



RESEARCH PAPER**The Syntax of Light Verbs in Pashto: A Minimalist Approach****Inayat Ullah^{1*} and Dr. Nadeem Haider Bukhari²**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the syntax of light verbs in Pashto, an Indo-Iranian language, using the theoretical framework of the Minimalist Program developed by Chomsky (1995, 2000). Light verbs, although contribute little semantic content, play a crucial syntactic role. Despite their prevalence, the syntactic behavior of light verbs in Pashto has not been extensively studied. This research seeks to fill this gap by providing a detailed syntactic analysis of these verbs. The nature of the study is descriptive, theoretical as well as comparative. The data for the study was collected from personal observation, Pashto books and other relevant sources. The analysis reveals that light verbs in Pashto occupy a specific syntactic position, acting as functional heads that select a lexical predicative category such as verb, noun and adjective as their complement. The resulting structure forms a single verbal predicate known as light verb constructions, where the light verb contributes nothing to semantics but provides the necessary syntactic flavor to the construction. The agreement between the light verb and the subject or object for features like gender, number, and person plays a significant role in sentence construction. Further research is recommended to explore the semantic and syntactic behavior of light verbs in Pashto.

KEYWORDS Light Verb Constructions, Light Verb, Minimalist Program, Syntax**Introduction**

This study focuses on the syntax of light verbs in Pashto within the framework of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 1995, 2000). Light verbs are a notable linguistic phenomenon observed in various South Asian languages, including Pashto. Despite their significance, light verbs in Pashto have received relatively less attention. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by providing a descriptive analysis of Pashto light verbs, especially from a syntactic perspective. Pashto is an Indo-Iranian language. In Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, Pashto is spoken as a first language. It is one of the most commonly spoken languages in Pakistan, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan. More than fifty thousand people speak it as their mother tongue in Iran (Tegey, 1996). In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it is taught in almost all public schools and is the primary medium of instruction in more than 90% of them (Iqbal et al., 2013). According to Rahman (2009), Pashto is typically classified into five main dialects: North-Western (Central) Dialect, South-Western (Kandahar) Dialect, South-Eastern (Quetta) Dialect, North-Eastern (Yousafzai) Dialect, Middle Tribal Dialect According to Hallberg (1992), the North Eastern dialect of Pashto, also known as the Yousafzai dialect, retains a prominent status and is regarded the standard dialect of the language. The researcher collected data from the Yousafzai dialect, which is also the researcher mother tongue.

Otto Jespersen (1965), a renowned Danish linguist, first introduced light verbs in his 'Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles,' and since then, they have been a topic of discussion in the relevant literature. Later on, Grimshaw and Mester (1988), Mohanan (1994), Butt (1995), Akhtar (1998 & 2000), Bukhari (2009) and Kiani (2013) have frequently used this term. In recent year a light verb have become more popular, and has mostly replaced the previous terminology. Light verbs have been referred to by various terms by different researchers, including explicators, auxiliary verbs, intensifiers, operators, vectors, and vector verbs. From a Minimalist perspective, light verbs can be analyzed as functional categories that host tense and aspect features and license arguments.

Light verbs are called so because they have a weaker semantic content. According to Grimshaw and Mester (1988), light verbs have two distinct properties: (a) they are weak from a semantic perspective, and (b) they are either phonologically null, or if overt, they exclusively perform syntactic function. These two properties are mostly true for light verbs in Pashto, except that they are always overt. They provide a distinct meaning only when paired with a proper complement. For instance, when the light verb *kedal/kegi* (to become) is used as a predicate, it does not convey a specific proposition unless combined with an appropriate complement. The light verb and complement work together to generate the overall meaning of the light verb constructions (henceforth LVCs). Together, they contribute to the semantics and syntax of the construction. Thus, the defining property of light verbs is that they don't contribute much to the meaning so are called light verb.

