Syntylistics: New Horizons in the Study of Poetry

Mohammad Amin Sorahi
Islamic Azad University, Abadeh Branch, Abadeh, Iran

Abstract

Because linguistics can make a precise and stimulating contribution to an objective analysis of the language of literature, and that literature can provide a rich and varied field for linguistics study, the present paper is an attempt to show that the linguistic study of literary texts and especially poetry is not something haphazard and unsystematic, rather it is a kind of study which is based on the scientific theories and methods of modern linguistics.

The main question proposed here is whether stylistics is the study of performance or competence of poets. In other words, is it the surface structure that should be considered as the starting point or, since poetry is a kind of creation," the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings", an unconscious phenomenon, it takes its origin from the underlying levels of thought and language, and therefore is a result of competence.

By studying "complex predicates" in modern Persian poetry based on the theory of minimalist syntax, another objective of the present study is to show that to do stylistics, stylisticians should depart from the surface structure to the abstract underlying structures. This procedure has its own advantages: it provides researchers with a new and of course reliable tool for stylistics studies. Moreover, it can reconciles modern linguistics and stylistics.

Key words: stylistics, syntax, complex predicates, Persian poetry

1 Introduction

As Mahootian (1997: 5) argues, Persian is a pro-drop language with an SOV word order. Verbs are the carriers of tense and aspect and agree with the subject in person and number. Persian is a head first language with the exception of VPs which are verb-final. Unlike English and some

other languages, although it is said that Persian is an SOV language, the verb and the object and other elements can be topicalized without making grammatical errors in the original sentences. The following examples can illustrate some possible movements of the different elements of sentences in Persian:

a) *mæn   ?æz ?æli   [kotæk xordæm].*
     I   from Ali   beating   ate
                "I was beaten by Ali."

b) *?æz ?æli   mæn   [kotæk   xordæm].*
    From Ali   I   beating   ate
              "I was beaten by Ali."

c) *[kotæk xordæm]   ?æz ?æli.*
    beating   ate   from   Ali
              "I was beaten by Ali."

d) ? *[kotæk xordæm]   mæn ?æz ?æli.*
    beating   ate   I   from   Ali
              "I was beaten by Ali.'

e) **xordæm   mæn ?æz ?æli kotæk.*
    ate   I   from Ali   beating
              *"Was I by Ali beaten."

(a), (b) and (c) are quite grammatical and therefore acceptable in Persian, (d) may seem grammatical only to some native speakers, but (e) is an instance of an ungrammatical sentence in Persian. These examples show that although different elements of a sentence can be used in different places within a sentence, these movements are regular and not haphazard. *kotæk xordæn* "to be beaten" is a complex verbal predicate in Persian.

Complex predicates constitute a great number of Persian verbal forms. They are usually made by using a preverbal element which may be a noun, adjective, preposition, verb or prepositional phrase followed by a light verb. The preverbal element (PV) carries most of the semantics of the complex predicate and determines its argument while the light verb (LV) carries the inflections and shows the properties of tense, mood and aspect.

As it is the case with many languages, complex predicate making, or compounding, is a highly productive phenomenon, and because of this reason, it has been the subject of many studies. However, this article aims at studying complex predicates from the perspective of the roles and syntactic behaviors that they play in poetry.

As for the organization of this article, it falls into different sections: first, complex predicates will be defined and studied. Then, foregrounding and syntactic deviation will be explained very briefly. The next section is devoted to the analysis of the data from a minimalist point of view. The

conclusion, together with some proposals for other works make up the last part of this article.

2 Complex Predicate: definition and explanation

As Butt (2003: 1-2) assumes, complex predicates are monoclausal structures with two or more predicating morphemes and designate a nouns, verbs and adjectives) which predicate as a single element, i.e., their argument map onto a monoclausal syntactic structure".

