

Complex Predicates in Iranian Languages

Opening remarks

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Before I say a few words about the literature on complex predicates in general, and the literature on this phenomenon in Iranian languages, I would like to take a few moments to thank you all for attending this conference, and for presenting your research on this very interesting topic. I am sure that we will all know a lot more about this subject by tomorrow afternoon at the end of the conference, thanks to all of you.

I specially thank my co-organizers: Karine Megerdooian, for creating and managing a wonderful web-page for our conference, Gholamhossein Karimi-Doostan for advertising the conference inside Iran, and my special thanks go to our local organizer, Pollet Samvelian, for all those long hours she has spent organizing this conference here, responding to questions, writing and sending letters, and so much more. I am also very thankful to her three graduate assistants, Gwendoline, Justine, Julliette, and Soha who helped her making this event happen. Please join me to thank them all for their wonderful work.

Let me now turn to the theme that brought us all here, and say a few words about it. As you all know, complex predicates exist in so many languages. They are particularly common in South Asia (among **Turkic, Indic, and Iranian languages**) as well as in **Northern Australia** and some parts of **Papua New Guinea**. This topic has received extensive attention, specially in the last couple of decades. A number of languages and language groups have been investigated, concentrating on the structure and meaning of complex predicates: for example:

Work on Hindu and Urdu by Mohanan 1994, Butt and Geuder 2001, Butt 1995 & 1997 (Butt organized the Complex Predicate Workshop in **Konstanz, Germany in 2003**); on central Asian Turkic and Turkish by Anderson 2003 and Öztürk 2003; on Northern Australian languages by **Bowern 2004** (She organized a conference on complex predicates at **Rice University** in 2005) and Schultze-Berndt 2001; on Japanese by Grimshaw and Mester 1988, Isoda 1991, Matsumoto 1996; on Italian by DiSciullo and Rosen 1990; and work on Korean by Ahn 1991, Han 1988, J.R. Kim. 1991, S. W. Kim 1994, Park 1992. This is just a handful examples representing the huge body of work on this issue. I will mention work on Iranian languages in a few minutes.

Different approaches to Complex Predicates:

Complex predicates have been discussed from various points of view, in terms of theories and in terms of specific properties of their nonverbal and verbal elements. First, I briefly review some of the general views expressed in the literature on this subject, and then I will concentrate on the literature on complex predicates in Iranian languages.

Theories:

The literature on verbs, in general, and complex predicates, in particular, has provided different views regarding the correlation between verb meaning and argument structure. Many early proposals in this respect were influenced by the simple verbal morphology of English. The traditional Government and Binding-style approach to projection involves representing verbs complete with information about their argument structures in the lexicon, which then project into the syntax. Accordingly, the Projection Principle (Chomsky, 1986:84) states that lexical information must be syntactically realized. This represents a theoretical view known as the *lexicalist view*. The argument

structures of the verbs are linked via universal principles to particular syntactic positions in this framework. In such a theory, argument-structure alternations, whether morphologically marked or not, are accomplished via a separate generative process that occurs within the lexicon, prior to projection. For instance, a transitive verb may be mapped to an intransitive verb via the lexical rule of passive formation, which alters both the argument structure and the morphology of the relevant verb. The altered lexical entry then projects in accordance with the linking principles, thereby indirectly giving rise to the altered syntax of passives. This kind of explanation has then been adopted by various lexicalist analyses (Levin and Rappaport, 1995 et seq.) to explain not only active/passive alternations, but also many other kinds of alternations that verbs display in languages like English.

With respect to Persian, Goldberg 2003 adopts a lexicalist view stating that the complex predicate is formed in the lexicon. We are going to hear more on this issue from *Stefan Müller* who will discuss Persian complex predicates from a lexicalist point of view tomorrow.

