

ON THE COMPLEXITY OF LIGHT VERB CONSTRUCTIONS: SIMPLE *VERSUS* COMPLEX LIGHT VERB CONSTRUCTIONS IN PERSIAN

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Abstract. Light verb constructions (LVCs) consist of a light verbal element and a phrasal element (NP or PP). Together, these two elements form a complex predicate. In the literature, it is generally assumed implicitly, but sometimes also explicitly, that the light element is a simplex verb. We show that in Persian, light verb constructions can also be realized as the light element of a complex LVC. These LVCs can occur both as simple LVCs and as the head of complex LVCs. We show that they behave identically in both uses with regard to the grammatical properties (i.e., separability) investigated.

Keywords: Persian, word status, complexity, separability.

1. INTRODUCTION

In regular predicate-argument constructions, the predicate is realized by a verb and its arguments by an NP or – in some cases – also by a PP. The verb denotes an eventuality² and makes a statement about its arguments. Thus, (1a) states that there is a giving event (denoted by *gave*) in which the ownership of the referent of *a book* is transferred from Peter to Mary.

- (1) a. Peter gave Mary a book.
b. Peter gave Mary a kiss.

Various typologically different and genetically unrelated languages (cf. Fleischhauer and Riccio 2025: 3 for a list of languages) have predicative constructions consisting of a verbal element and an NP or PP, with the NP/PP providing the main semantic content to the predication. An English example can be seen in (1b). The sentence describes a kissing event in which Peter kissed Mary. Here, it is the NP *a kiss* that contributes the main predicative load, not the verb *gave*. In the case of (1b), the complex predicate *give a kiss* can be replaced by a simple predicate – *kiss* (e.g., *Peter kissed Mary*). The meaning of both predicates is very similar, even if they vary in nuance, e.g., concerning *Aktionsart* (cf. Wittenberg et al. 2014b, Wittenberg and Levy 2017).

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² The term ‘eventuality’ goes back to Bach (1986) and serves as a cover term for states and events.

Linguistic expressions such as *give a kiss* are referred to in the literature as ‘light verb constructions’ (LVC), among other things. There is now extensive literature on this type of complex predicate, in which various characteristics of such constructions are examined, both in individual languages and in cross-linguistic comparisons. This ranges from their grammatical properties to the question of meaning composition (e.g., Ježek 2016, 2023; Bonial and Pollard 2020; Fleischhauer and Gamerschlag 2019; Fleischhauer and Neisani 2020) to the characteristics of their diachronic development (e.g., Bower 2008; Butt and Lahiri 2013; Fleischhauer and Hartmann 2021; Boldt 2025; Sundquist 2025) or language processing (e.g., Wittenberg et al. 2014a, 2014b; Wittenberg and Levy 2017). One aspect that has received little attention in the discussion so far is the question of the structural complexity of light verb constructions. Structurally, it is said that LVCs consist of a phrasal element (*a kiss*) and a (light) verb (*give*). The (implicit) assumption in the literature seems to be that the light verb is a simplex verb, i.e., a morphologically non-derived verb. In our paper, we take up this issue and show that there are LVCs in Persian that are structurally more complex. Instead of a light verb, they have a multi-word expression as their head, which can itself be used as an LVC. A representative example is *tahte sarparasti qarār dāshtan* ‘to be under someone’s care’, which is composed of the PP *tahte sarparasti* ‘under care’ and the LVC *qarār dāshtan* ‘to be located, be somewhere’ (lit. position have). We will translate *qarār dāshtan* as ‘be somewhere’ in the following, as this makes the relationship to other LVCs, which we will discuss in more detail later, more transparent. Our paper thus shows that light verb constructions can themselves function as light verbal heads. To our knowledge, this has not yet been systematically described. Accordingly, numerous questions arise regarding this type of construction, but for reasons of space we can only address some of them in this paper.

The paper is structured as follows: In Chapter 2, we introduce the concept of a ‘light verb construction’ and explain our understanding of this type of complex predicate. In particular, we present a definition that we use to develop our research question. Chapter 3 takes a closer look at ‘light verbs’ and shows that the individual components of an LVC have word status and that LVCs are therefore multi-word expressions. In Chapter 4, we present Persian language data showing that, in addition to simple LVCs that have a light verb as their grammatical head, there are also complex LVCs in which the grammatical head itself is a multi-word expression. Chapter 5 examines the semantic and grammatical properties of simple and complex LVCs and shows that LVCs that are realized as the grammatical head of complex LVCs have the same grammatical features as when they are used as simple LVCs. The paper concludes with some final remarks in chapter 6.

2. LIGHT VERB CONSTRUCTIONS: TOWARDS A DEFINITION

Light verb constructions (LVCs) are complex predicates consisting of a light verb and – usually – a phrasal element (NP, PP). This type of complex predicate occurs particularly frequently in Persian (< Iranian < Indo-Iranian < Indo-European), which has only a small inventory of morphological simplex verbs in the modern language. According to Mohammad and Karimi (1992: 195), there are around 115 simplex verbs that are used in the current language. Samvelian (2018: 256) gives a higher number (~250) but also states that not all simplex verbs are still used in the present-day language. However, we also find LVCs in languages that have a larger inventory of simplex verbs, such as the Germanic languages

German, English, and Dutch (e.g., Everaert and Hollebrandse 1995; Ronan and Schneider 2015), Romance languages such as Italian, Spanish, Catalan, and French (e.g., Pompei and Pinno 2023; Wiskandt 2025), or Bantu languages like Swahili and Gĩkũyũ (e.g., Olejarnik 2011; Fleischhauer and Kihara 2025).

There is currently no consensus in the literature regarding a (cross-linguistically applicable) definition of the concept of a ‘light verb construction’. Similarly, the term ‘light verb’ is used inconsistently in the literature. We adopt the definition of ‘light verb constructions’ proposed by Fleischhauer and Riccio (2025: 14):³

- (2) Light verb constructions are multi-word expressions which form complex predicates consisting of (at least) a light verb and a non-verbal element. The eventuality denoted by the complex predicate is determined by the non-verbal element rather than the verb.

The definition consists of formal and semantic criteria. Formally, an LVC is understood as a multi-word expression, i.e., a complex predicate whose meaning is distributed across several words (e.g., Hüning and Schlücker 2015; Masini 2021). This puts light verb constructions – like serial verb constructions – in opposition to complex verbs (i.e., verbal compounds in, for instance, German or morphologically incorporating languages such as the Iroquoian language Mohawk; cf. Mithun 1986). Formally, an LVC can thus be described as a construction consisting of a light verb and another component which we will refer to as the ‘non-verbal element’. The component of an LVC referred to in (2) as a ‘non-verbal element’ is also referred to in the research literature on Persian as a ‘preverbal element’, which is partly due to the fact that Persian is a verb-final language.

