

# Other Options without Optionality\*

Aniko Csirmaz and Markéta Ceplová  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

In this paper we present an overview of light verb constructions in Zazaki. We show that light arguments, which contribute the meaning in light verb structures, can either behave as objects, or as incorporated elements. The incorporated or object status is not optional, however, but set for once and all for each light argument. In this respect, Zazaki light verbs diverge from their Japanese counterparts, where incorporation or syntactic objecthood is largely optional. In addition, we also discuss some examples that apparently pose a difficulty for our analysis.

## 1. Introduction

The present paper is concerned with light verb constructions in Zazaki, and aims to establish that light verb constructions can be divided into two large groups, depending on the status of the light complement. Light verb constructions are characterized, as the name suggests, by verbal predicates that are largely devoid of any meaning. In Japanese, *suru* constructions provide such an example, where the meaning of the predicate is contributed by a nominal element.

- (1) John-wa Mary-ni hanashi-o shita<sub>light verb</sub> (Grimshaw & Mester 1988)  
John-TOP Mary-TO talk-ACC *suru*  
'John talked to Mary'

Similarly, in Zazaki the verb *kerd*<sup>1</sup> 'do' fails to contribute to the meaning of the sentence. Instead, it is a nominal *pači* 'kiss' that determines the meaning:

- (2) layiki čeneke pači kerd<sup>2</sup>  
boy-OBL girl<sup>3</sup> kiss did  
'the boy kissed the girl'

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\* We would like to thank our informant Gulcem Aktas for her immense patience with us and our attempts at trying to figure out how to say such important things as 'the boy kissed the girl' in all possible ways and forms. Thanks go also to the instructors of the class, Michael Kenstowicz and Norvin Richards, and our classmates for their invaluable help, guidance and comments. It's been fun to work with all of you!

<sup>1</sup> What we are writing as 'kerd' here alternates with 'k'erd' (i.e. with palatalized k), which we treat as optional variation.

<sup>2</sup> The following symbols we use in transcribing the Zazaki data have these corresponding IPA symbols: ε = [ɛ], i = [ɨ], š = [ʃ], č = [tʃ], ž = [ʒ], j = [dʒ], y = [j].

The verb *kerd* ‘do’ can, however, also appear without a nominal that specifies the verb meaning. In these cases it can mean ‘do’ or ‘put, place’.

- (3) a. layiki kitab kerd bine masa  
 boy-OBL book put-PAST under table  
 ‘the boy put the book under the table’  
 b. ti či kəna?  
 you what do  
 ‘what are you doing?’

In (3a) and (3b) above, only arguments are present in addition to *kerd*. We take the absence of a nominal similar to *pači* ‘kiss’ to indicate a non-light verb usage. Given the data above, the *Zazaki* verb *kerd* has both light verb (2) and non-light verb (3) usages. In the remainder of the paper, we will restrict the discussion to light verb occurrences. That is, we will only consider those instances of *kerd* when the sentence contains—in addition to the arguments—a nominal that specifies the meaning of the verbal predicate.

For ease of discussion, let us use the term *light argument* for the nominal that defines the meaning of the predicate, such as *pači* ‘kiss’ in (2). The main claim of this paper is that light arguments can either be syntactic complements of the light verb, or form a part of the verbal head itself. This claim is not novel; it was already observed by Grimshaw and Mester (1988), Miyagawa (1989), and Tsujimura (1990) for Japanese. However, for each *Zazaki* light argument, it is invariably determined what the status of the light argument is. For Japanese, syntactic objecthood or incorporation is largely optional, as shown in (5). For unergatives, however, only incorporation is an option (as established by Miyagawa 1989, Tsujimura 1990). The restricted behavior of unergatives is illustrated in (6) ((5) and (6) cited from Saito & Hoshi 2000).

- (5) *Light verbs with incorporated / accusative marked light arg*  
 a. Mary-ga John-to (kyonen) kekkon -sita  
 Mary-NOM John-WITH last year marriage -did  
 b. Mary-ga John-to (kyonen) [<sub>NP</sub> kekkon] -o sita  
 Mary-NOM John-WITH last year marriage -ACC did  
 ‘Mary married John (last year)’
- (6) *Incorporated / accusative marked light arg with unergatives*  
 a. ya -ga mato -ni [<sub>V</sub> meityuu -sita]  
 arrow -NOM target -TO strike -did  
 b. ?\*ya -ga mato -ni [<sub>NP</sub> meityuu] -o sita  
 arrow -NOM target -TO strike -acc did  
 ‘The arrow struck the target’

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<sup>3</sup> Nominative/Absolutive case is the unmarked case and we mark the Accusative/Ergative case as Oblique (obl). For further comments see section 2.

