This study investigates how Persian compound verbs are processed in the mental lexicon, through which we can infer how they are stored, organized, and accessed. The study focuses on investigating Persian compound verbs in light of psycholinguistic theories on polymorphemic word processing as well as linguistic theories of complex predicates. The psycholinguistic section details three experiments addressing the following three research questions: (1) whether compound verb constituents show significant priming in the masked-priming paradigm; (2) whether priming effects are constrained by semantic transparency; and (3) whether priming effects are due to morphological relatedness. This study revealed several findings: (1) compound verbs in Persian are decomposed into their constituents at early stages of processing, (2) at early stages of processing, decomposition is based on purely orthographic similarity, (3) although both transparent and opaque compound constituents were facilitated while processing, transparency had an impact on processing in the early stages of processing. Finally, the findings seem to support a parallel input effect or competing alternative effect for the verbal constituent of the transparent compound verb, as reflected in the slower facilitation for the verbal constituent compared to the nominal constituent.

In theoretical studies on Persian complex predicates, the compound verb formation can be either lexical or syntactic. The overall evidence reflected in the linguistic data for Persian complex predicates presented in this dissertation as well as the results of the experimental studies carried out in this research seem to point towards lexical compounding in Persian compound verb formation. The evidence comes from (1) the nominalization of the compound, i.e. the possibility of using the compound verb as a noun; (2) the atelicity feature, i.e. the possibility of using the compound verb after the progressive expression dar haale ‘in the process of’, which indicates an incomplete action; and (3) the nonreferentiality of the nominal constituent in the compound verb, i.e. the nominal constituent cannot be followed by a pronoun that refers to it. On the other hand, the results of the experimental studies reported in this dissertation seem to support a lexical approach to compound verbs in Persian. The technique used in these experimental studies was masked priming paradigm, which investigates the prelexical and lexical processing. The results reveal constituent priming effects under masked priming technique. This indicates that Persian compound verb constituents are accessed at the prelexical stage of processing. Syntactic calculations are said to be done at later stages of processing. Therefore, the early processing of compound verb constituents leads us to the argument for the lexicality of Persian compound verbs.