In the course of this paper, we will show that the definition needs to be revised in one respect, namely with regard to the assumption that LVCs consist of a light verb in addition to the non-verbal element. The term ‘light verb’ suggests that it is an element of the lexical category verb, i.e., something that has word status. This is often only stated implicitly, for example by listing verb lexemes as instances of the category ‘light verb’. Sundquist (2018: 267), for instance, writes „there is general agreement that they [light verbs] make up a small class of highly frequent verbs. In studies of English, this class includes *make*, *take*, *give*, *have*, and *do*.” This fits with Schultze-Berndt’s (2006: 362) approach, in which light verbs – or ‘function verbs’ in her analysis – are described as “members of the class of verbs”. Concerning LVCs in the Indo-Aryan language Urdu – like the one in (3) – Butt and Lahiri (2013: 8) state that „[...] the form of the first verb is identical to the stem form and never carries any inflection in the V-V construction. This is the main or full verb. The second verb carries tense/aspect marking and is inflected according to the standard paradigms governing simple verb inflection”. They refer to a light verb as an element that carries “simple verb inflection” and contrast it with a verbal stem (the non-light element). Elsewhere, they write that “[l]ight verbs inflect just like their main verb counterparts” (Butt and Lahiri 2013: 11). Light verbs are therefore assumed to behave morphologically like simple verbs and to be the counterpart to main verbs. This is also reflected in the terminology which distinguishes between light verb usage and heavy verb usage of the same main verb (Butt and Lahiri 2013: 24;

³ For a very similar definition, see Fleischhauer (2020: 4).

similarly in Butt 2010). Butt and Geuder (2001: 326) refer to the relationship between light verb usage and heavy verb usage as lexical polysemy, which also suggests that light verbs are regarded as lexical verbs.

- (3) Nadya=ne xat lik^h di-ya.
 Nadya.F=ERG letter.M write give-PERF.M.SG
 ‘Nadya wrote a letter.’ (Butt and Lahiri 2013: 7)

Although the assumption that light verbs are elements that have word status is rarely made explicit, there are occasional statements that suggest that authors regard light verbs morphologically as simplex verbs – i.e., verb stems that cannot be further broken down morphologically. Folli et al. (2005: 1370) write, for instance, that “[t]he LV [light verb] of Persian CPs [complex predicates] ranges over a number of simple verbs” and give examples such as *kardan* ‘to do’ and *zadan* ‘to hit’. Dabir-Moghaddam (1997: 28) treats Persian LVCs as ‘compound verbs’ and analyses them – following Lambton (1984) [1953] – as, for instance, “compound verbs formed by a simple verb and a noun”. We will show later in this paper that LVCs are not compound verbs and that in Persian we find LVCs in which, instead of a simple verb, a light verb construction with a non-verbal element forms a complex predicate.

Semantically, an LVC is characterized by the fact that the denotated eventuality is determined not by the verb, but by the non-verbal element. This can be illustrated using the examples in (4). In both sentences, *dādan* ‘give’ is used as a finite verb. In (4a), it is a ditransitive transfer verb denoting a caused change of possession: The referent of *ketāb* ‘book’ changes ownership; the new owner is the referent of *zan* ‘woman’. This is similar to the English example in (1a). However, the situation is different in (4b). Here the verb is not used ditransitively, but forms a complex predicate with the noun *sedā* ‘sound’. Accordingly, it does not denote a transfer event, but an event of sound production (cf. also the discussion in Butt and Geuder 2001: 338–343 concerning the light verb *give* in English). That it is the noun *sedā* that denotes the denotated eventuality type becomes obvious when we replace it with another noun, e.g., *šekast* ‘defeat’ in (5). *Šekast dādan* (lit. defeat give) means ‘to defeat’ and does not denote an event of sound production, but rather an event of defeating. If, on the other hand, we replace one of the non-subject arguments in (4a) with another noun, the denotated eventuality type does not change, only the referent of the recipient argument or the theme argument varies. Nevertheless, a caused transfer event of change of possession is denoted.

- (4) a. Ān mard Be ān zan yek ketāb dād.
 DEM man To DEM woman INDEF book give.PST.3SG
 ‘The man gave the book to the woman.’
 b. Sag sedā dād.
 Dog sound give.PST.3sg
 ‘The dog made a sound.’
 (Fleischhauer 2020: 4)
- (5) Ān-hā došman-rā šekast dād-and.
 DEM-PL enemy-ACC defeat give.PST-3PL
 ‘They defeated the enemy.’ (Saeedi 2017: 385)

Since our work focuses on the complexity of the verbal head of LVCs, in the next section we will take a closer look at light verbs and their morphological status.

3. LIGHT VERBS: MEANING AND WORD STATUS

The term ‘light verb’ was introduced by Jespersen (1942: 117-118), who used it to refer to the finite verb in constructions such as English *give a laugh* or *take a drive*. Jespersen recognized that the verb, as part of these constructions, does not contribute its full verb meaning and reduced it to a carrier of grammatical features. According to him, the function of the verb is to realize verbal inflectional features and to license the nominal element (*a laugh*, *a drive*) in a predicative function. With regard to semantics, Jespersen assumes that light verbs are meaningless, i.e., semantically empty. This view was later shared by other authors (e.g., Cattell 1984, Grimshaw and Mester 1988), but the view that light verbs contribute to the meaning of the complex predicate has since become accepted (e.g., Bower 2008, 2014; Butt 2003, 2010; Butt and Lahiri 2013; Bonial and Pollard 2020; Ježek, 2016, 2023; Fleischhauer and Neisani 2020; Pompei and Piunno 2023; among others). As a rule, we can observe that light verbs can replace each other, resulting in a systematic change in meaning. This can be well illustrated by German LVCs, for which the phenomenon of ‘commutation series’ (*Kommutationsreihen* in German) has played a major role in the discussion from the outset.⁴ In examples (6) to (8), we combine the PP *unter Beobachtung* ‘under observation’ with three different light verbs: *stehen* ‘stand’ in (6), *geraten* ‘get’ in (7) and *stellen* ‘put’ in (8). The LVC headed by *stehen* ‘stand’ is a passive state predication (see Fleischhauer and Gamerschlag 2019, Fleischhauer 2022). *Unter Beobachtung geraten* ‘get under observation’ (7) has an inchoative reading: the subject referent (*der Mann* ‘the man’) was first not under observation, but then came under observation through his mistake. Such a change of state is not predicated in (6). Finally, (8) denotes a causative change of state. The verb *stellen* ‘put’ is the lexical-causative form of *stehen* ‘stand’ and means ‘cause to stand’. In contrast to the other two LVCs, *unter Beobachtung stellen* ‘put under observation’ has an additional argument which is the instrument *eine richterliche Anordnung* ‘a court order’ functioning as an indirect causer.

