

## Light verb constructions as complex verbs.

### Features, typology and function

#### Convenors

Raffaele Simone, Lunella Mereu, Anna Pompei, Valentina Piunno (Roma Tre University)

This workshop aims at convening scholars working on different languages and within different theoretical approaches in order to focus on the topic of light verb constructions (LVCs) as monoclausal complex predicates.

Complex verbs are analytical predicates composed of more than one linguistic item, each of which contributes a significant part of the semantic information associated to a complex predicate (Alsina *et al.* 1997). According to Amberber *et alii* (2010) complex predicates are multi-predicational, but monoclausal structures. Among other possible structures (cf. phrasal verbs, coverbs, proper coverbs, etc.), the workshop takes into account Light Verbs (LVs) as complex verbs (Butt 2010).

LVCs are structures composed of a predicative noun and a semantically bleached verb (cf. e.g. *to take a walk*), traditionally called *light verb* (Jespersen 1965). Such analytical predicates may correspond to synthetic verbs (cf. e.g. *to take a walk*  $\approx$  *to walk*). In some languages (e.g.. modern Persian) they are particularly productive as they represent the typical verbal construction, but are very common also in other languages, which may show both LVCs and their synthetic verbal counterparts (e.g. Romance languages, Germanic languages).

LVCs are a challenge for semantics, syntax and morphology.

The features of LVs include high generality of meaning, polysemy, and the function of codifying grammatical features, such as TAM features and person (G. Gross 2004). For this reason M. Gross (1981) calls them *verbes supports*. On the other hand, the noun in LVCs is semantically full, as well as the nucleus of the predication (De Miguel 2006).

Some tests are available to assess the lightness of the verb and the low referentiality of the noun due to its predicative function. They include the impossibility to form a deverbal noun from LVs (e.g. *to have breakfast*  $\rightarrow$  *\*the having of a breakfast*), and the possibility to delete the LV without losing the original meaning (e.g. *John has breakfast with his family*  $\rightarrow$  *the breakfast of John with his family*) (Gross 2004).

However, the verb is not always semantically empty. For instance, LVs have been distinguished into several classes: among them, basic LVs (e.g. *to make*, in *to make a war*), aspectual LVs (e.g. inchoative, as in *to take charge*) and diathetic LVs (e.g. passive, as is the case of *to take advice* vs. *to give advice*) (Gross 2004: 357). Moreover, basic LVs can impose selectional restrictions (cf. e.g.

Grimshaw & Mester 1988: 229: ‘*a spider can walk, a spider does not normally take a walk*’) and can have a partially unspecified argument structure (e.g. *to give advice to students*; cf. Di Sciullo & Rosen 1990). This means that they can affect both the event- and the argument structure. Finally, verbs that are not semantically empty – the so-called ‘extensions’ (e.g. *to conduct a war*) – are usually associated to LVs.

LVCs’ nouns have different degrees of predicativeness. For instance, in *to have a cold*, the predication of a temporary physiological state is not only due the noun (which denotes a non-permanent physiological state) but also to the stative verb. In such an instance, there is a high degree of morpho-syntactic cohesion (Simone 2007) between the two members of the LVCs. Indeed, syntactic operations such as passivization (e.g. *\*a cold is had by John*) and object extraction (e.g. *\*it is a cold that John has*) are impossible.

The higher the morpho-syntactic cohesion of a LVC, the lower the noun referentiality. Therefore, syntactic incorporation has sometimes been called upon. For instance, Baños (2012) speaks of syntactic incorporation for Latin LVs such as *ludos facere* ‘to make fun (of somebody)’, where there is a reduction in the verb valency. Furthermore, Baños (2013) underlines the differences between the LV *bellum gero* ‘to make a war’ and the compound *belligero* ‘to make a war’, a sort of morphological incorporation stored in the lexicon.

In addition to LVs occurring with a predicative noun, there are other patterns, which have been less studied, such as [V+PP]<sub>v</sub> (e.g. *to take into account, to have in mind*), [V+Adv]<sub>v</sub> (e.g. *to do well [sth], to get well*), [V+Adj]<sub>v</sub> (e.g. *to get fat, to make available*), and [V+V]<sub>v</sub> (e.g. *to put to use, to put to work*). Although they occur less frequently than the construction with a noun, they show similar shifts in cohesion, which are bound to change in argument and event structure.

Possible topics of the meeting include:

- Different degrees of verb lightness, and noun predicativeness and referentiality
- Implications in terms of both morpho-syntactic cohesion, and event and argument structure
- Similarities and differences between light verb constructions and corresponding synthetic verbs
- Relationship between LVs (e.g. *to make a war*) and both their ‘extensions’ (e.g. *to conduct a war*) and the corresponding full verbs (e.g. *to make a cake*)
- Types of noun occurring in light verb constructions
- Efficiency of tests measuring noun predicativeness and/or referentiality in light verb constructions
- Similarities and differences between light verb constructions with scarcely referential nouns and incorporation
- Different patterns of light verb constructions ([V+N]<sub>v</sub>, [V+PP]<sub>v</sub>, [V+Adv]<sub>v</sub>, [V+Adj]<sub>v</sub>, [V+V]<sub>v</sub>)

- Different degrees of both morpho-syntactic cohesion, and event and argument structure in light verb constructions showing patterns different from [V+N]<sub>v</sub>
- Comparison between the features of light verb constructions in languages where they represent the typical verbal construction (i.e. Persian) and their features in languages where there are both light verb constructions and synthetic verbs
- Comparison between light verb constructions and other complex predicates
- Computational analysis and representation of light verb constructions
- Sociolinguistic traits of light verb constructions
- Relationship between light verbs and light nouns

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