

The Nominal Element in Complex Predicates

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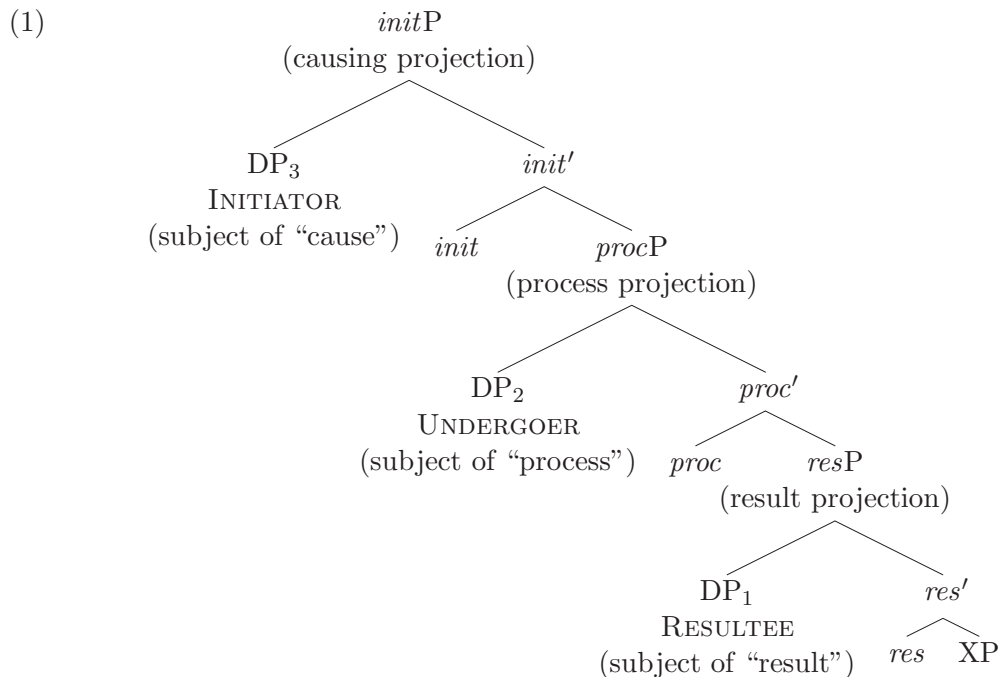
1 Aims of the talk

- In this talk, I propose a syntax-based analysis of Persian complex predicates, using the framework of the verbal First Phase Syntax developed by Ramchand (2008).
- I analyze complex predicates with the light verb *zædæn* ‘hit’ to illustrate how this approach can shed light on some widely discussed issues in the literature.
- The main problem I focus on is the syntactic status of the preverb of complex predicates of the type noun preverb+light verb.
- In general, noun preverbs exhibit properties of direct objects (Samvelian 2001; 2004), while at the same time being distinct from real arguments of the verb (Megerdooian 2006).
- I show how this analysis captures their dual nature by suggesting that noun preverbs can occupy more than one position in the verbal phrase.

2 The theoretical background

- I adopt Ramchand’s (2008) decomposition of the VP into three distinct subevent heads: *init*[iation]P, *proc*[ess]P and *res*[ult]P.
- The specifier positions of the subevent heads host the thematic participants in the particular subevent, or the “subject” of the subevent.

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- The system employs a compositional semantic rule based on a “leads-to” relation.
 - *initP*: introduces the causation event and licenses the external argument (the INITIATOR)
 - *procP*: specifies the process or the nature of the change and licenses the internal argument (the UNDERGOER)
 - *resP*: introduces the result state and licenses the holder of the result state (the RESULTEE)
- A verb can lexicalize more than one subevent. Which ones it lexicalizes depends on the verb’s feature specification.
 - All non-stative verbs lexicalize *proc*, as *proc* is the core of the dynamic predication.
 - A verb with an [*init*] feature projects an external argument.
 - Verbs with a [*res*] feature project by default to telic or punctual predicates.
- DP arguments can move through more than one specifier position thus acquiring a *composite θ-role*, for instance, UNDERGOER-INITIATOR and UNDERGOER-RESULTEE.