- (6) Der Mann steht unter Beobachtung durch den Geheimdienst.
 the Man stands under observation by the secret.service
 ‘The man is under surveillance by the secret service.’

⁴ In isolated cases, the fact that German LVCs form ‘Kommutationsreihen’ (commutation series) leads to the term ‘light verb’ being explicitly rejected as inadequate, since German light verbs can clearly be identified as not being meaningless. This is seen, for example, by Van Pottelberge (2001) as a contradiction to Jespersen’s conception of the term ‘light verbs’. Instead of insisting on a narrow understanding of Jespersen’s term, we take a broader view – in line with much of the research literature – and can therefore also speak of ‘light verbs’ in German. This has the advantage that we can view the phenomenon not purely from a language-specific perspective, but also from a cross-linguistic perspective.

- (7) Durch seinen Fehler geriet der Mann unter Beobachtung durch
by his mistake got the man under observation by
den Geheimdienst.
the secret.service
'Because of his mistake, the man got under surveillance by the secret service.'
- (8) Eine richterliche Anordnung stellte den Mann unter Beobachtung
a juridically order put the man under observation
durch den Geheimdienst.
by the secret.service
'A court order placed the man under surveillance by the secret service.'

Assuming that light verbs are completely meaningless, it cannot be explained why substituting one light verb for another one causes a systematic change in meaning. It is important to note that this is a systematic change that is not limited to the examples in (6) to (8), but also occurs with other non-verbal elements. It is therefore not an idiosyncratic feature of LVCs with *unter Beobachtung* 'under observation' as their non-verbal element.

Light verbs are not meaningless on the one hand, but on the other hand they are semantically reduced in comparison to heavy verb usage. Even though there is broad consensus on this aspect, other questions remain that have not yet been clarified. These include, among other things, the distinction between light verbs and other semantically reduced verb usages, such as auxiliaries. We will not go into this aspect further here, but see, for example, the discussion in Butt and Lahiri (2013).

We would like to address another aspect that, to our knowledge, has not received particular attention in the research literature on light verbs and light verb constructions, namely the categorical status of light verbs. The term 'verb' suggests that it is a linguistic element that can be assigned to the lexical category 'verb'. This also applies to light verbs in German, for instance. In German, verbs can be distinguished from other lexical categories on the basis of a number of morphological and morphosyntactic criteria. For example, only verbs can be inflected for the categories of person and tense (the same is true of Persian). A partial inflectional paradigm for the verb *stehen* 'stand' is shown in Table 1. This paradigm holds for *stehen* in both its heavy usage and its light usage. Grammatically, light verb usages do not differ from heavy verb usages. The same observation is made by Butt and Lahiri 2013 for Urdu and Bengali supporting their view that light verbs grammatically pattern like regular lexical verbs but unlike auxiliary verbs (see also Fleischhauer and Kihara 2025 for a similar claim on the Bantu language Gikũyũ).

Table 1 Indicative paradigm of the verb *stehen* 'stand'. The past tense is realized by ablaut.

	PRESENT	PAST
1SG	<i>steh-e</i>	<i>stand</i>
2SG	<i>steh-st</i>	<i>stand-est</i>
3SG	<i>steh-t</i>	<i>stand</i>
1PL	<i>steh-en</i>	<i>stand-en</i>
2PL	<i>steh-t</i>	<i>stand-et</i>
3PL	<i>steh-en</i>	<i>stand-en</i>

More important than the difference between verbs and other lexical categories is the difference between words and multi-word expressions. *Stehen* ‘stand’ is a word, as we can show using Haspelmath’s (2023) definition of the concept ‘word’ given in (9):

- (9) A word is (i) a free morph, or (ii) a clitic, or (iii) a root or a compound possibly augmented by nonrequired affixes and augmented by required affixes if there are any. (Haspelmath 2023: 285)

The definition draws on a number of concepts, for which Haspelmath offers subsequent definitions. We will ignore the notion of a ‘clitic’ at this point and only explain the other terms that are central to the understanding of the definition (see, however, footnote 5 on clitics). First, a word can be a free morph, i.e., a linguistic form “that can be used on its own” (Haspelmath 2023: 285). The key question in determining whether a form is a free morph is whether or not it must always occur together with another element. The noun *Stress* ‘stress’ is a free morph because it does not have to be realized together with another form. For example, *Stress* ‘stress’ can be used as an answer to the question *Unter was steht er?* ‘He is under what?’ or *Worunter leidet er?* ‘What is he suffering from?’ The preposition *under* ‘under’ is not a free morph, however, as it cannot be realized without a noun.⁵ So far, we have only explained what ‘free’ means; the aspect of the morph is still missing: “A morph is a minimal form” (Haspelmath 2023: 285). A form is minimal if it is not composed of other forms, i.e., if it cannot be broken down into smaller units that carry meaning. *Beobachtung* is not a minimal form, as the noun can be broken down into a verb stem *beobacht-* ‘observe’ and a word-formation affix *-ung*, whereas *Stress* ‘stress’ is a minimal form.

In addition to being a morph, a word can also be a root, i.e., a “contentful morph (i.e., a morph denoting an action, an object, or a property) that can occur as part of a free form without another contentful morph” (Haspelmath 2023: 287). The noun *Beobachtung* ‘observation’ consists of the root *Beobacht-* and the derivational suffix *-ung*. Similarly, *stehen* ‘stand’, which consists of the root *steh-* and an inflectional marker, e.g., the infinitive suffix *-en*.⁶

Finally, the term ‘compound’ is relevant to our discussion. Haspelmath (2023: 288) defines compound construction as follows: “A compound construction is a construction consisting of two strictly adjacent slots for roots that cannot be expanded by full nominal, adjectival, or degree modifiers.” Thus, a compound is a combination of two (or more) contentful morphs that occur strictly adjacent to each other. In particular, the components of a compound cannot be separated by other elements, whether free or bound. This is, for instance, the case for the German noun-noun compound *Lebkuchenhaus* ‘gingerbread house’ in which neither modifiers nor inflectional affixes (e.g., the plural or diminutive markers) can appear between the nouns, cf. *Lebkuchenhäuser* ‘gingerbread houses’, in which the plural is realized by umlaut in the second noun and the plural suffix *-er*.

⁵ According to Haspelmath’s criteria, *unter* is a clitic because it must always occur with another element, but unlike affixes, this element can belong to different categories. *Unter* can be adjacent to a noun (e.g., *unter Beobachtung* ‘under observation’), to an article (e.g., *unter der Beobachtung* ‘under the observation’) or to an adjective (e.g., *unter intensiver Beobachtung* ‘under intensive observation’).

⁶ Like in many languages, the root can be used alone to express imperative mood, e.g., *Steh!* ‘Stand!’.

