

## Are Vector Verbs Eternal?

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## 1. Introduction

- ◀ The compound verb (CV) is one of the hallmarks of the South Asian linguistic area (Cf. Masica 1976) and has been a topic of debate in traditional as well as modern linguistic descriptions.
- ◀ CV is concatenation of two verbs—**polar verb V1** (aka as main, or primary verb) and **vector verb V2** (aka explicator, light verb, secondary verb, intensifier, operator, etc.).
- ◀ The polar verb is in the conjunctive participle (or absolutive) form while the vector verb bears desinential affixes.
- ◀ Compound verbs can usually be replaced by corresponding non-compound verbs with little or no difference in meaning translatable into languages (eg, English) that lack them.

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## 1. Introduction

The core class members of vector set are drawn from near identical or at least closely similar lexical items: **GO, COME, GIVE, TAKE, THROW, PUT, KEEP, SIT, FALL, TAKE OUT.**

- (1) *raam-na patra lih-I-a*  
Ram-Erg letter.N write-Pst-N  
'Ram wrote a letter.'
- (2) *raam-na shyam-iaa patra lih-un di-I-a*  
Ram-Erg Shyam-Dat letter.N write-CP give-Pst-N  
'Ram wrote a letter for Shyam.' [OTHER-BENEFACTION]
- (3) *shyam-na patra lih-un ghet-I-a*  
Shyam-Erg letter.N write-CP take-Pst-N  
'Shyam wrote the letter (for himself).' [SELF-BENEFACTION]

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## 1. Introduction

- (4) *raam-na patra lih-un Thev-I-a*  
Ram-Erg letter.N write-CP keep-Pst-N  
'Ram wrote a letter.' [ANTICIPATORY ACTION]
- (5) *raam-na patra lih-un Taak-I-a*  
Ram-Erg letter.N write-CP throw-Pst-N  
'Ram wrote a letter.' [NOW RID or FREE of OBLIGATION]
- (6) *raam-na patra lih-un kaaDh-I-a*  
Ram-Erg letter.N write-CP draw-Pst-N  
'Ram wrote a letter.' [EXHAUSTIVE]
- (7) *raam patra lih-un bas-I-a*  
Ram.M letter.N write-CP sit-Pst-M  
'Ram wrote a letter.' [UNDESIRABILITY of ACTION]

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## 1. Introduction

- (8) *Tarou-ga Hanako-ni hon-o yon-de yat-ta*  
Taro-Nom Hanako-Dat book-Acc read-CP give-Pst  
'Taro read the book for Hanako.' [OTHER-BENEFACTION]
- (10) *Tarou-ga sono hon-o yon-de oi-ta*  
Taro-Nom that book-Acc read-CP put-Pst  
'Taro read that book.' [ANTICIPATORY ACTION]
- (11) *Tarou-ga sono hon-o yon-de shimat-ta*  
Taro-Nom that book-Acc read-CP put.way-Pst  
'Taro read that book.' [EXHAUSTIVE]

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## 1. Introduction

- ◀ Recently it has been asserted that the **vector (aka "light") verb** constituents of the compound verbs (V1+V2) found in South, Central, and Northeast Asian languages differ in fundamental ways from **auxiliaries of tense and mood** (Butt 2003, Butt & Geuder 2003, Butt & Tantos 2004).

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## 1. Introduction

- A central contention (Butt 2003:15-16) is that while **auxiliaries may evolve** from full verbs over longer or shorter periods of time in ways deemed by students of grammaticalization to be universally valid path-ways; the **vector verbs do not evolve** along those paths.

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## 1. Introduction

- Vector verbs are said to be "**form-identical**" with their full verb counterparts while tense auxiliaries are not:
  - " the light verb is always form-identical to a main verb in the language ... historically stable, very much unlike what has been documented for auxiliaries.." (Butt 2003:15)

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## 1. Introduction

- Vector verb's **semantics** are claimed to be **sufficiently abstract** to allow them to function **immediately** as vectors or explicators in compound verbs without semantic bleaching or phonological ablation.

