

Light Verbs and Noun Verb Agreement in Hunza Burushaski

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This paper introduces the concept of Light Verbs and Noun Verb Agreement in Hunza Burushaski from a native speaker's perspective by a student of linguistics in preparation for a future detailed study on the complex verb predicates and the general interaction of various types of verbs with six noun classes which produces a very complex notion of verbs in Burushaski. Burushaski is linguist isolate spoken in Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan. This fascinating language has three distinct dialect groups in Hunza, Nagar and Yasin. This paper introduces two new concepts: light verbs and six noun classes in Burushaski that have not been discussed in the previous researches.

Light Verbs

Burushaski like Persian has probably the smallest lexicon of single word verbs or simple verbs. A limited set of more than 15-20 Light Verbs (LV) form an infinite number of verbal constructions in Burushaski. These LV can be combined with an open set of preverbal elements (PV), which results in intricate complex verb constructions. Light Verbs can be intransitive like:

1. a.	//čai	ɬayaar	*man	-imi//
	[čai	ɬayaar	*man	-imi]
	tea	ready	become	-3MSG

The tea has become ready

or transitive verb like:

b.	//je-e	buk	mo-	*ɬ	-am//
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[ʃa-a	buk	mo-	*t̪	-am]
1-ERG	neck	3FSG	-do-	1MSG

I hugged her.

Basing itself on Butt & Geuder's proposal of light verbs, this paper will introduce the LV verbal notion in Burushaski. The unique characteristic of Burushaski Verbal system is its dominant use of LVs to express verbal notion. English simple verbs are expressed with complex verbal predicates in Burushaski.

1. karim-e	xarc	e-	*t̪	-imi
karim-ERG	clap(onom.)	3SG-	do	3M.SG

Karim do clap.

Karim clapped.

2. karim-e	ʃamini	gar	e-	*t̪	-imi
karim-ERG	last.year	marriage	3SG-	do.	3MSG

karim last.year. marriage do

Karim married last year.

Butt & Geuder (2004, p35) observe, "Light Verbs serve the purpose of structuring event concepts. To this end, they are reduced to an entirely schematic meaning. The crucial difference between light verbs and auxiliary verbs is that, with light verbs, the schematic information is applied in order to structure a lexical content (namely the full verb), not in order to express a grammatical meaning as is the case with auxiliaries. So if there were a gradual development by which light verbs are becoming semantically weaker over time, this would not mean that they are becoming more grammatical. We would just arrive at a more coarse-grained structuring of event concepts".

I will follow the general strategy for light verbs that Butt and Geuder adopt "linked to the main full verb reading via analysis under which light verb usages are considered to be an instance of polysemy" (2004, p25). This study will shed more light on the light verbs because in case of Burushaski the light verb combines with other verbs to form complex predicates as in the case in Urdu. In

addition to that, the elegant affixes for subject and object on the light verb will be considered a very useful tool to explore the grammatical function of LVs in this language.

One of the noteworthy features of the Burushaski language, similar to Persian verbal system, is its predominant use of light verb construction (LVC) to express verbal notions. LVC in Buruskaski are formed by a LV in conjunction with a nominal element, and an adjective. The most frequently used light verbs are [eʧas], “to do” [manaas] “to become” Below are some Light Verbs (in italics) and (PV) (in lower case), which I have collected from first ever published Burushaski Urdu Dictionary by Burushaski Research Academy (2002 to 2006). The use of light verbs in Burushaski is so pervasive that one would be surprised if one did not see a light verb construction on any single page of the dictionary. This construction is always seen with loan words. For example:

3. [mobile Ø-*yan -imi]

mobile 3SG-take-3MSG

He bought cell phone

4. [in-e p^hon e- *ʧ -imi]

3-ERG phone 3SG- do -3MSG

He called/made a phone call.

A brief list of Burushaski Light Verbs

salaam *e-ʧ-imi* greeted 3-do-3MSG He greeted him.

mađat e-ṭ-imi	help 3-do-3MSG	He helped him.
duro <i>man-imi</i>	work become-3MSG	The work completed
ḍaṅ ni-mi	sleep go-3SG	The sleep disappeared.
yuniqiş yeec-imi	bad see-3MSG	He looked down upon him
čaya-ce <i>ḍuun-imi</i>	talk-COM hold-3MSG	He started talking
p ^h oon-e ring ḍi-imi	p ^h one-GEN ring come-3SG	The phone rang.

