

Persian Comparative Correlatives are not Conditionals

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The relationship between conditionals and correlatives, discussed in various works on ordinary correlatives (Andrews 1985, Geis 1985, Izvorski 1996, Cheng and Huang 1996, Dayal 1996, Bhatt and Pancheva 2006) as well as on comparative correlatives (CCs) (Michaelis 1994, Beck 1997, Culicover and Jackendoff 1999) is an important field of study as there exist several interpretive and formal parallels between correlative and conditional constructions. There are morphological, syntactic and semantic similarities.

Concerning morphological marking, in languages where correlativization is a productive strategy, correlatives and conditionals often use the same marker of subordination.

Parallels between conditionals and correlatives extend beyond the use of the same morphological markings or the selection of pronouns. In their syntax, the two kinds of construction also show many similarities. To start with a basic one, they both involve a bi-clausal structure with a subordinate clause adjoined to the main clause. As Bhatt and Pancheva (2006) show, sentence initial conditionals adjoin to CP/IP, just like correlatives. Furthermore, conditionals, just like correlatives, can be coindexed with a proform – this form in English is *then* – whose placement observes conditions also found with correlate phrases (Bhatt and Pancheva (2006)). (1) exemplifies Persian CCs:

- (1) a. *hærče hāva særdtær beše,*
how much weather lower become.3rd.SG.SUBJ,
ehtemal-e bareš-e bærf bištær miše.
probability-EZ falling-EZ snow more get.3rd.SG.PRES.
- b. *færzænd-e kæmtær, zendegi-e behtær.*
Child-EZ fewer, life-EZ better.
The fewer the children, the better the life.

Each CC under consideration here has two primary phrases separated by a comma; these can be clearly clausal, as in, e.g. (1a)-(1b), or appear without verbs, as in (1c). In case of clausal structure, the first clause begins with *hærče(qædr)* (how much) and the second one with *hæmanqædr* (that much).

A typical conditional sentence in Persian looks like (2), in which the element *ægær* (if) occurs in the antecedent clause and the element *angah* ‘then’ optionally occurs in the consequent clause:

- (2) *ægær mi-ræfti unja (angah) un-o mi-didi.*
if ASP-go.2SG.PST there then s/he-ACC ASP-see.2SG.PST
If you had gone there, you would have seen her/him.

Andrews (1985) suggested that the correlative has the same type of quantificational structure as a conditional. Replacing the relative phrases with an indefinite, we can recast the relative clause as a conditional and get the same universal meaning:

- (3) $\forall x,y$ [*girl'(x) \wedge boy'(y) \wedge played-with'(x,y)*][*defeated'(x,y)*]

With respect to some diagnostics as the presence of comparative morpheme (or a comparative meaning), the scope of quantification, semantic matching, proportional

interpretations, and adverbs of quantification, I argue that the similarities observed between Persian CCs and conditionals are the result of the conservativity of generalized quantification and not the identity of the quantifiers involved in conditionals and CCs (Smith, 2011).

(4) **Conservativity** is the property of being a predicate (OP) on two properties such that $OP(A,B)$ is equivalent to $OP(A, A\&B)$.

I review the similarities, noted by Thiersch (1982), Fillmore (1987) and Beck (1997), inter alia, before presenting new data showing differences in the kind of quantification (universal/generic v. proportional) are found with each and how they affect interpretation. Moreover, I show that while paraphrase relations between conditionals and correlatives might be suggestive of full equivalence, there are semantic differences between the two types of construction. An obvious one is that not all correlatives can receive a conditional-type free choice interpretation, but rather a definite interpretation denoting a single unique individual. A second difference concerns symmetric versus asymmetric readings in relation to the proportion problem of donkey sentences (Kadmon 1987). The problem concerns the anchoring possibilities of an adverb of quantification – whether it is anchored to one or all of the indefinites in a given sentence:

(5) If a farmer owns a donkey, he is usually rich.

The symmetric reading of (5) is one in which the adverb usually is anchored to both a farmer and a donkey. In this reading the sentence says that in most cases involving a farmer-donkey pair, the farmer is rich. In an asymmetric reading, the adverb is anchored either to a farmer only or to a donkey only, and not to farmer-donkey pairs. Now, Hindi correlative clauses (Cheng and Huang 1996, referring to Utpal Lahiri p.c.), can only have asymmetric readings. Conditionals on the other hand allow for a symmetric reading. This distinction argues for keeping the two types of constructions separate.

I follow Dayal (1996) in positing that firstly, while correlatives need to match up with correlate phrases in a one-to-one manner, conditionals do not have such a matching requirement. Second, an analysis of correlatives as conditionals would entail that we predict that singular correlatives are always interpreted as universals, contrary to fact.

The paper concludes that Persian CCs are not merely a subclass of conditionals as previously theorized for their English counterpart (cf. Beck 1997, Lin 2007 and Brasoveanu 2008). I follow Smith (2011) in positing an alternative theory in which a proportional quantificational force is part of the lexical meaning of the first *hærče(qædr)* (how much) in the CC.

Selected References

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