

## **Encoding the Agent in Persian Passive Construction: A Cognitive Approach**

**Sahar Bahrami-Khorshid<sup>1</sup>, Arsalan Golfam<sup>2</sup>**

Received: 20/11/2012

Accepted: 21/6/2013

### **Abstract**

**This paper is an attempt to explore the prepositions used to encode the agent in Persian passive constructions. According to Givón (1983) the main function of the passive constructions is to defocus the agent. As the general trend in Persian is to omit this defocused agent, we will stylistically divide the passive constructions into two main sub branches, namely unmarked and marked passives according to whether or not the agent is included. Having analyzed the prepositions using in the passive construction (e.g. *tævæssot-e*, *be dæst-e*, *ba*, *æz suy-e*, *æz tæræf-e*, and *be væsile-y-e*) a complete semantic characterization of the type of agent that normally occurs with these prepositions will be provided. The results indicate that, in contrast to some linguists who treated the prepositions in the passive construction as stylistic forms, they are not always interchangeable; in fact they are meaningful which have a prototype for the type of agent that co-occurs with them.**

**Keywords: Agent, Preposition, Passive Construction, Cognitive Grammar**

---

1. Assistant Professor of Linguistics, Tarbiat Modares University, Iran. sahbahrami@modares.ac.ir

2. Associate Professor, Tarbiat Modares University, Iran.

## 1. Introduction

Almost all the previous studies focused on the passive construction in Persian share a hypothesis which is basically rooted from Chomsky (1957): the passive construction is derived from an underlying active counterpart in which the passive transformation moves the underlying object into subject position, the demoted subject is codified by 'by-phrase', and some formal changes occur on the morphology of the active verb. However, Langacker (1982: 57-58) claims that the space [cognitive] grammar analysis differs from generativist's in all points. He states "passive clauses do not derive from active clauses. All three grammatical morphemes are meaningful and figure actively in the semantic structure of the passive expressions. The object of by is simply the object of by: it is not demoted, and at not level is it the clausal subject". On the basis of the principles of Cognitive Grammar in which all the constituents are meaningful, it is assumed that in Persian the passive construction is an independent phenomenon consisted of three basic meaningful components: 1) non-verbal element (X in general), 2) the verbal element (*šod-æn*),

and 3) a preposition phrase encoding the agent. This combination has been illustrated in the following schemata:

(a) [PASSIVE]/[NP+(P-NP)+X+'šodæn']

where X = N<sub>EV</sub>, A, PERF<sub>3</sub>, and P<sub>nom</sub>

Ignoring the other components, this paper is fully concentrated on how the agent ('P-NP' in the above schemata) is encoded.

Methodologically, this study follows Langacker's analysis of *by-phrase* in English passive and Arnett's description of *von* (from/by), *durch* (through) and *mit* (with) in the German Passive (2004).

Langacker (1982:69) establishes that there are many meaningful uses of 'by' which form a lexical network. There is a link between the predicates that occur with 'by', although the predicates differ. The predicates of 'by' differ with respect to the domains in which this relation occurs. The meaning of the preposition 'by' is basically the same, but it is the domain that differs. He believes that the passive 'by' continues the pattern established in the active sentences. In other words, the usage of prepositions in the passive is motivated by their uses in other contexts. They are an extension of one of the meanings of these prepositions in the active.

This article includes four other sections: in § 2 some controversial issue on Agent-Phrase in Persian will be provided. In § 3 two types of passives will be introduced according to whether or not the agent is included. § 4 which is the main part of the paper concentrating on the prepositions used to encode the agent. In this part, we will also try to provide a complete semantic characterization of the agent occurs with the prepositions. The last section will naturally be devoted to results and findings.

## 2. Agent Phrase: A Controversial Issue in Persian

As far as we know the preposition phrase encoding the agent has not been deeply investigated by scholars who work on the Persian passive. Almost all of them (e.g. Golfam et al. (2006)) consider different prepositions encoding the agent as stylistic forms. Moyne is another linguist who speaks about preposition phrase in the Persian passive and according to his analysis concludes that it isn't agentive but instrumental. Accordingly, Moyne (1974) was the first linguist who claimed that there is no passive in Persian and the 'so called' passive is in fact an *inchoative*

construction.

As Naderi (2010) asserts Moyne's article is a prototypical example of what Croft (2001: xiii-xv; 2007: 464-472) calls the *reductionist formal/componential approach to syntax*. Moyne has brought two reasons against the existence of the passive construction in Persian. In addition to historical reasons, his second argument for the non-existence of the passive in Persian roots from the stylistic markedness of the agentive passive in this language. However, cross-linguistic studies reveal that this fact is not limited to Persian: there are many languages that either do not have an agentive passive or the agentless passive is their unmarked Passive (e.g. Limbu, Amharic, Latvian, Turkic and Kurdish) (Siewierska 1984; Haig 1998). Moyne believes that the 'so-called' passive in Persian is actually an inchoative construction to which a 'by-phrase' (i.e. Agent-phrase) is conjoined, and should the 'by-phrase' be omitted we will see the real inchoative structure of the 'so called' passive (Moyne 1974: 251-255).