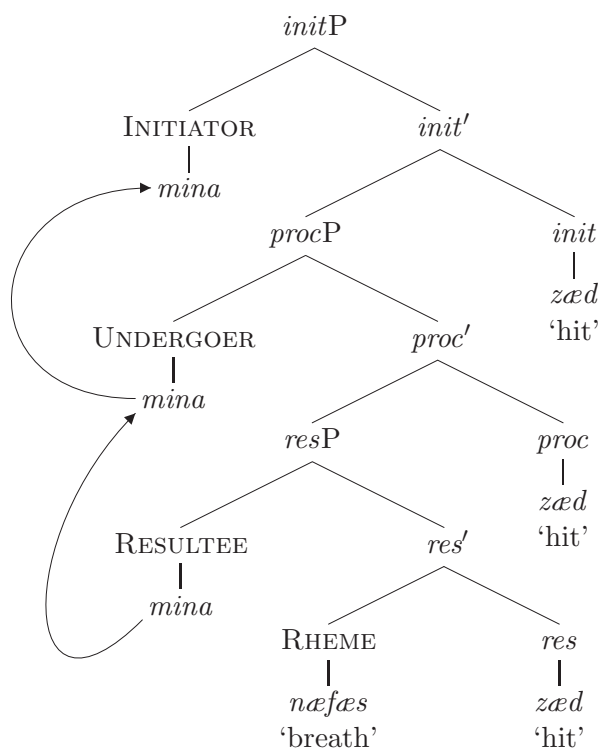
(2) John ran.

- *run*: [*init*, *proc*]; *John*: INITIATOR-UNDERGOER.
- A subevent head can have as its complement not only another subevent but also nonverbal material (DP, AP, PP). Such nonverbal complements are called RHEMES: the XP in (1).
- RHEMES are not arguments of the verb but part of the description of the predicate and together with the verb they build one joint predication.

3 Assembling the complex predicate

- I suggest that the light verbs in Persian lexicalize subevent heads just like lexical “heavy” verbs.
- The difference between light verbs and heavy verbs is that the light verbs have a very abstract semantics.
- The conceptual-intentional content of the complex predicate comes from the preverb.
- The preverb lexicalizes the RHEME and builds together with the light verb one joint predication.

- (3) *mina næfæs zæd.*
Mina breath hit
 ‘Mina took a breath’