It is interesting to note the with these Light Verb constructions in the lexicon, Burushaski native speakers construct a whole meaning and the meaning of the whole is never a function of the meaning of its parts. For instance the LV [yanas] individually means taking or carrying something but when it is used with [p^hone yanimi] “He bought the phone”, or [hiles yanimi] “he carried the boy” a novel meaning is constructed every time the verb is added with a different (PV).

Noun Verb Agreement

Burushaski has six noun classes i) [bay] ¹ ‘paired class’ human male, ii) [bo] ‘paired class’ human female, iii) [bi] ‘paired class’ ‘animals and in-animate solid objects’, iv) [bila] paired class’ for inanimate objects which can change shape like tree and book v) [bila] ²unpaired class ‘liquids, verbal nouns’ and vi) [bica] unpaired class ‘non-countable nouns like [ṭk] ‘sand’ , [šakar] ‘sugar’ . Below is the example of six noun classes in Burushaski.

i). Bay paired class			ii). Bo paired class			iii). Bi paired class		
SG	PL	Gloss	SG	PL	Gloss	SG	PL	Gloss
hiles	hilešo	boy	ḍasin	ḍasiwanc	girl	huk	hukay	dog
hir	hir	man	gus	gušinanc	women	buš	bušoŋo	cat

¹ I will use term ‘paired class’ which can occur in singular/plural pair

² I will use ‘unpaired class’ which do not occur in singular/plural pair.

But, [giyal] ‘soft bread’ is [bila] paired noun class.

(b) //je-e giyal-an *š-e-am//
 [ja-a giyal-an *š-e-y-am]
 1SG-ERG soft.bread-IND *eat-3SG-1SG*

I ate soft bread.

Here are more examples of verb roots

Gloss	Bsk Verb stem	Noun	Gloss	Class	Example with gloss
wash	[yaaltɿ]	[p ^h arcin]	hat	[bi]	ja-a p ^h arcin ø-yaaltɿ-am 1-ERG hat 3SG-wash-1SG I washed the hat
wash	[baalt]	[laqpis]	handkerchief	[bila]	ja-a laqpis baaltɿ-am 1-ERG handkerchief wash-1SG I washed handkerchief
count	[ghan]	[huyes]	cattle	[bi]	jaa huyes u-ghan-am 1-ERG cattle 3PL-count-1SG I counted animals.
count	[chan]	[tɔm]	trees	[bila]	jaa tɔm i-chan-am 1-ERG trees 3SG-count-1SG I counted trees.

Subject/Agent Suffix

Burushaski verb stem marks subject/agent in suffix position. Below is the paradigm to show suffixal subject agreement with person/number and class. The subject/agent mostly is [bay] and [bo] class nouns. In a few cases the subject/agent can be [bi] class, but never [bila] or [bica] class.

Person	Burushaski sentence	Gloss	Meaning	Subject Suffix
1SG	[ja-a şapik ş-iy-am]	1-ERG bread eat-3SG-1SG	I ate bread	-a
2SG	[un-e şapik ş-i-ma]	2-ERG bread eat-3SG-2SG	You ate bread	-a
3MSG	[in-e şapik ş-i-mi]	3M-ERG bread eat-3SG-3M.	He ate bread	-i
3FSG	[in-e şapik ş-i-mo]	3F-ERG bread eat-3SG-3F	She ate bread	-o
3 [Bi]	[hukan-e ʈin ş-i-mi]	dog-ERG bone eat-3SG-3 _[Bi]	Dog ate bone	-i
1PL	[mi-i şapik ş-i-man]	1PL-ERG bread eat-3SG-1PL	We ate bread	-an
2PL	[ma-a şapik ş-i-man]	2PL-ERG bread eat-3SG-2PL	You ate bread	-an
3PL	[uw-e şapik ş-i-man]	3PL-ERG bread eat-3SG-3PL	They ate bread	-an

Object Suffix and Prefixes

Unlike the suffixal agreement which marks the referent subject explicitly, the marking of the object on verb is rather complicated because of the six different noun classes in the language and its position on the verb. In most of the cases the object referent is marked in prefix position of the verb, but there are cases where the object referent is also seen on suffix position of the verb like [in-e baalt-an ş-i-mi] ‘3MSG-ERG apple-IND eat-3SG-3MSG’ ‘he ate an apple’ and [in-e baalt-ik ş-u-mi] ‘3MSG-ERG apple-PL eat-3PL-3MSG’. I will present a paradigm below to show the object referent prefixes and suffixes in correspondence with different noun classes with example sentences.

