

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Purpose and scope

The main purpose of this thesis is to present a Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) treatment of morphosyntactic phenomena in simple sentences in Farsi¹. Many languages have been studied in this grammatical framework since the introduction of this theory in the early 1980s. However, no one has worked on Farsi using RRG yet. Several analyses of Farsi within the framework of different theories such as Government and Binding (Miremadi 1997), Standard Theory (Meshkatoddini 1994), Scale and Category (Bateni 1970), among others, have been done. However, because these analyses were merely based on formal theories, they could not mirror all aspects of this language. I try to apply the RRG framework in order to gain new insights into the structure and the processes of Farsi. The main objective of this dissertation is to answer the following two basic questions:

- (A) Can RRG's theoretical assumptions, as a structural-functional theory of grammar, elucidate Farsi morphosyntactic phenomena with a new perspective in general?
- (B) Does Farsi follow and support RRG's general assumptions as a theory of universal grammar?

RRG postulates four grammatical representations for each sentence. These are ‘Linking from Semantics to Clause Structure’, ‘Constituent Projection’, ‘Operator Projection’, and ‘Focus Structure Projection’. In order to answer the above two questions, I will investigate those four projections in Farsi simple sentences. In the end, it will be argued that RRG mirrors Farsi morphosyntactic phenomena and Farsi follows RRG’s general assumptions.

This dissertation includes 7 chapters. This Chapter describes the purpose and the scope of this study and provides a short introduction to historical development and theoretical background of RRG and the general characteristics of Farsi. Chapter 2 deals with the syntactic structure of simple sentences. The layered structure of the clause (LSC) of this language and its universal and specific aspects will be presented. Moreover, the structure of adpositionals and simple noun phrases will be analyzed. Ultimately, the syntactic templates and their main examples in Farsi are represented. I will argue that RRG offers a very efficient framework for the analysis of LSCs in Farsi.

Chapter 3 is devoted to semantic representation. RRG’s verb classification and lexical representation will be presented. Then, an aspectual classification of Farsi verbs and a sample of each verb class will be proposed. I will also investigate the semantics of predicate-argument relations and thematic relations. The second

type of semantic roles, macroroles, and the question of transitivity are also studied in this chapter.

Chapter 4 deals with operator projection. In this theory of grammar, grammatical categories like aspect, tense, and modality are represented in operator projection. In this chapter, a new analysis of different grammatical categories based on RRG's operator system is presented. Investigating different operators in Farsi, I will propose a new approach to grammatical categories such as aspect, negation, directional morphemes, evidentials, modalities, etc. in Farsi. Also, it will be shown that Farsi fully follows RRG's operator system and supports the assumption that the ordering of the morphemes expressing operators with respect to the verb indicates their relative scopes.

Chapter 5 discusses the information structure of Farsi simple sentences. After presenting the historical background and the development of information structure in RRG, I investigate information structure of simple sentences and propose a typology of focus structure in Farsi in light of the basic Lambrechtian focus paradigms. It will be shown that focus structure is primarily marked by accentuation. Then, the interaction of focus structure and syntax in simple sentences will be examined. To find this interaction, word orders in transitive and intransitive simple sentences under different focus types will be studied. It will be concluded that the seemingly

free word order in Farsi is much less free in terms of focus structure. In sum, this chapter demonstrates the importance of the information structure in the exploration of the syntax, semantics and pragmatics interface.

Chapter 6 will be a study of grammatical relations in Farsi. I will introduce RRG's basic assumptions regarding grammatical relations. Next, the coding and behavioural properties of grammatical relations will be investigated. I will point out that the subject NP is the crucial argument in Farsi sentences in that it triggers verb agreement and some constructions like equi/control deletion, conjunction reduction,⁶ etc. are sensitive to the subject, i. e. the privileged syntactic argument. Moreover, a new analysis of passive constructions using RRG's formulation of voice constructions will be presented. It will be argued that Farsi has two recognizable types of passive constructions. The first type will be labeled basic passive and the second type will be termed as impersonal passive. I will argue that an RRG analysis of passive constructions in Farsi brings one of the most disputatious issues to an end. Finally, at the end of this chapter, the basics of the linking system for a simple sentence following RRG's linking system will be introduced.

Chapter 7 will be a summary and conclusion of this dissertation.