Regardless of the fact that some of his examples (his evidence) are against our intuition as Persian native speakers, the main factor responsible for the confusion of

inchoative and passive by Moyne is the double function of *šodæn* as the marker of both constructions. He believes that the oblique phrase in Persian agented passive is not really an agent-phrase but rather an instrumental construction.

According to him “[t]hese instrumental constructions do not clearly specify an agent for the action” (Moyne 1974: 251); so the action is perceived as happened spontaneously and does not involve any agency. While it is true for many of his non-passive examples, there are some examples in his work which cannot truly be explained by his claim. Let us take Moyne’s original example:

- (1) æz dæst-e æli košt-a  
 from hand-of Ali killed  
 šod.  
 became  
 ‘he was killed by Ali’.  
*(Moyne’s original example)*

Moyne (1974: 251) interprets this example as follows:

*“[It] means that Ali was instrumental in the killing of someone, but it does not necessarily mean that he personally performed the killing”.*

What which was considered as Moyne’s base of analysis is with no doubt ungrammatical to all Persian native

speakers (at least in that variety of Persian spoken in the geography of Iran). He probably means the following example:

- (2) be dæst-e æli košt-e  
 to hand-Ez Ali killed  
 šod Ø.  
 become.PAST 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG  
 ‘S/he was killed by Ali’.

As Naderi (2010: 30) correctly points out Moyne’s analysis is obviously a wrong interpretation. The only possible interpretation of (2) is the one which takes *Ali* as the agent of *košt-æn* ‘to kill’. Moreover, it is not actually possible to encode a real instrument with the preposition ‘*be dast-e*’, as illustrated in (3):

- (3) \*be dæst-e tofæng košt-e  
 to hand-Ez gun killed  
 šod Ø.  
 become.PAST 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG  
 Lit. ‘S/he was killed with the hand of gun’.  
 ‘S/he was killed by gun.’

*adapted from Naderi (2010: 30)*

Keeping these points in mind, we would like to demonstrate that:

- the prepositional phrase that encodes the agent is integral, but not required, part of the passive construction in Persian,
- the prepositions used to encode the agent are meaningful and not *purely* stylistic forms (against what Golfam

et al. claim),

- the prepositional phrase used in the passive construction is agentive rather than instrumental (against what Moyne claims).

### 3. Passive Construction in Persian: A Stylistic Classification

On the basis of a *stylistic* categorization we will divide Persian passive construction into two sub branches: 1) the agented passive which is stylistically marked and rather new in Persian. It is highly restricted to written language; 2) the agentless passive which is unmarked and is frequent in both spoken and written register.

Almost all the works on the Persian passive mention the novelty of the *agented* passive construction and some scholars have claimed that it is the result of translation from European languages (Najafi (1987) in particular). Of course, there are so many languages in which the agented passive is treated as marked but acceptable. The passive in Kurmanji (a northern dialect of Kurdish) is such an instance; however an agent might be introduced to the passive construction through the circumposition *ji aliyê...ve* ‘lit. from the side of’ (Thackston 2006: 68).

Turkish is another language in which the unmarked passive form is agentless, but “the introduction of the agent, though somewhat unnatural with the Turkish passive, is possible” (Comrie and Thompson 2007: 349). In Turkish the preposition *tæræfindæn* (from the side of) encodes the agent into the passive construction as exemplified in (4):

- (4) mektub    hæsæn    tæræfindæn  
 letter     Hassan    by  
 yaz        -il        -di.  
 write     PASS    3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG.  
 The letter was written by Hassan.

(Comrie and Thompson 2007:350)

As it has been revealed in schemata (a) the passive construction in Persian is a two (or more-participant) construction in which the agentive nominal is almost always omitted. Van Oosten (1986b) quantifies the occurrence of the agent in English and finds that it is omitted from the majority of passives. In line with English and German (Arnett 2004), the study of data in this article reveals that the same findings also hold true for Persian. The general trend to omit the agent is also present in the corpus used in this paper; the agent is omitted in 403 of 452 examples or 89% of the time.

On the basis of this fact and in order to enhance the reliability of the research, we

designed a questionnaire in which the participants were asked to rewrite some passive sentences<sup>1</sup> with a preposition phrase encoding the agent. According to both corpus and questionnaire, Persian native speakers use the following (compound) prepositions in order to encode the agent:

- (a) **tævæssot-e**  
intermediation-Ez<sup>2</sup>  
by, by the intermediation of
- (b) **be dæst-e**  
to hand-Ez  
by the hand of
- (c) **ba**  
with
- (d) **æz suy-e**  
from/of direction/side- Ez  
on behalf of
- (e) **æz tæræf-e**  
from/of direction/side- Ez  
on behalf of
- (f) **be væsile-y-e**  
to instrument-Ez

Regarding this hypothesis that the prepositions in the passive follow their

1. The passive sentences in this questionnaire are taken from Hamshahri Corpus of Tehran University Database available at <http://ece.ut.ac.ir/dbrg/hamshahri/>.

