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Coordination Ellipsis and Gapping: A Cognitive Construction Approach

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Abstract

Ellipsis constructions are formal patterns in which certain syntactic structure that is expressed to convey the intended content is omitted. The aim of this paper is to provide the basis for a cognitive construction grammar description of coordination ellipsis and gapping in Persian language. Therefore, the present research is based on the descriptive-analytical method, and since ellipsis is widely used in both written and spoken Persian, our corpus will include both types and it adopts cognitive and construction-based approach. The results show that Persian data can be analyzed, using the concept of access and activation introduced by Langacker (2012). Non-constituent coordination is analyzed in the context of other sorts of clausal reduction, including the accentual reduction of unfocused elements as well as ellipsis, where overlapping content is left unexpressed. A pivotal desctiptive notion is the differential i.e. the content appearing in one clausal window that does not appear in the prior window. The results, also, show that the placement of the differential, when it intrrupts the baseline clause, is important. So, It can easily say that the differential directly follows the anti-differential.

Keywords: Ellipsis, Gapping, Cognitive construction grammar, Differential, Anti-differential

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1. Introduction

Cognitive linguistics is an interdisciplinary branch of linguistics and is a cluster of overlapping approaches to the study of language as a mental phenomenon. It is the study of language in its cognitive function, where cognitive refers to the crucial role of intermediate informational structures with our encounters with the world. Cognitive Linguistics assumes that our interaction with the world is mediated through informational structures in the mind (Evans et al. 2006).

Cognitive Grammar which is the conceptual interface between syntax and semantics is a branch of cognitive linguistics (Langacker, 1991). Croft and Cruse (2004) believe that 'Cognitive Grammar's model of syntactic representation is a construction grammar model'. They state that the Cognitive Grammar as a construction grammar emphasizes on symbolic and semantic definitions of theoretical constructs traditionally analyzed as purely syntactic.

The aim of this paper is to provide the basis for a cognitive construction grammar description of coordination ellipsis and gapping in Persian language. Goldberg and Perek (2015) have defined 'ellipsis constructions as formal patterns in which certain syntactic structure that is expressed to convey the intended content is omitted.' There are some ellipsis constructions that the most commonly discussed of them are: gapping, sluicing, verb phrase ellipsis, stripping.

Goldberg and Perek (ibid) believes that there are general commonalties among ellipsis constructions and the existence of these elliptical constructions is motivated by Grice's maxim of Quantity, i.e. "say as much as is necessary for the communicative demands and no more". When we can recover some part of intended interpretation, there is no need for it to be overtly specified (Shannon 1993; Piantadosi et al. 2011). Then according to Goldberg and Perek(2015) ellipsis constructions exist in every language, undoubtedly.

The present study is based on the descriptive-analytical method, and since ellipsis is widely used in both written and spoken Persian, our corpus will include both types and it adopts cognitive and construction-based approach. We also want to answer the following questions:

1. Can coordination ellipsis in Persian be explaind in the context of Cognitive Grammar?

2. Can gappin in Persian be explaind in the context of Cognitive Grammar?

3. What are the roles of differential and anti-differential in these constructions?

2. Analysis

The data showed that in case of ellipsis an expression that is not itself a clause nonetheless receives a clause-like interpretation by analogy to one that is. In the following example 'a Benz' in (1b) can be understood in the same manner as the second clause in (1a). according to Langacker (2012) 'in both expressions, content that overlaps with the prior clause is less than fully manifested phonologically. The difference is one of degree: accentual reduction in (a), complete omission in (b)'.

(1) a. Ali ye mashin xarid. Ou ye Benz xarid

Ali one car buy.PST. 3SG. He one Benz buy. PST. 3SG.
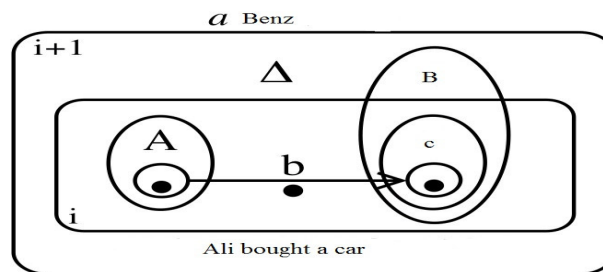
Ali bought a car. He bought a Benz

b. Ali ye mashin xarid. Ye Benz.

Ali one car buy.PST. 3SG. one Benz.

Ali bought a car. A Benz.

We can show the ellipsis in (1b) in the following figure in which all the content of window i remains active in i+1. It is as if one were saying *[Ali bought] a Benz.*

Figure 1
ellipsis

In the case of gapping according to Langacker (ibid) we see that the differential and anti-differential are non-constituents (at least prior to coordination) in the following example:

1.Ali mahin ro shost, va Amir toop ro.

Ali car ACC wash.PST. 3SG, and Amir ball ACC.

Ali washed the car, and Amir the ball

As we see the nominals in window i+1 specify two points of difference: *Amir* contrasts with *Ali*, and *toop* with *mashin*. Hence, the event of washing reconstructed in i+1 (by analogy to window i) is a different instance of this process type.

3. Conclusion

The results showed that Persian data can be analyzed, using the concept of access and activation introduced by Langacker (2012). Non-constituent

coordination is analyzed in the context of other sorts of clausal reduction, including the accentual reduction of unfocused elements as well as ellipsis, where overlapping content is left unexpressed. A pivotal desctiptive notion is the differential i.e. the content appearing in one clausal window that does not appear in the prior window. The results, also, showed that the placement of the differential, when it intrrupts the baseline clause, is important. So, It can easily say that the differential directly follows the anti-differential.