



The event structure of prefixal verbs in Kurmanji Kurdish of Gilan

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Abstract

This paper investigates the event structure of prefixal verbs in Kurmanji Kurdish of Rudbar (located in the south of Gilan province) and discusses the interpretational contribution of derivational prefixes to the event structure of these prefixal verbs. The research data has been gathered by means of interviewing a number of native speakers in the region and the oral fulfillment of a questionnaire. The findings show that derivational prefixes mostly denote a *directional concept* and make a motion verb. As a consequence, a punctual interpretation is typically developed in their instances, unless the linguistic or situational context triggers an accomplishment (i.e. telic and durative) event type. In the data corpus of this research, only a few stative verbs were found, and we could detect no prefixal verb in the activity event type. Therefore, the prefixal verbs of the Kurmanji of Gilan can exclusively express the three event types of state, achievement and accomplishment in their various meanings. These observations (the dominance of punctual interpretation and the absence of activity events) are probably in line with the typical meaning of prefixal verbs, i.e. the directional movement.

Keywords: event structure, Kurmanji Kurdish, prefixal verb, verbal derivational prefix.

Extended abstract

1. Introduction

This paper examines prefixal verbs in Kurmanji Kurdish of Gilan and attempts to determine the meaning of derived prefixes in these verbs in the framework of the features investigated in event structure studies. In other words, the main problem of the research is the role of these prefixes in determining the event type and how this event type interacts with other sentential elements (especially direct and indirect objects and adverbs). Prefixal verbs in Iranian languages are the result of combining derivational prefixes with simple verbs. Kurmanji

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belongs to the northern sub-branch of Kurdish, and the Kurmanji Kurds of Southern Gilan settled down in the mountainous areas of this region as a result of two consequent movements at the time of the Safavid king Shah-Abbas and the Afshari king Nader-Shah.

2. Theoretical framework

Vendler (1957; reprinted 1967) classifies verbs based on *time schemes*, or more linguistically speaking, according to the temporal characteristics of verbs. In his original framework, the distinctions are made among the verbs in terms of characteristics such as being stative or process, bounded or unbounded, and durative or punctual. However, these differences cannot be explained in terms of the concept of *time* exclusively, and other factors like the presence or absence of objects, conditions of occurrence, and situation influence the event type. In general, based on the characteristic of (a)telicity and also its duration (the ability to extend the event on the time axis), the event types can be classified in four groups: state, activity, accomplishment and achievement.

3. Methodology

The data collection method of this research was a combination of library methods and fieldwork. First, by examining the grammars and available sources on different varieties of Kurmanji Kurdish, a list of prefixal verbs of these varieties was extracted, and based on this list, a questionnaire including 220 sentences was designed. Then, the Kurdish prefixal verbs of Kurmanji of Gilan were collected and recorded through interviews with native speakers of the Rudbar region. Most of the interviews were conducted with five speakers (one woman and four men), all of whom were born and lived in the village of Sibon (Khorgam district, Rudbar city, south of Gilan province) and their education ranged from primary school to associate degree. In the interview sessions, the speakers were asked to produce the questionnaire sentences in their own variety. If the speakers did not use prefixal verbs while translating the sentences, they were asked whether the prefixal verb in question (common in one of the Kurmanji varieties) is used in the Gilan variety, and their judgments were recorded. In total, the data corpus of this research amounts to 22 hours of recorded data from five main speakers and a number of others.

4. Results & discussion

In the data corpus of this research (the Kurmanji Kurdish of Gilan), at least 7 derivational prefixes were found which combined with the simple verbs, including *væ-*, *hel-*, *ra-*, *ti-*, *ru-*, *li-* and *dæ-/de-/da-*. Altogether, 20 prefixal verbs are made with these prefixes, including *væ-gærin* ('to go back'), *væ-gæranden* ('to return [something]'), *væ-šarten* ('to hide'), *væ-ræšin* ('to vomit'), *væ-jæneqin* ('to fit'), *hel-anin* ('to pick up'), *hel-keren* ('to uproot'),

hel-čenin ('to collect'), *hel-dayin* ('to lift'), *hel-ferin* ('to jump out [of sleep]'), *ra-kæten* ('to sleep'), *ra-buyin* ('to stand up'), *ti-kæten* ('to fall into'), *ti-keren* ('to put in'), *ru-nešten* ('to sit'), *li-xesten* ('to hit'), *da-keren* ('to bring down'), *da-kæten* ('to get off'), *de-xesten* ('to pull down'), *væ-dæ-xesten* ('to take out').

These verbs can be classified in three event types of stative, accomplishment, and achievement, and we could not detect any example of activity verbs among these prefixal verbs. As exemplified in the paper, either the prefix is responsible for the development of the event type, or the simple verb, or other sentential or situational elements. For example, if the direct object is an incremental theme, the resulted event will be an accomplishment. Furthermore, if the pragmatic nature of the object requires some time to be undergone by the action, this will also lead to the formation of an accomplishment.

5. Conclusions & suggestions

Out of the seven derivational prefixes which were introduced, five of them have *directional meaning*, at least in some of their meanings: *væ-* (back), *hel-* (upward), *ra-* (up/forward), *ti-* (in) and *dæ-/de-/da-* (downwards). In these examples, an achievement is usually developed, unless the linguistic or situational context motivates an accomplishment interpretation. Therefore, the achievement interpretation is the most dominant event interpretation for the prefixal verbs under investigation. The reason for this dominance is probably the nature of *moving in a specified direction*, which requires spending physical energy and occurs in the shortest possible time. The absence of activities in prefixal verbs can also be related to this explanation. On the other hand, in some of the meanings of the above-mentioned five directional prefixes, as well as in the examples of the prefixes *ru-* and *li-*, apparently a stronger semantic link has been established between the prefix and the verbal element, and in fact, a higher degree of lexicalization has occurred in the entire prefixal verb. As a result, in these examples, the semantic contribution of the prefix and the verbal element cannot be separated, and the contribution of the prefix to the event interpretation cannot be determined either.

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How to cite:

Iran Zamani Siboni, I. & Mofidi, R. 2022. "The event structure of prefixal verbs in Kurmanji Kurdish of Gilan". *Zaban Farsi va Guyeshhay Irani*, 1(13): 147-171. DOI:10.22124/plid.2022.22691.1611

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