

NOTES

Case Marking and Complementizers in Persian*

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Ferguson (1970) discussed the convergence of certain functions of the dative case marker in several languages, one of which was MODERN PERSIAN. Partially in response to this discussion of cross-linguistic functional convergence, there have been several articles in recent issues of this publication (cf. Moravcsik (1972), Hinds (1973)), noting various languages which have a case-marker, often of the dative case, which is homophonous with a complementizer. In light of this interest, the following can be added to Ferguson's discussion which will show that in PERSIAN also, there can be found this homophony between the dative case-marker and a complementizer.

MODERN PERSIAN has a morpheme /be/ which serves two main functions as a prepositional case-marker. It both marks a noun as the indirect object of certain verbs, and also as the goal in directional phrases, as shown in the following examples:

- (1) man ketāb-rā be hasan mi-dah-am
I book -ACC to Hasan PRES-give-1 sg
+DEF
'I give the book to Hasan.'
- (2) hasan ketāb be man mi-dah-ad
to me -3 sg
'Hasan gives a book to me.'
- (3) be-š goft-am be mariz xāne boro
to him say-1 sg to hospital go
(PAST) (SUBJ)
'I told him to go to the hospital.'

* I would like to thank Guy Carden, who unknowingly provided the inspiration, as well as some of the data, for this note.

- (4) u raft-eh ast be šahr
he go-ptcpl. is to city
(PAST)

'He has gone to the city.'

Under some conditions, /be/ can be omitted; (4), for instance, could also be expressed as u rafteh ast šahr. However, it is clear that /be/ for many speakers is an overt marker for nouns in what are traditionally called dative functions.

The morpheme /be/ also figures in two types of sentential complementation. In some constructions, for instance after RAISING, /be/ can occur along with the infinitival form of a verb. Furthermore, with some verbs, such as χāštan 'want', sentential object complementation optionally can be achieved by prefixing /be-/ to the verb of the subordinate clause, which may be introduced by a morpheme /ke/,¹ to form what is termed the subjunctive mood. The following sentences illustrate these uses of /be/ as a complementizer:

INFINITIVE:

- (5) man hasan-rā be koštan entezār dār-am
kill-INF expect-1 sg.
(PAST)

'I expected Hasan to kill.'

- (6) man be koštan-e ali farmān-dād-am
kill-INF-of ali order-gave-1 sg
'I ordered Ali to kill.'
'I ordered Ali to be killed.' (AMBIGUOUS)

'I ordered Ali to be killed.' (AMBIGUOUS)

- (7) man žala-rā be dādan-e asb be ali farmān-dādam
 žala give-INF-of horse
 'I ordered Žāla to give the horse to Ali.'

'I ordered ^vZāla to give the horse to Ali.'

SUBJUNCTIVE:

- (8) mi-χ āh-am in asb-rā be-χ ar-am
want this buy
'I want to buy this horse.'

'I want to buy this horse.'

¹/ke/ is used as a clause-introductory particle, both for complement clauses and for relative clauses, e.g. ketāb ke zāla be hasan dād 'the/a book that Zāla gave Hasan'; thus PERSIAN has a complement/relative word convergence as well, which, interestingly enough, is shared by several other languages also, e.g. ENGLISH, that, MODERN GREEK, /pu/, and GERMAN, /das/ (for those dialects that have das as an invariable relative word).

- 'I ordered Hasan to kill Ali.'

One thing that is certain is the homophony of these particles, and therefore, inferences regarding their functional overlap can be drawn. PERSIAN can thus be added to the growing list of languages showing this same case-marker/complementizer convergence. The next question which should be considered, but which is beyond the scope and intent of this note, is why it is that this particular convergence should be so prevalent and recur in languages that are as typologically varied as PERSIAN, ENGLISH, JAPANESE, HUNGARIAN, MAORI and others.²

² Although I do not know the explanation myself, one possibility that bears further investigation is that sentences containing a reduced clause, as after EQUI or RAISING or Subject-Pronoun-Drop in an embedded clause, may in some sense, "try" to look as much as possible like a simplex sentence--hence the "case-marking" on the clause-remnant. Such an analysis seems to hold for Causative sentences, which have a bi-sentential source, but in many languages, via a Clause-Union rule, end up looking very much like a simplex sentence (TURKISH is the classic example of such a language). I suspect that much the same may be going on here. Furthermore, Thomas Bever has recently suggested (in a talk at the 11th Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society, in April 1975) that the perception and processing of sentences by the hearer is in terms of clauses, and that any internal embedded clauses will strain the limits of short-term memory. If clause-remnants are treated like NP's in simplex sentences, that is, with no distinct clause-boundary marker and a "case-marking", these perceptual limits will not be reached. This may shed some light on why sentences with a complex deep structure should turn out to mirror the structure of a simplex sentence on the surface.

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