

TEACHING PERSIAN COMPLEX PREDICATES FROM A PEDAGOGICAL CONSTRUCTION GRAMMAR STANCE

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Abstract

This paper addresses Persian Complex Predicates (CPs) from an Applied/Pedagogical Construction Grammar (PCxG) stance. PCxG is an approach to foreign language pedagogy that emphasises the importance of constructions (form-meaning pairings), which are patterns of words and grammatical structures that have meaning beyond the sum of their individual parts. According to Goldberg (2006: 3), it is ‘an attempt to describe language in a way that is both descriptively accurate and pedagogically useful’. Persian CPs are multi-word predicates comprised of twenty so-called light verbs and a non-verbal element (noun, adjective, adverb, preposition, verbal particle, complex noun, noun plus adverb) forming a single conceptual unit (e.g. pakhsh kardan, lit. scattered_{ADJ} do, ‘to spread’; and charkh zadan, lit. wheel_N hit, ‘to stroll’). Persian CPs present a compelling challenge to linguistics due to their lexical and phrasal properties. For example, they can undergo derivational processes, but they are also syntactically separable by the negation prefix, future auxiliary, or the direct object clitics. In this study, I argue that for teaching Persian CPs to English speakers a PCxG approach can be construed as a multidisciplinary effort aiming to elicit those aspects of Construction Grammar (CxG) that can be tied in more explicitly with Applied Linguistics, teacher education, and foreign language pedagogy.

Keywords: *Construction Grammar, Applied Construction Grammar, Pedagogical Construction Grammar, Persian Complex Predicates*

1. Introduction

The study of Complex Predicates (CPs)¹ is an important aspect of Persian language teaching, and a topic of interest to scholars in the fields of linguistics and language education. Persian CPs are constructions that involve light verbs² and pre-verbal elements, and they are among the most controversial areas of Persian grammar due to exhibiting both word-like (lexical) and phrasal properties. These constructions are particularly challenging for language learners, as they require an understanding of the complex relationships between light verbs and other elements that make up the predicate. In recent years, there has been growing interest in the use of Pedagogical Construction Grammar (PCxG) as an approach to teaching grammatical constructions such as Complex Predicates.

PCxG is a linguistic framework that emphasises the importance of learning *constructions* as a means of acquiring language. In this context, a construction is an abstract representation of a pattern of language use, which includes not only the words involved but also the syntactic and semantic relationships between them.³ By learning constructions, language learners can develop a deeper understanding of the underlying patterns of language use, which can help them to use the language more effectively and flexibly.

Herbst (2016) argues that this approach offers several advantages for language learners. For example, by focusing on constructions rather than individual words, learners can develop a more robust understanding of the underlying patterns of language use, which can help them to use the language more creatively. Given that foreign language learners are typically exposed to

¹ The following abbreviations are used in this article: 1 = first person; 2 = second person; 3 = third person; ADJ = adjective; ADV = adverb; AG = agent; AGR = agreement; CL = clitic; CNP = complex noun phrase; Cx = construction; DO = direct object; FUT = future; INF = infinitive; N = noun; NEG = negative; PL = plural; POSS = possessive; PP = prepositional phrase; PROG = progressive; PRS = present; PST = past; PTCL = particle; SG = singular.

² Light verbs are semantically empty verbs that denote the grammatical meanings in sentences. These are verbs such as *zadan* ‘hit’, *kardan* ‘do’, *shodan* ‘become’, and *dâdan* ‘give’ in Persian.

³ Adele E. Goldberg (1995) defines a construction as a form-meaning pair such that some aspect of its form or meaning/function is not strictly predictable from its component parts or from other previously established constructions. Additionally, “patterns are stored as constructions even if they are fully predictable as long as they occur with sufficient frequency” (Goldberg 2006: 5). Constructions include words (e.g. *apple*), morphemes (e.g. *-ing*), fixed expressions and idioms (*As a matter of fact, pull X’s leg*), and abstract grammatical rules such as the passive voice (*The letter was sent by me*) or the ditransitive (*Mary gave me a rose*).

significantly less language input than native speakers, it is essential that they be provided with construction-based explanations to arrive at generalizations about language patterns.

There is a large body of studies on Persian CPs (e.g. Barjasteh 1983; Folli, Harley, & Karimi 2005; Goldberg 1996, 2003; Karimi-Doostan 1997; Karimi 2003; Megerdooian 2001, 2012; Vahedi-Langrudi 1996), but there are no studies that focus on teaching them to speakers of other languages using principles of PCxG to the best of the author's knowledge. As the field of PCxG is an emerging domain of research, few studies have been done in this framework. Those that have been done so far are reported in Boas (2022) and De Knop & Gilquin (2016).

In this paper, I contribute to the growing body of PCxG-based research by exploring the use of PCxG for teaching Persian CPs. I begin by introducing PCxG and its main tenets (section 2.1), followed by providing a constructionist overview of Persian CPs, including the main features of Persian CPs (section 2.2). In tandem, I discuss the issue of separability of Persian CPs that makes learning them challenging (section 3). Then, I describe my approach to teaching Persian CPs using PCxG, which involves explicitly teaching learners to recognise and use Persian CP constructions as abstract patterns of language use (section 4). I also suggest a lesson plan, examples of classroom activities and tasks that I have developed to support this approach (section 5).

2. Literature review

2.1 Teaching constructions using Pedagogical Construction Grammar (PCxG)

The application of linguistic theory to language education has always been a concern in identifying and exploiting pedagogical opportunities. Innovative approaches inspired by Construction Grammar (CxG) offer a holistic and cognitive perspective on language learning (Boas 2022). CxG assumes that a

network of constructions, referred to as *constructicon*,⁴ captures the totality of our knowledge of language.