1.2. Formal versus Functional Grammar

Contemporary linguistic theories are usually divided into two broad schools of thought which are labeled formal versus functional orientations. From a formal point of view, a language is a set of structural descriptions of sentences where a full structural description determines the sound and meaning of a linguistic expression (Chomsky 1977:81). Formal theories are typical of the whole structural schools of linguistics, however, the dominant formal theory is Transformational-Generative Grammar (Foley and VanValin 1984:3). In this most dominant formal theory which is also referred to as the syntactocentric view of language (VanValin and LaPolla 1997:8) syntax is the central aspect of language.² The phonological and semantic aspects of language are derivative of and secondary to syntactic structure. From this point of view the form of sentence is an algebraic system of rules, that operate largely independent of the meaning of the sentence. Consequently, language is considered as an abstract object whose structure is to be studied independently of psycholinguistic, communicative, sociocultural and other considerations.

Chomsky (1965) proposed a fundamental distinction between linguistic competence and linguistic performance. For him, the proper object of study for linguistics is competence only, and linguistic theory will have something to say about performance only

insofar as a defensible theory of performance would of necessity incorporate a theory of competence. Since formal theories exclude the social context in which language is learned and used, it is in effect reduced to grammar. Hence, linguistics, the study of language is reduced to the study of grammar and only those areas of linguistic analysis which relate to the linkage of sound and meaning fall into the proper domain of linguistic investigations.

The goal of linguistics for Chomsky and other generativists is to explain how human beings acquire their first language. However, language acquisition, for Chomsky is a logical problem not a psycholinguistic one, and therefore it requires no psycholinguistic research or even study of language (VanValin and LaPolla:10). According to Chomsky human beings are born with a generative grammar hard-wired into an autonomous language module in the mind. What enables humans to acquire language, the Language Acquisition Device(LAD), is specific to language and independent of all other cognitive capacities.

The adherents of the second perspective, Functionalists, believe that language must be studied in relation to its role in human communication.³ According to this approach, language is defined as a system of communication (VanValin 1993, Dik 1991, Halliday 1985 among others). Indeed, functionalists believe that human beings do not communicate with each other in a vacuum but

rather in socioculturally defined activities and situations in which the participants take on socially defined roles and status. Whereas adherents of the syntactocentric paradigm view language as a potentially infinite set of structural descriptions independent of matters of use, functionalists take the very opposite approach in considering all aspects of the structural organization of language in the light of its role in human social interaction. Since functionalists assume a broader notion of language than formal theories the extent of linguistic investigation is correspondingly wider. In sum, the guiding principle of functionalism is the fact that the form of a sentence is determined by its meaning with reference to pragmatic and social considerations. As Newmeyer (2002) points out, the central theme of the functionalist theories is that functional motivation is an alternative to innateness. Linguistic theories which reject the syntactocentric or formal view and adopt the communication and cognition perspective include Functional Grammar (Dik 1991), Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday 1994), Role and Reference Grammar (RRG; VanValin and LaPolla 1997), Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG; Bresnan2001), etc.

1.2.1. Kinds of Functionalism

Different functionalist approaches represent a great range of theoretical opinion, and by listing them together no claim is made

that they are in agreement on all major issues. What they have in common is basically a rejection of the syntactocentric view of formalists and a recognition of the importance of the communicative factors, cognitive factors or both in grammatical theory and analysis. Different functional theories can be placed along a continuum according to their reduction of grammatical structure to discourse. VanValin distinguished three groups of functionalism: extreme, moderate and conservative (Yang 1994). Extreme functionalist theories deny any relevance to the formal aspect of language. This view characterizes functionalist theories such as that proposed by Hopper (1987). According to advocates of this approach, grammar is reduced to discourse and any apparent structural system being taken as an epiphenomenon of recurrent discourse patterns, formulaic expressions, etc. Therefore, this approach rejects any notion of grammatical structure other than that of discourse. As Newmeyer (2001) and Croft (1995) point out, this most extreme form of functionalism rejects the Saussurean dichotomies such as *Langue* vs. *Parole* and *Synchrony* vs. *Diachrony*.

Functionalist theories such as Kuno (1975) and Prince (1981) are considered as conservative functionalism. Kuno did not challenge the fundamental theoretical assumptions of Chomskyan linguistics. In his view, there is no conflict in principle between

functional syntax and the Government and Binding theory of generative grammar. Newmeyer (2001) stated that those linguists who have worked along the lines that Kuno advocates typically probe the interactions of grammar and discourse, without making the claim that the former can be derived from the latter. In these approaches, some functionalist explanatory principles are added to what is inherently a formalist undertaking. Consequently, only those aspects of grammar not amenable to a formal account are considered to be motivated by pragmatics and semantics (Abdoulaye 1992:16, Dabir-Moghaddam 1999:40). This kind of functionalism is termed as 'Formal Functionalism' by Newmeyer (2001).

