1 Light Verbs

We examine Chinese directionals and seek to align them with light verbs in Urdu.

Jespersen (1965, Volume V:117) is generally credited with first coining the term light verb for English V NP constructions such as

- have a rest, a ride, a cry, a think
- take a snort, a drive, a walk, a plunge
- give a sigh, a shout, a sliver, a pull, a ring

- Light Verbs are part of complex predicates. The defining characteristics of complex predicates are:
  - The argument structure is complex
two or more semantic heads contribute arguments—primary vs. secondary predications.
  - The grammatical functional structure is that of a simple predicate: there is only a single
  subject and no embedding.
  - Complex predicates may be formed either morphologically (lexically) or syntactically.
The constructions under investigation here are syntactically formed.

- Identifying Light Verbs
  - Light verbs are always form-identical with a main verb (Butt and Lahiri 2002).
  - Light verbs have a funny syntax: they can be distinguished syntactically and
  phonologically from main verbs and auxiliaries—they indicate the noun for a separate
  syntactic class (Butt and Gender 2001).
  - The funny syntax goes hand-in-hand with a funny semantics: the systematic
  semantic contribution of a light verb is hard to characterize.

We argue that both Chinese directionals and Urdu light verbs serve to further structure the event described by the main verb.
2.3 Optional Deictic Component

Directionals may optionally be followed by the verb lai 'come/there' or qu 'go/thither'.

(7) a. sng jin lai run enter come = 'come running in'
   sng jin qu run enter go = 'go running out'

b. na chu lai take exist come = 'to bring out'
   na chu qu take exist go = 'to take out/away'

2.4 Dissociability

Directionals are dissociable.

(8) a. sng dun shang zih-chai lai le
   he serve ascend on-cup to
   come Curr.Rel.Sit.
   [Li and Thompson 1981:63] (Chinese)

b. sng dun le zih-chai shang lai le
   he serve Perf-on-cup to ascend come Curr.Rel.Sit.
   He served up a cup to me.'
   [Li and Thompson 1981:63] (Chinese)

2.5 Multiple Functions of Directionals

The class of Directionals listed under (5) can function as:

1. Freestanding main verbs

(8) a. guo mahu
cross road
   'to cross the road'
   [Chinese]

b. guo niun
cross New Year
   'to pave the New Year'
   [Chinese]

2. V2 is a directional construction

(10) a. sng guo qu
   run cross go
   'to run across'
   [Chinese]

b. sng guo lai
   speak cross come
   'to explain'
   [Chinese]

3. Aspectual markers: a small subset (guo 'cross', qila 'rise-come' and zuq 'descend-go') can also be used as aspectual markers denoting the experiential perfective (11)), the inceptive ([12]) and the durative ([13]).

(11) a. ni chi guo yuchai meiyu?
   you eat cross shark's fin
   'Have you ever eaten shark's fin?'
   [Chao 1968:251] (Chinese)

b. wo shuai dian guo tui
   I fall never cross leg
   'I broke my leg once (but it has healed since).'
   [Li 1987:356] (Chinese)

(12) sng shuo qila le
   he speak rise-come Curr.Rel.Sit.
   'He started speaking.'
   [Chinese]

(13) sng shuo zuq le
   he speak descend-go Curr.Rel.Sit.
   'He continued speaking.'
   [Chinese]

2.6 Complications

There are a number of exceptions to the defining properties of directionals: the picture is more complex.

- The potential infix may be prohibited
- Circumlocutiously, the verbs come and go may be prohibited or obligatory, as well as optional.
3 Evidence for a Distinct Subclass — Light Verbs?

Previous analysis: Several Sinologists have suggested that in addition to Resultatives and Directionals, a third class of verb compounds exists, often referred to as 'phase' complements following Chao (1968).

The common properties of this class include: 1) a quasi-aspectual meaning; 2) boundness; 3) they do not take the potential suffix or the devic 'kui'come' and 'gu'go'.

3.1 guo 'cross' — A Case Study

Table (14) provides phonological, collocational and syntactic evidence in favor of a distinct class of light verbs (emulated by guo, see Scott (1996) for further discussion).