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## 1. Introduction

- Furthermore, vector verbs **are not to be regarded as semantically "bleached"** :
  - "... light verbs do not enter the grammaticalization cline, i.e., they are not main verbs which have been reanalyzed as light verbs and which are now prone to further reanalysis. ... light verbs are intimately connected to their main verb counterpart in the lexicon. They are so intimately connected that we assume just one lexical entry which can give rise to both light and main verb meanings." (Butt 2003:16)

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## 1. Introduction

Grammaticalization cline: Hopper & Traugott (1993)

Full verb > (light verb) > auxiliary > clitic > affix

Revised Grammaticalized cline: Butt & Geuder (2003: 328)

Full verb > auxiliary > clitic > affix

Light verb

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## 2. Form-identicalness

- Evidence in support of Butt (2003): Shina-Gilgit auxiliary verbs ? full lexical source

(11) a. *ma Caa bi-g-as*  
I.Nom cold become-Pst-1sgM(<'went'-1sgM)  
'I got / became cold.'

b. *Caa b-ee ma hamaam-eT g-aas*  
cold become-CP I.Nom bath-Dat went-1Msg  
'Feeling cold, I went to the baths.' (Hook and Zia 2005)

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## 2. Form-identicalness

◦ Evidence in support of Butt (2003):  
Marathi

vector verbs = full lexical source

- (12) a. *baaraa* *vaadz-un* *gele*  
twelve.Nom strike-CP WENT-M3pl  
'It struck twelve.'
- b. *te* *ghari* *gele*  
they.Nom home went-M3pl  
'They went home.'

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## 2. Form-identicalness

◦ Evidence in support of Butt (2003): Marathi  
auxiliary verbs? full lexical source

- (13) a. *te* *maadzhe* *mitra* *aahe-t*  
they.Nom my friends be-M3pl  
'They are my friends.'
- b. *te* *ghari* *gel-e* *(aahe)-t*  
they.Nom home went-M3pl BE-M3pl  
'They have gone home.'

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## 2. Form-identicalness

◦ However, Butt's generalization is not universally  
applicable. In Hindi-Urdu the forms of the vector *jaa-*  
*ga-* 'go' are **indeed form-identical** with those of their  
etymological source as claimed by Butt.

- (14) a. *ye* *gaaliyAA* *sun-kar* *aape* *se* *baahar*  
these curses hear-CP self from outside  
*ho* *ga-yaa*  
become WENT-Msg  
'Hearing these curses, he lost control.' (*godaan* 48:33)
- b. *tab* *hira* *apne* *ghar* *ga-yaa*  
then Hira self's house went-Msg  
'Then Hira went home.' (*godaan* 109:41)

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## 2. Form-identicalness

◦ However, although Hindi-Urdu *h-/th-* 'be' also  
functions as an auxiliary of tense and mood, there  
is **no difference in form** between its forms *qua*  
**auxiliaries** and the corresponding **full lexical verb**  
(example (15) and (16)).

◦ So the presence of "form-identicalness" does not  
in and of itself distinguish vectors from auxiliaries.

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## 2. Form-identicalness

- (15) a. *ham* *jaan-te* *hAI*  
we know-Hab Pres.1pl  
'We know.' (*god?n* 107:18)

- b. *ham* *yahAA* *hAI*  
we here are  
'We are here.'

- (16) a. *kahII* *duur* *nahII* *gayaa* *thaa*  
somewhere far Neg gone Pst.Msg  
'I hadn't gone anywhere far...'. (*god?n* 210:5)

- b. *lakhna'uu* *mE* *to* *thaa*  
Lucknow in Particle was  
'I was (just) in Lucknow.' (*god?n* 210:5)

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## 2. Form-identicalness

◦ In fact, when the data net is cast further, the  
empirical evidence for the "form-identity" claim  
evaporates. **Vector verbs do undergo phonological  
attrition, just as auxiliaries do.**

- (17) a. *naan* *naay-e* *viTT-een* (Tamil)  
I.NOM dog-ACC released-M1sg  
'I let the dog go.'
- b. (*naan*) *ad-e* *saappiTTu -TT-een*  
I.NOM it-ACC eat.CP-RELEASED-M1sg  
'I ate it (all) up.' (Schiffman 2005:90)

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## 2. Form-identicalness

- ⚡ About vector *koL-/koo-* HOLD; CONTAIN Schiffman says: "The phonology of the spoken form of this aspectual verb differs much more from its literary Tamil counterpart than could be predicted by regular historical or morphophonemic rules." (2005: 96)
- ⚡ Schiffman adds a footnote: "The extreme variability of the phonology of this aspectual verb bespeaks a radical departure of some sort that is one of the symptoms of the process of grammaticalization" (2005:105).

