

## General Extenders in Persian Discourse: Frequency and Grammatical Distribution

### EXTENSION GÉNÉRALE DANS LE DISCOURS EN PERSAN: FRÉQUENCE ET DISTRIBUTION GRAMMATICALE

Vahid Parvaresh<sup>1</sup>

Manoochehr Tavangar<sup>2</sup>

Abbas Eslami Rasekh<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** This study tries to investigate the frequency and grammatical distribution of general extenders in Persian. The analysis is based on a corpus of informal conversations. On some occasions, a comparison will also be made with the corpus of informal English compiled and analyzed by Overstreet (1999, 2005). The results of this study lay bare the fact that Persian speakers use adjunctive general extenders more frequently than disjunctive ones. It will also be demonstrated that Persian speakers use general extenders both at clause final and clause-internal positions. Finally, Persian general extenders will be examined with reference to their grammatical agreement requirements.

**Keywords:** Discourse marker; frequency; general extender; grammatical distribution; Persian

**Resumé:** Cette étude tente d'étudier la fréquence et la distribution grammaticale connues sous le nom de l'extension générale en persan d'un groupe de locuteurs. L'analyse est fondée sur un corpus de 9 heures de conversations informelles. Dans certains cas, une comparaison sera également faite avec le corpus en anglais compilé et analysée par Overstreet (1999, 2005). Les résultats de cette étude mettent à nu le fait que les locuteurs persans utilisent plus souvent les extensions générales sublatines que les extensions générales adversatives. En outre, l'analyse révèle que les locuteurs persans ne modifient pas leur extension générale avec un élément comme adverbe. Il sera également démontré que les locuteurs persans utilisent les extensions générales à la fois aux positions de clause finale et de clause interne. Enfin, les extensions générales perses seront examinées en ce qui concerne leurs besoins en accord grammatical.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran. Email: vparvaresh@gmail.com.

<sup>2</sup> University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran.

<sup>3</sup> University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran.

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**Mots-clés:** locuteurs de discours; fréquence; extension générale; distribution grammaticale; perse

## INTRODUCTION

As stated by Channell (1994), people hold many beliefs about the language they speak. The most important one is that good usage involves, inter alia, clarity and precision. Accordingly, it is believed that vagueness, imprecision, and general woolliness are to be avoided. However, as argued by Channell (1994), it is rather too simple a view, and likely to be misleading not only for those who speak a particular language as their mother tongue but also for those who are making an effort to learn a new language other than their first language.

Perhaps it was Peirce (1902), who, for the first time, introduced the notion of vagueness in linguistic studies. He was of the opinion that a proposition is vague “where there are possible states of things concerning which it is intrinsically uncertain whether, had they been contemplated by the speaker, he would have regarded them as excluded or allowed by the proposition.” It is worth noting, however, that by *intrinsically uncertain* he does not mean *uncertain* in consequence of any ignorance of the interpreter, but because “the speaker's habits of language were indeterminate; so that one day he would regard the proposition as excluding, another as admitting, those states of things” (p. 748).

In keeping with the above mentioned observation, it has, for too long, been acknowledged that vague language occurs widely in language use so much so that some investigators have wished to maintain that all language use is vague in some way (see Channell, 1994; Cutting, 2007).

Since the introduction of the notion of vagueness in linguistics by Peirce in 1902, a great many number of scholars have tried to define vague language in one way or another (see Ball & Ariel, 1978; Crystal & Davy, 1975; Cutting, 2007; Deese, 1974; Wierzbicka, 1986). Even so, the most comprehensive conceptualization of vague language seems to have been provided by Channell (1994, p. 20), who contends that an expression or word is vague if:

- A it can be contrasted with another word or expression which appears to render the same proposition;
- B it is purposely and unabashedly vague;
- C its meaning arises from the intrinsic uncertainty referred to by Peirce.

Following this definition and based on close examination of the occurrences of vague language in naturally occurring discourse, Channell (1994) categorizes vague language in the following way:

- A Vague nouns, for example *things, stuff*;
- B Vague category identifiers, for example *and stuff (like that), or something (like that)*;
- C Vague approximators, for example *about, around, or so*.

The focus of this study will be on the second category of vague expressions known as *vague category identifiers* in Persian. Throughout this study, however, the term *general extender* will be embraced instead of *vague category identifier*, since, as discussed by Overstreet (1999), it is “appropriately neutral with regard to possible competing functions” (p.12).

## GENERAL EXTENDERS

General extenders, expressions like *and stuff* and *or something*, are features of language that occur at the end of utterances and are typically used “to evoke some larger set” (Dubois, 1992, p. 198). In these cases, they generalize from a preceding referent to the larger group of items to which that referent belongs (Tagliamonte & Denis, in press). Such expressions have variously been referred to as *set marking tags*

(Dines 1980), *vague category identifiers* (Channell, 1994), *extension particles* (Dubois, 1992), *approximation markers* (Erman, 1995) *generalized list completers* (Lerner, 1994), *set markers* (Stenstrom, Andersen, & Hasund, 2002), and also *referent final tags* (Aijmer, 1985). The following examples from Tagliamonte and Denis (in press) demonstrate how general extenders are usually used in English. In each example, the underlined items are the referents and the general extenders are in italics:

