Word and Verb Nets for Semantic Processing

Understanding Verbs and the Verbal Complex

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Day 8 (Today):

- More on Auxiliaries, Modals, etc.
  (Discussion of simplified Austen text)
- V-V Complex Predicates
  (assignment handed out)

V-V Complex Predicates (CP)s

- Crosslinguistically, there are a number of different types of V-V CPs.
- One very common type in South Asia has been called *Aspectual CP* (butt 1995).
- Many articles refer to them as *vector verbs* or *compound verbs*.

V-V Complex Predicates (CP)s

(1) a. nadya=ne   xɑt   **lɪk**ʰ **li-ya**
Nadya.F=Erg letter.M.Nom write take-Perf.M.Sg
'Nadya wrote a letter (completely).'   (Urdu)

   b. nadya=ne   mɑkan   **bɑna di-ya**
Nadya.F=Erg house.M.Nom make give-Perf.M.Sg
'Nadya built a house (completely, for somebody else).'   (Urdu)

   c. ram   **ga ʋʈ**ʰ**-a**
Ram.M.Sg.Nom sing rise-Perf.M.Sg
'Ram sang out spontaneously (burst into song).'
(Hindi, Mohanan 1994a:9)

   d. nadya   **hɑs pɑɾ-i**
Nadya.F.Sg.Nom laugh fall-Perf.F.Sg
'Nadya burst out laughing.'   (Urdu)

V-V CPs

- The light verb is called light because it does not have the full main verb meaning.
- The light verb fits into a distinct slot in the verbal complex — the following pertains to Urdu.

  (2) Main Verb (Light Verb) (Passive) (Progressive) (Be Auxiliary)

V-V CPs

The light verb can determine the case marking of the subject.

(3) ʊs=**ne/*vo** xɑt lɪkʰ-a
Pron.Obl=Erg/Pron.Nom letter.M.Nom write-Perf.M.Sg
'He wrote a letter.' (Urdu)

(4) a. **nadya=ne** xɑt lɪkʰ di-ya
Nadya.F.Sg=Erg letter.M.Sg.Nom write give-Perf.M.Sg
'Nadya wrote the letter (completely, for somebody else).' (Urdu)

    b. **nadya** xɑt lɪkʰ paṛ-i
Nadya.F.Sg.Nom letter.M.Sg.Nom write fall-Perf.F.Sg
'Nadya fell to writing the/a letter.' (Urdu)

Note: this property is one of the complications faced when trying to
extract/compile subcategorization frames for Urdu.

Set of Light Verbs

- Crosslinguistically, light verbs tend to come from highly frequent verbs in the lexicon like: 'come', 'go', 'rise', 'fall', 'take', 'give', 'hit'.
- For Urdu the approximate set is:

(5)

Common Light Verbs	
Based on (di)transitives (Ergative Subject)	Based on Intransitives (Nominative Subject)
le 'take'	a 'come'
de 'give'	ja 'go'
ḍal 'put'	paṛ 'fall'
mar 'hit'	mar 'die'
nikal 'pry out'	nikal 'emerge'
	cʊk 'finish'
	baiṭʰ 'sit'
	ʊṭʰ 'rise

Semantics of Light Verbs

- The semantics of light verbs are very difficult to characterize.
- Mostly, they give a sense of *completeness* of the action.
- But they also express more vague semantic dimensions such as suddenness, forcefulness, responsibility, volitionality, benefaction, etc.
- It would be good to determine the exact constraints on V-V combinations and what the resulting meaning is.
- Following: two examples of meaning components that seem to be robust.

Light Verbs — Completion

If one says, *Nadya ate cake, but she didn't eat all of it.*, then one can only use the a. version, not the b. one.

(6) a. nadya=ne   kek   kʰa-ya
     Nadya.F.Sg=Erg cake.M.Nom eat-Perf.M.Sg
     'Nadya ate cake.'

    b. nadya=ne   kek   kʰa li-ya
     Nadya.F.Sg=Erg cake.M.Nom eat take-Perf.M.Sg
     'Nadya ate (the) cake (completely).'

The b. version entails that the cake was gone (Singh 1994).

Light Verbs — Responsibility

When one uses *de* 'give' as a light verb, one seems to want to convey that the action was the responsiblity of the agent.

(7) a. nadya=ne   baʈua   kʰo li-ya
       Nadya.F.Sg=Erg wallet.M.Nom lose take-Perf.M.Sg
       'Nadya lost her wallet (completely).'

   b. nadya=ne   baʈua   kʰo di-ya
       Nadya.F.Sg=Erg wallet.M.Nom lose give-Perf.M.Sg
       'Nadya lost her wallet (completely and it was her own fault).'

VV CPs

- Aspectual V-V CPs appear very frequently in Urdu/Hindi.
- It is known that they occur in other Indo-Aryan languages, but the frequency differs (see papers by Hook and Pardeshi).
- These constructions are very problematic for the construction of lexical resources.
  - Some combinations occur very often and seem to be very fixed.
  - But there are many possible combinations with many possible subtle meaning distinctions.
  - It is not possible to list all these exhaustively — it would be good to identify combinatory rules and constraints.
  - However, the precise meaning is very context dependent.
  - It also seems to be very speaker-dependent.
  - $\longrightarrow$ Corpus work would be good!

Background Literature

The information in these slides was taken from the following literature

- Butt, Miriam. 1995. *Complex Predicates in Urdu*. CSLI Publications. (see the link under "Dissertations" in `jsal-journal.org`)

- Butt, Miriam and Wilhelm Geuder. 2001. On the (Semi)Lexical Status of Light Verbs. In N. Corver and H. van Riemsdijk. *Semi-lexical Categories: On the content of function words and the function of content words.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.