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# An Analysis of Comprehension Obstacles in *Tarjoma-yi Maḥāsin-i Eṣfahān* Based on the Pathology of Syntactic Structures

**Mayam. Koosha**[1] -**Naser. Rahimi**[2*]
1: Phd. Student of Persian Language and Literature, Semnan University, Semnan, Iran.
2: Assistant Professor of Persian Language and Literature, Semnan University, Semnan, Iran
(Corresponding Author): rahimi.naser@semnan.ac.ir

**Abstract:** *Tarjoma-yi Maḥāsin-i Eṣfahān*, translated by Ḥosayn b. Moḥammad Āvī in 729 AH, is a free rendering of the Arabic work by Mofażżal b. Saʿd al-Mafarrūkhī composed in the 5th century AH/11th century CE. Despite its historical, cultural, and literary significance, the Persian version has received little scholarly attention. One of the main reasons for this neglect lies in its syntactic complexity and unusual structures, which make the text difficult to comprehend. This study, adopting a syntactic pathological approach, demonstrates that the difficulties of the text do not primarily stem from vocabulary or rhetorical ornamentation, but rather from obscure and intricate syntactic constructions. The accumulation of such features disrupts the transmission of meaning and entangles the reader in layers of expression instead of clearly conveying the historical content. The methodology is based on syntactic stylistics, analyzing the text sentence by sentence and classifying problematic structures into three categories: verbosity, omission, and dislocation. Examining these features not only facilitates a clearer understanding of this text and similar works, but also contributes to a more precise knowledge of the development of Persian prose in the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries AH, and lays the groundwork for compiling a lexicon of syntactic structures in classical Persian texts.
**Keywords**: Barriers to Comprehension, Ornate Prose, Pathology of Prose, Syntactic Stylistics, *Tarjoma-yi Maḥāsin-i Eṣfahān.*

## 1. Introduction

The *Tarjoma-yi Maḥāsin-i Eṣfahān*, composed in 729 AH by Ḥosayn b. Moḥammad Āvī, is a free rendering of the Arabic *Maḥāsin al-Iṣfahān* written in the 5th century AH/11th century CE by Mofażżal b. Saʿd al-Mafarrūkhī. This text is one of the rare examples of local historiography for which both the Arabic original and its Persian translation survive, thereby increasing its historical, cultural, and philological value. Beyond its content, the Persian version is important for the study of language, style, and the history of prose. Despite this significance, the work has received little scholarly attention, primarily because of its syntactic complexity, which makes the text obscure and difficult to interpret. The central aim of this research is to identify and categorize the syntactic features that obstruct comprehension in *Tarjoma-yi Maḥāsin-i Eṣfahān*.

## 2. Literature Review

In the field of Persian prose stylistics and the history of prose development, several valuable studies have been produced, such as *Stylistics of Prose* by Bahār, *Syntactic Features of Persian Prose in the 5th and 6th Centuries* by Mahindokht Seddighian, *Fann-e Nasr* and other works by Hossein Khatibi, and *Stylistics of Persian Prose from the 4th to the 13th Centuries* by Mohammad Gholāmrezai. Nevertheless, most of these studies are descriptive in nature and have focused merely on identifying stylistic features of texts, without addressing syntactic pathologies or analyzing their role in generating ambiguity. Even in the introductions to edited texts, although difficulties of comprehension are occasionally mentioned, their syntactic causes are rarely examined in detail. By contrast, the present study adopts a diagnostic approach within syntactic stylistics to demonstrate how structural complexities and disruptions in syntax are the main sources of obscurity in *Tarjoma-yi Maḥāsin-i Eṣfahān*.

## 3. Methodology

The research follows a descriptive–analytical method within the framework of syntactic stylistics and with a diagnostic approach. The Persian text was analyzed sentence by sentence, and syntactic features directly responsible for obscurity were extracted. These features were then grouped into major categories to provide a systematic classification of the difficulties.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The analysis revealed three principal sources of syntactic obscurity: verbosity, ellipsis, and dislocation.

**Verbosity:** Extended chains of synonyms, explanatory appositions, repeated parenthetical clauses, and nested compound sentences create heavy discourse that obscures the main message.

**Ellipsis:** Numerous instances of missing constituents or unmotivated deletions render sentences incomplete or ambiguous, forcing readers to rely on conjecture or distant context.

**Dislocation:** The shifting of sentence elements from their natural positions disrupts cohesion, blurs boundaries between sentence units, and destabilizes meaning.

In addition to these categories, stylistic ornamentation and rhymed prose often sacrifice clarity for rhetorical effect. Evidence of haste and insufficient revision, such as repetition of passages and inconsistent preposition usage, further complicate the text. Overall, these findings indicate that the main obstacles to comprehension lie not in vocabulary but in the syntactic fabric of the text.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the complexity of *Tarjoma-yi Maḥāsin-i Esfahān* lies primarily in its syntactic structure. The three factors of verbosity, ellipsis, and dislocation play the most significant role in creating ambiguity, and their combination produces semantic knots that obscure clear comprehension of the content. These results, in addition to clarifying the structure of this text, also provide a model for analyzing Persian prose of the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries AH, highlighting the importance of paying attention to syntax alongside lexical and rhetorical studies in the interpretation of classical prose. Ultimately, this research can serve as a foundation for compiling a lexicon or handbook of syntactic structures in classical Persian prose, with broad applications in historical linguistics, literary criticism, and pedagogy.