Compound Verbs

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1. Introduction

One prominent feature of modern Indo-Aryan languages (IA) is the use of compound verbs (CVs), a particular sort of verb-verb collocation where one of the verbal elements behaves as a "light verb", that is with much of its normal semantic content bleached, which modifies the other ("main") verb. Common "light" (or vector) verbs in IA include GIVE, TAKE, GO, COME, FALL, RISE.[1]

Despite the prominence of this feature, much remains to be done in terms of descriptive and theoretical analysis of the properties of CVs in the various modern IA languages— including differences in morphosyntactic constraints on CVs, semantic constraints on possible V1-V2 combinations, and resulting semantics of V1-V2 combinations. The most complete descriptions by far concern Hindi, with relatively few in-depth analyses of CVs in other IA languages (for Hindi see Hook's (1973) book-length study and Nespital's (1997) extensive dictionary; as well as dissertations by Butt 1994 and Poornima 2012).

Further, the historical development of IA CVs is not entirely clear, especially with respect to the origin of CVs within IA; it would desirable to be able to establish a rough terminus ad quem (and terminus a quo) for this origin, as well as working out more of the details of the relationship of IA CVs to CVs in geographic proximate languages, including, in particular, Dravidian.

2. Basic Morphosyntax

In IA, CVs are prototypically formed from two verbal elements, where one verb is semantically contentful (often referred to in the Indological tradition as the pole or polar verb) and the other verb

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1   Verbs written in ALLCAPS indicates the English gloss of the main verb sense of a light verb. As discussed herein, the light verb senses are sometimes related more transparently to their main verb meanings, e.g. Hindi GIVE, often signalling other-benefaction; but sometimes are related rather opaquely, as in Hindi SIT, signalling regret.

(traditionally referred to as the vector or vector verb) acts as a modifier, contributing aspectual/Aktionsart, attitudinal, and/or other features such as benefactivity and volitionality. In almost all cases both verbal elements also occur in the language in verbal simplexes. The polar verb appears in a fixed grammatical form (often referred to as an absolutive form) which does not show differentiation for number, person, tense etc. All agreement and tense/aspect morphology is borne by the vector verb. Usually the pole immediately precedes the vector.[2]

In examples (1) and (2) is given a contrast between a simplex and a CV constructions in Hindi. Both examples use the same main verb, *ā* "come"; in (2) *ā* appears in absolutive form, followed by *jā* "go" appearing as a vector and contributing a sense of perfectivity (see Hook 1974, Singh 1998).

(1) vah   kal   āegā

     he/she.NOM   tomorrow   come.FUT.3MSC.SG

     "He will come tomorrow."   [Hindi]

(2) vah   kal   ā-Ø   gayā

     he/she yesterday   come-ABS   go.PST.MSC.SG

     "He came yesterday."   [Hindi]

Related to IA CVs are what are sometimes referred to as "conjunct verbs" (Kachru 1982, Masica 1993), which also involve what might be thought of as "light verbs" (Butt 2010) combining with more semantically-contentful elements, in this case nouns and adjectives. The most frequent light verbs which appear in this function are DO (e.g. Hindi *śurū karnā* "begin (trans.)" (lit. "start make")) and BE/BECOME (e.g. Hindi *śurū honā* "begin (intrans.)" (lit. "start be")), where these elements behave as semantically-empty verbalisers for making transitive and intransitive verbs, respectively, from nouns and adjectives.[3] However, other light verbs appearing in N/ADJ+V combinations include GIVE, TAKE, HIT/KILL, which also appear in V+V collocations, e.g. *lāt mārnā* "kick" (lit. "kick (n.) hit/kill (v.)", *mol lenā* "purchase" (lit. "price (n.) take (v.)").

3. Diachronic Evolution

Historically, IA CV constructions derive from collocations involving 'converbs', with which they continue to co-exist. The fixed form of the absolutive pole derives from that of the converb (also referred to as a 'conjunctive participle'). However, converbs, unlike the pole of CVs, denote a state or

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2 Some IA languages permit "reversal" in which the vector appears in absolutive form and the pole appears in a finite form, see Hook (1974), Poornima & Koenig (2008, 2009), Poornima (2012).
3 This is a particularly common strategy for borrowed elements, and many conjunct verbs involve Persian/Arabic elements. Masica (1991: 368) suggests that the conjunct verb structure itself may reflect Persian influence.

event independent of that expressed by any other verbal element of the clause; contrast (3), where *ā* appears as a converb, with (2), where it appears as an absolutive.

