

An Investigation into Verb Direction in English and Persian

Mohammad Abdollahi-Guilani¹, Mohamad Subakir Mohd Yasin¹, Tan Kim Hua¹ & Khadijeh Aghaei¹

¹ School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Malaysia

Correspondence: Mohammad Abdollahi-Guilani (PhD), School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Malaysia. Tel: 60-16-305-4193. E-mail: abdollahi20@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper compares several types of verbs in English and Persian in terms of direction. The direction of verbs seems to be potentially problematic for the Iranian EFL learners. English verbs can be formed by affixation and compounding. Even proper names and names of animals and products can be used as simple verbs. Persian is poor in this respect, and most verbs are formed via a limited number of affixes or by the productive process of verb collocation. English verbs seem more flexible in switching to intransitive or transitive modes, while Persian requires morphological transformation. The use of prepositions with objects can pose problems for the Iranian EFL learners. In one language, the focus of the sentence is on the subject while in the other, emphasis is directed to the object. Adverbs and prepositional phrases can be inherently stored in the English verb, while Persian has to openly express them.

Keywords: affixes, causative case, neutral verbs, reflexive verbs, verb formation, verb direction

1. Introduction

Languages are different; they follow certain sentence patterns. Some have to observe noun and adjective declensions based on the gender of the arguments. In Russian, or Arabic you would have to alter the verb to indicate tense and gender, while in some south-eastern languages, the tense is not marked on the verb; an adverb has to be applied to mark the tense (Boroditsky, 2009). The remote Australian aboriginal tongue, Guugu Yimithirr, from north Queensland, for example, does not make any use of egocentric coordinates at all. It relies on the cardinal directions. If they want you to move over on the car seat to make room, they will say 'move a bit to the east.' To tell you where exactly they left something in your house, they simply say, 'I left it on the southern edge of the western table.' (Deutscher, 2010). In English, two verbs follow each other according to certain rules, but most Persian verbs just simply follow each other without any significant changes or attachment to the second verb. Although there are several studies on Persian and English verbs, there are not many on the comparative analysis of verb directions. This paper addresses some of the differences and similarities which exist between English and Persian verbs in terms of the direction of the presentation of message and it also deals with the different interpretations which may cause misunderstanding for EFL learners in general and the Iranian EFL learners in particular.

Direction has variably been studied. Most studies focused on the ordering of word items commonly known as binomials. This linguistic phenomenon refers to the word pairs which consist of two or three words joined by conjunctions (e.g. 'come and see', 'treat or tricks'). These pairs are usually governed by different rules. Some have paid attention to the phonological patterns (Malkiel, 1959; Cooper & Ross, 1975; Bolinger, 1962; Pinker & Birdsong, 1979) saying that words with more syllables follow the mono or less syllable words. Others focused on the quality of the sounds such as strong or weak resonance and the quality of consonants and vowels as the initial element of the binomials (Lehiste, 1961, 1964; Byrd, 1994; Keating et al., 1999; Fougeron, 1999). Frequency is another factor which can determine the ordering of pairs. Golenbock (2000) argues that the more frequent word tends to be ordered first (e.g. ball and chain). Another feature that seems to be governing the order of binomials is in terms of markedness theory. That is to say, the words which are less marked have more frequency than the unmarked words. Based on the views presented by Mayenthaler (1988), the word denoting the perceptually less marked concept tends to come first as in *hen and rooster*. The word order in phrases and sentences are the

commonly practiced issue in language teaching; even the semantic and syntactic features of words, in general, have been widely addressed (Sauerland & Yatsushiro, 2009; Beebee, Sabbarton-Leary, 2010; Kearns, 2011; Rathert & Alexiadou, 2010).