Between these two extremes, there are other functionalist theories such as Functional Grammar (FG, Dik 1991), Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG, Halliday 1985, 1994), Role and Reference Grammar (RRG, VanValin and LaPolla 1997), etc. that fall between extreme functionalism and conservative functionalism. These theories are referred to as moderate functionalism (Yang 1994) or external functionalism (Newmeyer 1999). Newmeyer describes this group of functionalism as follows:

"External functionalism, like functionalism in general, rejects the project of characterizing the formal relationships among grammatical elements,

independently of any characterization of the semantics and pragmatics of those elements...

Nevertheless, external functionalism upholds the idea of a synchronic semiotic system, in which formal elements are linked to semantic and pragmatic ones".

(1999:13)

1.3. Role and Reference Grammar (RRG)⁴

As I mentioned before, RRG, which this thesis is based upon, is a moderate functionalist theory. In this theory grammatical units and constructions are analyzed primarily in terms of their functional roles in a linguistic system and secondarily in terms of their formal properties (VanValin and Foley 1980). In RRG, syntax is neither autonomous, as in transformational grammar, nor identical with semantics, as in generative semantics. Since RRG seeks to analyze grammatical systems with respect to the communicative function of their elements, pragmatics is crucially involved, and consequently it is not enough to talk only about the relationship of syntax and semantics. However, in this theory, syntax is not reduced entirely to semantics and pragmatics. VanValin and Foley (1980) indicated that some aspects of the morphosyntactic structure of a language cannot be described in purely functional terms, for example, why

adjectives precede their head nouns in English rather than follow them. VanValin (1993b) describes the theory as follows:

"RRG takes language to be a system of communicative social action, and accordingly, the communicative function of grammatical structures plays a vital role in grammatical description and theory from this perspective. It is in this sense that RRG is functional, but it is not radical like the Emergent Grammar view. Language is a system, and grammar is a system in the traditional structuralist sense: what distinguishes the RRG conception from the standard formalist one is the conviction that grammatical structure can only be understood and explained with reference to its semantic and communicative functions. Syntax is not autonomous. In terms of the abstract paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations that define a structural system, RRG is concerned not only with relations of cooccurrence and combination in strictly formal terms but also with semantic and pragmatic cooccurrence and combinatory relations. Hence, RRG may be accurately characterized as a structural functional theory, rather than purely formal or purely functional."

VanValin (1993b:2)

1.3.1. Historical background of RRG

The development of RRG goes back to the late 60s or early 70s. In the late 1960s, in Berkeley, Charles Fillmore developed an alternative model of grammar whose characteristic feature was that at the deepest syntactic level, a sentence consists of a verb and an unordered series of semantic cases. In 1968, he published a paper 'the case for case' in which he proposed the basic structure of a sentence to consist of the "proposition" a tenseless set of relationships involving verbs and nouns, and the "modality" such as negation, tense, and aspect (Fillmore 1968:23).

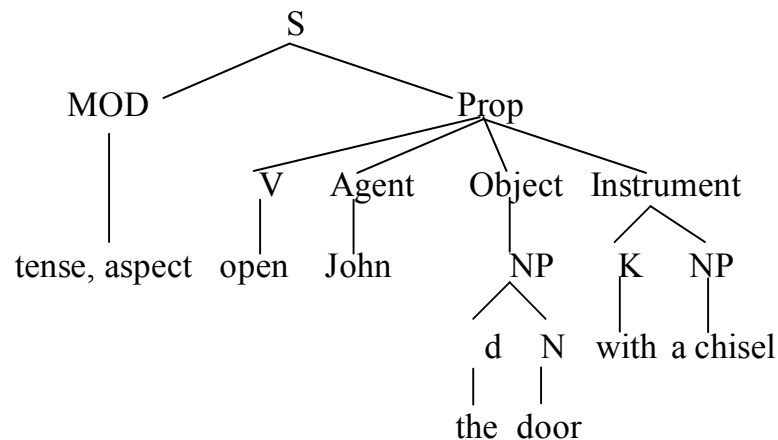
Fillmore's Case Grammar is purely semantically-oriented, as opposed to the purely syntactically-oriented grammar developed by Chomskyan generative grammar. In Fillmore's view the subject of a sentence is not a major element of the sentence, but is rather taken from the modifier of one of the major constituents. Fillmore used semantic elements such as 'Agent', 'Patient', 'Instrument', 'Locative', and 'Benefactive' instead of S, NP, VP and PP. The example used by Fillmore is shown below:

(1.1) a. $S \rightarrow \text{Modality} + \text{Proposition}$

$\text{Prop} \rightarrow V + (\text{Agentive}) + (\text{Instrument}) + (\text{Objective}) + \dots$

b. open: [-O(bjective) (I)nstrumental (A)gentive]

c. John opened the door with a chisel.



In this model, the sentence is represented as in (1.1a). As it can be seen, the components of the structure are unordered, and there is a semantic representation employing semantic case roles which is mapped into the syntactic surface structure, without any intervening level of syntactic representation. Fillmorean Case Grammar was rejected by Chomskyan syntacticians when it was first proposed. However, his main idea influenced many generative theories.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Robert VanValin and William Foley, students of Fillmore, developed and elaborated the Fillmorean idea into Role and Reference Grammar. Of course, several other factors played a central role in the development of this theory:

In the mid-1970s, some studies on typological grammar such as Dixon's (1972) grammar of Dyirbal (a syntactically ergative language) and Schachter and Otane's (1972) Tagalog grammar (a language with both nominal case marking and verbal cross-

referencing) were published. These two languages are radically different from English and raise important problems for generative theories. Besides, Prague School and Hallidayan ideas (Halliday 1967, 1975) regarding the role of discourse-pragmatics in grammar were being explored from a number of different perspectives. Indeed, RRG grew out of an attempt to answer two basic questions:

- A) What would linguistic theory look like if it were based on the analysis of Lakhota, Tagalog and Dyirbal, rather than on the analysis of English?
- B) How can the interaction of syntax, semantics and pragmatics in different grammatical systems best be captured and explained?

VanValin (2001c)

Considering the above mentioned points, Foley and VanValin started developing a non-derivational, functionally-based theory of grammar. They did not regard the structure of one language type as prototypical and other types as deviations from this prototype (Foley and VanValin 1984:viii). An introductory study of the theory appeared in VanValin and Foley (1980), and aspects of RRG are discussed in a number of other works (VanValin 1980, 1983, 1985, Foley and Olson 1985, Walton 1983).

1.3.2. Current formalization of RRG

The first fully developed treatment of RRG is Foley and VanValin (1984). This work used a wide range of typologically distinct languages, such as Austronesian, Papuan, Australian, and American Indian languages. They introduce RRG as a functional theory of language and state that RRG is different from transformational grammar, which posits multiple level of analysis (D-structure, S-structure, logical form, and surface structure). RRG assumes only two levels: a semantic structure in which the predicate of a clause and its arguments are presented, and the actual morphosyntactic form of the utterance. There are no abstract syntactic structures akin to D-or S-structures. Consequently, there are no syntactic derivations from a more abstract to a less abstract level of syntactic representation. Foley and VanValin (1984:16) point out that the name of this theory derives from the emphasis on the interaction of role (semantic) and referential (pragmatic) factors in grammatical systems. Thus, RRG seeks to analyze language with reference to its role in human communication and hence to analyze language with respect to how morphosyntactic and communicative function interact. Foley and VanValin (1984) introduce key terms such as Actor, Undergoer and Pivot, and formalize the layered structure of the clause, the operator system, and a theory of complex sentences.

In the 1980s some studies on information structure which is a formal expression of the pragmatic structure of a proposition in a discourse were done by Lambrecht (1986, 1988). At the same period, VanValin expanded the applications of RRG to a wider range of phenomena, many of which were not discussed in Foley and VanValin (1984). He added an account of the constraint on extraction construction known as subjacency, linking syntactic and semantic representations, and information structure. In fact, it is the Lambrecht's theory of information structure which is integrated into RRG. The elaborated and revised version of RRG and papers on specific subjects analyzed with this theory were published in *Advances in Role and Reference Grammar* (VanValin 1993a). In this work, he presents a revised version of the theory of clause structure, and introduces a formal notation to represent it. In this revised version of RRG, the theories of grammatical relations and complex sentence formation are reprised and expanded, and the algorithm linking semantic and syntactic representations is presented explicitly and applied to simple and complex sentences.