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## 2. Form-identicalness

- ⚡ Dictionaries specify forms for the imperative of *koL-/koo-* when it occurs as a vector that are different from those of *koL-/koo-* as a main verb
- ⚡ These facts are not consonant with Butt's and Tantos's claim that "... historical changes that apply to change the surface form of the verb (changes in morphology, form, etc.) will apply to both the light and the main verb uses..." (2004:126)

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## 2. Form-identicalness

- ⚡ In Japanese the vector *shimau* PUT (AWAY) shows a high degree of phonological attrition. In fact, *shimau*'s ablation to a suffix *-chau* is seen by Japanese linguists as a normal instance of grammaticalization (Ono 1992: 372).

(18) a. *ano ko wa moo otona ni nat.te shimatte iru*  
that child Top already adult to become PUT-CP be  
'That little girl has already turned into an adult woman.'

b. *kocchi-ni moo ki-chat-ta*  
this.way-to already come-PUT-Pst  
'(He) came/has come over here.' (Ono and Suzuki 1993: 205)

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## 2. Form-identicalness

- ⚡ We may conclude that the tendency over time for function as opposed to content verbs to undergo (or not to undergo) phonological attrition in a particular language or language family does not depend on whether they are functioning as vectors or as auxiliaries of tense or mood.

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## 3. Semantic bleaching

- ⚡ Is the contribution of the vector verb to the semantics of a compound verb something that needs to be separately accounted for? Or is the meaning of the vector isotopic with that of its full lexical counterpart, hence not subject to independent specification?
- ⚡ What are the consequences of this hypothesis? If the isosemantic assumption were correct, we should expect differences in the semantic range of a given lexical verb to be reflected by parallel differences in the range of functions of the corresponding vector. And *vice versa*.

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## 3. Semantic bleaching

- ⚡ These correlations should be observable both within and across languages. As the semantics of a main verb evolve, the functions and distribution of the vector should evolve *pari passu*.
- ⚡ If cognate lexical verbs have the same or nearly the same range of meanings in languages *x* and *y*, their vector counterparts should have the nearly the same distributions in *x* and *y*. This seems to be true in the case of PUT/KEEP in (19).

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### 3. Semantic bleaching

- Masica (1976) has noticed the cross-linguistic parallel in the function of vectors whose lexical counterparts mean 'put' or 'keep'.
- Regardless of their etymological source or phonological shape, vectors PUT/KEEP are used in the sense of performance of an act with future use or benefit in view.
- Such parallels can be seen in the uses of Kashmiri's *thav* (19a) and Marathi's *Thev* (19b), Hindi-Urdu's (non-cognate) *rakh* (19c), Tamil's *vayyi* (19d), Japanese's *ok* (19e), and Korean's *noh* (19f) and *twu* (19g).

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### Parallels in vectors < PUT

- (19) a. *kamri* **thevy-tav** *vuch-yith* *kath.baath* *kery-tav*  
 room PUT-Imper look-CP words do-Imper  
 'Have a look at the room, (then) talk things over.' (Kashmiri)
- b. *tum.cyaa* *saaThi* *rastaa* *tayaar* *kar-un* **Thev-I-aa**  
 your sake road ready make-CP PUT-Pst-Msg  
 '(They) prepared you the way.' (Marathi)
- c. *pahale-hii* *sab.kuch* *kah-sun* **rakhaa** *thaa*  
 before-Emph everything say-hear PUT.Pst be.Pst.Msg  
 '(He) had discussed it all in advance.' (Hindi-Urdu)

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### More cross-linguistic parallels:

- (19) d. *taNniir-e* *kuDiccu* **veppoom** (Tamil)  
 water-Acc drink-CP PUT.Fut.1pl  
 'We'll tank up on water.' [ie, '...fill up to avoid future thirst.'  
 (Schiffman 2005:91)]
- e. *wasure-nai* *uchi-ni* *kai-t(e)* **ok-ou** (Japanese)  
 forget-Neg house-in write-CP PUT-Hortative  
 'I better write (this) down before I forget.'
- f. *jan-i* *chayk-ul* *ilk-e* **noh-ass-ta** (Korean)  
 John-Nom book-Acc read-CP PUT-Pst-Declarative  
 'John prepared by reading a book.' (Suh 2000: 78)

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### 3. Semantic bleaching

- However, the cross-linguistic parallels in the meanings of vectors that are homophonous with main verbs meaning 'put' or 'keep' are the **exception** rather than the **rule**. Let us look at some exceptions.

