

THE METAPRAGMATICS OF *AND* *EVERYTHING* IN PERSIAN

Vahid Parvaresh*
Manoochehr Tavangar**

Abstract: This article tries to investigate the metapragmatic functions of *and everything* in Persian within the formulaic construction *and everything, but*. The focus of attention will be, following Bublitz and Hübler (2007), the pragmatics of this meta-utterance when it is actually performed as a means of commenting on and interfering with current discourse. In this way, it will be argued that although this construction, like its equivalent in English, does have a fixed underlying structure according to which it functions, it allows, unlike its English equivalent, for the construction of other surface structures fulfilling the same metapragmatic role. Here surface constructions are brought about by the use of Persian's different synonyms for the English *but*. Moreover, it will also be argued that Persian does not seem to have a formal equivalent to the English *and whatnot*.

Keywords: formulaic construction; meta-utterance; metapragmatics; Persian.

1 INTRODUCTION

Metapragmatics, or pragmatics of metacommunicative utterances, has been the target of extensive research in recent years (BUPLITZ; HÜBLER, 2007; CAFFI, 1994; JAWORSKI; COUPLAND; GALASINSKI, 2004; KASPER; BLUM-KULKA, 1993; LUCY, 1993; SILVERSTEIN, 1993; VERSCHUEREN, 1995, 2000; WORTHAM; LOCHER, 1996). Most researchers believe that in order to fully understand what lies at the heart of metapragmatics, it is metalanguage which needs to be elucidated and elaborated on first. Perhaps it was Jakobson (1960) who, for the first time, introduced the concept of *metalanguage* by distinguishing it from *object language*. He attributed the

* PhD Candidate of Applied Linguistics, Department of English, Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran. Email: vparvaresh@gmail.com.

** Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics, Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

glossing function to the former whereby speakers or writers are able to detach themselves from the object use of language.

But such a view is certainly not without its demerits. Bublitz and Hübler (2007), for example, criticize Jakobson's view on the grounds that it ignores the practical side of communication in the following way:

... he is neither interested in metalanguage as a means used by linguists to talk about or reflect on language as an object of scientific study in a theoretical and detached way, nor in metalanguage as an instrument actually used by the interactants in a particular speech event to refer to ongoing discourse (e.g., by querying meanings, clarifying functions, (re-)structuring clauses). Instead, he looks upon metalanguage as a kind of *virtual tool* geared towards the systematics of object language, i.e., as a potential at the language user's disposal (p. 3, original emphasis).

Since Jakobson's seminal work, therefore, many other eminent scholars have tried to introduce their own conceptualizations of the notion of metalanguage. One such distinguished scholar is Lucy (1993, p. 12), who, while distinguishing between metalanguage and object language, has defined the former as "language referring to language" and the latter as "ordinary language referred to", a view which, unlike that of Jakobson's, considers metalanguage as "a higher order or iterative use worthy of special attention."

In other words, this is the movement toward functional use of language in general and functional use of metalanguage in particular which has made the study of metalanguage worthy of special attention. The importance of such a functional analysis has also been underlined by Bhatia (1994) in this way:

This is particularly significant in the context of applied discourse analysis which has developed from a surface-level formal analysis to a deeper functional analysis [...], which marks a movement from form to function [...], grammar to discourse and communication in recent years (p. 5).

Therefore, in functional study of metalanguage a researcher is interested in metalanguage when it is actually deployed as a means to an end. Following this line of argument, Bublitz and Hübler (2007, p. 6) define metapragmatics as "the pragmatics of actually performed meta-

utterances that serve as means of commenting on and interfering with ongoing discourse or text.” In this way, as Jacquemet (1994, p. 302) argues, “participants usually deploy strategies of metapragmatic awareness to call attention to the specific use of linguistic mechanisms that refer to the interaction at hand.” This metalanguage is, therefore, as Halliday (1987) argues, an extension of a natural language not a totally new creation, the reason being that it is always kept tied to the natural language by its interpretive interface.

This metapragmatic use of language is perhaps at the service of what is called emergent collaboration by Robinson (2006), who calls attention to the collaborative work of people in groups for the very purpose of giving words their force, or also at the service of what Kant (1787/2003) calls performative linguistics by the help of which communicators are able to make forms out of sense data, and, as a result, shape the reality.

