Word Order of Persian and English: A Processing-Based Analysis

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To cite this article:
Mehri Izadi, Maryam Rahimi. Word Order of Persian and English: A Processing-Based Analysis. *Education Journal.*
Vol. 4, No. 1, 2015, pp. 37-43. doi: 10.11648/j.edu.20150401.18

Abstract: Word order refers to analyzing the order of languages syntactic constituent to find out the areas of their similarities and differences. In the present study, we intend to elaborate Persian and English word order mainly based on Dryer (1992) and Dabir Moghaddam (2001). Our research material includes examples driven from 26 orders. We studied these orders in order to present a clearer picture of correlations and diversities between the two languages. Research findings reveal that although Persian is an SOV language and English has the SVO order, these languages represent similarities in half of the 26 orders provided. As to differences, they are different in the application of adposition, noun and relative clause, want and verb, content verb and auxiliary, question particle and sentence, adverbial subordinator and clause, etc.

Keywords: Word Order, Persian Language, English Language, Contrastive Study

1. Introduction

Word order is the analysis of the order of the syntactic constituents of a language, and that how different languages would employ different orders (Tallerman, 2005). The discrepancies and similarities between orders in different syntactic domains are a matter of interest for linguists (Tallerman, 2005). Some languages are relatively inflexible in their word order. Thus, in order to convey grammatical information, their speakers have to rely on the order of constituents. Other languages are more flexible and convey grammatical information via inflection, case marking, or other markers. This shows that most languages have a preferred word order and use it most frequently than other word orders (Johnson, 2008). Based on Tallerman (2005) there are 6 possible constituent word orders for the world languages:

1. Subject + verb + object (i.e. SVO): including English, the Romance languages, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Chinese and Swahili,
2. Subject + object + verb (SOV): the prototypical Japanese, Mongolian, Basque, Turkish, Korean, the Indo-Aryan languages, the Dravidian languages, Persian, Latin and Quechua,
3. Verb + subject + object (VSO): Classical Arabic, the Insular Celtic languages, and Hawaiian,
4. Verb + object + subject (VOS): Fijian and Malagasy,
5. Object + subject + verb (OSV): Xavante and Warao,
6. Object + verb + subject (OVS): Hixkaryana.

Many languages of the world are either SVO or SOV. The third significant word order which is much smaller than the two is VSO word order. The three remaining orders are rare.

English is mostly an SVO language and has a strict word order in which words can be presented in sentences. This order is exemplified below:

The researchers sent their manuscripts to the journal (Wallwork, 2011: 21).

Here, we have subject (the researcher), verb (sent), direct object (their manuscripts) and indirect object (to the journal). If these parts of speech appear in a different word order, it would be difficult for the readers to get the meaning fully. Thus, the key is to keep these elements as close to each other as possible (ibid.). Whereas English sentences normally put the subject at the beginning of sentences, followed by the predicate, there are sentences in which the verbs come initially, such as imperative sentences like: *Beware of dog!* Here, we do not have any subject. In these cases English examples still conform to English grammar, and do not allow random placement of subject, verb and object. This means that word order is crucial in English language because it has a fixed word order (Gill, 2010). By adding an indirect object

the word order will be more complicated. Most of the English sentences have adverbials. The problem for the English learner is that some adverbials can be placed differently within the sentence, while other adverbials must appear in one place only; e.g. we can say both: *"I very quickly did my homework"* and *"I did my homework very quickly"*, while we can say only *"I did my homework in a hurry"*. Examples like these reveal that English learners who want to have a correct word order should ask a native speaker or consult a good usage guide such as *Swan's Modern English Usage* or search the sentences in the web (Shoebottom, n. d.).

