Complex Predicate in Liangmai[1]

Kailadbou Daimai, Ph.D.
Department of Linguistics
Assam University, Silchar
Assam-788011
kailadboudaimai@yahoo.co.in

===

Abstract

The paper proposes to study the morphological and semantic features of the complex predicates in Liangmai, a Tibeto-Burman language. The used of complex predicate is widespread in the language and this paper intends to study and to understand the types of complex predicate that occur in the language. The grammatical constructions such as compound verb or conjunct verb will all be expressed under the term 'complex predicate' in this work. In Liangmai, complex predicates occur in the form of Verb1 + Verb2 or Verb + Adjective or Noun + Verb. In complex predicates V2 or the vector is combined with main verb or V1 of the sentence either to modify or to add something more to the meaning or to make the predication of intended action possible. In compound verb, the central meaning of the predicate is obtained from the first verb, i.e., V1, which is in the root form, whereas the second verb (V2) is semantically delexicalized or grammaticalized. The paper also looks into the degree of grammaticalization of different vectors in the language.

Keywords: Liangmai, Tibeto-Burman, Complex Predicate, Compound Verb, Conjunct Verb, Grammaticalization.

1.   Introduction

In this study I describe the different characteristics of complex predicates in Liangmai, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in some parts of Manipur and Nagaland in the Northeastern region of India. The concern is to understand the types of complex predicates that occur in the language. The work also seeks to analyze the structure and component of Liangmai complex predicates and explain its morphological and semantic properties. The verbal category is one of the major word classes in the language. The verbal system of Liangmai can be divided into two

---

[1] This is a revised version of a paper titled "The nature of Complex Predicate in Liangmai", presented in the 22nd Himalayan Languages Symposium held at Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, Assam, India, on 8-10 June 2016.

types: simple verbs and complex verbs. As in other Tibeto-Burman languages of the region, complex verbs are abundant in the language. The main objective of the study is to analyze the structure of different complex verb forms that occur in the language which is expressed under the term 'complex predicate' in this word. Liangmai is not a well-documented language and not many linguistic works are done on it. No previous study on complex predicate in the language is available. The present paper proposes theory of complex predicate as a framework of the study for revealing different forms of complex verbs in Liangmai. It investigates how a combination of two lexical elements becomes a complex predicate and what type it belongs. The study also investigates the common characteristic of complex predicate construction, i.e. the process of de-lexicalization or grammaticalization of V2. The paper also attempts to recognize the verbs that can occur in V2 position in the language and see the degree of grammaticalization it went through.

2.   Theoretical Background

The term complex predicate is used to designate a notion whereby two or more morphological entities merged to form an expression with a single complex argument structure (Butt 1995, Das 2006, etc.). The term generally refers to constructions whose grammatical constituents can occur independently in phrase structure. Complex predicate consists of a host and vector or light verb. They occur in the form V1 + V2, known as compound verb, and Adj. + V or N + V, which is called conjunct verb. In the construction of compound verbs, a sequence of at least two verbs, V1 and V2 form the complex structure. The first member is the main verb, also known as 'polar' (Hook 1974, 1993), and the second member is known as 'explicator' (Masica 1976, Abbi and Gopalakhrishnan 1991) or 'vector' (Hook 1974, 1993) or 'light verb' (Jesperson 1965, Mohanan 1994, Butt 1995). The second verb (V2) occurs in the sequence to mark the main verb (V1) for certain grammatical features (Abbi and Gopalakhrishnan 1991). In the case of conjunct verb construction, one of the lexical items acts as 'nominal host' or 'adjectival host' and the other item acts as 'light verb' (Jesperson 1965, Mohanan 1994, Butt 1995). In compound verbs, V1 occur in root form followed by a V2 which bears tense, aspect, mood and agreement morphology. In conjunct verbs, the combination of noun or adjective with a verb functions as lexical equivalent of single verb (Masica 1993). The two forms can be illustrated as follows:

Compound verb
Hindi
1.   vo   aa   gəya
        he   come GO-PST
        'He came'   (Abbi & Gopalakhrishnan 1991: 162)

Meiteilon

2.   məhak   tʰəbək-to   kao   -tʰok-le
        he-3PS   work-DDET   forgetV1-exitV2-PERF-ASP
        'He has forgotten the work'   (Singh 2016: 51)

In the above example (1) and (2), **aa** 'come' and **kao** 'forget' are the main verbs, while **gəya** 'go' and -**tʰok** 'exit', both marked for tense and aspect respectively, are vectors that functioned as grammatical marker for 'perfectivity'.