Generally speaking, research on metapragmatics has progressed in two general directions. While in the first direction metapragmatic markers have been holistically looked at in different settings or environments (AIJMER, 1996; ANDERSON; FISTER; LEE; TARDIA; WANG, 2004; AUKRUST, 2001; BLUM-KULKA; SHEFFER, 1993; BUTTNY, 1993; JACQUEMET, 1994; KARMILOFF-SMITH, 1986; KECSKES, 2006; SILVERSTEIN, 1993; TANSKANNEN, 2007; WORTHAM; LOCHER, 1996), in the second direction one specific metapragmatic structure is chosen and subsequently examined in different situations or settings (AIJMER, 1985; AOKI, 2001; CLIFT, 2006; FILLMORE; KAY; O’CONNOR, 1988; MAYNARD, 1997; OVERSTREET, 1999; OVERSTREET; YULE, 2001, 2002; SUZUKI, 2000, 2007; WARD; BIRNER, 1993).

This paper is generally a response to the second direction of research, and specifically a response to a call by Overstreet and Yule (2002), who investigated the metapragmatic function of *and everything* in English within a formulaic construction, and asked for further research on this structure in different social cultures and contexts. In other words, this article is an attempt to investigate the metapragmatics of the structure **و همه چیز** (pragmatically equivalent to the English *and everything*) in Persian, a right-to-left language spoken in Iran. In this way,

it will be argued that although this construction, like its equivalent in English, does have a fixed *underlying* structure according to which it functions, yet it allows for the construction of other *surface* structures fulfilling the same metapragmatic role, a property which seems to be absent from English.

It is also worth noting that the analyses presented in this study will be based on the general approach to the study of language usually known as discourse analysis. Such an approach is, in fact, “the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs” (BROWN; YULE, p. 1). In other words, “the term discourse analysis does not refer to a particular method of analysis. It does not entail a single theory or coherent set of theories” (TANNEN, 2007, p. 5). Moreover, such a term does not describe a theoretical perspective or methodological framework at all. In fact, discourse analysis “does not refer to any single theory or method employed in the study of language in use. Rather, it represents a broad range of theories and methods with one thing in common: the analysis of language beyond the sentence level” (OVERSTREET, p. 13).

2 ANALYSIS

An example of the construction *و همه چیز* (*and everything*) is presented in (1) in order to clarify how it can be used metapragmatically in Persian:

(1):

در سال ۱۳۷۸ ازدواج کردم. چهار سال نخواستم
بچه دار بشیم. گفتیم خیلی زوده، غافل از **همه**
جا و همه چیز، اما پس از چهار سال تصمیم به
بارداری گرفتیم اما نی نی مورد نظر در دسترس
نبود! فهمیدم مشکلی در بین هست و باید

(collected from www.ivf.blogfa.com)

[In 1378¹ I got married. For four years I didn't want to have a child. We said it was too early while we were ignorant of everywhere *and everything, but* after four years we decided we would like to have a baby, but the baby wasn't available! I realized that there was a problem and I had to...]

A close look at (1) reveals that, as in English, the underlying structure for the metapragmatic use of *and everything* is something like the one presented in (2):

(2)

فلان و همه چیز، اما بهمان

X and everything, but Y

As Overstreet and Yule (2001) argue, the use of this formulaic construction appears to be motivated by the writer's anticipated need to offer a clarification of the behavior or events that should not be interpreted in terms of normal expectations. They also proceed to elaborate on the formulaic nature of this construction in this way:

In this *formulaic construction*, we would like to suggest, there is an acknowledgment in X of factors that would lead to certain expectations (and everything) following from X; however (but), the speaker/writer wishes to present information in Y as a justification for thinking contrary to those expectations in this case (p. 786, our emphasis).

Taking this formulaic construction into consideration, we could argue that in (1) the writer seems to be aware that having talked about her ignorance after the marriage, she might unintentionally lead the reader to assume something negative regarding her relationship with her husband; therefore, she tries to avoid such a negative interpretation by mentioning the fact that they were not too ignorant to let their life pass by without giving birth to a child, a highly praised practice in the Iranian culture.