Despite changing our perception of Second Language Acquisition, Holme (2010) suggests that the impact of constructions on language instruction has been muted. However, he proposes deriving a psychologically plausible approach to teaching grammar based on CxG. Grammatical forms should be considered symbols⁵, and their teaching should be indispensable to pedagogy while being inextricably linked with the mastery of text-type and lexis.

Several researchers (e.g. De Knop & De Rycker 2008; Eddington & Ruiz de Mendoza 2010; Gries & Wulff 2005; Herbst 2016; Littlemore 2009), adopted Ellis' (2001) proposal that second-language learning is construction learning. *Applied Construction Grammar* (De Knop & Gilquin 2016) and *Pedagogical Construction Grammar* (Herbst 2016) are two concrete versions of applying constructional approaches to language pedagogy. They rely on Cognitive Linguistics and CxG, combining cognitive, usage-based, constructionist, and corpus-based approaches to offer simpler and more plausible linguistic descriptions in the classroom.

Pedagogical Construction Grammar (PCxG) addresses important issues in foreign-language pedagogy that were previously peripheral in the Chomskyan generative framework, such as collocations and valency⁶. The constructionist approach to language views grammar as a structured network of conventionalised form-meaning pairings, or constructions, summarised by Goldberg's (2003: 223) catchphrase: "It's constructions all the way down!"

While it remains to be seen if all linguistic knowledge should be explained from the standpoint of constructions, usage-based approaches suggest that learning occurs through generalizing from language experience. However, the extent to which insights from first-language acquisition can be applied to second/foreign-language learning remains an open question (Ellis 2003).

⁴ In constructionist theory, a *constructicon* is an inventory of constructions making up the full set of linguistic units in a language. In applied practice, it is a set of construction descriptions – a “dictionary of constructions”.

⁵ Symbol is synonymous with construction in Construction Grammar theories. Constructions are symbolic units or signs, that is a pairing of form and meaning (Goldberg 1995).

⁶ In linguistics, valency or valence is the number and type of arguments governed by a predicate (for discussions on Valency Theory, cf. Herbst 2014; Herbst *et al.* 2004).

Input, output, and feedback are key factors in foreign language learning,⁷ but the relatively small amount of input in foreign language contexts makes it more difficult to arrive at linguistic generalizations. An important issue is that learners may find it easier to arrive at certain generalizations if they have similar generalizations in their native language (Herbst 2016). Despite being exposed to much less input in the foreign language compared to their L1, foreign language learners can still arrive at linguistic generalizations that lend themselves to construction-based explanations (Gries & Wulff 2005: 190–191).

The application of CxG in language education can significantly contribute to teaching and learning in two ways. Firstly, it can help identify the linguistic items included in curricula, teaching materials, and dictionaries, and secondly, it can propose appropriate techniques and strategies for presenting and teaching these items (Herbst 2016). Although learners' dictionaries such as the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (LDOCE), *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, and the *Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary* are compatible with CxG principles, electronic corpora that offer access to authentic data, frequency patterns, and search mechanisms can provide more comprehensive solutions.

The PCxG methodology is mainly inspired by Herbst's (2016: 40–44) seven principles of PCxG:

- Principle 1: “it's constructions all the way down” (Goldberg 2006: 18);
- Principle 2: Present constructions as form-meaning pairings;
- Principle 3: One sense at a time;
- Principle 4: Indicate chunks;⁸

⁷ Input refers to the language exposure learners receive. It encompasses all the linguistic material that learners encounter, such as listening to native speakers, reading texts, watching videos, or participating in conversations (Krashen 1985). Output refers to the language production by learners. It involves using the language actively through speaking or writing (Swain 1985). Feedback is information provided to learners about their language performance. It can come from various sources, including teachers, peers, or self-assessment (Ellis 2003).

⁸ A ‘chunk’ refers to a fixed or semi-fixed sequence of words or phrases that functions as a single unit of meaning or serves a specific communicative purpose. Chunks are often taught and learned as prefabricated language units because they are commonly used together in natural language contexts. Examples of chunks include collocations (‘take a break’, ‘make a decision’); idiomatic expressions (‘hit the hay’, ‘kick the bucket’); formulaic sequences (‘How are you?’, ‘Nice to meet you.’); grammatical patterns (‘If I were you’, ‘I'm looking forward to...’).

- Principle 5: Show valency constructions;
- Principle 6: Moderate and meaningful use of grammatical terminology;
- Principle 7: Consider authenticity.⁹

Among the seven principles taken from Herbst, principles three, four, and five are related to textbooks. Language teachers have no control over the sensitivity of the textbooks to the CxG and PCxG; however, these principles can be adapted well for developing supplementary teaching materials, activities, and tasks.

In section 2.2, I present my constructionist overview of Persian CPs drawing upon Goldberg (1995, 1996, 2006). These constructionist explanations can be beneficial for linguists/teachers to have a better understanding of the idiosyncratic features of Persian CPs when developing supplementary teaching materials, activities, and tasks for teaching them.