Conjunct Verb
    Hindi
3.   sangita-ne   kamal-par   bharosa   kiya
        sangita-3FS-Erg   kamal-3MS-Loc   reliance N(m)   do-Perf-MS
        'Sangita relied on Kamal'   (Das 2009: 4)

    Meiteilon
4.   soni   ne   -ta-re
        soni-3MS position-N   -lay/fall-V-PERF
        'Soni has settled'   (Singh 2016: 49)

In example (3) and (4) we see that the N + V combination functions as a single unit or a single predicate. The helping verb also bears inflection.

It is a well-known fact that complex predicates are common in many South Asian languages and various studies have been done on it. The common characteristics for identification of complex predicate cross linguistically include the following:

I. the argument structure is complex, two or more semantic heads contribute to it
II. the grammatical function of the structure is that of a simple predicate, there is only a single subject and no embedding
III. the second verb is de-lexicalized or grammaticalized to certain degree and adds some shades of meaning like aspectual, adverbial, attitudinal, etc
IV. they are mono-clausal, i.e., no clause linkage marker in the sequence.

3.   Complex Predicate in Liangmai
    Complex predicates are widely used in the language. They occur in the form V1 + V2, also known as compound verbs and V + Adj. or N + V combinations, which is referred to as conjunct verbs. Different verbs can occur independently as simple verb, main verb or vector in Liangmai. However, when the verb occurs as a vector, they often lose their inherent meanings and add different shade of meaning to the constituent. As mentioned earlier, the verbal system of

Liangmai is divided into simple and complex verbs. The complex verb can be further sub-divided into compound verb and conjunct verb. This classification of verb is presented in the table below:

Table 1. Verbal system of Liangmai

Liangmai Verb	Subtype	Components of verb	Example
Simple Verb	-	1	tiu 'eat' tad 'go' ken 'read' kəti 'teach'
Complex Verb	Compound verb	V1 + V2	sui-kʰai 'to agree upon' agree-put tad-pad 'to go' go-exit lu-waŋ 'to bring' take-come
	Conjunct verb	N + V V + Adj.	tsəluŋ-gut 'to pay attention' heart-enter kam-masan 'to clean' do-clean

3.1   Compound Verbs in Liangmai

Two verbs occur adjacent to each other and express a single event in Liangmai compound verb. In V-V sequence, the first verb (V1) occurs in the root form and provides the main semantic information. The semantic and morphological function of second verb (V2) is quite important and takes crucial role in Liangmai compound verb. V2 is semantically bleached and bears all grammatical inflections such as tense, aspect or mood. The examples below illustrate the difference between a simple verb and a compound in Liangmai.

5a.   ben-niu   tsəgan   laŋ-e   (Simple Verb)
        ben-3FS-ERG curry   cook-DECL
        'Ben cooks the curry'.

b.   ben-niu   tsəgan   laŋ-kʰai-e   (Compound Verb)
        ben-3FS-ERG curry   cook V1-put V2-DECL
        'Ben cooked the curry'

6a.   wagapiu   pə-mao   din-mide   (Simple Verb)
        thief   3P-wrong   tell-PERF

'The thief has confessed his crime'

 b. wagapiu pǝ-mao din-pad-mide   (Compound Verb)

    thief 3P-wrong tell V1-exit V2-PERF

    'The thief has confessed his crime'

   In (5a) and (6a), the information given by the simple verb is not clear whether the action of cooking (in the case of 5a) and confessing (in the case 6a) is completed or not. The addition of vectors **-kʰai** 'put' and **-pad** 'exit' in the compound verb indicate that the action is completed by adding telicity to the predicates as seen in (5b) and (6b). The vector verbs lose its inherent meanings as 'put' and 'exit'; it instead specifies a perfective role and thus expresses completion of the action.

