

The role of argument structure in relative clause extraposition: A comprehension study in Persian and German

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Corpus data from English and Persian has shown that the argument structure of the main clause verb influences the likelihood of relative clause extraposition from its arguments: Extraposition is more likely from hosting noun phrases that are patient/themes than from agents. For example, extraposition from subject noun phrases is more likely with unaccusatives (whose subject is a theme) than unergatives (whose subject is an agent) as main clause verbs. Additionally, these studies have shown that a subset of unaccusatives, namely verbs of appearance, such as *'appear'*, *'enter'*, and *'arrive'*, are especially more friendly with extraposition—an observation confirmed by comprehension studies in English. We are investigating whether these semantic and syntactic properties affect extraposition across different languages. Therefore, we conducted several acceptability experiments in Persian and German. We found that verb type affects the acceptability of extraposition in both languages in the same way. Appearance verbs showed a higher preference for extraposition than non-appearance verbs. However, we did not find such a preference for non-appearance verbs compared to unergatives. At the talk, we will discuss the implications of these results for the role of argument structure in real-time processing.