- (1) . . . taffy-covered chocolate *or something like that.*
- (2) . . . ripped or torn *or something.*
- (3) . . . supplies *and things like that.*
- (4) . . . Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, The Who, *all that stuff.*
- (5) . . . music and film, television *and stuff like that.*
- (6) . . . vegans *and stuff.*

As discussed by Tagliamonte and Denis (in press), research shows that the use of general extenders is conditioned by social factors such as age, sex, education, and socioeconomic class (Dubois, 1992; Stubbe & Holmes, 1995). Such expressions have also been found to pattern grammatically in terms of their morphosyntactic/semantic features (Aijmer, 1985; Cheshire, 2007; Dines, 1980; Overstreet & Yule 1997). Others have suggested that they encode various interactional functions (Aijmer, 1985), mark politeness (Overstreet, 1999, 2005; Overstreet & Yule, 1997; Winter & Norrby, 2000), topic shift or change of speaker (Dubois, 1992).

An idea of the range of possible types of expressions that may be classified as general extenders in English is provided in the following list by Overstreet and Yule (1997, pp. 87-88):

- and stuff (like that)
- and everything
- and what have you
- and all
- and that
- and the like
- and whatnot
- and so forth
- and so on
- and such
- and you name it
- and (all) {this/that}
- or something (like that)
- or anything (like that)
- or anybody/anyone (like that)
- or somebody/someone (like that)
- or somewhere (like that)
- or what have you
- or whatever
- or what
- and (all) {this/that} {sort/kind/type} of {crap/thing/jazz/junk/mess/nonsense/shit/stuff}
- and {crap/things/junk/shit/stuff} (like this/that)
- and {business/crap/things/junk/shit} of {this/that} {kind/sort/ilk/nature}
- et cetera

Of course, other examples could be added to this list. Variations on these forms and more novel creations can also be found.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

English general extenders are phrase or clause-final expressions with the following basic syntactic structure:

- *conjunction + noun phrase*

Overall, general extenders are divided into those beginning with *and*, called *adjunctive general extenders*, and those beginning with *or*, called *disjunctive general extenders*. However, it should be mentioned that some researchers like Terraschke (2007, p. 145) have argued that in addition to their basic pattern, general extenders can, at least in English, be expressed in the following way:

- *conjunction + (pre-modifier) vague expression (post-modifier)*

Overstreet (1999, p. 52), nevertheless, excludes such modified forms from the category of general extenders. She contends that general extenders “are necessarily non-specific” and, for this reason, they should not contain specific lexical items. Yet, as claimed by Terraschke (2007), additional lexical material does not make the extender notably less general. Consider, for example, the following excerpt:

[1]

Guy:                yeah (1) so what else do you listen to?  
Suzanna:        em. like what kind of music (1) a lot of jazz just ‘cos i most of my friends are jazz musicians.  
Guy:                ah okay.  
Suzanna:        yeah and em. hm Ani DiFranco **and kind of funky stuff like that.**  
Guy:                oh really?

(quoted from Terraschke, 2007, p. 145)

In this example, additional lexical material like *funky* has not made the extender less general as it is still not clear what other musicians or types of music Susan classifies as *funky*. Instead, this modifier appears to reflect the speaker’s personal evaluation of what is implied in the proposition.

The same can be argued for post-modifiers. Consider for example the following excerpt from Overstreet (1999):

[2]

Maya:            My nose ru:ns and (.) my eyeballs oo:ze **an' (.) things like that that aren't real attractive.**

(quoted from Overstreet 1999, p. 52)

A close look at the above example shows that, contrary to Overstreet’s contention, the post-modifier has not necessarily restricted the general extender. It seems that it has just added some evaluation to the propositional content which is being conveyed by Maya.

For this reason, in this study, the investigation of Persian general extenders will be based on the pattern *conjunction + (pre-modifier) noun phrase (post-modifier)*.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Although discourse markers have been examined in some languages other than English (e.g., Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg, 2006; Chen & He, 2001; Cuenca, 2008; Cuenca & Marín, 2009; Hasund, 2001; Hlavac, 2006; Strauss, 2009), all-embracing studies of general extenders have been bound to English (Cheshire, 2007; Overstreet, 1999; Tagliamonte & Denis, in press). Put differently, it seems that general

extenders have been left intact in many other languages, including Persian. Also, while there have been some contrastive studies (Graham, 1998; Overstreet, 2005; Takahara, 1998; Terraschke, 2007), no attempt has, up to this point, been made to comprehensively investigate the structure of these expressions in Persian (cf. Parvaresh & Tavangar, 2010). This study is, therefore, an attempt to provide answers to the following questions:

- A Are the same norms of construction employed by Persian speakers as the ones observed by native English speakers?
- B Is the same grammatical distribution observed by Persian speakers as the one observed by native English speakers in producing general extenders?

