Two (or three?) exclusives in Persian

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1 Introduction

- There is a class of discourse particles that König (1991) calls EXCLUSIVES, which say that some property holds of one member from a set of alternatives but no other member.
- In English, the best studied exclusive is only. It is a crosscategorial operator, adjoining to most sentence constituents.

1. a. Sam sold only [ŋ the HOUSE].
   'Sam sold the house, and nothing else.'
- But, when only adjoins to NP as Horn (1996:18) observes, it ‘semantically amounts to the converse of adverbial only’ (see also McNally 2008:165).

2. (2) Sam sold [ŋ the only [ŋe house]].
   'Sam sold the house such that there are no other houses.'
- The Oxford English Dictionary recognizes two distinct lexical items: one is an adverb (1), the other is an adjective (2).
- It seems suspicious, though, that these two phonologically identical lexical items are in complimentary distribution.
- Persian has two main exclusives, tanhā and faqat, both of which can convey something like the adverbial meaning of only:

3. (3) ramin tanhā git.tm-o dád.
   Ramin only kilim-OBJ gave.3SG
   'Ramin gave the kilim, and nothing else.'
   Not possible: 'Ramin gave the kilim such that there are no other kilims.'
- But, while tanhā allows the converse interpretation (3), faqat does not (4).

⇒ I argue that what looks like two exclusives in Persian are actually three:
- Like English only, tanhā corresponds to two different, but homophones, lexical items.
- Faqat has the meaning and syntactic distribution of just one of them.
- In the rest of the talk,
  1. I show how the two uses of tanhā illustrated in (3) correspond to two independent lexical items;
  2. I argue that faqat—the third exclusive—only functions like one of the two tanhā, the one that is a crosscategorial operator; and
  3. I connect the difference between the two tanhā to the difference in only's meaning and focus sensitivity depending on the constituent it is adjoined to.

2 The first exclusive

- Before we get started, there is a homophonous adjective tanhā that means ‘alone, lonely’:

5. vaq-ti vàred-e khâne shodim, u tanhā bud.
   time-IND inside-EZ house became.1PL he alone was
   'When we entered the house, he was alone.'
- But, when used attributively, this adjectival tanhā occurs after the noun it modifies, to which it is joined by the linking morpheme -e (called ezǐfe in the traditional grammatical literature):

6. man tabâl be yek ādam-e tanhā-ye asforde shodam ke harfâ-m bu-ye I changing to one person-EZ lonely-EZ depressed became.1SG that words-my smell-EZ nâmîdî va puchi mide... hopelessness and futility give.3SG
   'I have turned into a lonely, depressed person whose words smell of hopelessness and futility…'
- The use of tanhâ we are interested in has a wide crosscategorial distribution: it left-adjoints to DP arguments (7), PP arguments (8), DP adjuncts (9), predicative adjectives (10), and verb phrases (11).

7. har zamân ke mā birun miravim man etminân dáram ke u tanhâ man-ro dust every time that we outside go.1PL I confidence have.1SG that he only me-OBJ friend dárad... has
   'Every time we go out, I am confident that he likes only me…'
- But, while tanhā allows the converse interpretation (3), faqat does not (4).

⇒ I argue that what looks like two exclusives in Persian are actually three:
- Like English only, tanhā corresponds to two different, but homophones, lexical items.
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  3. I connect the difference between the two tanhā to the difference in only’s meaning and focus sensitivity depending on the constituent it is adjoined to.
The standard analysis of only can be extended straightforwardly to this use of tanhā. When it is adjoined to a VP, it universally quantifies over properties:

\[
[\text{tanhā}_1] \equiv \lambda f. \lambda x. \lambda y. ((f(x) \land \forall g(y) (g(y) \rightarrow g = f)) : \langle (e,t), (e,t) \rangle)
\]


a. vis tanhā [ṣp mtkhābd].
   'Vis slept.
   sleep(vis) \land \forall f (f (vis)) \rightarrow f = sleep'
   'Vis sleeps, and every property that holds of Vis is the property of sleeping.'

The second exclusive

• The previous use, which I would like to call tanhā₁, contrasts with tanhā₂, which only adjoins to NP.