2. 'ezafe construction marker'. Ezafe in Persian is an unstressed vowel –e which appears in the following positions: [N-Ez N], [N-Ez A], [N-Ez possessor], [N-Ez A-Ez A], [Pronoun-Ez A], [First Name-Ez Last Name].

usage in the active, we will study the occurrence of the above prepositions in the passive construction.

#### 4. Prepositions Used to Encode the Agent

##### 4.1. *tævæssot-e* in Active Clauses

In contrast to English preposition 'by' which is polysemous, the semantic domain of *tævæssot-e* in Persian is restricted to the domain of responsibility. In the abstract domain of responsibility, *tævæssot-e* is used to indicate the *immediate* origin of something, that is the originator or cause.

Consider the following examples:

- (5) ... šahed-e edžray-e musiqi-y-e  
witness-Ez performance music-Ez  
zende **tævæssot-e**  
alive intermediation-Ez  
**šæhram nazeri** xah  
Shahram Nazeri want-PRES  
-im bud.  
1<sup>st</sup>pers.PL BE.PAST  
'...we will witness the performance of live music by Shahram Nazeri'.
- (6) enqelab-i dær sistem-e  
revolution-INDEF in system-Ez  
danešgahi-y-e engelis  
university-Ez England  
**tævæssot-e** **æsatid** dær  
intermediation-Ez professors in  
hal-e šeklgiri æst  
position-Ez shaping BE.PRES.  
Ø.  
3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG  
'A revolution is shaping in the university system of England by professors'.

These examples draw on the knowledge of speakers that individuals are capable of carrying out actions and creating objects (as well as more abstract entities). Typically, individuals are responsible for the object or abstract things, and in this way, are considered as the originators (Langacker 1982:70).

Both example (5) and (6) show a trajector<sup>1</sup> for *tævæssot-e* that is the landmark of the process that brought the event into existence. The landmark of *tævæssot-e* corresponds to the trajector of the base process. This configuration is represented by the following figure (Langacker 1982:70).

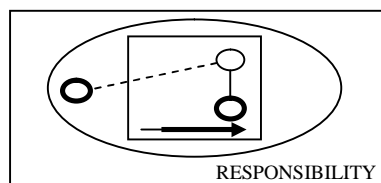


Fig.1

In the above figure which represents English 'by', German 'von' and Persian

1. In any relationship, varying degrees of prominence are conferred on its participants. The most prominent participant, called the trajector (TR), is the entity construed as being located, evaluated, or described. Impressionistically, it can be characterized as the primary focus within the relationship. Often some other participant is made prominent as a secondary focus. If so, this is called a landmark (LM).

*tævæssot-e* in the domain of responsibility, the process and its originator are located within the domain of responsibility. This represents the construal that the landmark of *tævæssot-e* is the originator of the trajector. The landmark corresponds to the immediate cause or originator of a process.

#### 4.2. *tævæssot-e* in Passive Clauses

The usage of *tævæssot-e* with an originator is most closely related to the use of *tævæssot-e* in the passive construction. This claim is on the basis of Langacker's (1982) analysis of the English preposition 'by' that establishes the link between the use of 'by' with an originator in the abstract domain of responsibility and the use of 'by' to encode the agent in the passive. The claim is that a similar link can be established between the use of *tævæssot-e* with an originator in the domain of responsibility and the use of *tævæssot-e* with the agent in the passive. Consider the following examples:

- (7) u            (tævæssot-e            ræʔis-e  
s/he        (intermediation-Ez        head-Ez  
bæxš)            be hæme  
department)    to all  
moʔærefi        šod  
introduction    become.PAST  
Ø.

- 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG.  
'S/he was introduced to all (by the head of department)'.
- (8) dær-ha-y-e estadiyom yek  
door-PL-Ez stadium one  
saæt piš æz šoru?-e  
hour before from beginning-Ez  
mosabeqe (**tævæssot-e**  
match (intermediation-Ez  
**mæs?ulin-e værzešgah)** baz  
responsible-Ez club) open  
šod Ø.  
become.PAST 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG.  
'The doors of stadium were opened  
(by the caretakers), one hour before  
the beginning of the match'.

As it was pointed out, in Persian passive sentences, *tævæssot-e* is used with the originator or cause of an action. The preposition *tævæssot-e* occurs thirty-two times in the corpus and in almost two third of the sentences of our questionnaire. The originator or cause is prototypically human in that it is animate, potent and able to act volitionally. Let's consider the following examples<sup>1</sup>:

- (9) xæbær-e extelaf-e anha  
news-Ez problems-Ez their  
**tævæssot-e moræbi** dær  
intermediation-Ez coach in  
resane-ha montæšer šod  
media-PL spread become-PAST  
Ø.  
3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG.

1. These examples are taken from both our corpus and questionnaire.

'The news of their problems was  
spreaded by the coach'.

- (10) næqše-y-e elmi-y-e kešvær  
map-Ez scientific-Ez country  
**tævæssot-e ræ?is džomhur**  
intermediation-Ez head republic  
e?lam šod  
declaration become.PAST  
Ø.  
3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG.  
'The scientific map of the country  
was declared by president'.

