

The two faces of a nominal linker: Another look at Reverse Ezafe in Gilaki

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In many Iranian languages (e.g. Persian), an iterative linking particle known as ‘Ezafe’ links nouns to attributive adjectives or to their possessors, and nominal prepositions to their objects. In these languages, modifiers and possessors are postnominal. In Caspian languages (Northwestern Iranian), a linker appears inside NPs and nominal PPs even though the noun and its modifiers have the reverse order, i.e. possessors and modifiers are prenominal and PPs are head-final. Due to this mirror image ordering in Caspian (and some other) languages, the linker has been referred to as Reverse Ezafe (henceforth REZ). This study examines REZ in (Eshkevarat) Gilaki (EG; Caspian). Based on distributional and prosodic properties of REZ in EG, we propose that what has been unifiedly known as REZ should be characterized as two distinct syntactic elements.

Reverse Ezafe has been previously analyzed as a “concordializer”, an element that is attached to [+N] categories such as Adjs to allow case concord with another nominal element such as N.¹⁻² This makes the prediction that only nominal Ps in EG require REZ on the preceding complement, in a similar fashion to Persian where only nominal Ps require Ezafe.³⁻⁵ Meanwhile, this prediction is not borne out in EG, providing evidence against a concordializer analysis of REZ. We see below that REZ is obligatory in EG regardless of whether the P is nominal (1) or not (2). Parallel examples for Persian where this distinction is crucial are given in (3)-(4). At the talk, we provide independent evidence for the nominal/true P distinction in EG.

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|---|---|
| <p>(1) miz-*(ə) bon (nominal P)
 table-REZ under ‘under the table’</p> <p>(3) zir-*(e) miz (nominal P)
 under-EZ table ‘under the table’</p> | <p>(2) hasan-*(ə) ji (true P)
 Hasan-REZ from ‘from Hasan’</p> <p>(4) az-*(e) hasan (true P)
 from-EZ Hasan ‘from Hasan’</p> |
|---|---|

A closer look at the EG data reveals a distinction between two types of REZ. One type (REZ₁) appears in the context of possessives and PPs. The second type (REZ₂) appears on Adjs. There are three systematic differences between REZ₁ and REZ₂. First, while REZ₂ is part of the phonological word of the element it attaches to and as such is stressed, REZ₁ is always unstressed. Second, while the phonological realization of REZ₂ is conditioned by the form of the base it attaches to (in clear contrast to Persian Ezafe), REZ₁ is realized invariantly. This distinction is dependent on the syllable structure of the base. REZ₂ obligatorily appears on one-syllable adjectives (5), but it is mostly banned on disyllabic adjectives, and is entirely banned on multisyllabic adjectives (6). REZ₁ does not show this sensitivity to syllable structure.

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|---|---|
| <p>(5) ruk-*(ə) lāku ‘(a) frank girl’
 frank-REZ girl</p> | <p>(6) bā-marefət-*(ə) ādəm ‘(a) wise person’
 with-wisdom-REZ person</p> |
|---|---|

Third, in ellipsis contexts where the head noun is elided, REZ₁ remains on the stranded modifier (7), while REZ₂ cannot (8).

- (7) mu maryam-ə xudkār-ə vegit-em na hasan-*(i)
 I Maryam-rez pen-ACC get.PST-1SG not Hasan-REZ ‘I got Maryam’s pen, not Hasan’s’
- (8) surx-ə xudkār bə-kət na sabz-*(ə).
 red-REZ pen PST-fall not green-REZ ‘The red pen fell down, not the green (pen)’

The above facts establish that the two types of REZ need to be distinguished. We posit that REZ₁, which appears on possessors and complements of P, is the realization of genitive case and REZ₂ marks attributive Adjs (possibly the morphological realization of a JOIN operator)⁶⁻⁷. Another Iranian REZ language, Balochi provides support for this claim. In Balochi, REZ₁ and REZ₂ are realized distinctly as *-ay/-e/-i/* and *-en/-in*, respectively.⁸ A similar pattern can be found

in non-Iranian languages; e.g., Japanese genitive marker *-no* vs. attributive markers *-na/-ni*. This study enhances our understanding of Reverse Ezafe and highlights its distinction from Ezafe.

References

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