2.2 A constructionist overview of Persian Complex Predicates

Persian Complex Predicates (CPs) are multi-word verbal constructions consisting of a preverbal element (host) and a light verb (LV) which is semantically empty. According to Folli, Harley and Karimi (2003), preverbal elements in a Persian CP may be a noun, adjective, adverb, verbal particle, prepositional phrase, or a complex noun. Examples include:

- Noun + LV, e.g. *dust dâshtan* (lit. like having) ‘to like/love’;
- Adjective + LV, e.g. *narahat kardan/shodan* (lit. sad doing/becoming) ‘to upset’;
- Adverb + LV, e.g. *kenar keshidan* (lit. side pulling) ‘to withdraw’;
- Verbal Particles + LV, e.g. *fara gereftan* (lit. over/beyond taking) ‘to grasp’;
- Prepositional phrase + LV, e.g. *be xâter(yâd) dashtan* (lit. to memory having) ‘to remember’;

⁹ The principle of authenticity suggests that teaching materials should be based on the analysis of corpora or on reference works based on corpus analysis and the frequency of constructions should be reflected in the design of teaching materials (Herbst 2016: 44).

- Complex noun + LV, e.g. *in pâ un pâ kardan* (lit. this foot that foot doing) ‘to procrastinate’;
- Noun(object) + adverb + LV, e.g. *pâ dar miâni kardan* (lit. foot in the middle doing) ‘to mediate’.

Simin Karimi (1997) argues that Persian CPs can have either compositional (*fekr kardan* ‘to think’, lit. thought doing) or idiomatic meaning (*chune zadan* ‘to negotiate’, chin hitting). Folli, Harley and Karimi (2003) and Megerdooian (2001) discuss that LVs in Persian CPs can determine whether the CP is agentive vs. non-agentive (*shekast dâdan* ‘to defeat’, lit. defeat giving, vs. *shekast xordan* ‘to defeat’, lit. defeat colliding), static vs. eventive (*be yad dashtan* ‘to remember’, lit. in memory having, vs. *be yad âvardan* ‘to remember’, lit. to memory bringing), or durative vs. non-durative (*dast keshidan* ‘to touch’, lit. hand pulling, vs. *dast zadan* ‘to touch’, lit. hand hitting).

In finite sentences including simple verbs, the main verb receives primary stress,¹⁰ but in finite sentences including CPs, it is the preverbal element (the host) which is stressed instead (Goldberg 2003). Persian CP constructions exhibit both lexical and phrasal characteristics, manifested by the presence of a preverbal element (PV) that serves as the overarching host of the entire CP and a light verb (LV) that occupies a zero level status (in the terms of Optimality Theory; Goldberg 1996). The host may take the form of a noun, an adjective, an adverb, verbal particles, a prepositional phrase, a complex noun phrase, or a noun (object) preceded by an adverb that bears primary stress. However, certain syntactic constituents may intervene and create discontinuous constructions, resulting in a non-adjacent relationship between the host and the LV.

(1) *Ali RAFT* (simple verb)
 Ali go.PST.3SG
 ‘Ali went.’

(2) *Ali AZ DAST raft.* (Complex Predicate)
 Ali from hand go.PST.3SG
 ‘Ali is lost.’

¹⁰ See section 3.1 in this study in which I explain that in finite sentences including a non-specific direct object, the primary stress falls on the direct object.

A representation of the internal structure of Persian CP construction is presented in Figure 1.

Persian Complex Predicate Cx
PV [N, ADJ, ADV, PTCL, PP, CNP, N+ADV] + LV[V0]

Figure 1. Representation of the Persian CP construction

Persian is a language that exhibits a relatively flexible word order, allowing for the combination of arguments with the verb in various orders. In this paper, I propose an account of this permutability of Persian CPs in terms of competing constructions. The notion that there are generalizations in languages that may be violated due to competing motivations has been previously discussed within the Competition Model Framework¹¹. This model posits that ‘decisions in sentence interpretation are made by evaluating the relative weights of the cues present in the stimulus’ (Bates *et al.* 1984: 344; MacWhinney 1982, 1987). In the following example, different competing constructions are presented, all conveying the same meaning, function, and constituents, yet exhibiting distinct word orders in Persian.

- (3) *be man harf=e=to bezan*
 to me word=EZ=2SG hit
 ‘tell me your words’
harfeto be man bezan
be man harfeto bezan
bezan harfeto be man
harfeto bezan be man
be man bezan harfeto

Construction Grammar (CxG) has embraced the notion that constructions can engage in competition if they share similar meanings and functions. This view

¹¹ Examples includes expressions of the future in English, namely the *will*-construction and the *going-to*- construction (*I will go to the party tomorrow* vs. *I am going to go to the party tomorrow*). These two constructions are in competition with each other for expressing futurity. The usage of one construction over the other can be influenced by various factors such as the speaker's intentions, the context, the level of certainty, and the speaker's preferences.

posits that two or more competing constructions can emerge as distinct nodes within a constructional network, having undergone the process of constructionalization, as defined by Traugott and Trousdale (2013). These constructions share aspects of their form or functional profiles, which establish connections between them. Each competing construction represents an alternation, akin to the generative syntax concept, and instantiates the same underlying structure. For example, active and passive voices represent competing constructions for expressing the same semantic content.

CxG posits that human language is comprised of a network of form-meaning pairs, with competing constructions representing connected nodes within this network. Competition arises when there are multiple possible forms for conveying a specific meaning, and speakers of a language select from among these competing constructions, based on the strength of the link between the intended meaning and one of the associated forms. The selection of a particular construction activates a feedback mechanism, with successful usage in a given context leading to a preference for future usage and the strengthening of the associated construction relative to other competing constructions. This competition between constructions, according to Smet, D'hoedt, Fonteyn, and Goethem (2018), results in the survival of the strongest construction (substitution) or a unique usage of a certain construction (differentiation).¹²

Croft (2001) argued that the primary driving force behind constructional competition is functional pressure, as speakers strive to express given ideas and explore innovative ways or altered replicates of linguistic forms. In addition to functional motivations, social factors must also be considered when studying constructional competition, as people may prefer one alternation over other competing constructions through the process of propagation to identify with a particular social group.

