

Construction Grammar: Evidence from Complex DP in Persian

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1. Introduction

This article aims to provide answers to a number of questions concerning Persian complex DPs containing an embedded CP. Most of the accounts concerning complex DPs have been proposed in generative grammar framework but none of them are free of problems. First, there is a mismatch of semantic and syntax of DP embedded CPs. Syntax requires it to be adjunct and semantics requires it to be complement. This sort of mismatch cannot be resolved in CG since it posits two different positions for complements and adjuncts.

The following sentences illustrate an instance of a complex DP containing an embedded CP in modern spoken Persian. Case (1a) contains a complex DP in object position and case (1b) a complex DP in subject position.

- (1) a *hame* [_{DP} *in vaqeyiat*] -o [_{CP} *ke Hasan bigonahe*] *mipaziran*²
all this fact - OM that Hasan innocent accept
Everybody accept this fact that Hasan is innocent.
- b [_{DP} *in vaqeyiat*] [_{CP} *ke Hasan bigonahe*] *hama ro xoshhal kard*
this fact that Hasan innocent all OM happy made
This fact that Hasan is innocent made everybody happy.

As illustrated by the sentences in (1), the demonstrative ‘in’ (this), which can also function as a pronominal elsewhere in the language, may be accompanied by an NP from a class of expressions including *vaqe’iyyat* ‘fact’, *edde’a* ‘claim’, *dastan* ‘story’, *xabar* ‘news’ and other such proposition denoting nouns (Aghayi, 2006).

The other issue is the possibility of associate CP to be disjointed of DP and appear postverbally. In 2(b) The CP associate of complex DP is separated of the DP and follows the verb. The relative data is given in (2).

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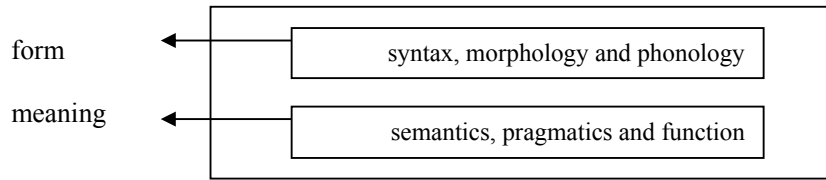
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- (2) a *hame* [_{DP} *in vaqeyiat*] -o [_{CP} *ke Hasan bigonahe*] *mipaziran*
 all this fact -OM that Hasan innocent accept
 Everybody accept this fact that Hasan is innocent.
- b *hame* [_{DP} *in vaqeyiat*] -o *mipaziran* [_{CP} *ke Hasan bigonahe*]
 all this fact -OM accept that Hasan innocent
 Everybody accept the fact that Hasan is innocent.

In this paper complex DP in Persian will be discussed within the theory of Construction Grammar (Goldberg, 1995). As for internal structure of complex DP, following Simpler Syntax Hypothesis (Culicover and Jackendoff, 2005) a flat configuration were employed in which complements and adjuncts are combined with their head as sisters.

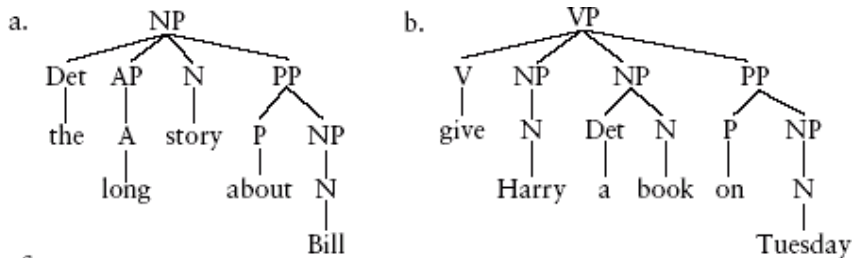
2. Theoretical Framework: Simpler Syntax and Construction Grammar

A new theoretical approach to language has emerged in the past 10–15 years that allows linguistic observations about form–meaning pairings, known as ‘constructions’, to be stated directly. Constructionist approaches aim to account for the full range of facts about language, without assuming that a particular subset of the data is part of a privileged ‘core’. Researchers in this field argue that unusual constructions shed light on more general issues, and can illuminate what is required for a complete account of language. Constructions - form and meaning pairings - have been the basis of major advances in the study of grammar since the days of Aristotle. Observations about specific linguistic constructions have shaped our understanding of both particular languages and the nature of language itself. But only recently has a new theoretical approach emerged that allows observations about constructions to be stated directly, providing long-standing traditions with a framework that allows both broad generalizations and more limited patterns to be analyzed and accounted for fully. Constructions are stored pairings of form and function, including morphemes, words, idioms, partially lexically filled and fully general linguistic patterns. To capture differences in meaning or discourse properties between surface forms, constructionist theories do not derive one construction from another, as is commonly done in mainstream generative theory so there is no derivational relationship between constructions. Constructions form a hierarchy with higher- level construction on top from which lower- level construction inherit their features. The structure of a construction is shown in (3).