In Persian, all verbs can be divides into the two categories of simple and non-simple (see e.g., Yarmohammadi 2002). Simple verbs have only one lexical element and constitute a very small portion of the verbs in Modern Persian. In Persian, non-simple verbs are usually divided into two other subcategories: compound and indirect or non-personal verbs. A compound verb consists of a preverbal element which can be a noun such as *zæmin* "earth" as in *zæmin xordæn* "to fall down", an adjective like *baz* "open" in *baz kærdæn* "to open" , an adverb such as *pish* "forward" as in *pish ræftæn* "to go forward", a preposition such as *dær* "out" as in *dær gozæshtæn* "to die" and a verb stem such as *gir* "taking" as in *gir ? aværdæn* "to obtain".

Harvey and baker (2007) mention two distinct ways of combining predicational information within monoclausal structures: merger and co-indexation. They show that co-indexation does not produce lexical predicates, and that these structures are rather multipredicational. Then, they divide the languages with complex predicate structures into two types: a) languages which allow both merger and co-indexation like some languages of New Guinea and (b) languages which only allow merger structures like many languages of northern Australia. Proposing some models for merger and co-indexation, they show that some of the differences between merger and co-indexation constructions lie in the lexical verbs.

4

In his article *Complex Predicates*, Muller (2007) defines complex predicates as predicates which are multi-headed with more than one grammatical element (which can be morphemes or words).each of these elements contributes part of the information which is associated with a head. He discusses a phenomenon that was used to motivate the analysis of complex predicates. He also describes several analyses of these phenomena in various frameworks.

Barjasteh (1983) has studied the morphology, syntax and semantics of the compound verbs according to the lexicalist hypothesis. He assumes compound verb formation as a productive lexical phenomenon which is generated by a number of lexical operations. Then, he divides the Persian compound verbs into the two categories of "separable" and "non-separable" compound verbs. He argues that a large number of Persian compound verbs are separable by different syntactic transformations. To him, a verb like *tæqaza kærdæn* "to request" is a separable compound because the non-verbal (or nominal in his example) element can take the accusative case marker *–ra*. These are his examples:

-hæsæn ? æz   ma [[*?in tæqaza*] *-ra   kærd*].
 Hasan   from we   this   reques –Acc did
"Hasan made this request to us."

According to him, a compound verb like *qædæm zædæn* "to walk" is non-separable because their building elements cannot be separated:

- *ʔæli [[ʔin qædæm] -ra zæd].
  Ali   this   walk -Acc hit
  *"Ali made this pace".

Finally, he emphasizes that the process of compound verb formation is lexical, and also such processes show a great amount of regularity.

Vahedi-Langrudi (1996) has used the theory of Lexical Relational Structure of Hale and Keser which is actually an X-bar theory of argument structure to study the syntax, semantics and argument structure of complex predicates in Persian. He studied the argument structure and formation of complex verbal structures, known as compound verbs or complex predicates, in Modern Persian. According to him, complex predicates are complex verbal structures made up of a preverbal element and a light verb. The preverbal elements may belong to any of the lexical categories nouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, or to prepositional phrases.

In his thesis, Karimi-Doostan (1997) studies light verb constructions (LVC) defined as combinations of a light verb (LV) and a non-verbal pre-verb element (PV) both in Persian and Kurdish. He argues that light verbs are different from auxiliaries and lexical verbs because auxiliaries lack LCS and a-structure, lexical verbs have full LCS and a-structure and light verbs possess defective LCS but not fully specified a structure. Light verbs combine with non-predicative elements and constitute idiom-like non-compositional light verb constructions with a single a-structure originally belonging to the whole constructs. Then, he says that light verb constructions of Persian are comparable to Korean and Japanese light verb constructions. To him, an LV and a PV are two zero-level elements and join together in the lexicon to form an LVC with a single a-structure which can be subjected to morphological rules and its members and can be split up by syntax.