   The verbs that are commonly recognized as vectors are the full lexical verbs that express a change in location or posture, or an action that entails go, give, take, throw, let go, let up, come, strike, sit, fall, etc. (Hook 1993). These second verbs are used to contribute the meaning of completion, suddenness, directionality, benefaction, intensity, violence, stubbornness, reluctance, regret, forethought, thoroughness, etc. (Masica 1976). Compound verbs are very common phenomena in Liangmai speech. I have listed twelve verbs that can occur as vectors in Liangmai and all these verbs indicate change of state. Some vectors can have multiple functions. For example, the vector **-kʰai** 'put' indicates the meaning of completion, or sense of regret or as an honorific when it occurs in imperative construction. In addition, there are some that mark initiation, ongoing, etc. The following table lays out which verb in V2 position imparts which type of meaning.

Table 2. Set of possible V2 in Liangmai

V2	Original Meaning	New Meaning as V2
-tad	go	completion, action directed away from beneficiary
-kʰai	keep or put	completion, sense of regret, honorific
-su	rise or start	commencement of event
-pad	exit	completion
-lu	take	completion, physical displacement
-kum	down	completion, suddenness
-wǝŋ	come	completion, action directed towards beneficiary
-gut	enter	completion
-tao	hit or strike	accomplishment of event
-duak	slip	suddenness
-kai	fall	suddenness
-loi	over or finish	terminative

Kailadbou Daimai, Ph.D.

Hook (1974) and others have claimed that vector verbs of Indo-Aryan languages are semantically empty and have undergone a process of grammaticalization. There are lots of works that have been done for the explanation of grammaticalization of vector verbs. In this study I used the term to refer to the lexical items that occur in V2 position and have undergone change from its inherent meaning into items that serve only as a grammatical function in the language. In example (5) and (6) above, the vectors **-kʰai** 'put' and **-pad** 'exit' underwent grammaticalization and loses its inherent meaning as 'put' and 'exit' and function as grammatical items which marks completion of event or perfectivity.

Abbi and Gopalakhrishnan (1991) also claim that vectors are multi-functional and have functions such as aspectual, adverbial and attitudinal. This multi-function of vectors is evident in Liangmai vectors as well.

7a.　tʰikna　lem-tad-mide
　　　bird　　flyV1-goV2-PERF
　　　'The bird flew away'　　　　　　　(Perfective)

b.　　tom　　kəbaŋki-gəsu　pak-duak-mide
　　　tom-3MS　prison-ABL　runV1-slipV2-PERF
　　　'Tom has escaped from prison'　　(Perfective)

8a.　i　məri　tʰin-kai-mide
　　　1S axe　holdV1-fallV2-PERF
　　　'I have dropped an axe'　　　　　(Suddenness)

b.　　pa　　kao-kum-mide
　　　s/he-3S　fallV1-downV2-PERF
　　　'S/he has fallen'　　　　　　　　(Suddenness)

9.　　ə-gu　　prozek　tʰin-su-mide
　　　1S-GEN　project　holdV1-startV2-PERF
　　　'I have started my project'　　　(Commencement of event)

10.　 ben　　amereka　tad-tao-mide
　　　ben-3FS　America　goV1-hitV2-PERF
　　　'Ben has been to America'　　　(Accomplishment)

11.　tiu-kʰai-lo
　　　eatV1-putV2-IMP
　　　'Please eat'　　　　　　　　　　(Honorific)

In the above examples, vectors such as **-tad** 'go' and **-duak** 'slip' have an aspectual function where it only affect the aktionsart, vectors such as **-kai** 'fall', **-kum** 'down', **-su** 'start' and **-tao** 'hit' have an adverbial function that mark suddenness, commencement of event and accomplishment, while vectors like **-kʰai** 'put' has attitudinal function that mark humility.

In Liangmai, a single vector can be multi-functional as well, as illustrated in the following examples.

