

Impersonal Constructions in Balochi

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Abstract

Impersonal constructions are interesting from a typological perspective. Siewierska (2008: 3–4) finds that “[t]he semantic characterizations of impersonality centre on two notions”, either “the lack of a human agent controlling the depicted situation or event” or “situations or events which may be brought about by a human agent but crucially one which is not specified.” The present article focuses on grammatical constructions for situations or events brought about by a non-specified agent in one Iranian language, namely Balochi. It draws upon four Balochi corpuses available to the authors, comprising four different dialects of Balochi and consisting of altogether approximately 130,000 words.

There are three constructions for a non-specific agent found in the corpus, those with the verb in 3PL, those with the verb in 2SG, and those with a passive verb. It seems that the 3PL construction allows the speaker to distance himself/herself from the event somehow in narrative texts, where the speaker and addressee are not included in the referential framework of this construction. The 2SG construction, on the contrary, allows an unrestricted impersonal interpretation in narrative texts. However, in procedural texts, the 2SG and 3PL constructions are used interchangeably to include the speaker, and probably also the addressee. The 2SG construction in narrative texts and the 2SG and 3PL constructions in procedural texts are open to a truly impersonal interpretation. Thus, the 3PL construction does follow the referential properties described by Siewierska (2008: 14–17) in narrative texts but has wider referential properties in procedural texts. In Balochi, the referential properties of the passive construction seem, on the contrary, not to be as unrestricted as Siewierska (2008: 23) suggests.

1. Introduction

Impersonal constructions are interesting from a typological perspective.¹ Onishi (2001: 45) notes that impersonal constructions need to be investigated for a large number of languages with different typological profiles and from different linguistic areas in order to draw far-reaching conclusions about these kinds of constructions and the typological constraints that apply to them. Siewierska (2008: 13–14) also pays attention to the lack of data for impersonal constructions in, e.g., grammatical descriptions of specific languages. The aim of the present article is to provide data concerning impersonal constructions for one such specific language, namely Balochi.²

Balochi is an Iranian language, thus belonging to the Indo-European language family, and is spoken in south-eastern Iran, south-western Pakistan, and southern Afghanistan, as well as in the UAE, Oman, and other parts of the Arabian Peninsula, Turkmenistan, India, and East Africa.

¹ In 2009, a corpus-based linguistic project comprising several languages belonging to different language families was initiated at the Department of Linguistics and Philology, Uppsala University, the aim of which is to study, among other grammatical features, impersonal constructions.

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In her article “Ways of Impersonalizing”, Siewierska (2008: 3–4) discusses the concept ‘impersonal’ and finds that this term has been used in a wide and not entirely well-defined sense. Some scholars “conceive of impersonality in semantic terms, others adopt a syntactic approach, and yet others a morphological perspective.” She finds that “[t]he semantic characterizations of impersonality centre on two notions”, either “the lack of a human agent controlling the depicted situation or event” or “situations or events which may be brought about by a human agent but crucially one which is not specified.”

In the second category she pays particular attention to third person plural impersonal constructions and verbal impersonals and to the referential properties of these different constructions. Among Siewierska’s conclusions are that the referential range of the 3PL construction is more restricted than for other constructions and that 3PL impersonal constructions denote third person referents among which the speaker and/or addressee are hardly ever included.³ She also concludes that verbal impersonals are generally of a less restricted character when it comes to referential properties, and normally include the speaker, and that the most open reference is found in agentless passives, which she finds referentially unrestricted (Siewierska 2008: 23).

Blevins (2006) takes a morphological approach and describes the characteristics of morphologically marked impersonal constructions found in, e.g., Balto-Finnic and Celtic languages, which “represent a distinctive grammatical strategy for ‘suppressing’ reference to the subject” (Blevins 2006: 236). There are no morphological impersonal constructions of this kind (see also Blevins 2003: 486–489) in Balochi.

Kitagawa and Lehrer (1990), on the other hand, ground their study in different uses of pronouns and define the concept of impersonality in semantic terms in connection with these pronouns. They discuss the distinction between referential, impersonal and vague uses of pronouns, where “[r]eferential uses identify specific individuals”, “[a]n ‘impersonal’ use of a pronoun applies to anyone and/or everyone”, and “[a] ‘vague’ use applies to specific individuals, but they are not identified, or identifiable, by the speaker” (Kitagawa and Lehrer 1990: 742).⁴ The distinction between ‘impersonal’ and ‘vague’ uses will here be applied to whole constructions rather than only to pronouns, particularly since Balochi is a pro-drop language.

