

Vocatives and Vocative Particles in the Syntax-pragmatics Interface in Persian

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Abstract

Vocatives are small but important expressions in the meaning of an utterance. They are defined as a means of drawing an addressee's attention, in order to “establish or maintain a relationship between this addressee and some proposition” (Lambrecht, 1996, p.267). In spite of their importance, we can claim that the investigation of the vocatives has been neglected in linguistic inquiry until very recently. Meanwhile, the vocatives do not take any syntactic or semantic role in the sentence and are not parts of the sentence structure, they have been considered as peripheral to syntax as well. Traditionally, vocative phrases have been considered purely pragmatic phenomena; as a result, they have been studied from the pragmatic viewpoint. Alternatively, recent studies (Rizzi, 1997; Spease & Tenny, 2003; Speas, 2004; Hill, 2007, 2013) propose that there are syntactic projections that encode information relevant to the interface between syntax and pragmatics. According to these studies, in a structural field above CP, some pragmatic phenomena such as vocatives can be studied. This assumption is based on the observation in some languages that there is agreement between pragmatic phenomena such as vocatives or interjections and syntactic features such as case, number and persons. Hill (2007) studies vocatives in the speech act domain above CP. He claims that markers surrounding vocative nouns that express pragmatic notions and are thought of as attention drawing interjections show restricted pattern of co-occurrence and ordering in languages that call for syntactic analysis. Hill (2007) believes that vocative phrases are derived through the same set of computations that apply to the core syntax, except for the point that the fields in which these computations occur are in the domain of discourse. In this approach, which tries analyzing pragmatic phenomena in the syntax-pragmatics interface, a vocative phrase is a functional projection whose head (V_0) contains a vocative particle which, in turn, selects a DP (vocative nouns) as its complement. Hill (2013) focuses on the internal structure of vocatives and their

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relations with the clause. He considers a vocative phrase as the indirect object of the speech act head mapped at the left periphery of the clause.

Therefore, the present study aims to survey vocatives and vocative particles based on Hill's (2007, 2013) study in the syntax-pragmatics interface in Persian. The advantage of this approach is that it is possible to account for a whole range of pragmatic phenomena occurring in an utterance. The linguistic data in the study were selected from diverse texts including poetic, formal and colloquial writings to account for the formal and informal vocative particles in Persian.

Vocatives in Persian are formed by an optional vocative particle and some grammatical categories such as proper or common nouns, adjectives and pronouns (Anvari & Givi, 1997, p.95). Vocative particles (as the head) can be overt or covert in a vocative phrase. By covert, it means that a vocative particle is present in the head position; however, it does not have any phonetic realization. Thus, in some instances, the vocative particle specifies a null vocative in Persian, therefore, it can be understood from the context. The results of the study indicate that a vocative phrase in Persian is a type of syntactic phrase named "a vocative phrase projection" in the speech act layer in the syntax-pragmatics interface. A vocative phrase contains a vocative either overt or covert particle in the head position of the vocative phrase that selects a vocative as its complement.

The vocative particle in the head position of a vocative phrase projection contains a [2nd person] feature and [inter-personal (i-p)] feature. The [i-p] feature is specified by three other functional features, including [+/-Deictic, +/- formality, +/- familiarity]. Interpersonal features refer to all kinds of interpersonal relationships between the speaker and hearer. A vocative sometimes refers to a hearer that can be the speaker hence it has deictic property. If no referent is available, the deictic feature is inactive. The feature formality refers to the usage of formal or informal vocative particles in Persian. The feature familiarity refers to the speaker-addressee relations. Sometimes, there is a close relationship between the speaker and hearer; therefore, the feature of familiarity is active. In conclusion, this study proposes that the interpretation of vocatives requires correlating syntax and pragmatics in the interface and a vocative phrase is a functional projection bearing pragmatic features above the complementizer phrase layer (CP). By considering a speech act layer above the CP, vocatives, interjections, and other pragmatic phenomena can be studied syntactically.

Key words: Complementizer Phrase Layer, Pragmatics-Syntax Interface, Speech Act Layer, Vocative Particles, Vocatives