The Viewpoint of Cognitive Grammar on Ellipsis in Persian Coordinative Constructions

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study aims at the investigation of ellipsis in Persian coordinative constructions. Langacker (2012) speaks of ellipsis in cases where an expression that is not a clause itself, receives a clause-like interpretation by analogy to one that is. Most of the research on ellipsis in coordination regarding Persian have adopted a Generative Grammar approach. Generative linguists seemingly do not hold a unified opinion about ellipsis coordination or what they call right node raising. Shabani (2013) has mentioned that constituency or non-constituency of the omitted part is a subject of controversy among different generative linguists. On the one hand, linguists, such as Postal (1974), Bresnan (1974), Williams (1990), and Larson (1990) claim that right node raising only works on the elements forming a constituent. On the other hand other linguists, including Abbott (1976), Wilder (1995), Duman (2003), Kluck (2007), Wyngaerd (2007), Ince (2009), and Alzaidi (2010) argue that right node raising targets non-constituents as well as constituents, and this means that right node raising violates constituency condition. Having this in mind, it seems that the fixed and rigid constituency defined by Generative Grammar has caused some challenges for this kind of constructions description. Hence, adopting Cognitive Grammar approach, which is meaning-based instead of syntax-oriented and investigates language with all aspects of it, has rendered new and different results.

Langacker (2009) argues that meaning includes not only conceptual content but also construal: our ability to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways. In order to have a uniform way of referring to (conceptual) content, the term domain (base) is adopted in cognitive grammar. One dimension of construal is the prominence conferred on conceptual elements, and one kind of prominence – profiling- is of central importance in coordination. This is how meaning plays a significant role in our analyses. Langacker (2012) introduces differential and anti-differential as the coordinands of an elliptic coordinative construction. He defines differential and anti-differential in the framework of a model named as Access and Activation Model. Based on this model, on a given time scale processing takes place

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in successive windows. A window provides the extensionality required for multiple entities to be represented and connected with one another. Canonically, the content subsumed in a window is thereby integrated to form a coherent structure organized around a single focus, or salient entity (Langacker, 2012). In the same work, Langacker refers to the windows coinciding with clauses as "clause-sized windows". Langacker (2012) employs Access and Activation model as an alternative metaphor for compositionality. As he puts it, the linguistic notion of composition is based on the metaphor of building something out of smaller pieces. While it is unavoidable, useful, and valid up to a point, the compositional metaphor has its limitations and is deleterious if pushed too far. In this alternative metaphorical model, a moving window of attention provides serial access to a complex conception. Portions of this target conception appear in the window at each processing stage until it is deemed to have been covered sufficiently for communicative purposes. Differential is defined as the content appearing in one clausal window that does not appear in the prior window. The anti-differential consists of any previously active content that the differential conflicts with and suppresses (Langacker, 2012). Based on Langacker's research carried out on English, it was expected for cognitive grammar to manage to describe ellipsis in Persian, considering differential and anti-differential as the coordinands of the coordinative constructions.
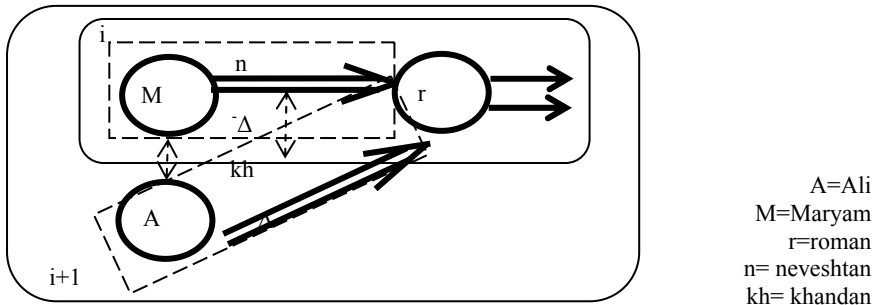
2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

In order to investigate the mentioned hypothesis, first we briefly introduced fundamentals of cognitive grammar and then explored the details of the most used parts of the theory. Then, using the theoretical instruments provided, we started analyzing the gathered data. A number of 200 examples containing coordinative constructions were gathered from two major Iranian newspapers, Shargh and Etemad. Then the elliptic coordinative constructions were extracted and analyzed adopting Langacker's views. First, the omission from different grammatical positions were represented in some simple examples, and then we tried to seek differential and anti-differential in our gathered data to make sure that they work as coordinands.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Using differential and anti-differential, and windows of attention, we tried to discuss the omission from different grammatical positions and represent each of them in a picture. Below, is an example of a Persian elliptic coordinative construction, in which the direct object of the second sentence is omitted.

    1. Maryam roman minevisad va Ali Mikhanad.

      (Maryam novel writes and Ali reads.)

A=Ali
M=Maryam
r=roman
n= neveshtan
kh= khandan

Picture 1- an example of object ellipsis in coordination

As we can see in the picture, the windows of attention are marked with i and i+1. We can see that *Ali mikhanad*, which is the new content of window i+1, is absent from the previous window and is thus considered as the differential of the construction. Hence, anti-differential, i.e. the part suppressed by differential in the previous window, will be *Maryam minevisad*, which is also marked in the picture. these two, shown with dashed boxes are considered as the coordinands of this construction.

4. CONCLUSION

The results showed that elliptic coordination in Persian can be justified using windows of attention, and differential and anti-differential. In this kind of constructions, differential and anti-differential act the coordinands. We can also see that no matter for the coordinands to be classic constituents or not, elliptic coordination can be described with no controversies in Cognitive Grammar framework.

Keywords: Coordination, Ellipsis, wWndows of attention, Differential, Anti-differential