



Lvs Cross-Linguistically: Universality Vs Parameterization

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Abstract

South Asian languages abound in complex verb formations such as Complex Predicate (CP hereafter) construction. CPs consist of two or more grammatical elements which finally function as a single verbal predicate (Butt & Ramchand 2001). A CP is a multi-word phenomenon functioning as a single verb with its own acquired argument composition. One of the constituents in a CP construction is the Light Verb (LV hereafter), which plays a crucial role in the valence value or argument composition, transitivity and also case. LVs exhibit commonalities as well as differences depending on which the languages vary from one another or parameterize.

LVs exhibit certain commonalities as well as differences across languages depending on which the languages vary from one another or parameterize. The present paper adumbrates on how languages parameterize with respect to syntax and semantics of LVs and to what extent LVs contribute to the syntax and semantics of CPs. For the analysis, the study examines data mainly from Telugu and Kannada, Dravidian Languages spoken in Southern India, and in order to provide supporting evidence for the observations, the relevant data from Tamil, Hindi, Odia, Bengali, Urdu and Persian (Indo Iranian) is also taken for the analysis on LVs.

Keywords: Light Verbs; Complex Predicate; morpho-syntactic properties; semantics ; Telugu; Kannada

1. Introduction

Dravidian languages are very rich in what are called Complex Predicates (CPs hereafter) in which light verbs (LVs hereafter) play a vital role. An LV has a full verb counterpart and thus is a main verb in other constructions. It is invariably the LV that marks inflections indicating agreement, tense, aspect and so on. For the LVs determine the argument structure of the predicate they are part of, the whole meaning of the clause depends on the semantic specification of the LV. LVs host non-verbal elements and constitute a single syntactic predicate or unit contributing to the argument structure of clause Mohanan (1994). LVs exhibit subtle lexical semantic differences in terms of combinatorial possibilities with main verbs Butt and Lahiri (1998).

Here is a CP example from Telugu.

1. pillanagrovi virigipooyindi

flute.Nom break go 3.sg.n

The flute broke.

In (1), *povu* ‘to go’ is an LV combining with the lexical verb *virugu* ‘to break’ to form a V+LV CP construction. The LV here in the predicate intensifies the action of breaking adding a sense of ‘suddenness’. The lexical verb, on the other hand, retains its semantic value and takes the perfective participial form which is -i in Telugu.

LVs exhibit commonalities as well as differences depending on which the languages vary from one another or parameterize. In the following sections, we will see how languages parameterize with respect to syntax and semantics of LVs and to what extent LVs contribute to the syntax and semantics of CPs.

2. LVs Cross-linguistically

For our analysis on LVs, we examine data mainly from Telugu and Kannada, Dravidian Languages spoken in Southern India, and in order to provide supporting evidence for our observations, we will look at data from Tamil, Hindi, Odia, Bengali, Urdu and Persian (Indo Iranian) LVs as well. LVs have abstract semantics and the various meanings that they acquire in the composition of CP constructions depend on what preverbal element they combine with. Syntactically, the LVs have certain language-specific properties determining the morpho-syntactic features of the whole predicate in the respective language. The most common LVs across languages can be grouped into three types – no means- according to the meaning of their lexical counter parts (Nadimpalli, 2016).

- Stative verbs : ‘become’,
- Motion verbs: ‘go’, ‘come’, ‘fall’, ‘hit’ ‘keep/put’, ‘do’ ‘catch’, ‘keep’
- Transfer verbs: ‘give’ take, etc

There are also other LVs which overlap with these types. The above classification is done only on the basis of LVs’ literal meaning. As we are aware, LVs express different meanings in different contexts. Thus, the same LV may acquire a wide range of meanings depending on the preverbal element and also the context in which the whole predicate is used. The meaning expressed in a certain CP by an LV in a particular language may not be expressed by the same LV in another language and vice versa. LVs, in general, express the following meanings:

- Perfectivity (Hook 1991, 1993, Singh 1994)
- Inception
- Completion (Butt 1995)
- Forcefulness
- Suddenness
- Benefaction (Hook 1974)
- Volitionality. (Hook 1974)

The afore-mentioned list of meanings is by no means exhaustive. Moreover, these meanings even have further nuances of meanings contingent with the thematic role of the argument in the argument composition of the whole predicate formation.

The syntactic and semantic characteristics of LVs interact to determine the meaning of a sentence. Before we move on to the semantics of LVs, we will see to what extent LVs decide the syntax of CPs.