In Persian, many linguists (such as Mansoori, 2000; Taheri, 2009; Sharifi, 2011) studied verbs mostly on the comparative basis to see the transformation of verbs from old, to middle and to modern Persian. However, there are others that dealt with the properties of verbs. Lotfi (2008) worked on the causative construction of Persian verbs and based on Song's (1996) classification and Talmy's (2000) description of causation, he concluded that a conceptual study of causation in Persian is necessarily dynamic, non-arbitrary, and multi-dimensional as such studies are meant to unify a messy repertoire of formal, semantic, and pragmatic variables in terms of man's unique possession i.e. human cognition. Ghomeshi's (2001) study on Persian control and thematic agreement has shown that Persian has core control constructions in which the obligatorily empty subject of an embedded clause takes its reference from an antecedent in the next higher clause. These embedded clauses are relatively transparent for scrambling and lack independent tense. It is, therefore, argued that core control verbs in Persian take complements that lack complement phrase, tense phrase, and a case position for their subjects. Rasekhmahmand (2010) compared different opinions about transitive and intransitive verbs in Persian, postulating that some intransitive verbs can serve as passive voice and there is middle voice in Persian, too. He specified four types of intransitive verbs in Persian. He concluded that in Persian the difference between passive and active sentences lies not in their semantic fields, but in their syntactic arrangement. However, to my best knowledge, there has been no or little work on the direction of verbs to pinpoint the potential mistakes that learners may make.

2. An Overview of Verbs

English is an SVO language while Persian follows SOV. In syntax, a verb usually denotes an action (*walk*), a state of being (*remain*) or an occurrence (*dissolve*). Based on the language, a verb may differ in terms of tense, aspect, mood, and voice. It may also agree with the person, gender, and/or number of the subject. Morphologically, English verbs can fall into simple, derivative, compound and multi-word. Each of the verbs has their own description according to their morphological build-up. However, Persian verbs include simple, simple compound, prepositional, compound prepositional, and complex compound (Jahanpanah, 2010).

Simple verbs have only one part and cannot be divided into smaller components e.g. *DIDAN* (i.e. to see). However, unlike English, Persian has only about 300 common simple verbs and the others fall into verb collocations. There are many more simple verbs, but they are either archaic or newly coined and so cannot be regarded very common (Abdollahi-Guilani, 2012).

A simple compound verb is composed of a delexical verb preceded by a noun or an adjective or in Lazard's (1956, cited in Pantcheva, 2007) terminology a preverb. These verbs are delexical and usually free from any semantic roles: *ZAMIN* (i.e. earth) → *XORDAN* (i.e. eat) → *ZAMIN XORDAN* (i.e. fall). In fact, simple compounds are verb collocations.

A subcategory of the Persian compound verbs is prepositional verbs or as some grammarians (e.g., Abolghasemi, 2009; Taheri, 2010; Rajabi, 2011) call prefixal verbs, which I do not believe to be actually 'prefixal' because they are not attached to the verb. They are prepositional because they stay in front of the verb, roughly similar to the English prepositional verbs. These are composed of a simple verb preceded by a preposition.

2.1 Verb Classification

English verbs can be approached differently. This paper deals with some of categories of English simple verbs and their corresponding Persian equivalents in Persian.

2.1.1 Ambitransitive and Ergative

Ambitransitivity, known as valency reduction, refers to the condition in which a verb can act transitively and intransitively:

- a) He is eating food.
- b) He is eating
- c) I read a magazine.
- d) I read.

An ergative verb is a verb whose object can be the subject of the same verb (Newson, 2008) without any morphological change

- a) The airplane flew.

b) Tom flew the airplane.

Both sentences can roughly mean ‘The airplane was flown.’

Ergative construction does not permit an agent to be mentioned, so the subject is performing the action on itself. For this reason, the intransitive construction of an ergative verb is in a middle voice, between active and passive, but closer to passive (Bennett, Bynon, & Hewitt, 1995) as in ‘I broke the cup.’ and ‘The cup broke.’

In English and Persian, there are very few paired verbs, one transitive and the other intransitive (e.g. raise/rise; seat/sit; drop/ fall; feed/eat; frighten/fear). What runs as ergative in English is a single verb with two syntactic features, but in Persian, except for very few ergative simple verbs (e.g. NESHASTAN (i.e. sit) and NESHAANDAN (i.e. seat), the rest fall in the category of verb collocations where a replacement should be made on the delexical verb (e.g. PARVAAZ DAADAN (i.e. flight + give) and PARVAAZ KARDAN (i.e. flight + do) are the transitive and intransitive forms of fly, respectively.