## CORPUS

The corpus for this study was collected with the help of twenty volunteers who agreed to record circa 30 minutes of their own mother tongue (Persian) conversations with their peers. They recorded the conversations either on the phone or in face-to-face interactions. The age of the participants and also their interlocutors ranged from 20 to 25. The participants were asked to provide the researchers either with one lengthy conversation or with a number of shorter ones. Table 1 features the dyadic make-up of their conversations. As the table shows, out of 55 conversations which were transcribed, 4 of them were not in dyads:

**Table 1: Dyadic makeup of the corpus**

Dyad	Number
Man-to-Man	18
Woman-to-Woman	17
Man-to-Woman	16
Non-dyadic	4

## RESULTS

On the whole, the Persian corpus consisted of about 9 hours of interactions of mainly informal nature (97804 transcribed words). Table 2 presents the average frequency of general extenders in the speech of native Persian speakers. It is also worth noting that since general extenders are multi-word units, each occurrence of a general extender was counted as one and the additional general extender words were deduced from the overall word count resulting in a corpus of 97200 words.

As Table 2 shows, adjunctive extenders are employed more frequently (229 tokens) than disjunctive ones (68 tokens). The most frequently used general extender is *و اینا* with 91 tokens accounting for about 40 percent of the adjunctive general extenders. This general extender is followed by *و از این حرف ها* and *و این چیز ها* which together account for about 17 percent of the adjunctive general extenders used by native Persian speakers.

Table 2: Average frequency of general extenders in Persian

Adjunctive			Disjunctive		
Form	Frequency	Percent	Form	Frequency	Percent
و از این چرت و پرت ها	8	3.49	یا چیزی	22	29.41
ونمی دونم از این حرف ها	16	6.98	یا هر چی	5	7.35
و اینا	91	39.74	یا چی	18	26.47
و از این حرف ها	21	9.17	یا نمی دونم چی	15	22.05
و این چیز ها	17	7.42	یا هر جا	4	5.88
و از این جور چیز ها	8	3.49	یا به همچین چیزی	4	5.88
و همه چیز	12	5.24			
و از این مزخرف ها	7	3.05			
و از این دست حرف ها	5	2.18			
و از این جور حرف ها	9	3.93			
و از این دست خیر ها	4	1.74			
و از این قبیل چیز ها	7	3.05			
و از این غلط ها	3	1.31			
و از این قرطی بازی ها	2	.87			
و از این خزعلات	1	.43			
و از این جفنگیات	5	2.18			
و از این کار ها	3	1.31			
و از این جریان ها	3	1.31			
و از این جور کار ها	7	3.05			
<b>Total</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100</b>
Forms	19		Forms	6	
Frequency per 100	.23		Frequency per 100	.06	
<b>Total</b>				<b>297</b>	
<b>Total per 100</b>				<b>.30</b>	

The Persian disjunctive general extenders, however, not only show less frequency but also less variability. This can be attributed to the fact that the number of disjunctive extenders (68 tokens) is smaller than that of adjunctive ones (229 tokens). The general extender *یا چیزی* accounts for about 30 percent of the disjunctive general extenders in Persian with *یا چی* lagging behind (26.47 percent).

A close look at the structure of the Persian general extenders in Table 2 lays bare the fact that although the corpus was exhaustively searched for the presence of specific modifiers within general extenders, almost no instance of a general extender modified by a pre-modifier was found. Instances with a specific post-modifier were also almost non-existent. In this way, it can be argued that the structural pattern of a general extender in Persian is:

- *conjunction + (I don't know) + (preposition) + noun phrase*

The following excerpt includes almost all major kinds of general extenders. Note that the general extender in line three has all the optional elements: *I don't know*, and *preposition*<sup>4</sup>:

[3] مرضیه: وقتی اول ازش راجع به سربازیش پرسیدن می گه که معارف شده چون که (.) تک پسر بوده! بعد اینام گیر می دن که معافیشا بیاره و اینا! میاره! بعد چی بوده؟! پزشکی بوده! می گن "پس اینکه پزشکیه!" "شما گفتید کفیله" و نمی دونم از این حرفا. می گه که ها، آره، کف پاش صافه و نمی تونه بره خدمت (.) بعد دوباره می ده به داداش من (.)

<sup>4</sup> All Persian general extenders have been *literally* translated.

داداش من می گه کف پا صاف و قد کوتاه و نمی دونم وزن و این چیزا مال دوران جنگ بود، الان که دیگه این چیزا نیست.  
الناز: ((می خندد))  
مرضیه: دختره، ا، خواهر دختره پا می شه میره، نمی دونم کجا، (۱) همین جا که، همین جا که این معافی و اینا رو می دن.

Marziyeh: When they asked him about his military service he said that he was exempted because he was (.) the only son of the family! So, they insist on him bringing the notice of exemption **and stuff!** He brings it! And what do they find?! It was medical! They say “this is medical!” “You told us it was parental” **and I don’t know of such talks!** He says that he has flat feet and he can’t go to the military (.) And then he gives it to my brother (.) My brother says that flat feet and being short and I don’t know being under weight **and such things** belong to the war time; these things don’t exist anymore.

