

## Aspect in Complex Predicates

In certain languages, verbal constructions form complex predicates composed of several grammatical elements, where each constituent contributes part of the information that is ordinarily associated with a single morphophonological word. Close investigation of these complex predicates points to a direct relation between the meaning of these verbs and the syntactic structure in which they appear. In this talk, I will explore the aspectual readings in complex verbal predicates in Persian and I will present evidence for the syntactic significance of aspect. By investigating the relation between light verbs and aspectual interpretation in this language, I will show that the resulting verbal aspect can be obtained only if the verbal predicates are decomposed into small subevents that closely reflect the syntactic structure. I will argue that verb phrase aspect is not predetermined in the lexical entry of the verb, but is obtained compositionally by taking into account the contribution of the various constituents in the predicate. I will argue that aspect is derived at the interface of syntax and semantics, based on the final syntactic configuration.

The relation between light verbs and aspectual interpretation in Persian has been studied closely by Karimi-Doostan (1997), in which the author distinguishes the two categories of Transition and Initiatory light verbs. He argues that constructions formed with the Initiatory verb *kešidæn* as in (1a) allow unbounded readings with agentive arguments, while the Transition verbs exemplified by *gereftæn* in (1b) always give rise to bounded readings and affected arguments. Following Butt (1995), Karimi-Doostan proposes to capture the different aspectual properties of Persian light verbs by positing an aspectual role within the light verb's lexical entry, which then maps to the relevant argument within the final argument structure. This proposal correctly captures the unaccusative / unergative distinction in Persian light verb constructions. However, Karimi-Doostan's generalization does not fully capture the light verb's contributions to verb phrase aspect since Transition light verbs can give rise to unbounded readings as shown in (2) and certain Initiatory light verbs always appear in bounded predicates as illustrated in (3).

By investigating causative alternation pairs in Persian as in (4) I will show that the light verbs used in the transitive constructions should be further decomposed into smaller functional parts, which represent the event information for the inner and outer domains respectively, and in fact encompass the underlying intransitive counterpart. In particular, I will propose an analysis based on a syntactic decomposition of verbal predicates following ideas developed in Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz 1993) and Hale and Keyser (1993), whereby the verbal predicate is formed by the combination of the root and functional components. In this analysis, the resulting aspect is not projected from the lexicon, but is formed compositionally by the conjunction of the components of the complex predicate in syntax.

The analysis shows that a decomposed syntactic analysis of the verbal predicates can provide a better account of the distinct aspectual readings of the light verb constructions without positing arbitrary aspectual roles in the lexical entry. In addition, this analysis derives information about event structure and the interpretation of the arguments based on the final syntactic configuration of the verbal predicate.

- (1) a. Dæst-e daryuš dær yek saniye / ?\*sa'æt-ha dærd=**gereft**.  
hand-EZ Dariush in one second / hour-PL pain=catch.PAST.3SG  
'Dariush's hand (started to) hurt in one second / ?\*for hours.'
- b. Daryuš ?\* dær yek saniye / sa'æt-ha dærd=**kešid**.  
Dariush in one second / hour-PL pain=pull.PAST.3SG  
'Dariush hurt ?\*in one second / for hours.'
- (2) a. mærdom sal-ha az dowlæt færib=**xord-ænd** (unbounded)  
people year-PL from government fool=eat.PAST-3PL  
'People have been fooled by the government for years.'
- b. u sal-ha dær zendan šekænje=**did** (unbounded)  
He/she year-PL in prison torture=see.PAST-3SG  
'He/she was tortured for years in prison.'
- (3) behzad ?\*saæt-ha / dær čænd dæqiqe mahmonir-ra be=yad=**aværd**  
Behzad hour-PL / in several minute Mahmonir-OM to=memory=bring.PAST.3SG  
'Behzad recalled Mahmonir \*for hours / in a few minutes.'
- (4) a. Pezešk mæriz-ro šæfa=**dad**.  
doctor patient-OM cure=give.PAST.3SG  
'The doctor cured the patient.'
- b. Mæriz šæfa=**yaft**.  
patient cure=find.PAST.3SG  
'The patient was cured.'

## References:

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