1. What are Light Verbs?

Light verbs (LVs, also known as “coverbs” and “restructuring predicates”) modulate the meaning of a main verb and differ from other complex predicates in quantity, semantic range, and structural properties.

Both nominal (N-LV) and verbal (V-LV) LV sequences are described in the literature for e.g. Hindi/Urdu (Mohanan 1994, Butt 2003, Ramchand and Butt 2002, Butt and Geuder 2001), Turkic (Bowern 2004), Japanese (Iwasaki 2002), Persian, Korean (Karimi-Doostan 1997), Udi (Harris 2008), and English (Jespersen 1954).

Uyghur [ISO 639-3: uig] is a Turkic, OV language spoken by ca. 10 million primarily in Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang). Uyghur has both nominal and verbal LV types. (Examples are modern Standard Uyghur based on elicitation unless otherwise indicated.)

(1) a. Ular tamaq-ni täyär#qil-d-i N#LV
    food-acc preparation#do-PST-3s
    ‘They prepared the food’

b. Män tünügün shundaq här # kät-t-im V-CNV#LV
    yesterday that.much be.tired-PST-1s
    ‘I was so (totally) exhausted yesterday.’

c. Män tünügün kät-t-im kät-as full verb
    yesterday depart-PST-1s
    ‘I left yesterday.’

Data basis: 2010 test corpus (Dwyer 2010) and a partially-completed diachronic annotated Uyghur corpus, used together with native speaker judgments. All results should be considered preliminary.

The goals of this paper1 are:
• To establish LVs as a verb class distinct from lexical verbs and auxiliaries
• To provide evidence that LVs can be diachronically unstable (contra Butt 2003, 2010).
• To provide evidence that Uyghur LVs otherwise pattern the same as other LVs cross-linguistically.

1 This work is part of a three-year project, “Uyghur Light Verbs” (Arienne M. Dwyer, P.I.), sponsored by NSF-Linguistics BCS1053152. These hypotheses were first tested on a pilot corpus and presented in Dwyer 2010.
2. A flock of pigeons are flying around.' (uig20040324_YK.28)

b. But they are expensive.' (uig1905_kg207-i.21)

3.1.2. Lack of Intervening Material

In LV constructions, intervening material is not allowed between the V₁ and V₂.

(3) a. U mäymäː l-lar-gha bir kün ash qoy-up # bär-är-lär
   PN DEM guest-PL DAT one day food put-CNV # AOR-3p
   'These guests are entertained all day long'
   (uig18920728_tf8.106)

b.* U mäymäː l-lar-gha bir kün ash qoy-up hazir bär-är-lär
   PN DEM guest-PL DAT one day food put-CNV now LVV -AOR-3p
   Intended: These guests are now entertained all day long'

3.1.3. Selectional Properties and Case Assignment

LVs do not select NP complements.

(4) a. Müshük yüz-üm-ni tatili-d-i
   cat face-POSS-ACC scratch-PST.DIR-3s
   'The cat scratched my face.'

b. Män kitab-ni üstäl-gä qoy-d-um
   PN book-ACC table-DAT put-PST.DIR-1s
   'I put the book on the table.'

In the light verb use in (4c), only one NP-complement is selected:

c. Yesh-i chong käptär tumshuq-i bilān päy-lir-i-ni tatila-p #qoy-d-i
   age-POS3 big pigeon beak-POS3 with feather-PL-ACC scratch-CNVCNV #LVV-PST.DIR-3s
   'The old pigeon scratched its feathers with its beak.' (uig20040324_YK.60)

In all of our data, the main verb determines selectional properties, while the LV provides aspectual or actional information regarding the event.

3.1.4. Negation

Morphological negation of light verbs is possible: V₁(lpv#V₂-mA- as in (5a), cf. main verb negation: V₁-mAy#V₂ as in (5b):

(5) a. Äsili teri-p # baq-ma-ghan ye: | xam ye:
   before grow-CNVCNV # LVV-NEG-PRC.PST land | raw land
   'The land that is not (yet) cultivated is called raw land.'
   (uig19560909_tf2.55)

b. Sen bu yil bughday teri-may # baq!
   PN2s this year wheat grow-CNVCNV-NEG #LVV.IMP
   'This year, how about you try not growing wheat (for a change)!'
   (native speaker elicitation)

Appears to contradict that light verbs should not be able to be negated (Butt 2003), but when light verbs take negative morphology, the scope of negation extends to the whole predicate. Thus, syntactically, Uyghur light verb predicates cannot be negated.

3.2 Prosodic Evaluation: Pauses

Pauses (marked as a pipe | in the examples) are permitted in sequential constructions in Uyghur, but are prohibited between the V₁ and V₂ in an LV construction.

(6) a. Shundaq bixätär qäpiz-im tur-up  | roh izdä-p nä-gä bar-i-män?
   in.this.way safe cage-Poss1 stay-CNVCNV | soul find-CNVCNV where-DAT go-PRT-1s
   'I am so safe in my cage, where would I go to find out about the soul?'
   (uig20040324_YK.106)

b. Män ganggira-p # qal-d-im
   PN1s freeze-CNVCNV # LVV-PST.DIR-1s
   'I (unexpectedly) froze.' (uig20040324_YK.82)

Our native-speaker investigator reports that (6b) would be ungrammatical with a pause between ganggira and qaldim.