In the context of our discussion, it is relevant that LVCs are not compound words and therefore do not have word status. Rather, LVCs consist of two or more words and are multi-word expressions. With regard to the LVC *unter Beobachtung stehen* ‘be under observation’, we have already argued above that it consists of two words (*stehen* ‘stand’ and *Beobachtung* ‘observation’) and a clitic (*unter* ‘under’). As we can see in (10), the words do not form a compound, as they can be separated from each other (e.g., by the PP *durch den Geheimdienst* ‘by the secret service’).

- (10) Unter Beobachtung durch den Geheimdienst steht der
 under observation by the secret.service stands the
 Verdächtige bereits seit fünf Jahren.
 suspects already since five years
 ‘The suspect has been under surveillance by the secret service for five years.’

The key point here is that LVCs are not compounds and therefore do not have word status, but must be understood as multi-word expressions. We understand multi-word expressions as a coherent unit that performs a specific function and/or meaning and is composed of at least two words that do not form a compound. LVCs are multi-word expressions because they form a predication unit which is composed of several words.

Although some authors (e.g., Rezai 2003, 27; Mahmoodi-Bakhtiari 2018, 295) treat Persian LVCs as compound verbs, we believe that applying our analysis to Persian is neither particularly controversial nor innovative, but merely makes explicit what is more or less implicitly assumed or, in some cases, explicitly formulated in numerous works. However, we present data which proof that Persian LVCs are multi-word expressions rather than compound verbs in the next section. We emphasize so strongly that LVCs are multi-word expressions because this is central to establishing the distinction between simple LVCs and complex LVCs in the next section.

4. SIMPLE AND COMPLEX LIGHT VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

The complex structure of Persian LVCs becomes apparent when we search for Persian translation equivalents of German LVCs such as *unter Beobachtung stehen* ‘be under observation’. The Persian translation of the German example in (6) is given in (11). *Tahte nezārat* ‘under surveillance’ is realized as an argument of *qarār dāshtan* ‘to be somewhere’. *Qarār dāshtan* is itself a light verb construction, composed of the light verb *dāshtan* ‘to have’ and the non-verbal element *qarār* ‘position’. We first discuss the LVC *qarār dāshtan* ‘to be somewhere’ before going into more detail about the complex LVCs with *qarār dāshtan* as its verbal head.

- (11) Ān mard taht-e nezārat-e sāzmān-e etelāf-āt
 that man under-EZ surveillance-EZ organization-EZ information-PL
 qarār dār-ad.
 position have.PRS-3SG
 ‘The man is under surveillance by the secret service.’

An illustrative example of the LVC *qarār dāshtan* (lit. position have) can be seen in (12). The meaning of the LVC is that the subject referent is located at a place denoted by the PP complement. The LVC does not make any predication about the posture of the subject referent and is therefore not a direct translation equivalent of the German verb *stehen* ‘to stand’. Like the German verb, however, the Persian LVC also takes a complement PP that has a spatial preposition as its head.⁷ In (12), this is *dar markaze shahr* ‘in the city center’.

- (12) Xāne-ye Nima dar markaz-e shahr qarār dār-ad.
 house-EZ Nima in center-EZ city position have.PRS-3SG
 ‘Nima’s house is located in the city center.’

The example in (13) shows that the non-verbal element can be separated from the light verb by functional morphology. The future auxiliary is realized between the non-verbal element and the light verb. This shows that the LVC is not a compound, since the components do not have to be realized immediately adjacent to each other.⁸ The simple LVC *qarār dāshtan* ‘to be somewhere’ is therefore a multi-word expression and not a compound verb (see also Monshizadeh et al. 2022 on this issue).

- (13) Sāxtemān-e jadid-e edāre-ye mā dar in xiābān qarār
 building-EZ new-EZ office-EZ 1PL.POSS in this street position
 xāh-ad dāsht.
 FUT.AUX-3SG have.PST
 ‘Our office’s new building will be located on this street.’

- (14) Ketāb ru-ye miz qarār dār-ad.
 book on-EZ table position have.PRS-3SG
 ‘The book is on the table.’

In (14), we see that the spatial preposition is not fixed, but that different prepositions – for instance *ru* ‘on’ – can be realized. This is to be expected, since the preposition *dar* ‘in’ is not a fixed component of the LVC, but rather the LVC has an argument position for a spatial PP. We will show later this is different for the complex LVC but that the preposition nevertheless contributes to the meaning of the complex light verb construction.

In (11), we see that *tahte nezārat* ‘under surveillance’ is realized as the PP complement of *qarār dāshtan*. This results in a change in the predicative meaning. The LVC *qarār dāshtan* means that the subject referent is spatially located at the place denoted by the PP. This is different in (11), because *nezārat* ‘surveillance’ does not refer to a place where someone or something can be located, but to an event. The linguistic construction *tahte nezārat qarār dāshtan* means ‘to be observed’. We can see here that the eventive noun

⁷ Although Persian has a lexical category of adpositions, various meanings realized by prepositions in languages such as English are realized by nouns. These include *taht* ‘under’, a term borrowed from Arabic which is formally a noun but is only used in prepositional contexts. This is different from *ru* in (14), which means ‘on’ in prepositional contexts but ‘face’ in nominal use.

⁸ Butt and Lahiri (2013: 14) present a similar argumentation concerning LVCs in the Indo-Aryan languages Urdu and Bengal, stating that “the term compound verb is a clear misnomer”.

realized in the PP determines the denotation of the complex predicate. If we replace the noun within the PP with another eventive noun, the result is a different predicative meaning. This becomes evident if we compare the examples in (11) and (15). Whereas the sentence in (11) refers to an event of surveillance, the one in (15) refers to an event of being under pressure.

- (15) Nadia dar sāl-e gozashte taht-e feshār-e ziād-i qarār
 Nadia in year-ez Past under-ez pressure-ez much-indef position
 dāsht.
 have. PST.3 SG
 ‘Nadia was under a lot of pressure last year.’

This shows that the complex construction *tahte nezārat qarār dāshtan* ‘to be observed’ behaves semantically similarly to simple light verb constructions such as *qarār dāshtan* ‘to be placed’. The denotated eventuality is determined by the noun within the PP; the LVC *qarār dāshtan* ‘to be placed’ licenses the PP in which the eventive noun is realized. It is essential that the preposition is an integral part of the complex LVC, as it cannot be replaced by a preposition with a different meaning.⁹ This is different from simple LVCs as we already mentioned above. We will discuss this aspect in more detail later.

Terminologically, we distinguish between simple LVCs such as *qarār dāshtan* ‘to be placed’ and complex LVCs such as *tahte nezārat qarār dāshtan* ‘to be observed’. We have already established above that in a simple LVC, the light verb is a lexical element of the lexical category ‘verb’ which has word status. In complex LVCs, on the other hand, we see that instead of a light verb, we have an LVC. This means that instead of a single word, a multi-word expression is combined with a non-verbal element to form a complex light verb construction.