Literature Review

Light verbs have attracted significant attention from linguists, syntacticians and scholars due to their versatility, productivity and effectiveness compared to simple verbs across various languages. Numerous analyses have been conducted to better understand the concept of light verbs in different languages, and scholars have addressed them from various perspectives. For instance, studies on light verbs in Urdu and other Indo-Aryan languages have highlighted their function in coordinating main verbs and forming complex verbal constructions. Researchers have also explored the syntactic representation of light verbs in Hindi, classifying them into four categories: conjunct, compound, permissive, and passive. According to Butt (1995), light verbs are usually used in the formation of complex predicates. Chomsky (2000) first proposed the idea of *v* for auxiliaries and modals. Within current analyses in the Minimalist Program, *v* is a category that could be interpreted as either a functional or lexical category, or a combination of both. Since light verbs carry some semantic but predicationally-dependent information, they have a mixed nature. As a result, it seems that *v* would be a good candidate for analyzing light verbs. A number of researchers have delved into the study of light verbs across various languages. Jespersen (1965) is credited as one of the first researchers to explore this topic. Subsequently, Grimshaw and Mester (1988), Mohanan (1994), Geuder (2001), Lahiri (2003), Akhtar (2000), and Bukhari (2009) and Bruening (2016) have all conducted investigations on light verbs within complex predicates. These researchers have approached the phenomenon from different angles, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the nature of light verbs.

Pashto, on the other hand, makes frequent use of light verbs in its constructions. However, light verbs in Pashto have remained largely unexplored, especially from a syntactic perspective. Pashto grammarians from 1855 to the late 20th century, such as Raverty (1855), Roos-Keppel (1922), Penzl (1955), Shafeev (1964), Mackenzie (1987), Khattak (1988), and Babrakzai (1999), did not use the term light verb in their analyses

of Pashto grammar. Thus, the review of the existing literature indicates that the syntactic properties of Pashto light verbs have not been comprehensively studied. In order to fill this gap this study is an attempt to present a descriptive analysis of the syntactic nature of Pashto light verbs within the framework of the Minimalist program.

Material and Methods

Due to the particular focus of this study on the syntax of light verbs in Pashto, the conventional techniques of data collection such as questionnaires, tests (written or oral) and interviews are inapplicable to the present study. In the data collection process, the researchers collected data from personal observation, Pashto-English dictionaries, articles, journals, as well as Pashto grammars composed in Pashto, Urdu and English. The analysis was conducted using a descriptive approach, with syntactic structures represented through tree diagrams to visualize the interactions between light verbs and other elements in the clause.

Results and Discussion

Light Verbs in Pashto

According to Butt (2003), light verbs are often high-frequency verbs with broad or generic meanings, and their number may vary depending on the language. Several South Asian languages, including Urdu, Punjabi, Hindko, Gojri, and Hindi, use many light verbs. However, linguists differ on the number of light verbs depending on the selection criterion. For instance, Bhatia (1993) found around twelve light verbs in Punjabi, while Mohanan (1994) listed *kar* (do) and *ho* (become) as typical light verbs in Hindi. Similarly, Singh (1990) and Akhtar (2000) identified eight and ten light verbs, respectively, in their studies. In Urdu, Butt (1995) identified thirteen light verbs, and Bukhari (2009) discovered seventeen light verbs in Gojri. Like other languages, Pashto has light verbs and they play a crucial role in a variety of Pashto complex constructions. The frequently used light verbs in Pashto are listed in table 1 below:

Table 1
Light Verbs in Pashto

S. No	Light verb	Lexical Meanings
1	kedəl	to become / to happen
2	kawəl	to make / to do
3	sho/shi / shum	to become / to happen
4	akhistəl	to take
5	wahəl	to beat
6	niwəl	to hold
7	ratələl/ raghlo	to come
8	lagi/lagidəl	to attach / adhere
9	wa/wo/ wi/wum/yam	be (past) / do
10	de/ da	be (present) / do
11	Warkai	to give
12	lār	to go

Syntactic properties of Pashto light verbs

Light verbs are commonly found in many languages around the world. However, their frequency, productivity, and constructional patterns exhibit variations among these languages. Moreover, they have particular syntactic properties that set

them apart from other types of verbs. The following are a few salient syntactic properties of Pashto light verbs:

Agreement and Light Verbs

In Pashto LVCs, inflectional features such as tense, aspect and agreement are typically expressed through light verbs. They serve as a syntactic frame for the construction and provide the necessary grammatical information. This means that they carry an agreement inflection that corresponds in person, number and gender (PNG) with either the subject or object of the sentence, depending on the tense used. Specifically, in the present tense, the light verbs agree with the subject, while in the past tense, they agree with the object.

