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Periphrastic Causative Constructions in Persian, Kurmanji, and Armenian

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Abstract

This study investigates the lexico-grammatical functions of the verb ‘give’ in Persian, Kurmanji, and Armenian, focusing on its ‘causation’ dimension (Bouveret 2021), with the aim of establishing a regional continuum for the identified constructions and functions. Given that the verb ‘give’ appears in a variety of constructions, ranging from ditransitives (fully lexical) to periphrastic causatives (grammatical) in these three languages, we begin by providing a fine-grained classification of its functions in each language. We then briefly discuss the findings in a regional and contact-based context.

‘Give’ in different causative constructions (Persian)

I. ‘Give’ in three-place predicates:

- According to Haspelmath (2015), the core semantic property of ditransitive constructions can be conceived as *Caused-Possession*, expressing the transfer of an object from a source to a recipient (1).

1) *ū yek ketāb be man dād*
(S)he one book to me give.PST.3SG
‘(S)he gave a book to me.’

- Constructions involving transfer/movement toward a direction which include a third argument that represents the direction (Bouveret 2021 for Kalam and Chinese). In Persian, the combination of certain directional constituents (e.g., *pāin* ‘down’ and *bālā* ‘up’) and ‘give’ can be used to indicate *Caused-Movement* toward a direction (2a-b).

2) a. *rū=ye sandali nešast, āyine rā pāin dād*
on-EZ seat sit.PST.3SG mirror DOM down give.PST.3SG
‘He sat on the car seat and turned the mirror downward.’
b. *‘āyine rā dād pāin* ‘he turned the mirror downward.’

II. ‘Give’ in light verb constructions:

- A light verb construction (LVC) is a type of verb form comprised of a non-verbal element (also known as preverb) and a light verb.
- Certain preverbs can pair with different light verbs, including ‘give’. In such cases, the occurrence of ‘give’ implies *external causation* (e.g., *enteqāl yāftan/dādan* ‘to be transferred/to transfer’, *ertebāt dāstan/dādan* ‘to be connected/to connect’, *hadar raftan/dādan* ‘to be wasted/to waste’, *parvāz kardan/dādan* ‘to fly/to fly sth’, *keš āmadan/dādan* ‘to be lengthen/to lengthen’, *taskil shodan/dādan* ‘to be formed/to form sth’).
- ‘Give’ also occurs in certain fully lexicalized LVCs with a PP preverb, implying a *Caused-Destruction* meaning (e.g., *be bād dādan* ‘to lose, to waste’ (lit. give to wind), *be fanā dādan* ‘to destroy, to annihilate’ (lit. give to annihilation), *be koštan dādan* ‘to cause someone’s death’ (lit. give to death)).

III. ‘Give’ in periphrastic causatives:

- These constructions include the serialization of conjugated forms of ‘give’ with certain transitive verbs, conveying *indirect causation*, as the subject of the main clause is not the agent of the action.

3) *dāru-hā rā dād xōrd*
pill-PL DOM give.PST.3SG eat.PST-3SG
‘(S)he fed him/her the pills.’
(lit. ‘(S)he gave him/her the pills (and) (s)he ate them.’)

‘Give’ in different causative constructions (Kurmanji)

I. ‘Give’ in three-place predicates:

- To express *Caused-Possession*, Kurmanji primarily uses three-place predicates (notice that the recipient can appear pre and postverbally as shown in (5)).

5) *Min ji> te <re gul dan*
I.OBL <to> you.OBL flower give.PST.3SG
‘I gave flowers to you.’ (also *min gul dan te* ‘I gave you flowers.’)

- The directional function with ‘give’ in Kurmanji can be expressed in multiple ways including a three-place predicate in which the third argument indicates the direction (6).

6) *ez ê bi-d-im cem te*
I.NOM will IRR-give.PRS-1SG near/at you.OBL
‘I will bring it to you. (lit. I will give it near/towards you.)’ (Haig et al. 2019)

II. ‘Give’ in light verb constructions:

- Similar to Persian, the use of ‘give’ as a light verb can imply *external causation* compared to its passive-like counterparts (e.g., *hatin/dan der* ‘to be revealed/to reveal’, *cih girtin/dan* ‘to be placed/to place’).
- Additionally, there are certain compound verbs consisting of directional particles attached to ‘give’, such as *hildan* ‘to lift, to rise’ (*hil* ‘elevation’), *vedan* ‘to separate, to dig, to return’ (*ve* ‘going down’), *berdan* ‘to let, to abandon’ (*ber* ‘before, in front of’).