¹² *Substitution* occurs when one construction is replaced or substituted by another construction that serves a similar communicative function but with different linguistic elements. For instance, for the phrase *I have a car* we could substitute *I own a car*. In this example, the construction “have” is substituted by the synonym “own”, maintaining the same basic meaning while using a different lexical item. *Differentiation*, by contrast, involves the emergence of a unique usage or form within a particular construction, setting it apart from other similar constructions. In the original construction *He hit the ball*, the verb *hit* refers to a physical impact; by contrast, the differentiated form *He hit the mark* uses the verb *hit* in a metaphorical sense.

The simplest forms among Persian CPs are those in which the elements of the CP appear adjacent to each other, as in the following example:

- (4) *be xâter âvardan*
to memory bring.INF
'to remember'
- (5) *fekr kardan*
thought do.INF
'to think'
- (6) *be donya âvardan / âmadan*
to world bring.INF / come.INF
'to give birth/to be born'
- (7) *az donya raftan*
from world depart.INF
'to pass away'
- (8) *be dast âvardan*
to hand bring.INF
'to obtain'

Examples (4) to (8) exhibit Persian CPs that are separable but not flexibly extendible. It is worth noting that all Persian CPs are amenable to separation by certain intervening elements, such as imperfective, negation, subjunctive prefixes, future auxiliary, or DO clitic. Nevertheless, an intriguing phenomenon in Persian grammar is that some CPs exhibit resistance to internal extension, such as the insertion of an adverb.

3. Separability of Persian CPs

The separability of Persian CPs is a phenomenon that arises frequently when the preverbal element (host) and light verb do not manifest as an atomic lexical unit, but rather as constituents of a phrasal structure. In Persian, the CP may be subject to intervention by various elements, such as the future auxiliary, imperfective, negation, subjunctive prefixes, and direct object (DO) clitic.

3.1 Separation by future auxiliary

Persian, with its standard subject-object-verb (SOV) word order, is known for allowing movement of different sentence elements for topic and focus purposes (Karimi 2005), resulting in variations such as SVO, OVS and OSV, particularly in spoken or literary forms. In the simple future tense, the inflected future auxiliary, *xâstan*, appears before the main verb, which takes the past stem as in (9). Within Persian CPs, the inflected form of the future auxiliary (*xâstan*) agrees with its subject, which is also the subject of the entire CP, and occurs immediately between the preverbal element (host) and the light verb, as exemplified in (10). The semantic tense of the event is conveyed by the future auxiliary, and its adjacency to the light verb follows the general tendency of semantically related items to appear close to each other in the syntactic string (Goldberg 2003).

- (9) *Ali xâhad RAFT.* (Simple verb)
 Ali FUT.3SG go.PST
 ‘Ali will go’.

- (10) *Zaman AZ DAST xâhad RAFT.* (CP)
 time from hand FUT.3SG go.PST
 ‘Time will be lost.’

In Persian the future auxiliary cannot appear before the entire CP:

- (11) **Zaman xâhad AZ DAST RAFT.* (CP)
 time FUT.3SG from hand go.PST
 ‘Time will from hand be lost.’

This future CP construction is limited to formal written discourse, where the word order is maintained as S-O-FUT-LV. In spoken Persian, the present progressive tense is commonly used to express future time reference instead. The graphical representation of the future CP construction is presented in Figure 2.



Figure 2: the Future Auxiliary Construction

3.2 Separation by imperfective, negation and subjunctive prefixes

In Persian, the imperfective prefix (*mi-*), negative prefix (*na-*), and subjunctive prefix (*be-*) are directly attached to the main verb in simple predicates and to the present stem of the light verb in CPs, creating an intervening structure between the preverbal element (host) and light verb. These prefixes do not attach to the host element. According to Goldberg's (2003) default inheritance hierarchy, highly frequent forms such as *mi-kardan* and *na-kardan* are stored in the lexicon, even when they are entirely regular, as shown by psycholinguistic research (Losiewicz 1992; Bybee 1995). Figure 3 provides a visual representation of the internal structure of the aforementioned affixes in Persian.

Imperfective Cx in Persian CPs
PV+ <i>mi/n/be</i> -LV [PRS-AGR][V0]

Figure 3: Representation of the imperfective prefix (*mi/n/be*) in Persian CPs

3.3 Separation by Direct object (DO) clitic

In the case of simple predicates, DO clitic appears directly after the verb, as in (12):

(12) *ferestad-am=ash*

send.PST-1SG=3SG.CL

'I send it'.

In the case of CPs, the DO clitic normally appears directly after the preverbal element (host) intervening between host and the light verb as in (13):

(13) *xarab=ash kard*

spoil=3SG.CL do.PST.3SG

'S/He spoiled it'.

Goldberg (2003) posits that pronominal elements cannot be situated within single zero-level categories. Thus, the direct object (DO) clitic in Persian CPs cannot be placed between syllables within a polysyllabic single word, even when following a stressed morpheme boundary. This suggests that the preverbal element (host) and light verb should be analyzed as two separate words in sentence (13). Goldberg considers CP_{V0} to be the unmarked form of Persian CPs and views other separable CPs as marked deviations from this default base form. Furthermore, she argues against a strict division between single words and

phrasal elements within the *constructicon*, and posits that the same stored CP can be realised as either a zero-level word or a phrasal entity depending on neighboring constructions. However, her analysis supports a more lexical account of CPs. Figure 4 illustrates the clitic position in Persian CPs competing constructions.

