

Case Assignment in Russian and Persian

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Abstract

Russian language, with regard to its grammar, is a language with its own special complexities, hardly found in other languages. Although languages are different from each other, they have some similarities as well. The Iranian learner, while learning Russian, analyzes the sentences using patterns similar to his/ her native language patterns. Occasionally, such native patterns cause the learner to make glaring mistakes. Verb, in Russian language, is a word that grammatically conducts a noun and its modifiers (падеж). The difficulty, which the learners encounter is the lack of a complete agreement of verb conduction. That is to say, it is possible for a verb in Persian language to conduct its dependent word in a particular manner, which the very same verb, in Russian language, might conduct its defendant word in a different manner. It is even possible that the verb conduction by the same verb in the two languages might occur by means of two totally different prepositions. In other to avoid such errors, it seems necessary to make the learners aware of their occurrences at the very initial steps of language learning.

Keywords: Russian language, Persian language, verb, grammatical case (manner), mother tongue, student.

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Introduction

Man has been engaged in the learning of new languages since the time immemorial, as the acquisition of a new language implies familiarity with a new culture, history, customs, traditions and also the possibility of establishing communication with other people. Though language learning can be set off by different objectives or motivations, however, there are still numerous problems in the way of language learners. Most of these problems are created by the patterns imposed by the learners' mother tongue. In other words, during L1 acquisition, each person stores a set of information and clichés belonging exclusively to his/ her mother tongue. As a person sets out to learn a new language, particularly the first L2, s/he unconsciously evaluates and comprehends the L2 in accordance with the fixed mental clichés and patterns of his/her mother tongue. Each language possesses unique features of its own, which are different from other languages. The lack of complete semantic concordance, presence of unfamiliar grammatical structures, sociolinguistic differences in the encoding of messages etc are only some of these differences to name a few.

Based on the above assertion, the comparative studies seem to be a common mechanism to reveal some of the obstacles on the way of language learners, and manage to produce worthwhile results.

Russian is one of the languages whose teaching / learning have gained momentum in the past 15 years in Iran. The collapse of Soviet Union in 1990s and the fall of dividing lines between socialist countries created new opportunities for more contact between Russia and other nations. Iran as a neighboring country, was no exception to this rule and after the disintegration of Soviet Union, the commercial, political and cultural ties and the exchange of students became very common among newly created Central Asian republics and Iran. The new republics enjoyed their own national languages; nonetheless, it seems that Russian is going to linger on for quite a long time in these countries.

Grammatically speaking, Russian language is regarded as one of the most complex languages of the world, a fact which makes its acquisition as a second language a formidable task. Sad to say, despite the necessity of comparative works between Russian and Persian, few studies have been done in this field.

Russian possesses a very complicated grammar and one of the issues which creates a lot of difficulties for Iranian students is the case system and case assignment of the following noun phrases.

Discussion of the Problem

The case system (управление глагола) is of great significance in Russian grammar and is

one of the issues, which poses a formidable task for foreign L2 learners. It should be noted that case is not limited to verbs and other categories such as nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and numbers should agree with the following structures in one of the complements, which is generally known as Case Assignment. This paper deals only with verbal case system which refers to the assigning of an appropriate case (падеж) to the following NP or PP. For example the verb (видеть – увидеть) “to see” assigns an accusative case to its oblique.

Вчера я увидела свою старую преподавательницу.

Di-rooz man ostade ghadimiyam ra didam.

(I saw my former professor yesterday)

Here the phrase “свою старую преподавательницу” (my former professor) has been assigned an accusative case by the verb (видеть – увидеть) its counterpart in Persian is manifested by the use of accusative marker of {ra}.

The verb “идти” (to go) assigns a dative case to its oblique:

Я ушел с Виктором.

Man ba Victor raftam.

(I went with Victor.)

In this example the word Victor “Виктор” has been assigned a dative case by the verb “to go” which is manifested by its relevant marker “с” meaning “with”.

The verbs “говорить - сказать” meaning “to say and to talk” assign a dative case to its oblique:

Я говорила Нине.

“man be Nina goftam”

(I to Nina told)

“I told Nina”

Here the word “Nina” has become an oblique (dative case), which is indicated by the preposition “be” in Persian.

The difficulty that Iranian learners face in this regard concerns the lack of agreement between the cases in Persian and Russian; in other words, a particular verb in Persian may assign a special case to its oblique whereas in Russian the same verb assigns a different case or the verb may require different prepositions for their oblique.

As an example, the verbs “поздравлять – поздравить” meaning “Tabrik Goftan – To congratulate ” require an accusative case as

“вицительный падеж”

Я поздравляю Вас.

