Control in Persian

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Farsi, Western (PES)
a member of the Indo-European family
also known as Persian, New Persian, Parsi, Irani
spoken in Iran (Asia)

1 Grammar Profile

1.1 Morpho-Syntax

1.1.1 Head position

Despite SOV word order, Persian is in all other respects head-initial: prepositional; N-adj, N-rel, N-gen; Adj-comparative phrase; Det-NP; C-IP.

1.1.2 Morphological type

Inflectional. Verbal paradigms are fairly rich, though nominal system is not.

1.1.3 Case system

Nom/Acc

1.1.4 Verbal Agreement

Verbs inflect for person and number of the subject. There is no object marking.

1.1.5 Transitivity Patterns

Passive is a compound formed from a participle and an auxiliary. The causative is synthetic.

1.1.6 Null Arguments

Subject pro-drop is common. Definite direct objects are often realized as verbal clitics. The clitic follows the subject agreement marker, and in verbal compounds, can appear on either part of the compound.

1.1.7   Non-Finite Categories

Finite forms are clearly distinguished and inflect for tense, person, and number. The verbal infinitive is rarely used, except in certain specific cases with verbs that have ingressive aspect (verbs of beginning.) In this case, the infinitive is preceded by *be*, 'to'.

(1)   Dašt-im šuru-mi-kaerd-im   be   šam   xordaen
       had-1P start-DUR-did-1P   to   dinner   to eat
       'We were starting to eat dinner.'
       (Mahootian: p.242, ex. 447)

The same meaning can be expressed, however, using the subjunctive, inflected for person and number.

(2)   Dašt-im šuru-mi-kaerd-im   šam   bo-xor-im
       had-1P start-DUR-did-1P   dinner   SBJN-eat-1P
       'We were starting to eat dinner.'
       (Mahootian: p.242, ex. 445)

The past participle is used to form the passive (along with the auxiliary 'become') and the pluperfect (with the auxiliary 'be'.) The present participle shows no agreement and is typically interpreted with an adverbial meaning.

(3)   baecce-ha   gerye-konan   doid-aend   xune
       child-PL   cry-do.PRPT   ran-eP   home
       'The children ran home crying.'
       (Mahootian: p. 253, ex. 490)

1.2   Matrix Clause

1.2.1   Basic word order

Basic word order is SOV.

1.2.2   Alternate word orders

Initial Position: Almost any element, aside from adjectives, can be moved to sentence-initial position for emphasis. This includes preposing a verb for contrastive emphasis, as well as preposing various types of adverbs.

Final Position: The subject may be moved to final position (after the verb) to indicate non-contrastive emphasis. Adverbs of time may also be moved to final position.

Clefting: subjects, direct objects, and prepositional objects can all be clefted by moving to initial position and inserting the copula and the complementizer *ke*.

(4)   Be xohre   bud   ke   sima   sa'aet-o dad
       to Zohre was   that   Sima   watch-OBJ   gave
       'It was Zohre that Sima gave the watch to.'
       (Mahootian: p. 118, ex. 483)

Topicalization: Object noun phrases are topicalized by moving them to sentence initial position. The topicalized elements retain their object marker. Adverbs can likewise be topicalized by movement to initial position with affixation of the topic marker. (This contrasts with movement for emphasis, where the object marker is not present.) Indirect objects may be topicalized through movement and affixation of the object marker. Otherwise, indirect objects may be topicalized through movement of the entire PP (no object marker.)

Dislocation: Noun phrases can also be topicalized via dislocation to initial position together with realization of an object clitic on the verb. The left-dislocated noun phrase bears an object marker. Noun phrases can also be right dislocated, though this is uncommon.

Scrambling: pre-verbal elements may scramble freely.

1.2.3   Ordering of nominal and pronominal arguments

Pronominal arguments follow SOV word order, although subject pronouns are often dropped, and object pronouns can be realized as verbal enclitics.

1.3   Embedded Clause

1.3.1   Basic word order

The embedded clause follows the same SOV word order. Topicalization, dislocation, and scrambling are all permitted in the embedded clause. However, verb preposing is not permitted in the embedded clause.

1.3.2   Verbal agreement

Verbs in the embedded clause agree in person and number, except in the rare instances where the infinitival is used with ingressives. (See above.)

1.3.3   Restrictions on tense, aspect, mood

Choice of mood depends on the certainty of the embedded event. Embedded verbs are often realized in subjunctive mood, which is limited to present and compound past tense.

1.3.4   Non-control complements

Persian has a handful of raising predicates, including the following.

