

Moving Right Along: Motion verb sequences in Urdu

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Urdu/Hindi is known to contain various types of complex verbal constructions, including N+V, ADJ+V and V+V complex predicates (e.g., Mohanan (1994), Butt (1995)). A lesser known construction, but one that also occurs fairly frequently is that of motion verb sequences (MVSS). This construction was first noted by Hook (1973), who discusses it in the context of complex predication, but is puzzled by several of its properties. This paper proposes an analysis that accounts for the types of combinations, word orders and argument structures that are possible in Urdu, providing a first formal analysis of the construction. The MVSS, illustrated in (1), cannot be analyzed as complex predicates, but instead appear to represent associated motion constructions (cf. also Simpson (2001)) in which one verb plays the role of a clausal adjunct and modifies the event denoted by the other verb.

- (1) a. cor makan=se bahar **kud nıkl-a**
thief.M.Sg.Nom house.M.Sg=Source outside **jump emerge-Perf.M.Sg**
'The thief jumped out of the house.' (Hook 1973, p. 69)
- b. sanđ hamar-e makan=mẽ g^hus cal-a
bull.M.Sg.Nom Pron.1.Pl.Obl house.M.Sg=Loc **enter walk-Perf.M.Sg**
'A bull got into our house.' (Hook 1973, p. 60)

Superficially, the construction looks like an aspectual complex predicate (Butt 1995) which is shown in (2). In all cases, a verb in the root form is followed by an inflected verb. The classification of the construction in (1) as an aspectual complex predicate is supported by the fact that motion verbs like *nıkal-na* 'to emerge' and *cal-na* 'to walk' are common light verbs in Urdu.

- (2) adnan gir gay-a
Adnan.M.Sg=Nom **fall go-Perf.M.Sg**
'Adnan fell (completely).' (Butt 1995, p. 92)

However, the constructions in (1) differ markedly from aspectual complex predicates: First of all, tests for monoclausality like co-predicated argument structure or their interpretation of negative polarity items fail with respect to these constructions. Moreover, some motion verb sequences allow their verbs to appear in a switched order, as shown in (3), while at the same time retaining the overall interpretation of the sentence.

- (3) hava=ke ek b^honke=ke sat^h patang cal ur-i / ur cal-i
wind.M.Sg=Gen one gust.M.Obl=Gen with kite.F.Sg **walk fly-Perf.F.Sg / fly walk-Perf.F.Sg**
'The kite flew up with a gust of wind.'

The construction should also not be mistaken as a serial verb construction, despite the fact that the criteria as to whether a verb sequence is in fact a serial verb vary greatly among the literature (cf. Seiss (2009) and the literature cited therein). Although arguments are shared among the two motion verbs, the characteristics of motion verb sequences with respect to tense/aspect marking and verb valencies do not match the criteria for a serial verb analysis. This suggests that the construction is bi-clausal, which is supported by Hook (1973) who notes the process of *kar-deletion* established by Bahl (1964). In principle, the sentence in (1a) is a derived version of the sentence in (4), where the first motion verb is followed by *kar* 'having' (originating from the verb *kar-na* 'to do'). This participle construction clearly shows that the underlying structure of the sentence is in fact bi-clausal and contains a subordinate clause headed by the root verb *kud* 'jump' which modifies the main path-like event denoted by the finite verb *nıkl-a* 'emerge-Perf.M.Sg'.

- (4) cor makan=se bahar **kud kar nıkl-a**
burglar.M.Sg.Nom house.M.Sg=Source outside **jump having emerge-Perf.M.Sg**
'The burglar jumped out of the house./The burglar exited the house by jumping.'

Another evidence for the bi-clausality stems from the way that negative polarity items are inserted, pointing to a syntactic and semantic independence of the two motion verbs. Therefore, the analysis proposed in this paper treats the two motion verbs as separate predicates which have their own argument structure and contribute their own lexical semantic information. In particular, the analysis differentiates between motion verbs denoting *manner of motion* (e.g. *kud-na* 'to jump') and verbs denoting *direction of motion* (e.g. *nıkal-na* 'to emerge'), which has consequences as to the valency of the predicates: In Urdu, manner of motion verbs are generally intransitive

whereas motion verbs denoting direction license a source or a goal OBLIQUE. This means that the verb *nīkl-a* ‘emerge-Perf.M.Sg’ in (1a) allows for a subject (*cor* ‘thief’) and a source argument (*makan=se* ‘from house’), with the manner of motion verb *kud* ‘jump’ as a modifier of the event. In contrast, the finite manner of motion verb *cal-a* ‘walk-Perf.M.Sg’ in (1b) only requires the subject *sand* ‘bull’ and all other motion denoting material is optional and modifies the walking event further.