In more recent literature, attention has been paid to languages with rich verbal morphology and complex verbal constructions. Consequently, the locus of verbal meaning and its correlation with argument structure has shifted from the lexicon to the syntactic component of the grammar. A sustained effort has been made to eliminate lexical rules and generate all argument structure alternations in syntax, greatly simplifying the model of the lexicon. This approach is known as the *Constructionalist View* in the literature. Some recent proposals in this vein include Baker, Johnson and Roberts (1989), Diesing (1991), **Borer (1993, 1998)**, **Harley (1995)**, Pesetsky (1995),

Baker (1988, 1996), Jelinek (1997), Marantz 1997), Arad (1998), **Hale and Keyser (1993, 1998, 2002)**, McGinnis (1998), Richards (1999), **Ramchand (1997)**, and of course the *Distributed Morphology* (e.g. **Morantz** 1997). In such constructionalist theories, the verb is inserted into a particular complex syntactic structure, which determines the location and interpretation of each of the arguments in the verb phrase. In Hale and Keyser's approach, unergative verbs, for instance, are generated by incorporating the object in a transitive structure into an abstract verbal head, which then appears to be intransitive. The verb *Work*, for example, is underlyingly transitive: "do work", with *do* being covert in this framework. In a language like Persian, the light verb *kardan* replaces the covert 'do' in English, giving us the complex unit *kar kardan*.

Correlation between the light verb and the non-verbal element:

As for the correlation between the light verb and the non-verbal element in complex predicates, alternative views have been proposed. Some have interpreted the nominal preverbal element as the internal argument of the light verb (e.g. Lieber 1980). Others have considered the formation of complex predicates as a syntactic incorporation, by which a semantically independent word comes to be inside the other (Baker 1988, 1996).

Grimshaw and Mester (1988) define two specific properties for light verbs: (a) they are semantically deficient, and (b) they are either phonologically null, or if overt, they only serve as a host for agreement and tense morphology. They argue that the nominal preverbal element of the complex predicate lends its arguments to the light verb, turning it into a theta marker. Finally, there is also this argument-sharing theory suggested by Mohanan (1997) based on data from Hindi.

In more recent investigations, different components of the complex predicate have been discussed with respect to their role in determining the *event structure*, *agentivity*, *causativity*, and *duration* of the whole predicate construction.

Why are Iranian languages important in this respect?

All Iranian languages exhibit some common characteristics. One such property has to do with the remarkably interesting verbal constructions as well as the existence of a broad range of derivational and inflectional affixes in these languages. Therefore, they offer the right properties to shed light on the descriptive, typological, theoretical, as well as historical aspects of the interaction of syntax, morphology, and semantics.

In the last several decades, there has been a considerable body of literature on this subject with respect to these languages, mostly with regard to Persian and to some extent with respect to different dialects of Kurdish. Khanlari 1973 stated that complex predicates have gradually replaced simple verbs in Modern Persian. This process might have started in the 10th century. **Agnes Korn** and **Ludwig Paul** will tell us more about this historical development tomorrow. Sadeghi 1993 reports that there are 115 simple verbs left in Persian. I have collected about 130 thus far, although many of them are not actively used in every day language. The rest of the verbal concepts are expressed by an open ended list of complex predicates.

Furthermore, eighteen different light verbs have been attested in Persian that combine with various preverbal elements to provide the verbal information. All light verbs have heavy counterparts in this language, which seems to be a property of all languages that exhibit complex predicates. The preverbal elements range over eventive and non-eventive nouns, adjectives, prepositional phrases, and particles.

Other Iranian languages use a similar format to express verbal concepts as well. Thus it is not surprising that so much attention has been paid to this subject. To mention a few, Ghomeshi and Massam 1994; Dabir-Moghaddam 1995; Vahedi-Langrudi's dissertation in 1997; Megerdooonian 's dissertation in 2002 (also on Armenian) and other articles in 2002, 2003 and 2007; Zahedi 2003; Goldberg 2003; Karimi-Doostan's disserttion in 1997 and subsequent work; Family's dissertation in 2006, and my own work since 1986 up to now. With respect to Kurdish, there are Karimi-Doostan's articles in 2001 and 2005, and Haig's 2002 article on Kurmanji Kurdish.

The roles of the light verb and the preverbal element

Light Verb

The contributions of the light verb and the preverbal element to the argument structure and aspectual interpretation of the whole complex predicate have been controversial issues in the literature on Iranian linguistics.

Mohammad and Karimi 1992, following Grimshaw and Mester 1988, suggested that the light verb is semantically bleached, and that the argument structure of the whole complex predicate is determined by the nominal preverbal element.

