



snippets

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6.

Karine Megerdooian – MITRE *Telicity in Persian complex predicates*

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In their study of complex predicates in Persian, Folli, Harley and Karimi (2005) (henceforth, FHK) propose that the nonverbal component (NV) is the sole determiner of telicity in the complex verbal construction. The data from semelfactive verbs in Persian, however, do not support this analysis.

FHK argue that telicity in complex predicates is determined by whether or not the NV denotes a definite endpoint or a result state. For instance, the complex predicate *be donya amædæn* (to world come = ‘to be born’) is telic because the NV is a prepositional phrase marking an endpoint to the event. Complex verbs with an eventive noun as in *shekæst dadæn* (defeat give = ‘to defeat’) are also telic. Locatum verbs provide further evidence for this claim: Harley (1999) investigates the aspectual properties of denominal verbs in English and argues that if the base noun is a spatially bounded thing, then the event denoted by the verb will also be bounded. Hence, if the incorporating noun in a locatum verb is bounded, the event described by the verb is inherently telic as shown in (1); but if the noun is unbounded, verbal aspect can be either telic or atelic as exemplified in (2).

- (1) a. John blindfolded the hostage in a flash / *for a minute.
b. Mary saddled the horse in 5 minutes / #for 5 minutes.
- (2) a. Jill painted the wall in an hour / for an hour.
b. John oiled the pots in an hour / for an hour.

This contrast can also be seen in locatum verbs in Persian. All the nouns shown in (3) combine with the light verb *zædæn* ‘hit’ to form complex predicates, but the nominal NV’s boundedness properties determine the aspectual interpretation of the verb.

- (3) (i) Telic Aspect
æfsar ‘harness’, *cheshmband* ‘blindfold’, *qællade* ‘collar’, *dæstbænd* ‘handcuff’, *puzebænd* ‘muzzle’, *pabænd* ‘shackle’, *mohr* ‘stamp’
- (ii) Atelic Aspect
roqæn ‘oil’, *ræng* ‘paint’, *pudr* ‘powder’, *hæna* ‘henna’, *morækæb* ‘ink’,
vaks ‘wax’, *lak* ‘nailpolish’, *næmæk* ‘salt’, *chashni* ‘spice’

Semelfactive verbs in Persian are also formed with the light verb *zædæn* ‘hit’. In these verbs, however, the boundedness of the preverbal noun, such as *jaru* ‘broom’ or *shune* ‘comb’, does not affect the telicity of the complex predicate as shown in (4). This behavior counters the claim by FHK that the preverbal noun is the sole determiner of telicity in Persian complex predicates.

- (4) a. nima dær ærze nim saæt / saæt-ha xunæ-ro jaru=zæd
 Nima in half hour / hour-PL house-OM broom=hit.3SG
 ‘Nima swept the house in half an hour / for hours.’
- b. ma dær ærze nim saæt / saæt-ha mu-ha-sh-o shune=zæd-im
 we in half hour / hour-PL hair-PL-3SG-OM comb=hit-1PL
 ‘We combed her hair in half an hour / for hours.’

In addition, we do not expect to see the same NV giving rise to distinct aspectual readings. In the examples in (5), however, the same NV element *dærd* ‘pain’ is used with different light verbs producing different aspectual interpretations.

- (5) a. dærd=keshidæn [atelic]
 pain pull
 ‘to hurt’ (as in ‘I hurt a lot’)
- b. dærd=gereftæn [telic]
 pain catch
 ‘to hurt’ (as in ‘my back hurt suddenly’)

These contrasts demonstrate that the nonverbal component alone is not responsible for determining the telicity of the complex predicate. The properties of the light verb and potentially the structural relation between the NV and the light verb should also be taken into account in determining verbal aspect.

References

- Folli, R., H. Harley and S. Karimi (2005) "Determinants of event structure in Persian complex predicates." *Lingua* 115.10, 1365-1401.
- Harley, H. (1999) "Denominal verbs and aktionsart." In *Proceedings of the 2nd Penn/MIT Roundtable on Event Structure*, ed. L. Pykkänen and A. van Hout. Cambridge, MA: MITWPL, 73-85.