Different explanations have been proposed for the ungrammaticality of (6b), invoking Burzio's generalization (Miyagawa 1989, Tsujimura 1990), or proposing an LF-incorporation account (Saito and Hoshi 2000). Abstracting away from this limitation, the light argument can optionally either be an object, or form a complex head with the verb. In Zazaki, the alternatives are not optional. For each light argument, the light argument is either an object of the light verb *kerd*, or forms a complex head with it. In this paper we will establish these two distinct classes of light verb constructions, and indicate some additional interesting points. Among these will be a structure which suggests that ergative subjects may not always be tied to absolutive-marked objects.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. In section 2 we briefly outline the relevant aspects of Zazaki grammar. Section 3 contains a discussion of transitive light verb constructions, where the light verb takes a syntactic object. Section 4 discusses light verb structures with a puzzling double-faced behavior, and suggests an account. In section 5, we introduce a construction type that is apparently transitive, but we will show that they are better analyzed as intransitive verbs. Section 6 discusses intransitive light verbs and certain idiosyncrasies. Section 7 summarizes the main points of the paper.

## 2. Basics of Zazaki Grammar

Before discussing the details and diagnostics of light verb constructions, let us introduce some relevant properties of Zazaki. First, it should be noted that Zazaki has a split ergative paradigm. In the past, it has an ergative-absolutive pattern. That is, in a transitive structure, the object receives the unmarked (nominative) case, and the verb agrees with the object in number and gender. The subject receives ergative case. Examples in (7) show that the agreement on the light verb *kerd* varies according to the number of the object.

- (7) a. mi kitab-i berz kerd-i  
 I-OBL book-PL lift-up did-PL  
 'I lifted up the books'  
 b. mi kitab berz kerd  
 I-OBL book lift-up did  
 'I lifted up the book'

In the future tense (which can be characterized as non-past; i.e. can refer to ongoing as well as future events), Zazaki has a nominative-accusative system. In these environments, it is the subject that displays nominative case and agrees with the verb, and the object appears with accusative case marking. Note that the agreement on the verb varies along with the number of the subject.

- (8) a. ez kitabi berz kena  
 I book-OBL lift-up will-do  
 'I will lift up the book'  
 b. ŝima kitaba berz ken-ε  
 you-PL book-OBL lift-up will-do-1SG.PL  
 'you will lift up the book'

For intransitive verbs, the case on the only argument is Nominative in both the future and the past (for more details see section 6).

Since the paper will largely discuss past-tense examples, for convenience, we give a table of (non-evidential) past verb forms below.

(9) Past (non-evidential) paradigm

	Singular	Plural
1person	kɛrd-a	kɛrd-ime
2person	kɛrd-a	kɛrd-i
3person	kɛrd- $\emptyset_M$ / kɛrd- $\epsilon_F$	kɛrd-i

Next, let us turn to case marking. We will refer to the unmarked case (whether on future subjects or past objects) as *nominative*. The marked case, borne by future objects and past subjects, will be described as *oblique*. The oblique can also be used to mark goals, objects of adpositions, and possessors. The case system is summarized below.

(10) Case-marking on nominals

	Singular masculine	Singular feminine	Plural
Nominative	- $\emptyset$	- $\emptyset$ [stem ends in - $\epsilon$ ]	- $\emptyset$ [plural suffix is -i]
Oblique	-i	- $\epsilon$	-a

As for word order, Zazaki is a head-final language, having postpositions and SOV as the basic order, with goals and PPs preferably following the verb, as illustrated by the ditransitive construction below.

- (11) Mehemed-i kitab da malim-i  
 Mehemed-OBL book gave teacher-OBL  
 ‘Mehemed gave the book to the teacher’

With these facts in mind, let us turn to transitive light verb constructions.

### 3. Transitive Light Verbs

In this section and later on, we use three environments to identify the properties of light verb constructions. The diagnostics identify objects, and so they can be used to determine whether a certain light argument is an object or not. In the first section, we illustrate how the three diagnostics (past agreement<sup>4</sup>,

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<sup>4</sup> Recall that the object in the past is nominative. However, case marking cannot be used to identify objects reliably. We assume that nominative objects have phonologically null case-marking, and incorporated elements lack case marking. Thus lack of overt case marking cannot distinguish between syntactic objects and incorporated elements, while agreement morphology on the verb can do so.

passivization, and causative agreement) work with transitive non-light-verbs. In the next two sections, we identify and discuss two types of transitive light verbs.

### 3.1 The diagnostics

The three diagnostics we will use to identify objects are listed below.

- (12) a. trigger of verb agreement in the past  
 b. promotion under passivization  
 c. agreement with the past auxiliary in causative constructions

Let us discuss these diagnostics one by one.

First, as noted in the previous section, the past-tense verb agrees with the object in number and gender. Thus whatever determines agreement on the verb in the past is singled out as an object. It is the object of a transitive non-light verb that determines what agreement suffixes appear on the verb.