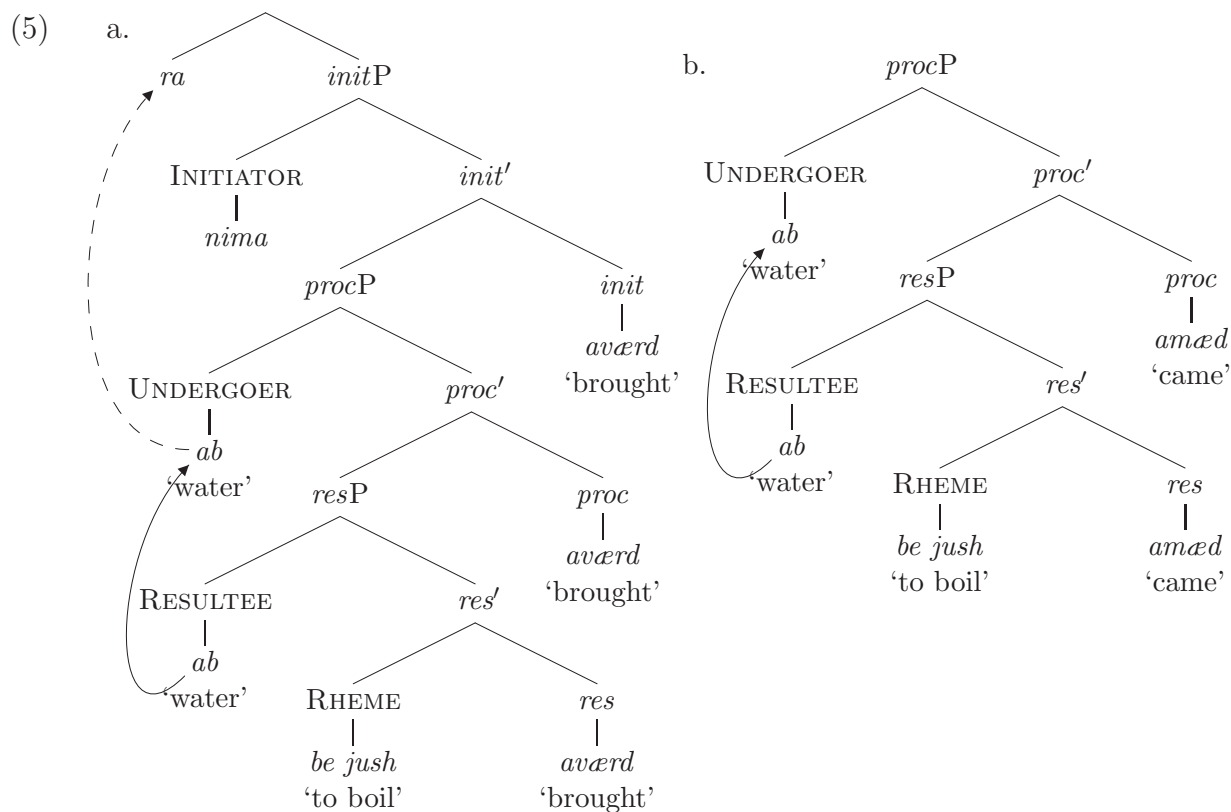


- Given that the light verb lexicalizes the verbal heads, the argument structure of the complex predicate will depend entirely on the feature specification of the light verb, in line with Megerdooian (2002) and Folli et al. (2003).
- Karimi-Doostan (1997) divides the light verbs into two groups: **initiatory** and **transition** light verbs.
- Translated into the terminology of the First Phase Syntax, initiatory light verbs are the ones that are specified for *init*. Transition light verbs lack *init*.

<i>init</i> light verbs		<i>init</i> -less light verbs	
<i>zædæn</i>	‘hit, strike’	<i>xordæn</i>	‘collide’
<i>kærdæn</i>	‘make’	<i>shodæn</i>	‘become’
<i>aværdæn</i>	‘bring’	<i>amædæn</i>	‘come’
<i>dadæn</i>	‘give’	<i>didæn</i>	‘see’
<i>ændæxtæn</i>	‘throw’	<i>oftadæn</i>	‘fall’

Table 1: Classification of Persian light verbs with respect to the feature [init]

- (4) a. *nima ab-ra be jush aværd.*
Nima water-OM to boil brought
 ‘Nima boiled the water’
- b. *ab be jush amæd.*
water to boil came
 ‘The water boiled’
 (Megerdooimian 2002:149)



- In (5a), I assume raising of a specific UNDERGOER-RESULTEE argument (in other words, direct object) to the edge of *v*P (cf. Karimi (2005)).
- Intransitive complex predicates with *init* light verbs have volitional agents, as noted by Samvelian (2004).

- (6) a. *bæchche qælt zæd.*
child trip hit
 ‘The child tripped’ (intentionally)
- b. *bæchche qælt xord.*
child trip collided
 ‘The child tripped’ (unintentionally)

- (7) a. *tup qælt zæd.
ball trip hit
- b. tup qælt xord.
ball trip collided
 ‘The ball rolled’

4 The dual nature of noun preverbs

4.1 Neither fish nor fowl ... or both?

- At first glance, non-specific direct objects (*bare objects*) and noun preverbs look very much the same.

- (8) a. reza divar zæd.
Reza wall hit
 ‘Reza hit a wall/walls’
- b. reza telefon zæd.
Reza phone hit
 ‘Reza called’

- According to Megerdumian (2006), noun preverbs have no specific counterpart, unlike bare objects.

- (9) a. reza in divar-ra zæd.
reza this wall-OM hit
 ‘Reza hit this wall’
- b. *reza in telefon-ra zæd.
Reza this phone-OM hit
 (‘Reza made this call’)
 okay under the reading ‘Reza hit this phone (the object)’

- Nevertheless, some complex predicates allow for definite noun preverbs (Dabir-Moghaddam 1997, Samvelian 2001).