*(man shoma ra tabrik migoyam)

(I you + accusative marker, congratulate)

I congratulate you

This verb requires the preposition of “be” in Persian to produce a dative case whereas in Russian, as we saw, an accusative case is required “man be shoma tabrik migoyam”

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The verb “Верить – поверить” meaning “to believe in” assigns an accusative case to its complement by the use of preposition “В” as “винительный падеж”:

Я веру в вас.

*(man dar shoma eteghad dalam)

(man be shoma eteghad dalam)

I believe in you

The verb “eteghad dashtan” in Persian “to believe in” requires a dative case, which is indicated by the preposition “be”:

(man be shoma eteghad dalam)

(I believe in you)

Therefore, there are certain set of verbs in Persian and Russian, which require different cases or prepositions and consequently the language learners as interference from their mother tongue habits, translate the patterns of their L1 into Russian producing ungrammatical and even unintelligible sentences.

Due to the same reason, in order to produce meaningful and grammatical sentences comprehensible to both readers and listeners, the learner not only should be familiar with the meaning, spelling, usage, and verbs conjugation, but should also know the case assignment of different verbs.

Based on their role in a sentence, the words can have any of the 6 different cases in Russian (all nouns, adjectives, numbers, pronouns and participles) these cases are indicated by the addition of certain endings which include:

nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, instrumental and prepositional cases. One of the cases acts as nominative and the other five cases are oblique.

There are four cases in modern Persian namely nominative, oblique, genitive and vocative.

The nominative case of Persian corresponds with the “именительный падеж” in Russian.

The oblique case is of two types: accusative case, which agrees with “винительный падеж” in Russian and dative case, which based on the preposition used in Persian may agree with one of the following cases in Russian: (дательный падеж, творительный падеж, предложный падеж” and sometimes even with “родительный падеж”.

The genitive cases of Persian, which are of 5 different categories (possessive, exclusive, simile, metaphoric and expressive) correspond with “родительный падеж” in Russian.

What we emphasize here is that though cases are present in both languages, yet they cause difficulty for language learners due to their different distributions a fact which creates problems for L2 learners.

The cases of Persian are indicated by the “ra” marker, vocative marker, the genitive morpheme “e” and prepositions while case is shown in Russian by the inflectional endings (склонение) and prepositions. The same issue also causes grammatical differences between the two languages leading to linguistic errors by learners.

As an example, let us compare and contrast the different cases of the word girl “dokhtar” with its Russian counterpart “девочка” :

Она девочка. (u dokhtar ast) (she girl is) she is a girl
Отец девочки об этом сказал. (pedare dokhtar dar in mored goft)

The girl's father said about this matter.

Я отдала куклю девочке. (man arusak ra be dokhtar dadam) I gave the doll to the girl.

Я увидела девочку. (man dokhtar ra didam) I saw the girl

Мама разговаривала с девочкой. (madar ba dokhtar harf mizad)

The mother was talking to the girl.

Мама говорила о девочке. (madar dar bare dokhtar migoft) The mother was talking about the girl.

As can be seen, the appearance of the word “dokhtar ” does not undergo any change for different cases, which are shown by means of accusative marker, morpheme or prepositions:

(dokhtar) the girl

(e dokhtar) the girl of

(be dokhtar) to the girl

(Ba dokhtar) with the girl

(dar bare dokhtar) about (of) the girl

But in Russian as can be seen, the word “девочка” is represented in 6 different forms, in other words, this word takes different endings in different cases / is accompanied with or without prepositions:

И.п. девочка

Р. П. девочки

Д. П. девочке

В. П. девочку

Т. П. девочкой

П. п. (о) девочке

Case assignment without preposition

Incorrect assignment	case	Persian equivalent	English equivalent	Verbal case	Verb
От кого? От чего?		Az che kasi? Az che chizi?	From what? From whom?	Р. П. Кого? Чего?	Бояться (tarsidan) (To be afraid of)
Бояться волка = az gorg tarsidan (to be afraid of wolf) ≠ Бояться от волка					
Кто? Что?		Che kasi? Che chizi?	What? Who?	Т. П. Чем? Кем?	Быть (budan) (to be)
Быть студентом = daneshju budan (to be a student) ≠ Быть студент					
Чему?		Be che chizi?	To what?	Т. П. Чем?	Заниматься Mashghul budan / eshteghal dashtan (to be busy or engaged)