However, as far as word order is concerned, Persian is more flexible and its word order is relatively free. Some of these orders are more marked than other orders, but all of them can be permissible (Ramsay, Ahmed & Mirzaiean, 2005). Persian can have free word order, because Persian parts of speech are totally unambiguous. Moreover, prepositions and the accusative marker help to remove ambiguity (Oranski, 2007). Also, case endings like different suffixes allow speakers to permute word order (Ramsay et al., 2005). This feature enhances expressiveness and more information load can be driven from each of its sentence. Verb endings can provide information about the tense and subject of a sentence. The verb */mi-ra-v-am/* can mean "I am going". In Persian subjects can be freely omitted, there are not any distinctions between nouns and noun phrases (Ramsay et al., 2005), the main clause is located before a subordinate clause. Modifiers usually come after the nouns which they modify. The question particle */âyâ/*, which is used in yes/no questions appears at the beginning of sentences. Contrary to many languages which use SVO, Persian can use prepositions. The object marker, "râ", precedes its direct object (Oranski, 2007).

The present project deals with the differences and similarities between the word order of Persian and English language. This study provides findings about word order status of these languages through the analyses and recognition of their behavioral patterns and their specific characterizations. The project found its way on the basis of Dryer (1992) and Dabirmoghaddam (2001) works on word order. We compared the two languages according to the criteria of their distinctive variations based on 26 orders, each with two examples. We demonstrated how they behave by classifying them into two different charts, and analyzed their word order. Further, we provided the whole representation of the data gathered for the concerned languages. The table can show in which orders the two languages correlate, or signify differences. Finally, we evaluated the results of the data on the basis of our observations, and showed the similarities and differences among the concerned languages as well. Then, it will be possible to classify those similar orders that show correlations in their word order and to distinguish them from those orders that reveal different patterns.

The 26 orders that were the basis of our study are as follows: (They are derived from Persian language, and are given phonetically. Then, they will be translated into English in subsequent parts of the paper for a clearer comparison)