The latest version and the most comprehensive presentation of this theory is discussed in VanValin and LaPolla (1997). In this book, they present a detailed formalization of the theory. Having introduced the fundamental units of clause structure, a distinction between the universal and non-universal aspects of the layered

structure of the clause is initiated. VanValin and LaPolla extend the three-layered scheme to NP structures and adpositional phrases too. The layered structure of noun phrases is developed on the basis of Nunes (1993), while that of adpositional phrases is adopted from Jolly's three-way typology of prepositions (Jolly 1993). Also, the two authors integrate several theories and individual works, that fall within the communication and cognition perspective, into RRG, e.g. Rijkhoff's (1992) theory of noun phrase structure from FG, the concept of constructional templates adopted from Constructional Grammar, Lambrecht's theory of information structure, Pustejovsky's (1995) theory of nominal qualia, the pragmatic analysis of pronominalization of Kuno, Bolinger and Bickerton (1975), and Jackendoff's ideas about reflexivization (1992). VanValin and LaPolla assume that grammatical structures are stored as constructional templates, each with a specific set of morphosyntactic, semantic and pragmatic properties, which may be combined with other templates to form more complex structures. This version of RRG postulates that there is a set of syntactic templates representing the possible syntactic structures in the language, which are stored in the 'Syntactic Inventory' and that there is a separate lexicon containing lexical items, morphemes and other types of lexical entities.

VanValin and LaPolla present a linking system between semantic and syntactic representations, which is not derivational. Most of what counts as syntax in many theories, e.g. case assignment, agreement, WH-movement, and reflexivization, is handled in RRG in terms of the syntactic phase of linking. In sum, the organization of RRG is given as Figure (1.1) (VanValin 1998a)

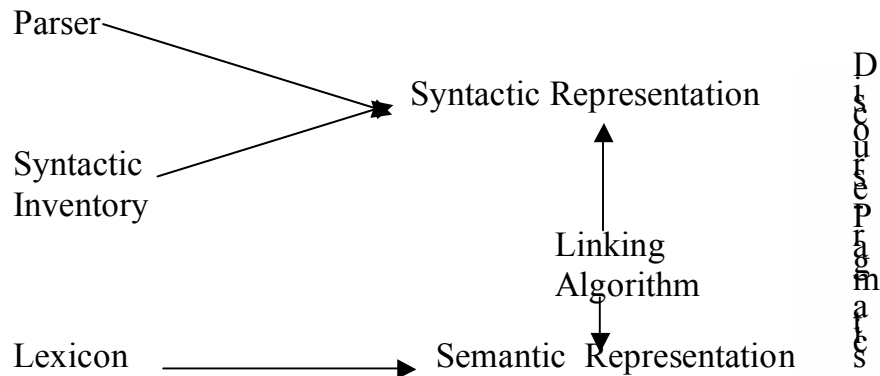


Figure 1.1 The organization of RRG.

It should be noted that the two independent representations are linked to each other, in the sense that argument variables in the semantic representation are associated with referring expressions in the syntactic representation, and vice versa.

It is interesting to note that VanValin and LaPolla (1997:649) point out that RRG can also serve as an explanatory framework for the analysis of language acquisition and child language.⁵ Chomsky (1995) maintains that the language acquisition device (LAD) is an autonomous mental organ independent of other human cognitive

capacities. On the contrary, RRG claims that it is not necessary to postulate an autonomous LAD to account for the acquisition of language. According to VanValin and LaPolla the grammatical phenomena are learned on the basis of the initial cognitive endowment posited by communication-and-cognitive approaches, together with the input the children receive from caregivers.

1.3.3. Complex sentences in RRG

Although this thesis is exclusively devoted to simple sentences in Farsi, it should be noted that RRG has also a very distinctive theory of complex sentence syntax (VanValin 2001a, Ohori 2001). It has three main components: the theories of juncture, nexus, and interclausal semantic relation. The theory of juncture deals with the clausal and subclausal units which make up complex sentences. The theory of nexus concerns the syntactic relationship between the units in the juncture. The theory of interclausal semantic relations deals with the semantic relationship between the units in the juncture.⁶

Juncture refers to the units making up the complex sentence, i.e. whether it contains multiple nuclei, multiple cores or multiple clauses. Complex sentences are analyzed as falling into three juncture types: nuclear junctures, core junctures, and clausal junctures. VanValin and LaPolla (1997:442-8) illustrate these three

juncture types with the following examples from French and English.