(5)   lazem=budæn
       necessary=be
       'to be necessary'

(6)   be=næzær=amadæn/residæn
       to=view=come/arrive
       'to seem/appear'

(7)   momken=budæn
       possible=be
       'to be possible'

(8)   ehtemal=daštæn possibility=have
       'to be possible'

In raising constructions, the matrix verb always shows 3s agreement.

(9)   lazem-e   [(ke)   bæčče-ha   be-r-æn   mædresse].
       necessary-3SG   [(COMP)   child-PL   SBJ-go-3PL   school]
       It is necessary that the children go to school.
       (Ghomeshi 2001:45)

However, if a subject appears before the raising predicate, it does not trigger agreement in the matrix clause.

(10)   bæčče-ha l   azem-e/*-ænd   [(ke)   be-r-æn   mædresse].
       child-PL   necessary-3SG/*3PL [(COMP)   SBJ-go-3PL   school]
       It is necessary that the children go to school.
       (Ghomeshi 2001:46)

Because the 'raised' subject in such cases are interpreted contrastively, Karimi (1999) argues for a scrambling analysis, contra Darzi (1993, 1996). Ghomeshi (2001) argues that raising predicates lack a vP projection, in which the external argument is assigned, and assumes default third person agreement.

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2   Control Profile

Hashemipour (1989) describes both subject and object control into subjunctive complements, and offers a covert-operator analysis of both structures, along the lines of Clark (1985). This variable-binding analysis accounts for the presence of PRO in a case-marked position, which is problematic for an anaphor-based analysis. Hashemipour argues that the Agr feature on the embedded subject is co-indexed with the control subject, a theme taken up by Ghomeshi (2001).

Ghomeshi argues against a concord analysis, which posits an agreement relation between the matrix and embedded verbs (as opposed to a relationship between argument positions). The concord analysis fails on a number of counts, and Ghomeshi advances instead a thematic agreement analysis, in which agreement hold between theta roles projected by the verbs (and not between verbs or arguments). The analysis crucially holds that the embedded structure is vP and not CP, suggesting restructuring.

2.1   forward subject control into subjunctive complement

2.1.1   Example structure

Embedded complements are introduced by the complementizer *ke*, and the embedded verb, which is expressed in the subjunctive, matches the unexpressed subject in person and number. (Unexpressed subjects are represented below by the Δ symbol. SJ indicates subjunctive mood.)

(11) $moin_i$ sæyy=kærd   ke $\Delta_{i/*j}$ bi-ad
        Moin   tried   that   SJ-come:3s
        Moin tried to come.
        (Hashemipour 1989:152)

2.1.2   Predicates participating in the construction

Persian allows complex verbs which include a nominal plus a light verb. These verbs are inflected for tense, aspect, and mood, just as lexical verbs are. Complex verbs are represented in the following form below: nominal=light verb.

implicative verb:	sæiy=kærdæn	'try'
	yad-eš=ræftæn	'forget'
aspectual verb:	tunestæn	'be able'
communication verb:	qol=dadæn	'promise'
desiderative:	xastæn	'want'

Complex verbs can be distinguished from noun plus lexical verb constructions (e.g. 'have an intention'), where the nominal and the lexical verb can be separated by other lexical material. Nematzadeh (1995) and Darzi (2001) both identify control structures with these verbs, and Darzi argues that they form control nominals.

2.1.3   Evidence in support bi-clausal structure

Ghomeshi (2001) argues that for a class of 'core' control predicates, the embedded structure is vP and not CP. The analysis is based on patterns in scrambling and question formation and on the lack of independent tense for the embedded verb. Judgments are gradient, however, and it appears that modals (be able) and implicatives (try, forget) fit the vP analysis. The remaining verbs Ghomeshi examines (want, think, say, know) presumably form bi-clausal structures. This classification appears to correspond with Hashemipour's (1989) distinction between obligatory and optional control verbs. (Optional control verbs admit a disjoint overt subject in the embedded clause.)

Obligatory subject control verbs permit scrambling out of the embedded clause.

(12) bižæn   [ketab-o]$_{SCR}$ sæ'iy=kærd   (ke)   [t$_{SCR}$ be-xun-e]
      Bijan   book-OM   try=do.PAST.3SG   (COMP)   [SBJ-read-3SG]
      Bijan tried to read the book.
      (Ghomeshi 2001:28)

Non-control verbs do as well, but the resulting construction is discourse-marked, carrying contrastive emphasis.