2.1.2 Transitive

A transitive verb has a subject and an object. These verbs can be categorized into monotransitive, a verb with one object; ditransitive, a verb with two objects; and tritransitive, a verb with three objects and attributive verbs. The last type refers to the verb whose objects are semantically one entity and one quality. In fact, there is a direct object and a complement:

People **elected** him president.

I will **name** him John.

NOTE: Some verbs require an optional preposition as in:

I **consider** him (as) my best friend.

In many such verbs, there is an agreement between English and Persian structures, but in the case of *elect* and *appoint*, for example, the result or object complement requires the preposition *as* to precede it.

MODIR OO RA BEONVAN-e MOSHAAVER MANSOOBKARDAD

manager him object-marker as advisor appointed

‘The manager appointed her the advisor.’

A related example is the verb *break* which is directionally object-orientated

My leg broke.

This sentence can easily be interpreted by an Iranian EFL learner as something has happened to the leg just like the sentence: *My leg was broken*. However, there is a misunderstanding in ‘*I broke my leg*.’

A language beginner is probably shocked to see such a sentence in a normal situation. This is an instance of direction in verbs in which the subject is not the agent of the action, but it just represents a type of sentence whose subject slot has to be filled in. In Persian, this sentence may suggest the clumsiness of the agent, but the usual way of presenting such an idea in Persian is through topicalizing the object: *My leg broke*.

However, another choice is to use a passive voice to facilitate comprehension although the focus of attention from the formal subject is directed away to the logical object. In the warnings, such misunderstanding does not happen since the audience perceives that if the doer is not careful, he will likely do himself some harm:

Be careful. Don’t break your back; the loads are too heavy.

And even the context can determine either the intention or an inevitable consequence:

She slipped on the ice and hurt herself badly.

2.1.3 Reflexive Verb

In English, certain verbs are normally used with a reflexive pronoun, but they are represented differently in Persian. The verbs *perjure* and *revenge* require two arguments to make sense:

a) The judge warned **the witness** not to **perjure himself**.

b) **The man** revenged **himself** on the killer.

The words ‘the witness’ and ‘herself’ and ‘the man’ and ‘himself’ are the arguments, while in Persian, the second argument will sound strange since there seems to be no need for the sense of reflexivity. Consequently, it will be deleted from the translation; however, in Persian a different structure is used:

QAZI BE SHAHED HOSHDAARDAAD SHAHAADAT-e DOROOGH NADAHAD.

judge to witness warned statement false not give

‘The judge warned the witness not to give a false statement.’

In Persian, there is no trace for a reflexive pronoun. In sentence (b) above, it seems that a reflexive pronoun is obligatory, while in Persian the structure can change for two reasons:

The first one is that ‘revenge’ as a single-word verb has a Persian compound verb equivalent consisting of a dellexical verb GEREFTAN (i.e. take) and a noun ENTEGHAAM (i.e. revenge). So there is not a one to one equivalent for ‘revenge oneself’. The second argument is that if the agent is important as in sentence (b) above which is ‘the man’, the noun that appears in the Persian collocation must be preceded by a possessive adjective, namely ‘-ASH’ (i.e. his) which then could be realized as sentence (d) below:

MARD ENTEGHAAM ASH RA AZ GHAATEL GEREFT.

The man revenge + his Object-marker from the killer took

‘The man took revenge on the killer.’

So in neither case is the English reflexive pronoun manifested in Persian.

2.1.4 Reciprocal Verb

In a reciprocal construction, each of the participants serves as the agent and the patient with respect to each other. For example, the English sentence ‘*John and Mary cut each other’s hair*’ contains a reciprocal structure: *John cuts Mary’s hair*, and *Mary cuts John’s*. English generally uses ‘each other’ or some other phrases to indicate reciprocity. In English, it is sometimes possible to avoid using ‘each other’ as in ‘*They kissed (each other)*’, or ‘*They met*’, but in Persian, it is compulsory to put a reciprocal word.

ONHA YEKDIGAR RA BOOSIDAND.

They each other Obj Marker kissed

‘They kissed each other.’