In other words, this formula has been used in a metapragmatic way, providing the writer with a means of influencing the interpretation of the pragmatic impact of what she is writing (CAFFI, 1994; MEY, 1993; OVERSTREET; YULE, 2001).

¹ According to the Solar Year, which is followed in Iran.

Perhaps such awareness on the part of the writer is an indication of what Verschueren (1995, p. 376) intends when he says “language users know more or less what they are doing, even if certain choices are virtually automatic in contrast to others that are highly motivated.” What we have in this scenario is a writer’s awareness of the fact that her words might be interpreted in a way contrary to her intentions; hence, she employs a kind of reflexive language in order to deter the undesired interpretation. Such reflexive language is so central to the extent that Verschueren (1999) contends that it is seen as one of the prerequisites for the development of human language:

Reflexive awareness may be so central that it could be regarded as one of the original evolutionary prerequisite for the development of language. It is so central, furthermore, that *all verbal communication is self-referential* to a certain degree. In other words, *there is no language use without a constant calibration between pragmatic and metapragmatic functioning* (p. 187-188, original emphases).

In the above-mentioned example, the reflexive language functions in this way: the presence of **و همه چیز** (*and everything*) seems, as Lee (2001, p. 42) also argues, to have a basic function similar to “you know what I mean”, which needs to be circumscribed more by the presence of the following **اما** (*but*).

Now let’s direct our attention toward another example taken from an interview with Pegah Ahmadi, one of the Iranian female activists:

(3)

پگاه احمدی: ببینید ما در تمام حوزه ها جایزه ویژه زنان داریم. در حوزه هنرهای تجسمی، فیلم کوتاه، جشنواره فیلم زنان، فراكسیون زنان مجلس، در حوزه محیط زیست، ورزش **و همه چیز، اما** وقتی که پای ادبیات به میان می آید نمی دانم چرا يك همكاری زنانه برای همه سوال برانگیز می شود

(collected from www.khorshidprize.com)

[Pegah Ahmadi: Notice that we have in all fields specific prizes for women. Plastic arts, short film, women’s film festival, parliament’s

women fraction, environment, sports, *and everything, but* when we get to literature, I don't know why women's cooperation is a controversial topic for many.]

Here, again, the speaker, having acknowledged the active women-directed cooperation which is evident in many areas or fields in Iran today, feels that she should intervene in the readers' interpretation process and avoid the wrong assumption of 'uncontroversial feminist cooperation in all areas'. For this reason, she tries to shape the above-mentioned "you know what I mean" function (LEE, 2001, p. 42). Her intervention might also support Bakhtin's (1953/1986) claim that writers (or speakers) inevitably signal cues regarding their position with respect to other people or situations by expressing not only their attitude toward others peoples' utterances but also their attitude toward the object of their own utterance.

More interestingly, in the English version of the previous example the construction *and everything* could have been easily replaced with the construction *and whatnot*, fulfilling approximately the same metapragmatic function (see OVERSTREET, 1999). In this way, it can be argued that while in such cases English makes use of two *formally* different constructions fulfilling the same metapragmatic role, Persian usually makes use of only one construction, namely *and everything*. Example (4) reveals how in English the construction *and whatnot, but* is used to fulfill a more-or-less similar metapragmatic function. In this example, Nobel laureate Michael Spence talks about the prospects for and the obstacles to achieving sustainable growth:

(4)

I was on the board of Nike. Nike's shoe manufacturing was almost entirely - in the 1980s - in Taiwan and Korea. It's just the way it works, right? So, China's going through that set of transitions. They have very flexible labour markets *and whatnot, but* it's still hard because of the size of the economy.

(collected from www.voxeu.org)

The next example has been taken from a religious text in which the writer tries to talk about one of his recent religious commemorations, where he has, presumably, tried to purify his soul. In this way, he first

mentions that although, before attending the commemoration, his mind was unaware of everything, let alone the presence of a spiritual being (the Creator), his heart somehow hankered for something spiritual. Therefore, it can be argued that such a formulaic structure has served a “clarification function” (OVERSTREET; YULE, 2002, p. 789) or a “response-controlling” one (BAKER, 1975, p. 37).