The present article takes a semantic approach and focuses on the second category specified by Siewierska, namely situations or events brought about by a non-specified (impersonal or vague) human agent. This should, however, not be taken as the position of the present researchers on what should be regarded as impersonal constructions. Another interesting type of impersonal construction comprises those with a non-canonical subject, that is, a subject in the genitive or dative case (see Onishi 2001), which are frequent in Balochi and which will be the subject of a forthcoming study.

³ Siewierska (2008) does not treat 2SG impersonal constructions (see below).

⁴ Siewierska (2008: 9) uses the term ‘impersonal’ the way Kitagawa and Lehrer employ the term ‘vague’ reference, and ‘generic’ for the concept Kitagawa and Lehrer call ‘impersonal’. The present article follows Kitagawa and Lehrer.

This investigation draws upon four Balochi corpuses available to the authors, namely Serge Axenov's corpus of tales, reality-based stories, and procedural texts (dealing with, e.g., weaving, cooking, farming, etc.) from Turkmenistan (abbreviated BT), Behrooz Barjasteh Delforooz's corpus of tales and reality-based stories from Sistan (abbreviated BS), Maryam Nourzaei's corpus of tales, a reality-based story, and a procedural text in Koroshi, a dialect of Balochi spoken in Fars (abbreviated BK), and Carina Jahani's corpus of modern short stories from Pakistan (abbreviated BP). These four corpuses comprise approximately 130,000 words.⁵ The texts that contain the greatest number of impersonal constructions with a non-specified human agent are procedural texts, but the written texts (BP) also have a considerable number of such constructions. The tales contain, on the whole, fewer impersonal constructions. The examples are transcribed in a phonemic representation modelled on the system used by Jahani and Korn (2009).⁶ All examples are marked for dialect.

Different constructions for a non-specified human agent found in the corpus will be classified and discussed below. Special attention will be given to the referential properties of the agent in each construction. There could be a vague delimitation of possible agents in the context, but there could also be a totally impersonal reference to any possible agent, including the speaker and the addressee in these constructions (generic reference, see Siewierska 2008: 9–10). This difference will be discussed for each example below.

The purpose of the present article is thus two-fold: to analyse the nature of the constructions used for non-specified human agents in the corpus of Balochi under study, and to discuss whether Siewierska's (2008) conclusions about referential properties for the agent in different types of constructions hold for this corpus.

2. Constructions with a non-specified human agent found in the corpus

In this corpus, two main types of constructions where the human agent is not specified are found, one type with an active verb and one type with a passive verb. There are three different constructions with an active verb, 3PL, 2SG, and 3SG constructions.

2.1 *Constructions with an active verb, narrative texts*

Constructions with an active verb are particularly common in procedural texts, but they are also found in reality-based stories and, although much less commonly, in tales. Since it seems that the constructions operate somewhat differently in narratives and procedural texts, the analysis of the procedural texts is separate from that of the narrative texts (see section 2.3). In narrative texts the verb is found either in 3PL, 2SG, or 3SG. In the ergative construction (ex. 3) the agent is expressed by a

⁵ These four corpuses will henceforth be referred to as 'the corpus'.

⁶ Nasalization is not taken into account here. Pronoun forms are analysed as one unit due to the great variation in these forms. The DEM.OBJ can, e.g., occur as *ārā*, *āīrā*, *āīārā*, *āīā*. The COP.PR.3SG is explicitly given as \emptyset in the present perfect, but not the \emptyset personal ending in the past tense 3SG.

pronominal clitic. Only a limited number of examples have been included, but these examples are chosen to be representative of all the occurrences of the particular construction.

