

## A Study of Complex Verb Constructions in Persian

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One of the inspiring developments in the area of semantics- syntax interface is introducing the notion of construction in the study of linguistic expressions. A Construction, as an abstract schema with structured meaning, is a linguistic pattern that "some aspect of its form or function is not strictly predictable from its component parts" (Goldberg, 2006: 5). As Booij (2010:118) assumes, the notion of construction provides a useful basis for the study of syntactic complex predicates, including complex verbs, which he has, elsewhere (Booij, 2001) referred to them as "constructional idioms". Relying on such a perspective, this study attempts to shed light on complex verb construction in Persian language. The structure of Persian complex verbs consists of a nonverbal element (NE) of different types and a light verb (LV). Complex verb formation has proved to be very productive in Persian and it has completely replaced the former morphological rule of simple verb formation in this language (Batani, 1989). This, besides some other reasons, makes such constructions a valuable target for a closer investigation, despite the previous studies from different perspectives (including Karimi, 1997; Dabir- Moghaddam, 1995; and Folli et al., 2005). According to Karimi (1997), the analysis of Persian complex verbs reveals that they bear a single stress; their idiomatic compositionality is a matter of degree and they display less syntactic freedom compared to their English counterparts. She also states that light verbs in these constructions, although semantically bleached, are not completely empty. The present paper concentrates on one of the subcategories of complex verb construction, with the structure 'N (a body part)+ spatial preposition *be* (lit. to)+ N+ light verb'. As it is seen in the following examples, in this construction, the NE consists of two nouns attached with the spatial preposition *be* (lit. to). The first noun is obligatorily a body part name while the second one can be a noun of any type.

- (1) *dast be jib shodan*  
hand to pocket becoming  
to spend money for
- (2) *cheshm be dar duxtan*  
eye to door sewing  
to wait for
- (3) *del be darya zadan*  
heart to sea hitting  
to take a risk

In all instances of the linguistic expressions under study, including (1)- (3), there is a structured constructional meaning that is independent of the particular open class lexical items. Here the preposition *be* (lit. to) is at the center of a schema which entails a kind of movement (specified by the light verb) of a trajector toward a landmark in order to accomplish a task. Such a task necessarily involves the use of the first NP. The trajector slot before the preposition is filled by a body part noun and the landmark slot is filled by a noun which stands for a larger and more stable entity than that of the trajector. *dast*, (hand), *cheshm* (eye), and *del*(heart) are, respectively the trajectors in the schemas of (1)- (3) which undergo a kind of movement toward their landmarks *jib* (pocket), *dar* (door), and *darya* (sea), respectively. So the constructional meaning is

motivated by schematic meaning of the preposition *be*, in coordination with the (bleached) light verb meaning. This seemingly peripheral role of the light verbs in the construction of meaning can provide a clue in support of the above-mentioned claim that, although semantically bleached, light verbs in complex verb construction of Persian language are not completely empty. The constructional meaning of such complex verbs, in turn, can pave the way for the open class lexical items to play their usage-based role in conveying the final meaning of these linguistic expressions. A close analysis of this construction shows that the constructional meaning which entails the movement of a trajector toward a landmark, in most cases, makes sense with a mediation of idealized cognitive models (ICMs) of different types, including metonymy, metaphor, and symbolic ICMs or frames. This fact can account for considering polysemy and prototype-extension structure as two properties of such constructions. Examples (1)- (3) are illustrative of these points. In (1), since paying money in a prototypical sense includes taking money out of the pocket, taking hand to the pocket, in a metonymic way stands for paying. Also in (2), since doors are places through which people enter, casting and fixing the look (sewing the eye) to the door makes sense in a metonymic way. As a good instance of metaphonymy, here this metonymy facilitates understanding of the metaphor at work, WAITING IS STARING. In cases like (3), speaker's knowledge derived from the frames, (here, that of the sea and the heart) prepares the ground for a metaphorical extension. The results of this investigation also show that complex verb constructions are very good candidates for conducting more detailed studies in order to illuminate the nature of lexicon-syntax interface in Persian language.

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