

# RELATIVIZATION IN PERSIAN

Dr. Mohammad Hossein Keshavarz  
University for Teacher Education

## ABSTRACT

*In this paper, the structure of relative clauses in Standard Persian will be discussed within the frame of reference of Generative Transformational Grammar.<sup>(1)</sup> The procedure employed in this paper involves (a) the presentation of the surface structure of relative clauses in Persian by means of a selected set of data, (b) the determination of their deep structure on the basis of the data presented, and (c) the application of transformational rules necessary to relate the deep structure to the surface structure. Throughout the paper, Persian relative clauses and other related grammatical points will be compared and contrasted with their English counterparts, wherever necessary.*

Before discussing the structure of Persian relative clauses in detail, a few notes on the relative marker, direct object marker, and particles and determiners related to relative clauses in Persian may prove helpful in the following discussion.

Unlike English, Persian has no relative pronoun as such; instead, it has only one relative marker, namely **ke**, which can equally be used with nouns having the semantic features [+human], [+animate, -human] or [-animate] and also with adjuncts of place and time. In other words, the Persian relative marker **ke** is the equivalent of all English relative pronouns (who, whom, that, which, whose) as well as 'where' and 'when'. A few illustrative sentences may help make this point clearer.

- (ān) šaxs-i **ke** āmad dust-e man ast  
(that/the) person-part **who** came-he friend-of I is-he  
'The person who came is my friend.'

- (a) Ali ketāb-i xarid **ke** Ĵeld nadāšt  
Ali book-part bought-he **that** cover had not-it  
'Ali bought a book that had no cover.'
- (b) Ali yek ketāb xarid **ke** Ĵeld nadāšt  
Ali one/a book bought-he **that** cover had not-it  
'Ali bought a book that had no cover.'
- (ān) mard-i rā **ke** did-i mo?alem-e  
(that/the) man-part D.O.marker **whom** saw-you teacher-of  
man ast  
I is-he  
'The man whom you saw is my teacher.'
- sag-i rā did-am **ke** češm nadāšt  
dog-part D.O. Marker saw-I **which** eye had not-it  
'I saw a dog which was blind.'
- (ān) pesar-i **ke** ketāb-aš gom šod barādar-e  
(that/the) boy-part **whose** book-his lost become brother-of



man ast  
I is-he  
'The boy whose book got lost is my brother.'

6. ān pārk-i ast ke dar ānja bāzi mikard-im  
that park-part is where in there play did-we  
'That is the park where we used to play.'

7. vaqt-i (ke) Jāvān bud-am varzeš mikard-am  
time-part (when) young was-I exercise made-I  
'When I was young I used to do exercises.'

(part = particle, D.O. = Direct Object)

From the above examples, the following observations can be made:

(i) Definite nouns in Persian may optionally be preceded by the definite determiner **ān** 'that/the', as in sentences 1, 3 and 5.

Note that **ān** is obligatory when it is used as a demonstrative, as in sentence 6.

(ii) The particle -i, which is added to the head noun in the majority of cases, has two functions:

(a) **Demonstrative Suffix** or 'referential -i' when it is attached to a definite noun, as in sentences 1, 3, 5, and 6. This suffix is traditionally known as '**yay-e ešarat**' 'the -i of indication'.

(b) **Indefinite Suffix** when it follows an indefinite noun, as in sentences 2a and 4. It should be noted that instead of this -i, the determiner **yek** 'a, an, one' can be used, as in sentence 2b.

(iii) **rā** in sentences 2 and 4 is the direct object marker. It should be pointed out that only specific direct objects are followed by **rā**, non-specific direct objects are unmarked. For example, compare the following sentence, in which the direct object is not specific, with sentence number 4.

8. u az sag mitarsad  
he/she from dog afraid is  
'He/ she is afraid of dogs.'

(iv) In Persian there is a phenomenon called **zamāyer-e mottasel-e šaxsi** 'attached personal pronouns.' These personal pronouns are suffixed to verb stems, as in:

did - am	did - i	did - and
saw - I	saw-you	saw-they
'I saw'	'you saw'	'they saw'

(v) **ke** is obligatory used before all types of relative

clauses (sentences 1-6) except for time adverbial clauses in which case the use of **ke** is optional, as in sentence 7.

### Relative Clauses in Persian

A relative clause in Persian can be defined as a subordinate clause which modifies a noun phrase in the embedded clause which is replaced by the relative marker **ke** in the surface structure.