1. Adposition type
/boŝqâb râ ruye miz gozâŝtam/
/man dar hayât zamin xordam/

2. Order of noun and relative clause
/doxtari ke bâ ŝomâ ?âmad/
/lebâsi ke sabz rang ?ast/

3. Order of noun and genitive
/ŝalvâre pedar duxte ŝod/
/qazâye baĉĉe rixt/

4. Order of adjective and standard in comparative construction
/mina zibâtar ?az zahrâ ?ast/
/?u kuĉaktar ?az ?ali ?ast/

5. Order of verb and adpositional phrase
/man hamiŝe be ?u fekr mikonam/
/fardâ ?az mosâferat mi?âyam/

6. Order of verb and manner adverb
/man geryân ?âmadam/
/man bâ xoŝhâli ?u râ busidam/

7. Order of copula and predicate
/havâ ?âftâbi ?ast/
/pedare ?u keŝâvarz ?ast/

8. Order of 'want ' + verb
/mixâham be xâne?at biyâyam/
/to mixâhi dâstân râ benevisi/

9. Order of content verb and auxiliary verb
/mâ mitavânim bedavim/
/man mitavânam bexânam/

10. Order of question particle and sentence
/?âyâ to midâni?/
/?âyâ ?ânhâ mariz hastand?/

11. Order of adverbial subordinator and clause
/?vaqti ke ?u râ didi/
/?hengâmi ke be xâne ?âmadi/

12. Order of article and noun
/doxtari ?âmad/
/ĉerâqi roŝan ŝod/

13. Order of verb and subject
/man xâbidam/
/doxtar raft/

14. Order of numeral and noun
/ĉahâr livân ŝekast/
/do pesar raftand/

15. Order of tense/aspect affix and verb stem
/be xâne miravam/
/?u râ mibinam/

16. Order of affix and noun
/pedaram ?âmad/
/be xâne?aŝ raftam/

17. Order of verb and object
/dâstân râ xândam/
/baĉĉe râ didam/

18. Order of tense/aspect auxiliary verb
/?u ketâb xânde ?ast/
/man ?u râ dide?am/

19. Order of negative auxiliary and verb stem
/nemitavânam be kelâs biyâyam/
/be ?ânjâ naxâham raft/

20. Order of complementizer and sentence
/fekr mikardam ke ?u rafte ?ast/
/midânestam ke mi?âyad/

21. Order of plural word and noun
/baĉĉehâ? âmadand/
/darhâ baste ŝod/

22. Order of noun and adjective
/doxtare zibâ ?âmad/
/mâdare mehrabân raft/

23. Order of demonstrative and noun
/?in golhâ zibâ hastand/
/?ân doxtar râ didam/

24. Order of intensifier and adjective
/mohammad xeili sangin ?ast/
/?u kami ĉaq ast/

25. Order of verb and negative particle
/nâme râ naneveŝtam/
/qazâ râ naxordam/

26. Order of tense/aspect particle and verb
/?u mixâhad bedavad/
/?agar be madrese beravam/

2. Word Order in English and Persian

By the use of the 26 orders in the introduction we start to investigate the word order status of each language in turn. First, we provide the Persian examples followed by their glosses, and then we present the corresponding English equivalents for each order. There are two tables representing the word order of Persian and English separately. Then table (3) is given based on our observations that reports helpful information about their characteristics. Finally, we deal with each language in detail:

1) boŝâb râ   ru-y-e   miz   gozaŝt-am
plate OM   on-EP-GEN   table   put.PAST-1SG
"I put the plate on the table."

man dar   hayât   zamin   xord-am

I   in   yard   ground   eat.PAST-1SG
"I fell down in the yard"

2) doxtar-i   ke   bâ   soma   ?âmad
girl-REST   that   with   you   come.PAST.3SG
"The girl who came with you"

lebâs-i   ke   sabz   rang   ?ast
clothes-REST   that   green   color   be.PRES.COP.3SG
"The clothes which is green"

3) ŝalvâr-e   pedar   duxt-e   ŝod-e   ?ast
trousers-GEN   father   sew-PAST-PP   become-PAST-PP   be.PRES.AUX.3SG
"The father`s trousers are sewn."

qazâ-y-e   baĉĉe   rixt
food-EP-GEN   child   spill.PAST.PASSIVE.3SG
"The child`s food spilled."

4) mina   zibâ-tar   ?az   zahrâ   ?ast
Mina   beautiful-COMP   from   Zahra   be.PRES.COP.3SG
"Mina is more beautiful than Zahra."

?u   kuĉek-tar   ?az   ?ali   ?ast
he   small-COMP   from   Ali   be.PRES.COP.3SG
"He is smaller than Ali."

5) man   hamiŝe   be   ?u   fekr   mi-kon-am
I   always   to   he   thought   IMP-do.PRES-1SG
"I always think about him."

fardâ   ?az   mosafera   mi-?â-y-am
tomorrow   from   trip   IMP-come.PRES-EP-1SG
"Tomorrow I come back from my trip."

6) man   geryân   ?âmad-am
I   crying   come.PAST-1SG
"I came crying."

man   bâ   xoŝhali   ?u   râ   busid-am
I   with   happiness   he   OM   kiss.PAST-1SG
"I kissed him happily."

7) havâ   ?âftâbi   ?ast
weather   sunny   be.PRES.COP.3SG
"The weather is sunny."

pedar-e   ?u   keŝâvarz   ?ast
father-GEN   he   farmer   be.PRES.COP.3SG
"His father is a farmer."

8) mi-xâh-am   be   xâne-?at   bi-y-â-y-am
IMP-want.PRES-1SG   to   home-you.CLIT   SUB-EP-come.PRES-EP-1SG
"I want to come to your house."

to   mi-xâh-i   dâstân   râ   be-nevis-i
you   IMP-want.PRES-2SG   story   OM   SUB-write.PRES-2SG

"You want to write the story."

9) mâ   mi-tavân-im   be-da-v-im
   we   IMP-can.PRES.AUX-1PL SUB-run.PRES-EP-1PL
   "We can run."

   man mi-tavân-am   be-xân-am
   I   IMP-can.PRES.AUX-1SG SUB-read.PRES-1SG
   "I can read."

10) ?âyâ   to   mi-dân-i
    whether   you   IMP-know.PRES-2SG
    "Do you know?"