(13) # bižæn [ketab-o]$_{SCR}$ fekr=mi-kon-e   (ke)   [t$_{SCR}$ be-xun-e]
      Bijan   book-OM   thought=DUR-do-3SG (COMP)   [SBJ-read-3SG]
      Bijan thinks he'll read the book.
      (Ghomeshi 2001:28)

Questions are formed with wh-in situ. When the wh-word scrambles out of a control complement, there is little interpretive difference.

(14) bižæn   (či)   sæ'iy=kærd   (ke)   [(či)   be-xun-e]?
      Bijan   (what) try=do.PAST.3SG   (COMP)   [(what) SBJ-read-3SG]
      What did Bijan try to read?
      (Ghomeshi 2001:29)

With non-control complements, however, placement of the wh-element can distinguish between a direct question (at the matrix level) and an embedded interrogative.

(15) bižæn   goft   (ke)   [či   mi-xun-e].
      Bijan   said.PAST.3SG   (COMP)   [what   DUR-read-3SG]
      Bijan said what he's reading/he'll read.
      (Ghomeshi 2001:31)

(16) bižæn   [či]$_{SCR}$ goft   (ke)   [t$_{SCR}$ mi-xun-e]?
      Bijan   what   said.PAST.3SG (COMP)   [DUR-read-3SG]
      What did Bijan say he's reading/he'll read?
      (Ghomeshi 2001:31)

Failure of control verbs to form embedded interrogatives is compatible with a lack of CP projection. Similarly, failure to take independent tense is compatible with a lack of TP projection.

(17) ? bižæn diruz   sæ'iy=kærd   (ke)   [færda   be-r-e].
      Bijan   yesterday try=do.PAST.3SG (COMP)   [tomorrow   SBJ-go-3SG]
      * Bijan tried yesterday to go tomorrow.
      (Ghomeshi 2001:34)

Compare with independent tense in a bi-clausal structure.

(18) bižæn   diruz   mi-xast   (ke)   [færda   be-r-e].
      Bijan   yesterday DUR-want.PAST.3SG   (COMP)   [tomorrow SBJ-go-3SG]
      Bijan wanted yesterday to go tomorrow.
      (Ghomeshi 2001:34)

2.1.4   Evidence of empty category

Reflexive binding of an embedded object suggests that there is a structural position for the unexpressed subject in the embedded clause.

(19) moin mi-xad   ke   Δ sæiy=kon-æm ke   Δ   xod-æm-o   eslah=kon-æm
      Moin want:3s   that   try=SJ:do-1s that   RFL-1s-AC shave=SJ:do-1s
      Moin wanted me to try to shave myself.
      (Hashemipour 1989: 165)

2.2 *forward object control into subjunctive complement*

Hashemipour (1989) describes two classes of object control verbs: causatives and communication verbs.

2.2.1 Example structure

(20) mo'allem$_i$ be šagerd$_j$ sefareš=kærd ke Δ$_{*i/j/*k}$ bolænd be-xun-e
teacher to student recommended that loud SJ-read:3s
The teacher recommended to the student that he read out loud.
(Hashemipour 1989:152)

2.2.2 Predicates participating in the construction

| manipulative verbs: | mæjbur=kærdæn | 'cause/force' |
| | vadar=kærdæn | 'compel' |

communication verbs:	tæqaza=kærdæn	'request'
	dæstur=dadæn	'order'
	ejaze=dadæn	'allow'
	esrar=kærdæn	'urge'
	goftæn	'tell'
	pišnæhad=kærdæn	'suggest'
	sefareš=kærdæn	'recommend'

2.2.3 Evidence of empty category

Although pro-drop is permitted in Persian, Hashemipour (1989) shows that when a lexical subject is not present in the complement, a control interpretation is necessary. A pro-drop analysis, in which the reference of the embedded subject is interpreted pragmatically, is not tenable, given that the only possible interpretation is one in which the unexpressed subject is coreferent with the matrix controller.

(21) mo'allem$_i$ æz madar$_j$ taqaza=kærd ke pesær-eš/Δ æz madrese be-re
teacher from mother requested that son-her from school SJ-go:3s
The teacher requested from the mother that her son/she$_{*i/j/*k}$ leave the school.
(Hashemipour 1989:160)

Reflexive binding also suggests the presence of an unexpressed subject in the embedded clause.

(22) moin$_i$ æli-ro$_j$ vadar=kærd ke Δ$_{*i/j/*k}$ zud bi-re
Moin Ali-acc compelled that soon SJ-go:3s
Moin compelled Ali to leave soon.
(Hashemipour 1989:195)

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