Argument structures of Persian intransitive verbs

Kivan Azizi¹, Khanmohamadi Mostafa² and Tooran Razmjoo³

¹Department of English Language, Payame Noor University, Iran.
²Linguistics, University of Razi, Kermanshah, Iran.
³Department of Literature, Payam Noor University, Iran.

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates types of intransitive verbs in Persian. Although six types of intransitive Persian verbs have one argument in their argument structure, they different to their derivation. We divide them into unergative, unaccusative, passive, attributive constructions, middle constructions and ergative. To classify intransitive Persian verb we use the operations like argument suppression, argument structure, argument deletion and externalization, external argument and internal argument (Williams 1981, Marantz 1984). This research supports the absolute theory of argument structure (Jackendoff 1972, Grimshaw 1990, Chung 1993) also this study cast high on the semantic and syntactic aspects of those constructions.

Following Haghshenas and etl (2005) we contrast intransitive to transitive verbs and focus on intransitive argument structure.

Type of arguments

A predicate describes an event or situation in which some participants are required. Let’s consider the following sentence:

(2) Amir hossein sib – ra khor – d.


Internal versus Eternal argument

Based on syntactic realization, we can classify argument types as external and internal argument. External argument is an argument which is realized outside the maximal position of the predicate, where as internal argument is one realized inside the maximal projection of the predicate (Chamsky 1981, Williams 1980).

In Chamsky’s minimalism program (1995) external argument represents in specifier of VP, while internal argument is the sister VP as shown in below diagram.

(3) Amir hossein sib – ra khor – d.

Based on baker’s UTAH theory, theme is the sister of V and agent is generated on the spec of VP and receive their semantic functions. Miyayawa (2002) argues that argument structure of verbs determines word order of sentences.

**Direct and indirect argument**

Another type of arguments are direct and indirect argument. This distinction is based on the appearance of prepositions; if an argument is realized with a preposition, it is an indirect argument, and if an argument is realized without a preposition, it is a direct argument (Marantz: 1984).

(4) Reza daftarra bar ruyemiz gozas - t.

Reza notebookobj – marker on surface table put – past
In (4) “bar ruyemiz” is indirect argument of “gozas” predicate and “daftarra” is direct argument of it. Zubizareta 1987 and Marantz 1984 use the following notations to distinguish the types of arguments.

(5) Gozas: X (y )

In (5), the verb “Gozas” has three arguments, X, y and Z. the external argument X is outside the bracket and internal arguments are inside, and the direct argument y is underline. Another types of arguments include suppressed, deleted arguments and event arguments. Passive is a process which change internal argument of a verb into suppressed argument. Grimshaw (1990) defines passive as a process through which an argument becomes adjunct.

(6) Amir livanraškas – t.

Amir glass – obj maker broke – past.
Amir broke the cup.
(7) Livanškastešod.

Glass broke become
In (7) predicate “škaste” has a suppressed argument. Which shows by following notation:

(8) škaste : (y) (X)
The star notation used in literature to show that this predicate has one suppressed or implied argument.
So far, we have discussed several types of arguments. How we briefly mention argument structure theories. It is generally assumed that arguments are hierarchically structured, not just an unordered list. That is, each argument has a hierarchical status, compared with others which is known as the thematic hierarchy where the thematic roles are used. The following show some versions of the thematic hierarchy:

(8) Thematic hierarchy

a. <Agent, location/source/ Goal, Theme> (Jackendoff 1972)
b. <Agent, Experiencer, location/source/ Goal, Theme> (Grimshaw 1990)
c. <Agent, theme, Goal, obliques> (Larson 1988)
d. <Agent, theme, Goal/benefactive/ location> (baler 1989)

As show in (8), there are some variations of the thematic hierarchy. For example, Jakendoff (1972) and grimshaw (1990) assume that goal is higher than theme, whereas Larson (1988) and Baker (1989) That theme is higher than goal.

Grimshaw and Li (1990) assume that the status of arguments is not relative, but absolute. That is, an argument has it’s own status or value, with out being compared with others. Thus, when there is a single argument, it has its own hierarchical value. In the next section we discuss unergative and an accusative verbs.

3. unergative and an accusative

(9) a. Amirhossein karkar – d.
Amirhossein work do – past.
Amirhossein worked.
b. sinaalabkhandaaz.
sina smile do – past.

Hale and keyser (1993) propose that unergative predicates are intrinsically transitive. They state that anunergative verb takes an object incorporates to V, becoming an intransitive verb on the surface. But, we should consider that arguments of unergative andunaccusative predicates project in different syntactic positions which challenge Hale and keyser assumption. Chung (1998), Rappaport and Levin (1992) propose that – er suffix attaches to unergative verbs not unaccusative, barker, “collasper. In Persian, “Nade” and “gar” suffixes attach to unergative verbs and drive subject noun phrases, but not unaccusative verbs. Bazigar oftadandeh.