Quoting from Lambton (1953), Dabir-moghaddam (1998) provides a taxonomy of compound verbs as below:

1. N + V: Some common verbs that are used in this pattern are:

Kærdæn(do)*, dadæn* (give)*, dashtæn*(have)*, zædæn* (hit)*, shodæn* (become)*, xordæn* (eat)

2. Adj + V: Most of the verbs which are used in N + V construction can also be used in this construction:

a. *bozorg   kærdæn*   b. *bolænd   shodæn*
     big   do   high   become
    "to raise"   "to get up"

3. P / Adv + V: In compound verbs, sometimes it is possible to use prepositions or adverbials as the non-verbal element:

a. *baz   dashtæn*   b. *bar ?amædæn*
     again   have   on   come
    "to restrain"   "to be accomplished"

4. PP + V: Sometimes, a prepositional phrase can be used as the non-verbal element before the light verb:

a. be *ja   ?aværdæn*   b. *?æz   dæst   dadæn*
     to place   bring   from hand give
     "to perform"   "to lose"

7

Dehdari (2007) examined Persian complex predicates to see if their building elements (the preverbal element and the light verb) can be separated. In his paper, he investigated where complex predicates syntactically originate and what possible movements are necessary to account for separation. He concludes that the separation of complex predicates sheds light onto their internal structure. While an explanation such as Syntactic Word Formation (Karimi, 2003) accounts for many properties of complex predicates, it becomes problematic for separated complex predicates.

3 Foregrounding and Syntactic Deviation

3.1 Foregrounding in Literature

The notion of foregrounding has its roots in the work of Russian formalists and the name most associated with it, according to Peer (1986: 1) is Viktor Shklovsky. Hasan (1989:94) holds that the notion of foregrounding first developed by the Prague school linguists and developed greatly by Mukarovsky.

According to Hasan (1989:94) "The concept basic to foregrounding is that of contrast; and as applied to a text, the contrast is a contrast to the norms of that text". The term contrast to Hasan is a very general notion which can be applied to any two given sentences, and it is always possible to speaks of a contrast which is significant, because it is only significant contrast that she views as foregrounding. Hasan (1989: 94) thinks of something as foregrounded when "…it stands out against an established tendency". Halliday uses the terms "linguistic highlighting" and "prominence" to refer to the phenomenon of foregrounding (cited in Chatman, 1971: 339).

Regarding foregrounding, Peer (1986: 7) maintains that " …a good poet should avoid random deviations, and instead would try to work towards unity of the work by making the foregrounded component points in the same

8

direction". Such systematic foregrounding in his view "…creates the most powerful aesthetic structure that a poet can hope for".

According to Leech (1969: 56) "…deviation which is offending against the rules of the standard language, and extra regularity, which is adding some rules to the rules of the standard language, can make the language of literature foregrounded". The next part is devoted to the definition of deviation.

3.2 Literary Deviation

It is a very general principle of artistic communication that "…the work of art in some deviates from the norms which we, as members of a society, have learned to expect in the medium used" (Leech, 1969: 47).However, according to Safavi (1994: 47) not al deviations of the norms of standard language can be claimed to result in artistic creativity, because some of the deviations merely result in ungrammatical structures. To distinguish unmotivated random deviation from a linguistic deviation which is artistically significant, Leech (1969) considers three possibilities:

1. Linguistic deviation is significant when it (deviation) communicates something. Leech (1969: 59) believes that "…according to this definition of significance, practically all deviations are significant". He provides the following examples:

a) My aunt suffers from terrible authorities.

B) Like you plays?

c) The Huwe(sic) of Commons.

Leech (1969: 59) believes that "the linguistics abnormalities in these examples are most likely to be taken as errors, as trivial hindrances of communication. But unintentionally, they may convey quite a bit of information". If we take the first as an example of malapropism (authorities for arthritis), at least tells us something about the education and character of its producer. In (b) ungrammaticality is probably related to the fact that its producer is a foreigner with imperfect English. If we think that (C) has occurred in a printed text, it gives us this information that the printer has made a mistake. Leech (1969: 59) says that "this sort of mistakes may be deliberately imitated for artistic or comic effect". According to him even the most unmotivated deviation may communicate information of a kind".

2. When it communicates what was intended by its author. This definition of "significant" according to Leech (1969: 60) "…narrows the first one to exclude solecism, malapropisms, and other sorts of linguistic blunder. It insists that a deviation is significant only when deliberate".

3. When it is judged or felt by reader to be significant. Leech (1969:60) believes that "this answer is on the face of it the most unsatisfactory of all, because it merely says that the significance of a poem lies ultimately in the mind of the reader, just as beauty is said to lie in the eye of the beholder".