    ?âyâ   ?ânhâ   mariz   hast-and
    whether   they   sick   be.PRES.COP-3PL
    "Are they sick?"

11) vaqti   ke   ?u   râ   did-i
    when   that   he   OM   see.PAST-2SG
    "When you saw him"

    hengâmi   ke   be   xâne ?âmad-i
    when   that   to   home come.PAST-2SG
    "When you came home"

12) doxtar-i   ?âmad
    girl-INDEF   come.PAST.3SG
    "A girl came."

    ĉerâq-i   roŝan   ŝod
    light-INDEF on   become.PAST.PASSIVE.COP.3SG
    "A light turned on."

13) man xâbid-am
    I   sleep.PAST-1SG
    "I slept."

    doxtar   raft
    girl   go.PAST.3SG
    "The girl went."

14) ĉahâr   livân   ŝekast
    four   glass   break.PAST.PASSIVE.3SG
    "Four glasses broke."

    do   pesar raft-and
    two boy   go.PAST-3SG
    "The two boys went."

15) be   xâne   mi-ra-v-am
    to   home   IMP-go.PRES-EP-1SG
    "I am going to home."

    ?u   râ   mi-bin-am
    he OM   IMP-see.PRES-1SG
    "I see him."

16) pedar-am   ?âmad
    father-I.CLIT come.PAST.3SG
    "My father came."

be   xâne-?aŝ   raft-am
to   home-he.CLIT go.PAST-1SG
"I went to his house."

17) dâstân   râ   xând-am
    story   OM   read.PAST-1SG
    "I read the story."

    baĉĉe   râ   did-am
    child   OM   see.PAST-1SG
    "I saw the child."

18) ?u   ketab   xând-e   ?ast
    he   book   read-PAST-PP   be.PRES.AUX.3SG
    "He has read a book."

    man ?u   râ   did-e-?am
    I   he   OM   see-PAST-PP-AUX.1SG
    "I have seen him."

19) ne-mi-tavân-am   be   kelâs   bi-y-â-y-am
    NEG-IMP-can.PRES.AUX-1SG   to   class
        SUB-EP-come.PRES-EP-1SG
    "I cannot come to class."

    be   ?ânja na-xâh-am   raft
    to   there NEG-want.PRES.AUX-1SG go.PAST
    "I won`t go there."

20) fekr   mi-kard-am   ke   ?u
       raft-e   ?ast
    Thought   IMP-do.PAST-1SG   that   he
       go-PAST-PP   be.PRES.AUX.3SG
    "I thought that he`s gone."

    mi-dânest-am   ke   mi-?â-y-ad
    IMP-know.PAST-1SG that   IMP-come.PRES-EP-3SG
    "I knew that he would come."

21) baĉĉe-hâ   ?âmad-and
    child-PL   come.PAST-3PL
    "The children came."

    dar-hâ   baste   ŝod
    door-PL   close-PAST-PP become.PAST.AUX.3SG
    "The doors got closed."

22) doxtar-i   zibâ   ?âmad
    girl-GEN   beautiful   come.PAST.3SG
    "The beautiful girl came."

    mâdar-i   mehrabân   raft
    mother-GEN kind   go.PAST.3SG
    " The kind mother went."

23) ?in   gol-hâ   zibâ   hast-and
    this flower-PL   beautiful   be.PRES.COP-3SG
    "These flowers are beautiful."

    ?ân doxtar râ   did-am
    that girl   OM   see.PAST-1SG
    "I saw that girl."

24) mohammad   xeyli   sangin   ?ast
    Mohammad   very   heavy   be.PRES.COP.3SG
    "Mohammad is very heavy."

    ?u   kam-i   ĉâq   ?ast
    he   little-INDEF fat   be.PRES.COP.3SG
    "He is a little fat."

25) nâme   râ   na-neveŝt-am
    letter   OM   NEG-write.PAST-1SG
    "I didn`t write the letter."

    qazâ   râ   na-xord-am
    food   OM   NEG-eat.PAST-1SG
    "I didn`t eat the food."