12a.   ben-niu   tətiu   təliu-kʰai-mide
        ben.3FS-EGR   necklace   makeV1-putV2-PERF
        'Ben has made the necklace (completely)'   (Perfective)

b.   pa-niu   əpal   zon-kʰai-mide
        s/he.3S-ERG   apple   sellV1-putV2-PERF
        'S/he has sold the apple (mistakenly)'   (Sense of regret)

c.   taó-kʰai-lo
        sitV1-putV2-IMP
        'Please sit'   (Honorific)

In (12a), **-kʰai** 'put' gives the reading of putting emphasis on the completion of the event, whereas (12b) **-kʰai** 'put' implies that the act of selling the apple has been done mistakenly and in (12c) **-kʰai** 'put' implies respect. Other vectors listed in table-2 can also have one or more functions.

3.2   Conjunct Verb in Liangmai

In Liangmai conjunct verb construction, a light verb can take a host which could be a noun or adjective. Conjunct verb are not as common as compound verb in the language. One common conjunct verb structure in the language is N + do or do + Adj. sequence. In the following are some conjunct verb examples where a light verb takes a nominal host.

13a.   harry   pə-ŋam-ga   pəluŋ-gut-mək-e
        harry   3S-work-LOC 3S-heart N-enter V-NEG-DECL
        'Harry does not pay attention to his work'

b.   pa   tsəlu-ga   tsəŋam-kam-e
        s/he-3S field-LOC   work N-do V-DECL
        'S/he works in the field'

c.   ə-pui   naimətsaŋ ə-leŋ   kəkʰeŋ-kam-e
        1S-mother everyday   1S-DAT   prayer N-do V-DECL
        'My mother prays for me every day'

In N + V conjunct verb, the noun gives the semantic content of the conjunct and the light verb turn the constituent into a verbal predicate. In example (13a), the noun **-luŋ** 'heart' combines with the verb **-gut** 'enter' to express the sense of 'to pay attention' or 'put his heart on'. In (13b) and (13c), the nouns **tsəŋam** 'work' and **kəkʰeŋ** 'prayer' is followed by a light verb **-kam** 'do' which bears inflection and turn the N + V construction into a verb.

Some conjunct verbs also have a third element, occurring after the noun and the light verb, forming a N + do + V structure. This third element alters the aktionsart of the complex verb as illustrated below:

14a.   zon-niu   tsəŋam-kam-kʰai-e
        john-3MS-ERG work N-do V1-put V2-DECL
        'John did the work'
b.   ə-pui-niu   ə-leŋ   kəkʰeŋ-kam-kʰai-e
        1S-mother-ERG 1S-DAT prayer N- do V1- put V2-DECL
        'My mother prayed for me'

The addition of **-kʰai** 'put' in the examples above provide the aspectual meaning of completion. This kind of verb has been referred to as vector verb (Dasgupta 1977, Ramchand 1990), or it has been treated as part of the class of light verbs (Butt 2003).

In conjunct verb where adjective co-occur with 'do' verb in Liangmai, the 'do' verb precedes the adjective, do + Adj., unlike the N + do conjunct verb. This structure is different from conjuncts of languages like Hindi, Bangla, etc. where the structures is Adj. + do.

15a.   ben-niu   tsəpiaŋ   kam-məsan-e
        ben-3FS-ERG   cup   do V-clean Adj.-DECL
        'Ben cleans the cup'
b.   nəmai-duŋ-niu   tsəki   kam-tənia-e
        child-PL-ERG   house do V-dirty Adj.-DECL
        'The children dirties the house'
c.   pa-niu   kəreŋ   kam-di-e
        s/he-3S-ERG   garden   doV-big Adj.-DECL
        'S/he expands the garden'

In the above examples, the adjectives **-məsan** 'clean', **-tənia** 'dirty' and **-di** 'big' gives the semantic content to the constituents while the 'do' verb **kam** turn the constituent V + Adj. into a predicate.

This V + Adj. constituent can also have a third element like the aforementioned conjunct, forming a V + Adj. + V and changing the aktionsart of the complex predicate.