Noun Class		Verb	Gloss	Object Prefixes
Bay/Bo	1S G	[in-e a -yaalt _ɛ imi] 3SG-ERG 1SG-wash-3SG	He washed me.	a-
	2S G	[ine gu -yaalt _ɛ im-i] 3SG-ERG 2SG-wash-3SG	He washed you.	gu-
	3M	[ine ∅ -yaalt _ɛ im-i] 3SG-ERG 3M-wash-3SG	He washed him	i-: ∅ /_y
	3F	ine mu -yaalt _ɛ imi 3SG-ERG 3F-wash-3SG	He washed her.	mu-
	1PL	ine mi -yaalt _ɛ imi 3SG-ERG 1PL-wash-3SG	He washed us	mi-
	2PL	ine ma -yaalt _ɛ imi 3SG-ERG 2PL-wash-3SG	He was you.pl.	ma-
	3PL	ine u -yaalt _ɛ im-i 3SG-ERG 3PL-wash-3SG	He washed them.	u-
[Bi]	SG	ine p ^h arcin ∅ -yaalt _ɛ imi 3SG-ERG 3SG-wash-3SG	He washed a hat.	i-
	PL	ine p ^h arcimuc u -yaalt _ɛ imi 3SG-ERG 3PL-wash-3SG	He washed hats.	u-
[Bila] paired	SG	ine laqpis baalt _ɛ imi 3SG-ERG wash-3SG	He washed handkerchief.	none
	PL	ine laqpišij baalt _ɛ imi 3SG-ERG wash-3SG	He washed handkerchiefs.	none
[Bila] unpaired	SG	[in iskil baalt _ɛ imi] 3SG-ERG wash-3SG	He washed his face.	none

[Bica]unpaired	PL	in-e gatəŋ baalt̪imi 3SG-ERG wash-3SG	He washed clothes	none
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We have seen above that some verbs appear to lack prefixal agreement with [bila] ‘paired class’ [bila] ‘unpaired class’ and [bica] ‘unpaired class’. However, this is not always true. The salient feature with these classes is that there is singular prefixal agreement with these noun classes. In sentence 2 (a) [p^hiti] ‘bread’ is a [bi] paired class noun, the prefix [e-] changes to [o-], when the noun class becomes plural [p^hitimuc] ‘breads’ in sentence 2 (b). But, in sentence 3 (a), [ɖuro] ‘work’ is a [bila] paired class, the prefix [e-] does not change in sentence 3 (b) with [ɖuroyɪŋ] “a lot of work.”

2. a. [in-e p^hitiy-an ɖ̪-e-s-man-um-o]

3F-ERG bread-IND x-3SG-TRAN-make-3F

She made a bread.

b. [in-e p^hiti-muc ɖ̪-o-s-man-um-o]

3F-ERG bread-PL x-3PL-TRAN-make-3F

She made bread.

3. a. [in-e ɖuroy-an ɖ̪-e-s-man-um-o]

3F-ERG work-IND x-3_[bila]-TRAN-make-3F

She completed a work.

b. [in-e d̪uro-iŋ-ik d̪-e-s-man-umo]

3F-ERG work-PL-IND x-3_[bila]-TRAN-make-3F

She completed some work.

Conclusion:

It is very clear from the data presented above that Burushaski verb morphology (inflectional and derivational) is extremely complicated. Previous literature on Burushaski has classified nouns into four classes and there has been no reference of light verb construction, which has led to misunderstanding and confusions in the linguistic analysis of the language. This paper proposes six noun classes and notion of light verb as a separate syntactic unit. These notions will contribute to lexical semantics and will help to analyze the morphology and syntax of Burushaski more precisely and elegantly in the future research.

References:

- Butt, Miriam and Geuder, W. (2004) *Light Verbs in Urdu and Grammaticalization*. In R. Eckardt, K.von Heusinger and C. Schwarze (eds.) *Words in Time: Diachronic Semantics from Different Points of View*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 295–349.
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