Or it is common to insert an object such as *face* plus the reciprocal pronoun as in:

ONHA SOORAT-e YEKDIGAR RA BOOSIDAND.

They face each other Obj Marker kissed

‘They kissed each other on the face.’

Still another choice is a verb collocation like ROOBOOSI KARDAN (i.e. do face-kissing)

ONHA ROOBOOSI KARDAND

They face-kissing did

2.1.5 Stative and Dynamic Verbs

Some verbs express a situation or state (e.g. know), while some show activity (e.g. walk). The former is known as a stative or resultative verb and the latter is variably called dynamic or eventive. This type of categorization does exist in Persian. Accordingly, passive structures are in two types; one is a structure in which something happens namely, eventive passive (e.g. *The door was broken yesterday*.) and the other shows a stative mode in which something exists or in fact the result of an action is described (e.g. *The door was broken and so the cold wind was coming in*.). Sometimes it is hard to distinguish between these two types: *The door was locked*. This sentence has two meanings: [*Someone*] *locked the door*, and *The door was in the locked state*. The former represents a canonical, eventive passive, and the latter, a stative passive. The terms eventive and stative/resultative refer to the tendencies of these forms to describe events and resultant states, respectively (Levin and Hovav, 2006).

In English, many past participles can function as both verbs and adjectives, and so there may arise a kind of ambiguity, whereas in Persian it is not the case because what appears to be an auxiliary verb (i.e. *be*) and its conjugations in a passive structure can have two separate realizations for a Persian speaker. One is **SHODAN** (i.e. become) which is used in passive and the other is **BOODAN** (be, exist) used in an active sentence as a copula. In Persian, however, depending on the type of the verb, the passive verb can have two formats:

1) The passive format of simple verbs can be made up of an auxiliary verb namely, SHODAN (i.e. become; be) plus a past participle. For example *XORDAN* (i.e. to eat) has the passive infinitive of *XORDEH SHODAN* (i.e. to be eaten) in which the suffix ‘-EH’ is a past participle marker

2). For the case of verb collocations, the verb is the determining component to make a verb active or passive. For example, GHOFI *KARADAN* (i.e. to lock) is transitive and GOFL *SHODAN* (i.e. to be locked) is passive or GOOL ZADAN (i.e. to deceive) and GOOL XORDAN (i.e. to be deceived). There is no need for the verb to change into past participle. Simply a different verb is employed to serve as a passive delexical verb.

2.2 Verb Formation

English is very productive in terms of word formation: 1) Some verb formation processes include affixation, conversion or zero-derivation, (Carstairs-McCarthy, 2002) where a lexeme belonging to one class can simply be ‘converted’ to another. 2) Eponymous verbs are the names of people used as verbs (e.g., pasteurize). 3) Back-formed verbs in which new derivatives are obtained by generalization for the already extant words (e.g. televise from television) (Akmajian, 2001) and some other word formation patterns. In Persian, except for the few affixes used to coin new verbs (but most verbs are made via verb collocation patterns), the other strategies are rare to produce single word verbs.

2.3 Subject-Object Direction

Verbs themselves represent a kind of direction; that is, they dictate the learner how to direct their attention toward understanding the meaning. There are several categories for such a feature:

2.3.1 Sex-Neutral Verbs

Some verbs seem to be sex-oriented in Persian. For example, the verb ‘scream’ is sex-neutral in English. That is, it can be used for male and female subjects, but in Persian, there will be two equivalents:

English: Tom screamed.

Persian: TOM FARYAD ZAD.

English: Mary screamed.

Persian: MARY JIGH KESHID.

In Persian, FARYAD ZADAN and JIGH KESHIDAN are usually specific to men and women, respectively. If they are used in reverse, they may sound rather unnatural. Thus, the verb ‘scream’ can be termed as sex-oriented in Persian while sex-neutral in English.

2.3.2 Unilateral / Bilateral Direction

Some English verbs behave unilaterally and some bilaterally. For example, if my friend borrows some money from me, he will probably say:

I owe you some money.

But if I am going to express my position in relation to my claim on the loan, how am I going to say that? There are at least two choices:

1) I can say, ‘He owes me some money.’ This sentence does not actually transfer the interpersonal relation; that is, the loaner’s status is neglected.