2.1.1 Verb in the third person plural

Ex. 1

<i>ā</i>	<i>drōgburr</i>	<i>uškīṭ</i>	<i>ki</i>	<i>bi</i>	<i>plān</i>	<i>šār-ā</i>
DEM	liar	hear.PT.3SG	CLM	in	so.and.so	town-OBL
<i>drōgburr=ē</i>	<i>ast</i>	<i>wa</i>	<i>āī</i>	<i>tārīp-ān-ā</i>	<i>bāz=a</i>	
liar=IND	be.PR.3SG	and	DEM.GEN	praise-PL-OBJ	much=VCL	

kan-ant
do.PR-3PL

That liar heard that in such and such a town there was a liar who was widely praised (lit. and they praise him a lot). (BT)

The speaker here is the person in the story telling the addressee (the first liar) about a second liar. The presence of a speaker is, in fact, very weak, since the verb *uškīṭ* ‘he heard’ is used to refer to what was said. The addressee is definitely excluded from the referential properties of the verb *kanant* ‘they do’. He was not even aware of the second liar until he heard about him from the speaker. It is not totally clear whether the speaker also would praise this second liar or not, i.e. if the speaker is part of the referential framework of the verb *kanant* ‘they do’ or not. Possible agents are to be found in the context of the story, which means that this is a vague rather than an impersonal or, to use Siewierska’s terminology, generic construction.

Ex. 2

<i>šallāx</i>	<i>ēšī</i>	<i>čarm-ī-ēn</i>	<i>dāšt</i>		
whip	DEM.OBL	leather-ADJZ-ATTR	have.PT.3SG		
<i>ḡadīm-ā</i>	<i>zābul</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>bā</i>	<u><i>kurt-ant</i></u>	<i>čarm-ī-ēn</i>
old-OBL	Zabol	MIR	price.VCL	do.PT-3PL	leather-ADJZ-ATTR

A whip, he had a leather whip; in the past in Zabol, you know, they were sold, (whips) made of leather. (BS)

This sentence is found in a reality-based story. Possible agents are tradesmen in Zabol in former times, which makes the agent of *kurtant* ‘they did’ vague rather than impersonal. In this example, the speaker and the addressee must be seen as excluded from the referential framework of the verb, since the speaker is a storyteller from the region, and the addressee is a linguistic researcher.

Ex. 3

marō zahr=eš rētk-a=∅ mā xorāk=at
 today poison=PC.3PL pour.PT-PP=COP.PR.3SG in food=PC.2SG

Today there is poison poured into your food. (BK)

The context of this sentence from a folktale is that the stepmother wants to kill her stepson, but his horse has supernatural powers and is able to warn him. The speaker is the horse and the addressee is the boy. Possible agents in this ergative construction with an agent clitic instead of the verb in 3PL are the people present in the story who want to kill the addressee. Thus, both the speaker and the addressee are excluded from the referential framework, since neither of them would have put poison in the food. These restrictions of the agent makes the sentence vague rather than impersonal.

Ex. 4

xān mnī pād-ān kawš-ān-ī tā iškar
 Khan PRON.1SG.GEN foot-PL shoe-PL-GEN in live.ember

rēt-ag=ant ša dušmanāī-ā
 pour.PT-PP=COP.PR.3PL from enmity-OBL

Khan, my feet! Somebody has poured live embers in my shoes out of enmity. (BS)

This example comes from a reality-based story, and the incident with live embers being poured into the speaker's shoes took place at a wedding. Possible agents are people present at the wedding party, thus a vague subject from which speaker is excluded. It is also clear in the context that he does not suspect that the addressee (the Khan) would be the agent.

Ex. 5

nimāzliq bi awā bāl kurt=u ēšānā āwurt
 prayer.rug in air wing do.PT.3SG=and DEM.PL.OBJ bring.PT.3SG

am=ōdā ki wazīr-ay ĵinikk-ā šōd-ant
 EMPH=there CLM wizieer-GEN girl-OBJ.VCL wash.PR-3PL

The prayer rug took off into the air and brought them to the place where the wizieer's daughter was being washed (lit. where they wash the wizieer's daughter). (BT)

This sentence is from a folktale. It is the narrator's voice, which means that the speaker is excluded from the possible agents, as are the addressees, i.e. the audience, who are also outside the framework of the story. Possible agents of the verb *šodant* 'they wash' are people in the story who could be involved in washing the wizieer's daughter, which means that the agent is vague.

Ex. 6

xolāsa ar=r-ant ahmad-ī rannā
 in.short VCL=go.PR-3PL NP-GEN after

To make a long story short, Ahmad is asked to come (lit. they go to get Ahmad). (BK)

The sentence is from a narrative section in a folktale. This excludes the narrator and the audience, i.e. the speaker and the addressee, from the referential framework. Possible agents are the people at the court of the king who needs Ahmad's services and therefore sends for him. The construction is thus vague rather than impersonal.