- (13) *Agreement in the past*  
 a. mi kitab wend  
 I-OBL book(M) read.PAST  
 'I read the book'  
 c. mi qezeta wend-e  
 I-OBL newspaper(F) read.PAST-FEM  
 a. mi kitab-i wend-i  
 I-OBL book-PL read.PAST-PL  
 'I read the books'

Next consider passive structures. In passive constructions the object gets promoted; thus passives provide an additional diagnostic for identifying objects. As expected, the object (*non* 'bread') is promoted, and becomes the subject (14b). The object has nominative case marking in both the active (14a) and passive (14b) forms—since the case system is ergative in the past. The finite verb in the passive construction is *ame* 'come', that we analyze here as a passive auxiliary. The verb appears as a participle<sup>5</sup>.

- (14) a. *Active*  
 čeneke non pot  
 girl-OBL bread baked  
 'the girl baked the bread'  
 b. *Passive*  
 non ([hetε čeneke ra] amε pot-ene  
 bread (side girl-OBL from) came cook-NOM  
 'the bread was baked by the girl'

The optional *by*-phrase is expressed as a PP. We assume that the preposition *hetε* mediates the subject thematic role, but cannot assign case. A default case-

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<sup>5</sup> The participial form can also appear as a gerund.

assigning postposition, *ra*<sup>6</sup>, will ensure that the agent is case-marked, satisfying the Case Filter<sup>7</sup>. If this analysis is on the right track, then the postposition *ra* is similar to the English *of*, which can be described as a default preposition appearing in nominal environments (Chomsky 1970).

(15) the capture \*(of) the convict

Causatives yield the third diagnostic environment. The original transitive structure is shown in (16a), and the causative version in (16b). The causee appears as a PP, similarly to the agent of the passive structure in (14). In the causative form, the main verb *da* ‘give’ agrees with the object of killing, and the object has nominative case. The causer has oblique case-marking.

(16) *Causative*

- a. layiki kitab herina  
boy-OBL book bought  
‘the boy bought the book’
- b. malimi ebe layiki kitab da herinaš  
teacher-OBL INSTR boy-OBL book gave buy-NOM  
‘the teacher made the boy buy a book’
- c. malimi ebe layiki kitabi dayi herinaš  
teacher-OBL INSTR boy-OBL book-PL gave-PL buy-NOM  
‘the teacher made the boy buy books’

Let us summarize the three types of environments that identify objects. (a) In the past tense, finite verbs show agreement with the object. (b) In passive constructions, the object is promoted, and becomes a subject. (c) If a transitive structure is causativized, then the original subject appears (optionally) as a PP and the original object becomes the object of the causative structure. The object agrees with the main auxiliary *da* ‘give’. So far we have seen how non-light transitive verbs behave in these environments. In the following two subsections, we will consider light verb structures, specifically one class of light verb structures where the light argument functions as the object, and another class where the object of the transitive light verb is not the light argument.

### 3.2 Transitive light verbs with no objects?

Some light verbs take, in addition to the light argument, only a subject. In these cases the light argument may behave just like an object. That is, the light

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<sup>6</sup> Glossed as ‘from’ in *by*-phrases (to give the meaning ‘from the side of’) and as ‘RA’ elsewhere.

Zazaki *ra* immediately recalls Persian *ra*, which is described in Karimi (1990, 1996) as a specificity marker. The Zazaki data we gathered is insufficient to assert whether *ra* is also a specificity marker in this language. Note that we treat *ra* as a default case assigner here. In contrast, Karimi (1996) suggests that while Persian *ra* case-marks its complement DP, it also needs to be accusative-marked itself; for example, by the verb. This account of *ra* does not obviously carry over to Zazaki; it is not clear what would license the case of the *ra*-phrase in a passive construction such as (14b).

<sup>7</sup> Further support for the default case-assigning nature of *ra* comes from the fact that *ra* also appears with objects of certain verbs (cf. section 4); again, we suggest, assigning case.

argument determines past agreement on the verb as well as on the causative auxiliary, and it is the light argument that is promoted in passives. Examples illustrating the three diagnostics are given below. (17) shows that the past agreement varies along with the number of the light argument. (18) illustrates promotion in passives, and (19), agreement in causative structures. Light arguments in these constructions can be either singular or plural, and agreement varies accordingly.

(17) *Past agreement*

- a. layiki zur kerd  
boy-OBL lie did  
'the boy lied/told a lie'
- b. layiki zuri kerdi  
boy-OBL lie-PL did-PL  
'the boy lied/told lies'

(18) *Passive*

- a. no zur hete layiki - ra ame kerdene  
this lie side boy-OBL from came do-NOM  
'this lie was told by the boy'
- b. ne zuri hete layiki - ra amey kerdene  
these lies side boy-OBL from came-PL do-NOM  
'these lies were told by the boy'

(19) *Causative*

- a. malimi ebe mi zur da kerdene  
teacher-OBL INSTR I-OBL lie-NOM gave do-NOM  
'the teacher made me lie'
- b. malimi ebe mi zuri dayi kerdene  
teacher-OBL INSTR I-OBL lie-NOM.PL gave-PL do-NOM  
'the teacher made me lie/tell lies'

The light argument can also be modified by adjectives:

- (20) a. ez zuro di girs keno  
I lie-EZ AUG big will-make  
'I will tell a big lie'
- b. layiki xero phil kerd  
boy-OBL favor big did  
'the boy did a big favor'

Yet another indication of the objecthood of light arguments in this group is that their form varies across tenses. Recall that objects have nominative case in the past, but oblique case in the future. If light arguments are objects, then it is expected that they are case-marked; and so they should vary across

tenses. This prediction is borne out. Contrast the light argument forms in the past and future examples below.