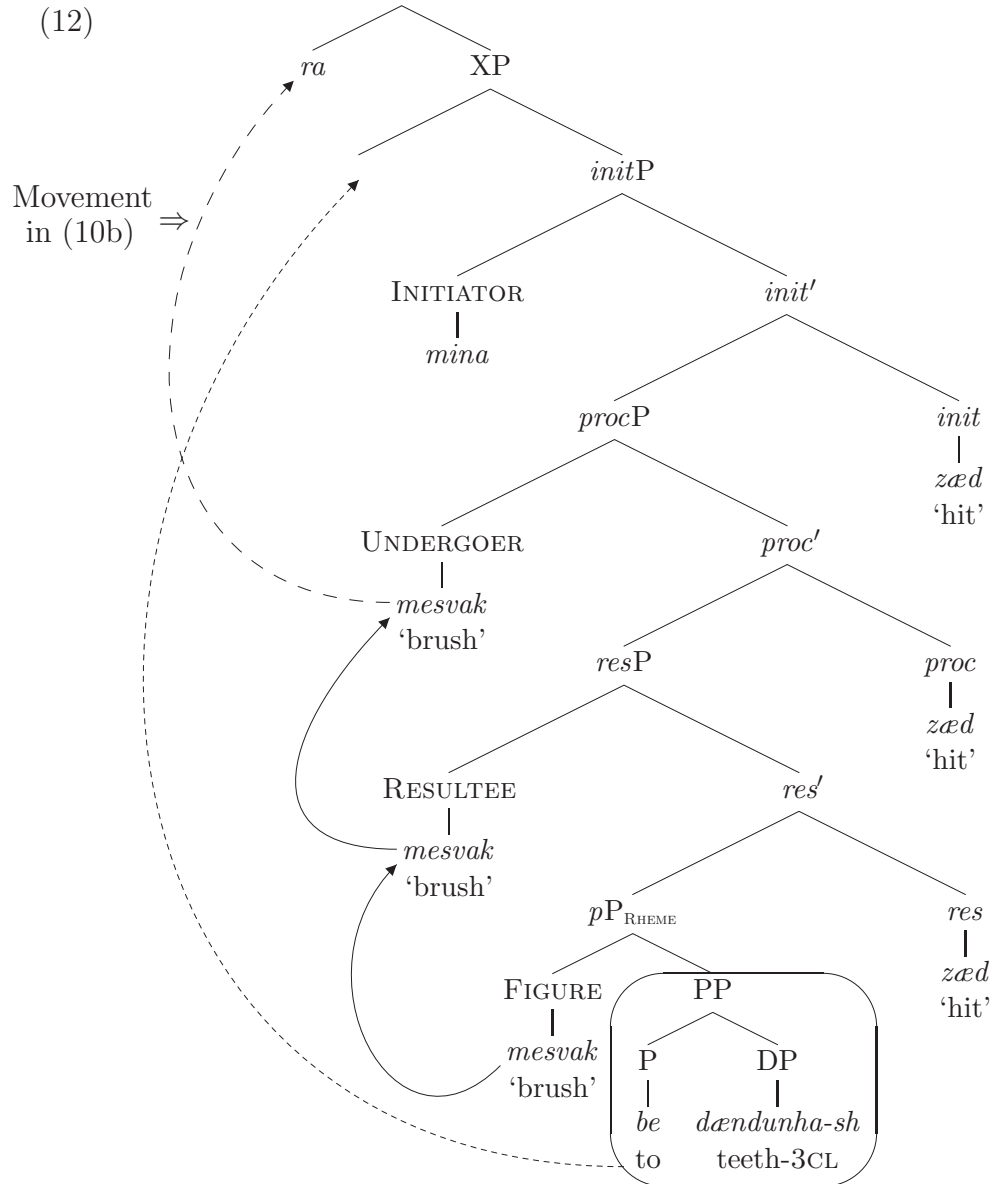
- (10) a. mina be dændunha-sh mesvak zæd.
Mina to teeth-3CL brush hit
 ‘Mina brushed her teeth’
- b. mina in mesvak-ra be dændunha-sh zæd.
Mina this brush-OM to teeth-3CL hit
 ‘Mina brushed her teeth with this brush’
 ‘Mina hit her teeth with this brush’

- In (10) we witness the unmarked word order of verb arguments in Persian (Mahootian 1997, Karimi 2003).

- (11) a. Subject – Indirect object (*to*-PP) – Bare direct object – Verb
 b. Subject – Specific direct object – Indirect object (*to*-PP) – Verb

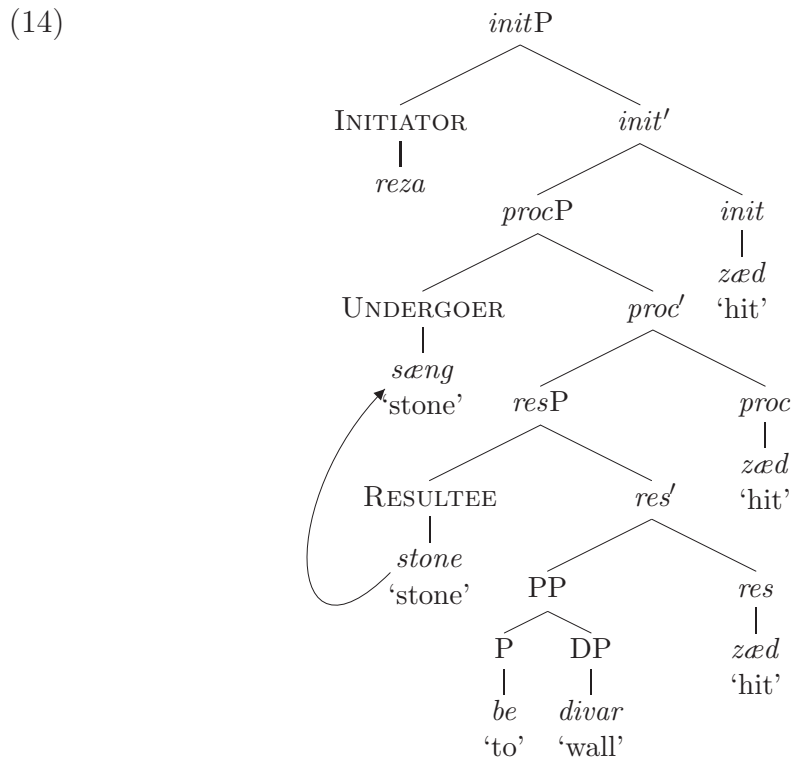
- In other words, there are good reasons to think that *brush* in (10) is the direct object of the verb *zædæn* ‘hit.’

