

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

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**Goal:** Show that the nominal linker in Gilaki (known as Reverse Ezafe) is in fact the realization of two different morphosyntactic elements. In doing so, we will also highlight the differences between Reverse Ezafe and Ezafe, found in Persian and other Iranian languages.<sup>1</sup>

**Roadmap:**

- Introduction: Overview of Persian Ezafe & typological predictions in Kahnemuyipour (2014)
- Review the Reverse Ezafe data in Eshkevarat Gilaki (hereafter EG)
- Establish the difference between Reverse Ezafe in EG and Ezafe in Persian
- Establish that what is known as Reverse Ezafe represents two morphosyntactic elements
- Provide data from other languages supporting the proposed dual function of Reverse Ezafe
- Conclude with implications for the typology of nominal linkers

**1. Introduction**

- In Persian, like many other Iranian languages, a linking element known as ‘Ezafe’ (hereafter EZ) appears between a noun and its modifier (N-EZ Mod), and is repeated on subsequent modifiers, if they are present, except the last one (N-EZ Mod<sub>1</sub>-EZ Mod<sub>2</sub>-EZ Mod<sub>3</sub>), as in (1). (1a) shows an attributive noun; (1b) an adjective; (1c) shows iterativity; (1d) a possessor, and (1e) an Ezafe appearing on a nominal P(reposition). As it is well established in the literature on Persian syntax (Samiian 1994, Karimi & Brame 1986, Ghomeshi 1997, Kahnemuyipour 2014, among others), Ps are divided into two main classes, nominal Ps (1e) which take the Ezafe marker, and true Ps which don’t.

(1) Presence of Ezafe with post-nominal modifiers

a. (ye) kif-e	čarm	b. (ye) mard-e	čāq
a bag-Ez	leather	a man-Ez	fat
'a/the leather bag'		'a/the fat man'	

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<sup>1</sup> The first and third authors are native speakers of Persian and the second author is a bilingual speaker of EG and Persian.

- c. sag-e qahveyi-ye gonde  
dog-Ez brown-Ez big  
'big brown dog'
- d. ketāb-e Ali/man  
book-Ez Ali/I  
'Ali's/my book'
- e. pošt-e dar  
behind-Ez door  
'behind the door'

- EZ only appears with post-nominal modifiers, never appears on a bare noun or on pre-nominal elements.

(2) Absence of Ezafe with bare nouns or pre-nominal modifiers

- a. ketāb-(\*e)  
book-Ez
- b. do (tā) – (\*e) ketāb  
two classif.-Ez book  
'two books'
- c. in-(\*e) ketāb  
this-Ez book
- d. har/hič-(\*e) ketāb-(i)  
each/no-Ez book-indef.

- When there is a combination of pre-nominal and post-nominal modifiers, the contrast with respect to the appearance of Ezafe is evident (3).

(3) Combination of pre-nominal and post-nominal modifiers

- in do ketāb-e qatur-e jāleb  
this two book-Ez thick-Ez interesting  
'these two interesting thick books'

**Summary:** There is a clear correlation between the presence of Persian Ezafe and the order of nominal elements. The noun marks a clear boundary for the Ezafe marker: all elements preceding it lack the Ezafe, while the noun itself and all elements following it (except the final one) are marked with the Ezafe.

(4) **Correlation between the Ezafe and order of nominal elements**

- a. N-Ez Mod Most common: Fully productive syntactically
- b. Mod N Prenom. modifier
- c. N Mod Limited to some compounds (not discussed here, Kahnemuyipour 2014)
- d. \*Mod-Ez N Gap, apparently filled by EG



## 2. REZ ≠ EZ; REZ1 ≠ REZ2

- We noted above that Persian prepositions are divided into two main classes: true and nominal Ps. This division is based on certain syntactic properties. For example, nominal (but not true) Ps can be pluralized, case marked or appear with demonstratives (7) (Samiian 1994).

(7) a. zir-ā / pošt-ā / tu-ā / \*az-ā / \*dar-ā  
 under-PL behind-PL in-PL from-PL in-PL

b. un zir/tu/pošt-(r)o did-am.  
 that under/in/behind-OBJ see.PST-1SG  
 ‘I saw the underneath/inside/behind.’

c. \*in/un az / \*in/un dar  
 this/that from this/that in

- EG Ps exhibit the same behaviour with respect to their nominal vs. true adpositional status (8).