(3)　　vah　　　　kal　　　　ā-ke　　　　gayā

　　　　he/she.NOM　yesterday　come-CONV　go.PST.MSC.SG

　　　　"Yesterday, he came and went."　　　[Hindi]

In many IA languages the converb has undergone secondary morphological differentiation from the absolutive by the (somewhat optional) use of various extensions, including the *ke* shown in the Hindi example in (3). However, CV and converb constructions remain potentially ambiguous in some instances (see Hook 1973: 54; Slade 2013: 534).

The modern IA CV has traditionally been considered an innovation of the modern period, as clear examples of CVs do not appear in IA languages until the early modern period (see Masica 1991: 325; Slade 2013)—with the exception of Sinhala, although various authors have pointed to apparent early instances of CVs in Apabhraṁśa (Singh 1980, Hook 1993, Bubenik 1998), Pāli (Hook 1993), and Sanskrit, including even Vedic, (Butt & Lahiri 2002, Butt 2003, 2010; cf. Tikkanen 1987).

Both historically and synchronically, IA languages show the use of a variety of verb-verb [V-V] collocations which involve complex predication in which one verb elements provides the main verbal semantics, and the other verb contributes Aktisionsart/aspectual information. These other V-V constructions involve the "main" verb appearing in a participial form (rather than as an absolutive/converb). Example (4) provides an instance of such a V-V from Vedic prose, while (5) and (6) are from modern Hindi and Nepali, respectively.

(4)　　adaṇḍyaṁ　　　　daṇḍena　　　ghnantaś　　　　　　caranti

　　　　not-to-be-beaten　stick.SG.INSTR　hit.PRES.PTCP.MSC.PL.NOM　move.PRES.3PL

　　　　"they make a practice of beating with a rod what is undeserving of punishment" (Pañcaviṅśa

　　　　Brāhmaṇa 17.1.9; cf. Whitney §1075b)　　[Sanskrit (Vedic prose)]

(5)　　jagte　　　　　　　　raho

　　　　wake.PRES.PTPC.MSC.PL　　continue.IMPV

　　　　"stay alert!"　　[Hindi]

(6)　　ma　　bhandai　　　　　jānchu,　　taṁ　　　　lekhtai　　　　　　jā

　　　　I- NOM speak.PRES.PTCP　go.PRES.1SG　you.NOM　write.PRES.PTCP　　go.IMPV

　　　　"I'll keep speaking and you keep writing!"　　[Nepali]

Various explanation of the historical development of IA CV have been offered (see Hook 1991a, 1993; Butt 2003, 2010; Butt & Lahiri 2002; Poornima & Painter 2010; Slade 2013; Kimmig 2014), but a number of issues remain unclear, including the question of when the first CVs are found in IA. Resolving this question would involve interpreting evidence from Pāli and Apabhraṁśa (Pāli offers certain additional difficulties arising from the fact that numerous texts originate in Sri Lanka or South India and thus instances of apparent CVs in Pāli may reflecting calqueing from Sinhala or Dravidian which would then have no direct bearing on developments in later continental IA). As well, given that the modern IA languages show numerous differences in terms of both their inventories of vectors and the morphosyntax of CVs, much work remains to be done on the later history of the development of IA CVs, including the historical development of CVs in particular languages.

One language for which more research would be highly desirable is Sinhala, unusual amongst modern IA languages in its possession of a fairly complete continuous literary record over the past 1000 years (with some earlier texts as well). Sinhala shows a clear use of CVs well before other IA languages (ca. 800-1000 AD, cf. Paranavitana 1956: §501). Sinhala's use of CVs is interesting in a number of respects —it diverged from mainland IA over two millennia ago and has had relatively little contact with other IA languages since that time—thus it would be instructive to know whether Sinhala's use of CV verbs reflects an IA inheritance or is due to influence from Dravidian (or both).

4. Semantics

The semantic contribution of the vector in CVs varies from instance to instance and can be difficult to pin down in many cases. In general, many CVs combinations involve a sense of perfectivity/completion (Hook 1974, 1993), which goes beyond the grammatically-encoded imperfect:perfect distinction which is found in IA examples like:

(7) a. vah ātā thā

he/she.NOM come.PRES.PTCP.MSC.SG be.PST.MSC.SG

"he was coming / he used to come"   [Hindi]

b. vah āyā

he/she.NOM come.PST.PTCP.MSC.SG

"he came"   [Hindi]

That is, even where an action/event is encoded in terms of using a past/perfect participle, as in (7b), that does not require that the action be complete, whereas the use of a CV, as in (2), requires that the action/event must have reached true completion; see the Nepali example in (8) where a perfect form of

the verb is possible, but not a perfective CV.