Light verbs can be clearly distinguished from the lexical V2 directional usage and from the fully functional aspectual usage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>guo 'cross'</th>
<th>Main Verb</th>
<th>V2 Directional</th>
<th>V2 Light Verb</th>
<th>Aspect Marker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>[kui]</td>
<td>bound affix</td>
<td>bound affix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[kui]</td>
<td>some S.R.</td>
<td>few S.R.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[kui]</td>
<td>THEME</td>
<td>THEME</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[kui]</td>
<td>some</td>
<td>some</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>[kui]</td>
<td>RA</td>
<td>RA (nave)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[kui]</td>
<td>Durative</td>
<td>Durative (pref)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[kui]</td>
<td>*pot</td>
<td>*pot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[kui]</td>
<td>*kui(qu)</td>
<td>*kui(qu)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[kui]</td>
<td>*aux</td>
<td>*aux</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>[kui]</td>
<td>RA</td>
<td>RA (nave)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[kui]</td>
<td>*NOM</td>
<td>NOM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[kui]</td>
<td>*v-c</td>
<td>v-c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[kui]</td>
<td>optional</td>
<td>obligatory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S.R. = selection restrictions
Asp = verbal aspect
v-c = verbal classifier

Co-occurrence

(15) a. ta cong hui moyou guo guoy hao jihui guoy
he over NEG on cross good opportunity cross
He has never missed a good opportunity.

b. man a? ta bj guo guoy guoy
who Quest.Part. he on cross cross
Who says he hasn't? He has! (He has had the experience of having err'd past good opportunities).

Negation

(16) a. hai mei ci 'guo ne
yet NEG on cross Smt Final Part
I haven't eaten yet.'

b. mei ci guo yuchi
NEG on Exp Asp. shark fin
I have never eaten shark's fin.

Verbal Classifiers

(17) a. *ta chi guo lang-ci fan
he on cross two times rice

a. ta chi guo lang-ci yuchi
he on cross two times shark fin
He has eaten shark's fin twice before.'

3.2 Semantic Evidence

The diagonals listed in table (14) offer evidence for a distinct subclass with distinct phonological and syntactic properties.

(18) Directional Light Verbs

guo 'cross'

shang 'ascend'
dao 'arrive'
zia 'descend'
lai 'open'

Question: Is there a common semantic denominator which characterizes the members of this subclass of directional?
3.2.1 A Quasi-Aspectual Meaning

- The light verb usage seems to add a telic component to the event (in most cases).
- The light verb usage seems to group with a subclass of resumptive V2 verbs.

(20) Resumptives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ting</td>
<td>'finish'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wan</td>
<td>'complete'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuo</td>
<td>'finish/completion'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hao</td>
<td>'good'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dao</td>
<td>'fall/drop'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jian</td>
<td>'see/meet'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhu</td>
<td>'stop'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The light verb usage can serve as a substitute for an otherwise obligatory aspectual marker (e.g., the ka-construction).

All of this evidence points towards an analysis by which the light verb contributes a [STR] feature to the event (cf. Scott 1990).

However, this analysis is too restrictive:

- the full class of light verbs (combining directional and resumptives) comprises about a dozen elements; this by far exceeds the number of aspectual markers in most languages.
- the directional light verbs are not obligatory, unlike aspectual markers (section 3.3.1).
- it does not account for lexically motivated selectional restrictions (section 3.3.2).
- it does not do justice to the observation that a class of light verbs occurs cross-linguistically. This class is characterized by similar syntactic, semantic, and phonological properties and serves to further modulate or structure an existing event predication.

3.3 Crosslinguistic Evidence

3.3.1 Functional vs. Lexical Aspect

When the directional is V2, it can either denote a literal directional meaning ((20)) or it can acquire what looks like a more aspectual usage ((21)).

(21) wo chi guo le
  'I have cut across.' (Chinese)

However, whereas aspectual markers are obligatory, the 'aspectual' V2 directional is not obligatory.