Summary

It is clear from ex. 1–6 that the 3PL construction is used with a vague rather than an impersonal (generic) human agent. The speaker and the addressee seem to be excluded from the referential properties of this construction in narrative discourse, which means that Siewierska's conclusion for the 3PL holds in this type of text (see also below).

2.1.2 Verb in the second person singular

Ex. 7

bēšakkā ki pa xudā ta yakk=ē b-day-ay
 undoubtedly CLM for God PRON.2SG one=IND SUB-give.PR-2SG

xudā da=a dant
 God ten=VCL give.PR.3SG

Undoubtedly, if you give one (unit of something) for the sake of God, He will give you tenfold (back). (BS)

This is a generic statement meaning 'Whoever gives something to God will get tenfold back'. The speaker, in this story the prophet Moses, definitely includes the addressee, a poor man who actually showed generosity and was rewarded, and there is no reason to believe that he would exclude himself either. Possible agents are not restricted to the framework of the story, which means that we are dealing with an impersonal construction.

Ex. 8

na-zān-ay čā ā čamm ham=ē kišk-ā
 NEG-know.PR-2SG why DEM.GEN eye EMPH=DEM side-OBL

sakk=at-ant
 fixed=COP.PT-3SG

Nobody knows why his eyes were fixed in this direction. (BP)

This sentence is about a man who is expecting his son to come back home even long after the son has been killed. The agent of the verb *nazānay* 'you don't know' could be anyone within the story, i.e. anybody who knew this man. But it could also be anyone hearing or reading this story. It therefore seems that an impersonal interpre-

tation is possible here. Thus, the speaker and the addressee can be included as possible agents in this example.

Ex. 9

ē nimāzliq-ay sarā ki nind-ay ā bāl=a kan-t
 DEM prayer.rug-GEN on CLM sit.down.PR-2SG DEM wing=VCL do.PR-3SG

When you sit down on this prayer-rug, it takes off. (BT)

The sentence is uttered by a man who wants to sell a magic rug, and the addressee is a person who wants to buy this rug. The intention is, of course, not that it will take off only if this buyer sits down on it, which means that the verb *ninday* ‘you sit down’ is not to be interpreted as referring only to the addressee. It is an impersonal construction with general referentiality, including both the speaker and the addressee in the context where it is uttered.

Ex. 10

doros=en bās=en ġarīb-pasand be-bey
 correct=COP.PR.3SG must=COP.PR.3SG stranger-accepting SUB-become.PR.2SG

Surely one must accept strangers. (BK)

This sentence is from a reality-based story and the intention of the person who said it is that everybody, including himself and the addressee, should accept strangers. It is open and generic in its referential properties, thus an impersonal construction.

Ex. 11

na-ma-bī-yā čūbān-ī kan-ey
 NEG-IMP-become.PR-3SG shepherd-NOMZ SUB.do.PR-2SG

It is impossible to be a shepherd. (BK)

This sentence is uttered by a shepherd boy, and the addressee is his father. The boy wants to quit being a shepherd and argues that it is an impossible job. It is therefore clear that the speaker in particular is included here. The statement is, however, made in such a general way that also the addressee (the father) and anyone else who would attempt to be a shepherd can be included. It can therefore be interpreted as an impersonal construction.

Summary

Ex. 7–11 show that the 2SG construction in narrative text has wider referential properties than the 3PL construction. In all the examples an impersonal interpretation is possible. It is interesting to note ex. 11, where the speaker refers to himself in particular with this construction. However, this example also allows for an impersonal interpretation.

2.1.3 Verb in the third person singular

Ex. 12

guš-īt *ki* *yag* *bādišā=yē=at*
 say.PR-3SG CLM one king=IND=COP.PT.3SG

The story goes (lit. he/she says) that there was a king. (BS)

Ex. 13

ē š-ī *ančēn* *sawt=ē* *ēširā* *allā=i* *pāk*
 DEM say.PR-3SG such.ATTR voice=IND DEM.OBJ Allah=IZ pure
dāt=at
 give.PT=COP.PT.3SG

He, the story goes, the Holy God had given him such a (wonderful) voice... (BS)

Ex. 14

š-īt *yakk* *xān=ē=at*
 say.PR-3SG one Khan=IND=COP.PT.3SG

The story goes that there was a Khan. (BS)

The construction with the verb in 3SG occurs only in narrative texts in one part of the corpus, namely BS, and only for the verb ‘to say’ (in full or reduced form), but it is common in BS, both in fiction and reality-based stories.⁷ It is found in the introduction of a story, but also later on in the narration. It is quite clear from the way this verb is used that it is linked to epistemic modality and expresses that the narrator does not have first-hand information about what follows after the introductory verb of saying. Rather, he⁸ expresses some uncertainty about the contents of the narration, but not to the extent that the listener feels that he expresses outright doubt about it. Thus, this construction does not include the speaker or the addressee in its referential framework and is therefore not impersonal. It has a vague reference to people who may have been eyewitnesses to the very story about to be told or being told.