(10) Traffic rawan ?ast.
a. Traffic smooth is :3sg.
Traffic is smooth.
b. hawasardšod.
The weather becomes cold

Semantically, the unergative sentences in (9) describe some actions initiated by the agentive subject where as the unaccusative sentences in (9) describe non – agentive situations. Thematically, the subjects of the unergatives in (9) are agent or actor, while those in (10) are theme.

In terms of argument structure, the unergative verbs in (9) take external argument but those in (10) internal argument. The argument structures of the two types of verbs are represented as

(11) a. unergative : X<> b. unaccusative : <X>
some person unergative predicates are:
Jangidan, bazikardan, šenakardan , pars kardan …. (to fight) (to play) (to swim) (to bark)
Some Persian unaccusative predicates are:
Oftadan, wojoddastaš, rokhadadan …. (player) (collapse)
The two types of argument structures are projected to different syntactic structures, as show below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. unergative</th>
<th>b. unaccusative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So, we can argue that, syntactically unergative predicates have one external argument as “subject”, while the only argument of unaccusative predicates project as object.

**Passive**

In literature, there is long time debates on the existence of passive in Persian. We only mention a few. Dabirmooghadam (1987) assumes that Persian has syntactic passive, while Karimi (2005) and Darzi (1996) disagree. Karimi (2005:75) consider so called passive constructions in Persian as complex predicate which the objective is non – verbal element of complex predicate.

(13) angol – ha be parviz dad - šod.
Those – flower – plural to parvizdelive – become.
Rasekhimahand (2007:4) assume active and passive as on voice if voice defines as the syntactic valency of verbs. None of
Iranian linguists use argument structure to explain passive process in this language.

Property of passivization is that it suppresses the external argument.

(14) a. Amir ghazarakhor – d.
    Amir ate the food.
    b. ghazakordesod
    Food eat became.
    The food was eaten.

In (14)“kord” has two arguments:amir as external argument (Agent here) and “ghaza” internal argument (theme here). While “kord”sod “only has one internal argument ”ghaza” so passive chang the argument structure of predicate here.

Koradankordsdan X(Y) (Y) (X)

The external argument suppressed which is represented as X which doesnt have the status of argument add its appearance as adjunct which normally doesn’t appear in persian .

Robert (1987) that the by- phrase is thematically an argument but structurally is an adjunct.

We can infer that persian has passive construction because suppressed argument can control pro wichgrimshaw called it argument-adjunct.

(16) mašinforokhtšod ta pro khane be khara-d car sell become to pro house subjunct buy – past.

In (16) the suppressed argument controls pro wich reveals that this argument is syntactically active at though dont have visible manifestation.

Attributive or incorporative construction

In persian there are contraction with one argument which is called attributive because one property attributes to an entity by thir predicates. Itaghabin(2007;21) belives that attributive constructions in persian have one argument in thir argument structures. She states six reason for her assumpton.

She argues that attribute verbs are not the only functor but own preposition and contative meaning of verb have this function.

(17) Ali agha ast.
    Ali wise is .

We argue that adjective ,preposition or noun incorporates with attributive verbs and altogether deter mines valancy of predicate with remainds bakers incorporation theory(1988).

(18) minazibast.
    Mina pretty.

Zibast : <X>

3-3 middle constructions

Middle is mean to be a voice between active and passive hagbin (2005) states that Persian has three voices :

Active ,passive and middle . She argues that middle construction lexically resemble to active verbs but syntactically and semantically resemble to passive constructions.

(19) a. ašēra mi- šekanad. (active)
    Shel he glass abj- marker dur- break-past.
    b. šiše be rahatimiškanad. (middle)
    glass as easily dur- break.
    Glass break easily.
    c. šišebarahatšekastēšekastemisšawad. (passive)
    glass as easily breakend- becom .
    glass is broken easily.

The middle sentences describe some property of surface subject . fore example in (19-b) describes the property of the glass being broken easily middle constructions always have the corresponding transitive construction as shown by(19-a) above.

Conclusion

In this paper we tried to reach a clear eat groups of intransitive Persian verb based on syntactic derivation and their morphological properties we grouped intransitive Persian verbs in six sub- group which all of them have one argument in their argument structures . un ergative and un acusative verb are un driven one – argument verb in persian . passive verbs in Persian are drivethrough suppressing external argument , we provided piece of evidence against karimi (2005) and darzi (1996) who claimed that Persian doesn’t exhibit syntactic passive . because the suppressed argument can control pro. attributive construction are another intransitive verbs in Persian , we assumed thatPersian has middle construction , following haghsenas (2005) ergative predicate is another class of intransitive verbs which driven from their accusative corresponding as rasekhmahand(2007) revealed.

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