Clitic position in competing Persian CP Cxs	
a.	PV+ DO CL+ LV[V0]
b.	PV+ LV[V0] + DO CL

Figure 4: Representation of DO Clitic position in competing Persian CP constructions

The construction depicted in Figure 6.a predicts that the clitic should be attached to the host, intervening between the host and light verb as shown in (6a); however, it can also appear after the light verb as seen in (6.b). As such, native speakers have access to two competing constructions: (a) PV + DO clitic+ LV Cx, and (b) PV+LV + DO clitic Cx, which are dependent on context, dialect, and genre. Example (14) illustrates that in Persian, the direct object clitic (*-ash*) can be attached to the stressed constituent (*negah*) as in (14a) or to the light verb (*kard*) as in (14b).

- (14)(a) *negah=ash kard*
 look=3.SG.CL do.PST.3SG
 ‘S/he looked at him/her’.
- (b) *negah kard=ash*
 look do.PST.3.SG=3SG.CL
 ‘S/he looked at him/her.’

Persian CPs can be nominalised in various ways, including (a) attaching the present stem of the light verb to the host followed by the suffix *-i*, as seen in examples (15) and (16); (b) adding the suffix *-ande* to the light verb, as in examples (17) and (18); and (c) forming an agent noun by adding the suffix *-gar* to the host, as in examples (19) and (20).

- (15) *fada kardan*
devote do.INF
'to devote/ to sacrifice' → *fada-kar-i* 'devotion'
- (16) *gonah kardan*
guilt/sin do.INF
'to sin' → *gonah-kar-i* 'sinfulness'
- (17) *davit kardan*
invitation do.INF
'to invite' → *davit-kon¹³-ande* (invitation-do-AG) 'host/hostess'
- (18) *pazirae kardan*
entertainment do.INF
'to entertain' → *pazirae-kon-ande* (entertainment-do-AG) 'entertainer'
- (19) *tamasha kardan*
watching do.INF
'to watch' → *tamasha-gar* 'spectator'
- (20) *gozaresh kardan*
report do.INF
'to report' → *gozaresh-gar* 'reporter'

Figure 5 represents the internal structure of nominalised CPs.

Nominalised Persian CP Cxs	
a.	PV+ LV [PRS]+AFFIX -i
b.	PV+ LV [PRS]+ AFFIX -ande
c.	PV + AFFIX - gar ¹⁴

Figure 5: Representation of nominalised Persian CPs

¹³ *kon* is the present stem of *kardan*. Verbs in modern Persian have two simple stems (PRS and PST). The past stem is used to conjugate verbs in the past tense, and the present stem is used to conjugate verbs in the present tense.

¹⁴ The affix -gar is based on the present stem of the LV *kardan* (*kar-* in Old Persian).

According to Vahedi-Langrudi (1996: 6, 202–203, 211) and Karimi Doostan (1997: 198), the process of derivation in many light verbs is not possible without the presence of a preverb, as demonstrated in example (21).

(21)(a) *davat-kon-ande*

invitation-do-AG

‘host’

(b) **kon-ande*

do-AG

In sum, considering their unique properties, Persian CPs can be located somewhere on the continuum between lexicon and syntax, and a suitable analysis would require a morphosyntactical approach that does not rely solely on either a lexical or phrasal perspective. Within Construction Grammar (CxG), which does not enforce a strict distinction between lexical and phrasal elements, Persian CPs are formed and stored in the constructicon. Competing constructions in Persian CPs can be accounted for by the Competition Model Framework (Bates *et al.* 1984; MacWhinney 1982, 1987) within CxG, which avoids the need for syntactic movement or transformation. This approach allows for a consideration of both the semantic and syntactic properties of Persian CPs as form-meaning pairings. While some have suggested that simulating movement or transformations are necessary for analyzing free constituent order languages such as Persian, this view can be challenged within the CxG framework. Having presented my constructionist description of Persian CPs, I will take a PCxG stance to suggest my proposal for teaching Persian CPs to English speakers in the following sections.

4. Teaching Persian Complex Predicates

The study of CPs in Persian is a topic of great interest to scholars in the fields of linguistics and language education.

Traditional methods of teaching Persian CPs, particularly in classroom settings, often relied on a combination of rote memorisation, grammar drills, and teacher-led explanations to teach complex predicates. Students would memorise

the various verb forms and conjugations of Persian verbs, including those used in complex predicates. Moreover, students would engage in translation exercises where they would translate sentences containing complex predicates from Persian to their native language and vice versa.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the use of Pedagogical Construction Grammar (PCxG) as an approach to teaching grammatical structures. PCxG can be an effective approach to teaching Persian CPs. By focusing on constructions rather than individual words, learners can develop a more holistic understanding of the underlying patterns of Persian grammar, which can help them use the language more effectively. Additionally, providing explicit instruction on CP constructions can help learners to develop a more systematic and structured approach to language learning. However, there is still a need for more research on the effectiveness of PCxG for teaching different types of constructions, and for learners at different proficiency levels.

The first point to consider in teaching Persian CPs is what criteria to use in selecting these verbs. Various studies have proposed different criteria for selecting standard vocabulary, among which two principles have been more successful than others. These are: (1) frequency based on the usage of the word by native speakers; and (2) learnability. It should be noted that these two principles do not necessarily have a direct relationship with each other (Ziahosseini, 1999).

