

## Ellipsis in Persian: Verb phrase ellipsis or argument ellipsis?

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**INTRODUCTION:** Persian has been proposed to be a verb-stranding VP Ellipsis (VVPE) language (Toosarvandani 2009; Shafiei 2015, 2016); however, Rasekhi (2014, 2015) presents a contrasting view and proposes that Persian has Argument Ellipsis, in which the argument(s) is elided independently. Goldberg (2005) argues that we find VVPE in languages which independently allow V to T movement. For instance, according to her analysis, in the Hebrew example in (1), the verb moves to T prior to ellipsis. However, Gribanova (2013) argues that, in Russian, V doesn't have to move to T for the VVPE to be possible but rather the verb needs to move to a position above *v*P. She proposes that in Russian VVPE, the verb moves to AspP, which is lower than T but higher than *v*P.

1. Q: (Ha'im) Tamar kanta kafe?                      A: Ken, hi kanta.  
Did Tamar buy coffee?                              Yes, he bought (coffee).                      (Goldberg, 2005; 36)

Toosarvandani (2009) proposes *v*VPE for Persian Complex Predicates (CPr). By adopting the CPr structure put forth by Folli, et al. (2005), in which the non-verbal element (NV) and the light verb (LV) belong to different phrases, he can explain that the LV survives the elision because it is the phrase including the NV that undergoes deletion.

Shafiei (2016) also proposes a stranding analysis for ellipsis in verb phrases in Persian. However, her approach is different in that she uses a verb movement account to explain the presence of verb after elision takes place. She proposes that the verb has to move out of the *v*P and it goes as high as C because it cannot stop at T since there is no V to T movement in Persian. So, for Shafiei, the CPr *out zadan* 'to iron' in the example (2), starts off as a single unit and then the LV moves higher to T and then to C, and survives the deletion.

2. Sohrab *piran-a-ro*      *otu na-zad*              *vali Rostam* [~~*piran-a-ro*~~—~~*otu*~~] *zad*.  
Sohrab shirt-PL-ACC iron NEG-hit.3SG but Rostam shirt-PL-ACC iron hit.3SG  
'Sohrab didn't iron the shirts, but Rostam did.'                      (Toosarvandani, 2009: ex. 4)

On the other hand, Rasekhi (2014, 2015) argues that *v*VPE analysis cannot account for Persian simple predicates. One of her arguments against *v*VPE comes from verbal identity. In VVPE, as in Hebrew, verbs must be identical in root and derivational morphology (3b); otherwise, the result will be ungrammatical (3c), (Goldberg, 2005: 106). However, in Persian simple predicates, the verbs can be either identical, as in (2) or have opposite meaning, as in (4).

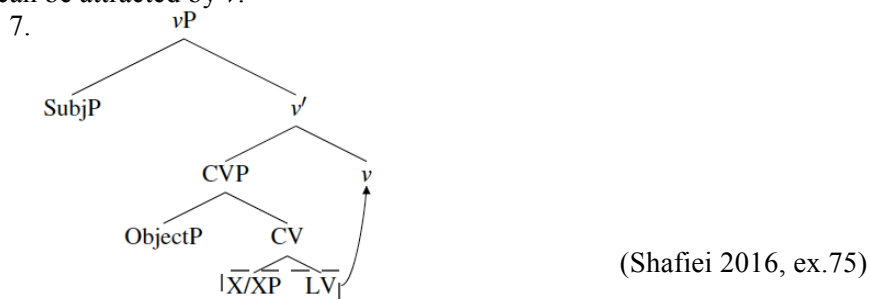
3. a. (Ha'im) Miryam hevi'a              et      Dvora la-xanut?  
Q      Miryam brought.3SG ACC Dvora to-the.store  
'Did Miryam bring Dvora to the store?'
- b. *ken, hi hevi'a*    c. \**ken, hi lakxa*  
yes she took.3FSG    yes she took.3FSG  
'Yes, she brought (Dvora to the store).'                      '(Intended) Yes, she took (Dvora to the store).'
4. a. *az in ke Ali pārsāl yeho      un khuna-ro kharid      tazjob=na-kard-am*  
from this that Ali last year suddenly that house-ACC bought.3SG surprise=NEG-did-1SG  
'The fact that Ali bought that house suddenly last year didn't surprise me.'
- b. *vali az in ke emsāl yeho* [~~*un khuna-ro*~~] *furukht tazjob=kard-am*  
but from this that this year suddenly that house-ACC sold.3SG surprise=did-1SG  
'The fact that he suddenly sold (that house) this year surprised me.'                      (Rasekhi, 2015: ex.34)