Elnaz: ((Laughs))

Marziyeh: The girl, er, the girl’s sister gets up and goes I don’t know where, (1) the place, the place in which they give exemption to military service **and stuff.**

The results of this investigation stand in contrast to, for example, Overstreet’s (1999, 2005) 10-hour Native American English corpus in which disjunctive forms outnumbered adjunctive ones. Overstreet (1999, p. 6) writes of English general extenders:

Disjunctive general extenders occur much more frequently in informal spoken contexts and talk among familiars (89 of 156, or 57 percent of the total number of occurrences) than in formal spoken contexts and talk among non-familiars (3 of 30, or 10 percent of the total number of occurrences). (Overstreet, 1999, p. 6)

As noted above, in Persian the form *واینا* (roughly equivalent to *and stuff*) dominates the use of adjunctive general extenders. In the disjunctive category, however, the form *یا چیزی* is in saddle (roughly equivalent to *or something*).

Furthermore, as the data suggest, on the whole, compared with native English speakers (Overstreet 1999, 2005), Persian speakers tend to employ more instances of general extenders in their conversations. In other words, although Persian corpus has fewer hours of data (9 hours) than the English corpus (10 hours), it shows more instances of general extenders (297) than the English one (156). This comparison will make more sense if we take into consideration the fact that although Overstreet’s (1999, 2005) corpus does not include instances of general extenders modified by specific modifiers, she points out that, in fact, her 10-hour data had few instances of such extenders.

However, regarding the formal characteristics, the most common adjunctive (*واینا*) and disjunctive (*یا چیزی*) general extenders in Persian are two-word combinations with the basic syntactic structure *conjunction + noun phrase*. The same patten exists for English as its most common adjunctive (*and stuff*) and disjunctive (*or something*) general extenders are also two-word combinations with the same syntactic structure (Overstreet, 2005).

Furthermore, as graphically shown in Figure 1, although Persian speakers seem to allow some variation for the construction of general extenders, about 40 percent of adjunctive general extenders seem to have been formed by using the basic formula *conjunction + noun phrase* (*واینا*).

Another characteristic of Persian adjunctive general extenders reflected in Figure 1 is that although intuitively the inserted element *نمی دونم* (*I don’t know*) could have been used with other noun phrases, in all its 16 instances it was unanimously used with the word *حرف ها* (*talks*).

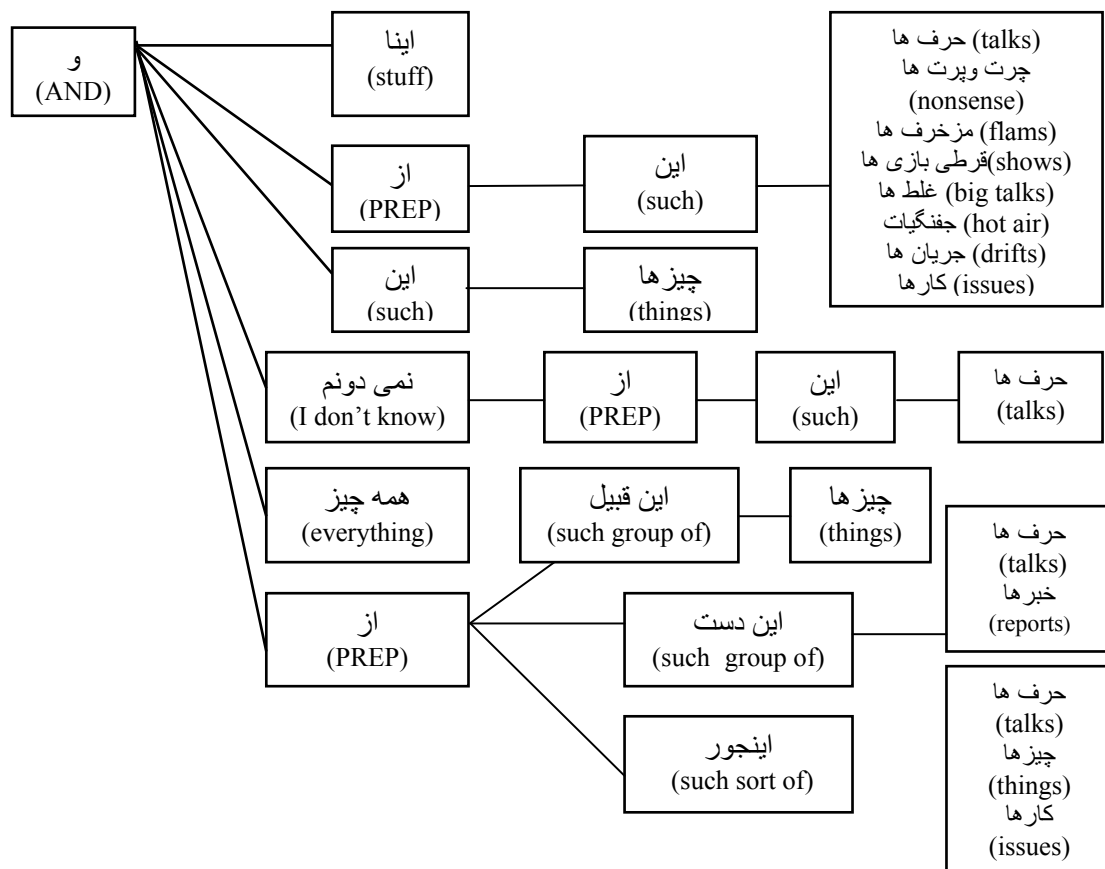


Figure 1: Persian adjunctive general extenders

Note 1: The adjunctive general extender which occurred only once has been excluded.

