

Argument Composition in Certain Types of Complex Predicates

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Abstract

Complex Predicates (CPs hereafter) are multi-headed and are composed of more than one grammatical element (Alsina *et al* 1997). This paper concentrates on the composition of argument structure of Adjective/ Adverb plus Light Verb (LVs hereafter) CPs in Telugu which are traditionally called Conjunct Verbs. There has been very little work done on these two types of CPs, so this paper will address this interesting phenomenon syntactically as well as semantically in a better way. In general, as for nominal CPs, the argument structure depends on the preverbal noun in Telugu. Coming to adjectives and adverbs, can these preverbs decide the number of arguments of the CP they are part of or is it the LV which determines the number of arguments or do they have an equal share is the main concern of this study.

1. Introduction

One of the main components of a CP is an LV that carries inflections indicating tense, agreement, aspect and so on. LVs play a vital role in deciding the meaning of the whole predicate. Typically, LVs often indicate perfectivity (Hook 1991, 1993, Singh 1994) or inception/ completion (Butt 1995) and other semantic information such as forcefulness, suddenness, benefaction and volitionality (Hook 1974). They can also indicate displacement, losing, transformation, separation and so on. The main concern of this paper is to find out what LVs can attach to what adjectives and adverbs and how the argument composition and transitivity of the entire predicate is determined.

2. Complex Predicates in Telugu

I. Adjective + Light Verb forming CPs

Telugu, the most wide-spread Dravidian language spoken in the Southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana as official language, allows both attributive and predicative adjectives. In the combination of adjective and LV construction, the agreement is always realised on the LV and not on the adjective which is the same case with other types of CPs too. Just like V+N and N+V, the order of this type too is not reversible. The LVs that go with adjectives are very limited in number and the very constructions of this type are very few. Let us look at the list of LVs that can go with adjectives.

Light verb	Gloss
<i>paḍu</i>	to fall
<i>ekku</i>	to climb
<i>avvu</i>	to become

The LVs afore-mentioned are commonly used in the CPs of this type. Not all the verbs mentioned above can go with all adjectives and there is always a selectional restriction that allows or does not allow some combinations. Let us look at some examples in the following.

1. abbāyi tellabaḍḍaḍu.
Boy.nom white.fall.pres.3sm
The boy has become fairer.
2. ammāyi nallabaḍindi.
girl.nom black.fall.pres.3sn
The girl has become dark.

From the afore-given examples, we can make a generalisation that all adjectives of colour take the LV *paḍu* ‘to fall’ and not any other LV.

3. *ammāyi nallapayyindi
Girl.nom black.become.pres.3sn
The girl has become dark (Intended meaning)

As we can see in the example (3), the LV *avvu* ‘to become’ going with the adjective *nalla* renders the whole sentence unacceptable. With the evidence given, we can now state that it is the LV *paḍu* ‘to fall’ which goes with adjectives of color to constitute a CP. It is an intransitive LV and the whole CP is also an intransitive construction taking only one argument.

Now let us look at the LV *ekku* ‘to climb’ which is also frequently heard with adjectives.

4. ataniki mattekkindi.
He.dat intoxication.climb.pres.3sn
He has got intoxicated.
5. āmeki piccekkindi.
She.dat madness.climb.pres.3sn
She became mad.

The other words that this LV *ekku* ‘to climb’ goes with to constitute a CP and function as an adjective are:

List-I	Gloss	List-II	Gloss
<i>kovvu + ekku</i>	‘to be arrogant’	<i>baruvu + ekku</i>	‘to become heavy’
<i>pogaru + ekku</i>	‘to become head strong’	<i>eṇḍa + ekku</i>	‘to become sunny’
<i>timmiri + ekku</i>	‘to become numb’	<i>vēḍi + ekku</i>	‘to become hot’
<i>picci + ekku</i>	‘to become mad’	<i>pōṭu + ekku</i>	‘to become full’

As shown above, on the List-I and II, the words that are going with *ekku* ‘to climb’ indicate one meaning in common which is ‘intensification’. In other words, *ekku* ‘to climb’ always intensifies the state or condition expressed by the preverbal element. The adjectival forms on the List-I speak about negative quality and on the List-II *ekku* refers to the change of state. Therefore, *ekku* is used to refer to two kinds of meaning.

