

## Equative Constructions in Persian Language

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### Abstract

Equative constructions have not been desirably studied due to their formal and semantic similarity to similitive constructions. Haspelmath (2017) proposed the six basic types of equative constructions in distinct patterns based on typological studies. The five key components in an equative construction, are illustrated in (1), using an English and a French example. The six types can be characterized with reference to these five components:

(1)	1	2	3	4	5
	comparee	degree-marker	parameter	standard-marker	standard
	Mary	is	[as beautiful]	[as	Lili].
	Mary	est	[aussi belle]	[que	Lili].

As Haspelmath (2017) points out, an equative construction must allow a way to express the PARAMETER (component 3, some gradable property concept words, usually are called adjective), the COMPAREE (component 1, the first referent to be compared), and the STANDARD (component 5, the other referent to which the first referent is compared).

Regarding the equative constructions in Persian language, as far as the authors have considered, no research has been done. However, some works of research can be mentioned regarding the methods of expressing analogy and similarity, such as; Shariat (1988), Arzhang (1971), Farshidvar (2009) among them. In this paper, however, we intend to answer the following questions by studying equative constructions:

- 1- What will be the representation of different types of equative constructions in Persian language?
- 2- what are the generalizations given about equative structures in Persian?

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The data used in the present study comes from two main sources: from published stories and novels with colloquial styles, and from daily conversations of people around. The methodology used to collect the data was, primarily, direct elicitation of sentences. The authors built contexts and ask people to make a constructions according to that contexts. We tried to provide enough context to give a clear view of the use of the construction in question.

After studying the data, the authors identified seven types of equative construction in Persian, which are introduced as follows.

Type 1: this type of equative construction in the most common type in data. It consists of a predicative parameter plus compare and standard. There is an equative standard-marker, but no equative degree marker.

1. Ma mesle to hazerjavab nistim.

We like you spontaneous are not

We are not as spontaneous as you.

Type 2: In this type of equative constructions, in addition to the three main components (comparee, standard, parameter), there is also a degree-marker and a standard standard-marker. In Persian, as far as the authors have considered, there is no construction in which the standard-marker and the degree-marker can be shown at the same time based on type 2, but there is a construction similar to the type 2 in such a way: “comparee+ preposition+ nominal adjective+ Ezafe+ standard”:

2. Afshin be zerangi-e Bijan nist.

Afshin as smart as Bijan is not.

Afshin is not as smart as Bijan.

In (2) we can consider preposition (be) as a degree-marker and Ezafe as a standard-marker.

Type 3: This type consists of a predicative parameter with an equative degree-marker, the comparee and standard referents are unified, i.e. they are expressed as a single conjoined or plural noun phrase (‘Afshin and his brother’). There can thus be no standard-marker. As Haspelmath (2017) points out, “This construction can also be regarded as a kind of reciprocal construction.”

[Afshin va baradar-ash] ham qiafe-and.

Afshin and brother-his the sam appearance are.

Afshin and his brother are the same. (have the same appearance)

Type 4: this type of equative construction contains a verb as its primary predicate that in other contexts represents a notion of ‘residan= reaching’ or ‘raftan= take after’, there are comparee as subject and the standard as second argument that is generally the object, and the parameter that expresses as a kind of oblique constituent (‘in kindness’).

4. Sara tu mehrabani be Maryam nemiresad.

Sara in kindness to Maryam doesn’t reach.

Sara does not reach Maryam in kindness.

Type 5: In this type of equative construction, there are comparee and standard as a continuous unit as a subject, a verb expresses the notion of “reaching or equalling” and a parameter as an oblique constituent (tu zibaei).

5. [Afshin va Bijan] tu zibaei be ham miresan.

Afshin and Bijan in beauty to eachother reach.

Afshin and Bijan are equal (to each other) in beauty.

Type 6: In this type there is a parameter as the first predicate, and a second verb that expresses a notion of ‘residan=reaching’ or ‘yeki shodan=equaling’. This type

of construction does not exist in Persian as far as the authors have considered. In more precise terms, it is not possible to use an adjective as the first predicate and a verb as the second predicate at the same time. But the construction is used with a attributive adjective, such as in example (6):

6. Zibaei-e Arash be pedaresh nemirese.  
 beauty-Ezafe (of) Arash to his father doesn't reach.  
 Arash's beauty doesn't reach to his father (beauty).

Type 7: In this type of equative construction, comparee and standard is used along with the verb of “reaching/ equalling”. There is standard-marker without standard, it inferred from the context. The important point that distinguishes this type of construction from other constructions is that the comparee also has a marker that appears as a postposition (after comparee).

7. Maryam ham be madaresh rafte.  
 Maryam as well to her mother take after.  
 Maryam takes after his mother (in manner).

Based on the research findings, some generalizations of equative constructions in Persian can be provided. First, [if the Ezafe is considered as a standard-marker] there is no equative construction in Persian that has a degree-marker but left the standard without any marker.

Second, in all examples of equative constructions in Persian that the parameter appears as a predicate, the parameter is placed after the standard, and according to Haspelmath (2017), in such a situation, the language has an object-verb word order. According to Dabir Moghaddam (2001), Persian language, especially in the field of simple sentences, tends to have a predominant object-verb order. Therefore, the mentioned generalization is valid in Persian language equative constructions. Third, in all examples of equative constructions (with predicative parameters) with the order of [parameter + standard] in spoken and written data, the standard-marker is placed before the standard. This violates Haspelmath's (2016) prediction. Perhaps the reason for this discrepancy can be attributed to the nature of the free word order of the Persian language.

**Keywords:** Cross generalizations, Equative construction, Similitive constructions