- However, if we assume that *brush* is a direct object of *zædæn*, it is unclear why the interpretation of (10a) is not *Mina hit a brush at her teeth*.
- Further, the ambiguity of (10b) is unaccounted for.
- To solve these issues, I propose the following syntactic structure underlying (10).



- I suggest that *mesvak* 'brush' starts out inside the RHEME and moves subsequently to Spec,*procP* (UNDERGOER) via Spec,*resP* (RESULTEE).
- More specifically, *mesvak* is first merged in Spec,*pP*, where Figures are introduced (Romanova 2007).
- In the case of the heavy verb *zædæn* 'hit' taking a direct object (*sæng* 'stone' in (13)), the latter starts out not in the rhematic position, but directly as a RESULTEE:

- (13) *reza be divar sæng zæd.*
 Reza to wall stone hit
 ‘Reza hit a stone/stones at the wall’



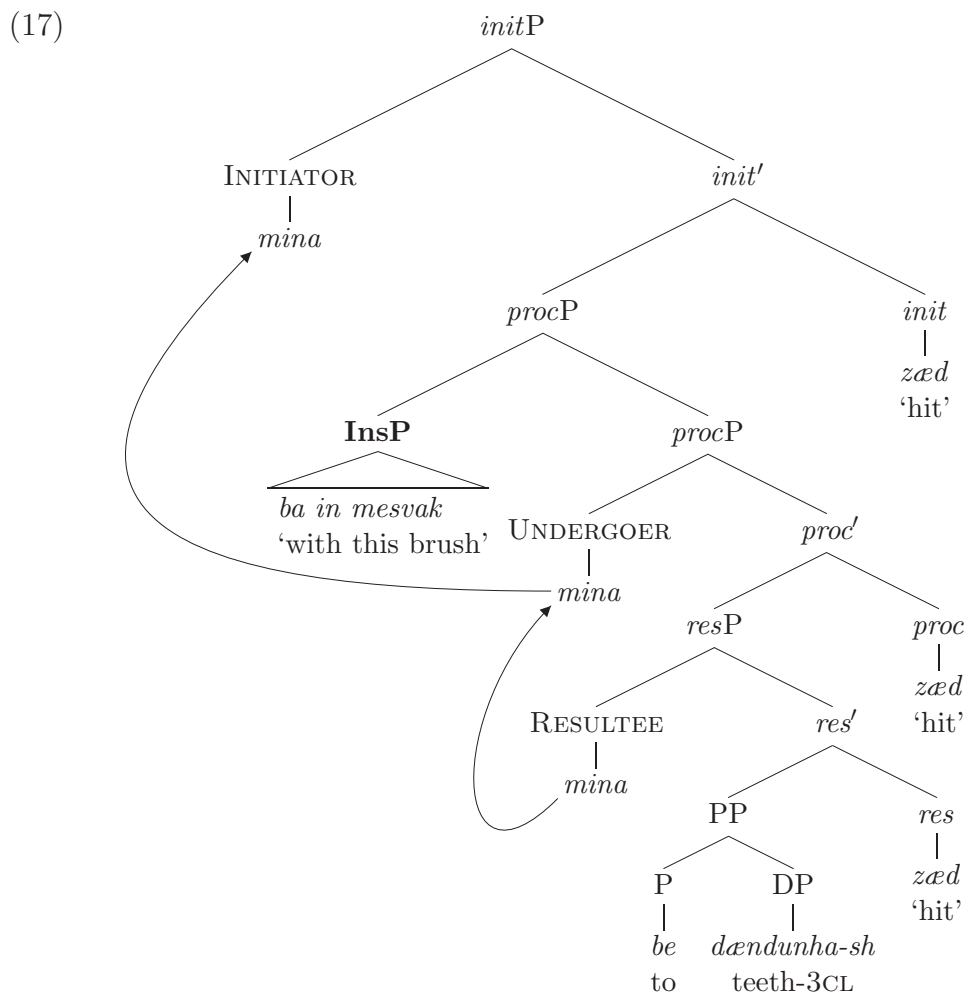
- This accounts for the fact that *mesvak* in (10) is interpreted as part of the complex predicate, while *sæng* in (14) is not.
- As a matter of fact, Samvelian (2001) observes that (10b) can be paraphrased as:

- (15) *mina ba in mesvak be dændunha-sh mesvak zæd.*
Mina with this brush to teeth-3CL brush hit
 ‘Mina brushed her teeth with this brush’

- Notice that, in (15), the presence of the instrumental phrase *with this brush* is not enough for interpreting the verb *zædæn* ‘hit’ as ‘brush’.