Note 2: The English words in parentheses are *literal* translations of the Persian words.

An interesting point as regards the adjunctive general extenders in Persian is that Persian speakers do not tend to remove the conjunction *و* (*and*) although they may, at times, reduce it. In point of fact, in 297 instances of Persian adjunctive general extenders no instances of a removed *و* (*and*) were found. In the following excerpt, for example, the word *and* has been reduced, not removed:

[4]

<p>اینقدر خواننده های جدید، که اصلا نمی شه اینا رو حفظ کرد. به خاطر اینکه خیل//ی اینقدر زیاد شدن و اینقدر توشون هست که صداهای افتضاح تر از بنیامین (.) یعنی وحشتناکه صداش بده طرف بعد اومده داده رپ می خونه طرف برا من! من نمی دونم اینا رو کی گو:ش می ده! می دونی (.) به نظر من مخاطبشون نوجو و نای رده سنی ۱۲ تا ۱۶ ساله. آره ، دقیقاً ، باریکلا. اونایی که تو دوران راهنمایی //و اونایی که تازه تازه دارن فکر می کنن آدم شدن اینا. بعد کلا می دونی، به حالت خود نمایی داره این آهنگا.</p>	<p>مرضیه: الناز : مرضیه: الناز: مرضیه: الناز: مرضیه: الناز: مرضیه:</p>
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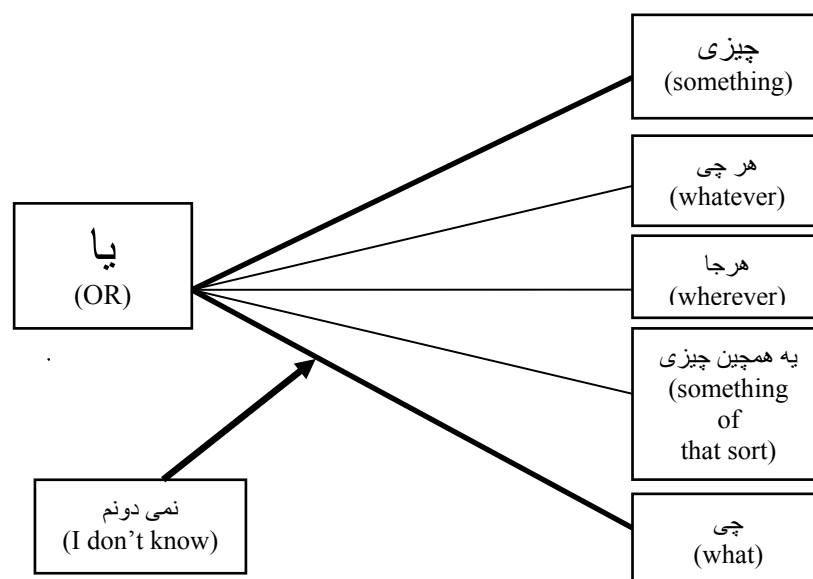
Marziyeh: There are just so many new singers you can't remember all of them.

Elnaz: Because they're re//ally



- Marziyeh: They've become so many, and there's just so many of them, people who sound worse than Benjamin (.5), it's awful, their voice is dreadful and then they go and start singing rap!
- Elnaz: I don't know who listens to them!
- Marziyeh: You know (.5), I think their audience. Their audience is teenagers from ages 12 to 16.
- Elnaz: Yeah, spot on, well done.
- Marziyeh: kids in guidance school, a//nd
- Elnaz: People who just think they're real grown up **an' stuff**.
- Marziyeh: And you know on the whole, these songs are a bit like showing off.

The following figure graphically captures the essence of Persian disjunctive general extenders. As Figure 2 shows, Persian speakers sanction less variation in the construction of disjunctive general extenders compared with adjunctive ones.



**Figure 2: Disjunctive general extenders**

Note: The English words in parentheses are *literal* translations of the Persian words.

Additionally, it seems that Persian speakers tend to remove یا (*or*) in the production of disjunctive general extenders. The following excerpt contextualizes this tendency in Persian:

[5]

- علی: حالا من به چیزی بپرسم؟! تو الان وقتی می خواهی با یکی آشنا بشی (.). با یه پسر! تو نگاه اول چیش تو را جذب می کنه؟
- لاله: چشم هاش! (می خندد)
- علی: جدی گفتم؟
- لاله: خوب (.). نظر من نظر اکثریت که نیست. من نظرم با خیلی از همسن و سالهای دور و برم فرق داره.
- علی: نه، جدی تو نگاه اول بالاخره به چیزیش جذبیت می کنه دیگه (.). قیافه، تیپ، لهجه، ماشین، چیزی؟
- لاله: تو (۱) نگاه اول؟!

- Ali: Now can I ask you a question?! When you want to get to know someone (.) get to know a boy say! What attracts you at first glance?!
- Laleh: His eyes! ((laughs))
- Ali: Seriously?
- Laleh: Well (.) my opinion isn't in tune with the majority. My opinion is different from other people my age.

Ali: No seriously at first glance there must be something that attracts you (.) looks, style, accent, car, **something**?

Laleh: At (1) first glance?!