Similar to the kinds of agents co-occur with 'von' in German (Arnett 2004: 131), in examples (9) and (10) the agents are human, and furthermore, they act volitionally as the source or cause of the action of the verb. The agents are potent because they affect a change in the second participant (*xæbær-e extelaf*, *næqše-y-e elmi-y-e kešvær*). These agents, therefore, correspond quite closely to the prototype for an agent.

The prototype of an animate, volitional agent can be extended via metonymy to organizations, corporations, countries, governmental entities and other collectives that are construed to act as a single body (ibid). For example:

- (11) in damaene **tævæssot-e**  
this domain intermediation-Ez  
**gugel** edžare dad-e  
google rent give.PAST-PPRT



mi- šæv -æd.  
 PROG become.PRES 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG.  
 ‘This domain will be rented by Google’.

- (12) dær 1358 vey be hæmrah-e  
 in 1358 s/he along with-Ez  
 xanevade -ʔ-æš **tævæssot-e**  
 family his/her intermediation-Ez  
**dolæt-e** **æraq** exradʒ  
 govenmen-Ez Iraq dismissal  
 šod Ø.  
 become.PAST 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG.  
 ‘In 1358, he was dismissed by  
 Iraq government along his family’.

- (13) došmæn **tævæssot-e** **ærteš**  
 enemy intermediation-Ez army  
 be æqæb rand-e  
 to back send.PAST.PPRT  
 šod Ø.  
 become.PAST. 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG.  
 ‘The enemy was sent back by the army’.

In (11) and (12), the company and the governing bodies of countries are given the ability to act as a human as they rent something or dismiss someone. Companies, governments and countries are often seen as the representatives of their members or people, whether or not they actually represent them accurately (ibid). They are volitionally able to do like a human agent does. The second participants in the clause, *in damæne* and *vey be hæmrah-e xanevade-ʔ-æš* are affected by the agents. Therefore, these social organizations behave like prototypical agents. Example

(13) shows a group of individuals that acts like a single animate, potent and volitional agent. The *enemy* is affected by the actions of the *ærteš*. This example shows that collective bodies can be construed to act as one prototypical agent. The following figure is suggested for the passive counterpart:

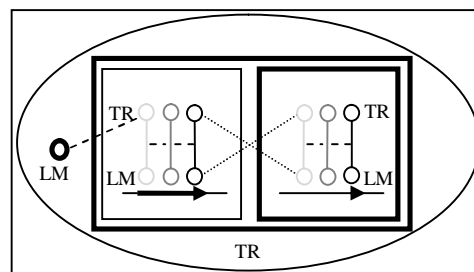


Fig. 2

#### 4.3. *be dæst-e* in Active Clauses

The expression ‘*be dæst*’ in Persian is fairly frequent: in combination with the verbal element *aværdæn* ‘to bring’ (to earn), in combination with nouns to represent manner *gitar be dæst* (someone with guitar in his/her hands), in adverb *dæst be dæst* (transferring something through different people). Like *tævæssot-e*, the compound nominal preposition *be dæst-e* occurs in abstract domain of responsibility, it shows the originator or cause of something. Consider the following examples:

- (14) ...hakemiyæt hærekæt-e ma

...government movement-Ez us  
 ra **be dæst-e xodemān**  
 DO to hand-Ez ourselves  
 modiriyæt mi- kon  
 management PROG do.PRES  
 -æd.  
 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG  
 ‘...the government is managing  
 our movement by ourselves’.

(15) ešqāl-e æntakiye **be**  
 occupation-Ez Andalusā to  
**dæst-e sælibiyun** ruydad-i  
 hand-Ez Crusaders event-INDEF  
 æst Ø ke...  
 BE.PRES 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG that  
 ‘The occupation of Andalusā by  
 Crusaders is an event that...’

As it is illustrated, the agent in the above sentences is human and volitional. In these sentences the landmark is the direct originator of the action.

#### 4.4. *be dæst-e* in Passive Clauses

The compound preposition *be dæst-e* is another preposition which occurs six times in our corpus. The participants who have inserted a preposition phrase into the passive sentences of the questionnaire have often used *be dæst-e* as an alternative form of *tævæssot-e* (written as *tævæssot-e/be dæst-e*). But the point is that they have used this preposition in sentences in which:

- the agent is either human (therefore a

volitional agent) or the feature of human (having hand) can metaphorically be extended to,

- the action/event represented in the passive form is done through hands; we call these kinds of actions/events ‘*handi-actions*’.

(16) in diplomat ke **be dæst-e**  
 this diplomat that to hand-Ez  
**polis** dæstgir šod  
 police arrest become.PAST  
 Ø...  
 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG.  
 ‘This diplomat who was arrested  
 by police...’

(17) mæsaʔel-e mæntæqe bayæd  
 problems-Ez region must  
**be dæst-e kešvār-hā-y-e**  
 to hand-Ez country-PL-Ez  
**mæntæqe** hæl šæv  
 region solve become.PRES  
 -æd.  
 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG  
 ‘The problems of the region must  
 be solved by the countries of the region’.