- (16) *mina ba in mesvak be dændunha-sh zæd.*
Mina with this brush to teeth-3CL hit
 ‘Mina hit her teeth with this brush’

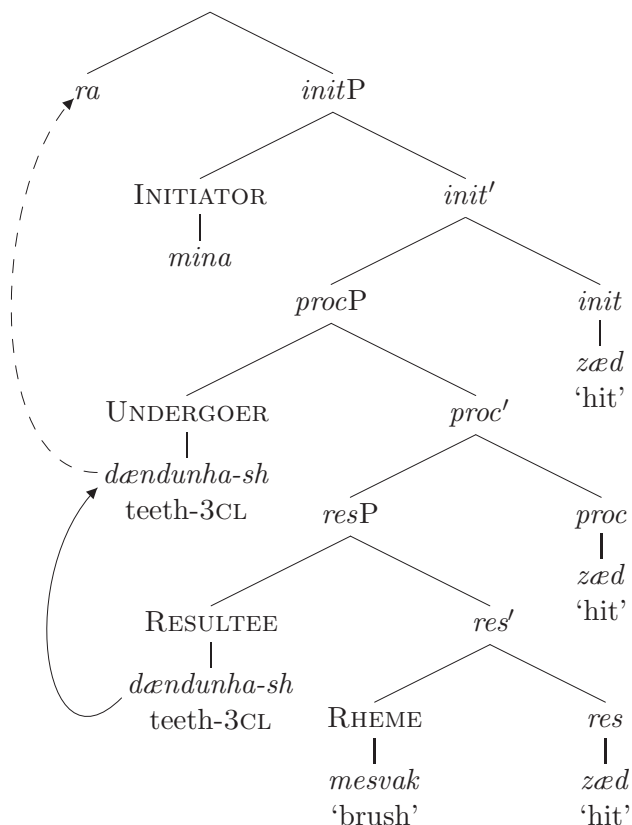
- The reason is that the instrumental phrase *ba in mesvak* is a PP adjunct.



- Thus, the syntactic structure underlying the complex predicate *mesvak zædæn* (brush hit) different from the syntax of constructions where a heavy verb *zædæn* ‘hit’ takes a direct object, as in *sæng zædæn* (stone hit) ‘hit a stone’.
- This is confirmed also by the fact that the complex predicate can appear with a direct object: (18a). The direct object+heavy verb construction cannot: (18b).

- (18)
- a. *mina dændunha-sh-ra mesvak zæd.*
Mina teeth-3CL-OM brush hit
 ‘Mina brushed her teeth’
- b. **mina divar-ra sæng zæd.*
Mina wall-OM stone hit
 Intended: ‘Mina hit her wall with a stone’

(19)



- Summing up:

- The analysis proposed here captures the dual behavior of noun preverbs in that, on the one hand, they originate in the RHEME position, where they form one predication with the verb (i.e., one complex predicate).
- On the other hand, noun preverbs can move out of the RHEME to a specifier of a verbal head (RESULTEE, UNDERGOER), if it is available.
- Due to this movement, the noun preverb can acquire properties typical of RESULTEE or UNDERGOER arguments (direct objects), and INITIATOR arguments (subjects).

