

Complex verb constructions, aspect and telicity in Hill Mari¹

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My talk deals with complex verb constructions in Hill Mari². These are combinations of two verbs where the first verb contributes its lexical meaning (=light verb) and the second modifies it functioning as a telicizer.

Complex verb constructions have received a great interest in the previous research, see e. g. [Pengitov et al. (eds.) 1961; 202–216; Serebrennikov 1960: 190–199; Driussi 1992-1993; Bradley 2010]. However, no detailed analysis of these constructions was proposed which would account for crucial semantic difference between them. Three telicizers will be in focus of my interest, *šənzāš* ‘to sit down’, *keāš* ‘to go, to leave’, and, especially, *koltaš* ‘to send’, which appear to be the most productive ones. The following examples show that adding different telicizers to the same verb leads to different semantic effects.

- (1) Vas'a noski-m čüc-en kolt-en/ šənd-en
V. socks-ACC wear.out-CVB send-PRET sit-PRET
‘Vasya has worn the socks out/ made a lot of holes in his socks’.
- (2) püşangö kušk-en ke-n (kolt-en)
tree grow-CVB go-PRET send-PRET
‘A/the tree has grown (enexpectedly, quickly)’.

In Hill Mari language, the complex verbs are usually described as Turkic influence. In Turkic languages, complex verb constructions were successfully analyzed as functional projections (cf. [Grashchenkov 2012, 2015]), which suggests that light verbs are constituents that c-command converbs. However, no detailed semantic analysis was elaborated in order to account for the observed differences in (1) and (2).

I will show that Grashchenkov’s analysis makes right predictions concerning the structural properties of Hill Mari complex verb constructions. At the same time, I will propose a unified analysis of Hill Mari constructions using Ramchand’s event structure framework (see [Ramchand 2008]). First of all, I will argue that, in most cases, deletion of the telicizer does not affect neither the argument structure of the verb nor its ability to express the resulting state (or entry-into-state, in other terms). For example, (3) is equally felicitous with and without the telicizer and no semantic change is observed:

- (3) of'icer mā ture-š-nā kədal mi-š
officer 1SG near-ILL-POSS.1PL run.CVB come-AOR
dā mən'-əm uš-ən/ uš-ən (kolt-əš)
and 1SG-ACC see-PRET see-CVB send-AOR
‘The officer came to us, and then he saw me’.

In many other cases, the verb does not require telicizers in order to express telicity. For example, the verb *jarataš* ‘love’ can express entry-into-state even in the absence of the light verb:

- (4) Vas'a Maša-m jarat-en/ jarat-en (kolt-en)
V. M.-ACC love-PRET love-PRET send-AOR
‘Vasya fell in love with Masha’.

However, I will show that the telicizers do affect the semantics of the light verb. The effect they impose on light verbs is due to some crucial semantic properties of the lexical verbs which gave rise to complex verbs constructions. I suggest that the meaning of the light verb is based on the semantic structure of its lexical counterpart (=the verb which gave rise to the telicizer), and, particularly, on its aktionzart, aspectual composition and subevent structure. For example, the verb *koltaš* (originally ‘send’)

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²The data come from fieldwork (both elicitation and corpus analysis) in the village of Kuznetsovo and some neighbouring villages (Mari El, Russia) in 2016-2018.

is an achievement, and, as a consequence, it evolves into the marker expressing instantaneous events, thus restricting the set of possible interpretations of the lexical verb:

- (5) Vas'a pičal gəc lü-en kolt-əš
V. gun from shoot-CVB send-AOR.3SG
'Vasya shot a gun [once, = made a single shot]'.
(6) tädə tol-ən kolt-en
3SG come-CVB send-PRET
'He has come (unexpectedly)'.

On the contrary, the verb *šənzäš* is not an achievement and, therefore, it cannot encode an instant entry-into-state which in fact is true and is supported by my data. In my model, I will describe the light verbs as bunches of semantic features (i. e., [+agentivity], [-durative], [-incrementality], [+bound], [-resultative] for the light verb 'send') which follow directly from the semantics of the corresponding lexical verb. I will also show how they contribute to the meaning of the complex predicate resulting in the range of meanings available for a certain telicizer.

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