2.2 Grammatical passive construction, narrative texts

The grammatical passive construction in Balochi consists of an infinitive or a past participle with an auxiliary verb, either ‘to become’ (ex. 15–17, 19–20) or ‘to come’ (ex. 18).⁹ The passive is normally not used with an overt agent in Balochi (see e.g. Farrell 1995: 231, Baranzehi 2003: 100, Axenov 2006: 200) but there are two such

⁷ The 3PL is occasionally found in BS the same context, but not nearly as frequently as the 3SG.

⁸ All these stories were told by male storytellers.

⁹ For the passive construction in Balochi, see also Jahani and Korn 2009: 662–663.

examples in the whole corpus, which thus do not belong in the discussion of a non-specified agent.¹⁰

Ex. 15

dawlatxān-ārā kayz u band-ay sazā day-ag
NP-OBJ prison and prison-GEN punishment give.PR-INF

ma-bīt

PROH-become.PR.3SG

Dawlatkhan should not be punished by imprisonment (lit. imprisonment should not be given to Dawlatkhan). (BP)

This is the verdict in a murder case. The person writing it issues an order to those involved in the process, particularly to the addressee (the receiver of the verdict), who would be the actual person to imprison Dawlatkhan. The agent here is, however, vague rather than impersonal, including the addressee as well as others who are part of the process, though not the writer himself, who stands above the process.

Ex. 16

agan māt=ē kuš-ag ma-būt-ēn du čār
if mother=PC.3SG kill.PR-INF PROH-become.PT-SUB.3SG two four

rōč-ā rand zahg allamā wadī būt-ag=at
day-OBL after child surely born become.PT-PP=COP.PT.3SG

If the mother had not been killed, the child would definitely have been born a couple of days later. (BP)

A woman has been killed and the prosecutor is trying to find out more about the murder. The sentence above is spoken by the father of the killer (i.e. the agent), quoting the midwives about the birth of the child with whom the woman was pregnant. Either the speaker did not know that his son (actually the father of the illegitimate child, who tried to conceal his adultery) killed this woman, or he did not want to disclose this information. He would hardly include himself as a possible agent though, and the addressee, the prosecutor, is definitely not one of the potential killers, which makes the agent vague rather than impersonal.

Ex. 17

ham=ē rōč-ā bēgāh-ay wahd-ā āsmān-ay dēmā
EMPH=DEM day-OBL evening-GEN time-OBL sky-GEN on

¹⁰ E.g. *pādišā ki kušt-a būt ša ragjan-ay dastā*
king CLM kill.PT-PP COP.PT.3SG from bloodletter-GEN hand
mušmā ā ragjan-ā bi dār-ā jan-an
PRON.1PL.INCL DEM bloodletter-OBJ to wood-OBL.VCL hit.PR-1PL

When the king has been killed by the bloodletter (lit. at the hand of the bloodletter), we will hang that bloodletter. (BT)

ĵāgah ĵāgah=ē ĵambar ham ġind-ag ātk-ag=at
 place place=IND cloud also see.PR-INF come.PT-PP=COP.PT.3SG

That same day, in the evening, one could see clouds in a few places in the sky. (BP)

This sentence is in a narrative part of a modern short story. Here the agent includes everybody who is part of the framework, including the ‘omnipresent narrator’. The persons to whom the story is told (the addressees), i.e. the readers of this short story, are not a natural part of the framework, however.

Ex. 18

diga āl bi man mālūm na-bū ki
 other state to PRON.1SG evident NEG-become.PT.3SG CLM
mnī mard kušt-a bū yā na
 PRON.1SG.GEN man kill.PT-PP become.PT.3SG or no

It was actually not clear to me if my husband was killed or not. (BS)

This sentence is from a folktale and the speaker is the wife of the man who may have been killed. The addressees are her parents. The potential agents are to be found within the framework of the story, but exclude the speaker and the addressees. The construction is therefore not an impersonal construction but a construction with a vague human agent.