We have already shown above that *qarār dāshtan* ‘to be placed’ is a multi-word expression when used as a simple LVC. This is also the case when the LVC is realized as the grammatical head of a complex LVC. We see this in (16) with the complex LVC *tahte sarparasti qarār dāshtan* ‘to be under guardianship’. The future auxiliary separates *qarār* from *dāshtan*, as is also the case when *qarār dāshtan* is a simple LVC (cf. 13).

- (16) Kudak-ān pas-az haft sālegi taht-e sarparasti-ye pedar
 child-PL after seven year under-EZ guardianship-EZ father
 qarār xāh-and dāsht.
 position FUT.AUX-3PL have.PST
 ‘Children will be under the father’s guardianship after the age of seven.’

The existence of complex LVCs forces us to reconsider the definition of ‘light verb constructions’ that we introduced in Section 2. We had already noted that this definition, which we repeat in (17), is too narrow. It states that an LVC consists of a light verb and a non-verbal element. At this point, we need to revise the definition slightly so that constructions such as *tahte nezārat qarār dāshtan* ‘to be observed’ are also covered.

⁹ In many, though not all, cases, the preposition *taht* can be replaced by *zir* ‘under’. This replaceability is motivated by the similarity in meaning between the two prepositions. We will discuss the semantic contribution of the preposition in more detail in section 5.3.

- (17) Light verb constructions are multi-word expressions which form complex predicates consisting of (at least) a light verb and a non-verbal element. The eventuality denoted by the complex predicate is determined by the non-verbal element rather than the verb.

A revised definition, which is now explicitly divided into formal aspects and semantic aspects, is given in (18):

- (18) Revised definition of a light verb construction
- a. Formal aspects: Light verb constructions are multi-word expressions which form complex predicates consisting of a semantically light grammatical head and an additional semantic head. The grammatical head is responsible for realizing the LVC as the sentence predicate and bears the relevant grammatical features. The grammatical head consists of at least one light verb or a multi-word expression that itself has a light verb as its grammatical head, whereas the semantic head is a non-verbal phrasal element
 - b. Semantic aspects: The eventuality denoted by the complex predicate is determined by the semantic head rather than the formal head.

In contrast to the first definition, the revised definition now explicitly uses the terms ‘semantic head’ and ‘grammatical head’. The function of both heads is defined, as well as the categories of expression by which they are (minimally) instantiated. It is crucial that the grammatical head is minimally instantiated by a verbal element. This means that a verb must be part of the expression that realizes the grammatical head. At the same time, however, it also means that a larger linguistic unit that includes a verb can realize the grammatical head. Whether there are stronger (possibly language-specific) restrictions regarding the grammatical head remains to be investigated in future work.

We can now define a simple LVC as a light verb construction whose grammatical head is instantiated by a single word (= light verb), while a complex LVC is a light verb construction whose grammatical head is realized by a multi-word expression (= light verb construction).

Finally, we would like to address one aspect of the definition, namely the assertion that the grammatical head is semantically light. We have already discussed this for light verbs such as Persian *dādan* ‘give’ and English *give*. But can we also say that *qarār dāshtan* ‘to be placed’ is semantically light as the grammatical head of a complex LVC? We cited the shift of reference from the grammatical head to the semantic head as a criterion for ‘semantic lightness’. This also means that the complex predicate denotes a different eventuality type than the grammatical head would if it were not part of the complex predicate. Put simply, *tahte nezārat qarār dāshtan* ‘to be observed’ denotes a different eventuality type than *qarār dāshtan* ‘to be placed’. And this is indeed the case, because *qarār dāshtan* ‘to be placed’ denotes a state of spatial localization. The subject referent is located at the place designated by the complement PP. *Tahte nezārat qarār dāshtan* ‘to be observed’, on the other hand, denotes an event of being observed. Further evidence that even in the case of complex LVCs it is not the grammatical head but the semantic head that determines the denoted eventuality can be seen when we vary the noun in the *taht*-PP. In addition to *tahte nezārat qarār dāshtan* ‘to be observed’, we find at least the LVCs in (19),

which formally differ only with regard to the nominal element of the *taht*-PP. Semantically, they differ in that they each denote a different eventuality. As with the simple LVCs, we see that variance in the NVE leads to a shift in meaning. According to our analysis, this suggests that *qarār dāshtan* is semantically light when the simple LVC is realized as the grammatical head of a complex LVC.

- (19) a. tahte kontorol qarār dāshtan
under control place have
'be under control'
- b. tahte feshār qarār dāshtan
under pressure place have
'be under pressure'
- c. tahte bāzdāsht qarār dāshtan
under arrest place have
'be under arrest'
- d. tahte sarparasti qarār dāshtan
under care place have
'be under someone's care'
- e. tahte amr qarār dāshtan
under command place have
'be under someone's command'

5. PROPERTIES OF COMPLEX LIGHT VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

To our knowledge, complex LVCs have not yet been systematically discussed in the literature. It therefore makes sense at this point to take a closer look at the semantic and grammatical properties of this special type of complex predicate. We will first briefly discuss the semantic contribution of grammatical heads (5.1). In 5.2, we will then examine whether the grammatical properties of LVCs vary depending on whether they are realized as simple LVCs or as grammatical heads of complex LVCs. The underlying question is whether LVCs that are realized as grammatical heads represent more fixed expression – i.e., are possibly more lexicalized – than when used as simple LVCs. Finally, in 5.3, we discuss the function of the preposition *taht* 'under'.

5.1. Semantic contribution of the grammatical head

In the previous section, we argued that *qarār dāshtan* 'be somewhere' is semantically light as the grammatical head of a complex LVC. However, we also pointed out that semantic lightness does not mean that an expression is semantically empty. Rather, light verbs contribute *Aktionsart* features, for instance. In the case of simple LVCs in German, we replaced in Section 3 the light verb by other light verbs and thus obtained an alternation between a stative meaning, an inchoative meaning, and a causative meaning. In the Persian examples, the light verbal element of the LVC realized as a grammatical head can also alternate. Besides *qarār dāshtan* 'be somewhere' we find *qarār gereftan* 'to get somewhere' (lit. position take) and *qarār dādan* 'to put somewhere' (lit. position give) as alternating

LVCs. In the examples so far, we had used *dashtan* ‘have’ as a light verb in the simple LVC *qarār dashtan* ‘be somewhere’. The LVC has a stative meaning, and even the complex LVCs with *qarār dashtan* ‘to be somewhere’ as the grammatical head denote states, e.g., the state of being observed.