Directly analogous to *tævæssot-e*, the prototypical agent encoded by *be dæst-e* (human) can be extended via metonymy to organizations, corporations, countries, governmental entities and other collectives that are construed to act as a human (i.e. personification).

Predictably, the landmark and the trajector of *be dæst-e* are located within the

domain of responsibility. In the passive construction the landmark is construed as the cause or originator of a process. The preposition *be dæst-e* can be used to represent the originator in the domain of responsibility in both active (Figure 1) and passive constructions (Figure 2). Now consider the following examples:

- (18) \*dærs            **be**    **dæst-e**  
 lesson            to    hand-Ez  
**moʔælem**        tædris        šod  
 teacher            teaching      become.PAST.  
 Ø.  
 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG.  
 ‘The lesson was taught with the hand of teacher’.

Example (18) is ungrammatical because the event encoded in the passive is not a handi-action; e.g. *tædris kærdæn* is not an action done necessarily through hands.

- (11) \*in        damæne    **be**    **dæst-e**  
 this    domain    to    hand-Ez  
**gugel**        edʒare    dad-e  
 Google    rent        give.PAST-PPRT  
 mi-        šæv                    -æd.  
 PROG    become.PRES    3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG.  
 ‘This domain will be rented by Google’.

This sentence is also ungrammatical because *having hand* is a feature restricted to what which is animate. Thus, it cannot be extended to *Google*. The fact that *tævæssot-e* and *be dæst-e* are not always interchangeable suggests that these

prepositions are meaningful.

#### 4.5. *ba* in Active Clauses

The preposition *ba* ‘with’ is polysemous. Yussefi Rad (2008) mentions a number of functions for ‘*ba*’ (e.g. accompaniment, instrumentality, manner, contrastive, addition, reason, possessive relation, and etc.) in Persian. Here, we will only focus on the first three functions. In active clauses, *ba* is used to express accompaniment, instrumentality, and manner. Consider the following examples:

- (19) **ba**    **mæn**    bi-    ya  
 with    me        IMP    come  
 Come with me!

- (20) dæst    -æm    ra    **ba**    **aqu**  
 hand    my        DO    with    knife  
 borid                    -æm.  
 cut-PAST    1<sup>st</sup> pers.SG.  
 I cut my hand with knife.

- (21) era    **ba**    **tæmæsxor**    hærf  
 why    with    ridicule        speech  
 mi-        zæn                    -i?  
 PROG    hit                    2<sup>nd</sup> pers.SG.  
 Why are you speaking ridiculously?

As Arnett (2004) points out the combination of instrumentality and accompaniment is one common to many languages. King (1988:559) states that “*since an instrument is controlled by an*

agent, it must also accompany the agent. Hence it is no accident that the preposition marking an instrument is the same in many languages as the preposition used to mark accompaniment". On the basis of this fact, Lakoff and Johnson (1980:134) give the combination of instrumentality and accompaniment as an example of 'metaphorical coherence in grammar', as reflected by the metaphor 'instrument as a companion'.

Figure 3 shows the preposition *ba* as it is used to express accompaniment (Langacker 1987:218):

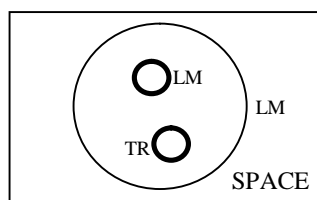


Fig. 3

The trajector is located with respect to two landmarks. The trajector of the preposition *ba* is located in the neighborhood of its landmark. Indeed, the neighborhood itself is also a landmark (Langacker 1987:217). However, the two landmarks differ in terms of their salience. The landmark that is located near the trajector is profiled and the neighborhood is not profiled.

#### 4.6. *ba* in passive clauses

In Persian passive sentences *ba* is used with the originator or cause of the event which is not animate. Consider the following examples:

(22) žapon æz ahar su **ba**  
 Japan from four side with  
**ab** ehate šod-e  
 water surround become.PAST-PPRT  
 æst Ø.  
 BE.PRES 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG  
 'Japan is surrounded by water from four sides'.

(23) dær nağæhan **ba** fešar-e  
 door suddenly with force-Ez  
**bad** baz šod  
 wind open become.PAST  
 Ø.  
 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG  
 'The door was suddenly opened by the force of wind'.

(24) dʒaygah-e faʔel **ba** mæfʔul  
 position-Ez subject with object  
 ešqal mi- šæv  
 occupation PROG become.PRES  
 -æd.  
 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG.  
 'The subject position is occupied by object'.

