

## Light verb fronting phenomenon in Bangla compound verbs

Compound verb constructions within Indo-Aryan languages like Bangla comprise of constructions that are largely understood to be multiheaded (Butt 1995, 2003); Paul (2003) and Verma (1993). These constructions (i.e. the aspectual complex predicates) extend a singular argument structure and are monoclausal units (Butt, 1995). In Bangla aspectual compound verbs, the main verb or polar verb provide not only the event information but also the argument structure and is marked by [e] – the conjunctive participle form or [te] – infinitive form. The main verb is followed by the light verb or vector verb which provides tense and aspectual information into these constructions.

1. mošaTa ure gelo  
mosquito-CL<sup>1</sup> fly-CP go-Pst-3P  
The mosquito flew away.
2. buro lokTa morte bošeche.  
old man-CL die-inf sit-Prst-3P  
The old man is about to die.

(Paul, 2003: 1)

Paul (2003) advocates that the unification of the polar verb and light verb is promulgated by the semantic principle of compounding where the semantic content of the light verb structure shares with at least a part of the content of the polar verb and certain selectional requirements on semantic grounds must be met to form these constructions. Thus, there has to be semantic compatibility between the main verb and light verb (Paul, 2003; Poornima 2012). The compound verbs do not require complete saturation of the light verb's subcategorization frame by the main verb's arguments. The compound verbs are essentially a lexical variant of the main verb. With constituency tests, it is established that the Bangla compound verbs also act as a verbal cluster. The Reverse constructions, on the other hand, do not adhere to such a structure. The Reverse constructions appear to show a VP complement that resists separation. This paper seeks to analyze the light verb fronted constructions in the Bangla compound verbs which also take a VP complement while forming interrogatives or exclamatives.

Bangla compound verbs can be understood to have argument composition (Hinrichs and Nakazawa, 1994; Poornima and Koenig, 2009, Poornima 2012) where the main verb and light verb extend a singular argument structure to the exclusion of the arguments brought in by the main verb. The Reverse constructions of such compounds, on the other hand show the light verb preceding the main verb and its object.

3. mohini akaš ke chimTi<sup>2</sup> keTe dilo. [Bangla compound verb]  
Mohini Akash Acc pinch-N cut-CP give-Pst  
Mohini pinched Akash.
4. mohini akaš ke dilo chimTi keTe. [Reverse construction of Bangla CV]  
Mohini Akash Acc give-Pst pinch-N cut-CP  
Mohini pinched Akash.

While Bangla compound verbs act as a verbal cluster (through tests like non-intervening NPs, adverbs, inflections) and essentially resist separation (Basu and Wilbur, 2010), some light verbs do not strictly adhere to this as seen in the examples below. Paul (2003) posits around 16 light verbs in Bangla that form compound verbs. However, only [dewa] meaning 'to give' and [jawa] meaning 'to go' appear to

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<sup>1</sup> CL-Classifier; 3P- 3<sup>rd</sup> Person; inf-Infinitive; Acc-Accusative case; Dat- dative case Gen- Genitive case; Loc-Locative case; Pron-pronoun; CONJ-Conjunction; NEG-Negative marker; CP-Conjunctive Participle; Pst-Past tense; Prst-Present tense; Fut-Future tense; N-noun; Sg-Singular; Adv-Adverb; Nom-Nominative case; redup- reduplication; INT-intensifier

<sup>2</sup> The VP complement structure (which is LIGHT+) applies only when a bare nominal is taken as the object of the main verb. Since Bangla is a classifier language, classifiers attached to the nominal specifies notions of definiteness or indefiniteness. With a classifier attached to give a definite reading, it would be able to show more flexibility in the scrambling phenomenon.

be the most illustrious in terms of usage of such light verb fronting constructions of Bangla compound verbs while other light verbs appear to give infelicitous and ungrammatical constructions. The light verbs [dewa] meaning ‘to give’ and [jawa] meaning ‘to go’ are driven by directional semantics despite largely being semantically bleached.

In Bangla compound verbs, [dewa] meaning ‘to give’ associates notions of other-benefaction and often necessitate agentivity. [jawa] is a polysemous light verb meaning ‘to go’ which may show a perfective action or an action drawn to conclusion or express an ongoing activity.<sup>3</sup> Light verb fronted constructions with these verbs thus bring focus to the directed action and bring attention to the directed motion aspect of an event which renders such marked interpretations. This constrained set<sup>4</sup> is illustrated below:

- 5.a. rupa            sobar            samne            heche    dilo  
Rupa-3P-Sg everyone-Gen in front sneeze-CP give-Pst-3P  
Rupa sneezed in front of everyone.
- b. dilo            rupa            sobar            samne            heche!    [exclamative/unintentional]  
give-Pst-3P Rupa everyone-Gen in front sneeze-CP  
Rupa sneezed in front of everyone!
- 6.a. meyeTa    nodite    dube            gelo.  
girl-CL    river-Loc drown-CP    go-Pst-3P  
The girl drowned in the river.
- b. gelo            meyeTa    nodite    dube!            [exclamative/suddenness]  
go-Pst-3P girl-CL river-Loc drown-CP  
The girl drowned in the river!
- 7.a. ora            kaaj    kore    p<sup>h</sup>elbe.  
they-3P work do-CP drop-Fut  
They will finish the work.
- b. \*p<sup>h</sup>elbe            ora    kaaj    kore!  
drop-Fut they work do-CP  
They will finish the work!            [Intended]
8. dilo            to    mohima    sob    misTi    p<sup>h</sup>ele?    [interrogative]  
give-Pst-3P INT Mahima all-Adj sweet-N drop-CP  
Mahima dropped all the sweets?