• They are intonationally distinct: tanhā₁ bears a rising tone, while tanhā₂ does not:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{rāmin tanhā [ṣp get.1m-o dād].} \\
\text{Ramin only kilim-OBJ gave.3SG}
\end{align*}
\]

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\text{Ramin only kilim-OBJ gave.3SG}
\end{align*}
\]

3 The second exclusive

• When there is an overt determiner, such as in ‘this’, it occurs to tanhā₂’s right:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{kurosh [ṣp in tanhā [ṣp zan-e khod]]-rā besyār dust va gerāmā dāsh.} \\
\text{Cyrus this only wife-EZ self-OBJ very friend and honorable had.3SG}
\end{align*}
\]

• Tanhā₂ always gives rise to a definite interpretation, whether it is an argument (17) or a predicate (18):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{shī’eyān-e ārāq pishnehād mikardand tanhā [ṣp shāh-e shī’]-rā dar kənār-e shāh-e } \\
\text{Shia.EZ Iraq suggestion do.3PL only king-EZ Shia-OBJ in side-EZ king-EZ Najaf dafn konand.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{fatem-e ye rajabi tanhā [ṣp zan-e rānān-ye kämyun dar irān] ast…} \\
\text{Fatem-EZ Rajabi only woman-EZ driver-EZ truck in Iran is}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{shēyār [ṣp in tanhā [ṣp zan-e khod]]-rā besyār dust va gerāmā dāsh.} \\
\text{Cyrus this only wife-EZ self-OBJ very friend and honorable had.3SG}
\end{align*}
\]

• Tanhā₂ takes a property and returns the property of being the sole entity to have that property:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[tanhā₂] = \lambda f. \lambda x. \lambda y. ((f(x) \land \forall y (f(y) \rightarrow y = x)) : \langle (e,t), (e,t) \rangle)
\end{align*}
\]

• This produces the definite interpretation, since like other universal quantifiers, tanhā₂ comes along with an existential presupposition (Horn 2001).

• If its domain is empty, there is a presupposition failure:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[There is a completely clear sky]}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{# tanhā [ṣp abr-o negāh kon!]}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{only cloud-OBJ looking do.2SG}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{‘Look at the only cloud!’}
\end{align*}
\]

• There is no overt definite determiner. Since without one, a noun phrase containing tanhā would denote a property, the type-shifting operator t applies to produce an e-type argument (Partee 1986):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[rāmin tanhā [ṣp get.1m-o dād].} \\
\text{Ramin only kilim-OBJ gave.3SG}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ramin gave the kilim such that there are no other kilims.'}
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\text{Ramin gave the kilim such that there are no other kilims.'}
\end{align*}
\]
• It is compatible with real definite determiners, such as in 'this' (16), as well as with being possessed:

(22) hamsar-e tajzade avalin movâjehe-ye âqâ-ye tajzade-râ bâ barâdar-esh ke dorost spouse-EZ Tajzade first confrontation-EZ mister-EZ Tajzade-OBJ1 with brother-his that right dar zamân-e dastgirî-ye ishân [sp tânhâ [sp dokhtar]-esh]-râ az dast dâdhe bud, in time-EZ imprisonment-EZ him only daughter-his-OBJ from hand given was.3SG

bêsâyâr talkta va darânân towâfî kard... very bitter and painful description did.3SG

‘Tajzade’s spouse described Tajzade’s first confrontation with his brother, who had lost his only daughter precisely while he was imprisoned, as very bitter and painful.’

⇒ There are two different lexical items, both pronounced as tânâhî, with different meanings.

⇒ These lexical items are in complimentary distribution. The meaning we would expect from adjoining tânâhî1 to NP is impossible:

(23) [in tânâhî zhân-e khîd] = \(\tau(x) (\text{wife}(x) \land \forall f (f(x) \rightarrow f = \text{wife}(x) [\text{his}]))\)

(16') kurosh [sp in tânâhî [sp zhân-e khîd]-râ bêsâyûr dust dâst. Cyrus this only wife-EZ self-OBJ very friend and honorable had.3SG

Not possible: ‘Cyrus loved his wife such that being his wife is the only property she has.’

4 The third exclusive

• Not all exclusives in Persian are homophonous in this way: faqat has just the meaning encoded by tânâhî.

• Faqat is a crosscategorial operator. It adjoins to any major sentence constituent: direct arguments (24), DP adjuncts (26), predicative adjectives (27), and verb phrases (28).