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### 3. Semantic bleaching

- Hindi-Urdu's vector *de* GIVE as in (20) has a much broader range of uses than its Marathi counterpart. Some of these are at odds with those of Marathi's *de* GIVE and are not predictable from the semantics of the main verb 'give' in either language.
- (20) *na-jaane* *kidhar* *cal* **de-tii.hai** ...  
 Neg-know where move GIVE-Habitual  
 'No knowing where she goes off to...' (Hindi-Urdu)
- Marathi does not allow the equivalent of (20) even though it also has a vector correlated with its main verb *de*- 'give'.

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### 3. Semantic bleaching

- This unexpected variation in vector function takes on dramatic form in Turkish:
- (21) a. *ko?a-**ver**-iniz!* 'Hurry up and run!  
 b. *i çkis-in-i* *i çe-**ver**-di*  
 drink -his-Acc drink -GAVE -Pst3sg  
 'He gulped his drink down.'
- While (21a) in Turkish has an apparent parallel in Hindi-Urdu's inverse CV *de bhaagaa* 'took off' there is no Hindi-Urdu counterpart to (21b) that can be related to any corresponding difference in the semantics of main verb *ver*- in Turkish as opposed to the semantics of main verb *de*- in Hindi-Urdu.

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### 3. Semantic bleaching

- The Japanese vector *shimau* PUT (AWAY) also exhibits a profound degree of semantic bleaching. As pointed out by Ono (1992:371) some dictionaries even have a separate entry for the grammaticalized usage and the Ministry of Education in Japan is trying to abolish use of the Chinese character (which denotes its lexical meaning) for the rendering of the grammaticalized usage. Example (22 a-f) shows the spectrum from lexical to grammatical usages of *shimau*.

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### 3. Semantic bleaching

- (22) a. *monooki-ni yoma-nai hon-o shimat-ta*  
 store.room-in read-not book-Acc put.away-Pst  
 'The books I don't read I put away in the store room.'  
 (Ono 1992: 369)
- b. *sono hon-o yon-de /break/ shimat-ta*  
 that book-Acc read-CP read-CP put.away-Pst  
 'I read that book and put it away.' (Ono 1992: 371)
- c. *sono hon-o yon-de shimat-ta*  
 that book-Acc read-CP PUT(.AWAY)-Pst  
 'I finished reading that book/I have read the book.'  
 (Ono 1992: 371)

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### 3. Semantic bleaching

- (22) d. *hon-o shimat-te shimat-ta*  
 book-Acc put.away-CP PUT(.AWAY)-Pst  
 'I put the book away.' (Ono 1992: 372)
- e. *susumu-wa nyuuginiya-ni it-te shimat-ta*  
 Susumu-Top New.Guinea-to go-CP PUT(.AWAY)-Pst  
 'Susumu has gone to New Guinea.' (Ono 1992: 372)
- f. *henna hon-o yon-de shimat-ta*  
 obscene book-Acc read-CP PUT(.AWAY)-Pst  
 '(I) have read an obscene book (to my regret).'  
 (Hasegawa 1996:14)

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### 3. Semantic bleaching

- Example (22a) represents the lexical use of *shimau* while (d-f) represent its grammatical uses. Examples (22b, 22c) straddle between the lexical and grammatical use with the former having a phonological break while the latter doesn't. This according to Ono represents the **iconic relationship** holding between phonological distance and conceptual distance: In (22b) the presence of a phonological break has a two-event interpretation wherein *shimau* maintains its lexical meaning while (22c) with its absence of a phonological break has a one-event interpretation in which *shimau* does not have its lexical meaning. Example (22d) shows a concatenation with two *shimau*'s in a row. The first one has the lexical interpretation while the second one is grammaticalized.

