Ezafe in the context of PPs
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In Persian, nouns are connected to their modifiers by a linking element, known as Ezafe (N-EZ Mod)[1-6]. Ezafe appears iteratively on all subsequent modifiers, except the last one (1).

(1) *sag-e*   *qermez-e*   *bozorg*   dog-EZ   red-EZ   big   'big red dog'

Based on (1), we should expect the absence of Ezafe in non-nominal contexts such as PPs. However, while some Ps do not allow Ezafe (2), with certain Ps, Ezafe is in fact required between P and its complement (3) and some Ps optionally allow it (4)[1-4, 6-8]. The use of Ezafe extends also to PP modifiers. Crucially, Ezafe is obligatory only in some N-PP contexts. (cf. (5) and (6–7)).

(2) *az*(*-e*)   *tehrān*   (3) *zir**(-e)   *miz*   (4) *jelo*(-ye)   *xune*
    from-EZ Tehran   under-EZ desk   in.front.of-EZ   house

(5) *ketāb**(-e)[PP *ru*(-ye) *miz*] (6) *farār*(-e) [PP *az*   *zendān*]   (7) *tamarkoz*(-e) [PP *ru*(-ye) *mowzu*]
    book-EZ   on-EZ desk   escape-EZ   from prison   focus-EZ   on-EZ topic

Larson and Samiian (L&S)[7-8] propose that Ezafe is a case marker and appears between two [+N] categories. L&S[8] argue that Ps in Persian are of three distinct syntactic categories. P_1, which is a true P, and hence a case assigner, never allows Ezafe between P and its complement (2). They take P_2 (4) and P_3 (3) as 'relational nouns' that are the complement of a null/overt Locative Preposition (LP). Regarding P_3 (3), they posit that the LP assigns case to P_3 and Ezafe assigns case to the complement of P_3, accounting for the obligatory presence of Ezafe in this context. The possibility of dropping Ezafe with P_2 (4) is taken to be the result of the optional incorporation of P_2 into the LP, allowing the LP to case-mark the complement directly. Otherwise, Ezafe is inserted to case-mark the complement. L&S's proposal predicts that Ezafe should only appear between nouns and PPs when the P is a relational noun, contra (6). To deal with this discrepancy, they suggest that in examples like (6), the PP is nominalized, thereby dissociating the presence of Ezafe in N-PP contexts from P type, and hence, undermining their original proposal.

We argue that the P_2 category is illusory. We propose that L&S's P_2 and P_3 should be collapsed into one morphosyntactic category. We take the optionality of Ezafe with P_2 to be the result of a surface phonological restriction, leading to the optional reduction of Ezafe after a vowel-final element, also observed with names. In other words, there are two types of P in Persian, true Ps (P_1) and nominal Ps (P_2). The presence of Ezafe is banned after P_1 (2) and required after P_2 (3), though optionally dropped when P_2 is vowel-final (4). Regarding (5–7), we propose that the presence of Ezafe depends on the N type preceding the PP. When N is an eventive noun (6–7), Ezafe is optional, irrespective of the P type (P_1 (6) and P_2 (7)). When N is not eventive (5), Ezafe is required. In other words, the correct generalization is as follows: there is no distinction between P_1 and P_2 with respect to the Ezafe preceding the P in N-PP contexts. Ezafe is required (5), unless the N is eventive, in which case Ezafe is optional regardless of the P type.

We take the presence of Ezafe to be the result of an inversion process deriving the postnominal order of the nominal dependents[6]. Thus, an example like (1) is derived from a base order: BIG RED DOG and roll-up movement of DOG around BIG, and then RED[6,9-10]. Additionally, we take PPs to be merged high in the nominal structure[9,11] predicting the presence of Ezafe between N and postnominal PPs as a result of the inversion process. This accounts for the pattern with non-eventive nouns (5), leaving us with the question of what happens with eventive Ns (6–7). We take the optionality of Ezafe with eventive nouns (6–7) to be the result of the possibility of PPs introduced as the complement of an eventive N. This could be related to the verbal source of eventive nominal structures, an issue we explore at more length in the talk.

This study provides a novel account for Ezafe in the context of PPs with insights into the analysis of eventive and nominal structures.

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