**PROBLEM:** The problem with Rasekhi's argument ellipsis analysis is that it is not economical since we need to have both DP ellipsis and PP ellipsis independently when both the direct and indirect objects are elided. On the other hand, the problem with Toosarvandani's *v*VPE analysis is that it cannot account for structures where only one argument is deleted (5) or when the nonverbal element survives (6). Shafiei's proposal solves the second problem by positing verb movement to C. However, V to C movement is just

a stipulation and there is no independent motivation. Moreover, to account for sentences like (5), she needed to propose that in such cases, we have argument ellipsis rather than vVPE.

5. Ayda ketab-ro baraye Araz xund vali Maryam majale-ro [~~baraye Araz~~] xund.  
 Ayda book-ACC for Araz read.3SG but Maryam magazine-ACC for Araz read.3SG  
 ‘Ayda read the book for Araz but Maryam read the magazine (for Araz).’
6. Sohrab piran-a-ro otu na-zad vali Rostam [~~piran-a-ro~~] otu zad.  
 Sohrab shirt-PL-ACC iron NEG-hit.3SG but Rostam shirt-PL-ACC iron hit.3SG  
 ‘Sohrab didn’t iron the shirts, but Rostam did.’

**THE PROPOSAL:** In this study, we propose a unifying account for structures in which the verb is overt while the rest of clause is elided. We argue that the VVPE strategy can account for all types of structures in which one or more arguments are elided. Our proposal is different from Toosarvandani’s analysis in the way we analyze complex predicates. We follow Shafiei’s (2015, 2016) complex predicates structure, as schematically illustrated in (7). In this structure, the NV and LV make a complex head (CV) and the LV or the whole complex head can be attracted by v.



We provide evidence that there is FocP in the TP level, above vP, and argue that in VVPE structure, the verb survives ellipsis by moving to the focus head, and the E feature (Merchant, 2001) on F licenses the elision of its complement, vP. We also argue that in structures as in (8), where one of the arguments survives the ellipsis, the argument moves to the Spec of FocP prior to ellipsis.

8. Ayda ketab-ha-ro be Araz dad vali Maryam [~~ketab-ha-ro~~] be Ali dad.  
 Ayda book-PL-ACC to Araz gave.3SG but Maryam book-PL-ACC to Ali gave.3SG  
 ‘Ayda gave the books to Araz but Maryam gave (the books) to Ali.’

This study differs from Shafiei’s studies in two respects. Firstly, the verb does not need to move all the way up to C, and secondly, it can account for the sentences with one missing argument by a movement operation rather than positing another available operation, i.e. argument ellipsis.

**CONCLUSION:** In this study, we examine Toosarvandani and Rasekhi’s proposals for missing objects in Persian. We discuss the problems with their analysis and provide a unifying account for structures in which the verb is overt while the argument(s) or nonverbal element is elided. Following Shafiei’s analysis of complex predicates, we are able to account for all types of data through VVPE strategy. In addition, we argue that there is FocP above the vP level, and in VVPE, the verb survives ellipsis by moving to the F. The Focus head carries E feature that licenses the elision of its complement, vP. We also argue that in structures in which an argument(s) remains overt, they move to the Spec of FocP prior to ellipsis.

**References:** Folli, R., Harley, H. and Karimi, S. 2005. Determinants of event type in Persian complex predicates. *Lingua* 115:1365–1401. Goldberg, L. 2005. Verb-stranding VP ellipsis: A cross-linguistic study. Doctoral dissertation, McGill University. Gribanova, V. 2013. A new argument for verb-stranding verb phrase ellipsis. *Linguistic Inquiry* 44:145–157. Merchant, J. 2001. *The Syntax of Silence: sluicing, islands, and the theory of ellipsis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Rasekhi, V. 2014. Missing objects in Persian. Ms., *Stony Brook University*. Raskhei, V. 2015. Missing Objects in Persian. Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Iranian Linguistics (ICIL5). Cahiers de Studia Iranica series. Shafiei, N. 2015. Ellipsis in Persian Complex Predicates: VVPE or Something Else? In *Annual Conference of the Canadian Linguistic Association*. Shafiei, N. 2016. *Persian Complex Predicates: Evidence for Verb Movement from Ellipsis and Negation*. Diss. University of Calgary. Toosarvandani, M. 2009. Ellipsis in Farsi complex predicates. *Syntax* 12:60–92.