



The Analysis of Light Verbs in Relation to Main Verbs: A Cross-Linguistics Study

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Abstract

The study highlights Punjabi light verbs in relation to main and auxiliary verbs. It describes the Punjabi verbs' classification on the basis of light verbs in relation to main verbs and auxiliary verbs. The study aims to describe light verb structure in Punjabi and English language that how they are similar or different from each other. The researcher analyzed some light verbs of Punjabi and English language in detail to see that how they are semantically, syntactically and phonologically similar or different and has pointed out the characteristics of the light verbs keeping in view the functions they perform in respect with the argument structure in which they occur. The analysis of the collected data was done manually regarding the sequence of light+ main verbs. The study also finds out the sequence of light verbs in relation with main verbs.

Keywords: Punjabi light verbs, main verbs, auxiliary verbs, semantics, syntactic, phonological

1. Introduction

The study focuses on the function of light verbs in Punjabi language to find that how they help the main verbs in conveying the information or sense of the text. The study aims to emphasize the importance of the light verbs that exist in Punjabi language. The research also reveals the sequence of light verbs in relation to the main verbs by analyzing the structure of Punjabi language. The reason is that Punjabi language lacks in the research work, especially on the classes of the verbs. The light verbs are acceptable only with the main verbs or nouns, and without these (i.e. main verbs or nouns) light verbs nothing. Light verbs play a role in the verb construction at the place where no other verb fits. Light verbs can be differentiated by their semantic, syntactic and phonological characteristics. Frequently used light verbs in English are; do, have, take, give, make. Whereas, in Punjabi language (اے، جے گئی لیا، گیا، پئی، دتا، دتی رہیا) are the frequently use light verbs (Butt, 2010).

In function, light verbs are similar to the auxiliaries as they modify the main verbs to complete the sense of the message however they do not qualify the test of auxiliary verbs. Some and many syntacticians such as Lahiri and Butt argue that a light verb should be categorized as main verbs or auxiliary. The verb (i.e. follows the main verb) may be auxiliary, modal or light verb. A light verb is used to show completeness, suddenness or similar properties. According to Butt and Lahiri (2013) important characteristics of light verbs are that they play the role of form identical to the main verb of a language. Though they play a little role semantically or structurally but they are an integral part of Punjabi language structure due to the reason that the required sense or meaning cannot be expressed without the use of the light verbs.

As Butt (2010) describes that the verbs usually consist of two parts (i.e. main and light verbs), both of these types of verbs form a verbal predicate, i.e. the co-verbal part can be a noun, adjective, or a verb and the later part consists of a light verb that is often identical to a content verb and semantically has little function to play. It is also observed that some of the light verbs add information or clarify meanings related to an event prediction. According to some of the syntacticians the light verbs have different verbal category because of the syntactic structure and semantic effects on the main verbs. The light verbs also have subclasses like the auxiliaries and main verbs according to their different semantic and syntactic roles. Light verbs often convey the tense or aspectual aspects in a sentence. Light verbs are named as light because they are semantically light.

Government binding and minimalist approaches argue that there is no distinction between light verbs and auxiliaries because both of them do the raising. Their construction is often done in a format like V+NP for example, a think, a read, a walk, a pull, a ring, a shout, have a rest, give a sigh. Important characteristic of light verbs is that they lack in argument structure like the main verbs but they are capable of marking the case of a sentence. Diachronic linguistics informs that light verbs have evolved from the main verbs/heavy verbs because of the semantic change i.e. a process through which a verb loses its pure meanings to some extent.

علی نے ابندی کنڈے تھے تھاپیوتی

Ali gave him a pat on the back.

علینہ نے آہیری

Alina gave a sigh.

راج نے تگلا دعویٰ کیوتا

Raj made a worthy claim that....



The underlined words in sentences 1, 2 and 3 in Panjabi and English languages are light verbs while the words in bold are full or main verbs.

