

AN ASSESSMENT OF SUBJECT POSITION IN PERSIAN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

The position of subject in SPEC/VP and its movement to SPEC/IP is one of the topics carried out within the Government and Binding theory. According to this hypothesis, subject receives theta role in SPEC/VP and then moves to SPEC/IP to receive case. Some Persian linguists believe that this hypothesis cannot be applied in Persian language. They claim that in their language subject is in the SPEC/IP, and this position is not the result of subject movement from SPEC/VP. Generally in sentences which contain floating quantifiers, subject movement from SPEC/VP to SPEC/IP is necessary, but Alizadeh (2008) rejects this rule and he believes that in this sort of sentences only a kind of topicalization happens, i.e. subject moves from SPEC/IP to SPEC/CP. It seems that his claim in government and binding theory doesn't have any admitted explanation. In this paper, different reasons are stated for rejecting subject position in SPEC/IP and its movement to SPEC/CP. According to the results of this paper, in Persian language, subject at first is in the SPEC/VP and then moves to SPEC/IP, and all principles mentioned in government and binding theory are observed. So, in Persian language, subject receives theta role in SPEC/VP and then moves to SPEC/IP to receive case, like many other languages in the world.

Keywords: SPEC/IP, SPEC/VP, subject, movement, Persian

INTRODUCTION

Government and Binding theory (GB) assumes that a large portion of the grammar of any particular language is common to all languages, and is therefore part of Universal Grammar. The GB view is that Universal Grammar can be broken down into two main components: levels of representation and a system of constraints (Black, 1999: 2).

In this theory a word, such as a noun, verb, adjective or preposition is a lexical category and they are called *heads*. Phrases are meaningful groupings of words built up from the lexical category of the same type that they contain. Examples of phrases are: NP (book), VP (relied on Mary), AP (=Adjective P, afraid (of snakes)), and PP (before [we leave]). But the particular head is choosy about what can combine with it to form a phrase. A *complement* (C) is a phrase that a lexical category takes or selects. Which complements are taken by a particular verb is an arbitrary property of that verb. Heads and complements are not the only parts of phrases. For example, NPs can be preceded by words (or sometimes phrases) like: *the, no, some, every, John's, my mother's*. APs can be preceded by degree words such as: *very, extremely, rather, quite*. These items differ from complements because they precede the lexical category and they are not subcategorized for. They are called *specifiers* (spec). GB posits that the tense and agreement features fill the same head position in finite sentences that *to* fills in nonfinite sentences. The category is therefore called Inflection, or Infl or I for short. This means a sentence is an *Inflection Phrase* (IP).

The position of subject is one of the topics carried out within the framework of Government and Binding theory. This topic deals with a proposal which has recently been gaining ground

in the literature through a number of studies by Fukui (1986), Kitagawa (1986), Kuroda (1988), Sportiche (1988) and Koopman and Sportiche(1991). In their analysis, it is argued that subject is base generated in spec. of VP and then moves to spec. of IP at S-structure to receive case. The present study has analyzed Persian data in the light of this hypothesis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The question of where in the subject arguments can appear has been well studied within the fields of syntax (e.g. Heycock 1993; Tateishi 1994; Ura 1996 for Japanese) and semantics (e.g. Diesing 1992; Kratzer 1996 for English and German). Most of the debate has centered on the issue of whether a nominative phrase has to be licensed in Spec of IP (e.g. Chomsky 1991) or if it may remain in its base position (i.e. internal to VP, Agree model in Chomsky 2000). In particular, it has been suggested, for several languages such as German, Greek, Japanese and Turkish, that, in these languages, certain subjects might be VP-internal, never raising to Spec of IP (see e.g. Haider 2005 and Wurmbrand 2006 for German; Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2001 for Greek; Tateishi 1994 for Japanese; Kornfilt 1984 and Öztürk 2004, 2005 for Turkish).

The subject movement from SPEC/ VP and movement to SPEC/ IP has been first stated by Fukui and Speas (1986), Kitagawa (1986), Kuroda (1988), Sportiche (1988) and Koopman and Sportiche (1991). In their analysis, their explanation for subject movement is that it is argued that subject is base generated in SPEC/VP to receive θ roles and then moves to SPEC/IP at S-structure to receive case. It is because theta roles are assigned by predicates to their arguments under sisterhood condition. Verbs and VPs can assign theta roles but not auxiliaries, because verbs are lexical category but auxiliaries are functional categories and just lexical categories can assign theta roles because theta roles can be assigned by merger. Therefore, for receiving theta roles, subject must be in SPEC/VP position and then moves SPEC/IP position because subjects carry a strong nominative case-feature which can only be checked if the subject rises to SPEC/IP.