There are two main types of relative clauses in Persian: (i) restrictive (attributive), and (ii) non-restrictive (appositive). Restrictive relative clauses identify a person or a thing, whereas appositives simply give further information about an already mentioned person or thing. Here the discussion will be confined to restrictive relative clauses on two grounds: (i) shortage of space, and (ii) the fact that restrictive relative clauses, as Comrie (1981) points out, are more central to the notions of relative clause than non-restrictive ones.

On the deep structure of relative clauses in Persian, Tabaian (1975: 73) asserts that:

*There are no deep structure relative clauses. Instead, all surface relative clauses are represented in the deep structure as full sentences joined to the surface main clause by a coordinator, specifically, **va** 'and'.*

However, it is the present author's conviction that there is a deep structure for Persian relative clauses, as follows:

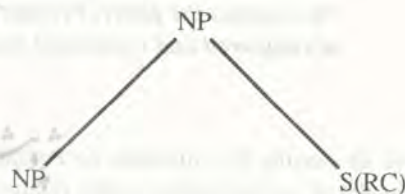


Diagram 1: The Deep Structure of Relative Clauses in Persian.

This is identical to the deep structure of relative clauses in English in the earlier models of Transformational Grammar (see, for example, Ross 1967: 118-31; and Jacobs and Rosenbaum 1968: 199). It is also similar to what Chomskians have proposed in recent years for the deep structure of English relative clauses within the frame of reference of the 'x-bar model' (see Mathews 1981; and Radford 1985).

To support our claim for the existence of a deep structure for Persian relative clauses, let us analyze the deep structure of one of the sentences above (sentence number 3), which represents an indefinite number of Persian sentences.



Downloaded from eijh.modares.ac.ir at 11:12 IRDT on Monday August 31st 2020

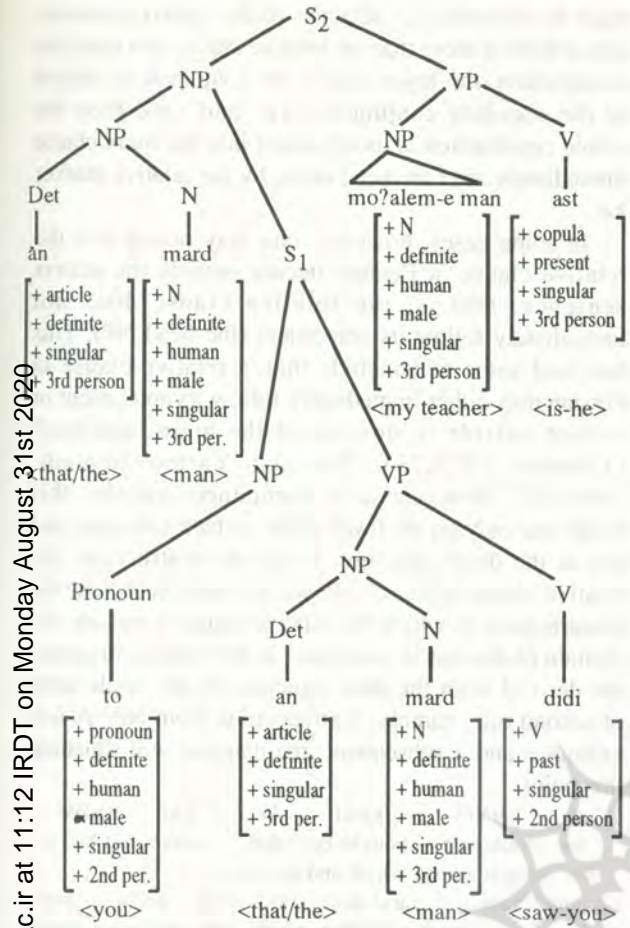


Diagram 2. The deep structure of sentence 3.