2) The second solution which I do not believe to be very appropriate is using some equivalents. *I should be paid by him*; or *I should receive some money from him*. etc. Nevertheless, there are two separate verbs in Persian to show the status of the borrower and the lender: BEDEHKARBOODAN (i.e. owe) and TALABDASHTAN or TALABKARBOODAN (i.e. want; demand)

MAN BE TO BEDEHKARAM. v. TO AZ MAN TALABDARI

I to you owe v. you from me want

‘I owe you.’ v. ‘You shall want some money from me.’

In Persian, it is almost easy for the verb collocations to reverse the direction from transitive to intransitive or show opposite meanings etc. by just changing the delexical verb. For example, SADAMEH ZADAN (i.e. hurt (vt)) versus SADAMEH DIDDAN (i.e. hurt (vi))

In English, there are some concepts that can have two verbs to show such as a relation:

a) His father *bequeathed* the son a big house.

b) The son *inherited* a big house from his father.

In some cases, it is not necessary to change the verb; a simple juxtaposition of the arguments and a preposition insertion can change the relationship:

a) I benefited them.

b) They benefited from me.

Some other verbs can have synonymous transitive or intransitive equivalent (e.g. raise /rise; seat / sit).

2.3.3 Causative Case

Causative case deals with a structure in which the formal subject of the verb causes someone to do something, or make something happen. This action may be with (e.g. (a) and (b) below) or without an intention as in (c):

(a) I had my car repaired.

(b) I got the mechanic to fix my car

(c) I got robbed in the market.

In Persian, however, there is not an exact equivalent for the English causative verb. In some cases, the verb 'give' is used instead:

(a)

DAADAM	MASHINAM	RA	TAMIR	KONAN
I gave	my car	Obj-marker	repair	they make.

'I gave them my car to repair it.'

The Persian version indirectly indicates someone will repair the car because the enclitic –NAN at the end of the Persian verb KONAN (i.e., do) is a third person plural marker.

Again for (b) the same structure is used with the inclusion of the real agent:

(b)

DAADAM	MEKAANIK	MASHINAM	RA	TAMIR	KONE.
I gave	mechanic	my car	Obj.Marker	repair	he make.

'I gave my car to the mechanic to repair it.'

For sentence (c), there is just a passive structure. However, it frequently happens that a passive causative verb changes direction toward an active structure:

(c)

I had my hair cut.

MOOHAM	RA	KOOTA	KARDAM
My hair	Obj. Marker	short	I did

'I cut my hair.'

Take the following which can have two interpretations:

I had my finger caught in the door.

a)

ANGOSHTAM	LAYE	DAR	MAAND
My finger	in	door	remained

My finger was caught in the door.

This interpretation just shows an accident. The second version says:

b)

ANGOSHTAM	RA	LAYE	DAR	GOZASHTAM.
My finger	Obj. Marker	in	door	I put

'I laid my finger in the door.'

In the second format, the speaker is blaming himself for his clumsiness.

2.3.4 Transitivity Verb-Shift

In English, the verb-shift from transitive to intransitive is a syntactic alternation; that is, a certain verb can often be used both transitively and intransitively. In Persian, however, depending on the type of the verb, the rules may be different: If it is a simple verb, it can be replaced by its intransitive/ transitive correspondence if available: **MORDAN** (i.e. die) v. **KOSHTAN** (i.e. kill). However, if the verb is part of a verb collocation, the delexical verb should be changed: FARIB **DAADAN** (i.e. deceive) versus FARIB **XORDAN** (i.e. be deceived)

2.3.5 Intransitive Expansion

Some English intransitive verbs can have their valency expanded. In fact, they take an object similar in meaning to the verb or of the same cognate:

He **slept** a troubled **sleep**.

They **lived** a happy **life**.

Sometimes the cognate object is similar to the verb only in meaning:

They **fought** a good **battle**.

In Persian, such a construction as valency expansion is almost rare. What can seldom be seen is a declarative structure followed by an exclamatory phrase as in:

OO **ZENDEGI** KARD; ON HAM CHE **ZENDEGIEE**!

he **lived** that also what **life**

‘He **lived**; what **a life** it was!’