One criterion for distinguishing state predicates from event predicates is that states cannot be continued after an interruption (Gabbay and Moravcsik 1980: 63). Rather, a new state of the same type must begin after an interruption. Linguistically, this is reflected in the fact that after an interruption of a state has been expressed, combination with expressions meaning ‘continue’ or ‘still’ is not possible. Instead, an expression that means ‘again’ has to be used to indicate that a new state of the same type hold. The combination with *dobāre* ‘again’ is possible, as the example in (20) shows. However, this is different for *hamchenān* ‘still’ which cannot easily combine with the LVC. Rather, the sentence in (21) is considered to be odd. We can therefore see that *tahte nezārat qarār dashtan* ‘be under supervision’ is a complex LVC with a stative meaning.

- (20) *ŷu taht-e nezārat-e yek motexasses qarār dāshd,*
 3SG under-EZ supervision-EZ INDEF specialist position have.PST.3SG
barāye do hafte az bimārestān moraxxas
 for two week from hospital discharged
shod, sepas dobāre taht-e
 become.PST.3SG then again under-EZ
nezārat-e yek motexasses qarār gereft.
 supervision-EZ INDEF specialist position take.PST.3SG
 ‘S/he was under supervision by a specialist, was discharged from the hospital for two weeks, and then was again under supervision by a specialist.’
- (21) *#ŷu taht-e nezārat-e yek motexasses qarār dāshd,*
 3SG under-EZ supervision-EZ INDEF specialist position have.PST.3SG
barāye do hafte az bimārestān moraxxas
 for two week from hospital discharged
shod, sepas hamchenān taht-e
 become.PST.3SG then still under-EZ
nezārat-e yek motexasses qarār gereft.
 supervision-EZ INDEF specialist position take.PST.3SG
 ‘S/he was under supervision by a specialist, was discharged from the hospital for two weeks, and then still was under supervision by a specialist.’

As already said, the stative LVC *qarār dashtan* ‘be somewhere’ can alternate with the eventive LVCs *qarār gereftan* ‘to get somewhere’ and *qarār dādan* ‘to put somewhere’. *Qarār gereftan* has an inchoative meaning, while *qarār dādan* has a causative one. In (22) and (23) the two LVCs function as the grammatical head of a complex LVC. The PP remains constant so that we only see variance with regard to the light verb of the complex grammatical head, which, however, is in line with the German examples. This results in an alternation between a stative meaning ‘be under surveillance’ (20), an inchoative meaning ‘get under surveillance’ (22) and a causative meaning ‘put under surveillance’ (23).

- (22) *Ān mard bā in eshtebāh-ash taht-e nezārat-e*
 that man with this mistake-3SG.POSS under-EZ surveillance-EZ
sāzmān-e etelāf-āt qarār gereft.
 organization-EZ information-PL position take.PST.3SG
 ‘Because of his mistake, the man got under surveillance by the secret service.’
- (23) *Dastur-e qazāyi ān mard-ra taht-e nezārat-e sāzmān-e*
 order-EZ judicial that man-ACC under-EZ surveillance-EZ organization-EZ
etelāf-āt qarār dād.
 information-PL position give.PST.3SG
 ‘A court order placed the man under surveillance by the secret service.’

In none of the examples can we realize the meaning of the complex LVC ‘be/get/put under surveillance’ if we only realize the light verb in the grammatical head and leave the nominal element *qarār* ‘position’ unrealized. It is therefore not only the alternation of the light verb that causes the difference in meaning between (20), (22) and (23), but the alternation of the light verb as part of the simple LVC.

So, we see that the grammatical head contributes to the meaning of the LVC, even if it is semantically light.

5.2. Grammatical properties: separability

Do LVCs differ grammatically when used as the grammatical head of a complex LVC compared to when used as a simple LVC? We cannot examine all conceivable grammatical properties here, but will limit ourselves to one aspect – namely separability.

‘Separability’ refers to the syntactic flexibility exhibited by the individual components of an LVC. An LVC is (syntactically) flexible if the semantic head and the syntactic head can be separated from each other and do not have to be immediately adjacent. This separation can be achieved through bound and free morphemes. Karimi-Doostan (2011: 85) argues that all LVCs can be broken up by “the negation particle, the imperfective particle *mi-* the pronominal clitics, the future auxiliary *xa:stan* ‘will’ and the progressive auxiliary *da:štan* ‘to have’.” The periphrastic progressive construction is colloquial, and the native speakers surveyed found it difficult to judge the complex LVCs with respect to this construction (see, for instance, Nematollahi 2018 for a discussion of the periphrastic progressive construction). We therefore do not take this construction into account. Similarly, we will not discuss another aspect of separability, namely the realization of adnominal and adverbial modifiers. Adnominal modifiers play a central role in the discussion of the compositional nature of light verb constructions (see Fleischhauer and Neisani 2020). However, we cannot do justice to this aspect within the scope of this paper and will therefore omit it from the discussion at this point.

First, in 5.2.1, we discuss the separability of the three simple LVCs *qarār dashtan* ‘be somewhere’, *qarār gereftan* ‘get somewhere’, and *qarār dādan* ‘put somewhere’, and then in 5.2.2 we move on to complex LVCs. The analysis of simple LVCs in 5.2.1 provides a basis for comparison for the investigation of complex LVCs.

5.2.1. Separability of simple LVCs

The question relevant to our discussion is whether the functional elements mentioned by Karimi-Doostan can be realized between the NVE and the light verb. This can be either as a free element between the two words or as a bound element that is cliticized to the NVE or prefixed to the light verb. The only important thing here is whether such a realization is possible, not whether this is the only possible realization.

Table 2 summarizes the behavior of the three simple LVCs with regard to the separability of the NVE from the light verb. ‘Yes’ means that separation is possible using the functional element specified on the left, ‘no’ means that this is not possible.

Table 2 Summary of results regarding the separability of the simple LVCs.

	<i>qarār dashtan</i> ‘be somewhere’	<i>qarār gereftan</i> ‘get somewhere’	<i>qarār dādan</i> ‘put somewhere’
Negation	yes	yes	yes
Imperfective aspect	no	yes	yes
Pronominal clitic	no	no	yes
Future auxiliary	yes	yes	yes

The fields marked ‘no’ in Table 2 can be explained systematically. The imperfective aspect is not compatible with state predicates, so the aspect marker cannot be prefixed to *dashtan*. Pronominal clitics realize a non-subject argument. However, both *qarār dashtan* ‘be somewhere’ and *qarār gereftan* ‘get somewhere’ are intransitive, which rules out the realization of a pronominal clitic. We are therefore dealing with systematic gaps that are not specific to the LVCs discussed.

We limit positive evidence for separability to one example from each LVC. In (24) we show the realization of the negation prefix *na-* on the light verb *dādan* ‘give’.

- (24) *Ŗu hame-ye vasāyel-rā dar chamedān qarār na-dād.*
 3SG all-EZ thing.PL-ACC in suitcase position NEG-have.PST.3SG
 ‘He/she didn’t put all the things into the suitcase.’

We illustrate the realization of the imperfective aspect prefix in (25) using the light verb *gereftan* ‘take’.