(24) faqat mîlân mitavânâd itâlâyâ-râ dar urpârî sarboland konad. only Milan can.3SG Italy-OBJ in Europe pride do.3SG

‘Only Milan’s (team) can make Italy proud in Europe.’

(25) man-o baqal kard. degar shode bud-am mesl-e bache-ye shish mâh-e. faqat be me-OBJ side did.3SG other became was.1SG like-EZ child-EZ six month-ADJ only to man nîgâh nîkard.

me looking did.3SG

‘He hugged me. I had become like a child of six months. He looked only at me.’

(26) dokhtar-e javân-i ke bâr-ye jodâyî az hamsar-ash be dâdgâh-e khânevâde âmâde girl-EZ young-IND that for-EZ separation from spouse-her to court-EZ home came bud, modde’sh. ezdevâyî-e u be surat-e somnati bârgozaar shode va was claimant became.3SG marriage-EZ her to face-EZ tradition taking place became.3SG and u tâ zamân-e ‘a’gd faqat yek bûr showhar-ash-râ dide ast.

she until time-EZ marriage only one time husband-her-OBJ seen is

‘A young girl has filed a claim in family court to get a divorce from her spouse. Her marriage, which was traditional, took place when she had seen her husband only once before.’

(27) vaqti âqâ-ye doktor-e zâhedpâshâ bê etmânîh man goft ke zeynab hich when mister-EZ doctor-EZ Zâhedpâsha with confidence to me said.3SG that Zeynab no mosdik-e jemîn-i va bîmîrî-i na-dârad va faqat goroosne ast... neg-a problem body-ADJ and sickness-ADJ NEG-has and only hungry is ‘When Dr. Zâhedpâsha told me with confidence that Zeynab has no physical or health problems and that she is only hungry...’

(28) barâ-ye hez-f-e qodrat-e badan-i faqat mikhâhid... for-EZ protection-EZ strength-EZ body-ADJ only slept.3SG

‘To protect his physical strength, all he would do was sleep...’

• But it does not have a use where it modifies an NP:

(16') # kurosh [sp in faqat [sp zhân-e khîd]-râ bêsâyûr dust dâst. Cyrus this only wife-EZ self-OBJ very friend had.3SG

Intended: ‘Cyrus loved his only wife.’

• Faqat has a single meaning. When it adjoins to VPs, it quantifies over properties:

(29) \(\lceil \text{faqat} \rceil = \lambda f x(l(f(x) \land \forall g (g(y) \rightarrow f = g)) : ((e, t), (e, t))\)

(30) a. vis faqat mikhâhid.

Vis only slept.3SG

‘Vis slept and did nothing else.’

b. sleep(vis) \land \forall f (f(vis) \rightarrow f = \text{sleep})

‘Vis sleeps, and every property that holds of Vis is the property of sleeping.’

⇒ Of Persian’s three exclusives, two of them—faqat and tânâhî—have the same meaning.

5 Association with focus

• The two lexical items pronounced as only in English do not differ in their intonation as their counterparts in Persian, pronounced tanhâ, do.

• But, one of them is famously sensitive to the position of focus (Jackendoff 1972). When only adjoins to major sentence constituents, its meaning varies with the position of the focus contained within its sister:

(31) a. Sam only [vp sold the house].

‘Sam sold, and did nothing else to, the house.’

b. Sam only [vp sold the HOUSE].

‘Sam sold the house, and nothing else.’

• This is a truth-conditional difference: if Sam sold his house and his car, then (31a) might be true but (31b) is false.

• Only expresses universal quantification, and its quantificational domain is restricted differently depending on where focus is located (Rooth 1985, 1992).

• When it is adjoined to VP, only quantifies over properties, mapping its sister into the nuclear scope:
Focus on the main verb in (31a) restricts only to quantifying over properties of doing something to the house; focus on the object in (31b) restricts it to properties of selling something:

\[(31a, b) = \text{sell}(\text{the-house})(\text{sam}) \land \forall f (f \in C \land f(\text{sam}) \rightarrow f = \text{sell}(\text{the-house}))\]

'Sam sells the house, and for every property in C that holds of Sam, it is the property of selling the house.'