In a pattern labeled reaction-object construction, Levin (1993:97-98) lists a series of intransitive verbs which are followed by cognate objects or semantically related nouns, for example:

(1)

a) She smiled.

b) She smiled her thanks.

(2)

a) She mumbled.

b) She mumbled her adoration.

In neither case (above) can Persian have an equivalent structure. What Persian utilizes to express such concepts is the transformation of the verbs into adverbs and the nouns / objects into verbs as in (1-c):

1-c)

OO **BAA XANDEH** TASHAKORKARD

she **with smile** thanked

‘She thanked with a smile.’

Or in a more expanded version, some other verbs are employed (1-d):

1-d)

OO BA KHANDEH TASHAKORATASH RA BAYAAN KARD

she with smile her thanks obj. Marker expressed

‘She expressed her thanks with a smile’

Sentence (2-b) can be put in following form:

(2-c)

OO **ZIR-e LAB** TAHSINKARD.

She **under lip** admired

‘She admired [somebody] under lips.’

The verbs denoting manners of speaking and gestures of emotions can be expanded into such sentences as *she thanked [somebody] by smiling* and *she admired [somebody] by mumbling*. Therefore, Persian has to make recourse to lengthy structures to convey the message. Even the adjectives that can be used after certain

verb-object constructions cannot be paraphrased in Persian unless an adverb is employed. So the sentence 'He pushed the door open.' can be expressed by:

OO BAA HOLDADAN DAR RA BAAZKARD.

He by pushing door obj.Marker opened

'He opened the door by pushing.'

2.3.6 Topicalization

Some English transitive verbs can have their objects topicalized without any syntactic or morphological changes on the verb, but a preposition is added to show the source of the action; the verb *radiate* is an example:

a) The sun radiates heat.

b) Heat radiates from the sun.

In Persian, however, there is a different direction to express such a meaning. If a single equivalent is supposed to be used for the same verb 'SAATE' KARDAN' for 'radiate' as a transitive verb, the meaning fails to be sensible. In this case, a morphological replacement is required to replace *KARDAN* (i.e. do) with *SHODAN* (i.e. become) and in addition, a preposition has been inserted. Finally, the construction will look like a passive voice:

a) XORSHID GARMA SAATE' MIKONAD.

Sun heat radiation does

'The sun radiates heat.'

b) GARMA AZ XORSHID SAATE' MISHAVAD.

Heat from sun radiation becomes

'Heat is radiated from the sun.'

2.3.7 Verbs with Hidden Objects

Some verbs in English do not need an explicit object; in fact, there is an understood object. For example, the verb *floss* (i.e. clean between teeth using floss) is an instance of such a verb:

a) She flossed her teeth.

b) She flossed.

However, Persian does not follow such a system at all. For such examples as (b) above, there should be a description like:

OO BA NAX-e DANDAAN DANDAANASH RA TAMIZKARD.

She with thread tooth her tooth obj.Marker cleaned

'She cleaned her teeth with a dental floss.'

For sentence (b) above, Persian can avoid mentioning 'her teeth', but it uses another verb plus an object indicating the instrument:

OO AZ NAX-e DANDAAN ESTEFADEHKARD.

She from thread tooth used

'She used the dental floss.'

However, outside the context, this sentence can be differently interpreted; for example, she used the thread for sewing or for other purposes. In fact, the English verb *floss* consists of two inherent arguments: an object and an instrument, which is incongruent with the Persian verb system.

A similar item is the verb with an understood reflexive object. The verb *preen*, for example, means 'clean oneself with one's beak'. English uses this verb in two formats: transitively with a reflexive pronoun and intransitively.

a) The bird preened itself.

b) The bird preened.

In Persian, it is necessary to use a verb collocation to express the meaning of *preen* because there is no single correspondence for it; hence, TAMIZKARDAN BAA MENQAAR (i.e. clean with the beak). On the other hand,

there should be an insertion of a reflexive pronoun because *clean* is a transitive verb and so it requires an object. Therefore, sentences (a - b) are identically translated into:

c)

PARANDE BAA MENQAR XODASH RA TAMIZKARD.
bird with beak itself obj.Marker cleaned

‘The bird cleaned itself with its beak.’