• The sequential construction in (6a) freely allows for a pause to follow the main V.
• The grammatical sentence in (6b) does not allow a pause in this position
3.3 Semantic Evaluation: Bleaching

The approximately 25 full lexical verbs in Uyghur are semantically bleached when used as LVs. Mostly but not exclusively cross-linguistically typical semantics; some unusual features:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb stem</th>
<th>Lexical Verb meaning</th>
<th>examples of LV meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>baq-</td>
<td>watch, see</td>
<td>try, attempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tur-</td>
<td>stand</td>
<td>durative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bär-</td>
<td>give</td>
<td>to the benefit of (benefactive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bol-</td>
<td>become</td>
<td>completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chiq-</td>
<td>emerge, ascend</td>
<td>resulting in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qoj-</td>
<td>put</td>
<td>completely finished; do quickly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Uyghur verbs share a number of typological properties with light verbs identified in other languages: monocausality, selectional properties, prosody, negation, and cross-linguistically typical semantic bleaching.

4. Typological irregularities

4.1 Diachronic Stability

Cross-linguistically, light verbs tendentially maintain their morphology, syntax, and semantics over time (Butt 2003, 2010). Sanskrit and Hindi/Urdu provide clear examples of this continuity; do not undergo diachronic change or grammaticalization from V₁-(I)p#al- in (8a) to the modern fused form V₁-(I)wal- as in (8b):


‘They do not make liquor themselves, they buy it (for their own benefit) from the Chinese’ (uig18911011_qm17.20)

Modern Uyghur: b. U kitab-im-ni el-ihel-d-i (<al-(I)p al- 'take (for own benefit)'

‘He took my book (for his own benefit)’

Uyghur LV forms are (contra Butt 2010) not diachronically stable, since they do undergo grammaticalization and semantic change. Several Uyghur complex LV predicates have been similarly grammaticalized as affixes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>source form</th>
<th>Grammaticized form</th>
<th>Example al- 'take'</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-(I)p yat- 'lie'</td>
<td>-(I)wat</td>
<td>el-iwat-i-män</td>
<td>I am taking'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-(I)p al- 'take'</td>
<td>-(I)wal</td>
<td>el-iwal-i-män</td>
<td>'I take for my benefit'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-(I)p bär- 'give'</td>
<td>-(I)wär</td>
<td>el-iwär-i-män</td>
<td>'I continue to take'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-(I)p ät- 'do'</td>
<td>-(I)wät</td>
<td>el-iwät-i-män</td>
<td>'I finish taking'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Perfectivity

The only other apparent characteristic of Uyghur LVs that does not fit in with the LV literature is the issue of perfectivity. LVs are cross-linguistically associated with perfectivity (Ramchand and Butt 2002, Karimi Doostan 1997, Bowern 2004). The Urdu examples in (9a-b) are both perfective LV constructions (Butt 2010).

Urdu: (9) a. nadya=ne xat=ko lk mar-a Perfective Nadya|L,FG=ERG| letter,M,SG=ACC write hit-PERF,M,SG ‘Nadya dashed off the letter (forcefully).’

Modern Urdu: b. nadya=ne xat lk di-ta Perfective Nadya|L,FG=ERG| letter,M,SG,ACC write give-PERF,M,SG ‘Nadya wrote the letter (for somebody else).’ (Butt 2003: 9)
Indeed, many of the verbal LV examples in our Uyghur corpus are perfective, as in (10):

(10) U bu kitab-ni kör-up#bol-ghan i-d-i
    PN 3s this book-Acc see-CNVPRT-PRC PST-3s
    ‘S/he has already read this book.’

However, Uyghur also allows LVs in imperfective clauses as well, both in early modern Uyghur as in (11a), and modern Uyghur as in (11b).

(11) a. Bu toy-ni shu yosun-da qil-ip # bär-lär
    this wedding-Acc manner-loc do-CNV#LVV AOR-3s
    ‘The wedding is held in this way’ (uig18920728_tf8.110)

    b. Seni äski adäm-lär tut-up yä-p # ket-ı-du
    PN 2s.Acc bad person-PL grab-CNVPRT#LVV-PRC-3s
    ‘A bad person may grab and eat you’ (uig20040324_YK.135)

Imperfective LV clauses have not commonly been attested crosslinguistically.

4. Implications for the Typology of LVs

We have established that LVs in Uyghur pattern similarly to LVs cross-linguistically in the following ways:

• Monoclausality – single predicate core
• No intervening material between V₁ and LV
• No pauses between V₁ and LV
• Scope of negation cannot be restricted to LVs (but they may bear morphological negation)
• LVs may not select NP-Complements
• LVs may not assign case
• LVs are semantically bleached compared to their main verb forms

Apparent cross-linguistic anomalies:

• Grammaticization of LVs, hence diachronically unstable
• Presence of imperfective LVs.

References


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