- (25) *EttelāŖāt-e porozhe-hā-ye mohem dar sistem-e*
 information.PL-EZ project-PL-EZ important in system-EZ
modiriyat-e ettelāŖāt qarār mi-gir-and.
 management-EZ information.PL position IMPF-take.PRS-3PL
 ‘The information of important project is placed in the information management system.’

Pronominal clitics have different uses: on the one hand, they can realize the object argument of a verb or the internal arguments of a prepositional phrase, or, on the other hand, the possessor argument in a possessive construction (cf., for instance, Lazard 1992: 109-112; Mahmoodi-Bakhtiari 2018: 280-281). In Persian, as in many other

languages, the arguments of relational nouns are formally realized as a possessor argument. This will play a role in the discussion of complex LVCs. In (26), the clitic =ash is cliticized to *qarār* and functions as a pronominal anaphora that is coreferential with *ketāb* ‘book’.

- (26) Sina ketāb-rā xānd va sepa dar qafase qarār=ash
 Sina book-ACC read.PST.3SG and then in shelf position=3SG
 dād.
 give.PST.3SG
 ‘Sina read the book and then placed it on the shelf.’

The future auxiliary is identical to the present tense stem¹⁰ of the verb *xāstan* ‘to want/ to wish’, which is followed by the verb as a so-called ‘short infinitive’. The short infinitive is identical to the past tense stem of the verb. Subject agreement is realized on the auxiliary. We have already seen the combination of the future auxiliary with the LVC *qarār dashtan* ‘be somewhere’ in (13). In (27) we see the realization of the future auxiliaries between *qarār* and *dādan*.

- (27) Asātid natāyej-e nahāyi-rā hafte-ye āyande ru-ye sāyt qarār
 professor.PL result.PL-EZ final-ACC week-EZ next on-EZ site position
 xāh-and dād.
 FUT.AUX-3PL give.PST
 ‘The professors will post the final results on the website next week.’

According to Karimi-Doostan, the separability of the semantic head from the grammatical head through the functional elements discussed is characteristic of all LVCs, and we see that this also applies to the three simple LVCs that are the subject of our investigation. The cases in which a marker cannot be realized between the components of the LVC can be systematically motivated.

5.2.2. Separability of the grammatical head of complex LVCs

Now that we have seen that simple LVCs are separable, we will next look at how the corresponding LVCs behave when they realize the grammatical head of complex light verb constructions. Tables 3 – 5 summarize the results regarding separability. In each table, we compare the behavior of an LVC when used as a simple LVC and when used as the head of a complex LVC. To be clear: this is not about the separability of the semantic head of the complex LVCs – i.e., the *taht*-PP – from the grammatical head, but rather about whether the individual components of the grammatical head can be separated from each other. In the discussion, we refer to a constant NVE, namely the PP *tahte nezārat* ‘under supervision’. As grammatical heads of complex LVCs, complex predicates behave in the same way as simple LVCs with regard to separability.

¹⁰ Some Persian verbs have suppletive stems depending on the tense, so that there is a present tense stem and a past tense stem.

Table 3 Summary of results regarding the separability of *qarār dashtan* as a simple LVC and as the head of a complex LVC.

	<i>qarār dashtan</i> 'be somewhere'	<i>tahte nezārat qarār dashtan</i> 'be under supervision'
Negation	yes	yes
Imperfective aspect	no	no
Pronominal clitic	no	no
Future auxiliary	yes	yes

Table 4 Summary of results regarding the separability of *qarār gereftan* as a simple LVC and as the head of a complex LVC.

	<i>qarār gereftan</i> 'be somewhere'	<i>tahte nezārat qarār gereftan</i> 'get under supervision'
Negation	yes	yes
Imperfective aspect	yes	yes
Pronominal clitic	no	no
Future auxiliary	yes	yes

Table 5 Summary of results regarding the separability of *qarār dādan* as a simple LVC and as the head of a complex LVC.

	<i>qarār dādan</i> 'be somewhere'	<i>tahte nezārat qarār dādan</i> 'put under supervision'
Negation	yes	yes
Imperfective aspect	yes	yes
Pronominal clitic	yes	yes
Future auxiliary	yes	yes

As in the last section, we will illustrate separability using individual examples. The realization of the negation affix on the light verb of the grammatical head is shown for the LVC *tahte nezārat qarār dashtan* 'be under supervision' in (28).

- (28) In moʿassese pish-az axz-e mojavvez-e *rasmi*
 this institute before-from obtaining-EZ license-EZ official
 taht-e nezārat-e hich nahād-e
 under-EZ supervision-EZ no institution-EZ
 dōlat-i-i qarār na-dāsht.
 government-ADJ-INDEF position NEG-have.PST.3SG
 'Before obtaining official authorization, this institution was under no governmental supervision.'

(29) shows the realization of the imperfective aspect marker using the complex LVC *tahte nezārat qarār gereftan* ‘get under supervision’. Since LVCs with the light verb *dāshtan* ‘have’ always realize a state predication, the imperfective aspect marker is excluded for complex LVCs in which *dāshtan* is part of the grammatical head.

- (29) Hame-ye xodro-hā dar pārkīng taht-e nezārat qarār
 all-EZ car-PL in parking under-EZ supervision position
 mi-gir-and.
 IMPF-take.PRS-3PL
 ‘All cars are under supervision in the parking lot.’

At this point, we need to take a closer look at pronominal clitics. In (30), we see that the clitic =*ash*, as in (26), can be cliticized to *qarār* and thus precedes *dādan*. =*ash* is coreferential with *bimār* ‘patient’. Formally, it is realized as the object argument of the grammatical head *qarār dādan*. In this case, the object of the grammatical head – the causee – is identical to the nominal argument of *nezārat* ‘supervision’, i.e., the one who is under supervision.

- (30) Pezeshk bimār-rā moraxxas kard vali that-e nezārat
 doctor patient-ACC discharged do.PST.3SG but under-EZ supervision
 qarār=*ash* dād tā darmān be-dorosti
 position=3SG give.PST.3SG until treatment correctly
 edāme peydā kon-ad.
 continue visible do.PRS-3SG
 ‘The doctor discharged the patient, but placed him under supervision so that the treatment would continue properly.’

Alternatively, =*ash* can also be cliticized to *nezārat*, as shown in (31). The two sentences vary only in the position of the clitic, but are otherwise completely identical. In (31), =*ash* is formally realized as a nominal possessor, i.e., his supervision. The possessor clitic is coreferential with the patient argument (*bimār*). It is the passive meaning which causes the patient to be realized as the possessor.

- (31) Pezeshk bimār-āh moraxxas kard vali that-e
 doctor patient-ACC discharged do.PST.3SG but under-EZ
 nezārat=*ash* qarār dād tā darmān
 supervision=3SG position give.PST.3SG until treatment
 be-dorosti edāme peydā kon-ad.
 correctly continue visible do.PRS-3SG
 ‘The doctor discharged the patient, but placed him under supervision so that the treatment would continue properly.’