- Focus on the main verb in (31a) restricts only to quantifying over properties of doing something to the house; focus on the object in (31b) restricts it to properties of selling something:

\[(33a) \quad \text{Since } C = \{f(\text{the-house}) | f \in D_{(\text{c}+\text{c})})\}, \quad [(31a)] \equiv \text{Every property of doing something to the house that holds of Sam is selling the house.} \]

\[(33b) \quad \text{Since } C = \{\text{sell}(x) | x \in D_{k}\}, \quad [(31b)] \equiv \text{Every property of selling something that holds of Sam is selling the house.} \]

- But when only adjoins to NP, the position of focus does not matter:

\[(34a) \quad \text{Sam sold the only [NP WHITE house].} \]

'Sam sold the white house such that there are no other white houses.'

\[(34b) \quad \text{Sam sold the only [NP WHITE house].} \]

'Sam sold the white house such that there are no other white houses.'

- NP-adjoined only has the same meaning as tanhāz (see Horn 1996:18 and McNally 2008:165).

\[(34a, b) = \text{sell}(\text{the-white} \land \text{house}(x) \land \forall y (y \in C \land \text{white}(y) \land \text{house}(y) \rightarrow y = x))(\text{sam})\]

'Sam sells the white house such that every white house is that one.'

NP-adjoined only quantifies over individuals, and its sister is mapped into the RESTRICTION of the universal quantifier.

- The focus inside the NP is not going to matter, then, since the quantificational domain is already restricted to a smaller set, the set of white houses:

  - In (34a), focus on white would restrict C merely to the set of houses.
  - In (34b), focus on house would restrict C merely to the set of white things.

The meanings given to only when it adjoins to VPs and when it adjoins to NPs are parallel to the meanings for tanhāz and tanhāz. They should interact in the same way with focus.

- While the position of focus affects the meaning of tanhāz, it does not affect tanhāz’s meaning.

(32) \[\text{(31a,b)} = \text{sell}(\text{the-house})(\text{sam}) \land \forall f (f \in C \land f(\text{sam}) \rightarrow f = \text{sell}(\text{the-house}))\]

(33) a. Since \(C = \{f(\text{the-house}) | f \in D_{(\text{c}+\text{c})})\}, \quad [(31a)] \equiv \text{Every property of doing something to the house that holds of Sam is selling the house.} \]

b. Since \(C = \{\text{sell}(x) | x \in D_{k}\}, \quad [(31b)] \equiv \text{Every property of selling something that holds of Sam is selling the house.} \]

(34) a. Sam sold the only [NP WHITE house].

'Sam sold the white house such that there are no other white houses.'

b. Sam sold the only [NP WHITE house].

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- NP-adjoined only has the same meaning as tanhāz (see Horn 1996:18 and McNally 2008:165).

(35) \[\text{(34a,b)} = \text{sell}(\text{the-white} \land \text{house}(x) \land \forall y (y \in C \land \text{white}(y) \land \text{house}(y) \rightarrow y = x))(\text{sam})\]

'Sam sells the white house such that every white house is that one.'

6 Conclusion

⇒ Persian has three exclusives that fall into two semantic categories: tanhāz and faqat on the one hand and tanhāz on the other.

- Both types contribute similar meanings, but only tanhāz and faqat are focus sensitive.
- Tanhāz, whose property-type argument restricts its quantificational domain, is not.

⇒ More questions:

- Are there languages that have completely distinct lexical items for the two functions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosscategorial</th>
<th>only</th>
<th>tanhāz</th>
<th>faqat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NP-adjoined</td>
<td>only2</td>
<td>tanhāz2</td>
<td>faqat2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Why do both English and Persian have homophonous lexical items for the two functions?

Data sources

Sources for naturally occurring examples are provided below. Judgments for constructed examples reflect the intuitions of one middle-aged speaker of Persian from Tehran, Iran residing in the United States.

(16) http://www.hakhamaneshian.net/ftopicp-2289.html, December 12, 2009
(17) http://www.irdc.ir/fa/content/6931/default.aspx, December 12, 2009
(21) http://savehportal.ir/content/view/2817/25/, December 4, 2009
(27) http://saveportialt/content/view/2817/25/, December 4, 2009
Abbreviations

The abbreviations I use in interlinear glosses are: 1, first person; 2, second person; 3, third person; ADJ, adjectivizer; EZ, ezife (linking morpheme); IND, indelinite; NEG, negation; OBJ, specific object marker rī; PL, plural; REL, relativizer; SG, singular.

References


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