

Auxiliaries as light verbs: evidence from four south Asian languages

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The empirical fact that both Aux-V and V-Aux orders are available in languages in general suggests a possible symmetry in word order. However, it has been noticed in typological studies that although adverbs can intervene between the Aux and the V in Aux-V languages, they cannot in V-Aux languages (shown for Bangla in (1)). Our study is an important footnote to this latter demonstration of antisymmetry as we believe that it has major consequences for the theory.

In investigating the distribution and nature of auxiliaries in four South Asian languages, both Indo-Aryan and Dravidian, we come to the conclusion that auxiliaries in these languages are really heavily grammaticalized light verbs. That is, V-Aux is really V-v in SA languages. However, in the spirit of antisymmetry and the Linear Correspondence Axiom, this order is derived from an underlying v-V order, i.e., the light verb forms an outer shell of the verbal extended projection.

Previous work on light verbs in SA languages (Hook (1991) and Butt (1997)) although agreed that they constitute a V-V complex predicate, differ as to the semantic content of the light verb. Our study differs crucially from all previous work on this topic firstly by treating auxiliaries also as light verbs (though heavily grammaticalized) and by comparing Dravidian with the general IA pattern. In particular, we counter Butt's conclusion that light verbs do not participate in the grammaticalization cline of Hopper & Traugott (1993) (see (2)) by considering the progressive and the perfective in Malayalam as in (3). The Perfective and Progressive affixes, shown in bold, in Malayalam are derived from verb roots themselves but are fully grammaticalized. The Bangla and Oriya equivalents (in (4) and (5)) where the affixes in bold, derived from the copular, we claim, are actually heavily grammaticalized light verbs. The implication here is that originally this verbal complex denoted a sequence of states of events like *{writing}* and *{being}*. This is borne out by crucial evidence more or less unnoticed in the literature that the verb stems in both language types are actually made up of the root and a particle, which, unlike the light verb, is not derived from any verbal root. We present evidence that this particle is actually a reflex of a union of events. Synchronically, this particle is *-i*, *-e* and *-i* or *-u* in Malayalam, Bangla and Oriya respectively. Since these particles are affixal (and are therefore functional heads) and denote completion of an event, we take these to contribute to the aspectual information of the verbal complex (see examples from Bangla and Oriya in (5)). The particle thus constitutes an aspectual outer shell of the V. Lv in (6) denotes the type of heavily grammaticalized light verbs that we propose.

The structure in (6) also includes the operator \exists , instantiated by the copular auxiliary in Malayalam (see (3)) and Hindi, unexpressed in Bangla and Oriya (as in Arabic, Hebrew and Russian). The complex structure is now really vP-AspP which reflects the fact that these complexes are a result of a union of two separate events. However, the clearest evidence in favor of a break in the extended verbal projection is shown in (8) and (9) which shows a whole range of possible adjunctions at the AspP site (and only at this site). Thus Malayalam shows clefting and Bangla/ Oriya show attachment of topic marker, modals etc. at this AspP site. The structure in addition predicts the typological finding that since it is no longer a vP-VP sequence adverbial adjunction is not possible in V-Aux languages (see (1)).

Finally, we resolve the problem posed by the data in (10) which show, contrary to the typological generalizations, that there are cases of apparent adverb incorporation even in V-Aux languages. However, the translation clearly indicates topicalization. With the structure in (6) it is possible to provide an easy explanation of such a topicalization of the AspP to an outer spec of vP (or TP in a fully extended structure) across the domain of the light verb. This analysis is

strengthened by the fact that category movement is a pervasive phenomenon in mixed languages as shown by the derivation of the German verbal cluster in (11).

DATA

- (1) *likh-*aste*-ch-i (Bangla)
 write-slowly-aux-agr
 Intended meaning: 'I am writing slowly'
- (2) full V > light V > Aux > Clitic > Affix
- (3) a. ezhuti-**yitt**-untu b. ezhuti-**kkont**-irunnu
 write-perf-copula write-prog-copula
 'has writtten' 'kept on writing'
- (4) a. likhe-**ch**-i b. likh-**ch**-i (Bangla)
 (5) a. lekhi-**aach**-i b. likhu-**aach**-i (Oriya)
 write-perf-agr write-prog-agr
 '(I) have written' '(I) am writing'
- (6) [_{VP} ∃ [_V L_V [_{AspP} [_{Asp} particle] V]]]
- (7)a. usne likkha (hai) [Hindi] b.* o likhe [Bangla]
 s/he.erg write.asp COP s/he write.asp
 'S/he has written' Intended: 'S/he has written'
- (8)a. ezhuti-yitt-aanu ull-atu (*ezhuit-yaanu ittullatu) [Malayalam]
 write-perf-is copula-nom
 'it is having written that...' (closest translation)
- (9)a. poRe-**to**-chi (*poR-**to**-e-chi, *poRe-**ch**-**to**-i) [Bangla]
 read.asp-top-Lv
 'as for reading, (I) have done it'
- b. kari-**pari**-thi-li (*kar-**pari**-thi-li, *kari-th-**pari**) [Oriya]
 walk.asp-can.asp-Lv-agr
 '(I) could do'
- (10) nie-**Ekhon**-phelo [Bangla]
 take.asp-now-drop.2
 'as for taking, do it now'
- (11)a. dass er dieses Buch lesen können muss
 that he this book read can must
 'that he must be able to read this book'
- b. [_{AuxP} [_{AuxP} [_{VP} dieses Buch lesen t_{obj}] können t_{VP}] muss t_{AuxP}]