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A syntactic analysis of case marker -ra in Persian

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study explores the comprehensive analysis of the morpheme "-ra" in Persian, a topic that has not been extensively studied despite its importance. Traditionally, "-ra" has been considered a definite/specific direct object marker. However, non-canonical occurrences of "-ra" on adverbs, extracted subjects from embedded clauses, obligatory appearances on extracted DPs from indirect object positions, and DPs extracted from PPs complement positions raise questions about its role as an accusative case marker and the mechanism for case assignment in these constructions.

The analysis of the morpheme "-ra" in Persian is of significant importance due to its widespread usage and syntactic/semantic variations beyond its canonical role as a definite/specific direct object marker. Understanding the comprehensive distribution and features of "-ra" is crucial for unraveling the intricate syntactic and semantic properties of Persian. Despite previous attempts to analyze this morpheme, no comprehensive framework has been proposed thus far that can account for all its syntactic/semantic distributions and capture its various non-canonical occurrences. This study aims to address this gap by providing a detailed investigation into the syntactic behavior and case assignment mechanisms associated with "-ra" in Persian. By delving into these aspects, we can shed light on the intricate nature of this morpheme and contribute to the broader understanding of Persian syntax and case marking phenomena.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study presents a theoretical analysis of the case marker "-ra" in Persian, aiming to provide a thorough examination of its syntactic and semantic properties. The analysis critically evaluates previous approaches by Karimi (1990) and Ghomeshi (1997) and highlights their limitations in explaining the full range of "-ra" occurrences. The study proposes the adoption of the dependent case theory as a more comprehensive framework to account for both canonical and non-canonical events involving "-ra" in Persian.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study highlight the limitations of previous analyses of the morpheme "-ra" in Persian and present a novel approach based on the dependent

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case theory. The analysis by Karimi (1990), which views "-ra" as marking a general oblique case inherited from a coindexed trace or clitic, provides valuable insights but fails to account for the diverse range of "-ra" occurrences observed in the language. Similarly, Ghomeshi (1997) considers "-ra" as an accusative case marker and a syntactic head of a case phrase, yet this analysis falls short in explaining all the non-canonical events involving "-ra".

To overcome these limitations, the dependent case theory is proposed as a more comprehensive framework for understanding "-ra" in Persian. According to this analysis, "-ra" functions as an oblique dependent case that appears on DPs located at the edge of the VP. This approach provides a unified explanation for both canonical and non-canonical occurrences of "-ra" in the language. Moreover, it aligns with recent discussions on case assignment mechanisms, suggesting that dependent case marking can offer an alternative perspective beyond the traditional functional head-based approaches.

By offering a more comprehensive account of "-ra" in Persian, this study contributes to the understanding of the syntactic properties and case assignment mechanisms associated with this morpheme. The proposed analysis not only sheds light on the intricacies of Persian syntax but also expands the broader understanding of case marking phenomena. It provides a foundation for further research on case assignment and syntactic structures, highlighting the need to consider alternative mechanisms beyond functional heads in the analysis of case phenomena.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the limitations identified in previous analyses, this study proposes a more generalized and homogenous syntactic analysis of "-ra" in Persian within the framework of the dependent case theory. This analysis can accommodate the majority of "-ra" occurrences and overcome the challenges faced by previous accounts. By applying the rule of dependent case assignment, the study argues that "-ra" functions as an oblique dependent case marked by parameter (b) of the dependent case theory on DPs located on the edge of the VP. This analysis supports the idea that case assignment is not solely reliant on functional heads under Agree, but rather, dependent case marking without direct association with a functional head offers a suitable explanation for the occurrences of "-ra" in Persian. The findings contribute to the ongoing debate on case assignment mechanisms and offer insights into the diversity of case marking across languages.

Keywords: Dependent Case, Object Case Marker, Persian Syntax, Case Assignment Mechanisms, Syntactic Analysis