(8)   mai-le   us-lāī   ciṭhī (diẽ   / *di-i   sakẽ),

        I-AGT   him-DAT   letter (give. PST.1SG / *give-ABS   complete- PST.1SG),

        tara   us-le   liena

        but   he-AGT   take.PST.3SG.NEG

    "I gave him the letter, but he didn't take it." (cp. Hook 1974: 163–8)   [Nepali]

In other cases the choice of a particular vector can involve features other than aspect. One such is the explicit signalling of the actor's volitionality with respect to the event/action (e.g. in Hindi *ḍālnā* "(lit.) pour" attributes conscious choice to the subject, while *parnā* "(lit.) fall" signals the subject's lack of control over the event; see Butt 1993).

Another example of a CV with a non-aspectual feature present in many IA languages is the use of a GIVE vector to indicate the action was done for another's benefit or else has some sort of outward-direction (e.g. Hindi *paṛh denā*, lit. "read give" is used to mean reading aloud), while the TAKE vector indicates that the action benefits or is directed towards the subject. Other vectors can indicate that the action/event occurred suddenly (e.g. Hindi *uṭhnā* "(lit.) rise") or violently (e.g. Hindi *ḍālnā* "(lit.) pour") or that the speaker regrets the action/event (e.g. Hindi *baiṭhnā* "(lit.) sit").

Fairly detailed formal semantic analyses of IA CVs are found in Singh 1998 and Butt & Ramchand 2001, and more recently, Poornima 2012. This last examines the semantics of several vectors in Hindi, and suggests that semantic notions like "regret" which linguists often assign to vectors are in fact pragmatic inferences which arise from more basic semantic properties. She argues that the aspectual properties of vectors involve boundedness, with other properties (like "regret") arise from affectedness. Further formalisation of the semantics involved in IA CVs, as well as consideration of the synchronic connection of the light verb senses to their full verb counterparts (if any), remain areas worthy of study.

5. Language-particular collocational and syntactic constraints

For many vectors, in many IA languages, there are large numbers of polar verbs they may combine with; however, there exist certain collocational constraints on particular vectors in particular languages (see Singh et al. 1986). In some languages (e.g. Bengali) there is a fairly strict general requirement that pole and vector both be transitive or both be intransitive (Dasgupta 1977); other co-occurrence restrictions may be more idiosyncratic and less transparent. There exist completely idiomatic CV collocations like Hindi *bajā lānā* "carry out, obey" (Hook 1974: 115) or Nepali *ai-pugnu* "to arrive",

where *pugnu* only occurs as a vector in this CV collocation.

Though there seems to be a core group of vector shared by most IA languages, which includes GIVE, and often GO, TAKE, THROW/PUT, RISE, FALL, COME, a good deal of variation exists, both in terms of total number of vectors—Hindi uses between 24 (Hook 1974) to 47 (Nespital 1997) vector verbs while Nepali uses somewhere between 11 (Sharma 1980) to 16 (Pokharel 1991); in Shina 6 vectors have been identified (Schmidt 2004) and just 3 in Kalasha (Bashir 1993)—and in terms of which vectors are found. Though TAKE is common in many IA languages, it is conspicuously absent in Nepali and apparently in Shina and Kalasha as well. There is also a deal of variation in terms of the lexical meanings of the full verbs used to express various vector meanings: the vector associated with "regret" in Hindi is SIT but SEND in Nepali. A full and detailed study of the vectors found in each language is highly desirable.

IA languages vary not only in the collocational constraints on V-V combinations, but also in terms of the syntactic environments in which CV constructions are permitted or required. For example, in Hindi CVs are fairly infrequent in negative contexts and "semi-negative" contexts like *sirf…hī* "only", *śāyad hī* "hardly" (Hook 1974, 1988), while the same constraint is not as strong in other languages, e.g. in Marathi certain CVs combinations can be easily negated (Hook 1988, Pardeshi 2001). Similarly, in Hindi CVs are nearly obligatory whenever an event/action is perfective/completive (Hook 1974), while the same requirement is not found in other IA languages like Marathi (Hook 1988) or Nepali (Slade 2013). Hook (1988, 1993) points out also that certain contexts in Hindi strongly prefer or disprefer the use of CVs; in Hindi strongly CV-preferring environments include clauses dependent on a verb expressing fear, as in:

(9) mujhe   ḍar   thā   ki   kahī̃   tum use   ciṭṭhī na   de

     me.DAT   fear   be.PST.SG.MSC that   lest   you he.DAT   letter NEG   give.ABS

     do

     give. IMP

     "I was afraid that you might give him the letter" (Hook 1993: 100)   [Hindi]

Hook (1988, 1993) points out that other IA languages may display such preferences more weakly or not at all. In Marathi, and, likewise, in Nepali verbs of fear do not trigger the use of CVs:

(10) ciṭhī   ta   dienas   holā   tai-le   bhanera

      letter PART give.PST.2SG.NEG   you-AGT   QUOT

      ma-lāī   ḍar   lāgethyo

      me-DAT   fear   apply.PST.1SG

"I was afraid that you might give him the letter"   [Nepali]

A more complete description of such differences across a wider range of IA languages is highly desirable, as would be diachronic studies focussed on the paradigmisation of CVs (as in Hook 1988, 1993; Slade 2013).