Besides variations in formal properties, Persian general extenders differ from English general extenders in their grammatical distribution as well. As discussed by quite a few number of researchers (see for example, Channell, 1994; Dines, 1980; Evison, McCarthy & O'Keefe, 2007; Overstreet, 1999, 2005; Terraschke, 2007; Terraschke & Holmes, 2007), English general extenders tend to appear in clause-final positions. The following examples taken from various sources may clarify the position of general extenders in English discourse:

[6]

A: And what's he going to be doing in there?

B: I think they're training him as a trainee manager.

A: Frying chips?

C: You mean he's frying chips. Basically. ((laughs))

B: He says 'I'm going to do everything. Fry chips and wait tables **and stuff**'.

A: There's no way he'll be able for that like ((laughs))

[7]

S: And my husband travelled for his father, selling **and that sort of thing**.

[8]

A: He was interested in keeping bees.

B: Oh yes, yes, bees and chickens **and all the rest of it**.

[9]

S: She frames pictures **and so on** and she doesn't have much free time.

(quoted from Evison *et al.*, 2007, pp. 138-139)

[10]

Maya: she's just really weird with them—she doesn't—I mean I—I think she's alm//ost like

Sara: It's like a completely unconscious sadistic str//eak.

Maya: Yeah it is. It's very sadistic. It's really mean. (.) The whole thing is r(h)eally m(h)ean when you watch her and she's like—gets kind of absorbed with it but she's not really.=I don't think she believes that they're living at all.

Sara: Um//hm

Maya: I don't think she believes that they'll like (.) bleed **an' stuff**. I don't think she understands that (.) when she gassed her dog that the dog bloated and lost oxygen and choked to death and (.) twitched and then died you know.

(quoted from Overstreet, 1999, p. 39)

[11]

V: and apparently [university name] ranked but they only rank because the grow good grass and sheep **and things** and they are the only university in New Zealand that do that.

(quoted from Terraschke & Holmes, 2007, p. 205)

[12]

S: I came back to study like em when I was twenty-two **or something**.

(quoted from Terraschke & Holmes, 2007, p. 211)

[13]

Ernie: I said no I know his name is something else. Teddy 'r Tom '**r somethin**.

Persian speakers, however, seem to use general extenders both at clause final and clause-internal positions. The following examples which have been taken from the corpus show how the two positions have been the target of general extenders by native Persian speakers:

[14]

علی: اول آزمایشو طراحی کردیم (. یعنی اومدیم نقشو کشیدیم.  
=باریکلا، خب؟! حسین:  
علی: یعنی اومدیم نقشه اولیه رو کشیدیم (. بعد اتفاقاً گروه ما زودترین گروهی بود که تموم کرد. (۱) خب خیلی آزمایشش وقت گیر و اینا بود.

Ali: First we designed the experiment (. I mean we drew the design.  
Hossein: =Well done, Well?!  
Ali: I mean we drew the initial design (. then actually our group was the first group to finish.  
(1) Well the experiment time-consuming **and stuff** was.

[15]

رامین: هی گیر داده بود به من که من گشتمه بیا بریم رستوران! اون وقت هر سری که رستوران می رفتیم می گفت "بذار برم حساب کنم." (. گفتم خب برو حساب کن! "ا من پول نیوردم، از تمرین اومدم پول نیوردم، یه ده تومن بده!" (۱) مثلاً یه پنج، شیش تومنشو می داد رستوران، بقیشو می داش جیبش! (. بعد دوباره دفته ی بعد هم حرفش همین بود: "یه ده تومن بده" و از این حرف ها!

Ramin: He kept nagging that he was hungry and wanted to go to a restaurant! And in every restaurant we went to he kept saying "let me pick up the bill." (. I said ok you pick up the bill! "I haven't brought any money, I've come from practice and I haven't brought any money, let me 10 Tomans<sup>5</sup>!" (1) He would give 5, 6 Tomans to the restaurant and the rest went into his pocket! (. And then the next time he would say the same thing "give me 10 Tomans" **and of such talks**.

[16]

الهام: احسان و اینا اصلاً خونوادگی آرومند. خیلی خونسردند. (. هر چی هم که بشه ها خونسردند! (۱) خلاصه، احسان گفت این رامین از دهنش در رفت، نمی دونم چی گفته که احسان فهمیده ...

Elham: Ehsan **and stuff (and the others)** are quite as a family. Very calm. (. Anything that is thrown their way, they still keep their cool! (1) Anyway, Ehsan said that Ramin blurted it out, I don't know what he said that Ehsan found out that ...

[17]

سارا: مرسی که شمار ما بهش ندادی، چون من خیلی بدم میاد که یکی بهم ننگه شمار مو بده به یکی دیگه.  
مهین: خب منم برای همین (. رو همین حساب ندادم!  
سارا: خیلی لطف کردی.  
مهین: =خواهش می کنم  
سارا: گفتم که بهت بگم که اگر دوباره گفت من بدونم چیکار کنم. (۱) بیچونمش یا چی؟  
مهین: = نه! نه! این دفعه بهش بده. (. طوری نیست.

Sara: Thanks for not giving me number to him, Coz I really hate it when someone gives my number to someone else without telling me.  
Mahin: That's the reason why (. that's exactly why I didn't give it!  
Sara: Thanks a lot.

