STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE COMPLEX PREDICATE

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Abstract:

This study investigates the complex predicate constructions in Uzbek, which possesses a rich variety of light verb constructions. Novel data from Uzbek is provided, and it is analyzed on the basis of proposed criteria in the government and binding theory (GB) literature for complex predicates. The analysis reveals that these constructions express simultaneity, cause and effect, and consecutivity. Both verbs in complex constructions share the same subject, and they describe a single event.

Keywords: Complex predicates, light verbs, Uzbek language, construction, derivation.

Introduction

Many languages of the world possess complex verb constructions. Their typology includes various types of serial verbs (e.g. in languages of East and Southeast Asia, languages of West Africa and Oceania), light verbs of the languages of Asia, and converbal complex predications in Japanese, Korean, and Turkic define complex predicates as constructions in which each component contributes to the meaning carried by the head. Moreover, predicate structure of these constructions is established by more than one element, which makes it difficult to decide which element in the clause is assigning the theta-role, or more than one element is assigning it simultaneously. In Turkic complex predicates, the structure which consists of V+V, the coverb determines the argument structure of the predicate (Bowern 2006). However, the inflecting verb carries finite inflection, and it occupies the head position of the predicate. Research on complex verbs has been approached within various theoretical frameworks. The importance of work in contrastive perspective and integrating different language families in the analyses has been emphasized.

Complex predicates are constructions in which more than one component is involved in functions associated with the head. These functions involve the argument structure and the thetarole assignment, and they appear to be determined ad interim by more than one element in the clause.

Butt (1995:2) presents the definition in (2) to explain the nature of complex predicates:

(2) a. complex predicates are multi-headed; argument structure is complex, and is spread across multiple constituents.

b. they are composed of more than one grammatical element, each of which contributes to part of the information normally associated with a head;

c. their grammatical functional structure, however is that of a simple predicate; contributes part of the information normally associated with a head;

d. light verb structures can be formed lexically or syntactically.

To sum up, what makes complex predicates 'complex' is the fact that they consist of two (or more) constituents which behave the same way as the simple verbal predicates do; multiple constituents take part in expressing the function of the predicate.

The term light verb has been coined by Jespersen (1965, Volume VI: 117), and it referred to the English V+NP constructions, as in (1) below:

(1) Have a rest, a read, a cry, a think

 Take a sneak, a drive, a walk, a plunge

 Give a sigh, a shout, a shiver, a pull, a ring

The reason behind the notion of 'light' as used here is that the verbs do not exhibit full predication. In other words, one does not actually 'give' a shout but 'shouts', or does not 'take' a drive, but 'drives'. In this regard, verbs serve as a verbal licenser for nouns. However, it cannot be concluded that verbs entirely lack semantic content, as there is a clear difference between take a ride and give a ride. All things considered, these types of verbs do not preserve their full semantic content, nor are they semantically empty. Butt (1995), based on agreement, anaphora, and control analysis proposes light verb constructions to be monoclausal.

Within the GB framework, complex predicates are referred to as light verbs, and their argument structure is suggested to consist of X+ V (see e.g. Grimshaw and Mester 1988). Various definitions are given by many other researchers to describe light verbs, and it has also been observed that light verbs exhibit different argument structure cross-linguistically.As for the semantics of light verbs, it exhibits cross-linguistic analogy. In the languages that possess only one light verb, the most prototypical light verb is 'do' or 'make'.

Other examples appear as:

a. motion verbs such as 'go' or 'come'

b. verbs of impact such as 'hit' or 'spear'

c. 'give'

d. verbs of trajectory such as 'catch' or 'fall'

e. psych verbs and verbs of volition such as 'think', 'want' and 'try'

Lexical verbs too, can be used in complex predicates, in which a gerund or participle combines with an inflecting verb. An example is provided in:

Bola kitobni o'qib turdi. (Uzbek)

 Child book –ACC read-GER 'stand'3-PST.

 'A child kept on reading the book'

Studying the syntax of complex predication involves the analysis of relationship between the preverb and the light verb, and their role in clause internal argument assignment. The two main approaches implicate argument unification (e.g. Butt 1995; see also Wilson 1999) versus argument transfer (Grimshaw and Mester (1988). The former would involve merging of the preverb with the light verb, thereby contributing to the argument structure of the derived complex predicate. As for the latter case, the light verb lacks the argument structure of its own, and the argument structure of the preverb is passed on to the light verb.

However, Hale and Keyser (2002) argue for a different approach with regards to the analysis of the verbal predicates. Under this analysis all verbal structures are complex, since they are proposed to have a root and a verbal head which undergo conjoinment. This theory attempts to bring together all alternations in argument structure in L-syntax, arguing that roots themselves have complex derivational structure. It argues that intransitive verbs such as 'work' or 'fish' are derived conflating a nominal element with an abstract verbal head, and it views the difference between simple and complex predicates in the realization of S-syntax.

Bowern (2006) lists a set of formal criteria according to which complex predicates can be identified. Those criteria will be directly cited below: a. Event structure – the predicate describes a single event (as viewed by speakers) and not a sequence of conjoined events; b. Selection criteria – almost any verb can be in the coordinate construction as long as the two events are consecutive and the subjects are identical, but the verb in complex predicate constructions is confined to a set of up to approximately 20 verbs (Wurm 1953:514). c. Word-order – the converb and the inflected verb cannot be separated by intervening material, and constituency is strict; d. Nominalization – predicate as a whole may be nominalized; e. Interrogatives – the predicate behaves as a single unit for interrogative marking; f. Negation and temporal adverbs – have scope over the entire predicate, not just the converb.

There are important elements to be investigated at all levels of analysis, from basic discussions of what constitutes a complex predicate, to how they are shaped, how they vary, and how they change. This study has discussed examples of complex predicate constructions by providing novel data from Uzbek and by discussing them. Uzbek is extremely productive when it comes to this type of constructions. Unlike many languages that possess a single light verb, Uzbek is rich in variety of verbs used in complex constructions. They can employ agreement markers, which differentiates them from serial verbs. Provided examples have shown that converbials express simultaneity, cause and effect, and consecutivity. Both verbs in complex constructions share the same subject, i.e. they describe a single event. However, the object may or may not be shared by both verbs. Light verbs may differ cross-linguistically, some receive inflection, and others may be subject to argument transfer. What is significant about Uzbek light verb constructions is they both host inflection and contribute to the event structure. That is, tense and agreement markers, as well as aspectual markers are carried by the light verb in these structures. The constituency is strict in complex predicates in Uzbek, and there cannot be an intervention between the converb and the light verb by such elements as interrogatives, negation, or temporal adverbs

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