

## **Another Look at the Ezafe Construction: Data from Caspian Languages**

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The Ezafe construction has been the focus of much renewed research in the generative linguistic traditions in recent decades. Following early studies on Ezafe by grammarians and linguists in Iran and the West, the phrasal structure of NP modifiers and complements have been explored extensively in a host of recent studies from multiple perspectives beginning with Hinch 1961, Samiian 1983 and 1994, Ghomeshi 1997, Schroeder 1999, Kahnemuyipour 2000 and 2014, Rebushi 2002, Larson and Yamakido 2004, 2006 & 2008, Samvelian 2005 & 2007, Den Dikken 2006, Holmberg & Odden 2008, Miriam Butt and Tina Bogel 2009, Ghaniabadi 2010 among others. While the primary focus has been on Persian, a number of these studies have also looked at other Iranian languages, in particular various dialects of Kurdish.

In Persian, Ezafe, which literally means ‘addition’, is a semantically vacuous morpheme [-e] that is phonologically attached to the head Noun, but motivated by the right branching complements or modifiers. It can be reiterated when there are multiple modifiers and complements, each occurrence motivated by a right branching modifier or complement, but phonologically attached to the previous constituent.

This paper will first provide a comprehensive review of earlier studies on Ezafe and the various analyses that have been presented:

- Ezafe as a Case-marker (Samiian 1983 and 1994; Larson and Yamakido 2005)
- Ezafe as a phonological linker for non-projecting head nouns to indicate phrasing within the nominal constituent (Ghomeshi 1994 and 1997)
- Ezafe as a marker of the syntactic movement of the head noun (Kahnemuyipour 2000; 2014).
- Ezafe as a conjunctive head (Rebushi 2002).
- Ezafe as a linker indicating subject-predicate inversion (Den Dikken 2006).
- Ezafe as a phrasal inflectional affix, attaching to the head and its intermediate projections, to mark dependency relations (Samvelian 2008).
- Ezafe as an agreement affix with different realizations in the noun phrase in Hawrami based on the presence and the nature of certain agreement-triggering elements (Holmberg & Odden 2008).

Additional data will be presented from Tati and Caspian languages (Tati, Mazandarani, Gorgani, Gilaki, Taleshi, and Deylami) to assess the various analyses presented above. Contrary to Persian, the noun phrase in all of these languages is head last in uniformity with other phrasal categories. Nevertheless Ezafe occurs as a marker before the possessive noun phrase and the adjectival modifier in most of these languages, remaining phonologically linked to the previous element, see 1-5 for (a) ‘my brother’s house’ and (b) ‘my brother’s big house.’ Data from other non-verbal phrasal categories in some of these languages will also be presented leading to a conclusion in support of the case-marking analysis of Ezafe.

1. (a) ceman berar ka [Tati]  
(b) ceman berar pila ka
2. (a) me berar-e xene [Mazandarani]  
(b) me berar-e gat-e xene
3. (a) me berer-e sere [Gorgani]  
(b) gat-e sere me berer
4. (a) mi berar-e xune [Guilaki]  
(b) me berar-e pile xune
5. (a) ceman bera ka [Taleshi]

- (b) ceman bera pila ka  
 6. (a) mi berer-e xane [Deylami]  
 (b) mi pila berer-e xane

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