(5)

ساعت یک شب بود رفتم داخل شبستان بی خبر از
همه جا و همه چیز، اما انگار در قلبم خبری بود.
کنترل قلبم در دست خودم نبود. چشمانم هم با
دلم هم نوایی می کرد. نوایی غریب که تا به
حال مثل آن را ندیده بودم. صدای گریه و ضجه
ی بچه ها مرا به خود آورد. دیدم صدایی محزون
و گیرا فریاد می زند

(collected from www.rahpouyan.com)

[It was 1 a.m. when I went into the Shabestan², unaware of my surroundings *and everything, but* I had a strange feeling in my heart. I could not control it. My eyes were in harmony with my heart. A bizarre tune which I hadn't heard before. The din of my friends moaning awakened me. I could hear a plangent and sonorous sound.]

In this example, the writer has perhaps felt that introducing himself as a blithely unaware person might make the reader consider him to be a boasting person, incapable of having any relationship whatsoever with a higher being; therefore, he has tried to justify his later feelings and his relationship with God by mentioning the fact that his relationship or feeling did not come out of nothing but out of something he had already felt in his heart.

² 'Shabestan' is a place in a mosque.

3 OTHER CONSTRUCTIONS

In Persian there is another word whose meaning is synonymous with *اما* (*but*). This word is *ولی* (*but*), which is at times substituted with *اما* (*but*) in the construction in question. Therefore, in Persian the underlying formulaic construction *و همه چیز اما* (*and everything, but*) can also be realized as the surface construction *و همه چیز ولی* (*and everything, but*). In this section, an attempt will be made to see whether or not this form also has a metapragmatic function similar to that of *و همه چیز اما* (*and everything, but*).

A look at the following example, which has been taken from an online counseling site, might reveal that the construction *و همه چیز ولی* (*and everything, but*), like the previous one, has been used by the writer in order to convince the addressee, who is apparently complaining about her marital problems, that her duties toward her husband are not only physical but also emotional; and, therefore, she has not perhaps fulfilled her emotional duties toward her husband.

(6)

من مطالب شمارو خوندم و خیلی دقیق شدم ولی جایی نیافتم که احساس کنم شاید طلاق لازم باشه. من به مسائل و مشکلات طلاق کاری ندارم ولی آیا شما واقعا فکر می کنید که تحمل این اوضاع اینقدر سخته که به طلاق رسیدید؟ فکر نمی کنید که شاید شما هم مقصر باشید نه عملی بلکه ذهنی. منظورم اینه که ممکنه شما از کوچکترین چیز هم در حق شوهرتون کوتاهی نکرده باشید و همه کار و همه چیز براشون فراهم کرده باشید. از مادیات گرفته تا خورد و خوراک و بچه داری و تحمل دوری و حرمت داری و همه چیز ولی فکر نمی کنید که شاید در مورد شوهرتون یک تنه به قضاوت می رید و او هم حرفهایی برای گفتن داشته باشه که شما ازش خبر نداشته باشید. شاید او هم احساساتی راجع به شما داره که اگر بشنوید تعجب کنید و بگویید...

(collected from www.hamdardi.net)

[I have attentively read your testimony but I found no need for a divorce. I'm not talking about the problems and difficulties of divorce but do you really think that bearing this situation is so difficult that you have decided on divorce? Don't you think that perhaps you might be responsible too - not practically but emotionally? I mean it is possible that you haven't missed anything concerning your husband and have fulfilled his desires *and everything*. I'm talking about money, food, taking care of the kids, tolerating your husband's absence, patience, *and everything*. *But* don't you think that you've unilaterally judged your husband and that he might as well have things to say about which you might not have the slightest idea. He might also have some feelings towards you, which, if you hear of, you may become surprised and say...]

As the excerpt shows, the construction *و همه چیز ولی* (*and everything, but*) has been exploited in exactly the same metapragmatic way as *ولی همه چیز اما* (*and everything, but*). In other words, the word *ولی* seems to have been used in order to comment on the twice-mentioned construction *و همه چیز* (*and everything*) in order to assure the addressee that doing chores at home is not the only thing that counts; and, for this reason, she should pay special attention to the emotional side as well.