Gender

In Pashto, light verbs are inflected according to the corresponding gender for agreement. In the following examples, the light verb *kra* (do) in (1a) agrees with *kela* (banana) in feminine gender, while in (1b), the same light verb carries the [-o] morpheme, which stands for masculine gender in Pashto.

1.
 - a. Kenza kela kat kr-a
 Kenza-ERG banana-NOM cut do.PST.F.SG
 Kenza cut the banana.
 - b. Kenza am kat kr-o
 Kenza -ERG mango-NOM cut do.PST.M.SG
 Kenza cut the mango.

In (1), the light verb *kra* is inflected according to the gender of the object NP. For instance, when the object NP is *kela* (banana), the light verb takes the morpheme [-a] to reflect the feminine gender. On the other hand, when the object NP is 'am' (mango), the same light verb takes the morpheme [-o] to reflect the masculine gender.

Number

Pashto, like some other languages, uses light verbs which exhibit agreement in number. This means that the verb takes on a different inflection depending on whether the subject is singular or plural. For instance, in (2a) the verb is marked with morpheme [-a] to match a singular object *anda* (egg), while in (2b) the same verb takes on the inflection [-i], reflecting agreement with a plural object *andi* (eggs):

2.
 - a. Kenza anda mata kr-a
 Kenza -ERG egg-NOM.F.SG break do.PST.F.SG
 Kenza broke the egg.
 - b. Kenza andi mati kr-i
 Kenza -ERG eggs-NOM.F.PL break do.PST.F.PL
 Kenza broke the eggs.

The above examples reflect the agreement of light verbs with respect to numbers. In the first example, the object NP *anda* (egg) is singular in number, so the light verb takes morpheme [-a]. In the second example, the light verb takes morpheme [-i], which marks the plural object NP.

In the same way,

3.

- a. Uzma kitab rawray de
 Uzma-ERG book-NOM.SG bring be.PRS.PF.M.SG
 Uzma has brought the book.
- b. Uz ma kitabuna raware di
 Uzma -ERG books-NOM.PL bring be.PRS.PF M.PL
 Uzma has brought the books.

The examples in (3) illustrate how light verbs conform to the number of their object nouns. When the object noun *kitab* (book) is singular, the light verb '*de*' agrees with it by taking the morpheme [-e]. On the other hand, when the object noun '*kitabuna*' (books) is plural, the light verb '*di*' agrees with it by taking the morpheme [-i].

It is worth noting that in Pashto, the main verb in certain contexts may undergo inflection, as demonstrated in examples (2) and (3) above. For instance, in (2a), the main verb *mat* is inflected with the morpheme [-a] to indicate agreement with the singular feminine object *anda* (egg), and in (2b), the same verb is inflected with morpheme [-i] to match with the plural object *andi* (eggs). Similarly, in (3a), the morpheme [-ay] reflects agreement with the third person singular masculine object, but in (3b), the morpheme [-ee] reflects agreement with the plural argument. However, in some contexts, the main verb occurs in its base form and does not undergo any inflection. Consider the following examples:

4.

- a. Uzma gilas mat kr-o
 Uzma-ERG glass-NOM.M.SG break do.PST. M.SG
 Uzma broke the glass.
- b. Uzma gilasuna mat kr-ə
 Uzma-ERG glasses-NOM.PL break do.PST M.PL
 Uzma broke the glasses.

In example (4), we see that the main verb *mat* (break) in both examples remains the same, maintaining its base form, i.e., it does not undergo inflection. However, the light verb '*kr-o*' and '*kr-ə*' undergo inflection to agree with the number of the object.

Person

In Pashto, in addition to gender and number, light verbs are also inflected according to the relevant person for agreement. It implies that the light verbs will change their form in terms of whether the subject is first person, second person, or third person. Consider the following examples:

5.

- a. zə/*hagha gadi khog kram
 I-ABS.SG car-ERG.SG injure do.PST.ISG

The car injured me.

- b. *mung*/*taa *gadi* *khog* *kr-o*
 we-ABS.PL car-ERG injure do.PST.IPL
 The car injured us.

- c. *Uzma*/*zə *sabzi* *kat* *kawi*
 Uzma-NOM vegetable-ACC cut do.PRS.3SG
 Uzma is cutting the vegetable.