2.1. Morpho-syntax of LVs

Syntactically speaking, just like lexical verbs have the properties of (in)transitivity which determine their argument structure, the LVs also exhibit similar properties. It is depending on the transitivity of the LVs too the combination of the preverb and LV takes place. LVs like ‘go’, ‘come’, ‘fall’, ‘become’ etc. are intransitives and therefore they combine with intransitive main verbs in all the languages. The transitive ones combine with transitive lexical verbs and there is a transitivity constraint. Some transitive light verbs, however, can even make intransitive lexical verbs transitive functioning as transitivisers. For instance, peTTu ‘to keep/put’ and koTTu ‘to hit’ in Telugu can even make unaccusative verbs transitive. The combination is, of course, driven by the semantics of both the constituents in a CP. This in turn affects the argument structure of the whole CPs across languages. For instance, in Bengali, Telugu, Urdu and other languages the LVs corresponding to ‘give’ indicate benefaction which results in the addition of one more argument. Here are examples from Bengali and Telugu.

2. Rama ravi-ke ekTa bari khuj-e Dilo (Bengali)
Rama Ravi-dat one-cl house search give-3.pt
Rama found a house for Ravi.
3. neenu ammammaku uttaramu vraas-icceenu/peTTeenu (Telugu)
I.nom grand mother.Dat letter.acc write.give.pt.1s/keep.pt.1.s.
I wrote a letter for my grandmother.

In Telugu, both the LVs ivvu ‘to give’ and peTTu ‘to keep’ express a sense of benefaction adding an argument. We will see how the two LVs change the argument structure in the following sentences.

4. neenu uttaramu vraasaanu. (Telugu)
I.nom letter.acc write.pt.1.s.
I wrote a letter.
5. neenu uttaramu vraasicceenu. (Telugu)
I.nom letter.acc write.give.pt.1.s.
I wrote a letter (on the request of someone).
6. neenu uttaramu vraasipeTTeenu (Telugu)
I.nom letter.acc write.keep.pt.1.s.
I wrote a letter (on the request of someone).

In (4), the lexical verb has two arguments neenu ‘I’ and uttaramu ‘letter’. On the other hand, in (5) and (6), because of the LVs ivvu and peTTu respectively, there has added another implicit argument on the request of whom the subject has written a letter. Thus, both the LVs in Telugu convey the same sense of benefaction.

There are some universals with respect to N + LV type of CPs. The LVs, across languages, function as verbalisers in this type. The noun functions as a verb with the help of an LV. Depending on what LVs attach to the noun, N + LV CPs become intransitive or transitive cross-linguistically. For instance, the LV paDu ‘to fall’ in Telugu and Kannada renders an N + LV CP intransitive as in bayapaDu ‘to fear’ whereas the LV peTTu ‘to keep’ in Telugu and the LV paDu with a causative marker -isu in Kannada makes an N + LV CP transitive as in bayapeTTu and bayapaDisu ‘to frighten’ respectively.

There is a special set of LVs in every language which combine with nouns to form CPs. Since the LVs are verbalisers in this type, there is no much semantic contribution made by the LVs unlike in V+LV type in all languages. Even with regard to the N+LV CPs which are formed on nouns borrowed from English, this is the case. The most common LV across languages is 'do'. Which generally functions as a verbalizer in bilingual CPs. The following are some examples.

Kannada	Persian	Hindi
foonu + maaDu	telefon + kardan	fon + karoo
DaunlooDu + maaDu	Dawnlu:D + kardan	daunlooD + karoo

As for adjective + LV type, the LV, across languages, as in N+LV type, is a verbaliser making the adjective a verb and the meaning of the whole CP always depends on the adjective itself. In adverb + LV, though the LV is a verbaliser, an idiomatic meaning is composed based on the combination of the both elements.

So far we have looked at how LVs behave syntactically in different types with their transitivity value and how they have a share in determining the argument structure. Not all LVs combine with all main verbs and there is always a collocational restriction on the combination across languages. For instance, both the LVs peTTu 'to put' and koTTu 'to beat/hit' in Telugu are transitivisers but koTTu cannot attach to the main verb aaru 'to dry' or the main verb aaru cannot take the LV koTTu. The reason is, drying is a process which demands some time to get dried completely. But the LV koTTu always indicates sudden action which is why koTTu cannot combine with aaru. Coming to the light verb, peTTu 'to keep/put', it can go with the main verb aaru as it indicates a process. This continuous process is well expressed by the combination aaru and peTTu. Thus, there is a constraint on the formation of CPs across languages.