(22) a. ta bu mei guan shang le
    he out door close get Curr.Rel.Sit.
    'He closed the door.' (Chinese)

b. ta bu mei guan le
    he out door close Perf
    'He closed the door.' (Chinese)

This finds a close parallel with Urdu V-V complex predicates, where the contribution of the Urdu light verb (V2) is often considered to be vaguely aspectual in nature.

But, again the presence of the light verb is optional, not obligatory.

(23) a. nadya-ni xat bh k'li-ya
    Nadya,F-Erg letter,M.Nom write take Perf,M,Sg
    'Nadya wrote a letter (completely).' (Urdu)

b. nadya-ni xat bh'k-a
    Nadya,F-Erg letter,M.Nom write Perf,M,Sg
    'Nadya wrote a letter.' (Urdu)

Note: With regard to the standard Chinese aspectual markers, Klein, Li and Hendriks (2000) for example suggest that even these should be interpreted as assertion markers in that they serve to assert or highlight a part of the semantic content of the clause that is already given, rather than contributing new information to it. The observed aspectual effects are thus derived rather than primary.

3.3.2 Functional vs. Lexical: Selectional Restrictions

The Chinese light verbs construction shows selectional restrictions that go beyond the merely functional.

(24) a. guan dao/'shang shou yin ji
    shut fall/ascend radio
    'switch off the radio.' (Chinese)

b. guan shang/3 dao men
    shut ascend/fall door
    'close the door.' (Chinese)
Urdu light verbs show similar selectional restrictions (see Butt 1995 for more discussion).

(25) a. nadya riqat lik ‘ikh
Nadya, F–Feg letter, M,Nom write go-Perf.M,Sg
‘Nadya wrote a letter (completely).’
(Urdu)

h. nadya lark gow-i
Nadya, F,Nom let tr.M,Nom write go-Perf.M,Sg
‘Nadya wrote a letter (completely).’
(Urdu)

(26) a. nadya gow-i
Nadya, F,Nom let tr.M,Nom make go-Perf.M,Sg
‘Nadya fell (down).’
(Urdu)

h. nadya riqat lik
Nadya, F–Feg letter, M,Nom write go-Perf.M,Sg
‘Nadya wrote a letter (completely).’
(Urdu)

Note: These are not simply one of the transitivity matching.

(27) nadya molan bona pop-i
Nadya, F,Nom house, M,Nom make kill-Perf.M,Sg
‘Nadya fell to building a house.’
(Urdu)

3.4 Summary

All the formal and semantic evidence points to the existence of distinct classes of directional light verbs (previously referred to as phase complements).

Question: How do the semantics of light verbs work?

4 The Structuring of Events via Light Verbs — Urdu

4.1 General Characteristics of Complex Predicates (Butt 1995)

Light verbs must be considered a type of co-verb or co-predicate (cf. Baker and Fang 1990).

(28)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{V} \\
\text{V} \\
\end{array}
\]

This co-predicate is expressed in terms of Argument Fusion at the level of argument structure (thematic roles).

The complex predicate only has a single subject. There is no evidence for an embedded or controlled subject.

M. Butt and B. Scott: Chinese Directionals

4.2 Event Decomposition/Modification

Butt and Guider (2011) analyze these light verbs in Urdu as semi-lexical elements whose apparent aspectual effects are linked to a subtle form of event structuring and modification.

On the basis of complex predicates in Urdu and Bengali, Butt and Ramchand (2001) make the following proposals (building on Ramchand 1997, 2001).

- Light verbs serve to help structure events.
- Light verbs are not simply functional heads that code “viewpoint aspect” (unlike auxiliaries).
- This is what makes light verbs unique and seems to give them properties intermediate between lexical items and auxiliaries (or inflections).

(29)

The syntactic representation works together with a Davidsonian event semantics (Davidson 1967, Higginbotham 1985, Parsons 1990).