The above tree is analyzed to undergo relativization. According to the general rule of relative clause transformation, we change the NP in the embedded sentence, which is coreferential with the head NP in the matrix sentence, to the relative pronoun *ke* and prepose it to the beginning of the embedded sentence so that it is immediately adjacent to the head NP. Then we apply **T-Relative Particle Addition** which adds to relative article *i* to the head NP, and **T-Pronoun Deletion** which deletes the personal pronoun *to*, "you, 2nd. per. sing.", for in Persian if a personal pronoun functions as the subject or the direct object of the relative clause, it is optionally deleted. However, it should be mentioned that if a personal pronoun functions as the indirect object of a relative clause, it may never be deleted. Also pronoun deletion does not apply to attached personal pronouns, as defined above. These rules may be illustrated as follows:

T-rules<sup>(2)</sup>:

T-Relative Clause Formation ⇒ [ân-mard= [ke-to-didi]-  
S<sub>2</sub> S<sub>1</sub> S<sub>1</sub>  
mo?aleme-man-ast]  
S<sub>2</sub>

T-Relative Particle Addition ⇒ [ân-mard-i- [ke-to-didi]-  
S<sub>2</sub> S<sub>1</sub> S<sub>1</sub>  
mo?aleme-man-ast]  
S<sub>2</sub>

T-Pronoun Deletion ⇒ [ân-mard-i [ke-Ø-didi]-  
S<sub>2</sub> S<sub>1</sub> S<sub>1</sub>  
mo?aleme-man-ast]  
S<sub>2</sub>

Lower level rules optionally delete the definite article *ân* 'that/the', add the object marker *râ*, and give us the surface structure of sentence 3 above.

The above proposal for the existence of a deep structure for relative clauses in Persian and the application of NP-S analysis is a possible one for any particular language." (Bach 1973:268).

However, it should be pointed out that this proposal holds true only with cases of simple relative clauses in Persian. The deep structure of multiple relative clauses will look somehow different, as illustrated in diagram. 3 below.

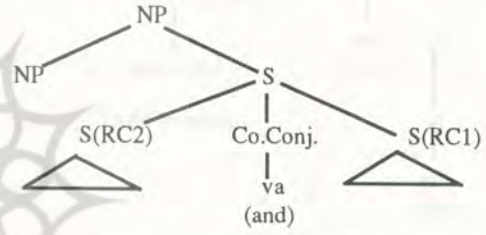


Diagram 3: The deep structure of multiple relative clauses.

As Diagram 3 shows, when there is more than one relative clause in the deep structure we have to conjoin the lower clauses by means of the coordinating conjunctive *va* 'and', and then incorporate the whole construction into the matrix sentence by the relative pronoun *ke* as in the following examples:

8.ketâb-i ke ru-ye miz ast va jeld-e âbi  
book-part that surface-of table is-it and cover-of blue  
dârad be man ta/aloq dârad  
has-it to I belong has-it

'The book which is on the table and wich as a blue cover belongs to me.'

9.dar-i ke az âhan sâxte šode bud va xeili  
door-part with from iron made become was and very  
ham mohkam bud bâz šod  
also firm was open becom

'The door which was made of iron and was also very firm opened.'

10.šâgerdi ke bâziguš ast va zyâd dars nemixânad  
student-part who playful is and very lesson not-read-he  
nomre-ye xub nemigirad  
grade-of good not-get-he



"The student who is playful and doesn't study hard won't get good grades."

The following diagram will further illustrate the construction of this type of relative clauses in Persian.<sup>(3)</sup>

Downloaded from ejh.modares.ac.ir at 11:12 IRDT on Monday August 31st 2020

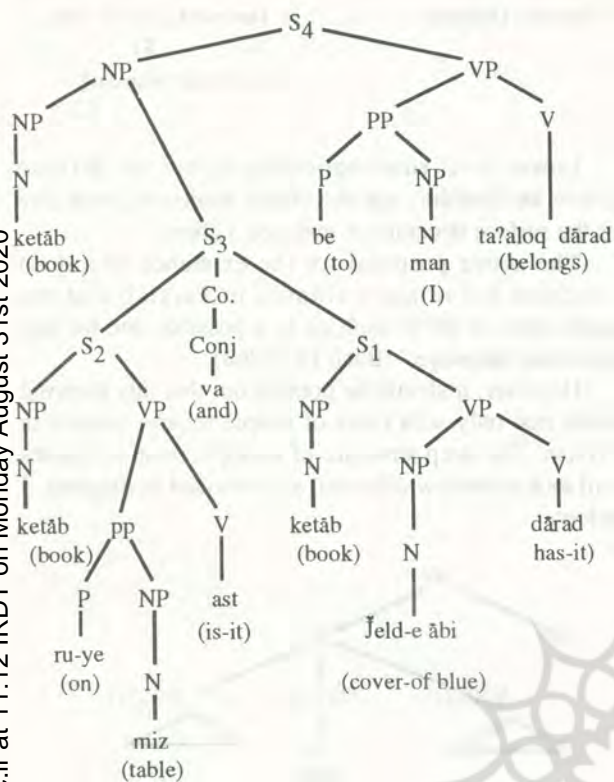


Diagram 4: The deep structure of sentence 8.