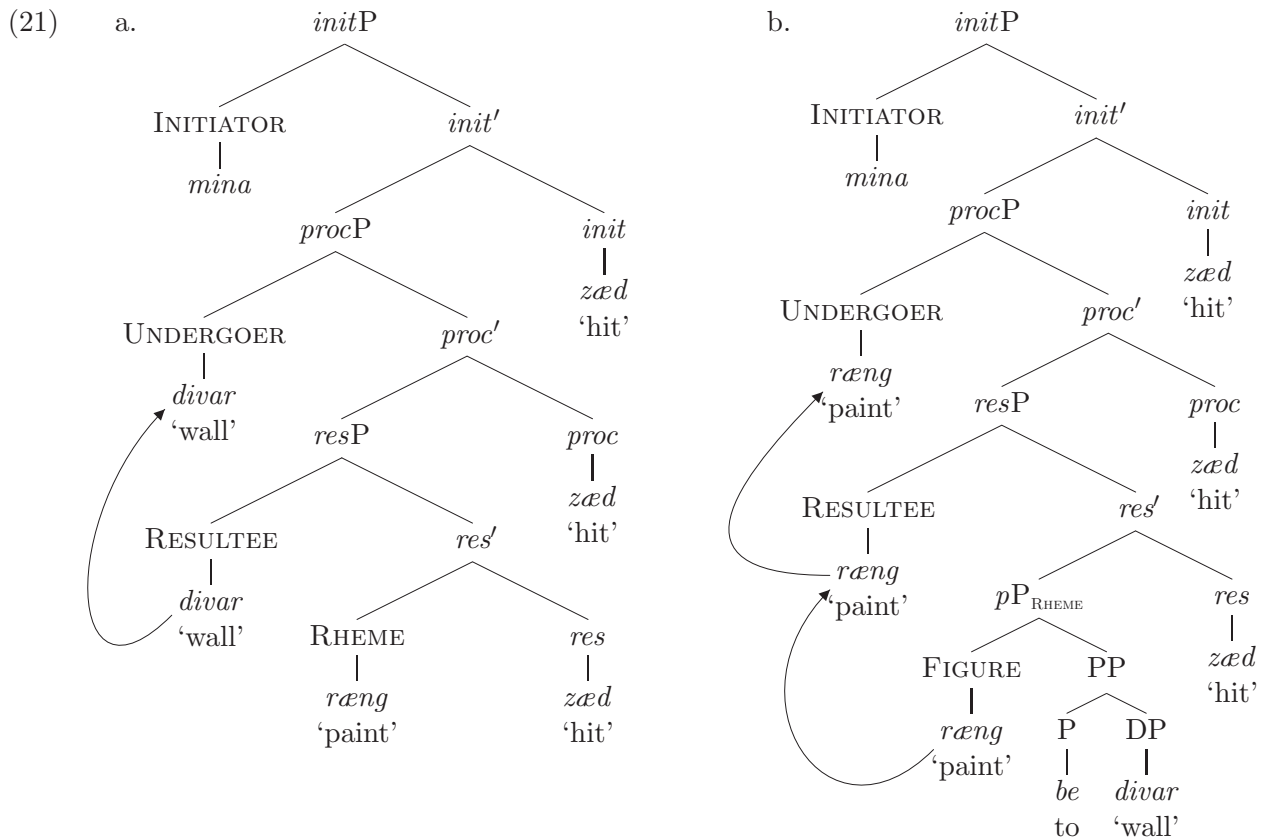
4.2 Affectedness alternation

- This proposal offers an account also for the following data:

- (20) a. mina divar-ra ræng zæd.
Mina wall-OM paint hit
 'Mina painted the wall'
- b. mina be divar ræng zæd.
Mina to wall paint hit
 'Mina painted the wall'

- In (20a), the wall has to be completely painted, while in (20b), the wall need not be completely painted.