16. ben-niu   tsəpiaŋ   kam-məsan-kʰai-e
     ben-3FS-ERG   cup   do V-clean Adj.-put V-DECL
     'Ben cleaned the cup'

4.   The Case of the Verb –pi 'give'

Matisoff (1989:40-45) reports that the verb 'give' undergoes a common grammaticalization process in Tibeto-Burman languages, such as Lahu, to form a benefactive or causative marker. There is much evidence that the TB languages like Burmese, Lahu, Meiteilon/Manipuri, Rongmei, etc., has a highly developed morphological process of forming causatives from simple verbs by addition of 'give' verb to form causative verbs. Liangmai follows similar strategy for forming causatives from all kinds of non-causative verbs. Most verbs, intransitive and transitive, form their corresponding morphological causatives by prefixing **pi-**, which is also a verb meaning 'give', directly to the root verb.

[pi 'give' + root verb + ASP]

17a. i-niu   pə-tu   tei   pi-tiu-e
      1PS-ERG   s/he-3PS-ACC rice   giveV1-eatV2-DECL
      'I cause/make him to eat food'
b.   nəŋ-niu   namai-duŋ-tu   əriak   pi-rao-e
      you.2S-ERG   child-PL-ACC   book   giveV1-writeV2-DECL
      'You cause/make the children to write letter'

18a. i-niu   ben-tu   pi-nui-e
      1PS-ERG   ben.3FS-ACC   giveV1-laughV2-DECL
      'I make Ben laugh'
b.   nəŋ-niu   namai-duŋ-tu   pi-pak-e
      you.2S-ERG   child-PL-ACC giveV1-runV2-DECL
      'You make the children to run'

We can see from the above examples that the verb **pi** 'give' can be added to both transitive and intransitive verbal base. The resulting complex predicate function as a single unit and the argument structure is the same as that of the simple predicate. Different aspect markers can be used with the causative verb and it gives the meaning of different internal structure of the event or situation. In Liangmai, the verb **pi** 'give' undergoes a common grammaticalization process to form a causative marker. It is to be noted that pi occurs at V1 position in Liangmai unlike Indo-Aryan languages like Bangla where 'give' occur as vector to form benefactive.

Vector verbs of Liangmai can be analyzed in term of mechanism of grammaticalization. Firstly, vectors in Liangmai show signs of de-semanticization, i.e. loss of meaning. We have seen in example (5b) and (6b) that when **-kʰai** 'put or keep' and **-pad** 'exit' occur as vector, it does not put any meaning of 'keeping or exiting' to the compound verb. It only acts as a grammatical item which carries inflections and affects the aktionsart of the construction. It has undergone semantic loss. But when it occurs as a simple verb it retains its full meaning. We can also refer to table 2 for more examples. The causative marker **pi** behaves in a similar way however it is to be noted that it occurs in V1 position unlike other vectors, which occur at V2 position. The verb **pi** 'give' maintains its inherent meaning while occurring as a simple verb and pole verb. However, the meaning of 'giving' is totally absent in the examples (17) and (18). Vectors like **-kʰai** 'put, keep', -**pad** 'exit', etc. also show a complete loss of semantic content. But there are also vectors in Liangmai that do not show complete loss of meaning as shown below:

19.   tətu   luaŋ-tad-mide
        stone   rollV1-goV2-PERF
        'The stone has rolled away.'
20.   nəŋ   suannai   deli   tad-su-lo
        you-2S tomorrow   Delhi   goV1-startV2-IMP
        'You go to Delhi tomorrow / you start going for Delhi tomorrow'

The vector in (19) **-tad** 'go' gives a meaning of action directed away from beneficiary. The meaning of 'going' is somehow captured in the compound verb **luaŋtad** 'roll away'. In example (20) the vector **-su** 'start' implies commencement of an event and this meaning is represented in **tadsu** 'go or start to go'.

Vector verbs in Liangmai show different functions; some shows aspectual function whereas some vectors have adverbial function. The vector verbs in the language also exhibit different degree of grammaticalization. Vectors like **-kʰai** 'put' and the causative verb **pi** 'give' are more grammaticalized than other vectors verbs like **-tad** 'go', **-su** 'start', etc.