Nuclear Juncture

(1.2) a. Je fer - ai mang-er les gateaux a
Jean.

1sg make-3sg FUT eat-INF the cakes DAT John.

‘I will make John eat the cake.’

b. John forced open the door.

Core juncture

(1.3) a. Je laisser - ai Jean mang-er les gateaux.

1sg let - 1sg FUT John eat-INF the cakes

‘I will let John eat the cake.’

b. John forced the door to open.

Clausal Juncture

(1.4) Pat talked to kim this morning, and they will go shopping
later in the afternoon.

These three juncture types are represented in Figure (1.2).

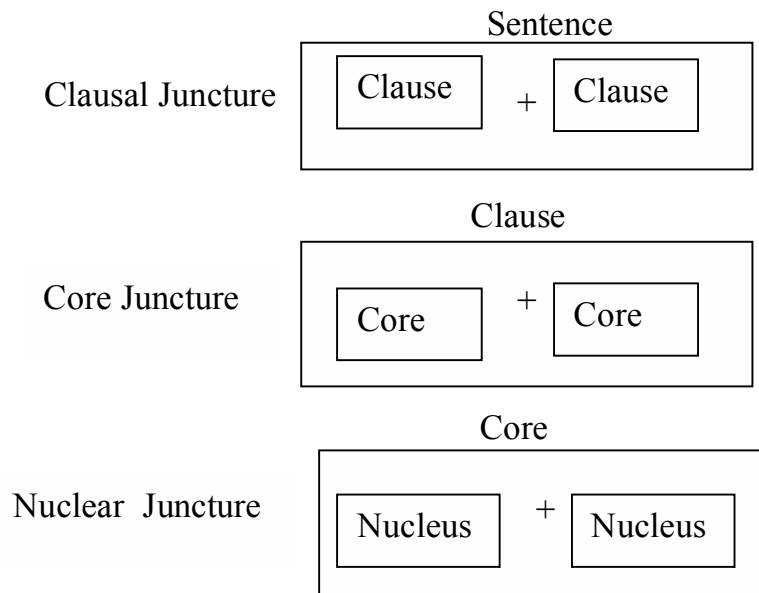


Figure 1.2 Types of Juncture (VanValin 2001a)

In a nuclear juncture, there is a single core containing multiple nuclei; in a core juncture, there is a single clause containing multiple cores, and in a clausal juncture there is a sentence containing multiple clauses. Nexus specifies the possible syntactic relations between units in the juncture. Traditional Grammar recognizes only two nexus relations, coordination and subordination. RRG posits a third nexus relation, one which is like coordination in that no unit is embedded in any other, but which is also like subordination in that non-matrix units are dependent on the matrix unit in this case for the expression of certain grammatical categories. This nexus relation, termed co-subordination and was

originally used in Olson (1981). These three nexus types are presented schematically in Figure (1.3).

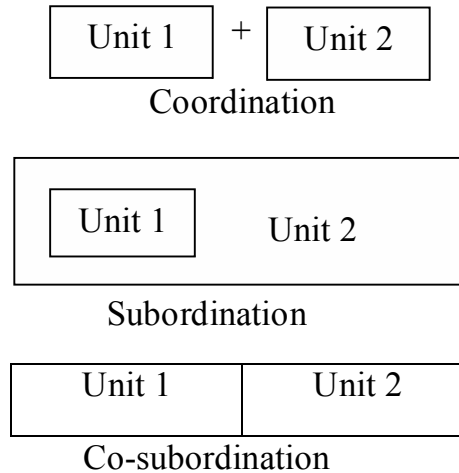


Figure 1.3 Types of nexus

The three possible levels of juncture and three possible nexus relations among the units result in nine possible juncture-nexus types in universal grammar. These nine juncture-nexus types can be ranked in terms of the tightness of the syntactic bond involved in the linkage as represented in Figure (1.4)