**T-Rules**

- Conj.-Placement ⇒ [ketāb [- [ketāb - ru-ye - miz - ast]-va -  
S<sub>4</sub> S<sub>3</sub> S<sub>2</sub> S<sub>2</sub>
- [ketāb-Jeld-e-ābi- dārad] - ] be - man - ta?aloq - dārad]  
S<sub>1</sub> S<sub>1</sub> S<sub>3</sub> S<sub>4</sub>
- Equi-NP Deletion ⇒ [ketāb [- [ketāb - ru-ye - miz - ast]-va -  
S<sub>4</sub> S<sub>3</sub> S<sub>2</sub> S<sub>2</sub>
- [∅-Jeld- ābi dārad] - ] be-man-ta?aloq-dārad]  
S<sub>1</sub> S<sub>1</sub> S<sub>3</sub> S<sub>4</sub>
- Relative clause Formation ⇒ [ketāb [- [ke - ru-ye-miz-ast]-  
S<sub>4</sub> S<sub>3</sub> S<sub>2</sub> S<sub>2</sub>
- va - [Jeld-e ābi - dārad] - ] be man- ta?aloq-dārad]  
S<sub>1</sub> S<sub>1</sub> S<sub>3</sub> S<sub>4</sub>
- Relative Particle Addition ⇒ [ketāb-i [- [ke - ru-ye - miz -  
S<sub>4</sub> S<sub>3</sub> S<sub>2</sub>
- ast]-va -[Jeld-e - ābi - dārad ] - ] be-man - ta?aloq - dārad]  
S<sub>2</sub> S<sub>1</sub> S<sub>1</sub> S<sub>3</sub> S<sub>4</sub>

After the application of lower-level rules and morphological changes we get the surface structure of sentence 8 above.

From the above discussion we can conclude that for relativization to occur in Persian, the relative clause

must be immediately adjacent to the matrix sentence, and if there is more than one relative clause in a complex construction, the lower clause are conjoined by means of the coording conjunctive *va*, 'and', and then the whole construction is incorporated into the main clause immediately after the head noun, by the relative marker *ke*.

In some cases, however, one may notice that the relative clause in Persian occurs outside the matrix sentence; that is, the relative clause does not immediately follow its antecedent (the head NP). This has led some to conclude that 'a relative clause in Persian may either immediately follow its antecedent or occur outside to domain of the main sentence' (Tabaian, 1975:73). (See also Yarmohammadi, 1965:157). However, it is maintained here that this holds true only on the level of the surface structure, and not in the deep structure. In the deep structure, the relative clause always follows its antecedent, and the constructions in which the relative clause is outside the domain of the matrix sentence, in the surface structure, are derived from the deep structure by the application of second rule, namely, 'Extrapolation from NP.' A few examples and a subsequent tree diagram will illustrate this point.

- 11. u ketāb-i xarid ke Jeld nadāšt  
he book-part bought-he that cover not-had-it  
'He bought a book which and no cover.'
- 12. ānhā xane-i xarid-and ke xeili gerān bud  
they house-part bought-they which very expensive was-it  
'They bought a house which was very expensive.'
- 13. u be madrase-i miravad ke nazdik-e xāne-aš ast  
he to school-part goes which near-of house-his is-it  
'He goes to a school which is near his house.'

The following is a tree diagram which shows the underlying deep structure of sentence 11 above.

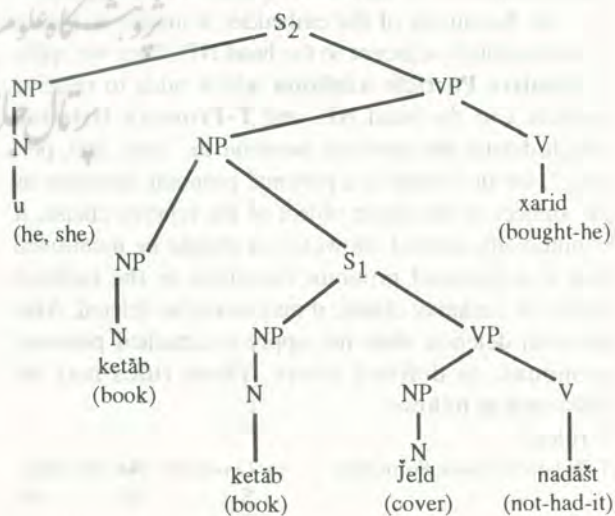


Diagram 5: Deep structure for sentence 11.