To sum up Leech's view of significant deviation, it can be said that deviation is significant when it is intended by the writer to convey his meaning and judged by the reader to convey the same meaning intended by the writer. In other words, a view needs to be shared by the writer and the reader about the significance of the deviant pattern.

3.2.1 Syntactic Deviation

Leech (1969) believes in eight kinds of deviation: lexical, syntactic, phonological, graphological, semantic, dialectal, deviation of register and deviation of historical period among which the "syntactic deviation will be studied here.

Leech (1969: 49) defines syntax as "…the grammar of how word patterns within sentences is formed respectively". According to Leech (1969: 50) there is a difference between two types of deviation: "…the one created by an exploitation of the potential complexity of repetitive structure to an unusual degree" examples of which can be cited from the last line of Hopkins' The Wrench of the Deutschland:

Our hearts' charity's heart's fire, our thoughts chivalry's throng's Lord

and a simple "yes/ No" case of grammaticality, as with *"I doesn't like him."* Secondly, there is a more important distinction between the deep structure and the surface structure. He does not go into the exact theoretical nature of the distinction, but simply observes that the deep structure directly reflects the meaning of a sentence, whereas the surface structure relates to the way in which a sentence is actually uttered.

In this article, it is tried to study the syntactic deviation according to the behavior of complex verbal predicates in Modern Persian poetry.

4 Methodology and Data Analysis

The data for the following study was culled from a collection of modern Persian poetry composed by some of the outstanding modern Persian poets like Nima, Sepehri, Farokhzad, Mosaddegh and Akhavan .

To gather the data, all of the poems of these poets were studied. Then, a list of different lines whose verbs were complex predicates was gathered. These lines made up the basis of our analysis.

According to the structure of the complex predicates of our data, five distinct groups of verbs were recognized:

1) N + LV as in: *peyvand   zædæn*

        transplantation hit

         "To transplant"

mæn   dær   in   ?aye   to-ra

I   in this verse you- ACC

be deræxt-o ?ab-o ?atæsh peyvand   zædæm

to   tree-and water-and fire transplantation hit

"In this verse,

 I transplanted you to the tree, water and fire" (Farokhzad)

2) Verbal stem + LV as in: *gozær   dadæn*

           pass give

            "to pass"

seda   .....

sound ……

fæza-ra   ?æz   xod   gozær   dad.

space-ACC   from   self   pass   give

"the sound….

 Passed the space through itself"   (Sepehri)

3) Adj + LV as in: *tar   shodæn*

       dark   become

      "To become dark"

tar   shod   chehre-ye   ?a?ine   ze   ?ah

dark   became   face-of   mirror   from sigh

"The face of the mirror became dark because of sighing"   (Farokhzad)

4) P + LV like: *bala   ræftæn*
                  up   go
                   "to go up"
Sho?le-?i   ?æz   ru-ye   ?a?ine   cho   mowj-i   mirævæd   bala
 Flame – a   from   over   mirror   like   wave- a   is going   up
" a flame is going up the mirror like a wave"

5) PP + LV as in :   *?æz   bær   dashtæn*
                        From   memory   have
                         " to learn by heart"
væ-?avazha-ye   ?adæmiyan- ra   yeksær
and- songs- of   humans-ACC   totally
mæn   daræm   ?æz   bær
I   have   from   memory
"and the songs of the humans
 I know them totally by heart."   "Nima"

The landing site of the complex predicates of the present data revealed this noticeable fact that the complex predicates of modern Persian poetry are used only in five different structures:

1) Sentence finally. It is the most neutral place occupied by simple verbs in every day conversations and in formal writing:

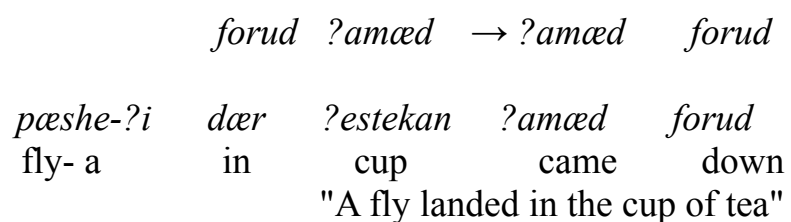*dær   shæhr   tak-ha-ra   xak   kærde?ænd.*
in   city   grapes-ACC   soil   did(3rd pl.)