We can also split this combination and place another constituent like adverb to intensify the state even more. Though the adjectival forms appear to be objects here as *ekku* ‘to climb’ is a transitive LV, the CP is intransitive. Thus, this LV is an evidence that the argument structure is not decided by the LV alone.

avvu ‘to become’ is also a frequently used LV in CPs to function as an adjective. *avvu* ‘to become’ goes with the preverbal element in some of the bare adjective form. In these constructions *avvu* indicates ‘state’. Let us look at some examples.

6. cakkanaina abbāyi andamaina ammāyi
good.become boy Beauty.become girl
A good boy. A beautiful girl.

The LVs *padu* and *ekku* are an addition to the preverbal noun to function as adjectives whereas *avvu* ‘to become’ is used with pure adjectives or nouns. Also, we can even analyse these adjectives as a combination of Noun + LV (*avvu*) to form an adjective. In most of the combination of this type the noun is a borrowed term from Sanskrit.

sundaramu + aina = sundaramaina	beautiful
ghanamu+ aina = ghanamaina	happy, beautiful
ramyamu + aina = ramyamaina	beautiful
andamu+ aina = andamaina	beautiful.

Simpson (1983), Jackendoff (1990), Levin and Hovav (1995), Hale and Keyser (1997) treat the resultative construction in English as a CP that is made up of a verb and an adjective. Let us look at some examples.

7. They painted the house white.

8. She washed the plates clean

However, Tara Mohanan (2007) does not treat this combination as CP as she finds the verbs, in the sentences, not belonging to any closed set. LVs always form a closed set. Tara Mohanan gives some examples from Hindi that are composed of an adjectival host and an LV which she calls CPs. The following examples are from Mohanan (2007).

9. karma saaf huaa
Room.nom clean become.past.3sn
The room became clean.

10. raa-ne karma saaf kiyaa.
Ram.nom room clean do.past.3sm
Rama cleaned the room.

Here ‘*hua*’ is a productive LV used in many expressions. This type is very productive in Hindi but Telugu has only a few expressions of this type which we have discussed already. There are also some expressions that have a borrowed adjective and a native LV to form A+V CPs in Telugu.

11. panivāḍu ivvāḷa nā gadi klīnu cēsāḍu.
Worker.nom today my room clean.do.pt.3sm
The worker has made my room clean today.

12. naa bomma photoḷo ḍārku ayyindi.
My image.nom in the photo dark.become.pt.3sn
My image has become dark in the photo.

The adjectives that are used with native LVs to form Adj.+ LV constructions are ‘bright’ ‘dark’ ‘clean’ and so on. The LVs that go with these borrowed adjectives, which are very limited, are:

Light verb	Gloss
<i>cēyu</i>	‘to do’
<i>avvu</i>	‘to become’

When the adjective is a borrowed term, the LV *cēyu* ‘to do’ can attach to the non native term and decide the argument structure of the whole CP. As *cēyu* ‘to do’ is a transitive one, the CP will also become a transitive predicate.

In the case of CPs that have native adjectives, the argument structure is decided by the adjective itself and the LVs which are transitive also become intransitive after attaching. The LV *ekku* ‘to climb’ is an example for that. Now to say that adjective alone can decide argument structure in CPs that have native adjectives, let us look at two examples with the same LV but two different adjectives.

13. atanu itanipai asuuyapaḍḍāḍu.
he.nom on him jealous fall.pt.3sm
He felt jealous of him.

14. atanu nallabaḍḍāḍu.
he.nom dark.fall.pt.3sm
He turned black.

The CP in (13) is a transitive predicate while it is intransitive in (14). The light verb *paḍu* ‘to fall’ used in both the sentences is intransitive but still the CP in (13) is transitive because of the adjective *asuuya* ‘jealous’. As it is the adjective because of which the transitivity is determined we can now say that it is adjective which decides the transitivity. Also, the adjective *asuuya* always has more than one argument and thus the composition of argument structure is decided by the adjective.