- (21) a. *Light argument in the past (nominative)*  
 layiki xer kerd / xeri kerdi  
 boy-OBL favor did / favor-PL did-PL  
 ‘the boy did a favor / favors’
- b. *Light argument in the future (oblique)*  
 no layik xeri / xera keno  
 that boy favor-OBL / favor-PL.OBL will-do  
 ‘that boy will do a favor / favors’

Thus the light arguments in these structures behave just like objects in the transitive constructions above. In addition, the variable number specification and modifiability suggests that light arguments have a phrasal status. Based on these facts, we conclude that the light arguments can be genuine objects. A list of such light arguments that we have identified is given below.

- (22) a. telefon kerd ‘telephone’  
 b. kar kerd ‘work (do job)’  
 c. xer kerd ‘do a favor / charity’  
 d. zur kerd ‘lie’  
 e. seir kerd ‘do magic’

In the next section we describe a light argument type that is the reverse of this group—a case in which the light argument forms a complex head with the light verb.

### 3.3 Transitive light verbs with objects

In the previous section, we have seen that the light argument can function as the object. It fulfills the same criteria as objects in section 3.1. In addition, number marking on these light arguments is variable, and they may be modified—arguing for the conclusion that these light arguments are phrasal objects.

Not all light arguments behave this way. Consider a light verb construction where in addition to the light argument, the verb also has a subject and an object. An example of such construction is given below.

- (23) mi kitab berz kerd  
 I-OBL book lift-up did  
 ‘I lifted up the book’

Comparing this case to constructions with ditransitive verbs (see e.g. (11) above, or section 5.2), we can see that it is different since ditransitive verbs require the indirect object to follow the verb, whereas here the light argument precedes it.

In these cases, it is the object *kitab* ‘book’ that is singled out as the object by the relevant diagnostics. It determines agreement on the past *kerd* as well as on the causative auxiliary, and is promoted in passives:



(24) *Plural agreement*

mi kitabi berz kerdi / \*kerd  
I-OBL book-PL lift did-PL / \*did-SG  
'I lifted up the books'

(25) *Passive*

no kitab hete čeneke - ra ame berz kerdene  
that book side girl-OBL from came lift do-NOM  
'that book was lifted by the girl'

(26) *Causative*

malimi ebe layiki kitabi dayi / \*da berz kerdene  
teacher-OBL INST boy-OBL book-PL gave-PL / \*gave-SG lift do-  
NOM  
'the teacher made the boy lift the books'

Apart from the objecthood diagnostics, these light arguments also differ from the previous group in modifiability and number marking. The number of those light arguments that do not function like objects is invariant<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, our attempts at eliciting a grammatical instance of light argument modification in these cases were largely unsuccessful.

(27) *Number marking and modification of the light argument*

- a. layiki čeneke kerde pači / \*pač<sup>9</sup>  
boy-OBL girl did kiss  
'the boy kissed the girl'
- b. \*layiki čeneke pač-o girs kerde  
boy-OBL girl kiss-EZ big did  
'the boy gave the girl a big kiss'

In sum, the second type of light verb constructions the light arguments are not object-like. They are not singled out as objects by the diagnostics used, and they resist variable number marking and modification. Based on these facts, we suggest that in this case the light argument is not a full phrase, but is only a noun head that is merged with the light verb *kerd*. Since the light argument is a head, it is expected that it will lack both number marking and any other modification. Furthermore, as parts of a complex verbal head, they are unavailable for agreement and promotion processes—hence the object diagnostics do not refer to them.

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<sup>8</sup> The precise form may have number or case marking (plural or oblique) present, as in the case of *pači kerd* 'kiss'. But crucially, even if it is morphological marking, it cannot vary.

<sup>9</sup> With the reverse ordering of the light verb and light argument, the final *-i* of *pači* 'kisses' can be optionally dropped. However, this possibility is not available with the reverse order. We have no precise account of the optional *-i* dropping, but suspect that it may be a phonological process.

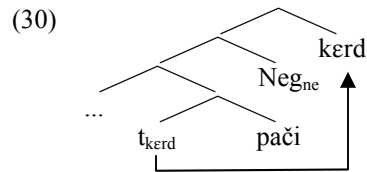
It must be noted that an incorporation account leaves a problem unresolved. In negative sentences, the negation *ne* immediately precedes the finite verb, as shown below.