The examples in (5) demonstrate the inflection of light verbs to match the person in each sentence. For instance, in example (5a), the light verb *kram* (do) agrees with the first-person singular subject *zə* (I). Likewise, in (5b), the light verb *kr-o* (do) agrees with the first-person plural subject *mung* (we). Similarly, in (5c), the light verb *kawi* (do) matches the third-person singular subject 'Uzma'.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that light verbs display inflection to reflect gender, number and person agreement in various linguistic contexts.

Case marking

Like argument-verb agreement, case marking is also triggered by the light verbs in Pashto LVCs, demonstrating that these verbs are truly the head of their respective constructions. It is also one of the defining characteristics of light verbs that they case mark one of the arguments. The subject receives an ergative case if the transitive verb has a past tense or perfective aspect; otherwise, it takes a nominative case.

In the present tense, V_2 is also sensitive to the ergative case in Pashto. The subject is marked with ergative case if the V_2 is *de/da*, while the object is marked with nominative case since it matches the verb. Moreover, intransitive V_2 like *yum* (I am), *shum* (I became), and *kawom* (I do) can only be used with a nominative subject and not an ergative subject in a clause. Consider the following examples:

- 6.
- a. *Uzma* *am* *khwaṛalay* *de*
 Uzma-ERG mango-NOM.M.SG eat be.PRS.PF.M.SG
 Uzma has eaten the mango.
- b. *Uzma* *sara* *khor* *raghali* *da*
 Uzma-ERG with sister-NOM come.PRS be.PRS.PF.F.SG
 Sister has come with Uzma.
- c. *zə*/*maa *pa-library-ki* *mutalia* *kawom*
 I-NOM.ISG in library-LOC study be.PRS.1SG
 I am studying in the library.

In sentence (6a), the light verb 'de' matches in gender and number the nominative argument *am* (mango). Additionally, the subject argument needs to be marked for ergativity since the same verb bears both present (PRS) and perfect aspect (PF). Similarly, in (6b), the light verb 'da' agrees in singular, feminine form with the feminine nominative argument *khor* (sister). Moreover, the subject needs ergative case due to V_2 being marked for both (PRS) and (PF) tenses. In addition, the verb *kawom* in sentence (6c) has present tense features, hence the subject pronoun *zə* 'I' is marked with the nominative case. Consider some more examples:

7.

- a. taa avdas karay wo
you-ERG ablution -NOM perform be.PST.PF .M .SG
You had performed ablution.
- b. hagma kambal aghoste wo
he-ERG blanket-NOM wear be.PST.PF.M.SG
He had worn the blanket.
- c. *zə hagma lidale wa
I-NOM she-OBL see.M.SG be.PST.PF.1SG
I had seen her.

In (7a-b), the V_2 , *wo*, requires the subject to be marked for the ergative case since the V_2 is marked for past tense. All the light verbs illustrated here are transitive and are marked for past tense; thus, they require the subject to be marked for the ergative case. However, example (7c) is grammatically incorrect since the verb (V_2) '*wa*' indicates the past tense, while the subject is in the nominative case, resulting in a mismatch between the two. Thus, there is a correlation between the case of the subject and the tense marked on the verb (V_2) in Pashto LVCs.

Scrambling

Bukhari and Kiani (2022) report that component of serial verbs cannot be scrambled in Urdu. The same pattern is also observed in Pashto. The main verb and the light verb, in Pashto, cannot be separated from one another and must function as a single unit, i.e., this verb group can be scrambled but as a whole unit. A light verb cannot function independently of the main verb in LVCs. They are semantically and syntactically dependent on each other. The following examples illustrate this phenomenon:

8.

- a. Kenza paila [mata kr-a]
Kenza-ERG cup-NOM break do.PST
Kenza broke the cup.
- b. Kenza [mata kr-a] paila
Kenza-ERG break do.PST cup.NOM
Kenza broke the cup.
- c. *Kenza mata paila kr-a
Kenza -ERG break cup-NOM do.PST
Kenza broke the cup.
- d. *Kenza kr-a paila mata
Kenza-ERG do.PST cup-NOM break
Kenza broke the cup.

The grammaticality of (8a-b) illustrate that the verb components within Pashto LVCs may be scrambled as a whole. However, the sentences (8c-d) are grammatically incorrect since V_1 and V_2 are separated. It means that LVCs in Pashto like Gojri allow scrambling of verb group as a unit but the light verb cannot be separated from the main

verb in such constructions. This phenomenon is also common in other South Asian languages, such as Urdu, Punjabi and Pahari.

