A Constructional Cognitive Approach to the Persian Suffix '-ɑr'

Parsa Bamshadi*[1], Negar Davari Ardakani[2]

1. Ph.D. in Linguistics, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran.
2. Associate Professor of Linguistics, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran.

Abstract

Introduction

Affixation is one of the two main word-formation processes in Persian. The suffix '-ɑr' is a nominal (or adjectival) suffix in Persian which is believed by most researchers to express the subject/agent (like *xæridar* 'buyer'), object/patient (like *gereftar* 'captive') or infinitive (like *ræftar* 'behavior') meaning. In Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 2008, 2009) and Construction Morphology (Booij, 2010, 2016) word-formation patterns are considered to be constructional schemas, i.e. schematic representations of morphological constructions. Constructions are pairings of form and meaning. The form pole of a construction includes morpho–syntactic and phonological properties. The meaning pole of a construction comprises semantic properties (conceptual structure), pragmatic properties and discourse properties. Cognitive Grammar posits that an expression invokes a set of cognitive domains as the basis for its meaning, i.e. as the content to be construed. Therefore, the meaning of a linguistic expression depends on two key notions of 'cognitive domain' and 'construal'. A cognitive domain is a coherent area of conceptualization which provides the conceptual base for the meaning of a linguistic expression. The term construal refers to human manifest ability to conceive and express the same situation or event in alternate ways.

735

Purpose: The present research aims to explore the suffix '-ɑr' within the framework of Cognitive Grammar and Construction Morphology and tries to identify its various constructional schemas and subschemas. Furthermore, it attempts to investigate cognitive domains that underlie the meaning of each subschemas and to analyze the role of construal in formation of each subschemas.

Study questions: the study questions are: (1) what are constructional schemas and subschemas of the suffix '-ɑr' and how is hierarchical relationships among them?
(2) What cognitive domain(s) underlie the meaning of each subschema?
(3) Which cognitive processes do play determinant role in formation of these (sub) schemas?

Methodology: Empirically, the paper adopts corpus-based method and theoretically, it adopts cognitive and construction-based approach. The data include a corpus of 38 derivational words having the suffix '-ɑr' extracted from the authors own morphological corpus (including more than 10000 complex words) and Farhang-e Zansoo (Keshani, 1993).

Analysis: Analysis of research data showed that derivatives of the suffix '-ɑr' belong to different constructional schemas. The schematic-constructional network of the suffix '-ɑr' is represented in Figure 1. As is shown in the figure, '-ɑr' appears in six different subschemas, in five of which the base of derivation is past stem of a verb while in the other the base is a noun. The conceptual base of the five subschemas that have a verb stem as their base is the cognitive domain of 'processes. The difference among these subschemas is that each subschema profiles a different aspect of the conceptual base. In other words, the difference among them is due to the key notion of 'profiling'. In the subschema with a noun as the base of derivation, the conceptual base is the cognitive domain of 'relation'.
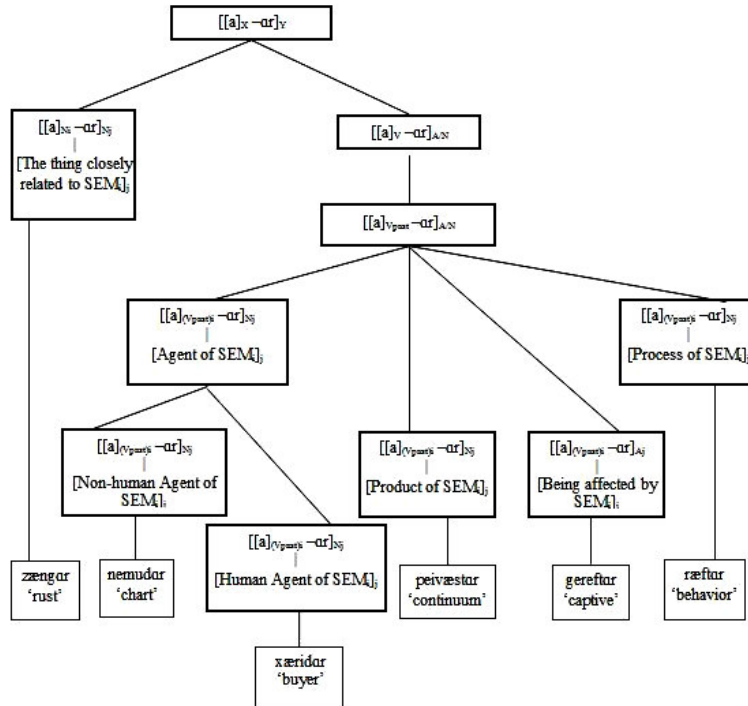
736

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Figure 1: The schematic-constructional network of the suffix '-ɑr' in Persian

Conclusion: Results of the study show that the suffix '-ɑr', which is added to past stems of verbs or nouns, can appear in six different constructional subschemas to indicate the cognitive domains of process, agenthood, aspect and relation. These subschemas are:

1) $<[[x]_{(Vpast)i} \text{-ɑr}]_{Nj} \leftrightarrow$ [The human agent who perform the process of $SEM_i]_j>$

2) $<[[x]_{(Vpast)i} \text{-ɑr}]_{Nj} \leftrightarrow$ [The non-human agent (or instrument) which perform the process of $SEM_i]_j>$

3) $<[[x]_{(Vpast)i} \text{-ɑr}]_{Nj} \leftrightarrow$ [The act of doing the process of $SEM_i]_j>$

4) $<[[x]_{(Vpast)i} \text{-ɑr}]_{Nj} \leftrightarrow$ [The result of the process of $SEM_i]_j>$

5) $<[[x]_{(Vpast)i} \text{-ɑr}]_{Aj} \leftrightarrow$ [The property of being affected by the process of

737

SEM$_i$]$_j$>
6) <[[x]$_{Ni}$ -ɑr]$_{Nj}$ ↔ [The thing closely related to SEM$_i$]$_j$>

The findings reveal that the cognitive process of 'construal' and especially its two aspects of 'profiling' and 'specification' have a determinant role in the formation of these constructional subschemas.

Keywords: Persian suffix '-ɑr', Construction Morphology, cognitive grammar, derivational suffix, affixation.