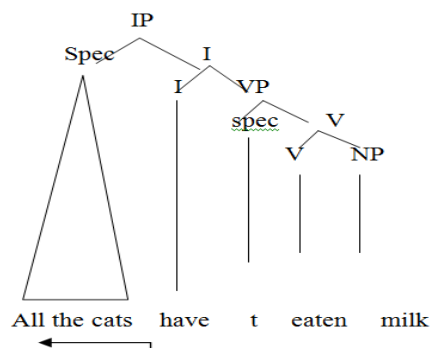
Another account would be to suppose that according to predication principle, syntactic predicates should have subjects (Radford, 1997: 165-168). Also for supporting their hypothesis, they stated floating quantifiers as a support; According to it:

A = All the cats have eaten milk.

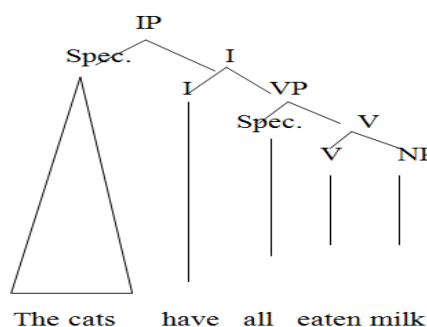
B = The cats have all eaten milk.

They believed that "all" originated as subject of the VP in B and moved to subject of IP in A and B:

A:



B:



Haegeman (1991) and Haegeman (2006) believe that subject first originates as subject in SPEC/VP. In order to be recognized as an argument of some predicate an NP must be made visible. Invisible NPs cannot be assigned a theta role. NPs must be made visible by means of case. But this is contradiction; for receiving theta role, subject must be visible and receive theta role in SPEC/VP. For being visible, subject must receive case in SPEC/IP. But Haegeman believes that our solution is "chain" which establishes a link between a theta position and a case position (Haegeman, 1991:188-191).

Haegeman stated floating quantifiers as a support for this hypothesis. She stated existential sentences as a support too (ibid: 253); for example, in this sentence: "There is someone knocking at the door", the word "there" is in SPEC/IP position and "someone" is in SPEC/VP position. But if "there" be deleted: "Someone is knocking at the door", so, "someone" moves to spec-IP position.

Adger (2003) is the next linguist who believes in this hypothesis. He stated floating quantifiers and existential sentences as supports for this hypothesis, too (Adger, 2003:205).

Radford believes in this hypothesis too. He stated numerous supports for it; for example floating quantifiers and existential sentences. Clitics are the next support. As we know, subjectless infinitive complements have a null case pro subject in SPEC/IP. If this were so, we expected that the sentence: "We want to help you", wouldn't be cliticized. But cliticization happens and the sentence; "We wanna help you", is a true sentence. This is because according to VP-internal subject hypothesis, pro subjects originate in SPEC/VP, and then moves to SPEC/IP; so in sentences like above, Subject doesn't move because 'to' receives its case; Therefore cliticization can happen (Radford, 1997, 154-155).

The other evidence that Radford mentions is idioms. Idioms are a string of words which form a unitary constituent; so we cannot insert an element in idioms and in idioms such as: "all hell broke loose", since the choice of three elements (subject, verb and complement) is fixed; we might refer to such idioms as clausal idioms. But in these idioms, we can insert auxiliaries between the subject and verb: "all hell will break loose". this is because of movement hypothesis; If we suppose that clausal idioms are VP idioms which require a fixed choice of head, complement and specifier in the VP containing them, "all hell" originates in SPEC/VP as the subject of the "break loose", and is then raised across the auxiliary 'will' into SPEC/IP, where it becomes the subject of the "will break loose" (Radford, 1997, 159-160).

In different languages, this hypothesis has been considered but in Persian, Alizadeh (2008) did one of the researches regarding the subject position in Persian language and concluded that mentioned hypothesis does not receive support from Persian data. It seems that movement of subject is an instance of topicalization in Persian from SPEC/IP into SPEC/ Top P, a position higher than IP according to Split CP Hypothesis. It shows that A'-movement, not a case driven A-movement is involved.

