

Free Relatives: Evidence from Persian

Mehrnoosh Taherkhani*, Tarbiat Modares University
Farnoosh Taherkhani, Imam Khomeini International University

Free relative clauses (henceforth, FRs) are embedded clauses with either a gap or a resumptive pronoun (RP) in an argument or adjunct position and a clause initial *wh*-element. The structure has the syntactic behavior and interpretation of sub-clausal phrases - DPs, or AdvPs and can be replaced and paraphrased respectively with DPs and Headed Relative Clauses (HRs) as exemplified in (1).

(1) a. Sara [hærči Tina xærideh.bud] ra bærdašt. (**Free relative**)
Sara whatever Tina bought.be.3sg RA.ACC took.3sg

‘Sara took whatever Tina had bought.’

b. Sara [ketabæm] ra bærdašt. (**DP**)
Sara book.my RA.ACC took.3sg

‘Sara took the book.’

c. Sara [ketab.i ke Tina xærideh.bud] ra bærdašt. (**Headed relative**)
Sara book.Indef KE Tina bought.be.3sg RA.ACC took.3sg

‘Sara took the book which Tina had bought.’

Based on the distributional and semantic similarities, most scholars have assumed that FRs are just a particular kind of HRs (e.g. Bresnan and Grimshaw 1978, Groos and van Riemsdijk 1981, Larson 1987, Grosu 1994, among the others). Relying on the diagnostics such as pattern of distribution of RPs, the matching effect, pied piping, and the presence of the complementizer *ke*, it is shown that the two constructions pattern differently and should be assigned separate syntactic structures.

Vogel (2000) observes that the only exceptional property of FRs is that the FR *wh*-phrase is sensitive to the requirements of both matrix verb and FR’s internal verb. It has to be of the appropriate category (and case, if case is marked overtly on *wh*-pronouns) for the position where the free relative appears. This phenomenon, first discussed in Grimshaw (1977), is known as the Matching Effect and is summarized in (2):

(2) The Matching Effect:

a. Case Matching: [_{FR} **wh**-CASE_i ...]-CASE_i

b. Categorical Matching: [_{FR} [**wh**]_{XPI}...]_{XPI}

Although it is assumed that FRs in Persian are subject to categorial matching effects (Taghvaipour (2005)), we provide some examples and show that this requirement is not so strong in Persian.

As for the internal syntax of free relatives, there have been two competing hypotheses in the literature. In what is called the Head Hypothesis, the *wh*-phrase is the head of the free relative and the matching effect follows under the X’-theory, because the head of a phrase must be of the same category as the phrase itself (Bresnan and Grimshaw (1978)). The alternative proposal, known as the Comp Hypothesis, considers the *wh*-phrase to be located in the Comp position, and the head of the clause to be either phonologically null or altogether absent (Groos and van Riemsdijk (1981), Harbert (1983) among others).

Testing the viability of both the Head and the Comp analyses of free relatives we argue for a Comp account and suggest that in Persian FRs are DPs with a covert D head that takes the *wh*-CP as its complement. The proposed structure is illustrated in (3).

(3) [DP wh_i e [CP t_i [IP t_i]]]

For the ultimate landing site of *wh*-phrase, we draw on Koopman (2000) in positing that languages disallow projections to be headed by silent covert heads and Specs. Projections must be activated to be semantically interpretable and activation happens by associating overt lexical material to either Spec or head at some point in the derivation. We, thus, assume that the *wh*-phrase of FRs further moves from the specifier of CP to the specifier of DP in order to license the covert head D. This brings the *wh*-phrase in the domain of a c-commanding head, which would allow the *wh*-phrase to subsequently satisfy the lexical properties of some predicate, say, matrix verb. Moreover, this configuration supports the striking similarity of FRs and *wh*-interrogative complements both in form and behavior with respect to constraints on RP distribution in some positions and the possibility of multiple *wh*-words; since prior to the movement of *wh*-phrase into the Spec, DP, the structure of FRs resembles that of an interrogative clause.

Assuming a paradigm of quantificational force realized through suffixes to a *wh*-word in Persian, we posit that *wh*-words in Persian FRs are QPs with a suffix/quantifier that indicates universal quantification. Besides, the Null D head has an uninterpretable max-feature which requires the entire QP containing the requisite features to move to spec, DP in order to satisfy features on null D. The structure then reflects features necessary for an agreement relationship between the *wh*-phrase and the null D head of the FR and supports the ‘maximalizing’ or quantificational nature of these FRs noted by Grosu (2003).

Concerning the cases in which a FR seems to behave like an AdvP, as in (4), we assume these expressions can act as both DPs and AdvPs, depending on the context. Following Larson’s (1985, 1998) proposal that FRs can only be nominal, we argue that these expressions are DPs that also allow an adverbial interpretation. That is, syntactically, they are DPs; semantically, they can be interpreted as either DPs or AdvPs.

(4) [hærkodʒa mixaj] boro!
 wherever DUR.want.2sg go.IMP.2sg
 ‘go where you want!’

Selected References

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