(8) a. bon-ān / pušt-ān / men-ān / \*ji-ān / \*hamra-ān  
 under-PL behind-PL in-PL from-PL with-PL

b. u bon/men/pušt-ə did-am.  
 that under/in/behind-OBJ see.PST-1SG  
 ‘I saw the underneath/inside/behind.’

c. \*i/u rə / \*i/u hamra  
 this/that for this/that with

- Crucially, unlike Persian in which only nominal Ps take EZ (9), in EG, noun complements of both nominal and true Ps take REZ (10).

(9) a. zir-\*(e) miz (nominal P)      b. az-\*(e) hasan (true P)  
 under-EZ table      from-EZ Hasan  
 ‘under the table’      ‘from Hasan’

(10) a. miz-\*(ə) bon (nominal P)      b. hasən-\*(ə) ji (true P)  
 table-REZ under      Hasan-REZ from  
 ‘under the table’      ‘from Hasan’

- The facts in (9) and (10) are important in the context of Larson’s (2009, 2019) analysis of REZ 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. 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. We showed in (9) and (10) that REZ is required regardless of the nominal status of P.<sup>3</sup>

- A closer look at the EG data reveals a distinction between two types of REZ. One type (REZ<sub>1</sub>) appears in the context of possessives and PPs. The second type (REZ<sub>2</sub>) appears on Adjs. There are three systematic differences between REZ<sub>1</sub> and REZ<sub>2</sub>, which we lay out below.
- First, while REZ<sub>2</sub> is part of the phonological word of the element it attaches to and as such is stressed, REZ<sub>1</sub> is always unstressed (11), where stress is marked in **bold**. Note that in Persian, Ezafe is consistently unstressed, as any other inflectional affix. In this respect, EG REZ<sub>2</sub> behaves like a derivational affix.<sup>4</sup>

(11)	a. čərm-ə	kif	b. hasə <b>n</b> -ə	xonə	c. div <b>ā</b> r-ə	sər
	leather-REZ	bag	Hasan-REZ	house	wall-REZ	on
	‘a leather bag’		‘Hasan’s house’		‘on the wall’	

- Second, while the phonological realization of REZ<sub>2</sub> is conditioned by the form of the base it attaches to (in clear contrast to Persian Ezafe), REZ<sub>1</sub> is realized invariantly. This distinction is dependent on the syllable structure of the base. REZ<sub>2</sub> obligatorily appears on one-syllable adjectives (12), but it is mostly banned on disyllabic adjectives (13), and is entirely banned on multisyllabic adjectives (14). REZ<sub>1</sub> does not show this sensitivity to syllable structure.

(12)	a. čərm*(-ə)	kif-ān	b. čāq*(-ə)	asb-ān
	leather-REZ	bag-PL	fat-REZ	horse-PL
	‘leather bags’		‘fat horses’	

(13)	a. xojur (-*ə)	māšin	b. xušhal(-*ə)	vəčə
	good-REZ	car	happy-REZ	child
	‘(a) good car’		‘a happy child’	

c. ye	tə	sifid(-ə)	čərm-ə	goron(-ə)	kif
one	CL	white-REZ	leather-REZ	expensive-REZ	bag
‘one white leather cheap bag’					

<sup>3</sup> Larson attributes the presence of EZ and REZ in Iranian languages to the nominal status of their adjectives. In a language like Persian, with post-nominal modifiers, he suggests that EZ is a case marker and that all [+N] elements need case. While D assigns case to N, EZ is inserted to assign case to the [+N] adjective (see Kahnemuyipour 2014 for arguments against a case analysis of EZ). Under this view, in REZ languages, the “nominal” status of adjectives leads to their needing a concordializing element (namely REZ) to allow case Concord between D and N.

<sup>4</sup> In Persian (and arguably other Iranian languages), lexical stress is on the final syllable. Meanwhile, there is a distinction between suffixes which receive stress and those that do not. Typically, derivational suffixes are part of the phonological word and receive stress, while inflectional affixes do not (see Kahnemuyipour 2018). EG seems to behave like Persian in this respect.