26) ?u   mi-xâh-ad   be-da-v-ad
    he   IMP-want.PRES-3SG   SUB-run.PRES-EP-3SG
    "He wants to run."

    ?agar   be   madrese be-ra-v-am
    if   to   school   SUB-go.PRES-EP-1SG
    "If I go to school"

According to the given discourse patterns, Table (1) shows the orders of different parts of speech in Persian language, and similarly Table (2) shows these features in English as well.

Table 1. Persian word order.

	Orders	Persian
1	adposition type	PREP+N
2	noun and relative clause	N+REL CL
3	noun and genitive	N+GEN
4	adjective and standard in comparative construction	ADJ+COMP
5	verb and adpositional phrase	ADP.PH+V
6	verb and manner adverb	M.ADV+V
7	copula and predicate	PRE+COP
8	'want ' + verb	WANT+V
9	content verb and auxiliary verb	AUX.V+CON.V
10	question particle and sentence	QU.PRT+S
11	adverbial subordinator and clause	ADV.SUB+CL
12	article and noun	N+ART
13	verb and subject	S+V
14	numeral and noun	NUM+N
15	tense/aspect affix and verb stem	AFF+VS
16	possessive affix and noun	N+POSS.AFF
17	verb and object	O+V
18	tense/aspect auxiliary verb	V+AUX
19	negative auxiliary and verb stem	NEG.AUX+V
20	complementizer and sentence	COMPL+S
21	plural word and noun	N+PL
22	noun and adjective	N+ADJ
23	demonstrative and noun	DEM+N
24	intensifier and adjective	INT+ADJ
25	verb and negative particle	NEG.PRT+V
26	tense/aspect particle and verb	PRT+V

Table 2. English word order.

	Orders	English
1	adposition type	PREP+N
2	noun and relative clause	N+REL CL
3	noun and genitive	GEN+N
4	adjective and standard in comparative construction	COMP+ADJ
5	verb and adpositional phrase	V+ADP.PH
6	verb and manner adverb	V+M.ADV
7	copula and predicate	COP+PRE
8	'want ' + verb	WANT+V
9	content verb and auxiliary verb	AUX.V+CON.V
10	question particle and sentence	QU.PRT+S
11	adverbial subordinator and clause	ADV.SUB+CL
12	article and noun	ART+N
13	verb and subject	S+V
14	numeral and noun	NUM+N
15	tense/aspect affix and verb stem	VS+AFF
16	possessive affix and noun	POSS.AFF+N
17	verb and object	V+O
18	tense/aspect auxiliary verb	AUX+V
19	negative auxiliary and verb stem	NEG.AUX+V
20	complementizer and sentence	COMPL+S
21	plural word and noun	N+PL
22	noun and adjective	ADJ+N
23	demonstrative and noun	DEM+N
24	intensifier and adjective	INT+ADJ
25	verb and negative particle	NEG.PRT+V
26	tense/aspect particle and verb	PRT+V

3. Results and Discussion

With detailed analysis of the concerned languages, Table (3) can be proposed. It is the gist representation of the data gathered for their word order. These languages reveal some similarities and differences in different aspects. Accordingly, it can almost be a good representation of differences and similarities between Persian and English word order

Based on the given examples, Persian and English have the same word orders in examples numbered: 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, and 26. These similarities are given in turn:

- Adposition type in that preposition comes before a noun,
- Noun and relative clause, in that nouns precede the REL.CL,
- 'Want' + verb: In all the languages 'want' precedes the verb,
- Content verb and auxiliary verb, in that CON.V comes after the AUX,
- Question particle and sentence, in that QU.PRT precedes the sentence,
- Adverbial subordinator and clause, in that the ADV.SUB comes before the clause,
- Verb and subject, in that verbs proceed their subjects,
- Numeral and noun, in that nouns come after their NUM,
- Negative auxiliary and verb, in that NEG. AUX precedes its V.
- Complementizer and sentence, in that complementizers come at the beginning of sentences,
- PL marker and noun, in that PL marker proceeds its noun,

- Demonstrative and noun, in that nouns proceed their demonstratives,
- Intensifier and adjective, in that INT comes before its ADJ
- Verb and negative particle, in that NEG.PRT precedes the V.
- And finally, tense/ aspect particle and verb, in that V follows its PRT.