In addition to inanimate objects, natural forces are inanimate sources of action that are potent and they also fit the extension of the prototype for agents with *ba*. Natural forces are not normally under the control of an outside agent and they are usually

perceived to be the sole cause of the action (Arnett 2004:141). This type of agent is construed as one that acts under its own power to cause a condition or process to come about (King 1988:565). The point is that *ba* is totally restricted to inanimate agent. It makes the sentence ungrammatical if it comes with animate agent:

- (9) \*xæbær-e extelaf-e anha  
 news-Ez problems-Ez their  
**ba moræbi** dær resane-ha  
 with coach in media-PL  
 montæšer šod  
 broadcasting become-PAST  
 Ø.  
 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG.  
 ‘The news of their problems was  
 broadcasted by the coach’.
- (10) \*næqše-y-e elmi-y-e kešvær  
 map-Ez scientific-Ez country  
**ba** ræʔis dʒomhur eʔlam  
 with head republic declaration  
 šod Ø.  
 become-PAST 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG.  
 ‘The scientific map of the country  
 was declared by the president’.

#### 4.7. æz suy-e/æz tæræf-e in Active Clauses

*æz suy-e* is the formal counterpart of *æz tæræf-e*. They can easily be exchanged without any semantic difference. Similar to

---

1. *moræbi* in this example is no longer agent. If we consider it as a grammatical sentence ‘*ba*’ encodes contrastive meaning.

the English preposition ‘*by*’, these two prepositions have some related meanings. The domains under consideration here are space and responsibility. In its most basic domain, space, the prepositions ‘*æz suy-e/æz tæræf-e*’ are used to express motion from a point of origin. Consider the following examples:

- (25) næsim-i **æz suy-e**  
 breeze-INDEF from side-Ez  
**šomal** væzidæn gereft  
 north blowing take.PAST  
 Ø.  
 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG.  
 ‘Some breeze blew from the North’.
- (26) lotfæn **æz tæræf-e** **rast-e**  
 please from side-Ez right-Ez  
 xod hærekæt kon  
 self movement do.PRES  
 -id.  
 2<sup>nd</sup> pers.PL  
 ‘Please move from your right side’.

In addition to their use in the spatial domain as a preposition, *æz suy-e/æz tæræf-e* also expresses the source from which an action is accomplished. For example:

- (27) name-y-i **æz tæræf-e**  
 letter-INDEF from side-Ez  
**vezaræt-e** **olum** dæryaft  
 ministry-Ez science receive  
 kærd -æm ke...  
 do.PAST 1<sup>st</sup> pers.SG. that  
 ‘I received a letter from the  
 ministry of science that...’

- (28) mæn name ra æz tæræf-e  
 I letter DO from side-Ez  
 šoma emza kærd  
 you signature do.PAST  
 -æm  
 1<sup>st</sup> pers.SG.  
 'I signed the letter on behalf of you'.

Like 'durch' in German in these examples, the nouns that occur with æz suy-e/æz tæræf-e are the origins out of which the action travels from agent to patient. But the point is that in contrast to the noun occurs with direct prepositions, the trajector of æz suy-e/æz tæræf-e doesn't have an immediate agentive role on the action chain. Thus, direct prepositions occur with an agent that is the immediate originator or cause of an action; however, æz suy-e/æz tæræf-e is used to express a source or origin from which an action/event is brought about. An agent used with the preposition æz suy-e/æz tæræf-e is not construed as the direct cause of the process; it is merely the source of energy that doesn't transfer energy to goal by itself. The following figure is

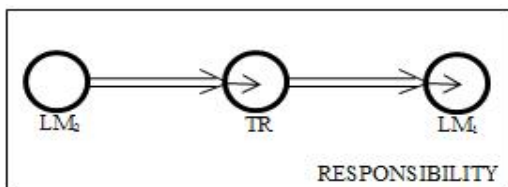


Fig.4

suggested for æz suy-e/æz tæræf-e in the domain of responsibility.

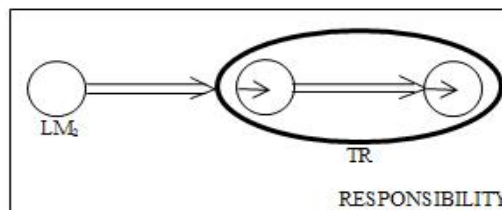


Fig.5

#### 4.8. æz suy-e / æz tæræf-e in Passive Clauses

The meaning of æz suy-e / æz tæræf-e in passive clauses follows the pattern established in active clauses. The diagram illustrated the transfer of energy among the participants is the same for both active and passive sentences. The trajector of æz suy-e/æz tæræf-e, the indirect originator, is not the most prominent participant in the passive clause.

As it has been shown in the schemata (1), in passive sentences, it is the affected entity that is the most prominent. The landmark of æz suy-e/æz tæræf-e is the head of the action chain and it is not encoded at all. The exclusion of the primary/real agent, -æm, and mæn of examples 27-28, is the skewed perspective that is the characteristic of the passive

construction. The affected participant is the most prominent in the passive, whereas in the active clause the primary agent is the most prominent. This fact is represented by figure (5):

Consider the following examples in which the direct and immediate role of the agent effects on the kind of preposition

(29) \* dʒæsæd-i                    **æz suy-e**  
corpse-INDEF                    from side-Ez  
ostad            dær    kelas    tæšrih  
professor    in    class    dissection  
šod                                    Ø.  
become-PAST    3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG  
'A corpse was dissected on behalf  
of the professor in the class'.