- Similarly, in Balochi (Northwestern Iranian), another REZ language, there is a phonological distinction between the REZ used on possessors and complements of P (our REZ<sub>1</sub>, realized as *-ay*) and the one used on adjectives (our REZ<sub>2</sub>, realized as *-ēn*), as shown in (20) (from Jahani and Korn 2009).<sup>5</sup>

(20)	a. mnī	brās- <b>ay</b>	kitāb		b. gis- <b>ay</b>	puštā
	I.GEN	brother-GEN	book		house-GEN	behind
	‘my brother’s book(s)’				‘behind the house’	
	c. mazan- <b>ēn</b>	asp				
	big-ATTR	horse				
	‘big horse(s)’					

- Turning to a genealogically unrelated language, Japanese, we see that attributive adjectives are marked with *-na/-i* (depending on adjective class, true versus nominal) (21), which is distinct from the genitive marker *-no* used on possessors (22) (Larson and Yamakido 2008). We saw above that *-no* may itself have two distinct functions (Watanabe 2012).<sup>6</sup>

(21)	a. utukusi-i	tori		b. taka-I	hon
	beautiful-?	bird		expensive-?	book
	‘beautiful bird’			‘expensive book’	
	c. kiree-na	uti		d. sizuka-na	umi
	clean-?	House		quiet-?	sea
	‘clean, tidy house’			‘quiet sea’	
(22)	a. Taroo-no	kyoodai		b. Taroo-no	hon
	Taroo-GEN	sibling		Taroo-GEN	book
	‘Taroo’s siblings’			‘Taroo’s book’	

#### 4. What are REZ<sub>1</sub> and REZ<sub>2</sub>?

- We have argued above that what is known as REZ in EG is in fact the realization of two different morphosyntactic elements. This raises a question about the nature of these elements. In this section, we share some tentative ideas in this regard.
- REZ<sub>1</sub> can most straightforwardly be analyzed as a genitive case marker, as it is used to mark possessors (see above examples from EG, Balochi and Taleshi). Under this view, we can take postpositions in these languages as assigning genitive case (see Haig 2019). Support for this proposal comes from possessive pronouns being used as pronominal complements of P (23).

<sup>5</sup> There appears to be variation with respect to the distinctive phonological forms of REZ among Balochi dialects. We are abstracting away from such variations here and leave a closer examination for future research. Also, REZ forms appear to reflect number distinctions not shown here.

<sup>6</sup> We have provided a simplified distribution of *-no*, which does not appear to be a straightforward genitive marker. Our focus here is the distinction between linking elements that appear on adjectives and those that appear elsewhere in a noun phrase.



and receives stress; 2. Its morphological realization is conditioned by the number of syllables of the base it attaches to; 3. It cannot be realized unless followed by an overt noun, which can be attributed to the phonological conditions this element can be realized in (akin to Watanabe's 2010 analysis of the numeral-classifier *-no*).

- We are still left with the question of what REZ<sub>2</sub> is. One possible candidate may be what is known as the JOIN operator (see Baker 2003, Truswell 2004, Belk 2017), which takes a predicative adjective and type shifts it into an attributive one. This proposed operator does not typically have a morphological realization in other languages. Under this view, REZ<sub>2</sub> in EG (and the other similar languages discussed above) can be seen as the morphological realization of this operator.<sup>7</sup>
- We leave a closer examination of a possible JOIN analysis of REZ<sub>2</sub> to future research. We need to investigate whether other languages across the world may have such morphological realizations of the JOIN operator? Are there languages which only have REZ<sub>2</sub> and not REZ<sub>1</sub> (in a parallel fashion to Hindi/Urdu which arguably has REZ<sub>1</sub> but not REZ<sub>2</sub>)? Are such realizations of the JOIN operator ever found in Ezafe languages? If not, why not?

## 5. Concluding thoughts

- We have argued in this talk that the nominal linker in EG is in fact the realization of two different morphosyntactic elements. These elements have distinct properties, and as we have seen in the cross-linguistic data above, sometimes even different forms. In making our case for the reclassification of the EG nominal linker into two morphosyntactic elements, we have also highlighted the differences between Reverse Ezafe and Ezafe. We have provided some speculations on what morphosyntactic elements REZ<sub>1</sub> and REZ<sub>2</sub> may represent.
- This study has implications for our typological understanding of nominal linkers. We have seen that elements which look alike, such as EZ and REZ, may in fact have different syntactic properties and as such should be analyzed as distinct. Meanwhile, by looking at diverse languages such as EG, Taleshi and Balochi, and even Hindi/Urdu or Japanese, we may find elements which exhibit similar morphosyntactic behaviour, rendering a unified analysis of these elements plausible.
- Ultimately, we may conclude that what is known as nominal linkers is not a unified phenomenon. Before drawing strong conclusions, we need a careful crosslinguistic examination to identify the syntactic behaviour of these apparently similar elements.

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