According to Ziahosseini (1999: 118), the usage of CPs in Persian is more prevalent than simple verbs, so it is necessary to pay special attention to teaching them. Among Persian CPs, some examples can be found that are widely used in Persian corpora; this series of verbs can be considered as high-frequency CPs in Persian. His suggestion is to teach these types of verbs to Persian learners at the beginner level. CPs with lower frequency or those selected only for the purpose of expanding language knowledge can be taught at intermediate and advanced levels.

In this study, CPs are divided into two categories based on the number of arguments: single-argument and multi-argument. In beginner level instruction of Persian CPs, starting with single-argument verbs has the advantage of allowing the learner to comprehend and produce sentences with the minimum number of words. Among the single-argument CPs, compound verbs that are formed by combining an adjective and an auxiliary verb, especially the verbs *budan* ‘to be’

and *shodan* ‘to become’ in the present tense, are more important for Persian language instruction at this level due to the openness of the lexical category. These are verbs such as *bad budan* ‘to be bad’, *khub budan* ‘to be good’, *dorost budan* ‘to be right’, *tabiee budan* ‘to be natural’, *jaleb budan* ‘to be interesting’, *movaffagh budan* ‘to be successful’, *movâfegh budan* ‘to agree’ (lit. to be agreeable), *khaste budan* ‘to be tired’, *mofid budan* ‘to be useful’, *asabâni budan* ‘to get angry’ (lit. to be angry), *sard/garm shodan* ‘to get cold/warm’) and *khoshk shodan* ‘to (become) dry’ that can be considered as single-argument CPs.

Of course, with the expansion of the learner's linguistic ability and language proficiency, instruction can be extended to include multi-argument CPs. Although in Persian, depending on the contextual conditions and the level of emphasis on a particular topic, a single or multiple arguments are often reflected vaguely, attention to the arguments of CPs is necessary for proper instruction.

So far, two fundamental points in teaching Persian CPs, namely frequency and the number of arguments, have been mentioned. However, there are other points that need to be considered in teaching CPs. For example, CPs that have certain semantic and structural differences in different contexts, such as *tashvigh kardan* ‘to encourage’ (lit. to do encouragement) in the following examples:

(22) *hazer-ân sokhanrân ra tashvigh kard-and.*
 audience-PL speaker-PL OBJ applause do.PST-3PL
 ‘the audience applauded the speaker’

(23) *dust-ân=e nâbâh u râ be sigâr keshidan tashvigh kard-and*
 friend-PL=EZ evil 3.SG OBJ to cigarette smoke encouragement do.PST-3.PL
 ‘Evil friends made him smoke cigarettes’

In sentence (22), *tashvigh kardan* means ‘to encourage; to agree; to give positive feedback’, while in sentence (23), *tashvigh kardan* means ‘to abet; to distract; to compel’. According to Craik & Tulving (1975), if words are related in terms of semantics, phonology, and subject, they are better remembered. Therefore, CPs that fall within a semantic category can also be taught using this method in a lesson plan. Examples of such verb groups include:

(A) *negâh kardan* ‘to look at’ (lit. look do), *tamâshâ kardan* ‘to watch’ (lit. watch do), *zol zadan* ‘to stare at somebody/something’ (lit. stare do), *khire shodan* ‘to stare at a scene/somebody’ (lit. dazzled become);

(B) *labkhand zadan* ‘to smile’ (lit. smile hit), *tabassom kardan* ‘to smile’ (lit. smile do), *ghahghahe zadan* ‘to roar with laughter/ guffaw’ (lit. guffaw hit);

(C) *ghosse khordan* ‘to feel blue’ (lit. sadness hit), *afsus khordan* ‘to regret’ (lit. regret hit), *nârahat shodan* ‘to get upset’, *gerye kardan* ‘to cry’ (lit. cry do), *âh keshidan* ‘to sigh’ (lit. sigh pull), *nâle kardan* ‘to moan’ (lit. moan do);

(D) *sohbat kardan* ‘to talk’ (lit. talk do), *pech pech kardan* ‘to whisper’ (lit. whisper do), *goftegu kardan* ‘to converse’ (lit. conversation do), *harf zadan* ‘to talk’ (lit. talk hit), *sokhan goftan* ‘to speak’ (lit. speech tell).

Another point to consider in teaching Persian CPs is incorporation. That is, for each incorporating verb, there is a corresponding non-incorporating form that has the same meaning. However, the incorporating form is not always have semantically transparent and we may also encounter a change in meaning in this group of CPs.

(24) *Ali zahr RA be Hossein dâd.*

Ali poison OBJ to Hossein give.3SG.PST

‘Ali gave the poison to Hossein’.

(25) *Ali be Hossein zahr dâd.*

Ali to Hossein poison give.3SG.PST

‘Ali poisoned Hossein’.

In sentence (24), the simple verb *dâdan* ‘to give’ is used and the exchange of *zahr* ‘poison’ between Ali and Hossein is described. However, in sentence (25), we are faced with a CP in the infinitive form, where *zahr dâdan* means ‘to poison’ and not just a simple exchange. Therefore, it is recommended to teach CPs with their non-incorporating forms in order to fully comprehend the meaning of the Persian CP.

