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A comparative Analysis of Complex Predicates in some Iranian Languages

Persian, an Iranian language, contains a vast number of Complex Predicates (CPr henceforth) consisting of a *Light verb (LV)* and a Nonverbal (NV) element. In CPrs, the NV ranges over a number of elements (Noun, eventive Noun, Adjective, Prepositional phrase, Particle), and the LV comes from a subset of simple verbs (*xordan* 'eat, collide' in *zamin xordan* 'to fall down'). The interdependence of the nonverbal element and the light verb has been shown to contribute in systematic ways to the syntactic properties, the event structure, and the alternation possibilities of the CPr (Folli, Harley, Karimi 2005). In this paper, I extend this analysis to other Iranian languages, specifically some Kurdish dialects.

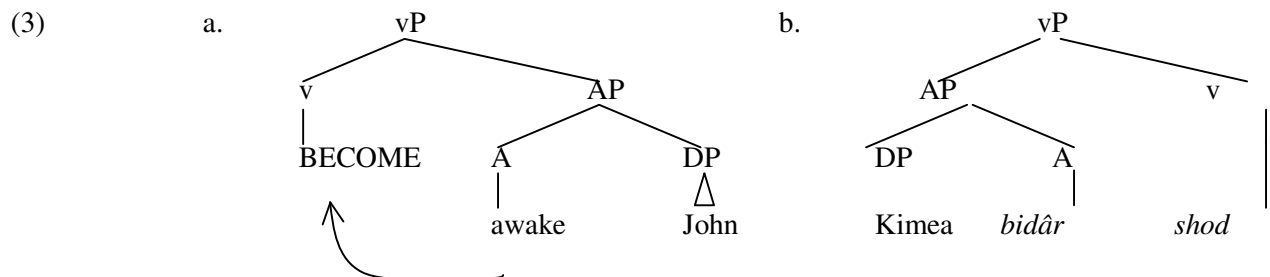
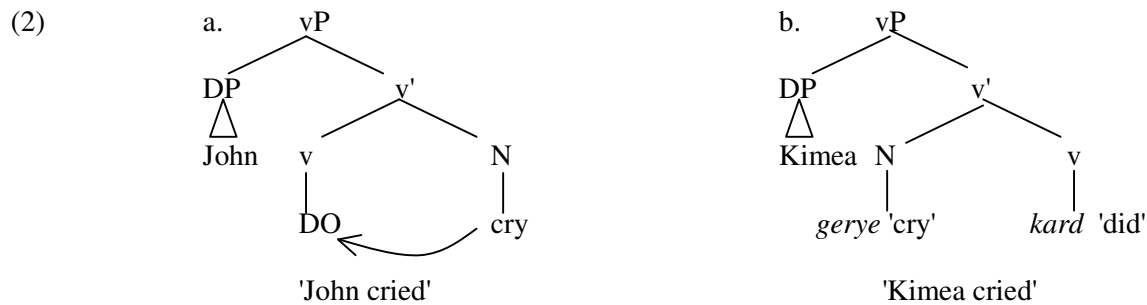
It has been argued that the argument and event structures of Persian CP, as well as their syntactic properties, such as control, cannot be simply derived from the lexical specifications of either NV element or LV. Therefore, the syntactic and semantic properties of these elements are determined in syntax rather than in the lexicon. For example, the event structure of the LV is not always the same as the event structure of its heavy counterpart (Karimi 1997). Furthermore, the choice of LV determines the agentivity of CPr (Mohammad & Karimi 1992, Megerdooian 2002). The LV also determines the eventiveness of CPr. That is, a change of LV results in a change of stativity of the CPr even when the NV element remains the same (compare 1b with 1d).

Folli, Harley, Karimi (2005) show that a constructionalist model, in which argument structure alternations are generated by inserting the same root in different syntactic structures, translates naturally to Persian CPrs for unergatives (2b), inchoatives (3b), and causatives (4b). They further show that within this system, there is a correspondence between the type of embedded structure below the vP and the Aktionsart of the whole CPr. The unergative predicate is characteristically an Activity, in Vendlerian terms, while the inchoative and causative are Accomplishments. The crucial difference between the two classes seems to be the type of clause that appears in the complement of v: when the lower phrase is an (non-event) nominal, the CPr has an Activity or a Semelfactive reading (e.g. 2b); when the lower phrase is a predicate and its subject (that is, a small clause), the CPr denotes an Achievement or Accomplishment (cf. 3b&4b). They further show that the telecity of the CPr is determined by the NV element as long

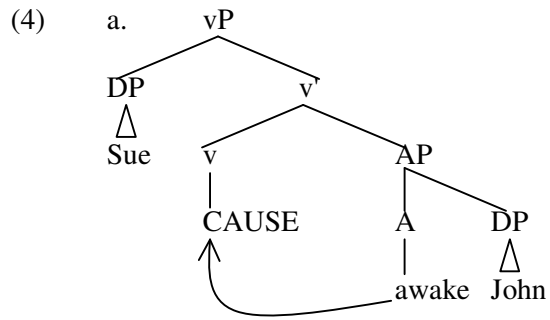
as the light verb can be both telic and atelic. In the case of light verbs that are inherently telic, such as *shod*, 'became', the category of the NV element does not have an effect on telecity, as in (5), where the NV element is a nominal expression.

In this paper, I extend the analysis of Persian CPr to some of Kurdish dialects (Kurmanji, Gorani, and Sorani). This comparison is specifically interesting with respect to the nominal NV element. This element has been suggested to be distinct from the direct object of the verb (Karimi 1997). However, Kurdish data show that this assumption might not be the correct one. The fact that Kurdish is an ergative-absolutive language, as opposed to Persian, a nominative-accusative language, sheds light on the true nature of the nominal NV element in Iranian languages.

- (1) a. Kimea esm-e un-o be yâd *dâr-e*
 K. name-Ez her-râ to memory have-3s
 'Kimea has her name in her memory.'
 b. *Kimea esm-e un-o dâr-e be yâd *dâr-e*
 K. name-Ez her-râ have-3sg to memory have-3sg
 Lit. *Kimea is having her name in her memory.
 c. Kimea esm-e un-o be yâd *mi-yar-e*
 K. name-Ez her-râ to memory hab-bring-3sg
 'Kimea remembers her name.'
 d. Kimea esm-e un-o dâr-e be yâd *mi-yâr-e*
 Kimea name-Ez her-râ have-3sg to memory hab-bring-3sg
 'Kimea is remembering her name.'

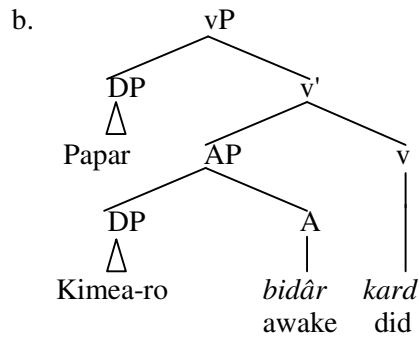


'John awoke'



'awake' 'became'

'Kimea awoke'



(6) kare âb shod
butter water became
'The butter melted.'