6. Language-specific Morphosyntactic differences

IA CVs also differ from language to language in terms of their morphosyntactic properties. These include reversibility (see above), interruptibility, vector recursion, head dominance, and other morphosyntactic restrictions (on the last four, see Slade 2013). In terms of interruptibility, many speakers of Hindi allow for pole and vector to be separated by particles, pronouns, and for some speakers even full NPs, while in Nepali nothing at all may intervene between the two verbal elements. Vector recursion refers to ability of a pole to support multiple vectors: languages like Nepali and Sinhala allow for this (see example (11)), while Hindi does not. Hindi, Nepali, and many other IA languages in certain tenses require special marking of agents of transitive verbs—head dominance refers to whether the pole or the vector determiners whether the entire CV is treated as transitive or intransitive for purposes of agent-marking.

(11) meyāge   bandinə   wayəsə dæŋ   pahu   wē   -gənə   -yanəwa

      his/her   marrying   age   now   past   become.ABS -take.ABS   -come.ABS

      "Her marrying age is now passing by" (Paolillo 1989, cited in Herring 1993)   [Sinhala]

A wide-ranging study of morphosyntactic differences across IA languages remains to be done.

7. History

Butt (2003, 2010) argues that modern IA CVs have existed with few changes since Vedic Sanskrit (as part of a larger argument about the special status of light verbs). Various studies (Hook & Pardeshi 2005; Slade 2013; Kimmig 2014) have pointed out difficulties with such claims. In part, though various types of complex predicates are found in early IA, there is no obvious continuity between these and modern IA CVs (see Slade 2013). The earliest examples of verb-verb collocations which are truly ancestral to the modern IA CVs are uncertain—putative examples in Sanskrit; Pāli evidence is difficult to interpret; however, it is possible that CVs may be already found in Apabhraṁśa (Singh 1980, Bubenik 1998)—further investigation by scholars versed in the intricacies of Apabhraṁśa is required. It does appear that CVs are found already in the Sinhala of the 8th-10th century (Paranavitana 1956: §501), though these show numerous similarities to Dravidian CVs and could represent an early instance of convergence not shared with other IA languages—thus the relevance of such examples is bound up

with the question of the relation of IA and Dravidian CVs.

The relationship of IA CVs to CV structures in Dravidian is not fully clear—it has frequently been suggested that IA CVs may represent a calque of Dravidian CVs (Chatterjee 1926, Hook 1991a, Herring 1993) due to numerous similarities. However, it is also certainly possible that IA CVs represent an independent development which (in certain languages) underwent convergence with Dravidian (see Hook 1991b).

Questions concerning the position of CVs within the grammar, in terms of the environments in which CVs are permitted and the environments in which they are obligatory etc., have been explored from various perspectives in Hook 1988, Poornima & Painter 2010, and Slade 2013, though more remains to be done in this area, particularly in terms of comparison of different IA languages.

8. Conclusion

CVs are a distinctive feature of modern IA languages. Although this feature has not been neglected in linguistic research, much remains to be investigated; particularly desirable are in-depth studies of CVs in languages other than Hindu/Urdu and crosslinguistic comparison of the differences in the morphosyntax of CVs across IA languages—from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives.

9. Appendix: Studies by language

A non-exhaustive listing of studies of IA CVs:–[4]

Assamese: Buragohain 2008

Bengali: Pal 1972; Dasgupta 1977 [Butt & Lahiri 2002]

Gujarati: [Cardona 1976: 124–133]

Hindi/Urdu: Hook 1974; Butt 1993, 1994; Verma 1993; Nespital 1997; Butt & Ramchand 2001; Poornima 2012 [Nespital 1966, 1989; Hook 1977, 1988, 1991a, 1993; Masica 1976; Kachru & Pandharipande 1980; Abbi & Gopalakrishnan 1991; Kachru 1993; Butt & Lahiri 2002; Butt 2003, 2010; Hook & Pardeshi 2005; Poornima & Koenig 2008, 2009; Slade 2013]

Kalasha: Bashir 1993

Kashmiri: Kaul 2006; Buragohain 2008

Marathi: Pandharipande 1993; Pardeshi 2001

Marwari: Hook 1993

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4 Studies referenced in []s touch on the language in question but may not be focussed on it.

Nepali: Pokharel 1991 [Sharma 1980: 100–111; Slade 2013]

Punjabi: Bahl 1969; Raja 2003

Shina: Schmidt 2004

Sinhala: Paolillo 1989

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