

Nominalised CPs in Persian: a Parametric Account

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This paper is meant to describe and explain the structure of the following constructions in Spoken Standard Persian (*Fārsi*):

- (1) a) [_{DP} **in** [_{CP} **ke** [_{IP} gorbehā šir dust dārand]]] tabi'l ast.
DET – *that* – *cats* – *milk* – *like* – *have* – *natural* – *is*
'That cats like milk is natural.'
- a) Man [_{PP} [_{DP} **in** [_{CP} **ke** [_{IP} gorbehā šir dust dārand]]] **rā**] midānam.
I – DET – *that* – *cats* – *milk* – *like* – *have* – OBJ – *know*
'I know that cats like milk'

The examples show that in Persian, argument clauses may be determined by the definite determiner *in* preceding the complementiser (henceforth 'CMP'), and exactly like nominal objects, object sentences may be marked by the particle *rā*. *Rā* is a case marker occurring with specific direct objects (cf. LOTFI 1997; KARIMI 2003, 91). Its categorial status is that of a postposition (cf. BLAKE 2001, 165).

- (2) a. Man **in** doxtar **rā** didam.
I – DET – *girl* – OBJ – *saw*
'I saw this girl.'
- a. **In** pesar to **rā** did.
DET – *boy* – *you* – OBJ – *saw*.
'This boy saw you.'

We intend to explain the Persian data before the background of a broader account of the comparative syntax of CP-embedding.

There are many languages characterised as SOV where CPs may occur (and do so predominantly) in postverbal position. Well known examples are Dutch, German, Hindi, Bengali and, last not least, Persian.

- (3) a) Ich habe die Antwort (ACC) **gewusst**. (German)
I – *have* – *the* – *answer* – *known*
'I knew the answer.'
- a) Ich habe **gewusst**, [_{CP} dass [_{IP} Katzen Milch mögen]]. (German)
I – *have* – *known* – *that* – *cats* – *milk* – *like*
'I knew that cats like milk.'
- (4) a) Man **in** doxtar **rā** **didam**. (= 2a) (Persian)
I – DET – *girl* – OBJ – *saw*
'I saw this girl.'

- a) Man **midānam** [_{CP} ke [_{IP} gorbehā šir dust dārand]]. (≠ 1b) (Persian)
I – know – that – cats – milk – like – have
 'I know that cats like milk.'

On the other hand, SOV languages like Japanese or Korean do not have such an asymmetry. Moreover, they overtly case mark object CPs the same way they do object DPs. Japanese uses a postposition *o*.

- (5) Mary wa [_{PP} [_{CP} John ga koohii **o** nomu no] **o**] mi-ta
Mary – TOP – John – NOM – coffee – ACC – drinks – CMP – ACC – seePST
 'Mary saw that John drank coffee.'

Persian allows preverbal CP objects optionally. It is exactly in this case, however, that it is obligatory to use the determiner *in*. Moreover, it is crucial to use the direct object marker *rā* that is also used with DP objects (cf. 2a/ 4a above). We regard this particle as a case postposition, exactly like Japanese *o*.

- (6) a. Man [_{PP} [_{DP} **in** [_{CP} ke [_{IP} gorbehā šir dust dārand]]] **rā**] midānam. (= 1b)
I – this – that – cats – milk – like – have – ACC – know
 'I know that cats like milk.'
 a. *Man [_{CP} ke [_{IP} gorbehā šir dust dārand]] midānam.
 a. *Man [_{DP} **in** [_{CP} ke [_{IP} gorbehā šir dust dārand]]] midānam.

The Persian data strongly suggest that preverbal clauses are in fact DPs. Since 'bare' CPs are ungrammatical in the canonical object position of DPs (6b), we must assume that the distribution of arguments is constrained by their category. Moreover, since the data also suggest that preverbal A-positions must not be occupied by elements not bearing abstract case (6c; which is overtly realised by a postposition in Persian), this categorial restriction seems to follow from the inability of non-nominals to realise case.

What is very striking is that the Persian CMP *ke* is optional if (and only if) the CP follows the verb. It is obligatory, if the CP precedes it (6).

- (7) Man **midānam** [_{CP} (ke) [_{IP} gorbehā šir dust dārand]]. (cf. 4b)
I – know – that – cats – milk – like – have
 'I know that cats like milk.'

Parallel to that, languages like German allow V2 clauses as objects only in postverbal position. An object clause must have a CMP if it is topicalised.

- (8) a) Jeder weiß, [_{CP} Katzen mögen Milch].
everybody – knows – cats – like – milk
 a) * [_{CP} Katzen mögen Milch], weiß jeder.
 a) [_{CP} **Dass** Katzen Milch mögen], weiß jeder.
that – cats – milk – like – everybody – knows

Our proposal is that the distribution of subordinate clauses is universally correlated with the category immediately dominating them and its ability to bear case. CPs in argument position must be NPs universally due to a constraint on the realisation of abstract case. CMPs like Persian *ke* are in fact nominal heads selecting clauses. The overt realisation of CASE and definiteness of clauses is a matter of parametrisation.

Following CHOMSKY (1995) in assuming that only exceptions from primitive properties are listed in the lexicon, it seems that *c-selection* can thus be removed from the lexical entry, if we generalise the category of structural arguments as [N] based on case assignment (cf. also PESETSKY 1982). PP-objects do not fall under c-selection either, if we assume that P is a specific realisation of lexical case.

References

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