According to Bukhari (2009), the scrambling of verb groups in Gojri emphasizes the meanings. The same is true for Pashto because in Pashto scrambling also brings additional emphasis to the meaning. For instance, sentence (8a) in Pashto has no special emphasis on any component, while sentence (8b) could highlight that the pen has indeed been broken.

Position of Light Verbs

Another defining syntactic feature of the light verbs is their position in the LVCs. The light verb carries the agreement inflection and occupies the second position in LVCs, thus being labeled as V_2 . Pashto LVCs follow a set word order, where the light verb always appears after the lexical verb (V), noun (N) or adjective (A). This results in constructions such as ($V_1+ V_2$), (N+ V), and (A+ V) etc., in which the main verb retains its root form in most of the cases and the light verb provides grammatical flavors. The following examples illustrate this phenomenon:

9.

- | | | | | | |
|----|----------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------|
| a. | Farid | makan | joṛ-aw-í. | ($V_1+ V_2$) | |
| | Farid-NOM | house-ACC | built.do.CONT.PRS.3.SG.F | | |
| | Farid is building a house. | | | | |
| b. | Ali | Uzma ta | stərga | wuwahəla | (N+ V) |
| | Ali-ERG | Uzma-OBL | eye.F.SG | beat/hit.PST.F.SG | |
| | Ali winked at Uzma. | | | | |
| c. | taa | jenai | khafa | kṛ-a | (A+ V) |
| | you-ERG | girl-NOM | upset | do.PST.F.SG | |
| | You made the girl upset. | | | | |

The examples in (9) demonstrate that in Pashto LVCs, light verbs typically occupy the slot on the right side. The complement consistently appears before the light verb, resulting in a fixed word order which is a notable feature of Pashto LVCs. Although there may be variations in sentence structure or intended emphasis, the prevailing pattern is for the complement to appear first, followed by the light verb. This consistent word order helps establish a recognizable structure in Pashto LVCs.

Argument Structure and Light Verbs

Argument structure refers to how a verb connects with the nouns or noun phrases (arguments) associated with it in a sentence. It specifies the exact number and type of arguments required by a verb to construct a sentence that is both grammatically accurate and semantically meaningful. According to the Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 1995), arguments are formed by combining basic components in syntax rather than projected from the lexicon. This framework further claims that the light verb in complex predicate constructions carries the argument information. Thus, by argument structure, I mean the number of arguments projected by light verbs and the thematic roles associated with those arguments. It is important to note that in LVC, the light verb contributes to the argument structure.

According to Karimi-Doostan (2011), heavy and light verbs can be distinguished by their argument structure. Lexical verbs typically have a consistent

pattern of taking a specific number and type of arguments, while light verbs exhibit an unpredictable argument structure. For instance, in Pashto the verb *khwaral* (eat) typically takes two arguments when it functions as a lexical verb, as shown in (10a). On the other hand, when it is used as a light verb with different nominal elements, it affects the argument structure, i.e., it can take different numbers and types of arguments, as exemplified in (10b):

- 10.
- a. Uzam manra wokhwaṛa
 Uzma-ERG apple-ACC.F eat.PST.F.SG
 Uzma ate an apple.
- b. halək wahəl wokhwaṛəl
 boy-ERG beating eat.PST
 The boy got beaten.

In example (10), the verb *khwaral* (eat) takes different arguments. In (10a), the verb used as a lexical verb takes two arguments, agent 'Uzam' and patient *manra* (apple). But in (10b), the same verb is used as a light verb, taking only one recipient argument *halək* (boy). This observation illustrates that using the verb as either a lexical or light verb affects the argument structure, leading to changes in the argument number.

