



A COMPARATIVE-TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF PREPOSITIONS IN PERSIAN AND ENGLISH

Munisa Akmalova

3rd-Year Student of Philology

(Arabic Language), Oriental University

akmalovam2908@gmail.com

Abstract

This article presents a comparative-typological analysis of simple prepositions in Persian and English, both of which belong to the Indo-European language family. Drawing on contrastive and descriptive methods, the study examines the grammatical characteristics, semantic functions, types, and syntactic roles of prepositions within sentence structures, illustrating them with relevant linguistic examples. The study examines the absence of an independent lexical equivalent of the English preposition *of* in Persian and the expression of this relation through the *ezafe* construction. Furthermore, the functional-semantic similarities and typological differences between prepositions in Persian and English are comprehensively analyzed.

Keywords: Prepositions, comparative-typological analysis, syntax, semantics, Indo-European language family, typology, *ezafe* construction.

INTRODUCTION

Modern comparative-typological linguistics seeks to uncover both universal structural principles and language-specific manifestations across various linguistic systems. Persian and English, despite their divergent historical evolution and geographical pathways, share common genealogical roots as members of the Indo-European language family. Studying auxiliary closed-class elements—specifically simple prepositions—in these two typologically distinct languages provides crucial insights into how relational spatial, temporal, and abstract concepts are encoded in human language.



Simple prepositions represent closed, morphologically non-derived functional morphemes that establish essential syntactico-semantic relations between lexical heads and dependent nominals. While English displays a prominently analytical framework where prepositional phrases (PPs) carry significant functional load, Persian combines prepositional usage with synthetic enclitics such as the ezafe construction (-e/-ye) and flexible word-order permutations.

The primary aim of this research is to conduct a comparative-typological analysis of prepositions in Persian and English, detailing their semantic scope, syntactic behavior, isomorphic correspondences, and allomorphic structural divergences.

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS & RESULTS

In standard literary Persian, simple prepositions are non-derived auxiliary morphemes that function primarily as grammatical markers rather than content words. The most active simple prepositions in modern Persian include:

- از – 'from' (ablative/origin)

Example: من از استادام چیزهای زیادی آموختم (I learned many things from my professor).

- به – 'to / towards' (directive/allative)

Example: او به کتابخانه رفت (He/She went to the library).

- با – 'with' (instrumental/comitative)

Example: من با برادرم سفر کردم (I traveled with my brother).

- در – 'in / inside / at' (locative/inessive)

Example: او در دانشگاه درس می‌خواند (He/She studies at the university).

- بر – 'on / upon' (superessive)

Example: کتاب بر میز است (The book is on the table).

- تا – 'until / up to' (limitative/temporal)

Example: تا فردا منتظر می‌مانم (I will wait until tomorrow).

- برای – 'for' (benefactive/final)

Example: این هدیه برای توست (This gift is for you).

Note on برای : Synchronically, native speakers perceive برای as a unified simple preposition, though diachronically it stems from the preposition بر fused with the ezafe enclitic (-e/-ye). In accordance with modern synchronic descriptive grammar, it is classified alongside simple prepositions.



In English, simple prepositions constitute foundational high-frequency vocabulary. British National Corpus (BNC) data indicates that of, to, in, and for rank among the fifteen most frequent words in the English language. Below is a structured comparative alignment of equivalent prepositions across English and Persian:

Sentences	Persian Preposition	English Preposition
I received a letter from my friend. من از دوستم نامه گرفتم	از	from
Ahmad went to his workplace. احمد به محل کارش رفت	به	to
My friend hit my head with a book. دوستم با کتاب به سرم زد	با	with
There was no one inside the room. در اتاق هیچکس نبود	در	in
Give me the book that is on the table. کتابی را که بر میز است به من بده	بر	on
The English class continued until six o'clock. کلاس زبان انگلیسی تا ساعت شش ادامه داشت	تا	until
I bought a gift for my mother. برای مادرم هدیه خریدم	برای	for

The comparative evaluation reveals significant structural and functional differences despite semantic overlap:

- 1. Genitive Encoding (The "of" Problem):** A critical typological discrepancy is the absence of a direct simple lexical preposition for English of in Persian. Genitive and possessive relationships marked by of in English are encoded in Persian via the synthetic ezafe construction (e.g., کتاب علی = "the book of Ali"). This demonstrates an analytical-lexical approach in English versus a synthetic-enclitic approach in Persian.



2. **Polysemic Breadth & Infinitival Marking:** English prepositions display much broader semantic valency. For instance, English *for* marks purpose, duration (for two hours), and cause, whereas Persian برای is strictly limited to purpose and benefactive functions. Similarly, English *to* functions as both a directional preposition and an infinitive marker (to study), a grammaticalized dual role absent in Persian به.
3. **Preposition Stranding:** English allows syntactic preposition stranding in relative and interrogative clauses (e.g., Who did you talk to?). In Persian, prepositions cannot be stranded; the preposition and its nominal complement form an unbreakable constituent block.
4. **Register & Modern Colloquial Evolution:** In modern spoken Persian, literary simple prepositions are frequently replaced by analytical compound noun structures— *بر* is predominantly replaced by روی ('on top of'), and *در* is replaced by the colloquial preposition تو ('inside'). Conversely, English simple prepositions remain stable across formal and informal registers.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, prepositions in Persian and English perform vital structural roles in establishing spatial, temporal, directional, instrumental and benefactive relations within sentences. While semantic isomorphism is strong across fundamental categories (از / from, به / to, با / with), structural allomorphy is distinct. English displays greater analytical polysemy and syntactic flexibility (such as preposition stranding and infinitival marking), while Persian balances prepositional structures with the synthetic ezafe enclitic and compound verb systems. These findings contribute directly to contrastive linguistics, foreign language pedagogy, and practical translation methodologies between Persian, English, and Uzbek.



REFERENCES

1. Comrie, B. (1989). Language universals and linguistic typology: Syntax and morphology (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
2. Huddleston, R., & Pullum, G. K. (2002). The Cambridge grammar of the English language. Cambridge University Press.
3. Lazard, G. (1992). A grammar of contemporary Persian. Mazda Publishers.
4. Mace, J. (2003). Persian grammar: For reference and revision. Routledge.
5. Mahootian, S. (1997). Persian (Descriptive Grammars). Routledge.
6. Tyler, A., & Evans, V. (2003). The semantics of English prepositions: Spatial scenes, embodied meaning and cognition. Cambridge University Press.