Dealing with differences, it is obviously noticeable that the remaining orders have shown significant differences. Table (3) below testifies to what we have mentioned earlier in this study. The gray parts are the points of difference between the two languages:

Table 3. English and Persian word order.

	Persian	English
1	PREP+N	PREP+N
2	N+REL CL	N+REL CL
3	N+GEN	GEN+N
4	ADJ+COMP	COMP+ADJ
5	ADP.PH+V	V+ADP.PH
6	M.ADV+V	V+M.ADV
7	PRE+COP	COP+PRE
8	WANT+V	WANT+V
9	AUX+CON.V	AUX.V+CON.V
10	QU.PRT+S	QU.PRT+S
11	ADV.SUB+CL	ADV.SUB+CL
12	N+ART	ART+N
13	S+V	S+V
14	NUM+N	NUM+N
15	AFF+VS	VS+AFF
16	N+POSS.AFF	POSS.AFF+N
17	O+V	V+O
18	V+AUX	AUX+V
19	NEG.AUX+V	NEG.AUX+V
20	COMPL+S	COMPL+S
21	N+PL	N+PL
22	N+ADJ	ADJ+N
23	DEM+N	DEM+N
24	INT+ADJ	INT+ADJ
25	NEG.PRT+V	NEG.PRT+V
26	PRT+V	PRT+V

4. Conclusion

In this project we investigated the word order of Persian and English languages by means of the examples driven from the 26 orders which was mainly driven from Dryer (1992) and Dabir Moghaddam (2001). We aimed at finding the probable correlations and diversities between the two languages. We dealt with each language`s characteristics and provided three tables that would confirm our explanations. The word order of English and Persian shows a number of differences. Persian has a free word order while English is strictly an SVO language. These differences in the application of adposition, noun and relative clause, want and verb, content verb and auxiliary, question particle and sentence, adverbial subordinator and clause, etc. cause problems for Persian people to learn English or vice versa. This will help learners to be familiar with the word order of these languages. Also, by pointing at the areas of difficulties between the two languages

learners can find the most common problems in finding an accurate word order for English or Persian.

Appendix

List of Abbreviations

1	1	1st person
2	2	2nd person
3	3	3rd person
4	ADJ	Adjective
5	ADP.PH	Adpositional phrase
6	ART	Article
7	AUX	Auxiliary
8	CLIT	Clitic
9	COMP	Comparative
10	COMPL	Complementizer
11	CONT.V	Content verb
12	COP	Copula
13	DEM	Demonstrative
14	EP	Epenthesis
15	GEN	Genitive
16	IMP	Imperfect tense
17	INDEF	Indefinite
18	INF	Infinitive
19	INT	Intensifier
20	M.ADV	Manner adverb
21	N	Noun
22	NEG	Negative
23	NEG.AUX	Negative auxiliary
24	NEG.PRT	Negative particle
25	NUM	Numeral
26	O	Object
27	OM	Object marker
28	PAST	Past tense
29	PASTP	Past participle
30	PL	Plural
31	PM	Past marker
32	POSS.AFF	Possessive affix
33	POSTP	Postpositional
34	PP	Past participle
35	PRE	Predicate
36	PREP	Prepositional
37	PRES	Present
38	QU.PRT	Question particle
39	REL.CL	Relative clause
40	REST	Restrictive
41	S	Sentence
42	SG	Singular
43	SUB	Subjunctive
44	TNS/ASP.AFF	Tense/aspect affix
45	TNS/ASP.PRT	Tense/aspect particle
46	V	Verb
47	V.EL	Verbal element
48	V.S	Verb stem

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