Light Verbs and Tense

Light verbs in Pashto, like in other languages, serve essential grammatical functions in the sentence structure. Among these grammatical functions, tense is a notable feature of light verbs. In Pashto, they can be found in all three tenses: present, past and future. Moreover, they exhibit their unique characteristics in each of these tenses. The detail of each tense is given below:

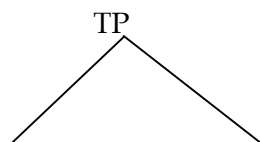
Present Tense

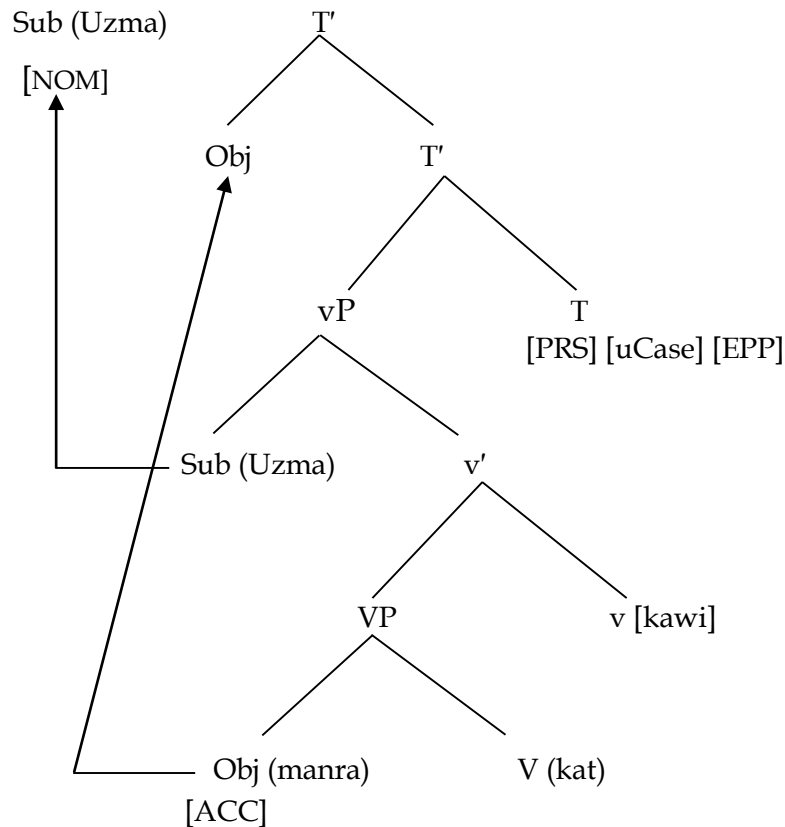
In Pashto, the present tense follows a simple structure with the subject is in the nominative case and the object is in the accusative case. Additionally, the light verb agrees with the subject in terms of person, number, and gender. Consider the following example:

11. Uzma manra kat kawī
 Uzma-NOM apple-ACC.F cut do.PRS.F.SG
 Uzma is cutting an apple.

The example above demonstrates the fundamental sentence structure of the Pashto present tense. In this sentence, the object, *manra* (apple), is in the accusative case, while the subject, *Uzma*, is in the nominative case. Moreover, the light verb *kawī* (to do) denotes the present tense and matches the subject in both number and person. The derivation for the above sentence (11) is given below:

- 1.





The main verb V and the object DP *manra* (apple) combine to create the VP at the start of the derivation. It then combines with little v to form v' projection. The subject DP and v' then combine to create vP, which then merges with the T', marked with [+PRS] features, forming T'. Within vP, theta-role is assigned. The object and T' combine forming one more T', which then merges with the subject DP to project the TP. Uzma, the external argument, shifts from Spec vP to Spec TP to fulfill the Extended Projection Principle (EPP). The agreement relations between the nominals (*Uzma and Manra*) and v and T (functional heads) were established. These agree result in checking the nominative and accusative cases of Uzma and *manra*, respectively.