- (28) a. mi kitab her(i)na  
 I-OBL book bought  
 'I bought a book'  
 b. mi kitab ne - her(i)na  
 I-OBL book NEG bought  
 'I didn't buy a book'

In a light verb construction negation always immediately precedes the light verb *kerd*:

- (29) a. layiki čeneke pači ne - kerde  
 boy-OBL girl kiss NEG did  
 'the boy did not kiss the girl'  
 b. \*layiki čeneke ne pači kerde

For the time being, we are assuming that the light verb can excorporate from the complex head and obligatorily raises to a head higher than negation. This movement will be invisible in sentences with no negation but it will derive the fact that even where there is word order optionality, the preferred order is light argument *kerd*<sup>10</sup>. Nevertheless, the precise way of deriving the correct word order variations (especially the reverse order) remains to be accounted for.



We have established in this section that there are two types of light arguments. Light arguments can be full-fledged objects, as the examples in section 3.2. Those light arguments share all properties with objects of non-light verb environments. The other option for light arguments is to be a part of a complex verbal head, as in section 3.3. In this case, the object diagnostics bypass the light argument. Also, the light argument cannot have variable number specification, and cannot be modified by adjectives. The two types of light verbs are schematically illustrated below.

- (31) a. *Light arg as object*  
 VP  
 [light argument] V
- b. *Light arg as part of a complex head*  
 VP  
 (object) V  
 [light argument] V

<sup>10</sup> An exception to this preference is 'lose' where the preferred order is *kerd vindi*.

In the next section we discuss a light verb construction of type 2, when the light argument is the part of a complex verbal head. Even though the resulting verbal head is transitive—that is, it has an object as well as a subject—the diagnostics used in the previous section behave unexpectedly.

#### 4. Diverging Diagnostics

In the previous section the examples tested were well-behaved. That is, all three diagnostics (past verb agreement, causative auxiliary agreement, and promotion in passives) picked out the same constituent. This is, however, not always true. We found a few cases where the diagnostics pattern differently.

In this section we present the relevant examples, and suggest a solution, which nevertheless requires further elaboration. The relevant group of constructions has experiencer subjects as well as objects. The light argument is incorporated into the verbal head, as in (31b). (32) provides some illustration.

- (32) a. mi layika - ra hes kerd  
 I-OBL boy-PL.OBL RA like did  
 ‘I liked the boys’  
 b. mi kitabi - ra ifret kerd  
 I-OBL book-OBL RA hate did  
 ‘I hated the book’

Note that the constituents that we have described as objects appear with the postposition *ra*. In both passive<sup>11</sup> and causative environments, this argument truly behaves as the object—it is promoted and triggers agreement:

- (33) a. *Passive*  
 layik hete čeneke - ra ame hes kerdene  
 boy side girl-OBL from came like do-NOM  
 ‘the boy was liked by a girl’  
 b. *Causative*  
 Fatima ebe čeneke layiki dayi hes kerdene  
 F. INST girl-OBL boy-PL gave-PL like do-NOM  
 ‘Fatima made the girl like the boys’

However, in the past, the verb does not agree with the object. Contrast (34a), where the object does not trigger agreement, with (34b, c), where the object does determine agreement on the past verb.

- (34) a. e ma - ra ifret kerd  
 he-OBL we-PL.OBL RA hate did  
 ‘he hated us’  
 b. e ma dime

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<sup>11</sup> The possibility of forming a passive of a construction where no object case is assigned recalls Norwegian passive formation (Áfarli 1989), where object case is only optionally absorbed in passives.

- he-OBL we-PL saw-1PL  
 'he saw us'
- c. e ma pači kerdime  
 he-OBL we-PL kiss did-1PL  
 'he kissed us'

It seems at first sight that the verb behaves like a transitive verb in passives and causatives, but like an intransitive in past tense. This is not true; the relevant construction still counts as transitive in the past. Recall that in the past, Zazaki has an ergative system and that the subject is nominative in intransitive constructions, but oblique in transitive ones. That is, if *hes kerd* 'love' and *ifret kerd* 'hate' structures were intransitive in the past, they would appear with a nominative subject. This is not true, as the examples below show. (35) shows that the subject of real intransitives is nominative; and (36) shows that the subjects of the light verb constructions in question have oblique case marking.

- (35) a. ez vazda  
 'I ran'
- b. layik ame  
 'the boy came'
- (36) a. mi Aniko - ra hes kerd  
 I-OBL Aniko RA like did  
 'I liked Aniko'
- b. e qewa - ra ifret kerd  
 he-OBL coffee RA hate did  
 'he hated coffee'

The puzzle then is the following. *hes kerd* 'love' and *ifret kerd* 'hate' behave like transitive verbs for the purposes of passivization, causative agreement, and for determining the case of the subject in the past. They behave like intransitives in that the object is not case-marked in the past by the verb, and that it does not trigger agreement with the past verb. We assume that lack of agreement and case assignment are two sides of the same operation (following standard minimalist analyses of feature checking). We analyze the agreement on the past verb as a default agreement.

