Chapter 7

The predicate phrase

The predicate phrase is either verbal or nominal. A verbal predicate phrase consists of a verb phrase (VP) and its complement (if required; §3.1.1.1; §3.3.6.2). A VP consists of a verb word other than the copula. A nominal predicate phrase consists of a nominal phrase (NP) and a copula verb which is not expressed under certain conditions (§3.1.1.2). Bound markers may be attached to a predicate, sometimes intervening between elements of the phrase, as shown in (7–1) and (7–2) below, and/or sometimes after an entire predicate, as shown in (7–3) and (7–4) below.

(7–1) *ba=a*   *hon=nu*   *jum-i-i=du*   *ur-Ø.*
     1SG=TOP   book=ACC   read-THM-NRT=FOC   PROG-NPST
     'I am reading a book.'

(7–2) *kari=a*   *sinsii=du*   *a-tar.*
     3SG=TOP   teacher=FOC   COP-PST
     'He was a teacher.'

(7–3) *kari=a*   *mudur-i-i*   *t-tar =pazï*
     3SG=Z=TOP   return-THM-NRT   come-PST=maybe
     'He may have come back.'

(7–4) *kari=a*   *sinsii=pazï.*
     3SG=TOP   teacher=maybe
     'He may be a teacher.'

7.1. The structure of verbal predicate phrase

In this section I describe the internal structure of the verbal predicate phrase, which is schematically shown below:

(7–5) **(VP complement+) [lexical verb 1 (+auxiliary verb/lexical verb 2)]$_{VP}$**

Our focus in what follows is VP structure. See §3.1.1.1 and §3.3.6.2 for the description of VP complements.

7.1.1. Verb inflection within a VP

When a VP is internally complex, the first verb (V1) is a non-finite, narrative converb form. The second verb (V2) is either a finite or a non-finite verb form, depending on whether the clause headed by the VP is independent or dependent. For example, the VP *purii ttar* in (7–6) has the structure V1$_{\text{[narrative cvb]}}$ + V2$_{\text{[finite]}}$, since the VP heads an independent clause. The VP *purii ccii* in (7–7), on the other hand, has the structure V1$_{\text{[narrative cvb]}}$ + V2$_{\text{[narrative cvb]}}$, since the VP heads a dependent clause that occupies a non-final slot in a clause chain (§11.3). The VP *purii ffiba* in (7–8) has the structure V1$_{\text{[narrative cvb]}}$ + V2$_{\text{[causal cvb]}}$, since the VP heads a dependent clause that functions as a causal adsentential clause (§11.4.1.3).

(7–6) *pai=kara*   *mm=mu=du*   *pur-i-i*   *t-tar.*
       field=ABL   potato=ACC=FOC   dig-THM-NRT   come-PST
       'From the field (I) dug potatoes and came.' [head: finite verb]

(7–7) *mm=mu*   *pur-i-i*   *cc-i-i,*   *fa-i.*
       potato=ACC   dig-THM-NRT   come-THM-NRT   eat-IMP
       '(You) dig potatoes and come, then eat (them).' [head: narrative converb]

(7–8) *mm=mu*   *pur-i-i*   *ff-i-ba,*
       potato=ACC   dig-THM-NRT   come-THM-CSL
       mac-i+ur-i.
       wait-THM+PROG-IMP
       'Because (I) will dig potatoes and come, keep waiting.' [head: converb]

7.1.2. Lexical verb and auxiliary verb

In a VP the structural head and the semantic head do not necessarily coincide. Let us examine this mismatch step by step. To begin with, the headship of a VP that lacks a structural dependent is uncontroversial, since the structural head is filled by a lexical verb, which is also a semantic head, i.e. the 'primary information-bearing unit' (Croft 2003).

(7–9) *ba=a*   *pisir=ru=baa*   *fau-ta-m=suga=du...*
       1SG=TOP   lunch=ACC=TOP   eat-PST-RLS=but=FOC
       'I ate lunch, but...'[1]

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[1] The clitics *=suga* and *=du* are clause-level constituents and belong only phonologically to the VP.

On the other hand, in a complex VP where both the head slot and the dependent slot are filled, it is the verb filling the dependent slot that is morphologically marked for the dependency relation. Thus in (7–10) below, the structural dependent is marked by a special inflection, the narrative converb form. However, this structurally dependent verb may be the semantic head, i.e. the primary information-bearing unit. Thus the structural dependent *faii* 'eat' is fully lexical in meaning, whereas the second verb *ar* encodes resultative aspect. On the other hand, it is this second verb *ar* which has finite inflection, and functions as the structural head.

(7–10)   *ba=a*   *pisir=ru=baa*   *fa-i-i=du*
         2SG=TOP   lunch=ACC=TOP   eat-THM-NRT=FOC

         ar-Ø.
         RSL-NPST
         a. Structural headship: Dependent   Head
         b. Semantic headship: Head   Dependent
         'I have eaten lunch.'

In this grammar an auxiliary verb is defined as a verb within an internally complex VP that fills the structural head slot but serves as a semantic dependent. In the example above, the auxiliary is the resultative aspectual marker *ar*. Thus 'auxiliary verb' labels the mismatch between structural and semantic headship. A lexical verb is defined as the verb that serves as semantic head, which may be either a structural head (e.g. *fautam* in (7–9)) or a structural dependent (e.g. *faii* in (7–10)).

7.1.3. Phrasal serial verb constructions
7.1.3.1. Definition
Those VPs in which V2 is also a lexical verb, with a double semantic head structure, are phrasal serial verb constructions (see §6.4.2.2 for agglutinative SVCs that constitute a verb stem). A phrasal SVC has structural asymmetry, where the first verb is non-finite (narrative converb form) and the second verb is finite (or non-finite, §7.1.1). An example of a phrasal SVC is:

(7–11)   *agu=u*   *jurab-i-i*   *t-tar*.
         friend=ACC   call-THM-NRT   come-PST
         'I brought my friends' [lit. (I) called (my) friends and came back; motion]

(7–12)   *tur-i-i,*   *mmja,*