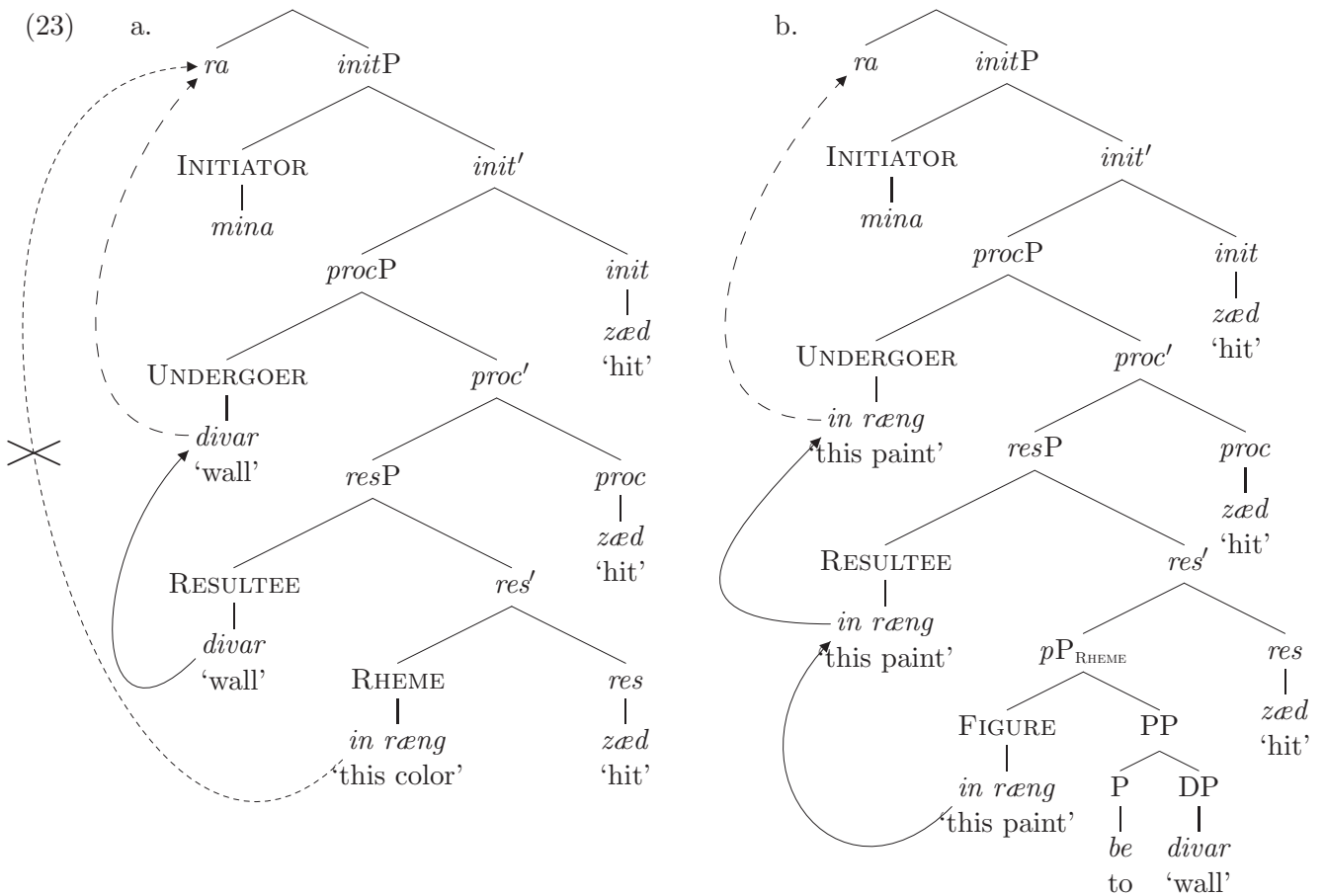
- The syntactic structures of (20a) and (20b) are presented in (21a) and (21b), respectively.



- Interestingly, if we make the noun preverb in (20a) specific, it doesn't take the object marker *ra* and stays *in situ*, cf. (22a).
- If the noun preverb in (20b) is made specific, then it takes the object marker *ra* and moves to the position reserved for specific direct object (before the indirect object), see (22b).

- (22) a. mina divar-ra in ræng zæd.
Mina wall-OM this paint hit
 'Mina painted the wall in this color'
- b. mina in ræng-ra be divar zæd.
Mina this paint-OM to wall hit
 'Mina painted the wall using this paint'

- The key to this peculiar behavior lies in the syntactic structures corresponding to (22a) and (22b).



- Assuming that the movement to the *ra*-projection at the edge of the *vP* targets only UNDERGOER-RESULTEE arguments, the RHEME *in ræng* in (23a) has no access to this position.
- In (23b), *ra*-affixation is licit, since the noun preverb *in ræng* is also an UNDERGOER-RESULTEE argument.

5 Summing up

- In this talk, I presented an analysis of Persian complex predicates in the framework of the First Phase Syntax of Ramchand (2008).
- I suggested that the *light verbs* lexicalize the subevent heads of the verbal phrase.
- The *preverbs* occupy the RHEME position and build together with the light verbs one joint predicate.
- Under this analysis, only the light verb determines the argument structure of the complex predicate (contra Karimi-Doostan 1997; 2005, in line with Megerdooian 2001 and Folli et al. 2003).
- I showed how this proposal captures the dual nature of noun preverbs, by suggesting that noun preverbs can simultaneously occupy an argument position of the verb and its RHEME.
- Such an approach can account for several facts concerning the noun preverbs in *zædæn* complex predicates (specifically, “Instrument complex predicates”, discussed in this talk):

- The preverbs of the examined complex predicates can exhibit properties ascribed to direct objects. This is because, in absence of an UNDERGOER-RESULTEE argument, these preverbs can move from Spec,*p*P to the UNDERGOER position, via RESULTEE.
- From this position, when specific, they also raise to the projection of the specificity marker *ra*, as direct objects do.
- When UNDERGOER-RESULTEEs, the preverbs can be interpreted as affected, as direct objects can be.
- At the same time, such preverbs are interpreted as part of the complex predicate, since they leave a copy inside the RHEME.

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