

Incorporation and Complex Predication in Persian

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Persian is a predominantly SOV language which displays a variety of multiword verbal expressions. This paper focuses on one such verbal expression, namely the N+V construction. Following Dabir-Moghaddam (1997) and Megerdoomian (2009), I propose a distinction between what I label *incorporation* and cases of so-called *complex predication*. Noun incorporation is here taken to refer to all cases of N+V compounds where the noun has an argument relationship to the verb, as shown in [1a] (Mithun 1984, Baker 1988). The term complex predicates, in contrast, is applied to constructions where more than one grammatical element contributes to the overall meaning of the complex and the argument structure of the complex results from the interaction of the contributing predicative elements, as illustrated in [1b] (Alsina et al., 1997; Butt, 1995, Mohanan 1994).

- 1a) āryā [Gazā]_N [xord-Ø]_V
Arya food eat-Past.3.sg
‘(lit.) Arya ate food.’
- 1b) āryā [kotak]_N [xord- Ø]_V
Arya beating hit-Past.3.sg
‘Arya was beaten.’

The contribution of this paper is threefold. First I survey the state-of-the-art for incorporation and complex predicates. After refining the definition of incorporation and adopting an argument merging analysis for complex predicates (Butt, 1995), I introduce a distinction between these two classes of syntactic multiword verbal expressions. Finally, I provide a c-structure and a-structure analysis of incorporation and complex predicates in Persian, drawing on the tools provided by the LFG framework.

The investigation of N-V constructions in Persian has taken either a lexical or a syntactic approach. Some researchers claim that all multiword verbal expressions are lexical and that they are the result of the morphological processes of incorporation and combination (Dabir-Moghaddam 1997, Vahedi-Langrudi 1996). However, a lexicalist approach falls short of explaining the syntactic behavior of both constructions. Other researchers discuss multiword verbal expressions as syntactic constructions, but they fail to observe the distinction between the two types of N+V sequences and take incorporation into account. (Karimi 1992, Folli et al. 2005). Megerdoomian (2009), in contrast, deals with the syntactic and semantic differences between these two N+V sequences, treating the nominal part under the term bare nominal as opposed to preverbal nominal (in my analysis incorporated noun and nominal part of the complex predicate, respectively). She does not deal with scrambling, topicalization, and relativization of preverbal noun, and these processes pose a challenge to a derivational analysis. The incorporation analysis I put forward, not only accounts for the bare nominals in Megerdoomian’s analysis, but it can also be extended to include other multiword verbal expressions in Persian, such as PP+V and most of the Adv+V constructions, which are treated in the literature as complex predicates (Folli et al, 2005; Megerdoomian, 2009; Pantcheva, 2010).

What follows is a reanalysis of N+V sequences in the light of the LFG theory. The subcategorized noun in N+V sequences shows some of the properties that are usually associated with incorporation: a) With respect to stress pattern, the whole complex behaves like one unit and the nominal part receives the main VP stress; b) The whole complex can be nominalized (example 2); c) the noun is not available to bind a nominal, but the whole complex can bind a pronominal, as illustrated in [3a] and [3b] (Dabir-Moghaddam, 1997).

2. Gazā xordan-aS

food eating-his

(Lit.) ‘His food-eating’

3a) *man Gazā, xordam va kami az ān; rā be gorbe dādam.

I food eat-past.1.sg. and some from it OM to the cat give-past.1.sg.

‘I ate the food and gave some of it to the cat.’ (examples adapted from Dabir-Moghaddam, 1997)

3b) man [Gazā xord-am]_i; va bad az ān; xābid-am

I food eat-past.1.sg. and after from it sleep-Past.1.sg.

(Lit.) ‘I ate food and after that I slept.’

Inflectional morphology, however, rules out a lexical analysis of this N+V sequence: if they were the results of morphological compounding, the incorporated element would not be separated from the verb by the Negative marker (*ne-*), the Imperfective prefix (*mi-*), the Subjunctive prefix (*be-*) and the future auxiliary (*xāstan*). Therefore, I posit that Incorporation in Persian is syntactic, involving Semantic Incorporation and packaging of the event as a conceptual whole.

The claim is that incorporation encompasses all cases where a verb and its arguments are combined to make a conceptual whole. I follow an argument merger analysis as a diagnostic for the relationship between non-verbal and verbal elements. As a result, it can be shown that other Persian multiword verbal expressions, which have been treated unambiguously as cases of Complex Predicate by most scholars (Dabir-Moghaddam, 1997; Folli et al, 2004; Megerdoomian, 2009; Pantcheva, 2010), are in fact cases of incorporation which have undergone metaphorical extension. For instance, Folli et al (2004) treat [[*be bād*]_{PP} [*dādan*]_V] (to wind give ‘to lose’) and [[*bālā*]_{Adv} [*āvardan*]_V](up bring ‘to vomit’) as cases of Complex

