

Semantics and Pragmatics Aspects of Locative Alternation in Persian

Zahra Ghane

Heinrich Heine University, Germany
University of Isfahan, Iran

Many verbs in Persian can participate in object alternations, which are a type of multiple argument realization of two or three-place predicates involving the expression of macroroles and/or non-macroroles. These alternations are classified into locative alternation, dative shift, and object-oblique alternation in Persian, to which the verbs can enter based upon their lexical meaning which crucially influences their syntactic behavior. As argued in Levin (1993), there are basically two types of verbs that enter the locative alternation: (i) verbs of placing (spray, load) and (ii) detaching (clear). One important feature of locative alternation in many languages is the holistic/partitive effect (Anderson, 1971; Beavers, 2006; Kailuweit, 2001). This study is an attempt to investigate locative alternation in Persian verbs of placing within the framework of Role and Reference Grammar (Van Valin, 2005). The main goals are to explain how this kind of alternation takes place based on what is suggested for alternations in this theory and to determine the semantic and pragmatic differences between the variants and presenting the factors influencing the selection of one variant rather than the other(s). To these ends, attested data were gathered from authentic written and spoken sources like Persian TV programs, lectures, novels, newspapers, and daily conversations, and the semantics to syntax linking system was checked against the sentences containing object alternations. Besides, some data from the corpus of Persian Syntactic Dependency (1.1.1) as well as Bijankhan corpus were used. The corpora were mostly referred to in determining the unmarked variant of the alternation. All these data were analyzed out of the context of use; however, when it comes to finding the pragmatic factors, the context should be included, too. The results showed that locative alternation in Persian can be explained through the different choice of undergoer based upon the actor-undergoer hierarchy. The results also show that Persian verbs of placing do not generally have the holistic reading in their inverted construction; rather the marked-undergoer-choice can imply a different level of affectedness and individuality of the undergoer which also affects the telicity of the predicate. Moreover, in the inverted construction, the undergoer is more prominent than the other competing participants in the sentence. The results also demonstrated that there is an interaction between the semantic role and discourse factors, which can specifically affect the argument realizations in Persian.

References:

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