The structure of the sentences in which the movement of subject and wh-movement take place simultaneously shows that the SPEC/Top P is the only potential landing site of subject after movement. So, Persian is a language whose subject is none derived and is base generated in the SPEC/IP at D-structure level. He also believes that in sentences which have floating quantifiers, subject moves to the SPEC/CP. but it seems that Alizadeh's claim isn't true and there are a lot of reasons for not accepting this claims in Persian language. In the next chapter, we consider this hypothesis in Persian language.

SUBJECT POSITION IN PERSIAN

there are a lot of reasons for not accepting subject position in spec IP and it's movement to spec. CP in Persian language, including:

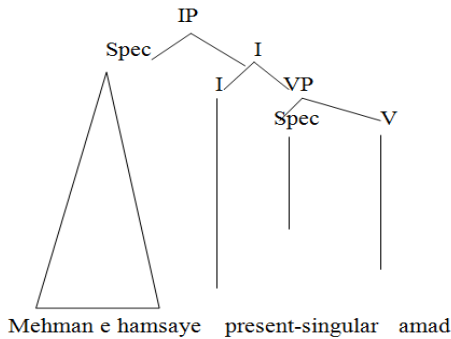
1. Verbs directly assign theta-roles to their internal arguments but assign theta roles to external arguments indirectly; this means that thematic role of subject isn't determined by the verb alone, but rather is compositionally determined by the whole verb + complement structure-i.e. by V-bar. But auxiliaries seem to play no part in determining the assignment of theta-roles to subjects, because auxiliaries are functional categories, so, theta roles are assigned only by lexical categories because theta roles are assigned to arguments via the process of merger with a lexical category. Therefore, subject is theta marked by merger with a V-bar constituent in the SPEC/VP and then moves to SPEC/IP (Radford, 1997, 165-168).if we accept subject position in SPEC/IP and it's movement to SPEC/CP ,we don't follow this principle and can't explain how subject receives theta role. Therefore, this view isn't true because subject can't receive theta role if its first position is SPEC/IP and this violates government and binding theory.
2. UG has explanatory adequacy (Cook, 1988:80-81). A linguistic theory is explanatory adequate if it can provide principled reason why linguistic competence takes the form that it does. According to this, subject movement from SPEC/IP to SPEC/CP must have an explanation but by accepting subject position in SPEC/IP and its movement to SPEC/CP, we can't state any explanation for that. if we accept that subject has theta role and received case because of its position in SPEC/IP, so why subject moves to SPEC/CP? As you know, every theory in government and binding theory must have an explanation and because of lack of any explanation for subject movement to SPEC/CP, it is rejected. Moreover, one of the main principles in government and binding theory is the principle of economy: All representations of structures and processes producing them must be as economical as the system allows (Cook, 1988: 170). According to this principle, any additional movement which doesn't have any explanation is denied and rejected. Therefore, subject movement to SPEC/CP which doesn't have any explanation, is additional and is rejected. So, this hypothesis is rejected.
3. COMP is strong and must be filled. If we accept subject position in SPEC/IP and its movement to SPEC/CP, a question arises: because COMP node is strong and must be filled, what fills COMP node? So this is another reason for rejecting this hypothesis: we cannot fill SPEC/CP and leave the COMP empty. (Radford, 1997:143)
4. Alizadeh, who believes in subject position in SPEC/IP and it's movement to SPEC/CP, stated sentences in order to prove his hypothesis:
 - 1- a: Mehman e hamsaye amad.
 - 1- a: Guest of neighbor came.
 - b: Hamsaye mehman ash (attached pro.) amad.
 - b: Neighbor guest his came.
 - c: Hamsaye ro (attached accusative pro.) mehman ash(attached pro.) amad.
 - c: Neighbor guest his came.
 - 2- a: Man mehman e hamsaye ra (attached accusative pro.) didam.
 - 2- a: I guest of neighbor saw.

b: Man hamsaye ra (attached accusative pro.) mehman ash (attached pro.) ra (attached accusative pro.) didam.

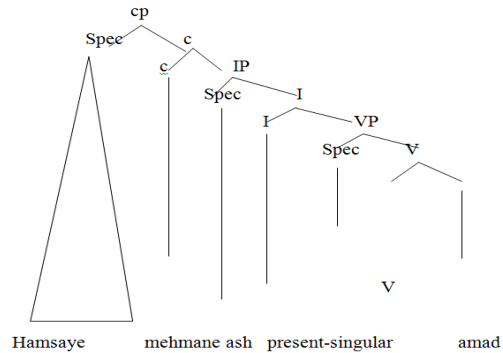
b: I neighbor guest his Saw.