Though the usual order of CPs is preverb plus LV in most Indian languages, the reverse order of CP containing light verb followed by main verb is also possible in some Indo Aryan languages such as Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi etc. which is not possible in Telugu Kannada and other Dravidian languages. There is also a semantic constraint behind the reverse order of the CPs. Hook (1974) states that lexical/main verbs that express hitting, breaking, running, throwing can form a reverse construction, but not other lexical verbs that do not express these meanings. The semantics of the verb in a reverse construction can differ in meaning and express more suddenness. Irrespective of the order of V + LV or LV+V, the inflection of tense and agreement is always on the latter one in a CP.

2.2. The role of LVs in the semantics of CPs

Butt and Ramchand (2003), Butt and Scott (2002), Butt and Geuder (2001) state that the LVs serve to modulate or modify the primary event predication of the main verb or noun. They also opine that these light verbs provide more information about either the cause of the event or the result of the event (or both). In short, LVs give information about the event structure of the predication adding information about the participants of the action.

There seems to be some kind of universality as far as the semantics of LVs are concerned. In order to find semantic commonality of the LVs afore-mentioned across the languages, we will group them according to the meanings they can express. Taking into account the general meanings expressed by the light verbs across all these languages, we will propose mainly three meanings which can fairly include all the various meanings that can be expressed by the LVs in different contexts. Here are those meanings.

- Completion
- Unexpectedness or abruptness

- Benefaction

The most common LV ‘go’ is an intransitive verb giving the meaning ‘completion’ and thus functions as an aspectual marker cross-linguistically. Here are examples below.

7. hakki haarihooyitu. (Kannada)

bird.nom fly.go.pst.3.sg.n

The bird flew away.

8. tak theke pore glasTa bheMe gElo. (Bengali)

Shelf from fall.conj.part. glass-cl break-conj.part. go-3.pst.

The glass fell down from the shelf and broke.

‘go’ and ‘come’ express the meaning ‘completion’ in all the major languages of South Asia except in Odia. Thus, it is universal that the LVs ‘go’ and ‘come’ give the meaning ‘completion’. ‘hit’, which is not available in Odia and Bengali, expresses the meaning ‘suddenness’ across languages. ‘rise’, ‘sit’, ‘drop’, are also LVs in many Indo-Aryan languages like Hindi, Odiya, Bengali and so on which are not in Dravidian languages.

When the transitive LV *pettu* ‘to keep’ in Telugu or *haaku* ‘to keep’ in Kannada is used with transitive verbs it mostly becomes benefactive and when it attaches to intransitive verbs or unaccusative verbs it makes them transitive indicating continuation of the action of the main verb and finally gradual the change of state. On the other hand, the intransitive LV *hogu* ‘to go’ in Kannada or *povu* ‘to go’ in Telugu indicates completion of the action of the whole predicate; it also indicates change of state or position. *hogu* or *povu* can even go with transitive main verbs too; it also contributes a sense of futurity to the meaning of the whole complex predicate construction.

3. Conclusion: Lexicalization across languages

There are not only cross-linguistic similarities, but also differences among LVs in terms of meaning and syntax. As we have seen, the common meanings that LVs express across languages are: benefaction, sudden action, completion and so on. Sometimes, the same meaning may be conveyed through different LVs in different languages. The meaning conveyed through an LV in one language may not be conveyed by the corresponding LV in another language. For instance, the LV *veyyu* ‘to throw’, as in *ceppeyyu* ‘to reveal’ in Telugu, expresses ‘sudden action’ while the same meaning is conveyed by the non-corresponding LV *biDu* ‘to leave’ as in *heeLbiDu* ‘to reveal’ in Kannada. Thus, through the process called lexicalization, the same meaning is encoded in different words. Thus, though there is universality of semantics of LVs, languages parameterize in the way meanings are conveyed through different LVs. So, languages parameterize in lexicalizing these concepts.

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Appendix A

List of Abbreviations:

1	First Person
2	Second Person
3	Third Person
ACC	Accusative
CP	Complementizer Phrase
DAT	Dative
LV	Light Verb
M	Masculine
NOM	Nominative
NPST	Non-Past Tense
PL	Plural
PROG	Progressive
PRS.PTCP	Present Participle
PST	Past Tense
REL	Relativiser
SG	Singular

Makalenin Türkçe başlığı buraya yazılır....

Özet

Türkçe özet.

Anahtar sözcükler: anahtar sözcükler1; anahtar sözcükler2; anahtar sözcükler3

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