13

"They have buried the grape trees in the town"

(1)

CP

Spec   C

C   TP

DP   T

Ø
T   VP

PP   V

dær shæhr   DP   V

tak-ha-ra   NV   LV
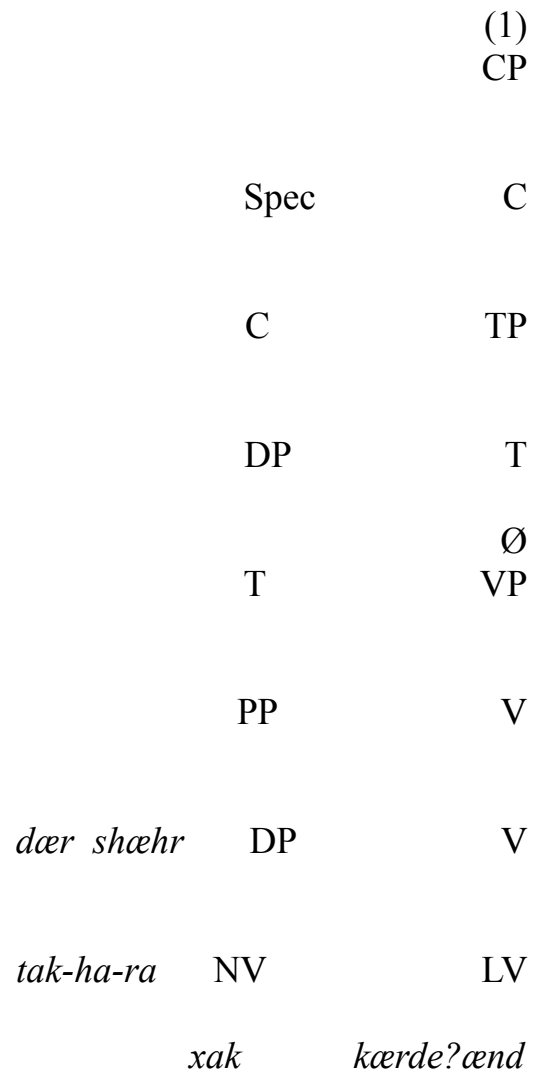
xak   *kærde?ænd*

The above diagram shows that *dær shæhr tak-ha-ra xak kærde?ænd* is a sentence in which the subject has been dropped. As it was mentioned, this sentence is the most neutral structure and syntactically is quite similar to the sentences used in everyday conversations.

2) Preverbal element and light verb inversion in which the light verb moves and landed before the preverbal element:

forud ?amæd → ?amæd forud

pæshe-?i	*dær*	*?estekan*	*?amæd*	*forud*
fly- a	in	cup	came	down

"A fly landed in the cup of tea"

(2)   CP

				spec	C
				C	TP
				DP	T
		pæshe-?i	T		VP
		PP			V
	dær ?estekan		DP		V
D		N	NV		LV
?amæd			*forud*		*?amæd*

In (2), there is an inversion of the light verb and the preverbal element. According to Muller (2007), complex predicates are multi-headed structures with more than one grammatical element. In the light of his assumption, and according to Dehdari, the preverbal element of the complex predicates can be considered as a kind of non-specific DP. What happens in (2), is the
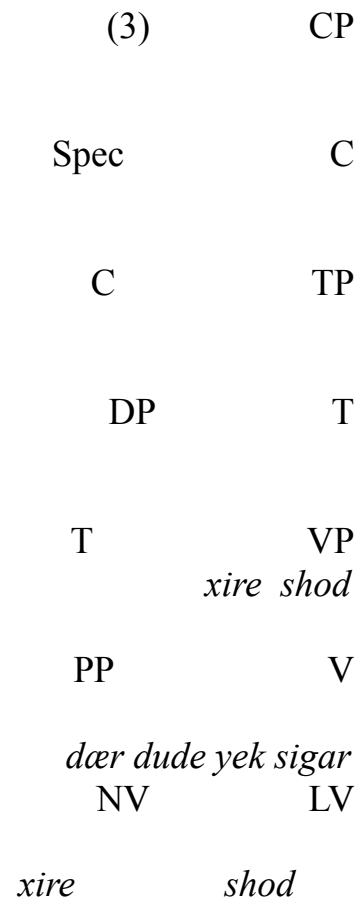
15

movement of the light verb (LV) *?amæd* to the head position of the above DP, namely D.

