

## The rise of *ke āyā* constructions in Persian interrogative embedding

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The purpose of this paper is to explain the development of markers of subordination and clause mood in Persian. The focus will be on two particles: Modern Persian *ke*, which serves as a subordination marker of very wide range, and *āyā*, which is used to mark interrogatives.

In Modern Standard Persian (MSP), *ke* is the general marker of subordination. It introduces subordinate clauses of all kinds: object, relative, and several kinds of adverbial clauses.

- (1) *šenīdam ke ū xāhad āmad.* (Lazard 1992: 222)  
*heard.1SG – SUB – s/he – will – come*  
'I heard that s/he will come.'
- (2) *kesī-ke to dīde-ī emrūz raft.* (Lazard 1992:229)  
*someone-SUB – you – have -seen – today – went*  
'Someone you saw went away today.'
- (3) a. *nazdīk ke āmad ū-rā šenāxtam.* (Lazard 1992:238)  
*near – SUB – came – s/he-FOC – recognised.1SG*  
'When s/he came near I recognised her/him.'
- b. *raftam ke ān ketāb-rā bexaram.* (Lazard 1992:218)  
*went.1SG – SUB – DEM – book-FOC – buy.1SG*  
'I went to buy the book.'

We suggest that, *ke* is not a complementiser, but a subordination marker with a very general function. Since complementisers carry more features than the formal feature of syntactic subordination, they are more specific to certain clause types, like Engl. *if*.

- (4) I don't know *if* he studies linguistics.

In MSP, however, there are embedded interrogatives where the subordination marker *ke* co-occurs with *āyā*, a particle that is used to mark interrogative mood also in matrix clauses.

- (5) a. *(man) nemīdānam (ke) (āyā) (ū) zabānšenāsī mīxānad.* (Ahmad Lotfi, p.c.)  
*I – NEGknow.1SG – (SUB –) (AYA –) s/he – linguistics – study.3SG*
- b. *(āyā) ān pesar zabānšenāsī mīxānad?* (Ahmad Lotfi, p.c.)  
*AYA – DEM – boy – linguistics – study.3SG*  
'Does this boy study linguistics?'

From the point of view of generative syntax, this suggests that the two markers occupy two different functional positions in the syntactic tree, the lower one specific to features of clause mood. What we intend to explain is the way of how this system of subordination developed.

We discuss data from Middle and Early Modern Persian (EMP), showing that *ke* developed from a relative marker and *āyā* is a grammaticalised form that developed from the predecessor of its cognate *yā*, a disjunctive marker in EMP and MSP.

- (6) gomān mīkonam *yā* emrūz *yā* fardā. (Behzad&Divshali 1999:90)  
*assumption – make. 1SG – YA – today – YA – tomorrow*  
'I assume [s/he comes] (either) today or tomorrow.'

In order to model the structural reanalyses leading to the new constructions, we use a framework of moderate minimalist syntax. Some functional aspects of the grammaticalisation of these markers, however, are also explained in a functionalist framework. Thus, as a side effect, we can show that the rise of the construction in discussion is evidence for the co-operation of parametric and performance-based changes in processes of grammaticalisation.

## References

- Behzad, Faramarz & Soraya Divshali (1999). *Sprachkurs Persisch: Eine Einführung in die persische Sprache der Gegenwart*. Bamberg: Edition Zypressen (2. Aufl.).
- Lazard, Gilbert (1992). *A Grammar of Contemporary Persian*. Costa Mesa etc.: Mazda Publishers.