In the c-structure, the verb in the root form is categorized as a verbal adverb which heads its own phrase (ADVvp) and modifies the whole clause. The f-structure representation depends on the lexical semantics of the finite motion verb. In the case of (1a) with *kud nīkl-a* ‘jumped out of/emerged jumping’, the arguments are distributed as shown in Figure 1, with one subject shared by both verbs. The lexical entries of the motion verbs are extended with lexical semantic information on the kind of motion they denote. The MOTION information in the LEX-SEM structure of the verbs encodes the nature of motion, either ‘manner’ or ‘path’, the SEM-PROP feature is only used for manner of motion verbs and captures the kind of motion that the subject undergoes. For motion verbs of direction, the feature DIRECTION specifies the kind of path that is followed by the subject. Figure 1 presents the resulting c- and f-structure.

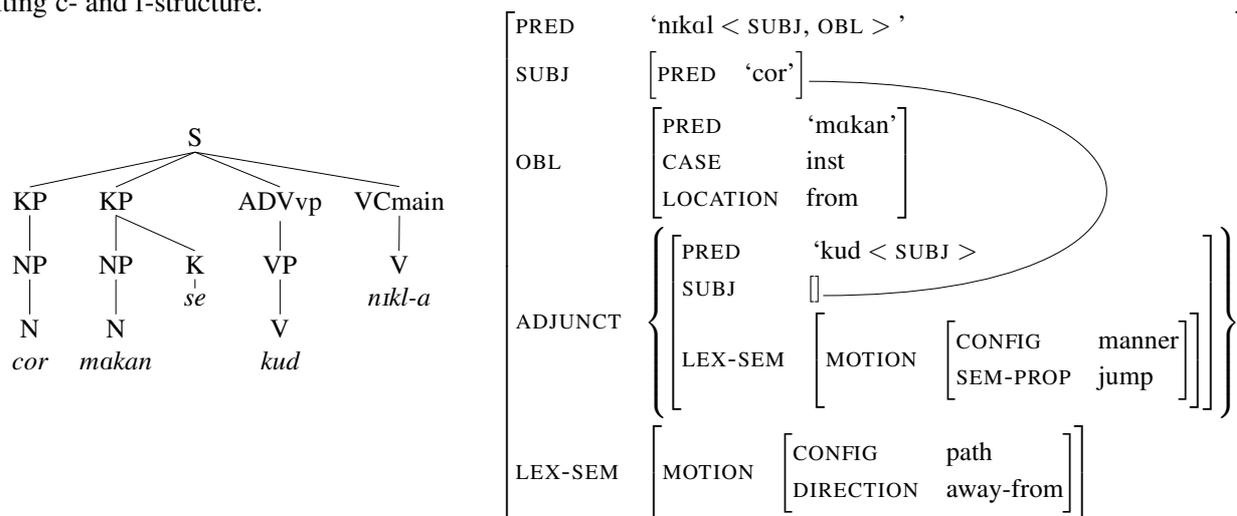


Figure 1: C- and f-structure representation for sentence (1a)

A slightly different analysis is needed when the order of directional and manner of motion verb is reversed. In example (1b), the manner of motion verb is denoted by the finite verb *cal-a* ‘walk-Perf.M.Sg’, whereas the direction or path of the motion is contributed by the verb *g^hus* ‘enter’ in the root form. The c-structure and the encoded spatial information is parallel to the analysis in Figure 1. However, the f-structure is different due to the valency of the finite verb: the manner of motion verb *cal-na* ‘to walk’ only licenses a subject, therefore the path argument *hamare makan=mē* ‘in our house’ is an ADJUNCT to the main predicate and is licensed by the directional verb *g^hus-na* ‘to enter’, which shares its subject with the subject of the finite verb.

From the investigated corpus data, no clear tendency as to the order of directional and manner of motion verb can be derived and their reversibility as in (3) is not always grammatical. The corpus investigation has also shown that combinations of two motion verbs with the same configuration are possible, but are semantically very restricted and rather a case of emphasis via reduplication (e.g. *b^hag dor* ‘lit. flee run’). The reason for using MVSS might be the fact that Urdu and Hindi are generally considered verb-framed languages (Talmy 1985, Narasimhan 2003) in which path phrases need to be expressed by a subordinate clause when occurring with an atelic manner of motion verb. The constructions presented in this paper might be one way of avoiding elaborate path phrases by “stacking” manner of motion verbs and directional motion verbs, thereby achieving an efficient combination of event structures.

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