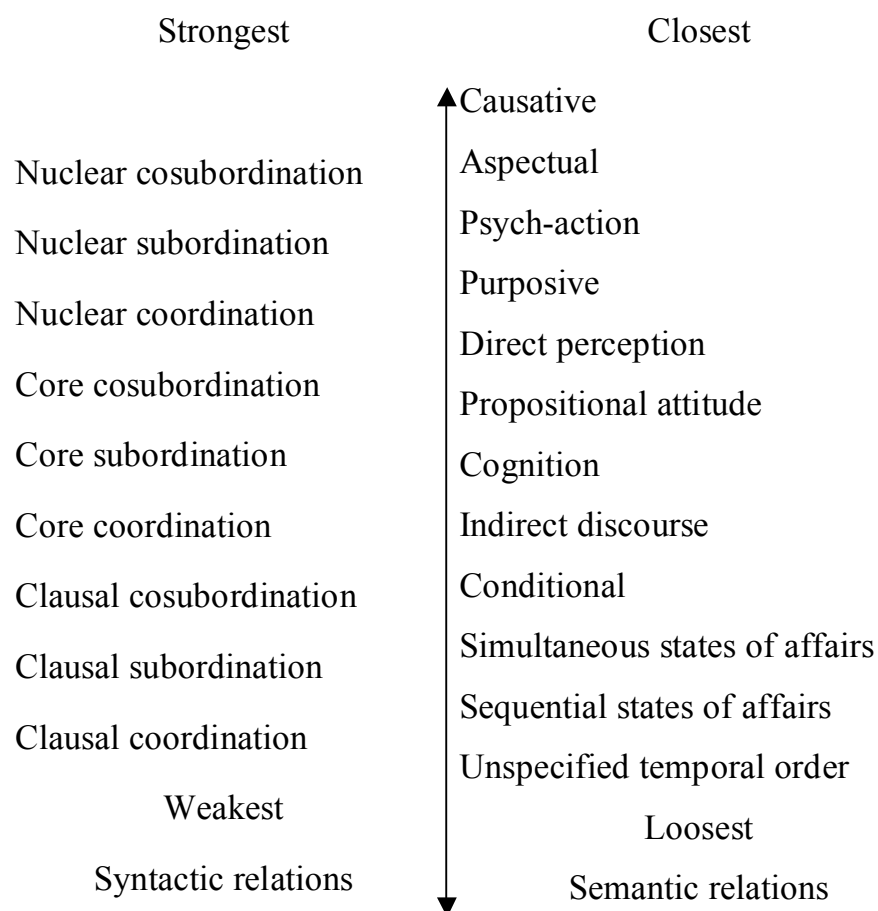


Figure 1.4 Interclausal relations hierarchy in RRG (from VanValin and LaPolla 1997: 481)

The relationship between the syntactic and semantic relations in clause linkage is very complex. The primary principle governing the interaction of the two hierarchies is: the closer the semantic relation between two propositions is, the stronger the syntactic link joining them.

1.4. Language under study

The language described in this study is the standard contemporary Persian(Farsi) in its written form, which is used by educated people, mass media, writers, etc. However, the spoken form of the language is not totally excluded, thus, in cases where it clarifies the analysis of the data, I also talk about spoken form of the language.

A descendant from the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family, Farsi (Modern Persian) emerged from ‘Middle Persian’ or ‘Pahlavi’, the language of the Sassanian Empire, and Old Persian, the language of the ancient Persian Empire, in about the ninth century A.D.⁷ Some of the typical characteristics of this language will be presented here.

1.4.1. Word order

Farsi is an SOV language. The sentence appears in the word order subject-object-verb. Verbs are marked for tense and aspect and agree with the subject in person and number. This is illustrated by the following sentences.

(1.4) a. bačče-hâ panjere râ šekast-and.

child-Pl window OBJ break-PAST-3PL

‘The children broke the window.’

b. mâ kêr mi-kon-im.

We work IMP-do-1PL

‘We work.’

Although verb-final, Farsi is otherwise head-initial: NGen, NA, PrepN, NRel. Heads are final according to traditional classification in such constructions as DemN. The following are examples of word order in these basic constructions.

(1.5) a. (NGen) dust - e man ‘my friend’

friend-EZ I

b. (NA) xâne-ye bozorg ‘The big house’

house-EZ big

c. (PrepN) dar xeyâbân ‘In the street’

in street

d. (NRel) gol-i ke dust dâr-am.

Flower- that like have-1sg.

‘The flower that I like.’

e. (DemN) in ketâb-hâ.

This book-PL

‘These books.’

If there is an oblique or a prepositional phrase in the clause, it precedes the indefinite direct object as shown in (1.6), but usually follows the specific or definite object as in (1.6b).

(1.6) a. Ali be bačče-hâ qazâ dâd.

Ali to child-pl food give-past-3sg

‘Ali fed the children.’

b. Ali qazâ râ be bačče-hâ dâd.

Ali food OBJ to child-pl gave-3sg

‘Ali gave the food to the children.’