We would like to suggest that these properties can be explained by positing some exceptional properties for the *v* head. We are assuming, following standard minimalist theories (such as Chomsky 2000, 2001) that the *v* head is responsible for both theta-role assignment to the subject and checking the case of the object. In Zazaki, the *v* head that assigns experiencer theta roles is defective, and cannot check the case of the object<sup>12</sup>. The case of the object cannot be checked, but it can appear as a PP—and thus not require case checking from outside of the PP. We suggested above that the postposition *ra* is a kind of default postposition. It is not surprising then that *ra* appears with the

<sup>12</sup> This defectivity holds for at least the experiencer-subject verbs discussed here. Whether it also holds for non-light verbs with experiencer subjects requires further testing.

objects in (34) and (36) above. It is worth noting here that the *ra* appears not only in the past but in the future tense as well, as shown by the following example.

- (37)  $\epsilon z$   $ne$   $kitab\acute{i}$   $-ra$   $ifret$   $kena$   
I that book-OBL RA hate will-do  
'I will hate the book'

In passive and causative constructions, it is not the defective  $v$  that licenses the case of the object. In passives, the T head checks nominative case on promoted objects. Since T is not defective, the exceptional structures behave just as other, well-behaved transitives. In causative structures, we assume that the agreement between the object and the causative auxiliary can also result in case feature checking. If this is true, then the case of the object in the causative (33b) is checked not by the embedded  $v$  head, but by the causative auxiliary.

A defective  $v$  head can account for the appearance of *ra* on objects. It is not clear, however, why the subject is oblique in the past, and not nominative. Even though the case of the object is not checked by  $v$ , it triggers the appearance of an oblique, rather than nominative, subject. This suggests that overt case checking of objects is not a prerequisite for oblique subjects. Rather, it appears that once an object is present in the structure, the subject will bear ergative (= oblique) rather than absolutive (= nominative) case. We do not pursue this line of thought further here, but note that this approach has interesting consequences for ergative case and agreement systems.

To summarize, in this section we have presented a group of light verb structures where the light argument forms a complex head with the verb. In addition, the verb has an experiencer subject and an object. The object behaves regularly in passive and causative constructions. In simple past, however, the object does not agree with the verb, and it obligatorily appears with the postposition *ra*. We suggested that this is due to the fact that the  $v$  head in these structures cannot check the case feature of the object, but a default postposition is inserted to satisfy the case checking requirement. Lack of object case checking correlates with lack of agreement between the past verb and the object. Even though the object is not case-marked by  $v$ , the subject is oblique in the past. We suggested that this shows that the case marking of the subject is sensitive to the presence of an object rather than a case-marked object.

In sections 3 and 4 we described light verb structures that have an object. The object is either the light argument, or a nominal other than the light argument. In the latter case, the light argument forms a complex head with the light verb. In the next section, we describe a deceptive class, which appears to have objects, but is, in reality, intransitive.

## 5. Deceptive Appearances: Objects That Are Not

In this section we turn to a class of light verbs that appear to have objects, but are really intransitive. We found two constructions that belong to this group:

- (38) a. mi biriya layiki kerde  
 I-OBL missing boy-OBL did  
 'I missed the boy'  
 b. layiki zeriya xo kerde čenēke  
 boy-OBL love self did girl-OBL  
 'the boy loved the girl'

### 5.1 Biriya kerd

In the *biriya kerd* constructions, the object of 'missing' invariably appears with oblique case marking. If it was an object, then in the past it would be expected to be nominative, contrary to fact. In addition, *biriya* can be analyzed as morphologically complex consisting of the head noun *biri*, followed by an ezafe that introduces possessors, illustrated in (39) below. In Zazaki, the possessee precedes the possessor. The possessor has oblique case. The possessee is followed by a possessor ezafe, which varies according to the number and gender of the possessed element.

- (39) a. kitab-e layiki  
 book-EZ.MASC boy-OBL  
 'the boy's book'  
 b. qeḷem-a layiki  
 pencil-EZ.FEM boy-OBL  
 'the boy's pencil'

Note that the feminine possessive ezafe is *-a*. Thus the object of 'missing' is structurally the possessor of the light argument (as also suggested by A. Nevins pc).

- (40) mi [ biri-ya layiki ] kerd  
 I-OBL missing-EZ.FEM boy-OBL kerd  
 'I missed the boy'

This analysis entails that the light argument may be accessible to object diagnostics, but the object of 'missing' is not. This prediction is borne out. In causatives, the auxiliary does not show agreement with the object:

- (41) malimi εβε Rožda biriya ma de kerdene  
 teacher-OBL INSTR R. missing-EZ we-OBL gave-SG do-NOM  
 'the teacher made Rožda miss us'

The analysis proposed here allows us to capture the fact that the constituent agreeing with *de* 'gave' is not the missee *ma* 'us', but the complex object [*biriya ma*] 'missing us'.

Since the light argument has a possessor, the light argument must be phrasal—that is, it can only be an object of *kerd* ‘do’, and have the structure of (31a), repeated below.

- (42) *Light arguments as objects*
- ```

      VP
     /  \
  [light argument]  V
  ([biriya OB])
  
```

The phrasal status of the light argument also leads us to predict that the object can be marked both singular and plural. We have seen examples that appear to be cases a singular—plural alternation. But to the extent that the alternation is possible, it is marked. We have no account for this fact.