2.3.8 Verbs with Latent Adverbs

Some English verbs are verbs of directed motion, describing an object moving and simultaneously emitting a sound (Levin, 1993:4):

The bullet whistled through the window.

Persian uses an adverb or a reduced relative clause plus an ordinary verb to express such meaning:

GOLOOLEH SOOTZANAAN AZMIAN PANJEREH OBOORKARD

bullet while whistling through window passed

‘The bullet passed through the window, whistling.’

There are also verbs with a latent adverb in them. For example, ‘grab’ means *get hold of* or *seize quickly and easily*. The adverbs *quickly* and *easily* are within the verb, but for most Persian verbs, a separate adverb is usually needed to give a secondary layer of meaning to the verb. For example, ‘*cane*’ is a concise verb which means ‘beat with a cane’ while in Persian this idea should be expanded with a thematic verb like ‘*ZADAN*’ (i.e. beat) plus an adverb or a prepositional phrase, in this case ‘BAA ASAA’ (i.e. with a cane).

2.3.9 Verbs with Prepositions

Some English verbs usually in the category of eating and ingesting like *chew*, *chomp*, *crunch*, *gnaw*, *lick*, or denoting a location *climb* and *descend* are arbitrarily accompanied by a preposition (Levin, 1993:42):

The mouse nibbled (*at/on*) the cheese.

He climbed (*up*) the mountain

In Persian, it is not usually allowed for verbs to have an arbitrary preposition. In fact, when a preposition is employed for a verb, there must follow an object or a location name.

2.3.10 Argument-Bound Verbs

Unlike Persian verbs, many English verbs are argument-type restricted. It means certain verbs can only be used with a certain argument whether subject or object. For example, the verb *burp* (i.e. expel gas from stomach) can be intransitively used for any animate subject argument (examples a-b below) but in the transitive application, its object argument is limited to babies (example (c) below). As the examples taken from Levin (1993:32) show, sentence (d) is unacceptable:

a) The baby burped.

b) The doctor burped.

c) I burped the baby.

d) * I burped the doctor.

A second type of bound argument is the use of there-expletive. In English, it is very common to insert the expletive *there* before certain verbs denoting existence, appearance, or motions at a direction specified (Levin, 1993:89), but in Persian, there is just one equivalent for ‘there + be’ (VOOJOOD DAASHTAN or MOJOOD BOODAN (i.e. exist). Other constructions with different verbs do not exist in Persian. Therefore, among the following pair examples which are pragmatically different, Persian employs the (a)’s, except for number (1) where both choices are acceptable.

1). a) A pen is on the table.

b) There is a pen on the table.

2). a) A ship appeared on the horizon.

b) There appeared a ship on the horizon.

3). a) A little boy darted into the room.

- b) There darted into the room a little boy.
- 4). a) A problem developed.
- b) There developed a problem.

A third type of bound-argument can be found in the use of dummy-it subject. In English, it is very common to start a sentence with the dummy-it with weather verbs, verbs whose logical subjects may follow them, or verbs with no visible subjects (examples a-d). It may also be used in certain patterns (e.g., (e)):

- a) It rains heavily.
- b) It seems that they are coming.
- c) It stands to reason that she will do the job.
- d) It takes two hours to reach there.
- e) It is easy to learn English.

To understand the sentence, Persian has to redirect the way of reading by putting an infinitive / gerund at the beginning of the sentence followed by verb and then noun / adjective. For example, sentence (e) above can be rendered into (f):

- f) To learn English is easy.

In this way, the total meaning of the sentence is achieved at the expense of shifting the point of emphasis. Another use of introductory-it can be spotted in the passive construction where a very formal sense of passive is going to be conveyed.

- a) Nancy says Tom is smart.
- b) Tom is said to be smart.
- c) It is said Tom is smart.

In Persian sentences (a & b) are identically translated into:

GOFTE MISHAVAD TOM BAHOOOSH AST.

said is Tom smart is

It is said that Tom is smart.

As a result, it seems that the formal passive structure is equal to a subjectless construction in Persian.