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Заниматься торговлей = be tejarat eshteghal dashtan (to be engaged in trade) ≠ Заниматься торговле				
От кого? От чего?	Az che kasi? Az che chizi?	Against what? From whom?	Р. П. Кого? Чего?	Защищать Defa kardan (to defend)
Защищать родину = az mihan defa kardan (to defend one's home country) ≠ Защищать от родины				
Кто? Что?	Che kasi? Che chizi?	What? Who?	Т. П. Кем? Чем?	Казаться Be nazar amadan (to seem/ look)
Он казался недовольным = u narazi be nazar miamad (he looked dissatisfied) ≠ Он казался недовольный				
Кто? Что? кого? чего?	Che kasi?che chizi?	What? Who?	Д. П. Кому? Чему?	Мешать Mozahem shodan / Mane shodan (to prevent / to stand in the way of)
Он Мешает отцу = u mozaheme pedarash ast (he stands in the way of his father) ≠ Он Мешает отец. Он Мешает отца.				
Кто?	Che kasi?	Who?	Д. П. Кому? Чему?	Нравиться Khosh amadan (to like)
Мне нравится эта книга = man az in ketab khosham miayad (I like this book) ≠ я нравится эта книга				
Кого? Чего?	Az che chizi?	What? Whom?	Р. П. Кем? Чем?	Руководить Rahbari kardan / hedayat kardan (to lead / manage)
Руководить движением = jonbesh ra rahbari kardan (to lead the movement) ≠ Руководить движение				
От кого?	Az che kasi?	From whom?	Р. П. Кого? У кого?	Спрашивать Soal kardan (to ask)
Спрашивать (у) друга о поездке = az dost dar bare safar soal kardan (to ask a friend about his trip) ≠ Спрашивать от друга о поездке				
Кого? Что?	Ke? Che?	What? Who?	Р. П. Кем? Чем?	Считать Be hesab avardan (to consider)
Я считаю его своим учителем = man u ra moaleme khod midanam (I consider him as my teacher) ≠ Я считаю его свой учитель				
Кому? Чему? Кого? Что?	Be che kasi? Be che chizi? Che kasi? Che chizi?	To whom? To what? Who? What?	Р. П. Кем? Чем?	Увлекаться Sar garm budan (shodan) Alaghemand budan (shodan) (to be / get engaged or to be / get interested in)
Увлекаться беседой = be sohbat sar garm budan (sar garm sohbat budan) (to be busy talking) ≠ Увлекаться беседе; Увлекаться беседу				
От чего? От кого?	Az che chizi? Az che kasi?	From what? From whom?	Д. П. Кому? Чему?	Удивляться Таajob kardan (to be surprised)
Он удивился моим словам = u az harfhaye man taajob kard, He was surprised by my words ≠ Он удивился от моих слов				
Кто? Что?	Che kasi? Che chizi	What? Who?	Р. П. Кем? Чем?	Является Budan Be manzelebudan Mahsub shodan (to be, to be regarded as)
Это является нашим долгом = in vazife ma ast (this is our duty) ≠ Это является наш долг				