The following notions are assumed to be primitives of the metalanguage:

\[ e \prec e_i \rightarrow e_j : e \text{ consists of two subevents } e_i, e_j \text{ such that } e_i \text{ leads to or causes } e_j \text{ (see Hale and Keyser 1993)} \]

\[ e \prec < e_i, e_j : e \text{ consists of two subevents } e_i, e_j \text{ such that } e_i \text{ and } e_j \text{ form an accomplishment event structure where } e_i \text{ is the process portion and } e_j \text{ is a state interpreted as the result state of the process (see Parsons 1990 and Higginbotham 1999, cf. also \textasciitilde for and Rapaport-Hovav's 1998 notion of template augmentation).} \]
4.3 Sample Analysis

(30) nadya-n me not bi' li-ya
   Nadya: F = Fig. letter, M = Nom write, take, Perf. M, Sg
   'Nadya wrote a letter (completely).'

Syntax and Semantics for (30) — Revised Workshop Analysis

(31) V₁ = Rp - written (c y)  V₂ = CAUSE (e‘(e₀, -e₀); x y)
    \(\exists e : e₀ \rightarrow e₀ : e'_{e₀} \rightarrow e₀ \) 'Nadya, 'letter') & written (e₀; 'letter')]
    'Nadya instigates a process affecting a letter which has the result that the letter comes to be written.'

(32)

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{DP} \\
&\text{cause} 'Nadya' \\
&\text{VP} \\
&\text{v (V₂)} \\
&\text{cause 'take'} \\
&\text{DP}_i \\
&\text{v (V₁)} \\
&\text{cause 'write'} \\
&\text{DP}_j \\
&\text{object of process}
&\text{letter'} \\
&\text{object of result}
&\text{letter'} \\
&\text{RpP} \\
&\text{V} \\
&\text{process}
\end{align*}
\]

Features of the Analysis

- The main verb (V₁) actually provides the result component of the predication, not the light verb as would be expected if light verbs were used akin to aux词 markers (as is often assumed).
- The main verb also is responsible for the process (V) portion (this contrasts with Germanic particles, which are not verbs and are confined to the result portion).

4.4 The Structuring of Events via Directionals

We suggest that the Chinese directional light verbs should be analyzed along similar lines. Chinese Directionals pattern with the Urdu light verbs in that:

- The directionals form a complex predicate as coheads under V.'
- The directionals structure the main event by contributing subevent information
- The main verb (V₁) in conjunction with the light verb (V₂) constructs the telic component as part of a RpP (result phrase).

(33) qing si lu xia side ming-pian
    plate you have descend your name card
    'Please have your name card.'

(34) V₁ = Rp - left (c y)  V₂ = CAUSE-PROCESS (e‘(e₀, -e₀); x y)
    \(\exists e : e₀ \rightarrow e₀ : e'_{e₀} \rightarrow e₀ \) 'Cause-Process (e₁ → e₀, 'you', 'name card') &
    left (e₀, 'name card')]
    'You instigate a process affecting a name card which has the result that the name card comes to be left.'

(35)

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{DP} \\
&\text{you} \\
&\text{v} \\
&\text{cause} \\
&\text{DP}_i \\
&\text{object of process}
&\text{ming-pian}
&\text{name card'} \\
&\text{V (Dir)} \\
&\text{lu 'have'} \\
&\text{V (V₁)} \\
&\text{side} \\
&\text{lu 'discard'} \\
&\text{DP} \\
&\text{object of result}
&\text{ming-pian}
&\text{name card'} \\
&\text{V (V₂)} \\
&\text{lu 'have'}
\end{align*}
\]
4.5 Points for Discussion

Although light verbs are responsible for event building/modulation, they exhibit lexical differences which result in overall interpretational differences at the level of the VP.

- Structure seems counterintuitive: the subset of light verbs drawn from the resultative construction seem to have switched into becoming main verbs.
- Further point: just like in Urdu, these structures show a reluctance to be negated.

5 Conclusion

A subclass of Chinese directionalals were found to be light verbs.

- Light verbs crosslinguistically form a distinct category.
- Light verbs serve to modulate (sub)event structure.
- The main verb (VI) turns out to contribute the telic/result component of the predication as part of the complex predicate construction (further research needs to be done for the Chinese case).
References


