Some issues in the morphological analysis of nominal plurals in Persian

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▶ **To cite this version:**

HAL Id: halshs-01480080
https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01480080

Submitted on 1 Mar 2017

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Under the framework of Whole Word Morphology (WWM) developed by Ford and Singh (Ford *et al.* 1997), this paper proposes a synchronic description of nominal plural morphology in Persian (limited to Tehran's spoken variety). According to this theory, any morphological relationship between two words of a language can be described by a Word-Formation Strategy (WFS), having the following form:

$/X/_\alpha \leftrightarrow /X'/_\beta$, where:

X and X' are words,

α and β are major lexical categories,

$\leftrightarrow$ indicates an equivalence relation (a bidirectional implication),

X' is a semantic function of X,

' indicates a formal difference between the two poles of the morphological operation,

' can be null iff $\alpha \neq \beta$.

Any strategy is a generalization from a particular fact, activated in the production or understanding of new words or temporarily forgotten ones. In order to establish a WFS, one must be provided with at least two couples of words with the same semantic and formal relationship.

Some problematic issues in the existing analyses are:

It is common to divide the plural morphology into Persian and Arabic. This etymological division, based on the illegitimate hypothesis that all speakers have access to words' etymology, has no place in a synchronic analysis.

A proper explanation of double plurals, ranging from speech errors: *maqâlâthâ, nazarâthâ...,* to commonly used forms: *omurât, omurhâ, rosumât, rosumhâ...,* is lacking.

-jât has been extended both in formal and informal registers and is no longer limited to vowel-ending nouns, i.e. *šarbatjât, roqanjât, boronzjât* used as technical terms, as well as *alkoljât, esemesjât, mozaxrafjât, sândevičjât* used in a familiar register, especially by youngsters.

Pairs of words such as *čarand/čarandiyât, qazal/qazaliyât, jafang/jafangiyât, hajv/hajviyât* challenge the analyses of *-iyât* as a phonological variant of *-ât*.

Finally, given that a variety of plural forms is available to speakers, and the fact that these forms are not always interchangeable, the question of how the choice of plural marking is determined is raised.

References

Ford A., Singh R., Martohardjono G. (1997), Pace Panini, New York: Peter Lang.