1.1 Aim of the Study

The aim of study is to find out the light verbs in Punjabi language and the functions they play along the main verbs and to find out if there is any difference and similarities in English and Punjabi light verbs.

1.2 Research Question

- What is the function of light verbs in Punjabi and English language structures?
- How is the Punjabi light verbs' structure different from that of the English light verbs' structure?

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study will be beneficial for the English and Punjabi language teachers as well as learners of both the languages, especially in the field of syntax. It will provide the possibilities to the translator to translate the light verbs of both languages in a more comprehensible way. In addition, it will be helpful for the researchers to carry out the research on a major level to find out the structural similarities and differences between the structures of light verbs in Punjabi and English languages.

2. Literature Review

It was a famous linguist Otto Jespersen who first of all coined the term in a book titled "A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles (1931) as cited in Jespersen (2013). A light verb, does not convey meaning on its own but it helps other parts of speech in conveying the information, usually with a noun. Light verbs, in English language, function as light verbs for e.g., make, take, have, give and do.

Punjabi language is one of the glorified languages of the world and mostly understood and used in Pakistan after the national language Urdu. It is an admitted fact that it is being ignored by its native speakers. Verbs like *دتی, دتا, پئی, پیا, گیا, گیا, گئی, گئے* play the role of light verbs in Punjabi language. Light verbs are also known as delexical verbs, vector verbs, explicator verbs, thin verbs, empty verbs, and semantically weak verbs, as they have the lighter meaning.

Research on the construction of light verbs claims that they have the tense morphology and often appear in the final position of a sentence. However, Bukhari (2009) negates this view saying that a main verb having the tense morphology can appear at the final position of a sentence. Hook, as cited in Butt (2010), argues that light verbs show the forcefulness and suddenness or they may be event bounded. The structural order of Punjabi language is SOV with free word order, but it seems rigid in the order of verbs that seem complex. Like Urdu language, Punjabi language structure is also full of light verbs. The light verb can be explained more in detail that it is the verb that has meaning of general type, and if we study it separately it has incomplete meaning. Similarly, when it is used along with other words (usually a noun) then it conveys more specific and complicated meaning (Geoffrey Leech, 2006).

It is observed that the light verbs function between the thematic verbs that convey the content of the sentence and the functional verbs which contribute little to the meaning of a sentence. Therefore, they are called light verbs and they contribute in the thematic and semantic aspects but they are lighter ones and are not much like the main verbs. The studies of Butt and Geuder (2001) reveal that light verb constructions seem a challenge for the theories that deal with syntax or semantics, as it becomes difficult to categorize them either as a lexical verb or auxiliary verb because of their double properties.

3. Research Methodology

The study highlights and compares the light verbs' structure differences and similarities in English and Punjabi languages. As well as it also highlights their role in conveying meaning. Light verbs in relation with main verbs, auxiliary verbs and nouns are also discussed.

The required data is collected by researchers themselves from real conversations of Punjabi speakers of rural areas of districts Lahore, Kasur, Okara and Sheikhpura. Important and repeated light verbs were noted down by the researchers. The data is qualitatively analyzed.

4. Observations

In order to find out the function of light verbs in Punjabi vs English language, the researchers took some frequently used light verbs from Punjabi language structure. The study compares the light verbs structure of Punjabi and English semantically, syntactically and phonologically. In above sentences i.e., 1, 2 and 3 the underlined words are light verbs while the words in bold are full or main verbs, in both languages i.e., English and Punjabi. In this sentence 1, both English and Punjabi light and full verbs have the same effect semantically but the syntactic structure seems different as in the English sentence sequence is (subject+light verb+vp). But the Punjabi language syntactic structure is (subject+object+full verb+light verb). Punjabi light verb is phonologically stressed or pronounced with a force while the English light verbs are pronounced unstressed and main verbs with a force or stress.