## T-Rules

Relative clause Formation  $\Rightarrow$  [u-ketab<sub>S2</sub>[ke-jeld-nadašt<sub>S1</sub>]-xarid<sub>S1</sub>]<sub>S1</sub>

Rel. Particle Addition  $\Rightarrow$  [u-ketab-i-[ke-jeld-nadašt]-xarid]  
<sub>S2</sub> <sub>S1</sub> <sub>S1</sub> <sub>S2</sub>

Thus far, after the application of lower-level rules and morphophonemic changes, we have the surface structure:

u ketab-i ke jeld nadašt xarid  
 he book-part which cover not-had-it bought-he

Which is an acceptable sentence in Persian. However, for stylistic variation we may extrapose the relative clause out of the matrix sentence by the application of **Extrapolation from NP**, as follows:

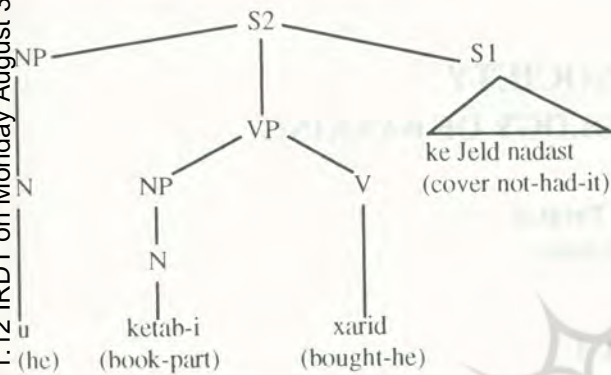


Diagram 6: Intermediate structure of sentence 11 after having undergone *Extrapolation from NP*.

As can be seen, after the application of Extrapolation from NP we get the surface structure of sentence 11.

In this paper, the structure of relative clauses in Persian was discussed and an underlying deep structure was postulated for these clauses. Other types of relative clauses in Persian will be presented in a separate paper.

## notes

1. It should be pointed out that although use will be made here of tree diagrams and other transformational conventions, we are not by any means concerned here with the theoretical issues of any model of Transformational Grammar. Rather, the conventional tree diagrams and transformational rules are used as convenient means for stating explicitly the implicit relationships involved in the structure of Persian relative clauses.
2. Here, we are concerned only with those rules which are directly relevant to the construction of relative clauses in Persian, and assume that irrelevant rules such as **ezafe construction**, **T-article**, **T-Copula**, and so forth have been applied to this structure.
3. Henceforth, I will not include the features of the segment transformation, for the sake of brevity and simplicity.

## References

- Bach, E. (1974). *Syntactic Theory*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc.
- Batani, M. R. (1969). *Towsif-e Sakhteman-e Dasture Zaban-e Farsi*. Tehran: Amir Kabir.
- Bowers, F. (1968) "English Complex Sentence Formation," *Journal of Linguistics* Vol. 4:83-8.
- Burt, M.K. (1971). *From Deep to Surface Structure: An Introduction to Transformational Syntax*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.
- Comrie, B. (1981). *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology: Syntax and Morphology*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Grinder, J. T., and S. H. Elgin (1973). *Guide to Transformational Grammar*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc.
- Jacobs, R. A., and P. S. Rosenbaum (1968). *English Transformational Grammar*. Waltham, Mass.: Xerox College Publishing.
- Lazard, G. (1957). *Grammaire Du Persan Contemporain*. Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck.
- Mathews, P. H. (1981). *Syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Radford, A. (1985). *Transformational Syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ross, J. R. (1967). *Constraints on Variables in Syntax*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Smith, C. S. (1964). "Determiners and Relativ Clauses in a Generative Grammar of English," *Language*, 40:37-52.
- Tabaian, H. (1975). *Conjunction, Relativization, and Complementation in Persian*. Colorado: University of Colorado Press.
- Yarmohammadi, L. (1965). *A Contrastive Study of Modern English and Modern Persian*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University.

Downloaded from eijh.modares.ac.ir at 11:12 IRDT on Monday August 31st 2020