Another fact we cannot account for at this point is that the object of *biriya* can be extracted out of the structure in passive and causative structures:

- (43) a. *Passive*  
 layik hete Rožda - ra ame biri kerdene  
 boy side R. from came missing do-NOM  
 ‘the boy was missed by Rožda’
- b. *Causative*  
 malimi ebe Aniko Marketa de biri kerdene  
 teacher INSTR A. M. gave missing do-NOM  
 ‘the teacher made Aniko miss Marketa’

## 5.2 Zeriya xo kerd

The other deceptive structure is illustrated in (44).

- (44) čeneke zeriya xo kerde layiki  
 girl-OBL love self did boy-OBL  
 ‘the girl loved the boy’

In this construction, the constituent that is interpreted as the object of loving follows the verb. This is already an indication of the non-object status of *layik* ‘boy’, since the standard object position is immediately preverbal. In fact, it is goals and other adjuncts that follow the verb. A ditransitive example is given below, to illustrate the point.

- (45) *Ditransitive verb*  
 Mehemedi kitab da malimi  
 M.-OBL book gave teacher-OBL  
 ‘Mohamed gave the book to the teacher’

Based on word order facts, we assume (following a suggestion by N. Richards) that *layik* ‘boy’ above is a goal, rather than an object. This analysis also accounts for the oblique case marking. If the object of loving was a syntactic

object, then we would expect the case marking to alternate between nominative and oblique, depending on the tense of the clause. The postverbal constituent is, however, oblique, even in the past—suggesting that it is a goal rather than an object. If the postverbal constituent is a goal, then it is not surprising that agreement is not determined by *layik*. In both simple past and causative cases, it is the light argument that determines agreement. Incidentally, the light argument can be either singular or plural:

- (46) a. mi zəriya xo kərde layik-i  
 I-OBL love self did boy-OBL  
 ‘I loved the boy’  
 b. mi zəriye xo kerdi layik-a  
 I-OBL love-PL self did.PL boys-OBL  
 ‘I loved the boys’  
 c. Rožda zəriya xo kərde layik-a  
 R-OBL love self did boys-OBL  
 ‘Rožda loved the boys’

We have been unable to elicit passive forms of the construction, and offer no account of why it is blocked here. Since the light argument can appear as either singular or plural, and trigger agreement, we analyze it as the object in the structure. There is another indication of the phrasal status of the light argument. *xo* is a subject-oriented anaphor, and in this light verb construction, it is the possessor of the light argument. The light argument has a possessive *ezafe*, as shown below.

- (47) a. [zəri-ya xo]  
 white liver-EZ.FEM anaphor<sup>13</sup>  
 b. [zəri-yε xo]  
 white liver-EZ.PL anaphor

We conclude that in *zəriya xo* constructions, the object is the light argument, while the loved one is a goal.

We have shown in this section that constituents that appear to be objects are not necessarily so. In the *biriya kerd* construction, the thing or person missed is the possessor of the light argument. In *zəriya xo kerd* construction, the thing or person loved is the goal. In both cases, the light argument is the object. This can be shown by agreement facts, and also by showing that the light argument is phrasal. Thus the above structures are further examples of light verb structures where the light argument is the object. These two examples are also potentially interesting in comparison to Japanese argument transfer with light verbs (as described in e.g. Grimshaw & Mester, 1988).

So far we have only dealt with transitive light verb constructions, where either the light argument or some other constituent was the object of the light verb *kerd*. In the next section we turn to intransitive uses of light verbs.

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<sup>13</sup> We are not entirely convinced that *zəri* is best glossed as ‘white liver’. Our informant volunteered several different equivalents of *zəri* at various times.



## 6. Intransitive Light Verb Structures

Some light verb structures pattern like intransitives in passive and causative environments. These light verb constructions are listed below.

- (48) a. kîž kerd ‘ski’  
b. firar kerd ‘escape’  
c. qesi kerd ‘talk’

The passive form of these light verb structures is ungrammatical, similarly to the passive form of intransitive predicates.

- (49) a. \*no firar hete Ali ra amo kerdene  
b. \*no qesi hete layiki ra ame kerdene  
(the sentence is only grammatical with the following reading:  
the speech/presentation was given by the boy)

Note that the impossibility of passivizing these light verb structures shows that having the light argument as a syntactic object is not an option (unlike the light verb structures in section 3.2). We take this to support our analysis, which states that in Zazaki, it is determined for each light argument whether it is a syntactic argument (object) or an incorporated head.

In addition, the causative form of intransitives and the light verb structures in (48) is also alike. The causee is not expressed as a prepositional phrase, but as a nominal. The agreement on the causative auxiliary is also determined by the causee.