3) The whole complex predicate raises:

xire   shod   dær   dud-e   yek   sigar.
stare   became   in   smoke   one   cigarette
"He stared in the smoke of one cigarette."

(3)   CP

Spec   C

C   TP

DP   T

T   VP
                xire shod

PP   V

dær dude yek sigar
NV   LV

xire   shod

In (3), V which contains the preverbal element NV together with the light verb LV moves to the head position. This movement can be justified if we accept that the complex predicates and their building components are considered as head together or separately.

4) In some cases, the subject of the sentence does exist and there is a movement of the complex predicate to a higher head position:

mæn   tekye   dade? æm   be   dæri   xamush.
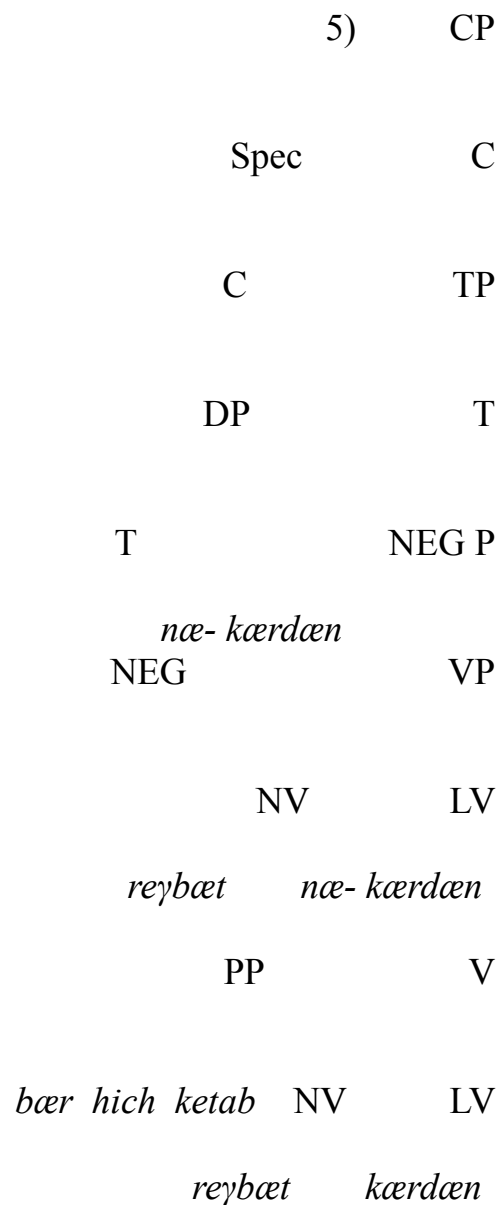
 I   leaning   have given   to   a door   quiet

"I have lent against a quiet door."

(4)   CP

    Spec   C

    C   TP

    DP   T

    mæn

    T   VP

    tekye dadæn

    PP   V

    be dæri xamush

    NV   LV

    Tekye   *dadæn*

(4) resembles (3) in the movement that happens. However, the only difference is that the subject DP has a representation and is not dropped.

5) In some lines, the complex predicates have a more complicated behavior. In these examples, the whole complex predicates move to the head of NEG P, i.e. NEG, then the preverbal element NV is left, but the light verb moves to the head T. The following example illustrates these movements:

nækonæd   reɣbæt   bær   hich   ketab.
Neg - do   relish   on   no   book
"He does not take a delight in any books."

5)   CP

Spec   C

C   TP

DP   T

T   NEG P

næ- kærdæn
NEG   VP

NV   LV

reɣbæt   næ- kærdæn

PP   V

bær hich ketab   NV   LV

reɣbæt   kærdæn

18

In (5), there are two movements: the movement of the complex predicate to the head of NEG P, and then the movement of the light verb to the head T.