II. Adverb + Light verb CPs

Now in this section we will discuss adverb plus LV combinations.

Though the combination of Adverb + LV constructions are very few when compared to N + V predicates in Dravidian languages, these are very productive in some languages. Adverb + LV CPs are mostly idiomatic.

15. rāju guṭṭu bayatapetṭāḍu (bayāṭa (adverb) + petṭu (LV))
Raju.nom secret.acc outside.put.pt.3sm
Raju revealed the facts (to others).
16. rāju caduvulō venukabaḍḍāḍu (venuka (adverb) + paḍu (LV))
Raju.nom in studies behind fall.pt.3sm
Raju lagged behind in studies.

Sometimes it is very difficult to decide whether a given constituent is an adverb or a noun in Telugu and in Kannada too. Adverbs of place and time look just like nouns with case inflections and thus it poses a problem as to what criteria are to be followed to determine their word class status. To look at some examples,

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| <p>17. <i>venuka</i> ‘behind’
<i>venuka-ṭi</i> ‘of behind’
<i>venuka-nunḍi</i> ‘from behind’
<i>venuka-ku</i> ‘to behind’;</p> | <p>18. <i>lōpala</i> ‘inside’
<i>lōpa-ṭi/lōpa-li</i> ‘of inside’
<i>lōpa-li-nunḍi</i> ‘from inside’
<i>lōpa-likī</i> ‘to inside’</p> |
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Other adverbs with case inflections like the afore-mentioned are *bayāṭa* ‘outside’ *mumdu* ‘before/front’ and so on. All these constituents function as both adverbs and nouns as well in the predicate phrase (Krishnamurti and Gwynn 1985:270). In Telugu, the root is the base for nouns, adverbs and adjectives (Rajyarama, 1998). Let us look at some data that helps us know how a root gets modified to acquire different grammatical categories.

		Grammatical category	Gloss
19.	<i>telupu</i>	noun	‘whiteness’
	<i>tellani</i>	adjective	‘white’
	<i>tellaga</i>	adverb	‘whitish’
20.	<i>calla</i>	noun	‘coolness’
	<i>callani</i>	adjective	‘cool’
	<i>callagaa</i>	adverb	‘coolly’

As we can see in the data afore-given, the suffixation of *-gā* is one way of forming an adverb from a noun or adjective.

Though the combination of adverb and LV CPs is limited, they are used frequently in Telugu. The LVs used with adverbs are more than those that go with adjectives. Now let us list out the LVs that are found in this type and their transitivity value in the combination of an adverb.

LVs	Gloss	Transitivity
<i>paḍu/baḍu</i>	‘to fall’	transitive

<i>peṭṭu</i>	‘to keep’	transitive
<i>avvu</i>	‘to become’	transitive/intransitive
<i>tirugu</i>	‘to turn’	transitive

Now let us look at some examples.

21. āyana mupphai ēḷḷu **pai-baḍḍāru**
He.hon.nom thirty years above.fall.pres.3sm.hon
He is above 30.

22. annaiah nānāṭikī caduvulo **venuka-baḍḍutunnāḍu**.
elder brother.nom day-by-day in studies behind.fall.pres.prog.3sm
My elder brother is lagging behind in studies day-by-day.

The constituents in this adverb + LV formations lose their individual meanings and together acquire an idiomatic meaning. As each constituent has its role to play syntactically and semantically to form one predicate giving an idiomatic meaning and forming one unit semantically in the CPs of this type, we can now conclude that both the adverb and the LV together decide the argument structure and transitive value of adverb and LV CPs in Telugu.

3. Conclusion

CP constructions are found across language families in South Asia and there are also many variations among the language families and also individual languages. It is the nominal preverb which decides the argument structure of nominal CPs. And for Adjective plus LV too, it is the adjective which decides argument structure and not the LV. However, in Adverb plus LV CPs the argument structure is determined by both the elements as it is idiomatic in meaning. Hindi allows many adjective and LV CPs while they are very few in Telugu though both of them are SOV languages and share many things in common. The present study helps us to know how CPs of Telugu behave which in turn contributes to the universal properties of CP constructions.

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