Now let us focus on another example, which is, in fact, a comment posted in a Persian weblog:

(7)

سارا: ...توی دنیای مجازی همه عالی هستند از همه نظر. برات وقت میگذارند، به حرفات گوش میدن، باهات همدردی می کنند و همه چیز. ولی همین دنیای مجازی باعث میشه ما از دنیای واقعی مون دور بمونیم. کلی وقتمون سر همین دنیای مجازی گذاشته میشه.

(collected from www.pazh.blogspot.com)

[Sarah: ...in the virtual world everyone is perfect in all respects. They have time for you, listen to you, sympathize with you *and everything*. *But* this very virtual world separates us from our real world. Our time is amply wasted because of this virtual world.]

Here again, this is the writer's anticipated need for a clarification which has forced her to hamper the wrong assumption of "a great virtual

world in all aspects” by utilizing the metapragmatic construction she has at her disposal.

Persian also makes use of another word instead of اما (*but*). This word, regarded as another synonym for ‘but’, is لیکن (*but*). The important point regarding this word is that, unlike the previous two ones, it is mostly used in formal or literary contexts; and, interestingly enough, it is also used in the same underlying construction with the same metapragmatic role. The following line of poetry which has been taken from one of Shahriyar’s³ poems might clarify the point:

(8)

دل خوش داشتم و دگر هیچ، نه متاع خوش و نه
منزله زل خـوش
حاليا مردم و دارم همه چیز، لیکن چیزی که ندارم
دل خوش

[I once had a joyful heart but no happy possessions or roof over my head,

Now I’m almost dead *and everything* I have, *but* my heart is like lead.]

Understanding this part needs, perhaps, more attention. Here the poet claims that while he was young he had nothing as his property except a joyful heart, but now that he is old and emaciated he has many things as his properties but a joyful heart. The interesting point regarding the metapragmatic use of لیکن (and everything, but) is that evoking an intersubjective understanding between the poet and the reader, about which the poet has felt a clarification to be necessary, has been artfully achieved if we take into account the fact that *joyful heart*, *happy possessions*, and *happy roof* in the first line have formed a chain which might raise a set of assumptions in the reader’s mind. In other words, the poet has felt the use of *and everything* might be interpreted as having happiness as well; therefore, he has used the construction همه چیز لیکن (and everything, but) in order to avoid such an interpretation.

Now look at another example, this time from a literary website, which again shows how the construction لیکن (and

³ ‘Shahriyar’ is one of the most famous contemporary poets of Iran.

everything, but) has been metapragmatically used in order to avoid something:

(9)

تمام اسباب و لوازم يك عشق شورانگيز
مهياست. پسران عموصحرا با دلهاي عاشق و
اراده معطوف به عشق. دختران ننه دريا،
معشوقاني كه خود عاشق اند و خلاصه همه چيز و
همه چيز. اما نه دريا سر سازگاري ندارد و
طومار عاشقانه گي پيچيده مي شود، ناتمام.

(collected from www.ircap.com)

[Everything is ready for a passionate love. The sons of Amoosahraa whose hearts are filled with love and have inclinations towards love. The girls of Nanesahraa, the beloved ones who are themselves in love, and, in short, everything and everything. But no! The sea isn't calm and the love story comes to an incomplete end.]

If a functional analysis besides a surface-level formal analysis is taken, it can be argued that in the above-mentioned example, which is itself an interpretation of a poem, the writer tries to convey the idea that in the original poem everything was at the service of a romantic relationship between the sons and the girls except the fate, which was decided by the sea. In other words, the writer by the use of the construction *ليکن چيز و همه چيز (and everything, but)* has tried to avoid the assumption of an easy-to-achieve love or a love without any difficulty in that poem since, in fact, as it is clear in the original poem itself, the girls and boys encounter a lot of problems which prevent them from seeing each other.

4 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Metapragmatics has been defined as “the management of discourse, based on common knowledge and reflexivity” (CAFFI, 2007,

p. 83). In this study an attempt has been made to investigate the metapragmatic functions of *and everything* in Persian within a formulaic structure. In this way, it has been argued that although in Persian, as in English, this underlying structure is used for fulfilling the same metapragmatic function, yet Persian allows for the construction of other surface structures with the same metapragmatic function. Moreover, it has also been claimed that Persian does not seem to distinguish between the two metapragmatic constructions *and everything* and *and whatnot*.