The data above shows that upon reversing the compound verbs, the light verb may appear in any environment that precedes the VP complement comprising of the main verb and its object since Bangla

<sup>3</sup> [jawa] meaning ‘to go’ is shown as a light verb that shows ongoing action. Basu and Wilbur (2010), thus, in an event-based analysis show through the following sentence that the V<sub>RESULT</sub>P is lacking. However, the other sentence below shows that a completive event maybe achieved through the light verb.

i) ami toma-ke kobe theke bole jachchi  
I-Nom you-Dat when from say-perf go-be-Prst  
I have been telling you for a long time. (Basu and Wilbur, 2010: 15)

ii) tak theke poRe glasTa bhenge gElo  
shelf from fall-CP glass-CL break-CP go-Pst-3P  
The glass fell down from the shelf and broke. (Paul, 2003: 5)

Thus, the light verb [jawa] meaning ‘to go’ can contribute to the compound verb through SEM where it has the completive\_rel or the ongoing\_rel.

<sup>4</sup> Examples have been taken to show how varied constructions from semantically opaque constructions (with main verb [kaTa] meaning ‘cut’) to more semantically transparent constructions (6.b., 8.b., 14) show this pattern.

has a relatively free word order. The following section takes up constituent analysis of the VP constituent which show that upon analysing light-verb fronting constructions, it appears that different clausal structures i.e. interrogatives and exclamatives form in Bangla but the VP complement analysis remains intact.

9.a. dilo            nib<sup>h</sup>a    mita    ke    chimTi   keTe!  
       give-Pst-3P   Nibha   Mita    Acc   pinch-N cut-CP  
       Nibha pinched Mita!

b. dilo            mita    ke    nib<sup>h</sup>a    chimTi   keTe!  
       Give-Pst-3P   Mita    Acc   Nibha   pinch-N cut-CP  
       Nibha   pinched   Mita!

c. dilo            chimTi   keTe    nib<sup>h</sup>a    mita    ke!  
       give-Pst-3P   pinch-N cut-CP   nibha mita    Acc  
       Nibha pinched Mita!

d. \*dilo            chimTi    nib<sup>h</sup>a    mita    ke    keTe  
       give-Pst-3P   pinch    Nibha Mita    Acc cut-CP  
       Nibha pinched Mita!    [Intended]

e. \*dilo            nib<sup>h</sup>a    chimTi    mita    ke    keTe!  
       give-Pst-3P   Nibha   pinch-N Mita    Acc cut-CP  
       Nibha pinched Mita. [Intended]

Sentences 9.a to 9.e show that the light verb fronted constructions always take a VP constituent and separating the main verb and its object results in ungrammatical constructions. In the following sentences, it is noted that coordination of the main verb with another main verb is not possible as the main verb and its object act as a constituent. Adverbial modification in between the main verb and its object also results in ungrammatical constructions as evidenced in sentence 12. The negation marker also appears after the light verb as seen in sentence 13. Sentence 14 is an instance of emphasizing that the action of breaking the glass is almost as a disservice to others thus emphasizing the directional semantics of the light verb.

10. \*dilo            nitin    promila    ke    guli    mere    aar    kore.  
       Give-Pst-3P   Nitin    Promila    Acc   bullet hit-CP CONJ do-CP  
       Nitin shot a bullet at Promila. [Intended]

11. dilo            rajib    pinki    ke    hoTatkore   d<sup>h</sup>akka   mere!  
       give-Pst-3P   Rajiv    Pinky    Acc   suddenly-Adv push-N hit-CP  
       Rajiv suddenly pushed Pinky!

12. ??dilo            rajib    pinki    ke    d<sup>h</sup>akka   hoTatkore   mere!  
       give-Pst-3P   Rajiv   Pinky    Acc   push-N   suddenly-Adv hit-CP  
       Rajiv suddenly pushed Pinky! [Intended]

13. debe    na    to    ora            pinkir    kaaj    kore?  
       give-fut   NEG   INT   3P-Pl-Pron   Pinky-Gen   work   do-CP  
       They will not do Pinky's work, right?

14. dilo            promila    gilaa    b<sup>h</sup>enge!  
       give-Pst-3P   Pramila   glass    break-CP  
       Promila broke the glass!

The English Auxiliary system (EAS) shows various auxiliary initial constructions ranging from interrogatives, exclamatives, negative exclamatives, blessings/curses and comparatives. (Sag et al, 2019) With Bangla light verb fronting phenomenon too, similar clausal structures appear as observed in sentences 5.b., 6.b. and 8. Following the constructional approach with a flat structure, the general constraint below captures this idea.