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### 3. Semantic bleaching

- In present day Japanese a layering of grammatical *shimau* and its phonetically reduced variant *chau* is encountered in which the full form marks the aspectual meaning (completeness) while the reduced form conveys what Suzuki (1999) calls "the speaker's negative attitude towards completion of a situation" (example 23).

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### 3. Semantic bleaching

- (23) a. *koi shi-te shimac-chat-ta-no desu*  
 love do-CP PUT.1-PUT.2-Pst-Nominalizer be  
 'I fell in love (to my regret).'
- b. *douse natsu-mo owat-te shimac-chat-ta-shi*  
 alas summer-also finish-CP-PUT.1-PUT.2-Pst-CL  
*betsu-no koto-o kangae-you*  
 other-Gen thing-Acc think-Desiderative  
 'Alas summer is over (to my regret), I should think of something else.'
- In other words the aspectual auxiliary is form-identical with its lexical counterpart while the attitudinal light verb is phonologically reduced. These facts run counter to the prediction of Butt (2003) and Butt and Tantos (2004).

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### 3. Semantic bleaching

- Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the acquisition of the reduced form *-chau* precedes its non-reduced counterpart *-te shimau*. Through the analysis of mother-child interaction data, Suzuki (1999) demonstrates that *-chau* which is the most grammaticalized form occurs much more frequently than its full form counterpart *-te shimau*.
- She claims that the earliest meaning of *-chau* as shown to the child by his mother is affective, expressing a negative attitude toward completion of a situation, rather than mere completion. This according to her is one of the morphological tools that a Japanese mother uses in socialization, trying to teach a child how to behave, how to move his own body, and how the world around him is structured.

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### 4. Entanglement

- In a more recent study Butt and Tantos (2004) assert that the vector and its main verb counterpart are so closely linked that if the either one disappears from its language then so does the former, simultaneously.

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### 4. Entanglement

- "... evidence for the intimate connection between main and light verb ... is the observation that when a verb ceases to exist in a language, then both the main and the light verb usage disappear simultaneously (if both exist). ... if the lexical entry is deleted from the grammar of the language, then both the main and the light verb use will cease to exist at the same time. ... This situation stands in stark contrast to that of auxiliaries, which tend to develop away from the original main verb form until they are almost unrecognizable." (2004:126)

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### 4. Entanglement

- Further: "The available diachronic evidence... shows that one never finds a light verb on its own; there is always a form-identical main verb in use as well." (2004:126).
- The clearest counter-example to this generalization is Hebbar Tamil's *kyo:-* which as a vector is cognate with Tamil's *ko:/koL-* CONTAIN (Sriram 2004) but which in contemporary Hebbar Tamil does not have a main verb counterpart. *kyo:-* is an "orphan" vector, a status that, by Butt's claims, should be impossible.

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### 5. The end of the line.

- A central contention (Butt 2003:15-16) is that while auxiliaries may evolve from full verbs over longer or shorter periods of time in ways deemed by students of grammaticalization to be universally valid path-ways; the vector verbs do not evolve along those paths.
- However...

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### 5. Vectors do evolve.

- The verb *la* 'put, place' was already in use as a vector in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE and was also used as a suffix:
- "The absolutive form of the verb *la* used as an auxiliary has ... become the mark of the absolutive..." ('absolutive' = conjunctive participle) ..." (Paranavitana 1956 1.clvii)

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## 5. Vectors do evolve.

[pi]rimi bāNā la-ta tama-haTa  
men speak PUT-Cond self-with

rava-la [bā]u dik-net  
frown-PUT looked long-eye

'Were men to speak to her, the long-eyed  
one looked (at them) frowning.'  
(Parnavitana 1956:2.119, 8<sup>th</sup> cent)

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## 6. Conclusion

✦ We conclude that any differences in the speed of phonological attrition or semantic bleaching that may seem to discriminate vector verbs from auxiliaries of tense/mood should be ascribed to the greater text frequency of the auxiliaries and not to some fundamental or categorial distinction between vector verbs and other kinds of auxiliaries. (cf. Fidelholtz 1975 and Johnson 1983 as discussed in Newmeyer 1998:256)

✦ Thank you for your kind attention!  
(Comments, suggestions, criticisms most welcome.)

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