He believes that in both groups of sentences 1 and 2, topicalization happened. If we depict diagram of sentences in group 1:

A:

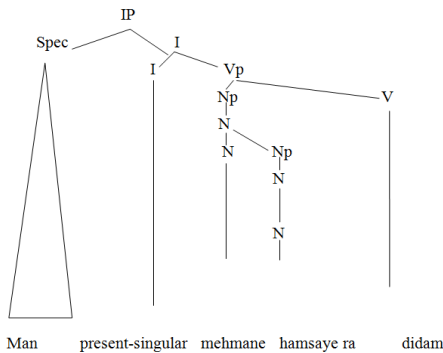


B:

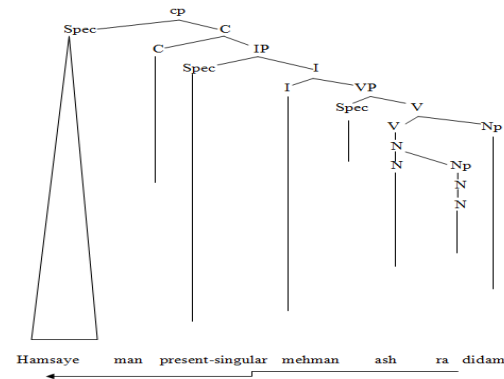


But in sentences group 2:

A:



B:



If we depict diagrams according to Alizadeh's view, some mistakes are evident in sentence 2b, plus the mistakes mentioned before. In diagram 2b, locality isn't observed. Locality has roots in head movement constraint principle: A head can only move from the head position in one phrase to the head position in the immediately containing phrase in the structure (Radford, 1997:117).but in this diagram, this principle isn't observed because for going toward SPEC/CP, we don't see any successive cycle and there is jump to that position and this is one of the reasons for not accepting Alizadeh's hypothesis. even if we place "mehman e hamsaye" in SPEC/VP, "hamsaye ra" must be placed in SPEC/IP which is full, and if it can be placed in this position, it must jump from this position too for going to SPEC/CP.

another problem in this diagram is that by depicting diagram according to Alizadeh's hypothesis, the right order of sentence elements can't be observed and the right order of sentence: "Man hamsaye ra mehman ash ra didam" will be converted into false order:

"hamsaye ra man mehman ash ra didam"; and this is another reason for rejecting this hypothesis.

CONCLUSION

According to what stated in previous chapters, maybe we can conclude that in Persian language, subject receives theta role in SPEC/VP and then moves to SPEC/IP for receiving the case and Alizadeh's view about subject position in Persian language doesn't seem true. He believes that in Persian language, subject is in SPEC/IP, and this position isn't the result of subject movement from SPEC/VP. one sort of sentences which are as a reason for adjusting subject movement from SPEC/VP to SPEC/IP are sentences containing floating quantifiers, but Alizadeh rejects these sentences and believes that in this sort of sentences just a sort of topicalization happened and subject moves from SPEC/IP to SPEC/CP in these sentences. In this paper, different reasons are stated for rejecting this view:

1. If we accept that subject is in SPEC/IP and this position isn't the result of subject movement from SPEC/VP, so subject can't receive theta role and this violates government and binding principles. Therefore, this view (subject position in SPEC/IP and its movement to SPEC/CP) cannot be accepted.
2. Every view stated in government and binding, must have an explanation and because subject movement from spec IP to SPEC/CP doesn't have any explanation, it cannot be accepted. Moreover, according to economy principle, any additional movement which doesn't have any explanation is denied and rejected. Therefore, subject movement to SPEC/CP which doesn't have any explanation, is additional and is rejected. So, this hypothesis (subject position in SPEC/IP and its movement to SPEC/CP) is rejected.
3. COMP is strong and must be filled. If we accept that subject moves to SPEC/CP, there is nothing to fill COMP node. So this is another reason for rejecting this hypothesis: we cannot fill SPEC/CP and leave the COMP empty.
4. If we depict diagram of sentences mentioned by Alizadeh according to his own hypothesis, locality won't be observed and moreover, the right order of sentence cannot be observed.

Therefore, if we accept that in Persian language, subject was first in SPEC/VP and then moves to SPEC/ IP, any problem mentioned above wouldn't happen and all principles mentioned in government and binding theory would be observed. So, in Persian language, subject receives theta role in SPEC/VP and then moves to SPEC/IP for receiving the case.

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