

Attributive and adverbial modification of light verb constructions in Persian

Jens Fleischhauer & Mozhgan Neisani

The topic of our talk is the modification of light verb constructions (LVCs) in Persian. Persian makes heavy use of LVCs, which consists of a semantically bleached verb – the so-called light verb – and a non-verbal constituent (a noun, an adjective, an adverb or a PP). The light verb, together with the non-verbal constituent, forms a complex predicate, whose meaning is often non-compositionally derived.

Persian LVCs come in two kinds: separable and non-separable ones (Karimi-Doostan 2011). The non-separable LVCs do not allow an element such as the indefinite article, demonstratives or attributive adjectives to intervene between the non-verbal constituent and the light verb. Separable LVCs, on the other hand, allow the separation of both elements by such modifiers. In the talk, we focus on the different modification patterns that can be found with separable LVCs.

In Persian, many adverbials are derived from nouns either by zero conversion or by an explicit derivation. Thus, in some cases one and the same expression can be used as an adverbial modifier of an LVC or as an adnominal modifier of the nominal constituent within an LVC. An example is shown in (1). The difference between an adverbial modifier and an attributive modifier is that the latter triggers the so-called *ezâfe*-construction, as witnessed in (1b), whereas the former does not. Both sentences in (1) result in the same interpretation: the referent of the subject pronoun produced a loud sound.

- (1) a. *Boland sedâ dâd.*
loudly sound gave
'It/(s)he produced a loud sound.'
- b. *Sedâ ye boland-i dâd.*
sound EZAFE loud-INDEF gave
'It/(s)he produced a loud sound.'

Other modification constructions are asymmetric in nature, meaning that the adverbial and the attributive modification result in different interpretations. A telling example is given in (2). In its adverbial use, *ziyâd* 'much' specifies the frequency of the event (2a), whereas in the attributive use it indicates the quantity of blood (2b).

- (2) a. *U ziyâd xunrizi kard.*
3sg much bleeding did
'S/he bled a lot.' (= S/he bled often.)
- b. *U xunrizi ye ziyâd-i kard.*
3SG bleeding EZÂFE much-INDEF did
'S/he bled a lot.' (= S/he emitted a large quantity of blood.)

In the talk, we like to raise the question why some modifiers result in an asymmetrical modification construction (as in (2)), whereas others lead to a symmetrical modification construction (as in (1)). We basically like to claim that a difference in the interpretation of adjectival and attributive modifiers results only if both constituents of the light verb construction license a suitable attribute as a target for the respective modifiers. If the attribute is merely licensed by one of the constituents of the LVC – the nominal part – the different modification structures result in the same interpretation.

References

Karimi-Doostan, G. 2011. Separability of Light Verb Constructions in Persian. *Studia Linguistica* 65 (1): 70-95.