III. ‘Give’ in ‘self’ constructions:

- There are certain constructions in which ‘give’ is accompanied by a reflexive pronoun, where the ‘causer’ and ‘causee’ are the same person/entity, such as *bîhn di xwe dan* ‘to use perfume’ (lit. odor to self give), *lezê dan xwe* ‘to hasten’ (lit. haste give self), *sebrê dan xwe* ‘to be patient’ (lit. patience give self), *xwe dan barbar* ‘to help someone’ (lit. self give bearer of s.o), *xwe dan tenahiyê* ‘to isolate’ (lit. self give isolation).

IV. ‘Give’ in periphrastic causatives:

- Constructions involving the serialization of a conjugated form of ‘give’ and the infinitive form of a transitive verb, which cannot be separated or expressed through a main and subordinate clause.

7) *em kurdayeti-yê bi wan did-in nasîn*
1PL.NOM kurdcity-OBL by 3PL.OBL give.PRS.1PL know.INF
‘We teach them/make them know patriotism and Kurdcity.’ (Akin and Bouveret 2021:237)

‘Give’ in different causative constructions (Eastern Armenian)

I. ‘Give’ in three-place predicates:

- To express *Caused-Possession*, Armenian primarily uses three-place predicates (8).

8) *dasaxos-ê da (ayd) tal-is ê nran*
teacher.NOM-the it.NOM give-PTCP.PRS he is he.DAT
‘The teacher gives it to him.’ (Dum-Tragut 2009: 567)

II. ‘Give’ in periphrastic causatives:

- Constructions that use the serialization of a conjugated form of ‘give’ and the infinitive form of a transitive verb, implying *indirect causation*, which cannot be expressed through a main and subordinate clause.

9) *Anna-n Aram-i-n kard-al tv-ec nor girk-ê*
Anna.NOM-the Aram-DAT-the read-INF give-AOR.3SG new book.NOM-the
‘Anna made Aram read the new book.’ (Dum-Tragut 2009: 318)

- Certain constructions position the causer as the grammatical subject and the causee (embedded subject) as the indirect object in dative case.

10) *Hayr-ê k’artular-i-n namak ê gr-el tal-is*
father-the secretary-DAT-the letter.NOM he is write-INF give-PTCP.PRS
‘Father makes the secretary write a letter.’ (Dum-Tragut 2009: 328)

- There are certain constructions in which the main verb is accompanied by reflexives, where the ‘causer’ and ‘causee’ are different entities.

11) *Mayr-ê ir ord-u-n sap’r-v-el tv-ec’.*
mother.NOM-the her son-DAT-the shave-REFL-INF give-AOR.3SG
‘The mother made her son shave (himself).’ (Dum-Tragut 2009: 322)

Summary

The following hierarchies depict the lexico-grammatical continuum of ‘give’ with respect to its ‘causation’ in Persian, Kurmanji, and Eastern Armenian:

- Persian:
Full verb (caused-possession > caused-direction) >> periphrastic (indirect cause) >> light verb (idiomatic expressions (direct cause) > passive-active alternation (direct cause))
- Kurmanji
Full verb (caused-possession > caused-direction) >> periphrastic (direct cause) >> light verb (reflexive (causer = causee) > passive-active alternation (direct cause))
- Eastern Armenian
Full verb (caused-possession) >> periphrastic (indirect cause)

Discussion

Despite high comparability, Kurmanji and Persian differ significantly in how they form and employ periphrastic causative constructions. Although both languages use ‘give’ to denote causation, Persian employs the main-subordinate clause strategy (or serial verbalization) to imply indirect causation. Kurmanji, on the other hand, uses ‘give’ as a grammaticalized element, followed by the infinitive form of the main verb. In such cases, the subject of the clause is the causer of the action, expressing direct causality. From another perspective, the use of ‘give’ followed by an infinitive form to indicate indirect causation is well established and observed in Eastern Armenian. One relevant hypothesis for the somewhat recent development of similar periphrastic causatives in Kurmanji is that it may have been triggered through contact, since these types of constructions do not exist as a conventionalized way of expressing causation in other Iranian languages or neighboring languages, except for the Eastern Armenian.

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