Past Tense

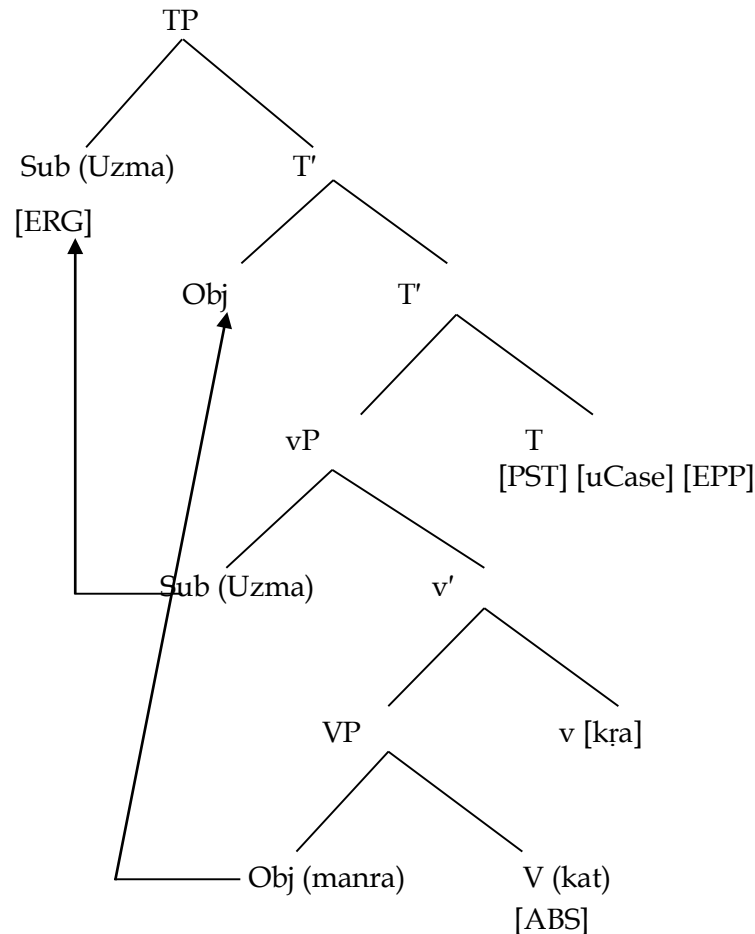
In Pashto, the past tense uses an ERG-ABS case alignment, leading to agreement between the verb and object. Past tense is the exact opposite of the present tense in terms of agreement and case assignment, which behaves similar to a nominative-accusative language. This means that arguments behave as ergative/absolutive in the past tense, while they behave as nominative/accusative in the present tense. This difference in case assignment can be attributed to the significant role played by the light verb. Consider the following example:

12. Uzma manra kat kṛ-a
 Uzma-ERG apple-ABS.F cut do.PST.F.SG
 Uzma cut the apple.

The example in (12) demonstrates the past tense in Pashto. In this sentence, the ergative case is given to the subject (Uzma), while the absolutive case is given to the direct object (*manra*). Additionally, the light verb 'kra' denotes the past tense and is

appropriately conjugated to match the direct object in terms of gender and number. The derivation for the above sentence (12) is given in diagram (2) below:

2.



The verb (V) 'kat' and the object (DP) 'manra' combine to generate VP at the beginning of the derivation. The little v then combines with VP to form the v' projection. Subsequently, the subject (Uzma) combines with v' to generate vP, which combines with the T' projection marked with [+PST] features to generate T'. The object 'manra' then merges with T', forming another T' that merges with the subject 'Uzma' to project the TP. During this process, the external argument (Uzma) is moved from Spec vP to Spec TP in order to satisfy the Extended Projection Principle (EPP). The two nominals receive the absolutive and ergative cases, respectively, as a result of an agreement between the external argument and T and between the internal argument and v. The light verb 'kra', which has 3rd person feminine connotations, reflects the agreement between T and the external argument.

