

## Semantic Behaviors of 'va' in Spoken Persian

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### Abstract

'و' /va/ [=and] as a conjunction that coordinates different linguistic units, namely words and sentences, has been studied in logical and grammatical perspectives by many logicians and grammarians from a long time ago. In this research, semantic study of this morpheme was done on the basis of a spoken corpus which was all produced sentences in three Iranian TV series including *Monster*, *Mannequin*, *Rhino*. Here, 'و' as a sign within the linguistic system was considered by its own especial value and with regard to the syntagmatic relations of other elements presented in the sentences. Considering the semantic values of 'و' which means its substitutional possibilities with other units on the paradigmatic axis on one hand, and semantic behaviors of this unit on the syntagmatic axis on the other hand showed that firstly, 'و' can have different values on the paradigmatic axis as 'and', 'because', 'but', 'while', 'with', 'starting unit' and 'so'; Secondly, this morpheme on the word level has two semantic roles in the frame of free or bound conjunctive compounds, and in onomatopoeia in the form of strong or weak repetitions. However, on the sentence level, 'و' with regard to propositions p and q can have various behaviors that shows its dependence on the time, possible worlds, conditional situations, making consequences, and models in possible worlds. Therefore, the semantic behavior of 'و' completely depends on the semantic behaviors of propositions p and q.

**Keywords:** Conjunction, coordination, semantic behavior, truth value, syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes

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## 1. Introduction

'va' [=and] is a letter that inflects two words or two sentences together. Its written form in the Persian script is "و", and its pronunciation in the spoken language is [o], but its reading form is manifested in the form of a labiodental consonant and a vowel that form [va]. The study of this morpheme has a long history in formal semantics or truth conditional semantics in the form of logical relations. In the propositional logic, the constant "و" as a connective or inflection device is shown as  $\wedge$ , and the variables are represented by p, q, r, and the like. In such cases, [p $\wedge$ q] is used to represent a compound proposition obtained by combining two simple propositions p and q (Chapman, 2000, pp. 47-48). In the semantics of propositional logic, the meaning of propositions is determined by the value of their truth, that is, whether they are true or false; based on this, the truth value of compound propositions can be determined according to the truth value of simple constituent propositions. The main issue in the analysis of conjunctive devices is whether different functional contexts cause one to consider a general and specific meaning for that particular relational device (micro attitude) or whether the different uses of these devices should be distinguished from each other (macro attitude). In fact, the main question is whether "و" has a semantic content other than its traditional role in representing the truth value. Thus, the focus of the present study is to determine the semantic behaviors of "و" in Persian, especially in the spoken form of Persian speakers. For this purpose, this study used a speech structure and analyzed the data in a descriptive-analytical manner.

## 2. Literature Review

The semantic behavior of this conjunction in English has been studied by various linguists from different linguistic perspectives, including its study in Relevance Theory (Blackemore, 1988; Carston, 1993), Discourse Representation Theory (Jayez & Rossari, 2001; Txurruka, 2003), Systemic

Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Martin, 1992), and Cognitive Linguistics (PanderMaat, 1999; Pit, 2003).

Various Iranian researchers have studied the grammar of the conjunction "و", and its features and applications (Khatib Rahbar, 1989; Anwari & Givi, 1998; Meshkooch al-Dini, 2000; Tabibzadeh, 2012). Ahmadi Bidgoli and Ghari (2015) have studied the capacities and capabilities of the letter "و" in creating meaning and artistic innovation in the structure of literary and rhetorical texts. Taghi Pour (2016), in a comparative study of the functions of "و" in Persian and Arabic, has focused on the study of Saadi's poems. Baghaei and Naghzguye Kohan (2020), while examining the possible worlds of conditional construction in contemporary Persian, examined the formal construct of conditional sentences.

This set of studies as a whole is not conclusively confirmed by the author of this research, since, in a wide range of cases, one encounters several exceptions, and it seems that some of the semantic roles or behaviors of "و" are not considered.

### 3. Methodology

In the present study, the data was analyzed in a descriptive manner based on a corpus of spoken sentences of Persian speakers. The corpus in question is a collection of three Iranian TV series that could be accessed through home broadcasts: *Monster* (1398; directed by Mehran Modiri), *Mannequin* (1398; directed by Hossein Soheylizadeh), and *Rhino* (1398; directed by Kiarash Asadzadeh). As per the focus of this research, the examples presented in this study have been purposefully selected from hundreds of sentences that were expressed in these series within conversations between different characters. In different parts of this research, the author, as needed, used the language of logic to refer to different structures and parts of sentences. The reason for choosing this corpus was simply the lack of a linguistic corpus for spoken Persian.

#### 4. Results

The study of "و" as a semantic construct in at least two levels of words and sentences was prioritized in the present study. Considering several examples of speech in Persian, the researcher found that "و" has various semantic values. This morpheme can have the semantic value of "and", "because", "but", "while", "with", "as a result" and as a starting unit in speech. In other words, "و" can be substituted for each of these expressions in the composition of sentences, and it can take on the semantic value of these units. To examine the semantic behaviors of "و", which indicates the dependence of this unit on its accompanying units on the syntagmatic axis, the researcher considered it in two levels of word and sentence. At the word level, this morpheme can play a role in the form of "free and restrictive inflectional combinations," on the one hand, and onomatopoeias or "strong inflectional repetition and weak inflectional repetition" on the other hand. When "و" was evaluated at the sentence level, it exhibited at least five different behaviors. Various data indicate that "و" can have different behaviors with respect to the components of "time", "possible worlds", "conditioning", "conclusion" and "patterns in possible worlds". These behaviors are determined according to the two propositions p and q, that is, the accompanying units with "و"