<sup>5</sup> Toman is a superunit of the official currency of the Islamic Republic of Iran, *Rial*.

- Mahin: =Any time  
Sara: Just wanted to let you know so if he asks again I'll know what to do. (1) Shall I change the subject **or what?**  
Mahin: =No! No! This time give it to her. (.) It doesn't matter.

[18]

احمد: چند نفری اومده بودن؟  
معصومه: ده، دوازده تا، چیزی، اومده بودن.  
احمد: =پس تعداد همچین کم هم نبوده.

- Ahmad: How many of them that came?  
Masoumeh: 10, 12 of them, **something**, had come  
Ahmad: =So the numbers weren't that low.

It should also be emphasized that the Persian examples which have been provided to locate the position of general extenders above are not at all habitual markers of solidarity the position of which may vary in English discourse as well.

More precisely, general extenders as markers of solidarity may tend to vary their position even in English. In fact, it has been shown that the English general extender *and stuff* may be in the process of becoming more flexible with regard to its position, at least in the speech of some individuals or groups (Overstreet, 2005). An example of this is presented in the following excerpt, where two nurses are discussing the events of the previous day:

[19]

- Karen: So (1) a::nyway, no I sta—I sta—I got out of here by a quarter till yesterday **an' stuff**. I didn't (1) see that last patient.  
Donna: You mean quarter to four.  
Karen: Yeah, **an' stuff**—after I took care—after I took care of the body, so. I just figured I didn't wanna leave that hanging till the evening shift.

(quoted from Overstreet, 2005, pp. 1849-1850)

In [19], *and stuff* appears to have become a kind of reflex marker of solidarity, much like *y'know*, and occurs in many positions other than phrase or clause-final (see Overstreet, 2005).

Furthermore, although general extenders, in both Persian and English seem to attach to more or less similar structures, there seems to be a major difference between the two languages as far as their most common adjunctive general extenders—*و اینا* and *and stuff*—are concerned. In fact, in cases when it should attach to nouns, Persian general extender *و اینا* seems to attach only to singular and non-count nouns and not to plural ones. The English *and stuff*, however, is attached to all kinds of nouns. The following examples from both the Persian and English corpora clarify this observation more:

(Plural noun + *and stuff*)

[20]

- Julie: John and I are hiking out with you.  
Rosie: Ya::y  
Julie: He's excited about the idea. We went an' bought shoes.  
Rosie: Okay. That's //cool.  
Julie: So—  
Rosie: We'll get an early start, an' I was thinking if we wanted to bring in the coo::ler, we could, an' have it—each pitch in a little bit of money an' have Mike take it out by boat. So that we can put all the kitchen stuff in the::re, an' all the heavy stuff, an' just pack out our

clo::thes an' tents an' stuff. Yeah. Most of 'em are evergreens around there I guess. Pine trees and stuff.

(quoted from Overstreet, 1999, p. 23)

(Singular noun + *and stuff*)

[21]

S: One time, back in the seventies, when I was married ta Jim. An' there was a sugar shortage an' a-like he sold pot 'n stuff . . .

(quoted from Guthrie, 1994, p. 59)

(Non-count noun + *and stuff*)

[22]

S: We provided equipment to the Haitians, and stuff, we provided security and stuff, we took care of people who needed help and stuff.

(*Windward O'ahu News*, Jul. 1995, cited in Overstreet, 1999, p. 103)

[23]

S: I couldn't get a proper education, and stuff (like that).

(quoted from Dines, 1980, p. 27)

(Non-count noun + *و اینا*)

[24]

ناصر:	ب::ه! داش حسین! ((می خندد)) تعریف کن بینیم، میبینم که میرین شمال و (. بی خبر//و
حسین:	یهویی شد به خدا.
ناصر:	یهویی شد به خدا؟!
حسین:	یهویی شد به خدا، نمی خواستیم بریم اولش.
ناصر:	حالا تعریف کن.
حسین:	تعریف که (۱) هوا و اینا خیلی خوب// بود.
ناصر:	((می خندد)) هوا و اینا خیلی خوب بود!

Naser: Grea::t! Bro Hossein! ((laughs)) So what's going on, I see you went to the North and (. without a heads-up// and

Hossein: It just happened.

Naser: It just happened?!

Hossein: I swear to God it just happened, we didn't want to go at first.

Naser: Now tell us about it.

Hossein: All in all (1) the weather and stuff was very go//od.

Naser: ((laughs)) the weather and stuff was very good!

(Singular noun + *و اینا*)

[25]

مینا:	شنیدم باغ بابای لاله دیگه با::غ نیست! (۱) همه چیش خشک شده تو این خشکسالی و بی آبی.
مریم:	=نه بابا، این جور یام نیست. <u>درخت و ایناش</u> فقط خشک شده! ((می خندد))

Mina: I've heard that the garden of laleh's father is no longer a gard:::en! (1) It's all dried up in this drought.

Maryam: =No way, it's not like that at all. Only the tree and stuff have dried up! ((laughs))

The observation that the Persian general extender *واین* is attached to only singular and non-count nouns and not to plural ones provides tangible evidence that it can be the equivalent to the English *and stuff*; otherwise the Persian *واین* could have been regarded as a pronoun, something like the English *these*, and not as a generic noun.