Ex. 19

dēb-ay sarag ki sist-a būt dēb murt
 demon-GEN head CLM remove.PT-PP become.PT.3SG demon die.PT.3SG

When the head of the demon was removed, the demon died. (BT)

This sentence is found in a narrative section of a folktale. The potential agents of this construction are to be found within the framework of the story. The speaker and the addressee are excluded from the referential framework of this construction with a vague human agent.

Summary

In this corpus, the grammatical passive is the preferred strategy for a vague human agent in written texts (BP), where no instances of the otherwise common 3PL construction are attested. In the oral texts, the grammatical passive is rather rare, although not totally absent. It thus seems that the grammatical passive construction plays the same role in written literary style as the 3PL construction does in oral literary style to denote vague human agents excluding the speaker and the addressee in most instances (ex. 16, 18–19), but that it also can be used with wider referential properties to include the speaker (ex. 17) or the addressee (ex. 15). It is, however, not used in impersonal contexts in the same way as the 2SG construction is used. Siewierska’s (2008: 22) conclusion that the most open reference is found in agent-

less passives, which she finds referentially unrestricted, is thus not readily applicable to this corpus.

2.3 Constructions with an active verb, procedural texts

In procedural texts, which in this corpus are available for BT and BK, the two constructions 3PL and 2SG are used interchangeably. They are therefore not separated into different sections here. Two slightly longer examples (ex. 20–21) from procedural texts are presented to illustrate the way these constructions are used in procedural texts. They are taken from a text about weaving and a text about traditional cures for various diseases.

Ex. 20

masalan har raḡ=ē ke gēš bokān=et estefāda
 for.example every colour=IND CLM more want.PR=PC.2SG use
kan-ey ā raḡ=at gēš=a kan-ey hālā yā
SUB.do.PR-2SG DEM colour=PC.2SG more=VCL do.PR-2SG now or
zard yā ḡrmez yā ke ez... har raḡ=ē... ābī
 yellow or red or CLM from... every colour=IND... light.blue
aksaran ḡālī-bār-ey zamīn-ā ḡrmez=a kan-ant hā
 mostly carpet-PL-GEN ground-OBJ red=VCL do.PR-3PL yes
ḡrmez=a kan-an
 red=VCL do.PR-3PL

You know, any colour you want to use more, you dye more wool in that colour (lit. make that colour of yours more) now, either yellow or red or...any colour...light blue. You (lit. they) mostly make the ground of the carpet red. Yes, you (lit. they) make it red. (BK)

Here the narrator starts out by using constructions in the 2SG (*bokān=et estefāda kaney*, *gēš=a kan-ey*) and then switches to the 3PL construction (*ḡrmez=a kan-ant*, *ḡrmez=a kan-an*) in the very same passage. It is clear that she includes herself in the referential properties of these constructions, since she is a weaver and therefore sometimes herself performs the tasks she describes. She potentially also includes the addressee, the linguistic researcher, in case she would like to try the craft of weaving. If the addressee was a weaving apprentice, she¹¹ would definitely be included in the referential framework of the construction. It is thus possible to apply an impersonal interpretation both to the 3PL and the 2SG construction in this example.

Ex. 21

pa aḡḡdardī-ā pas-ay pōst-ā gwarā=a kan-ant pas=ē
 for bone.ache-OBL sheep-GEN skin-OBJ on=VCL do.PR-3SG sheep=IND

¹¹ In this culture it is only the women who weave.

ki *kuš-ay* *pōst-ay-ā* *kašš-ay* *pōst-ā*
 CLM kill.PR-2SG skin-PC.3SG-OBJ.VCL pull.PR-2SG skin-OBJ.VCL
patāy-ant=u *garm=a* *sōč-ant* *šap-ā* *nājōṛ-ay*
fold.PR-3PL=and warm=VCL burn.PR-3PL night-OBL sick-GEN
pučč-ān-ā *kašš-ant=u* *pōst-ā* *bi* *gwaray-ā*
 clothes-PL-OBJ.VCL pull.PR-3PL=and skin-OBJ to on.PC.3SG-OBL.VCL
day-ant
give.PR-3PL