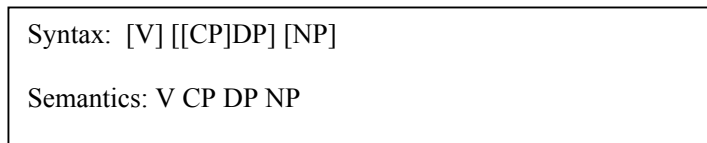
(3)The structure of a construction

As for syntactic structure, the theory of Simpler Syntax Hypothesis were employed. The position advocated by the Simpler Syntax Hypothesis is that syntactic structure should be minimum necessary to map between phonological and semantic structures. Based on this hypothesis the appropriate complexity for syntax is relatively flat; Headed phrases that are linearly ordered and that correspond to constituents in Conceptual Structure. There are no hierarchical distinction between attachment of the complements and adjuncts. Some examples are shown in Figure (4). Figure 4(a) is the configuration for [*The long story about Bill*] and 4(b) for [*give Harry a book on Tuesday*](4).



3. Results and Discussion

Based on Construction Grammar, there is no derivational relationship between sentences in 2(a) and 2(b). Each sentence is related to a construction shown in (5) and (6). (5) is the construction related to sentence 2(a) and (6) is related to the sentence 2(b) in which the CP is disjointed of the DP and appears after the verb.



(5) construction of the sentence 2(a)

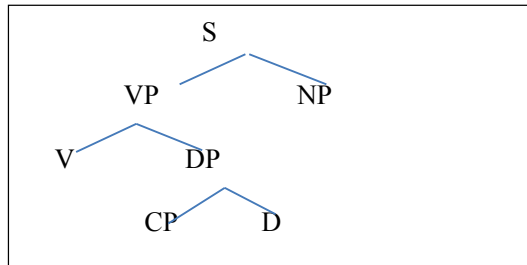
Syntax: [CP] [V] [DP] [NP]

Semantics: **CP** V DP NP

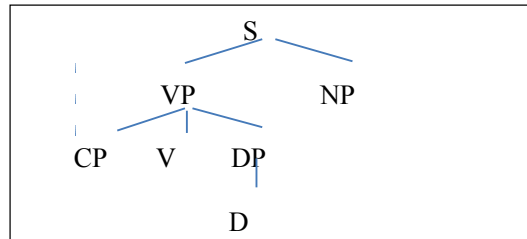
(6) construction of the sentence 2(b)

There is a difference in semantics of constructions in (5) and (6). The CP in (6) is focused so it is written as bold in semantics of construction (6).

As for syntactic structure, based on Simpler Syntax Hypothesis, the structure of the sentences in (2) is shown in (7) and (8). The structure of the sentences are simple and flat.

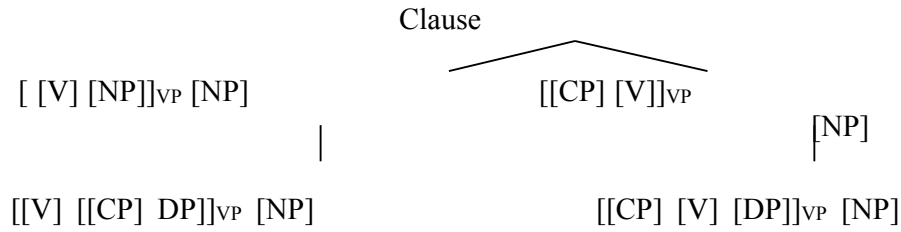


(7) syntactic structure of 2(a)



(8) syntactic structure of 2(b)

Each construction in (6) and (7) inherit their features from a higher level construction. The inheritance relation an hierarchy of constructions is shown in (9).



(9) Inheritance of Constructions

4. Conclusion

Based on Construction Grammar (Goldberg, 1995) two different constructions were proposed to account for different positions of CP. There is no movement or derivational relationship between two constructions. As for internal structure of complex DP, following Simpler Syntax Hypothesis (Culicover and Jackendoff, 2005) a flat configuration for syntactic structures were employed in which complements and adjuncts are combined with their head as sisters. Based on this analysis, complex DP in Persian can provide strong evidence to support constructional account of Persian grammar.

Keywords: Complex DP, Complementizer Phrase, Construction Grammar, Simpler Syntax Hypothesis, Construction

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