The Syntax and Argument Structure of Laki Complex Predicates
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Overview. Complex predicates (CPrs) consist of two elements whose combination forms a single predicate. The argument structure of CPrs has been a topic of debate in much previous work. The central question is whether the components of a complex predicate can introduce an argument on their own [1-6]. This study examines the argument structure of Noun-LV CPrs in Laki (Kurdish, Northwestern Iranian). I argue that while eventive nouns can introduce the internal argument (IA), the external argument (EA) is introduced when both components combine and form a predicate.

The Puzzle. The components of Laki CPrs can be separated by a variety of morphological markers. Besides morphological markers, the IA can also intervene between the components of the CPr. In (1), the IA of a causative predicate can optionally precede the whole predicate, or intervene between the components. For a clear illustration, the components of the predicate are highlighted. Crucially, however, not all predicates allow the separation of their components by an IA (2).

(1)   ima   (āyl-ela)   [**tarbyat**=a   (āyl-ela)   ma-**ke**-ymen].
         we   kid-PL.DEF   raise=PRS.IND kid-PL.DEF   DUR-do-1PL 'We raise the kids.'

(2)   va:r   *(yax) [**āw**   (*yax)=a   ma-**ke**-y].   'The sun melts the ice.'
         sun   ice   water   ice=PRS.IND DUR-do.PRS-3SG

Proposal: I propose that the separability of the components by the IA correlates with the eventiveness of the noun. I further posit that the internal argument of the CPr can appear as the argument of the whole CPr. Meanwhile, eventive nouns, which can take an argument on their own (in the spirit of [1-3,7-9]), allow for the introduction of the IA as their complement. Nominalization (i.e., formed by the nominalizer suffix –(e)*n* to the verbal element (3a)) provides support for this proposal. (3b-c) show that with an eventive noun taking an internal argument, the IA can intervene between the components of a nominalized predicate or precede the predicate, suggesting that the nominalization domain involves the components of the CPr and its IA in two structural positions. Note that nominalization with an intervening IA fails when the CPr has a non-eventive noun (4a).

(3) a. **šekast dāyn**   b. došman **šekast dāyn** 'defeating enemy'   c. **šekast** došman **dāyn**
      defeat giving   enemy defeat giving   defeat enemy giving

(4) a. *āw   yax   **kerden**   b. yax   **āw**   **kerden** 'melting the ice'
         water ice   doing   ice   water   doing

    This proposal predicts that CPrs with nominals which do not take an internal argument on their own, should resist the separation. As shown in (5), this prediction is borne out.

(5) a. ***parvāz** paranda-al   **dāyn**.   b. paranda-al   **parvāz dāyn**
       fly   bird-PL   giving   bird- PL   fly   giving
                                                          'flying birds'

    Based on the observations made above, I propose that Laki CPrs form a VP, taken as the nominalization domain as well. I further posit that when the IA is introduced as the argument of the whole predicate, it merges in [Spec,VP] (3b, 4b, 5b), and when the IA is introduced by the NV element, it merges as the complement of an eventive NV (1, 3c (with the intervening IA)). Crucially, differently from what we saw above concerning the IA, as shown in (6), irrespective of the eventiveness of the noun, the EA can never intervene between the components. I posit that the EA is introduced by an external *v*P layer only when the N and LV combine, depending on whether the predicate as a whole describes an eventuality that has an agent (in the spirit of [10]).

(6)   *došman **šekast** ima **dāyn**. 'intended: defeating the enemy by us'
         enemy defeat   we giving

Conclusion. The current study examined the syntax and argument structure of Laki CPrs. Different from previous accounts which consider a single merge position for the IA in complex predicate constructions [3-5], the current proposal allows two merge positions for the IA.

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