5 Conclusion

This article aimed at providing a syntactic analysis of complex predicates in Modern Persian Poetry. By the syntactic analysis it was mean how this syntactic device was treated by the poets.

The data for the present paper came from the poems of some of the most famous modern Persian poets. It was tried to study these data from a minimalist point of view. This study showed that complex predicates have a very important role in poetry in making the language of poetry foregrounded. It seems that among the five different structures in which complex predicates are used in Persian poetry, only one kind is dominated in every poet's poetry. For instance, while Farokhzad was really skilled in using type (1), which makes her poems seem more like everyday conversations, Nima was a master of using complex predicates in the third (3) pattern, and so on. Therefore, the fact that how complex predicates are used can be considered as a reliable stylistic tool to distinguish one poet's style from another one.

19

During this study, it was also found that the frequency of some of the light verbs which are used in the complex predicates are surprisingly more than the others: the frequency of *kærdæn* "do" is not comparable with that of the rest of the light verbs. Also, another finding of this study was that every poet was interested only in a limited number of light verbs in the structure of different complex predicates, hence, emphasizing both morphological and semantic deviations.

To sum up the discussion, this paper shows that linguistics and literary criticism as two independent disciplines can illuminate each other in many ways, among which syntax has a noticeable place. Moreover, linguistics can accomplish a precise analysis of literary texts, and by doing so, make stimulating contribution to literary studies.

References

Barjasteh, Darab. (1983). *"Morphology, Syntax and Semantics of Persian Compound Verbs: A Lexicalist Approach*". PhD thesis. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaihn.

Butt, Miriam. (2003). *The light verb jungle*. Ms., Harvard Working Papers in Linguistics. Boston.

Chatman, S.R. (1971). *Literary Style: a Symposium*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dabir-Moghaddam, Mohammad. (1998). "Compound Verbs in Persian" *Proceedings of the Third Linguistics Conference*. Tehran: Allameh Tabatabaee University and Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies.

Dehdari, Jon. (2007) .*Split Complex Predicates in Persian*. Retrieved from

Farokhzad, F. (1997). *majmu?e ?æsh?ar*. [Collection of Poems]. Tehran: Behzad Publications.

Hasan, R. (1989). *Linguistics, Language, and Verbal Art*. (2nd ed.). London: Oxford University Press.

Karimi-Doostan, G.(1997). *Light Verb Constructions in Persian.* PhD dissertation, University of Essex, England.

Harvey. M., and Baker, B. (2007). *Complex Predicate Formation.*

Leech, G.N. (1969). *A linguistic Guide to English Poetry*. London: Longman.

Mahootian, Sh. (1997). *Persian*. London: Routledge.

Mosaddegh, H. (1998). *do mænzume*: *?abi, khakestæri, siah væ dær ræhgozare bad* [Two Long Poems: Blue, Grey, Black and In the Pathway of Wind]. Tehran: Kanoon Publications.

 Moshiri, F. (1993). *?æz diare ?ashti* [From the Peace Region]. Tehran: Cheshme Publications.

Muller, Stefan. (2007). *Complex Predicates*. Retrieved from

Peer, V. (1986). *Stylistics and Psychology*. Provident House: Croom Helm Ltd.

Rowshangar, M. (1990). *?æz nima ta bæ?d (1)*. [From Nima Onward (1)]. Selected by Forough Farokhzad. Tehran: Morvarid Publications.

Sepehri,S. (1984). *hæsht ketab* .[Eight Books]. Tehran: Tohuri Publications.

Sfavi, k. (1373/ 1994). *?æz zæbanshenasi be ?ædæbiat: jelde ?ævvæl, næzm.*[From Linguistics to Literature, Volum I, Poetry]. Tehran: Nashre Cheshme

Vahedi-Langrudi, M.(1996). *The Syntax, semantics and Argument Structure of Complex Predicates in Modern Farsi*. PhD sthesis. University of Ottawa, Canada.

Yarmohammadi, lotfolah. (2002). *A Contrastive Analysis of Persian and English: (grammar, vocabulary and phonology*). Tehran: Payam-e Nour University Publications.