The development of complex predication in Turkic: Uvghur light verbs

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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
PN3P food-Acc **preparation#do**-PST.DIR-3S

'They prepared the food'

Män tünügün shundaq här-ip # kät-t-im V-CNV#LV pn1s yesterday that.much be.tired-cnv # Lvv-pst.dir-1s 'I was so (totally) exhausted yesterday.'

c. Män tünügün **kät**-t-im *kät*- as full verb PN1s yesterday depart-PST.DIR-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 paper 1 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 crosslinguistically.

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2. Properties of Light Verbs

2.1 Working definition

Verbal LVs are a specific kind of monoclausal predicate which, in a V_1 - V_2 construction, the V_2 "structure[s] or modulate[s] the event described by the main verb in a manner that is quite distinct from auxiliaries, modals or other main verbs (Butt 2003; 3)."

In Uyghur, the construction most commonly takes the form V_1 -(I)p# V_2 , where V_1 is the main lexical verb, -(I)p the converb, and V_2 the light verb, as exemplified in (1b) above. (# indicates a monoclausal complex predicate)

2.2 Syntactic Properties

- LV predicates should be monoclausal, functioning as a single unit; no material should intervene between the converb and the V₂
- V₁ + V₂ expresses a single predicate core, not a conjoined sequence of simultaneous or sequential events
- LVs (V₂) are not directly negatable
- LVs (V2) are unable to assign case.
- LVs maintain diachronic stability (i.e. do not change form or meaning much over time)

2.3 Prosodic Properties

Pauses are not permitted between V₁ and V₂ in LV constructions.

2.4 Semantic Properties

- LVs are semantically bleached compared to their main verb counterparts.
- · LVs are associated with perfectivity cross-linguistically.

3. Uyghur Light Verbs

How do Uyghur *verbal* light verbs as in (1b) fare when evaluated by the above criteria?

3.1 Syntactic Evaluation

3.1.1. Monoclausality; Single complex predicate core

Uyghur V-LV constructions combine a main with a light verb to express a single predicate core, not a multi-predicated, sequential event.

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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. Bir top käptär-lär asman-da **uch-up#yür**-ätt-i one flock pigeon-pl. sky-loc **fly-**cnv# Lvv-pst.hab-3s 'A flock of pigeons are flying around.' (uig20040324_YK.28)
 - b. Leken qimet bol-up # qal-ur-lar but expensive be-cnv # Lvv-Aor.3p 'But they are expensive.' (uig1905_kg207-i.21)

3.1.2. Lack of Intevening Material

In LV constructions, intervening material is not allowed between the V_1 and V_2 .

- (3) a. U mäyma:1-lar-gha bir kün ash **qoy-up #bär**-är-lär
 PN.DEM guest-PL-DAT one day food **put-cnv # Lvv**-AOR-3p

 'These guests are entertained all day long' (uig18920728 tf8.106)
 - b.* U mäyma: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-poss1-acc **scratch**-pst.dir-3s 'The cat scratched my face.'
 - b. Män kitab-ni üstäl-gä qoy-d-um
 pn1s 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 bilän päy-lir-i-ni **tatila-p #qoy**-d-i age-poss3 big pigeon beak-poss3 with feather-pt-poss3-acc **scratch-cnv** #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.

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3.1.4. Negation

Morphological negation of light verbs is possible: V_1 -(I) $p#V_2$ -mA- as in (5a), cf. main verb negation: V_1 - $mAv#V_2$ as in (5b):

- (5) a. Äsili **teri-p** # **baq-**ma-ghan ye: | xam ye: before grow-cnv # Lvv-neo-prtc.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-**CNV.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 V_1 and V_2 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-cnv | soul find-cnv where-dat go-prs-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
 pnls freeze-cnv # Lvv-pst.dir-ls
 'I (unexpectedly) froze.' (uig20040324_YK.82)

Our native-speaker investigator reports that (6b) would be ungrammatical with a pause between gangirap 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 1. Uyghur full V vs. LV semantics

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

Uyghur verbs share a number of typological properties with light verbs identified in other languages: monoclausality, 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; the verb 'go' ga: appears in the Sanskrit example in (7a), and also in the Modern Urdu example in (7b):

Sanskrit:

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(7) a. tato makṣikoḍḍīya then fly.fly.ger go-pertc.pst (Pancatsntra 122, from Tikkanen 1987:176)

Modern Urdu:
b. kabutre or ga-ye pigeon.m.pl.nom fly go-perf.m.pl.
'The pigeons flew away.' (Butt 2010)
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Uyghur provides counterevidence to the claim: morphological erosion and grammaticalization from V_1 -(I)p#al- in (8a) to the modern fused form V_1 -(I)wal- as in (8b):

Premodern Uyghur:
(8) a. Araq-ni öz-ler-i qil-ma-y-du | Xita:y-din set**-ib #al**-a-du liquor-acc self-pl-poss3 do-neg-prs-3s | China-abl buy-cnv#lvv-prs-3s
'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-**iwal**-d-i (< **al-(I)p al-** 'take (for own benefit)') PN3s book-POSS1-ACC buy-CNV.LVV-PST.DIR-3S '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 2. Grammaticized Uyghur LVs

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

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 lik mar-a Perfective Nadya.F.SG=ERG letter.M.SG=ACC write hit-PERF.M.SG 'Nadya dashed off the letter (forcefully).'

b. nadya=ne xat lık di-ta Perfective Nadya.F.SG=ERG letter.M.SG.NOM 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-üp#bol-ghan** i-d-i

PN3s this book-acc **see-**CNV#LVV-PRTC.PST X-PST.DIR-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-är-**lär this wedding-ACC manner-LOC **do-CNV#LVV-AOR-**3P 'The wedding is held in this way' (uig18920728_tf8.110)
 - b. Seni äski adäm-lär tut-up **yä-p # ket-i**-du PN2s.ACC bad person-PL grab-CNV eat-CNV# LVV-PRS-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.

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