Another case for the use of 'it' can be found in sentences such as 'Does it kill you to say something?' which results in three points in Persian. First, the pronoun 'it' cannot be translated into Persian. Second, the direction of the verb changes from transitive to intransitive. That is to say, instead for the verb 'kill' of being translated into 'MIKOSHAD', (as its literal meaning in Persian), there is a switch to an intransitive direction, saying 'MIMIRI' (i.e. do you die...?). And third, the whole sentence changes into a conditional format:

MIMIRI AGE CHIZI BEGI?

do you die if something say ?

'Do you die if you say something?'

And a similar case is the use of 'it' after some verbs followed by adjectives as in:

*I feel **it** necessary to talk with him.*

This structure looks unusual in Persian. Given the example, the following can be derived in Persian:

- a)

EHSASMIKONAM **LA AZEM** AST BA OO HARFBEZANAM.

I feel necessary is with him I talk

'I feel it is necessary to talk with him.'

- b)

EHSAS-E **NIYAAZ** MIKONAM BA OO HARFBEZANAM.

feeling necessity I do with him I talk

'I feel the necessity of talking with him.'

What happens in the Persian translation? In sentence (a), the English adjective ‘**necessary**’ keeps its part of speech intact (LAAZEM (i.e. necessary)), but in sentence (b) it changes to a noun (NIYAAZ (i.e. necessity)).

2.3.11 Verb-Alternation

Some English nouns can almost easily be converted to a verb without any morphological transformation. For example, the name of a fruit or an animal can be used as a verb:

a) The children like to berry in summer.

b) They are fishing in the river.

However, Persian does not use such a system at all and if such meanings are going to be expressed in Persian, it is necessary to use the nouns with an appropriate thematic verb:

a)

BACHEHA DOOSTDAARAN DAR TAABESTAAN TOOT BECHINAND.

Children like in summer berry pick

‘Children like to pick berries in summer.’

b)

ONA MASHGHOL-e MAHI GEREFTAN HASTAND.

They busy fish catch are

‘They are catching fish.’

2.3.12 Negation

Another case of direction can be seen in noun clauses where the verb in the main clause will undergo negation but the effect of this negation is on the verb in the noun clause:

I think he will come.

I don't think he will come.

The second sentence means ‘he will not come.’

In Persian, however, this form of communication does not exist. There is a reverse direction in Persian; that is, the verb in the second clause is negated while the verb in the main clause remains positive:

FEKRMIKONAM OO NAXAAHAD AAMAD

I think he will not come

This usually happens when the verbs in the main clause are such verbs as *think, believe, know assume* to name a few.

3. Results and Conclusion

Languages possess subtleties one of which lies in the direction of verbs. Direction here discusses the relation between arguments and verbs which may be interpreted differently. The construction of verbs in English and Persian is largely varied. Except for the limited number of simple verbs in Persian, the main part of Persian verb lexicon is filled with verb collocations. Based on the findings, verbs in English and Persian often behave differently. English has different strategies to make new simple verbs while Persian is comparably limited in this respect, but the Persian system of verb collocation is very productive. English and Persian verbs do not have a one-to-one correspondence in terms of ergative and ambitransitive verbs. The application of prepositions after a Persian verb means inserting an object or a location name, while English can, in some cases, skip this restriction. Reciprocity can be easily played by English simple verbs, but Persian requires an object after any transitive verb. Sex-neutrality or unilaterality of some verbs can sometimes cause EFL learners to be more curious about the features of verbs in either language. What an Iranian simply say *I washed my car*, should not simply be literally translated as he washed the car himself, maybe a carwash or an agent did it. The vast flexibility of nouns being used as verbs especially without any morphological inflection is really noteworthy for the Iranian EFL learners who have to put together a list of words, adjectives, adverbs, or prepositional phrases to express such and such ideas.

Among about 200 categories of English verbs, only some of them have been discussed in this paper. However, as most language learners are not exposed to sufficient input to immerse in language, it is necessary for the EFL

teachers to dissect not only the language sentence structures but also the words and especially verbs in order to shed light on the path of the learners and save time and energy on both sides.

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