Although these examples describe the canonical word order, Farsi is a free word order language and the sentential constituents can be moved around in the clause.⁸ These scrambled clauses often give rise to focused or topicalized readings. In the written language, although most elements may appear in relatively free word order, the sentences often remain verb-final. Adverbs and preposition phrases, however, can appear in various positions quite freely. Apart from manner adverbs, which occur within the verb phrase, other adverbs may appear almost anywhere in the clause, in between the various constituents. Adverbs usually can not occur following the verb. It should be noted, however, that this seemingly free word order is much less free in terms of focus structure (see ch5). Farsi lacks case-marking. The grammatical relations of noun phrases are expressed by means of prepositions, postpositions, and, for the subject only, verb agreement. This language, like many European languages is basically dependent-marking in Nichols (1986) typological sense. However, Farsi has verb agreement which expresses the person and number of the subject. Therefore, an independent pronoun is not necessary. Indeed Farsi is a prodrop language. This can be illustrated by the following examples:

- (1.7) a. man ketâb râ xarid-am
 I book OBJ buy-PAST-1sg
 ‘I bought the book.’
- b. ketâb râ xarid-am.
 book OBJ buy-PAST-3sg
 ‘I bought the book.’
- c. xarid-am-eš
 buy-PAST-1sg
 ‘I bought it.’

1.4.2. Verbs

Farsi verbs are formed using one of two basic stems, present and past. Aspect is as important as tense; and all verbs are marked as perfective and imperfective. Both perfective and imperfective verb forms appear in three tenses: present, past, and future.

In this language passive is formed with the verb *šodan* ‘to become’, and not allowed with specified agents. Farsi verbs are normally compound consisting of a noun, adjective or preposition followed by a light verb (Megerdooimian 2002, Karimi Doostan 1997, among others). The meaning of the light verb constructions can not be obtained by translating each element separately as the following examples illustrate:⁹

- (1.8) a. zamin xordan ‘floor eat’ to fall
 b. gul zadan ‘deception hit’ to deceive
 c. šekast dâdan ‘defeat give’ to defeat

1.4.3. Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns are used for all numbers and persons and their forms do not change if their function change. Sentences in (1.9) below show the personal pronoun *man* ‘I’ in subject, object, and genitive positions respectively.

- (1.9) a. man dir resid-am
 I late arrived-1sg
 ‘I arrived late.’
 b. Farid man râ na-šenâxt
 Farid I OBJ NEG-recognize-PAST-3sg.
 ‘Farid did not recognize me.’
 c. Ali ketâb-e man râ pasdâd
 Ali book-EZ I OBJ return-PAST-3sg
 ‘Ali returned my book.’

In addition to the above pronouns which are free morphemes, Farsi uses a set of pronominal clitics in certain positions. However, these pronominals do not occur in the subject position.

- (1.10) Ali ketâb-am râ pasdâd.
 Ali book-poss OBJ return-PAST-3sg.
 ‘Ali returned my book.’

1.5 Summary

In this chapter I have described the purpose and the scope of this thesis. I have also presented a short contrast between two general perspectives on the linguistic studies. A short introduction to historical background and major assumptions of Role and Reference Grammar as a functional-structural theory is provided. In the end, some of the general characteristics of Farsi are demonstrated.

Notes to Chapter 1

1 Iranian people refer to the official language of the country as Farsi. However, in European languages, Persian (English) and Persan (French) are used to refer to this language. For more information about the name of this language, see Ghomeshi (2001b).

2 The term syntactocentric is introduced by Jackendoff (1997).

3 It should be noted that within this orientation there are a number of competing theories. For comparing different functional theories see Newmeyer (1999, 2001).

4 This section gives the general theoretical principles of this theory. Comprehensive theoretical notions and assumptions of RRG will be presented in each relevant subsequent chapter.

5 See VanValin (1992, 1994) for more information on language acquisition from an RRG point of view.

6 For a comprehensive analysis of complex sentences in RRG, the reader is referred to VanValin and LaPolla (1997: chs 8-9), and VanValin (2001a).

7 See Aboulhassemi (1996) and Sadeghi (1978) for more information on the historical development of Farsi.

8 As I will show in Chapter 5, the word order in Farsi is not free in terms of focus structure. Indeed the focal elements, unlike non-focal elements, can not appear in different positions.

9 For recent studies of the light verbs in Farsi see Megerdooomian (2002: ch3) and Karimi Doostan (1997).