



## Possessor-Raising and Figure-Raising Constructions in Persian: a Distributed Morphology Analysis

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(101-122)

### Abstract

In Persian, much research focuses on the syntax-morphology interface in DM, but research on the syntax-semantics interface is generally absent from DM literature. The aim of this study is to account for possessor raising and figure raising constructions in Persian which demands the review of the distinction between possessor and figure as thematic roles in double object and ditransitive constructions based on Wood and Marantz (2017). By the former, we mean the double object and to-dative expression of transfer of possession and by the latter, we mean ditransitive predicates that select for a locatum argument and a location argument. They involve one structure, varying in terms of what vP takes as a complement, which is a D\*P in double object and a p\*P in ditransitive constructions. The DP is interpreted as “possessor” if it is externally merged in Spec of D\*P and the DP is interpreted as “figure” if it is externally merged in Spec of p\*P. Possessor raising generates two other kinds of thematic dependencies, including clausal possession and change-of-state vPs. Figure raising requires the considerations of natural reflexive vPs in ditransitive constructions and their corresponding inchoatives. The interpretation of an external argument depends on a theta-role introduced somewhere lower in the structure. Figure raising involves an external argument that bears a figure role introduced inside a lower pP; clausal possession involves an external or applied argument bearing a possessor role introduced inside a lower DP. This also requires the consideration of change-of-state semantics. The basic structure of a change-of-state vPs involves one v head which takes a DP complement. Possessor raising construction combines properties of both clausal possession and change-of-state semantics.

**Keywords:** change-of-state vPs, clausal possession, inchoatives, figure raising, natural reflexive vPs, possessor raising.

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### **1.Introduction**

Wood and Marantz (2017) argue that the principles of syntactic structure building are truly autonomous such that underlying structure is determined neither by “theta theory” nor by considerations of aspectual or argument structure. The resulting system of interpretive semantics better explains semantic relations in alternative constructions. I will follow interpretive semantics to review thematic roles of possessor in double object constructions indicating transfer of possession and figure in ditransitive constructions indicating locative constructions. Then I will provide a detailed discussion of possessor-raising and figure-raising constructions in Persian.

### **2.Literature Review**

Argument structure refers to the syntactic structure linking a verb with its arguments. Over the years, this notion has been interpreted in different ways, mainly focusing on the lexical verb or on the structure associated with it. According to the “lexicalist” view, the verb determines the structure associated with it. The lexicalists investigated double object constructions (Barss & Lasnik 1986, Larson 1988, Pylkkänen 2002/2008, Cuervo 2003, Rappaport & Levin 2008, Bruening 2010, Harley & Miyagawa 2018, Karimi 2005, Anoushe 1397, among others) and locative constructions (Pinker 1989, Rappaport & Levin 2008, Roshan 1377, Karimi-Doostan & Safari 1390, among others). Their approach was challenged by the advent of anti-lexicalist approaches including DM (Halle & Marantz 1993). DM introduced the idea that a root can form any possible structure depending on the functional head it is merged with. In Persian, much research focuses on the syntax-morphology interface in DM (Anoushe 1394, 1396,1397,1398; Ahmadi & Anoushe1398), but research on the syntax-semantics interface is generally absent from DM literature. Sadrolmamaleki and Anoushe (2021) investigated dative and locative alternations in Persian based on Wood and Marantz (2017).

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

Wood and Marantz (2017) propose that the syntax and semantics of external arguments depend on the autonomy of the syntax. They argue for a simplification of the primitives that introduce argument structure in the syntax, proposing a unifying analysis for heads such as Voice (which introduce the external argument of verb phrase), little *p* (which introduces figure, i.e., the external argument of prepositional phrase) and *low* applicative (which introduces the external argument related to a DP). They propose that these heads can be reduced to one single argument introducer, which they refer to as *i\**. In the present study I review the distinction between possessor and figure as thematic roles in double object and ditransitive constructions based on Wood and Marantz (2017). Then I discuss possessor-raising and figure-raising constructions in Persian by a descriptive-analytical method.

#### **4. Results**

We examined possessor-raising and figure-raising constructions in Persian, which demands the review of the distinction between possessor and figure as thematic roles in double object construction and ditransitive construction based on Wood and Marantz (2017). When  $i^*$  merges with a DP, its categorial feature is valued to match that of its complement and a DP projected to specifier position is interpreted as possessor. When  $i^*$  merges with a pP, its categorial feature is valued to match that of its complement and a DP projected to specifier position is interpreted as figure. Possessor raising generates two other kinds of thematic dependencies, including clausal possession and change-of-state vPs. Figure raising requires the consideration of natural reflexive verbs in ditransitive constructions and their corresponding inchoatives.

#### **5. Discussion**

The objective of this study was to re-establish the autonomy of syntax by indicating abstract morphemes that build interpretable structures in line with Wood and Marantz (2017). Based on interpretive semantics, I demonstrated that the principles of syntactic structure building were truly autonomous such that underlying syntactic structure was determined neither by “theta theory” nor by considerations of aspectual or argument structure. After outlining the syntactic and semantic properties of argument-introducing head, I presented an analysis of dative and locative constructions to show the distinction between possessor and figure roles. Then I applied the system to a set of cases where the interpretation of an external argument depends on a theta-role introduced somewhere lower in the structure. Figure raising involves an external argument that bears a figure role introduced inside a lower pP; clausal possession involves an external or applied argument bearing a possessor role introduced inside a lower DP. This also requires the consideration of change-of-state semantics. The basic structure of a change-of-state vPs involves one v head which takes a DP complement. Possessor raising construction combines properties of both clausal possession and change-of-state semantics.