Additionally, Persian disjunctive general extenders do not seem to come after prepositional phrases (PP). In English, however, such extenders can come after PPs. The Persian corpus, in fact, did not include any instances of disjunctive general extenders used after a PP. The following example shows how a general extender might be combined with a PP in English (note that the PP has been underlined):

[26]

S: Everybody I know wants some kind of soft parts rubbed up against their soft parts. Or in their facial area or something.

(quoted from Overstreet, 1999, p. 10)

Interestingly, however, Persian adjunctive general extenders can be combined with a PP. In the following example, the Persian *واین* (*and stuff*) has been combined with the PP *تو کمد*

[27]

رضا:	اگه گشته بودی، بو//د
قادر:	گشتم بابا، نبود ( ) یه سیصد بار دیگه هی تکرار کن!؟
رضا:	تو کمد و اینا رم گشتی؟
قادر:	=آره به خدا. عجب گی::ری تو، نبود بابا نبود.

Reza: If you had looked for it, it would have been th//ere.  
Ghader: I looked for it, it wasn't there say it another 300 times why don't you?!  
Reza: Did you look in the cupboard and stuff?  
Ghader: =By God yes. You nag s::o much, it wasn't there.

In the Persian corpus, there were also instances of both adjunctive and disjunctive general extenders combined with verb phrase (VP), adjectival phrase (AP), and sentence (S):

(VP + General Extender)

[28]

لاله: نمی دونم. می دونی، خیلی نمی شناسمش. نمی دونم کار می کنه، درس می خونه، یا چی؟

Laleh: I don't know, you know, I only know that I don't know him well. I don't know if he works, or studies or what?

(AP + General Extender)

[29]

لاله:	نگفتی بالاخره طرف چه ج::وری بود؟
نگار:	((می خندد)) گفتم که (۱) قد بلند و خوش تیپ و از این حرف ها!

Laleh: You didn't say in the end what was he like?  
Negar: ((laughs)) I told you (1) tall and stylish and of such talks!

(S + General Extender)

[30]

خیی نامرد بود که نیومد؟ (.) مگه نگفت به تو که می//یاد؟	حمید:
آره، ولی نتونست خوب؟	رضا:
=نتونست خو//ب؟! =	حمید:
فکر کنم سرش شلوغ بود پنجشنبه، یا خونوادش اجازش ندادن، و از این چیزها دیگه!	رضا:

Hamid: He's s::o bad not to have come? (.) Didn't he say he would co//me?  
Reza: Yeah, but well he just couldn't make it.  
Hamid: =Couldn't make i//t!?  
Reza: I think he was busy on Sunday, or his family didn't give permission and of such things!

English general extends can also attach to APs, VPs, and Ss (for a comprehensive discussion see Overstreet, 1999):

VP + General Extender

[31]

S: She's sort of a child who swings and does somersaults and stuff like that.  
(quoted from Dines 1980, p. 28)

(AP + General Extender)

[32]

S: They just think, maybe you're kooky or something.  
(quoted from Ball & Ariel 1978, pp. 37-38)

(S + General Extender)

[33]

S: They forgot to bring the leftovers, or they didn't have time, or something.  
(quoted from Ball & Ariel, 1978, p. 38)

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this article an attempt was made to investigate the frequency of general extenders in the Persian discourse. Additionally, general extenders were compared with the English ones (Overstreet, 2005) regarding their structural distribution. The results can be summarized in this way:

1. Persian speakers use adjunctive general extenders more frequently than disjunctive ones.
2. Both Persian and English disjunctive general extenders show smaller variability of form compared with their adjunctive counterparts.
3. The structural pattern of a Persian general extender can be represented as *conjunction* + (*I don't know*) + (*preposition*) + *noun phrase*.
4. Persian speakers seem to use general extenders both at clause final and clause-internal positions. English speakers, however, tend to use such structures clause-finally.
5. In cases when it should attach to nouns, Persian general extender *ببینا* seems to attach only to singular and non-count nouns and not to plural ones. The English *and stuff*, however, is attached to all kinds of nouns.
6. Persian disjunctive general extenders do not seem to come after prepositional phrases.

Future research is however needed to shed more light on the nature of Persian general extenders. In English, for example, besides their widely-assumed function of indicating that the clause element to which they are attached should be seen as an example of a general category, general extenders have acquired interactional functions too (Overstreet, 1999). In other words, recently a wide array of functions has been claimed to exist for such expressions in the English discourse, implying that “as pragmatic particles, these expressions are multifunctional with the context, both linguistic and non-linguistic, helping to constrain the interpretation on particular occasions of use” (Cheshire, 2007, p. 157). Future researchers should, therefore, focus on the functions performed by general extenders in Persian in order to see whether or not Persian general extenders perform the same range of functions as the ones fulfilled by English general extenders.

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## TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

.	a stopping fall in tone
!	an animated tone
?	a rising tone
:	a lengthened segment
(.)	a half-a-second pause
(1)	a pause in seconds
(( ))	a description by the transcriptionist
//	where the next speaker begins to speak (in overlap)
=	no interval between adjacent utterances

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