V [ COMPS < ....., 1, ..... > ] < VP [SYNSEM 1] → Reversal constraint

Albeit only few light verbs form these reverse constructions and light verb fronted constructions from Bangla compound verbs, these nonetheless attribute to pragmatic factors that express blame, frustration, anger, intentionality (Das, 2015; Kumbaraou et al, 2021). Abbi and Gopalkrishnan (1991) propose distinct categories of semantic differentiations in their typological study of light verbs across India. The three categories are the aspectual category which notes the perfective aspect or the completive action; attitudinal category demarcating attitudes like ‘regret’ through light verbs like [bosha] meaning ‘to sit’ and adverbial category which show how the action is done- easily, suddenly, violently. While the light verbs [dewa] meaning ‘to give’ and [jawa] meaning ‘to go’ generally demarcate the aspectual notions in Bangla compound verbs, the light verb fronted constructions show the shift in prominence to the adverbial category in addition to the aspectual category. These pragmatic contexts appear on the part of the speaker for the subject. The pragmatic-rel undertakes all these pragmatic notions which are encoded within the feature background (bgrnd). Considering a sentence like 14 below, Fig. 1 is configured.

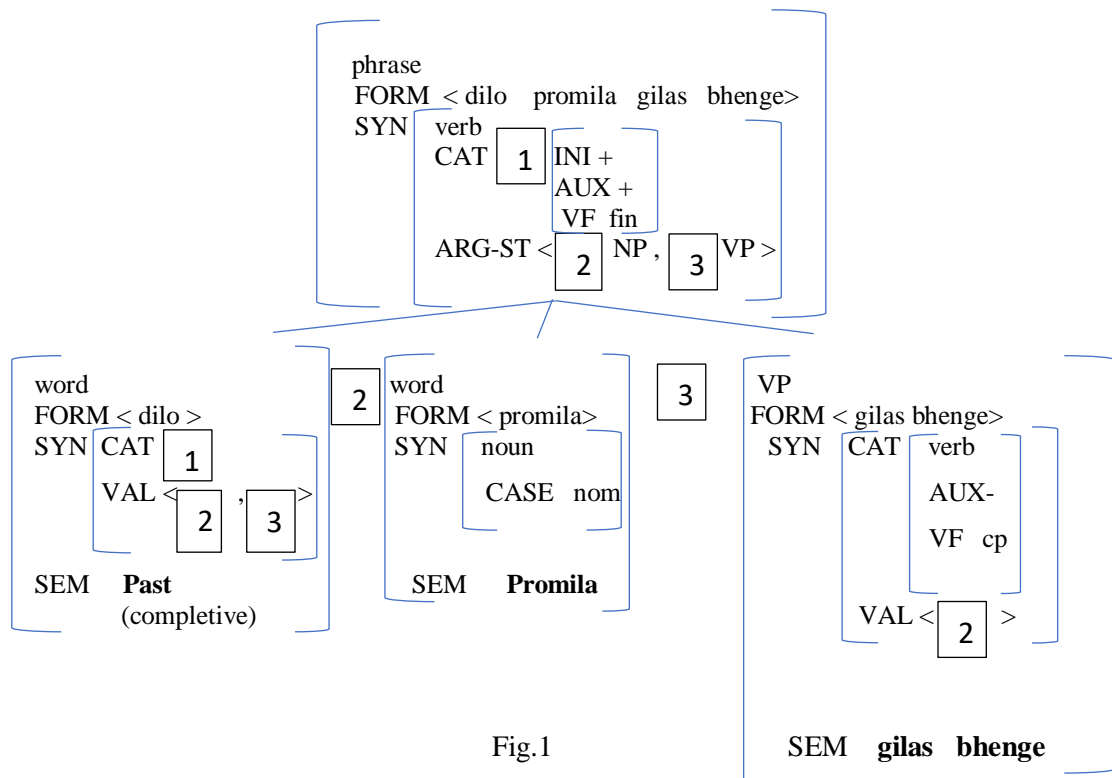


Fig.1

The figure above postulates a flat structure where the finite light verb [dilo] selects the VP [gilash bhenge]. The VP complement has the verb [bhanga] meaning ‘break’ with the verb form in its conjunctive participle form. The light verb fronted constructions take a HEAD [INITIAL +] value. The constructional approach undertaken above will require a type hierarchy allowing different sub-types of light verb fronted constructions- exclamatives and interrogatives. This paper intends to look at another possible analysis of these constructions with the head movement analysis using DOUBLE SLASH

(DSL) where essentially there is no ‘movement’ but the way Müller (2021) associates this while considering head movement in English and German. The light verb fronting phenomenon brings new clauses and represents a local dependency. DSL being a head feature makes it available along the projection path.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This analysis (head movement using DSL) without a flat structure as seen above will require domain considerations as well because in sentences like 11, it would be possible to have a word order where after the light verb, the object appears before the subject.