I have reconsidered and rejected this view since then in articles published in 1997 and 2005. Also Megerdooonian maintains the same view in her dissertation and work thereafter . Both of us have suggested that agentivity, causativity and duration of the whole complex predicate is determined by the light verb. Compare, for example, the data in (1) and (2):

- (1) Kimea amdan dast zad
Kimea intentionally hand hit

‘Kimea clapped intentionally’ with

(2) *ghazâ amdan dast xord,

food intentionally hand collided

The preverbal element is the same, namely ‘dast’ in (1) and (2), but the light verb has changed. While the first example allows the adverb ‘intentional’, representing agentivity, the second one does not. Thus the agentivity of the complex predicate, that either allows or disallows the adverb ‘intentional’, is determined by the light verb. Similar arguments have been presented to show that causativity of the complex unit is based on the light verb as well.

Furthermore, the duration of the complex predicate is suggested to be a property of the light verb (Megerdooian 2002a). For example, the light verb *keshidan* ‘to pull’ implies duration of the event, while the light verb *zadan* ‘to hit’ contributes punctuality to the meaning of the complex predicate. Compare the examples in (3) and (4):

- | | | | | |
|-----|----|--------------|----|---------------|
| (3) | a. | dast zadan | b. | dast keshidan |
| | | hand hitting | | hand pulling |
| | | ‘To touch’ | | ‘To touch’ |
| (4) | a. | dâd zadan | b. | dâd keshidan |
| | | yell hitting | | yell pulling |
| | | ‘To yell’ | | ‘To yell’ |

While the examples in ‘b’ represent duration, those in ‘a’ lack this property, and reveal punctuality instead. There are also examples discussed by Dabir-Moghaddam such as *nafas zadan* (breath hitting) versus *nafas keshidan* (breath pulling), both revealing the meaning ‘to breath’. Only the latter, however, represents a sense of duration.

In addition to determining whether the complex predicate is causative and its external argument is agentive, the light verb is suggested to distinguish between eventive and stative predicates (Megerdooian 2002a&b, Folli et al 2005). Consider the following examples:

- (5) a. Kimea esm-e un-o be yâd *dâr-e*
 Kimea name-Ez her-Acc to memory have-3sg
 'Kimea has her name in her memory.'
- b. *Kimea esm-e un-o dâr-e be yâd *dâr-e*
 Kimea name-Ez her-Acc have-3sg to memory have-3sg
 Lit. *Kimea is having her name in her memory.

In the 'b' example, the progressive form with the auxiliary *dâr-e* is used, a diagnostic test to check the eventiveness of a predicate. This sentence is clearly ungrammatical, indicating that the predicate must be stative. Change of the light verb alters the eventiveness of the whole complex predicate. Compare (5b) with (6b) where the progressive test has applied: while the former is ill-formed, the latter is perfectly grammatical.

- (6) a. Kimea esm-e un-o be yâd *mi-yar-e*
 Kimea name-Ez her-Acc to memory dur-bring-3sg
 'Kimea remembers her name.'
- b. Kimea esm-e un-o dâr-e be yâd *mi-yâr-e*
 Kimea name-Ez her-Acc have-3sg to memory dur-bring-3sg
 'Kimea is (in the process of) remembering her name.'

The contrast between (5b) and (6b), where only the light verb has changed, shows that while the former is a stative predicate, the latter reveals change of state, and thus is eventive.

Finally, the light verb is suggested to be responsible for Case in Persian and Kurdish (Karimi-Doostan 2005). That is, the light verb in combination with T(ense) assigns Case to the external argument, and is responsible for the Case of the internal argument(s) as well. The case of Kurdish is more interesting since the dialects of this language exhibit ergative and absolutive Case in addition to nominative and accusative Case observed in different variants of Persian.

Non-verbal element

The event structure of the complex predicate has been argued to be determined, at least in Persian, by the preverbal element. That is, complex predicates consisting of a non-predicative nominal are typically atelic representing *activity*, while those including all other types of preverbal elements are telic, representing *achievement* or *accomplishment*. This is shown in the following table.

Table 1 (taken from Folli, Harley, Karimi 2005)

TELIC	ATELIC
PP + LV Ex: <i>be donyâ âmadan</i> (to world coming) 'to be born' <i>be âtash keshidan</i> (to fire pulling) 'to put on fire'	N + LV Ex: <i>dast xordan</i> (hand colliding) 'to get touched' <i>kotak xordan</i> (punishment colliding) 'to get beaten' <i>dâd zadan</i> (scream hitting) 'to yell' <i>dast dâdan</i> (hand giving) 'to shake hands' <i>dast andâxtan</i> (hand throwing) 'to mock'
Particle + LV Ex: <i>kenâr âmadan</i> (side coming) 'to get along, agree'	
A + LV Ex: <i>derâz keshidan</i> (long pulling) 'to take a nap'	
Eventive Nominal + LV Ex: <i>shekast xordan</i> (defeat colliding) 'to be defeated' <i>shekast dâdan</i> (defeat giving) 'to defeat'	

Folli et al further state that some light verbs, such as *shodan* ‘to become’, are inherently eventive, and therefore, change of the non-verbal element does not effect the eventiveness of the whole predicate. We will hear more on this issue from **Karine Megerdooian** today.