Case assignment by preposition

Incorrect case	Persian equivalent	English Equivalent	Verbal case	Verb
Кому? Чему?	Be che kasi? Be che chizi?	To what? To whom?	Р. П. В кого? Во что?	Верить Eteghad dashtan Iman dashtan (to believe in / to have faith in)
Верить в Бога = be khoda eteghad dashtan (to believe in God) ≠ Верить Богу Note: The case assignment of the verb бер мь (Кому? Чему?) meaning “to trust or believe in” are equal with their Persian counterparts:				
На Кого? С кем? За кем?	Zane <u>che kasi</u> shodan? <u>Ba che kasi</u> ezdevaj kardan	To marry whom? To become the wife of?	Т. П. За Кого?	Выйти замуж Shohar kardan (ezdevaj kardan) (to marry / take a woman in marriage)
Выйти замуж за Сашу = ba Sasha ezdevaj kardan (zane Sasha shodan) (to marry Sasha) ≠ выйти замуж на Сашу; выйти замуж с Сашей; выйти замуж за Сашей				
На Кого? С кем?	<u>Che kasi ra</u> gereftan? <u>Ba che kasi</u> ejdevaj kardan?	To marry To take as one's wife	П. П. На Ком?	Жениться Zan gereftan (ezdevaj kardan) To marry (take a woman in marriage)
Жениться на Кате = ba Katia ezdevaj kardan (Katia ra gereftan) (marry Katia) ≠ Жениться на Катю; Жениться с Катей				
Во чтѸ О чём? О ком?	Dar che chizi? Dar morede che chizi? Dar morede che chizi?	About what?	П. П. в чём? в ком?	Ошибаться Eshtebah kardan (to err / make a mistake)
Ошибаться в расчетах = dar mohasebat eshtebah kardan (to miscalculate) ≠ Ошибаться в расчеты; Ошибаться о расчетах Ошибаться в человеке = dar morede shakhsi eshtebah kardan (to be wrong about someone) ≠ Ошибаться в человек; Ошибаться о человеке				
Кому? Чему?	Che kasi? Che chizi? Be che kasi? Be che chizi?	What? Who? To what? To whom?	В. П. На кого? На что?	Быть похожим Shabih budan (to look like someone)
Он похож на отца = u shabihe pedarash ast (he looks like his father) ≠ Он похож отцу Note: The word “похож” is used as an adjective in Russian while its Persian equivalent is a verb.				
О кого? О чего?	Az che kasi? Az che chizi?	From what? From whom?	В. П. На кого? На что?	Сердиться Asabani shudan/ khashmgin shudan (to get angry/ mad at)
Сердиться на детей = az bacheha asabani shudan (to get mad at kids) ≠ Сердиться от детей				
Для кого? Для чего? За кого? За что? Кого? Что?	Baraye che kasi? Baraye che chizi? Che kasi? Che chizi?	For whom? For what? What? Who?	Д. П. По Кому? По чему?	Скучать Deltangi kardan/ Deltang shudan (budan) To feel homesick/ to be nostalgic
Скучать по родине = deltang mihan budan (to feel homesick) ≠ Скучать для родины; Скучать за родину; Скучать родину				
Во чтѸ	Dar che? (koja)?	In what? Where?	П. П. В чем?	Участвовать Sherkat kardan (to participate / take part in)
Участвовать в переговорах = dar mozakerat sherkat kardan (to take part in negotiations) ≠ Участвовать в переговоры				

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This issue is regarded as one of the fundamental obstacles in the way of learning Russian by Iranian students. The mastery of inflectional endings and their proper use require attention and a lot of time along with constant practice.

Conclusion

Considering the fact that words lack inflectional endings in Persian, little attention is paid to the case system in this language and case assignment by verbs is not considered an important issue either. This issue makes Iranian learners unaware of the presence of case assignment in their Mother Tongue whereas this structure enjoys its unique position in Persian and this language only lacks the inflectional endings as a case assigner while other categories are used to show the case.

One of the best methods for teaching this structure is through comparative studies and particularly the publication of comparative books emphasizing problematic structures. Unfortunately, the books used for the teaching of Russian and even other languages in Iran are not based on a systematic comparison between the learners' MT and the FL. The contents of the textbooks and the arrangement of their materials, gradation and exercises are often based on the needs analyses made for other

foreign languages a fact which not only does not facilitate language learning but causes difficulties for learners as well. Therefore, the publication of especially prepared textbooks for students whose MT is Persian, is of paramount significance.

One of the structures in which the comparative studies can be of great help concerns the case assignment. While teaching a particular verb, the instructor should draw the attention of the learners to the case assignment particularly when it is different in each language.

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زبان روسی از نظر قواعد دستوری زبانی است با پیچیدگیهای خاص خود که شاید کمتر چنین ویژگیهایی را بتوان در دیگر زبانها مشاهده کرد. زبانها در عین حال که متفاوتند، شباهتهای گوناگونی نیز به هم دارند. زبان آموز ایرانی هنگام فراگیری زبان روسی با الگوهای مشابه زبان مادری خود به تجزیه و تحلیل و ترجمه جملات روسی میپردازد. گاهی این الگوهای زبان مادری، زبان آموز را گمراه میکند و به این علت اشتباهات گفتاری فاحشی را مرتکب میشود. فعل در زبان روسی کلمه ای است که اسم را همراه با وابسته هایش به شش حالت دستوری (падеж) هدایت میکند. مشکلی که زبان آموزان با آن مواجه میشوند، عدم تطابق کامل حالت دهی فعل است. بدیت معنی که یک فعل ممکن است در زبان فارسی کلمه تحت تاثیر خود را به حالتی خاص هایت کند، اما همان فعل در زبان روسی کلمه تحت تاثیر خود را به نوعی دیگر حالت دهد. و یا اینکه هدایت فعلی انجام شده توسط دو فعل مشابه در دو زبان مذکور، با کمک دو حرف اضافه کاملاً متفاوت انجام پذیرد. برای پرهیز از چنین اشتباهاتی ضروریست تا از همان گامهای اولیه زبان آموز را متوجه بروز چنین اشتباهاتی کرد.

واژگان کلیدی: زبان روسی، زبان فارسی، فعل، هدایت فعلی، حالت دستوری، زبان مادری، زبان آموز.

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