Both *tahte nezārat qarār dāshtan* ‘be under supervision’ (32) and *tahte nezārat qarār gereftan* ‘get under supervision’ (33) only allow the cliticization of =*ash* to *nezārat* but not to *qarār*. We attribute this to the fact that the additional argument is licensed by the NVE

and, unlike in the case of *tahte nezārat qarār dādan* ‘put under supervision’, cannot be unified with an argument created in the valency of the LVC in the grammatical head, since both LVCs are intransitive.

- (32) Dāneshju-yan dar tul-e dore-ye kārāmuzi taht-e
 student-PL in length-EZ course-EZ internship under-EZ
 nezārat=ash qarār dār-and.
 supervision=3SG position have.PRS-3PL
 ‘The students are under his/her supervision during the internship.’
- (33) Har taqyir-i ke dar porozhe
 every change-INDEF that in project
 shav-ad taht-e nezārat=ash qarār
 become.PRS-3SG under-EZ supervision=3SG position
 anjām mi-gar-ad tā keyfiyat
 implementation IMPF-take.PRS-3SG so that quality
 hefz shav-ad.
 preserved become.PRS-3SG
 ‘Any changes made to the project come under his supervision to ensure that the quality is maintained.’

We can see, then, that the positioning of pronominal clitics depends on whether the argument realized by them can be unified with an argument position in the valency of the grammatical head – if so, then the clitic can be realized within the grammatical head (separating *qarār* and the light verb) – or not. In the latter case, only a realization as the possessor argument of the NVE is possible.

Finally, we will discuss the positioning of future auxiliaries. In (34), we see that the future auxiliary is realized between *qarār* and *dādan*, thus separating the two components of the grammatical head even in the case of the complex LVC *tahte nezārat qarār dādan* ‘put under supervision’. We have already seen an analogous example for *tahte sarparasti qarār dashtan* ‘be under guardianship’ in (16).

- (34) Qāzi maznun-rā taht-e nezārat qarār xāh-ad dād.
 judge suspect-ACC under-EZ supervision position FUT.AUX-3SG give.PST
 ‘The judge will place the suspect under supervision.’

The linguistic data thus prove that the LVCs examined do not differ in their use as grammatical heads of complex LVCs in terms of separability from their use as simple LVCs. Thus, at least with regard to the feature examined, there is no evidence that LVCs, when realized as grammatical heads, constitute a tighter linguistic unit than when used as simple LVCs.

5.3. Semantic contribution of the preposition

Finally, we like to discuss the role of the preposition in the meaning composition of the complex LVCs examined. In the LVCs discussed, the preposition is fixed and cannot be replaced by another preposition (except by *zir* which also means ‘under’). We can observe the same thing in other languages with LVCs in which the NVE can be instantiated by a PP

(e.g., German). In the literature on German, the position is occasionally taken that the preposition is a purely functional element that does not contribute any meaning (e.g., Zifonun et al. 1997: 1113). However, this is not the case, as can be seen from LVCs such as *unter Beobachtung stehen* ‘be under observation’, the German equivalent of *tahte nezārat qarār dashtan* ‘be under supervision’. Although the LVC is formally active, it has a passive meaning. The subject argument is not the one performing the action, but the one affected by it. The agent argument can be added in the form of an optional complement of the noun, e.g., as its possessor argument (cf. 32). The passive meaning is contributed by the preposition. In German, the PP can also be used without a light verb and then also has a passive meaning (cf. Fleischhauer and Gamerschlag 2019: 147; Fleischhauer and Turus 2021: 75). The same applies in Persian, as shown in (35). *Tahte nezārate* ‘under supervision of someone’ is an adjunct in this example and can be omitted without affecting the grammaticality of the sentence. *Baqie* ‘others’ is the agent of supervision and is realized as the possessor argument of the noun. The patient, i.e., the one under supervision, is unified with the subject argument of the sentence.

- (35) Bishtar-e mardom taht-e nezārat-e baqie moztareb
 more-EZ people under-EZ supervision-EZ others anxious
 mi-shav-and.
 IMPF-become.PRS-3PL
 ‘Most people get anxious when others are watching them.’ (lit. Most people under supervision by others become anxious)

The passive reading comes from a metaphorical interpretation of the preposition. The guiding concept here is the metaphor ‘BEING SUBJECT TO FORCE OR POWER IS DOWN’ (Boers 1996: 47). In various languages – such as Persian, but also German – power is associated with verticality. Those who have power are conceptualized as being ‘above,’ while those who have no power or are subject to the power of others are conceptualized as being ‘below’. A specific form of power is ‘control’, and the complex LVCs with the *taht*-PP express control relations in the broadest sense: someone performs a certain activity on someone else, e.g., someone observes someone else. The metaphorical interpretation of the preposition brings the patient of the activity to the fore, resulting in a passive interpretation. A metaphorical interpretation of the preposition is triggered by the fact that the noun within the prepositional phrase denotes an event rather than a location. The preposition thus contributes to the meaning of the LVC (as also argued for by Moezzi-pour and Ghandhari 2017), even when it is fixed.

6. CONCLUSION

Persian has a large inventory of LVCs that compensate for the lack of simplex verbs. In addition to the possibility of forming LVCs with a simple grammatical head, the language has productive means for forming complex LVCs with an LVC as their grammatical head. This phenomenon, which has not yet been discussed in the research literature, contributes to determining the formal complexity of light verb constructions. Essentially, it shows that the

distinction between a heavy usage and a light usage can also be applied to LVCs and that semantically light LVCs combined with an NVE can form new complex predicates.

Based on several semantic and grammatical aspects, we were able to show that, first, there is no difference in the formation of LVCs depending on whether the grammatical head is realized by a simplex predicate (light verb) or a complex predicate (LVC). Second, there are no grammatical differences between the use of an LVC as a simple LVC or as the grammatical head of a complex LVC. The latter is consistent with Butt and Lahiri's (2011) claim that light verbs do not differ grammatically from their heavy verb counterparts. We can also apply this to light and heavy usages of LVCs, at least for the data discussed here.

We were unable to cover the topic of complex LVCs exhaustively in this paper. For example, we did not examine all grammatically relevant features. An investigation of the modifier potential of complex LVCs as well as a detailed analysis of their grammatical heads is still missing. We did also not come up with an exhaustive listing of complex LVCs. This raises the question of how productive this phenomenon is and which LVCs are even eligible as grammatical heads of complex LVCs. From a comparative linguistic perspective, the question arises as to whether complex LVCs also exist in languages other than Persian.

We hope that this paper provides an introduction to the phenomenon of complex LVCs and that it stimulates further research on this topic.

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