Nominal Preverbal Element

Several authors have proposed a similar syntactic treatment for the nonspecific direct object and the nominal preverbal element in Persian (Ghameshi and Massam 1994, Dabir-Moghaddam 1995). For these authors, the nonspecific object *ketâb* in *ketâb xundan* ‘book reading’ has the same syntactic status as the non-verbal element *dast* in *dast zadan* (hand hitting) ‘clapping’. These authors suggest that incorporation is responsible for both cases. We will hear **Fereashteh Marashi and Alexandra Simonenko** today who argue that Persian bare nouns have some properties of incorporation. Other authors have suggested that the non-verbal element of the complex predicate is different from the non-specific object of the verb, as discussed by Karimi 1997, and in a more elaborated fashion, in Megerdooian 2007.

Several authors at this conference will talk about the properties of the nonverbal nominal:

Marina Pantcheva with respect to Persian (Farsi)

Annahitta Farudi and Maziar Tousarvandani with respect to Dari

Keyvan Zahedi from a minimalist point of view.

Kurdish data are very interesting with respect to their preverbal nominals. As Haig 2002 shows, a predicate such as *govend girtin* (dance-hold), although representing

the intransitive verb ‘to dance’ in English, exhibits transitive properties in that the subject appears with oblique case, indicating that the preverbal element *govend* is treated as the direct object of the light verb. The contrast between Kurdish and Persian raises interesting questions regarding the nature of the preverbal element, and its relation to the light verb.

Finally, the morphological properties of complex predicates are interesting in that in addition to verbal affixes, prefixes may be added to the light verb. Persian negation and habitual prefixes *na-* and *mi-* appear on the light verb, as in the following examples:

(7) Kimea be râdiyo gush *na-dâd*
Kimea to radio ear neg-gave
'Kimea did not listen to the radio.'

(8) Kimea be radiyo gush *mi-dâd*
Kimea to radion ear dur-gave
'Kimea was listening to the radio.'

Similar situation holds in Kurmanji Kurdish where the negation and habitual prefixes *na-* and *di-* are attached to the light verb, as discussed by Haig 2002:

(9) av *na-dim* 'I don't irrigate.'

(10) dermân *di-kim* 'I am treating.'

Finally, the direct object can appear as an enclitic attached to either the nonverbal element or the light verb in Persian.

(11) man da'vat-*esh* kard-am
I invitation-her did-1sg
'I invited her.'

The separability of the non-verbal element will be further discussed today by **Gholamhossein Karimi-Doostan**.

The issue of separation has an important consequence for the lexicalist versus constructionalist view which hopefully will be discussed more in detail at this conference.

What is the significance of this conference?

It is important to note that the majority of Iranian languages have either not been studied at all, or are understudied at best, as the brief review of the literature indicated. Thus a conference like this will serve to provide insight into our understanding of the structure of different aspects of complex predicates, hopefully in a larger number of Iranian languages.

Some of the issues that had been discussed in the literature will take on further analyses in talks that will be presented here. I mentioned some of those work in this review. There are some other issues that have not been the center of attention in the literature, and will be discussed here. We will have the following topics:

In addition to **Ludwig Paul's** and **Agnes Korn's** talks on the historical development of complex languages in Iranian languages, which I mentioned before, **Soha Safa'i** will also talk about the diachronic aspect of these elements.

Ekaterina Lyutikova and Sergei Tatevosov will discuss causative /inchoative constructions in Ossetian

We will have couple of statistical reports on this issue: **Kim Gerdes and Pollet**

Samvelian will report on the status of light verbs from a statistical point of view. Also,

Mahmood Bijankhan and Elham Alaayi Aboozar will discuss the separability of the

non-verbal element and the light verb from a statistical point of view.

I hope we will all have interesting and productive discussions today and tomorrow .

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