5.   Conclusion

In this paper I described the form and structure of complex predicates in Liangmai. Complex predicates can be divided into compound verb and conjunct verb. In compound verb, the combination of V1 and V2 express single event. Vectors add more shades of meaning like aspectual, adverbial and attitudinal to the complex construction. It also bears inflection for tense and aspect. Vector verbs are also multi-functional. In conjunct verb, there are two structures, N + V and V + Adj. where N and Adj. give the semantic meaning and V turns the constituent into a

===

predicate. In conjunct verb with adjective host, the verb precedes adjective unlike Hindi, Bangla, etc. A third element, which is a verb, can be added to conjunct structure and it affects the aktionsart of the complex predicate. Vector verbs lose their inherent meaning when they are attached to a main verb. There are vectors such as **-kʰai** 'put', **-tao** 'hit', **-pad** 'exit', etc. and causative verb **pi** 'give' that completely loss its semantic meaning, while some vectors retain its meaning even when attached to a main verb. Based on this we can say that Liangmai vectors as one unit is being grammaticalized, but different vectors are at different stages of grammaticalization.

==

Abbreviation

1P - First Person	F - Feminine
2P - Second Person	GEN - Genitive
3P - Third Person	IMP - Imperative
ABL - Ablative	LOC- Locative
ACC - Accusative	M - Masculine
Adj - Adjective	N - Noun
ASP - Aspect	NEG - Negation
DAT- Dative	PERF- Perfective
DDet - Distal Determiner	S - Singular
DECL- Declarative	Pl- Plural
ERG/Erg -Ergative	

==

References

Abbi, Anvita and Devi Gopalakrishnan. (1991). Semantics of Explicator Compound Verbs in South Asian Languages. *Language Sciences* 13(2):161180.

Butt, Miriam. (1995). *The structure of complex predicates in Urdu*. Stanford, California: CSLI Publications.

Butt, Miriam. (2003). *The Light Verb Jungle*. http://ling.sprachwiss.unikonstanz.de/pages/home/butt/main/papers/harvardwork.pdf

Das, Pradeep Kumar. (2006). *Grammatical Agreement in Hindi-Urdu and its Major Varieties*. Munchen: Lincom Europa.

Das, Pradeep Kumar. (2009). Forms and function of conjunct verb construction in Hindi, *Journal of South Asain Studies*, HUFS, South Korea.

Dasgupta, Probal. (1977). The Internal Grammar of Compound Verbs in Bangla. *Indian Linguistics* 38:68-85.

Hook, P. Edwin. (1974). *The Compound Verb in Hindi*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan.

Hook, P. Edwin. (1993). "Aspectogenesis and Compound Verb in Indo-Aryan". In

Maninder K. Verma, Ed., *Complex Predicates in South Asian Languages,* 97-113. New Delhi: Manohar.

Jespersen, Otto. (1965). *The Philosophy of Language*. New York: Bantam

Masica, Colin P. (1976). *Defining a Linguistics Area: South Asia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Masica, Colin P. (1993). "Subareal Variation in Conjunct Verbs". In Maninder K. Verma, Ed., *Complex Predicates in South Asian Languages,* 157-162. New Delhi: Manohar.

Matisoff, James A. (1989). "Areal and Universal Dimensions of Grammaticalization in Lahu". In Elizabeth Traugott-Brend Heine, Ed., *Approaches to Grammaticalization II*, 1-79. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Mohanan, Tara. (1994). *Argument Structure in Hindi*. The Stanford University Press.

Ramchand, Gillian. (1990). Complex Predicate Formations in Bangla. *Ninth West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics,* Stanford University, 443-452.

Singh, Lourembam Surjit. (2016). Structure of Complex Verb forms in Meiteilon. *Advances in Language and Literacy Studies.* AIAC Australia. ISSN: 2203-4714. Vol. 7. No. 6. 46-55.

==

Kailadbou Daimai, Ph.D.
Department of Linguistics
Assam University, Silchar
Assam-788011
kailadboudaimai@yahoo.co.in