(29') dʒæsæd-i                    **tævæssot-e**  
corpse-INDEF                    intermediation-Ez  
ostad            dær    kelas    tæšrih  
professor    in    class    dissection  
šod                                    Ø.  
become-PAST    3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG  
'A corpse was dissected on behalf  
of the professor in the class'.

The last point worthy to mention is that similar to *tævæssot-e*, the preposition *æz suy-e/æz tæræf-e* can be extended to inanimate agents via metonymy.

#### 4.9. *be væsile-y-e* in Active Clauses

The compound preposition *be væsile-y-e* is another preposition found in both our corpus and our questionnaire. At first sight,

it seems that this preposition generally comes with those NPs which are either inanimate or hold low degree of animacy. One might think that this preposition has instrumental function (the same domain we studied for the preposition *ba*); this semantic implication might be because of the existence of the word *væsile* 'instrument' in the morphology of this preposition. Look at the following examples in which the preposition *be væsile-y-e* represents such meaning:

(30) ...mætm    ra            **be væsile-y-e**  
... text        DO        to instrument-Ez  
mos            kopi            kærd  
mouse        copy            do.PAST  
Ø.  
3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG  
'S/he copied the text with the mouse'.

On the other hand, the study of the corpus, questionnaire and also searching on Google motor search reveal that there are clauses in which the complement of the preposition *be væsile-y-e* is animate. Therefore, in the case of *be væsile-y-e* we face another semantic domain which is similar to the domain of responsibility mentioned in *tævæssot-e*.

(31) ændʒam-e    in            fæʔdliæt-ha  
doing        this        activity-PL  
**be væsile-y-e**        mærdom    væ...  
to instrument-Ez        people        and...

‘Doing these activities by people...’

Thus, the preposition *be vāstile-y-e* has two semantic domains: responsibility and instrumentality. Like active clauses, these two domains are also present in the passive counterparts.

#### 4.10. *be vāstile-y-e* in Passive Clauses

In line with what discussed about the other prepositions, especially *tāvāssot-e* and *ba*, the application of *be vāstile-y-e* with an agent in active clauses motivates its application in passive ones. However, in contrast to the prepositions *tāvāssot-e* and *ba* which are restricted to different degrees of animacy, *be vāstile-y-e* is neutral; it occurs with both animate and inanimate agents:

(24) d3aygah-e faʔel **be vāstile-y-e**  
 position-Ez subject to instrument-Ez  
 mæfʔul eʃqal mi-  
 object occupation PROG  
 šæv -æd.  
 become.PRES 3<sup>rd</sup>pers.SG.  
 ‘The subject position is occupied by object’.

(34) væqti ke šoma **be vāstile-y-e**  
 when that you to instrument-Ez  
 hæšærət æziyæt mi-  
 insects teas PROG  
 šæv -id.  
 become.PRES 3<sup>rd</sup>pers.PL.  
 ‘When you are teased by insects’.

(35) dæstur-e næqš væ erdʒaʔ  
 grammar-Ez role and reference  
**be vāstile-y-e** van Valin  
 to instrument-Ez van Valin  
 moʔærefi šod  
 introduction become-PAST  
 Ø.  
 3<sup>rd</sup> pers.SG  
 ‘The Grammar of Role and Reference was introduced by van Valin’.

#### 5. Conclusion

This paper totally focused on that component of the passive constructions which is integral but not necessary in Persian, namely agent. Having introduced different prepositions used to encode the agent, a semantic characterization of the agent was provided. Generally, these prepositions can co-occur with the agent which is human, non-human, natural forces, or abstract concepts. The preposition *tāvāssot-e* is used with agents that are causative, animate, volitional and potent. The preposition *be dæst-e* comes with agents which have hands or are the agent of handi-actions. *ba* is used with the originator or cause of the event which is not animate. The preposition *æz suy-e/æz tæræf-e* is used with participants which has no immediate role on action chain, but that are means to carry out an action. *be vāstile-y-e*

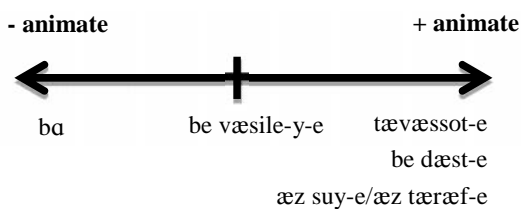


has a neutral essence which can come with both animate and inanimate agents. These prepositions are not always interchangeable, because they occur with different kinds of agents according to their semantic characterizations.

The analysis of these prepositions shows that two factors play role in the kind of preposition used to encode the agent:

- the degree of animacy of the agent.
- the direction of the effect of the agent on the patient.

On the basis of the first factor the following continuum is assumed:



**Fig. 6**

As you see the preposition *be væsile-y-e* is in the middle of the continuum whose ends reveal two different degrees of animacy. On one side there are the prepositions *tævæssot-e*, *be dæst-e* and *æz suy-e/æz tæræf-e* holding the semantic domain of responsibility, with the most degree of animacy. On the opposite side *ba* with the semantic domain of instrumentality has the least amount of animacy. As pointed out

before, these two domains are the semantic domains of *be væsile-y-e* in between.

