



Extrapolation as a Constituency Test for Syntactic Structures in Persian

Seyed Mohammad Hosseini-Maasoum¹, Maliheh Eslami²

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1. INTRODUCTION

A constituent is a chain or structure made up of one or more words, which function as a whole i.e. a single unit, in syntactic operations. Almost all syntactic operations are applied to constituents. Any failure to detect them properly will not only lead to structural ambiguity but also make the analysis of the syntactic processes virtually impossible. It is here that a strong need is felt for a special device to detect the structures. Constituency tests are tools applied in the formal syntactic tradition and hence, in Minimalism, for the detection of constituents and the borderlines between them. So far, constituency tests and their applications in syntactic analyses have been substantially discussed in English resources on syntax (Radford, 1997; 2006; 2009; Carnie, 2001; Kim & Sells, 2007; Tallerman, 2011), but they have only been occasionally and briefly addressed in Persian sources although constituent detection is one of the first steps in fundamental syntactic investigations.

Tests such as coordination, ellipsis, topicalization clefting, sentence fragment etc. have been frequently discussed in terms of how successful they are in detecting main categorical constituents. The results show that these tests are not absolute devices for the detection of borders between constituents. In other words, not all of them are successful in detecting all constituents. On the other hand, their efficiency may vary cross-linguistically. For example, as Hosseini-Maasoum (2022) puts it, a test like coordination is equally successful in Persian and English while a test like topicalization may be more efficient in English than in Persian.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

One of the major syntactic operations frequently used in Persian is extrapolation. The constituents in Persian sentences have extensive freedom for movement to different positions. One of these target positions is the post-verbal position. Extrapolation is the movement of a constituent from an unmarked pre-verbal position to the marked post-verbal position. Although extrapolation has been mentioned in a few resources, it has not been so far a candidate of constituency test in Persian. The present study begins with a review of some constituency tests in the literature and considers the constituent structure of Persian and continues to define extrapolation as a frequent phenomenon in Persian.

Since still a majority of linguists consider SOV as the Persian main word order,

¹ Associate Professor, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran (corresponding author); hosseinimasum@pnu.ac.ir

² M.A. in Linguistics, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran; malihe.eslami1982@gmail.com

we, in the present study, consider SOV for Persian and base our analysis of extraposition on this initial unmarked status. Hence, the verb will be the rightmost (final) element and any constituent located after the verb is supposed to be there as a result of a movement, often extraposition.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study considers extraposition as a constituency test; therefore, any element or chain of elements which can be moved to the post-verbal position in Persian sentences resulting in a grammatical structure is a constituent.

The test was applied to different categorical constituents and non-constituents to see whether it is successful or not. The results showed that DP and PP are more frequently extraposed in Persian. It is even possible to extrapose multiple constituents in some sentences.

1. daad _[DP Ali] _[DP hame-ye basteh-ha ra] _[PP be Maryam]
gave Ali all-of package-s- OBJ to Maryam
Ali gave the book to Maryam.

But the extraposition of an indefinite object is disallowed (2b).

2. a) Hassan ketab khund.

Hassan book read

Hassan studied (read books).

- b) *Hassan khund ketab (Naderi & Darzi, 2015, p95)

Most PPs as indirect objects and adverbials can also pass the extraposition test.

An interesting finding about adjective phrases is that APs can be extraposed from within an NP only if the head of the NP is an indefinite noun.

3. a) Ali _[NP pezeshk-i] _[AP besyar hazegh]] ra baraye madar-ash avard.
Ali _[NP doctor-Indef.] _[AP very skillful]] OBJ for mother-his brought
Ali brought a very skillful doctor for his mother.

- b) Ali _[NP pezeshk-i --t-] ra baraye madar-ash avard _[AP besyar hazegh].

But the extraposition test fails to detect APs moved from within an NP with a definite head. The extraposition of an AP from within a definite NP will produce an ill-formed structure.

- c)* Ali _[NP in pezeshk --t-] ra baraye madar-ash avard _[AP besyar hazegh].

The word *in* (this) is a definite determiner; hence, the NP is definite and the extraposition of the AP is disallowed.

CPs were also found detectable with this test in most cases. The only exception to this was CPs which are non-restrictive adjective clauses.

- 4.*doost-am emrooz bar-mi-gard-ad

friend-my today back-Pres.-come-3rd

_[CP that in US live Present-do-3rd].

_[CP ke dar Amrika zendegi mi-kon-ad].

My friend who lives in the US comes back today.

Adverbial phrases almost unanimously pass the test, and the test can be said to be efficient in detecting such constituents.

4. CONCLUSION

A brief review of different constituency tests showed that the issue has not been deeply touched in Persian. The results of the present study showed that we can apply extraposition as a device to detect most of the lexical and some of the functional categories realized as constituents in Persian sentences. It works well in detecting DPs, PPs, APs, AdvPs, and CPs, and hence the main research question was answered. In instances where extraposition fails as a test, other constituency tests can be applied for detection. What was new in this research, was the introduction of extraposition in Persian as a constituency test. In comparison to some other tests, extraposition has a wider range of applications and is more often efficient.

Keywords: Syntactic constituents, Constituency tests, Extraposition, syntax, Persian