

Semantic typology and information distribution in Pashto

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This paper reports on the semantic typology of events in Pashto. Pashto is characterized by widespread dialectal variation; this paper will examine properties that appear to hold across dialects. Relevant morpholexical properties of Pashto are: it is verb-final; it exhibits an ergative/accusative case-marking split based on verbal aspect; it has prepositions, postpositions, and circumpositions. Because the category VERB is closed, complex predicate constructions, including light verb constructions, are extremely prevalent. Pashto robustly lexicalizes MOTION + PATH predicates, as can be seen in examples in (1) and (2) (which shows encoding of deictic directionality). It also lexicalizes MOTION + MANNER predicates, as shown in example (3). However, as shown in (4), MOTION + MANNER predicates may not be coerced into an expression of translational motion; instead, the MOTION + PATH is found as the main verb and the manner predicate is expressed as a satellite expression—usually in an instrumental phrase. Paths may also be expressed via satellite expressions, as shown in the adpositional phrases in (1) and (4). However, locational satellites may be more appropriately considered to be subregional points of reference than expressions of path, given the existence of circumpositions like /pə ... ke/ ‘in, on, at’, as exemplified in (6), where the two sentences encode different spatial and functional configurations; compare also the locational use of /tər ... pore/ in (7) with its apparent path use in (4). Finally, the prevalence of complex predicates considerably complicates the picture of event lexicalization. This paper addresses three questions: What semantic constraints does Pashto place on the lexicalization of predicates? How do complex predicate constructions compensate for semantic constraints on lexicalization? How do the verbal group and satellite expressions divide up the semantic and informational labor in a clause?

1. *do amrikā-Ø pə lor-Ø rawān-Ø šaw-ay dəy*
of America-F.OBL on direction-M in.motion-M.DIR become.AOR.PST-PTCP.M.DIR be.CONT.PRS.3SG.M
‘He is heading towards America.’
2. *Daxlak-a zamən-a wə=ye bos-a če ayə motyandḡ-e*
Daxlak-M.VOC son-M.VOC AOR=3.WEAK remove.PRS-IMP.SG that 3SG.STRONG.DIR urine-PL.F.DIR
wə-k-o
AOR-do.PRS-PRS.3SG.M
‘Daxlak, my son! Take it outside so that it can urinate.’
3. *parun me ləz wə-dzast-əl*
yesterday 1SG.WEAK little AOR-run-PST.3PL.M
‘Yesterday I ran a little.’
4. *tər... plār-a ...pori pə mənḡa-Ø wlār-əm*
up.to... father-M.ABL ...up.to INSTR run-F.DIR go.AOR.PST-1SG
‘I ran to my father.’
5. *ahmad-Ø kor ta zyəl-i*
ahmad-M.DIR house.DIR to run-PRS.3SG.M
‘Ahmad is running home.’
6. *mahmud- Ø pə... sinf-Ø ...ke dəy*
Mahmoud-M.DIR in... class-M.OBL ...in be.CONT.PRS.3SG.M
‘Mahmoud is in class.’

ahmad-Ø də mahmud-Ø pə... kor-Ø ...ke dəy
Ahmad-M.DIR of Mahmud-M.OBL in... house-M.OBL ...in be.CONT.PRS.3SG.M
‘Ahmad is at Mahmoud’s house.’
7. *tər... saḡ-i ...pore di wə-šarm-aw-əl-em*
up.to... man-M.OBL ...up.to 2SG.WEAK AOR-shame-CAUS-PST-1SG
‘You shamed me in front of the man.’