The second factor categorizes the prepositions as follows:

- direct agent: *tævæssot-e*, *be dæst-e*, *be væsile-y-e* and *ba*
- indirect agent: *æz suy-e/æz tæræf-e*

## References

- [1] Arnett, Carlee (2004), *A Cognitive Approach to the Semantics of the German Passive*, New York: Edwin Mellen Press.
- [2] Comrie, B. and S. A. Thompson (2007), "Lexical nominalization". In T. Shopen (ed.), *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, Vol. III, 2nd Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- [3] Croft, William (1991), *Syntactic Categories and Grammatical Relations: The Cognitive Organization of Information*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- [4] Dabir-Moghaddam, Mohammad (2006/1384), *Passive in Persian, Studies in Persian Linguistics- Selected Articles*, Tehran: Iran University Press.
- [5] Evans, Vyvyan and Melanie Green (2006), *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- [6] Golfam, Arsalan et al. (2007) *Negahi be saxt-e madz hul dær zæban-e farsi ba tek ye*

- bær didgah-e šenaxti, *Journal of Language and Linguistics*, No. 5, pp 57-76.
- [7] Haig, G. (2008), *Alignment Change in Iranian Languages: A Construction Grammar Approach*, Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- [8] King, Robert (1988), Spatial Metaphor in German Causative Constructions. *Topics in Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. by Brygida Rudzka-Ostyn, 555 - 585. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- [9] Langacker, Ronald W. (1982), Space Grammar, Analysability, and the English Passive, *Language* 58.1.22-80.
- [10] ----, (1987), *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar: Theoretical Prerequisites*, Vol.1, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- [11] ----, (1990), *Concept, Image and Symbol: The Cognitive Basis of Grammar*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- [12] ----, (1991), *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*, Vol.2, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- [13] ----, (2008), *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [14] Moyne, J. (1974), The so-called Passive in Persian, *Foundation of Language*, No 12, Pp 249-267.
- [15] Naderi, Navid (2010), *Semantic and Pragmatics of Grammatical Voice in Farsi*, M.A. Thesis, Leiden: Leiden University Center for Linguistics (LUCL).
- [16] Nædzæfi, Abolhassan (1988), goldan tævæssot-e bæ e šekæste šod (The Jar Was Broken by the Child), *Danesh Publication* 7, No. 5.
- [17] Saeed, John I. (2004), *Semantics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [18] Siewierska, A. (1984), *The Passive: a comparative linguistic analysis*. London: Croon Helm.
- [19] Yussefi Rad, Fatemeh (2008), *The study of Persian Prepositions within the Framework of Cognitive Semantics with a Special View to Locational Prepositions*, PhD Dissertation, Tehran: Tarbiat Modares University.

## رمزگذاری کنشگر در ساخت مجهول زبان فارسی: رویکردی شناختی

سحر بهرامی خورشید<sup>۱</sup>، ارسلان گلنم<sup>۲</sup>

اتاریخ پذیرش: ۹۲/۳/۳۱

تاریخ دریافت: ۹۱/۸/۲۰

این مقاله تلاش می‌کند به بررسی حروف اضافه‌ای که در رمزگذاری کنشگر در ساخت مجهول دخیلند، بپردازد. همان‌طور که گیون (۱۹۸۳) تصریح می‌کند نقش اصلی ساخت مجهول کانونی‌زدایی کنشگر است. گرایش کلی در زبان فارسی حذف این کنشگر غیرکانونی است. براساس یک طبقه‌بندی سبکی ساخت مجهول در زبان فارسی را به دو طبقه اصلی طبقه‌بندی می‌کنیم. در واقع، با توجه به این نکته که آیا کنشگر در ساخت مجهول ظهور می‌یابد یا خیر دو زیرگروه مجهول نشان‌دار و مجهول بی‌نشان را معرفی خواهیم کرد. با بررسی و تحلیل حروف اضافه‌ای که در ساخت مجهول به‌کار می‌روند (توسط، به دست، با، از سوی/از طرف و به‌وسیله‌ی) ویژگی‌های معنایی کنشگری که به‌طور معمول با این حروف اضافه به‌کار می‌روند را ارائه خواهیم کرد. نتایج این تحقیق نشان می‌دهد که برخلاف برخی زبان‌شناسان که این حروف را گونه‌های سبکی یکدیگر قلمداد می‌کنند این حروف همواره قابل جایگزین با یکدیگر نیستند، بلکه معنایند و هریک با نمونه نوع نخست از کنشگر به‌کار می‌روند.

کلیدواژگان: کنشگر، حرف اضافه، ساخت مجهول، دستور شناختی.

۱. استادیار، گروه زبان‌شناسی همگانی، دانشگاه تربیت‌مدرس، ایران.

۲. دانشیار، گروه زبان‌شناسی دانشگاه تربیت‌مدرس، ایران.