Future Tense

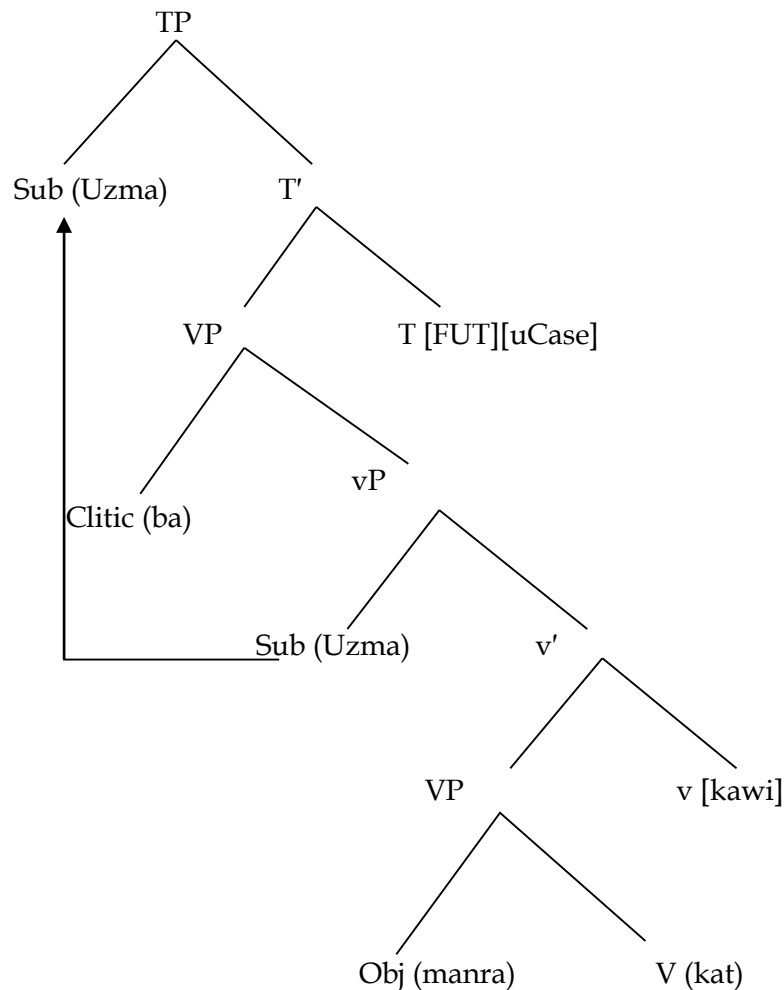
The future and present tenses of the Pashto language employ the same constructions. However, the modal clitic *-ba* is used, which indicates the future tense in Pashto. Consider the following examples:

13. Uzma ba manra kat kawi

Uzma-NOM FUT apple-ACC.F cut do.PRS.F.SG
 Uzma will be cutting the apple.

The sentence in (13) shows how the future tense is formed in Pashto. The nominative and accusative cases correspond to the subject, 'Uzma', and the object, 'manra'. The V₂ 'kawi' matches the subject regarding number and person. The modal clitic 'ba' is positioned immediately after the subject to signify futurity. The derivation for the above sentence (13) is given below:

3.



The diagram (3) illustrates that the derivation for the future tense is the same as that of the present tense, with the only difference being the presence of the modal clitic *ba*. It combines with vP to create an extended vP. Regarding case assignment in the future tense, the two nominals are assigned nominative and accusative cases, respectively, based on an agreement between v and the internal argument and between T and the external arguments. T and the external argument agree, which is morphologically visible on the light verb *kawi*, which has 3rd person singular feminine feature. It is not apparent on the modal clitic *ba*; hence, it emphasizes the importance of light verbs in sentence construction and agreement.

Conclusion

To conclude, the study reveals that Pashto, like other languages, has light verbs. Light verbs are the weakened or 'bleached' forms of the corresponding lexical verb and are frequently coupled with other lexical categories to convey a specific meaning. The Minimalist framework endorses the idea that light verbs necessitate complements to convey their intended meaning. It further states that they cannot function as complete predicates independently and need to be coupled with another element in order to serve as full predicates on their own. According to this perspective, light verbs only have a functional role in LVCs and thus contribute the necessary syntactic information required to complete the construction. Pashto light verbs tend to combine with different lexical categories such as verbs, nouns and adjective to construct different constructions that invariably take the form (V₁+ V₂), (N+ V) and (A+ V). Furthermore, in these constructions the semantic content is provided by nouns, adjectives or the first verbs, while the light verb provide the grammatical information and invariably appears in the second position.

This paper also unfolds that Pashto light verbs govern case marking, host tense and aspect features and carry the agreement inflection to correspond with the gender, number, and person of their arguments. Moreover, they exhibit distinct features for tense and can be found in all three tenses, i.e., past, present, and future. In the present tense, the light verb agrees with the subject in both person and number, with the object in the accusative case and the subject in the nominative case. In the past tense, Pashto uses an ergative-absolutive case marking system, where the verb carries past tense features and assigns ergative case to the subject, while the direct object receives absolutive case, and the light verb agrees with the object in terms of number and gender. In the future tense, Pashto follows the same pattern as the present tense. However, it adds a modal clitic *-ba* to indicate future tense. Thus, Pashto light verbs exhibit distinct syntactic properties in different tenses, including case marking and agreement with the object or subject in terms of person, number and gender.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that future research should focus on the semantic and syntactic aspects of light verbs in Pashto. Additionally, extending the analysis to a broader range of light verbs and their interaction with different types of lexical categories could provide a more comprehensive understanding of their syntactic roles.

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