For pain in the bones, you (lit. they) put on a skin from a sheep. When you kill the sheep, you pull off its skin. You (lit. they) fold the skin and heat it up. At night you (lit. they) pull off the clothes of the sick person and you (lit. they) put the skin on him. (BT)

This example allows for a similar interpretation as ex. 20. The speaker, who himself knows about traditional medicine and therefore can be expected to cure people with pain in the bones, is included in the referential framework. He starts out with a 3PL construction (*gwarā=a kanant*), then uses two 2SG constructions (*kušay*, *kaššay*), and then again four 3PL constructions (*patāyant*, *sōčant*, *kaššant*, *dayant*). The addressee, although in this case a linguistic researcher, i.e. an outsider, could probably also be included in the referential framework of this construction in case he would need to treat somebody with pain in the bones. It is also likely that the very same construction would be used to instruct somebody from within the culture who would like to learn this skill (see also ex. 20).

Summary

An interesting observation is that the two constructions with 3PL and 2SG verbs seem to be interchangeable in procedural texts, making the referential framework of the 3PL construction able to also include the speaker and the addressee, thus allowing for an impersonal interpretation. The distinctive features of the 3PL construction versus the 2SG construction encountered in narrative texts are thus not present in procedural texts. This observation contradicts Siewierska's conclusion that the 3PL construction does not readily include the speaker and the addressee within its referential framework.

3. Conclusions

The present corpus proved to be a rich source for the investigation of constructions with an impersonal or vague human agent in Balochi. There are three main constructions found in the corpus, those with the verb in 3PL, those with the verb in 2SG, and those with a passive verb.¹²

¹² The construction with 3SG verb is limited to one specific verb and is also found only in BS. Another interesting impersonal construction has, in fact, been observed by the authors in spoken Balochi, but it is not attested in the corpus. This construction uses *mardum* 'people' with the verb in the singular for an impersonal human agent. The same subject with a plural verb would denote a vague human agent (*mardum=a kant* 'one does, you do (impersonal)' versus *mardum=a kanant* 'people do (vague)').

It seems that in Balochi the 3PL construction allows the speaker to distance himself/herself from the event somehow, particularly in narrative texts, but that this interpretation cannot be applied to the 3PL construction in procedural texts. Thus, the 3PL construction does follow the referential properties described by Siewierska (2008: 14–17) in narrative texts but allows for wider reference in procedural texts.

The referential properties of the passive construction do not seem to be as unrestricted as Siewierska suggests. In most examples of the passive construction a vague interpretation lies closer at hand than an impersonal interpretation. There is one example (ex. 15) where the addressee is definitely included and one where the speaker can be seen as included (ex. 17), but in most examples both the speaker and the addressee are definitely excluded.

The 2SG construction in narrative texts allows for an impersonal interpretation. It is also used totally interchangeably with the 3PL construction to include the speaker, and probably also the addressee, in procedural texts, which makes an impersonal interpretation possible for both these constructions in this type of texts. Thus, the 2SG construction in the examples from narrative texts (ex. 7–10) and the 2SG and 3PL constructions in the examples from procedural texts (ex. 20–21) are open to a truly impersonal (generic) interpretation.

These conclusions are similar to the conclusions drawn by Shokri (in the present volume) about the use of 3PL and 2SG impersonal constructions in Mazandarani, another Iranian language closely related to Balochi.

List of abbreviations and symbols

-	separates a morpheme
=	separates a clitic
∅	zero morpheme
1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ADJZ	adjectivizer
ATTR	attributive
BK	Balochi, Koroshi (Maryam Nourzaei's corpus)
BP	Balochi of Pakistan (Carina Jahani's corpus)
BS	Balochi of Sistan (Behrooz Barjasteh Delforooz's corpus)
BT	Balochi of Turkmenistan (Serge Axenov's corpus)
CLM	clause linkage marker
COP	copula
DEM	demonstrative
EMPH	emphatic particle
GEN	genitive
IMP	imperfective
INCL	inclusive
IND	indefinite
INF	infinitive
IZ	<i>izāfa</i>

LOC	locative
MIR	mirative particle
NEG	negative
NOMZ	nominalizer
NP	proper noun
OBJ	object
OBL	oblique
PC	pronominal clitic
PL	plural
PP	past participle
PR	present
PROH	prohibitive
PRON	personal pronoun
PT	past
SG	singular
SUB	subjunctive
VCL	verb clitic

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