Specifically, it has been noted that achieving intersubjective understanding is of high importance in the metapragmatic use of language since, as Overstreet (1999, p. 66) argues, “discussions of intersubjectivity focus on how participants can reach similar interpretations, and they ascribe this achievement to an assumption of shared knowledge, or a co-conception of the world.” In other words, it seems that in Persian the construction *and everything, but* has a clarification function in contexts where “speakers/writers anticipate and emphasize the existence of certain expectations of a type that will be intersubjectively understood” (OVERSTREET; YULE, 2002, p. 792).

Future research is, however, needed not only to shed more light on the use of such constructions in other languages and cultures but also to investigate how automatic metapragmatic decisions are. In this sense, Blum-Kulka and Scheffer (1993) contend that:

The term *metapragmatics* seems to imply the capacity of speakers to formulate explicit rules of speaking. But it is a matter of debate whether the capacity to “do” reliable metapragmatics is reserved to professional pragmaticists or, indeed, whether it can be practiced by all (p. 216, original emphases).

In this way, researchers can also try to investigate if both native and non-native speakers of a language do have conscious access to the rules of reflexive language or if this knowledge is limited to only party.

Moreover, most studies in linguistics, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis seem to be rather about form, about structures, and not about content. We need to know who speaks about what topics, with whom, in what types of social situations. It is likely that topics are generally occasioned by social practices but this is only a kind of generalization. What researchers need to pursue in the future is

multidisciplinary, empirical research projects that go beyond limited data (see LOUVERSE; VAN PEER, 2002; TANNEN, 2007; VAN DIJK, 2008).

This study, however, might be criticized because of its so-called subjective analysis of the linguistic data. For this reason, it is also worth taking into consideration that although discourse analysis needs to make explicit what contexts are like and how exactly the relations between contexts and text or talk are to be analyzed in order to clarify how language users do it, this study has considered contexts, following Van Dijk (2008), to be “*participant constructs* or *subjective definitions* of interactional or communicative situations” (p. 16, original emphases), and not objective properties of social, political or cultural situations. Such a view has been perceptively elucidated by Van Dijk (2008):

This does not mean that social and political situations and structures may not have objective dimensions (e.g., of time and space), or that they are not experienced as “real” by social members. My fundamental point is to emphasize that such social situations are able to influence discourse only through their (inter) subjective interpretations by participants. Such a perspective is a special case of the view that social situations in general are social constructs, and only as such are able to influence all human conduct (p. 16, original emphasis).

As subjective definitions of communicative situations, contexts, therefore, seem to be unique constructs, featuring ad hoc, embodied experiences of ongoing perceptions, knowledge, perspective, emotions and opinions about the ongoing communicative situations. As such, unique contexts may also condition unique ways of using language, that is, unique discourses. One of the reasons why subjective definitions of the same communicative situation are unique and different for each participant is that by definition their knowledge at each moment must be minimally different from the interaction itself in order to make sense (see VAN DIJK, 2008).

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Título: A metapragmática de and everything em persa

Resumo: Este artigo investiga as funções metapragmáticas de and everything em persa como parte da construção formulaica and everything, but. Nosso foco de atenção será, seguindo Bublitz e Hübler (2007), a função metapragmática desse meta-enunciado no momento em que ele é efetivamente usado como meio de comentar sobre e interferir no discurso corrente. Dessa forma, argumentaremos que embora essa construção em persa, como seu equivalente em inglês, não possua uma estrutura subjacente fixa que determina seu funcionamento, ela permite, diferentemente de seu equivalente em inglês, a construção de outras estruturas de superfície que desempenham o mesmo papel pragmático. Essas estruturas de superfície são produzidas pelo uso de diferentes sinônimos persas para a palavra inglesa but. Além disso, argumentaremos que o persa parece não possuir um equivalente formal para a construção inglesa and whatnot.

Palavras-chave: construção formulaica; meta-enunciado; metapragmática; persa.