

# Reading assignment #2

## Processes of verb formation

May 27, 2013

**Readings** Both readings are available for download from the course website.

- Oyharçabal, Bernard. 2006. Basque Light Verb Constructions. *ASJU* 40:787–806
- Megerdooian, Karine. 2002. Beyond words and phrases: a unified theory of predicate composition. Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California (read pages 55–66).

Send your answers by email to [vicente@uni-potsdam.de](mailto:vicente@uni-potsdam.de) no later than Monday June 3 at 23:59. Send only either .pdf or .txt files (no .doc, .docx, or .rtf). You may write your answers in either English or German.

**Background** Basque, among many other languages, has a construction in which a bare noun is combined with a semantically bleached verb (a *light verb*) to produce the meaning that is usually associated with a single verb in English or German.

- (1) Mirenek amets egin du.  
Miren.ERG dream.ABS make AUX  
“Miren has dreamed” (lit.: “Miren has made dreams”)

Superficially, this pattern resembles that of Persian (Farsi), where sentences like the following are common.

- (2) Mæn pul-ra pærdaxt kæræm.  
I money.OM payment did  
“I paid the money” (lit.: “I made a payment of some money”)

Additionally, both Basque and Persian have variants of these LVCs in which the object and the light verb seem to have combined into a single word, which qualifies as a regular verb.

- (3) a. Mirenek amestu du.  
Miren.ERG dream AUX  
“Miren has dreamed”  
b. Mæn pul-ra pædaxtæm.  
I money.OM paid.  
“I paid the money”

**Clarification** Unfortunately, the terminology employed in these two articles is somewhat confusing. Oyharçabal uses the term *light verb construction* (LVC) exclusively for (1), and then calls (3a) a *denominal verb construction*. In contrast, Megerdooian uses *light verb construction* to refer collectively to both (2) and (3b); when she needs to distinguish between the two, she refers to (2) as a *complex predicate* and to (3b) as a *simple predicate*.

**Exercise #1** Compare the Basque and Persian data discussed in, respectively, Oyharçabal's and Megerdooian's articles. Specifically, you need to answer all three of the following questions.

1. Do Basque LVCs and denominal verbs have the same syntactic structure?
2. Do Persian complex predicates and simple predicates have the same syntactic structure?
3. To what extent are the Basque and Persian data comparable? Are there any remarkable syntactic differences or similarities between the two languages?

Quote data as necessary to justify your answers.

**Exercise #2** German also has some denominal verbs (verbs derived from a noun), such *die Arbeit* → *arbeiten*. Are these verbs equivalent to any of the Basque/Persian constructions in (1) through (3)? If so, which one? Justify your answer by trying to apply some of the tests suggested in Oyharçabal and Megerdooian to *arbeiten*.