- (50) a. malimi layik da / layiki dayi firar kerdene  
teacher-OBL boy gave / boy-PL gave-PL escape do-NOM  
‘the teacher made the boy / boys escape’  
b. malimi çeneke de / çeneki dayi qesi kerdene  
teacher-OBL girl gave / girl-PL gave-PL talk do-NOM  
‘the teacher made the girl / girls talk’  
c. malimi layik da / layiki dayi vaznayıš  
teacher-OBL boy gave / boy-PL gave-PL run-NOM  
‘the teacher made the boy / boys run’

In passive and causative environments, the light verb structures of (48) behave like intransitives. The intransitive analysis of the structures in (48) is also supported by the fact that the light arguments cannot have plural specification, and may not be modified. That is, the light arguments are best analyzed as being incorporated into the light verb, with the complex verb taking a subject (via the *v* head).

So far the parallelism between intransitive verbs and the light verbs in (48) seems to be complete. In simple past sentences, however, intransitives and light verb structures behave differently. The subject of intransitive predicates is nominative, and the verb shows agreement with the subject. In light verb structures, however, the subject is oblique, and the verb shows no overt agreement.

- (51) a. layiki firar kerd  
 boy-OBL escape did  
 'the boy escaped'  
 b. layika firar kerd  
 boy-PL.OBL escape did  
 'the boys escaped'

- (52) a. o vazda  
 'he ran'  
 b. e vazde  
 'they ran'

To summarize: 'intransitive' light verbs behave like non-light-verb intransitives in passive and causative constructions. In simple past sentences, the behaviors diverge. Intransitive verbs have nominative subjects, which trigger agreement on the verb. 'Intransitive' light verbs have oblique subjects, and the verbs show no overt agreement. We offer no conclusive evidence for this behavior, but suggest that an explanation outlined above may be invoked. In section 4 we suggested that in simple past clauses, the subject is oblique whenever an object is present. The object does not need to be structurally case-marked; we analyzed the postposition *ra* as a default postposition. The relevant example is repeated below from (32a).

- (53) mi layika - ra hes kerd  
 I-OBL boy-PL.OBL RA like did  
 'I liked the boys'

A similar breakdown in default case patterns is discussed in Mohanan (1994a, 1994b). She notes that the case of the object is unexpected with some dative subjects.

- (54) a. ilaa-ko anu dik<sup>hi</sup>i  
 ila-DAT anu-NOM appear-perf  
 'Ila saw Anu' (lit. To Ila appeared Anu)  
 b. \*ilaa-ko anu-ko dik<sup>hi</sup>i  
 ila-DAT anu-ACC appeared

Animate objects in Hindi are typically accusative, but only nominative marking is possible with dative subjects of experiencer verbs. Mohanan 1994a suggests that the object case discrepancy arises because *dik<sup>hi</sup>i* 'appear' is an 'unaccusative transitive' verb: it is transitive, since it has two arguments, but it is unaccusative, because its subject is not agentive. If accusative case is available only when the predicate has an agent argument (by Burzio's generalization), then the puzzling facts are accounted for.

Essentially the same analysis can be applied to (53), where the predicate is also an experiencer verb. No case is available for the object, if accusative case is contingent on the presence of an agent theta role (hence the

default case assigner *ra*). Nevertheless, the predicate is transitive, hence the subject has dependent, oblique case.

In sum, we identified a group of light verbs where the light argument is a part of the complex verb head, which in turn takes a single argument. We have shown that this construction generally patterns like intransitive predicates. They differ in simple past environments, where the subject of light verb structures has oblique case-marking, unlike the nominative case of intransitive constructions. To account for this divergence, we suggested that the ergative system is sensitive to the argument structure of the predicate, and not case marking. In other words, a subject is ergative if the predicate has arguments other than the subject, and nominative otherwise.

## 7. Conclusion

In this paper we argued that light arguments, which supply the predicate meaning in light verb constructions, can have different status in Zazaki. Light arguments can be either structural objects, or heads incorporated into the verbal head. This option is fixed for each light argument, and is not optional—unlike in Japanese *suru* constructions. Furthermore, looking at the mentioned cases, the distribution of the light arguments between these two classes does not seem to follow any semantic distinction and looks rather arbitrary. If the light argument is an object, then it behaves as other objects do; it triggers agreement on finite verbs in the past, and can be promoted in passives. The light argument can also be shown to be phrasal; it can be either singular or plural, and can be modified by adjuncts. Incorporated light arguments, on the other hand, cannot be modified, and are unambiguously specified for number. They cannot determine agreement, and cannot be promoted in passives.

In the course of the discussion, we also noted that incorporated light arguments and non-case-marked objects occur with oblique subjects, just as full objects do. This is unexpected if the appearance of oblique subjects is tied to the presence of a case-marked argument. We suggested that, at least in Zazaki, nominative subjects are only possible in an ergative system if the subject is the only argument. If the argument structure of the predicate is more complex, then the subject must be oblique. We leave a more explicit implementation of this proposal for the future.

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Department of Linguistics and Philosophy  
E39-245 MIT  
77 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
USA

*aniko@mit.edu, ceplova@mit.edu*