This example, in sentence 2, shows that both English and Punjabi light verbs are semantically equal but there is a syntactic variation. It is important to note that the Punjabi light verb (*دیا*) is following the main verb (*بند*). It seems that Punjabi light verbs convey something more than the English light verb. If we discuss the argument structure of English light verbs, on the left they have an NP while on the right side they have the VP (main verb and argument).

1. Majid made the door close.
2. Majid let the door close.

Seeing sentences 4 and 5, it can be said that "Majid closed the door". But in both the sentences Majid did something that became the reason of closing the door. Some of the LVCs are similar in meaning to a main verb, for example:

3. Raj did a revision of my paper (LVC).
4. Raj revised my paper (MVC).

Light verbs are not fixed. Rather, it depends on the situation in which they appear as they can play the function of auxiliaries and full verbs. LVs have similarities with auxiliary verbs as both of them add something to the functional meaning instead of the semantic meaning. But it should be kept in mind that they are neither auxiliaries, nor main verbs. They are not auxiliaries as they fail in the syntactic test set for auxiliary verbs. For example,

5. I did call Salman yesterday.

6. Did I call Salman yesterday?
7. I did not call Salman yesterday.
8. My teacher did the review of my paper in the morning.
9. *Did my teacher the review of my paper in the morning?
10. *My teacher did not the review of my paper in the morning.

LV are also different from the main verbs as they lack in the semantic function that the main verbs have. Full verbs are the major part of the predicate whereas the light verbs have to take help from an NP that consists of its own content.

In Punjabi structure, like the Urdu it is observed that the main verb is modified by another verb that follows the main verb as it is described by Schmidt (1999). In a verbal sequence after the main verb, there comes an auxiliary, aspectual auxiliary, a modal or a light verb. It is the function of a light verb that shows the suddenness, completeness or similar properties. Just like the auxiliaries and the main verbs, light verbs also have the sub-categories, as Ramchand (2008) divides light verb into three classes i.e., undergoer, resultee, and rheme. As in sentence 14 the light verb, in the 'undergoer' class, the change happens with the state of the subject as in the sentence

جج ٹرہی

Baraat suddenly moved

In sentence 14, the state of the subject (جج) is changed and the light verb (ہی) also shows the suddenness of the action. And the subject of the ingestive type of light verbs also undergoes change. For example:

اوہ کھانہ کھا کے گیا

Having eaten the meal, he left.

In sentence 15, the verb class is ingestive that shows the action of eating and the word (کے گیا) shows the completeness of the action, which is also a characteristic of light verbs that they show the completeness. Some of the verbs (see sentence 16) reflect a change in the state of mind e.g., the verb in which mind feels fear.

جنید ڈر کے بچ گیا

Junaid ran away with fear.

Manner of displacement is also a subclass of light verbs that deals with the motion and displacement of a state of the subject. See sentence 17 for example.

چڑی اڑ گئی

The sparrow flew away.

In sentence 17, we come to know someone has performed the act of motion and displacement. Second main subclass is resultee or undergoer, these light verbs show that the subject in these sentences is either a receiver or it shows the endpoint. These states are reflected in sentences 18 and 19.

چڑی نے دانہ کھا لیا

Sparrow ate the food.

شعیب سب کولوں ڈر گیا

Shoaib feared from the snake.

This type of verbs (shown in 18 and 19) cannot be classified under the heading of mental gain verbs. Rather, they can be categorized as "resultee" or "undergoer" because they show direction of the 'act' under process.

4. Conclusion

In fact, the light verbs play the role of coordinator for the main verbs and created complex verbal constructions along with main verbs. In function they are similar to auxiliary verb as both add some functional meaning not the semantic towards the content. It can be said that light verbs don't have their own meanings, if have they are lighter one, but if they happen in a sentence, they can change the meanings of the whole sentence. Often, they affect the aspectual and tense form of the sentence. So, most of the syntacticians consider the light verbs a different verbal category because of their syntactic structure and semantic affects these have on the main verbs.

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