5. Suggestions on designing lesson plans for teaching Persian CPs using PCxG

As mentioned in 2.2, PCxG is an approach to language teaching that emphasises the importance of teaching language as a system of constructions rather than just a collection of isolated words and rules. In teaching Persian CPs, teachers can draw on principles of PCxG (Herbst 2016; Pakzadian 2023) to help students understand the underlying structures of these constructions and how they are used in context. One way to do this is to provide explicit instruction on the various components that make up a CP, such as the light verb, adjective, or the noun. By breaking down the construction into its component parts, teachers can help students understand the meaning and function of each part and how they work together to create the whole.

A key principle of PCxG is the importance of providing ample input and opportunities for practice. Teachers can accomplish this by using a variety of authentic materials that feature Persian CPs, such as news articles, movies, and television shows. They can also design activities that require students to use CPs in context, such as role-playing exercises, discussions, and writing assignments. By exposing students to a wide range of CPs and providing opportunities for practice, teachers can help them develop a better understanding of these constructions and how they are used in real-world communication. In their classes, teachers may consider following this step-by-step guide:

- Introduce learners to Persian CP constructions and their structure.
- Teach verb-argument constructions (VACs): Introduce VACs and provide examples. Explain that VACs are a type of complex predicate that consist of a verb and its associated arguments.
- Drawing upon Pedagogical Construction Grammar (PCxG), emphasise the importance of learning language in meaningful chunks, rather than isolated words or structures.
- Focus on frequent CPs in Persian, such as *gerye kardan* ‘to cry’, *zang zadan* ‘to call’, *narahat shodan* ‘to get upset’, etc. Provide examples and explain the meanings of each construction.

- Once learners have mastered the basic construction of a CP, scaffold to more complex constructions. This can include constructions with multiple arguments, or constructions that require specific word order.
- Write a sample Persian sentence containing a CP on the board, such as (26) *Man dâr-am be dust-am telephon mi-zan-am.*
1SG be.PRS-1SG to friend-1SG.POSS telephone PROG-hit-1SG
'I am calling my friend.'
- Analyze the construction of the CP and break it down into its component parts. Explain the role of each word or particle in the construction and how they work together to convey meaning. For example, explain the structure of (26) in the sentence, including the verb *zadan* 'to hit' (*telephon zadan* 'to call'), the preposition *be* 'to', and the noun *dust* 'friend'.
- Provide more examples of Persian CPs and explain the different types of additional elements that can be added to the verb to form a CP (see 2.2).
- Hand out worksheets or handouts with exercises on forming and using Persian CPs.
- Provide practice activities to help learners recognise and produce the construction. These can include gap-filling exercises, sentence completion tasks, and translation exercises.
- Provide feedback on learners' production of the construction, focusing on accuracy and fluency.
- Provide practice activities that contextualise the use of CPs in real-world situations. This can include role-plays, dialogues, and simulations.
- Use video or audio materials to provide examples of CPs in context and to give learners a chance to hear and see the structures being used in real-life situations.
- Review the main points of the lesson, including the structure and types of Persian CPs.
- Ask learners to provide feedback on the lesson, including what they found challenging, what they enjoyed, and what they would like to learn more about in future lessons.

- Provide additional resources or support to learners who need extra help with the material.
- Summarise the lesson and thank the learners for their participation.
- Encourage learners to be creative and use CPs in their own writing and speaking and daily activities. Provide opportunities for learners to share their own examples and receive feedback from the teacher and peers.

5.1 Sample tasks to practise Persian CPs

5.1.1 Task 1: Match the CPs with their corresponding meanings

Objective: To develop understanding and recognition of Persian CPs and their corresponding meanings.

Instructions:

- (1) The instructor provides a list of Persian CPs and their corresponding meanings. The list should include a variety of CPs, with different verbs and noun/adjective complements.
- (2) The students are asked to match the CP with their corresponding meanings. The matching can be done in pairs or small groups.
- (3) Once the matching is done, the instructor can provide feedback and lead a discussion about the meaning of each CP.

Example list of CPs and their meanings:

- (a) *dast dâdan* = ‘to shake hands’ (lit. hand give)
- (b) *dast keshidan* ‘to give up’ (lit. hand pull)
- (c) *pa feshâri kardan* ‘to insist on’ (lit. foot pressure do)
- (d) *seda zadan* ‘to call’ (lit. sound hit)

Variation: To make the task more challenging, the instructor can provide only the verbs or noun/adjective complements and ask the students to match them with the appropriate CPs and meanings.

5.1.2 Task 2: Identifying and analysing Persian CPs in authentic texts

Objective: To identify and analyse CPs in authentic Persian texts and develop a deeper understanding of the constructional patterns and meaning-making potential of these constructions.

Materials: Authentic Persian texts (e.g. news articles, short stories, etc.) with examples of CPs, worksheets or handouts with guiding questions, and CxG-based dictionaries or other resources for checking the vocabulary.

Procedure:

- (1) Introduce Persian CPs, and provide examples of the structures, their components, and their meaning-making potential.
- (2) Divide the class into groups and provide each group with an authentic Persian text that contains examples of CPs.
- (3) Instruct the groups to read the text, identify the CPs, and analyse their structure and meaning. Encourage them to discuss their findings and interpretations with each other.
- (4) Provide worksheets or handouts with guiding questions to help students analyse the CPs, such as:
 - a. What are the components of the CP?
 - b. How do the components contribute to the overall meaning of the predicate?
 - c. What other words or constructions in the sentence or text interact with the CP to create meaning?
- (5) Ask each group to present their findings and interpretations to the class and encourage discussion and debate about the different interpretations and CP constructions.
- (6) Summarise the key points and insights that emerge from the discussion and encourage students to reflect on their own language use and how they might incorporate CPs into their own Persian production.

