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The Effect of Grammatical Weight on Postposing in Persian

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate postposing in Modern spoken Persian. Persian is a verb-final language; however, some constituents frequently follow the verb and appear in the post - verbal domain. Among the factors motivating this phenomenon, one of them is grammatical weight. The universal tendency proposed by typologists is the "short-before-long principle"; locating the heavy constituents after the light ones in order to ease the process of production and comprehension. Some studies advocate the position of long constituents before short ones in verb-final languages like Japanese and Korean. Based on the Persian spoken corpus, this research analyzes the postposed constituents according to their grammatical weight. It is observed that the heavier constituents are postposed more easily compared with the light ones; supporting the universal trend of placing heavy constituents after the light ones.

*Keywords***:** Grammatical weight, Postposing, Word order, Typology, Verb-final

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1. Introduction

In most grammatical and linguistic studies, the order of the unmarked word order in Persian has been considered "subject-object-verb". But in Persian sentences, there are other sequences in which the above-mentioned order is not necessarily observed. One of these marked sequences is the presence of some constituents in the postposed position. This movement also called postposing, is a phenomenon that occurs mostly in the spoken form of Persian. The main hypothesis of this study is that the weight of structures affects postposing and heavier structures are more liked than lighter structures, and therefore the Persian language puts heavy structures in the postposed position; after light structures. To test this hypothesis, it is necessary to examine natural data and the corpus of this research is spoken corpus of Persian.

Research Question(s)

1.Does grammatical weight affect postposing in Persian?

2.Which constituent comes first? Heavy before light or light before heavy?

2. Literature Review

Reviewing previous studies, we can say that there are three types of conclusions about the effect of weight on the arrangement of constituents in Persian: the group that considers weight ineffective in word order (Frommer 1981; Ma'aref and Mehdizadeh, 1397). The second group has studied weight in preposed constituents and considers it effective. In their view, heavy structures take precedence over light constituents (Faghiri & Samvelian 2014, 2020). The third group has studied the postposed constituents and concluded that weight is effective in the postposing and heavier constituents are moved more easily and frequently and after the constituents (Alaei et al. 1396, 1397; Rasekh Mohanand et al., 1392, 2016).

None of the above studies that have utilized the natural spoken corpus have

not specifically focused on postposing. The present study, considering the spoken corpus of Persian, investigates the effect of weight on the rearrangement of constituents.

3. Methodology

In the present study, in order to study natural data from Persian, the spoken corpus has been used. ELAN software version 5.7.0 was used to prepare spoken corpus. This software is a tool for producing natural language data and is a tool used in the project of a spoken corpus with the name HAMBAM.

4. Results

Here Finally, it can be said that the results of this study are a confirmation of the researches of Alaei et al. (1396, 1397) and Rasekh Mohannad (1396) who have emphasized the effect of weight and more probability of moving heavy constituents to the end of the sentence. Also, according to Hawkins (1994), the main reason for the postposing and tendency of Persian to choose a heavy constituent after a light constituent can be considered as facilitating sentence comprehension and processing. The placement of the verb as the semantic core of the sentence before the heavy constituents makes it possible to understand the meaning of the sentence faster and thus convey the message.

5. Discussion

In summary, this study, considering the principle of "heavy constituents before light constituents " in four areas, confirms that in Persian, among the constituents that have become obsolete, and the constituents that are in the unstable position. The signs are located, four constituents follow this principle; In contrast to other constituents, with a slight difference, they show a tendency contrary to this principle.

6. Conclusion

We can examine the hypothesis of the present paper. In this study, the main hypothesis was that the proposed constituents are heavier than their corresponding pairs in the unmarked state. If this hypothesis is confirmed, at least it can be said that the Persian language puts heavier constituents in place after the verb, in other words, the principle of light structure is observed before the heavy structure.

Among the three types of views on the effect of weight on the arrangement of constituents in Persian mentioned, it can be said that the view that considers the effect of weight on the arrangement of constituents is acceptable. There is sufficient evidence for this tendency in the constituents of the subject, predicate, time, and indirect object, but the evidence related to direct object, place constituents, and manner constituents do not confirm this finding.