Assessment: Students can be assessed on their ability to identify and analyse CPs in the texts provided, their participation in group discussions and class

debates, and their ability to apply what they have learned to their own language production.

5.1.3 Task 3: Identifying CPs in Persian Corpora

Objective: To recognise and analyse CPs in Persian texts/dialogues using corpus-based techniques.

Materials:

- Access to a corpus of Persian texts such as *TalkBank Persian Corpus* (Rasooli, Kouhestani & Moloodi 2013) on Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff, Rychlý, Smrž & Tugwell 2014).
- Worksheets with examples of CPs in Persian, such as *dust dashtan* ‘to like/love’ (lit. friend have)
- Annotation tools, such as AntConc or Sketch Engine.

CQL: [word="دوست"] [lemma="داشتن"]

normal token + [word="دوست"] + [lemma="داشتن"] + [+]

USE THIS CQL ➔

result example ▾

کسانی را که دوستم ندارند گریه کنم برای کسانی که هیچگاه غم مرا ند
تا کردن دستمال سفره به شکل گل گرچه پیچیده و مشکل به نظر - >
که حذف شد افراد سانگ اوک در حال بسته بندی بارند که چورای و ای
فوری متنی را بنویسند و تمام کنند ، اما برای نوشتن متن « افسانه ج
که عکسهای خود را در سایت ما ببینید آنها را برای ما ایمیل کنید تا ما
ولی به گمانم درک کردن و فهمیدن آن بسی مشکل باشد این بار من ؛
می‌تونه تبدیل به نفرت بشه و یا حداقل تبدیل به بی‌تفاوتی . فقط م
سپید ، رباعی ، غزل نقاشی کلماتند وقتی چشمانت را نمی
من از بازی هفت سنگ بدم میاد . می‌ترسم انقدر سنگ روی سنگ >
مامان ! به سوال بپرسم ؟ </p><p> چون خودخواهی هایم ، نفر

دوست دارم
دوست دارم
دوست دارم
دوست دارند
دوست دارید
دوست میدارم
دوست داشتن
دوست دارم
دوست ندارم
دوست ندارم
دوست ندارم

ن حقیرت ببخش و دردهای عظیم را به جانم ریز . . . دکتر علی شریعتی
ا به بهشت نمی‌روند ، ماموریت آقای شادی ، مجسمه ، من زمین را ،
من کسی دیگه‌ای را </p><p> GetBC (263) | و ساعت 13: 54
مونگ « در ایران است . اغلب فیلمنامه‌نویسان ایرانی حوصله ندارد و
نوشته شده توسط علی اکبر در دوشنبه 23 اذر 1388 و ساعت 9: 40 .
؛ الحق که رسم دوستی را هم به جا آورد و به دوست شهیدش پیوست
می‌زدم عشق نمی‌تونه منجر به قتل بشه چون منشا قتل نفرتیه . ولی
م توفیقی ————— شعرهای قدیمی خانم نسرين تهرانی را نیز
از دل تنگ تو نمی شود برمی گردم ؛ چون دلتنگت </p><p> ... است
شق طلب میکنم و آرامش . پروردگارا به من بیاموز که چگونه دیگران را

Figure 6: Screenshot of Sketch Engine CQL search for *dust dashtan* in the *TalkBank Persian Corpus*

Procedure:

- (1) Introduce Persian CPs and provide examples using the worksheet.
- (2) Divide the class into small groups and provide them access to the corpus of Persian texts/talks.

- (3) Instruct each group to search the corpus for examples of CPs and to record their findings in a shared document or spreadsheet.
- (4) Ask each group to identify the most common CP they found in the corpus and to provide examples of its usage in context.
- (5) Instruct each group to use an annotation tool to analyse the usage of the CPs they found, looking for patterns in their grammatical structure and collocational patterns with other words.
- (6) After the groups have completed their analysis, reconvene as a class and ask each group to present their findings, highlighting the most interesting or surprising results.
- (7) Discuss the patterns and structures found in the CPs and how they relate to the meaning conveyed by the predicate.
- (8) Ask students to create their own examples of CPs using the patterns and structures they have identified and share them with the class.

Assessment: Students' comprehension and ability to recognise CPs can be assessed through their participation in the group work and their ability to present and analyse their findings. Students' ability to create their own examples of CPs can also be assessed as an individual task.

6. Conclusion

This paper advocates for the great potential of Pedagogical Construction Grammar (PCxG) in teaching Persian Complex Predicates (CPs). It provides practical recommendations for applying PCxG principles in the design of lesson plans, supplementary teaching materials, activities, and tasks. PCxG represents a confluence of Cognitive Grammar (CxG), second language acquisition, applied linguistics, and corpus linguistics, combining the strengths of each in language pedagogy.

Despite increasing interest in PCxG for language teaching and learning, several questions remain unanswered. For instance, it is unclear how effective PCxG is in teaching different types of constructions or at different proficiency

levels. Additionally, more empirical studies are required to investigate the effectiveness of PCxG in real-world language classrooms.

Future research could help incorporate constructional research outcomes into foreign/second language learning. This could involve situating CxG-based syntax theories in an applied linguistics context to enhance learners' use of language.

A pedagogical approach to teaching Persian CPs may be of interest to Persian linguists and teachers who have been seeking diverse methods and strategies to enhance learners' knowledge of CPs and improve foreign language learning outcomes. Nonetheless, much remains to be learned in this regard.

As a final remark, it is essential to note that the PCxG-based instructional ideas presented here are recommendations, and the efficacy of the approach needs to be validated in further experimental studies.

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