



The Ezafe as a head-marking inflectional affix: Evidence from Persian and Kurmanji Kurdish

Pollet Samvelian

► To cite this version:

Pollet Samvelian. The Ezafe as a head-marking inflectional affix: Evidence from Persian and Kurmanji Kurdish. S. Karimi, V. Samiian, D. Stillo. Aspects of Iranian Linguistics: Papers in Honor of Mohammad Reza Bateni, Cambridge Scholars Ltd, pp.339-361, 2007. halshs-00673182

HAL Id: halshs-00673182

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00673182>

Submitted on 22 Feb 2012

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

The Ezafe as a head-marking inflectional affix Evidence from Persian and Kurmanji Kurdish Pollet Samvelian

1 Introduction¹

A number of West Iranian languages - Persian, different Kurdish dialects, Hawrami, Zazaki... - share several aspects in their noun phrase structure:

1. The surface word order pattern is strongly head-initial. Adjectival modifiers, the possessor NP, prepositional phrases and the relative clause follow the head noun, which may only be preceded by some determiners² – if any - and in very few cases by an adjective.
2. Possession is expressed by means of a bare NP (or DP) which follows adjectival and some prepositional modifiers, if any.³
3. Elements occurring between the head noun and the possessor NP are linked to the head and to one another by the Ezafe, realized as an enclitic.

The following Persian NP exemplifies these points:

- (1) in lebâs-e sefid-e bi âstin-e Maryam
 this dress-EZ white-EZ without sleeve-EZ Maryam⁴
 ‘this Maryam’s sleeveless white dress’

The expression of possession by means of an NP in close construction with the head noun, and, to some extent, the Ezafe construction is reminiscent of the Semitic construct state construction. Despite the fact that the possessor NP is not constrained to be strictly adjacent to the head noun, as it is the case in construct state nominals, the constituents occurring between the head noun and the possessor NP have been nevertheless assumed to be subject to some significant constraints, leading to the analysis of the Ezafe domain as a domain of bare heads (X°s) adjunction in Persian (Ghomeshi 1997). This is reminiscent of the word-like properties of construct state nominals (Borer 1988).

¹ I am especially indebted to Amr Ahmed for the Kuridsh data. I also want to thank two anonymous referees for their stimulating comments and suggestions.

² The term “determiner” designates demonstratives, cardinals and quantifiers.

³ Some Iranian languages (e.g. Kurmanji dialects) have maintained an oblique case for nouns. In this case, the possessor NP appears in the oblique case.

⁴ Abbreviations: COP = copula, DEF = definite, DEM = demonstrative, DEMEZ = demonstrative ezafe, EZ = Ezafe, F = feminine, IND = indefinite, INF = infinitive, LINK = linker, MA = mood-aspect, M = masculine, OBL = oblique, PAF = personal affix, PAS = past, PL = plural, PP = past participle, PRES = present, RESTR = restrictive, RRC = reduced relative clause, S = singular.

The Ezafe construction has been a particular focus of interest in different recent studies (see Hinch 1961, Samiiian 1983, Samiiian 1994, Ghomeshi 1997, Schroeder 1999, Kahnemuyipour 2000, Larson and Yamakido 2005, among others). Actually this construction raises several issues in syntax and morphology, mainly the status of the Ezafe itself.

The Ezafe has generally been assumed by Persian grammars (see Lazard 1992, among others) to be semantically vacuous. Moreover, it can be iterated within the NP, occurring as many times as there are modifiers. But, at least in Persian, it is not the expression of a concord between the head noun and its dependants. On the basis of these observations, Samiiian (1983) and Ghomeshi (1997) propose not to view the Ezafe as a morpheme at all, but rather as an element inserted in Phonological Form. For Ghomeshi, the need for the Ezafe vowel results from the fact that nouns being non-projecting in Persian, a “phonological linker”, i.e. the Ezafe, must be present in order to indicate phrasing within the nominal constituent.

This view of the Ezafe has been rejected in subsequent studies and various alternative analyses have been suggested:

- Ezafe as a Case-marker (Samiiian 1994, Larson and Yamakido 2005).
- Ezafe as a marker associated with the syntactic movement of the noun and realizing a strong feature (Kahnemuyipour 2000).
- Ezafe as a conjunctive head (Rebuschi 2002).
- Ezafe as a linker indicating subject-predicate inversion (Den Dikken 2006).

In this paper, I will suggest a new analysis of the Persian Ezafe as a suffix attaching to the head and to some of its intermediate projections, and marking them as awaiting a modifier or a complement. Viewed as such, the Ezafe construction is an illustration of the head-marked pattern of morphological marking of grammatical relations (Nichols 1986).

This view of the Ezafe is quite the opposite of the Case-marker analysis suggested by Samiiian (1994) and Larson and Yamakido (2005), according to which the Ezafe is rather a dependent marking device. My analysis also differs from the one suggested by Rebuschi (2002) and Den Dikken (2006), in that the sole contribution of the Ezafe is the marking of dependency relations and consequently the Ezafe construction does not necessarily involve either an intersective reading, as it is suggested by Rebuschi (2002), or a predicative relation, in the sense of and Den Dikken (2006). Finally, contrary to Kahnemuyipour (2000) and Den Dikken (2006), the insertion of the Ezafe is not motivated by movement, since no movement is posited.

The analysis outlined in this paper entails that the Ezafe particle, whose origins in Modern Persian can be traced back to the Old Persian relative/demonstrative *hya/tya* (Darmesteter 1883), has undergone a process of reanalysis-grammaticalization, being thus reinterpreted as a part of the nominal inflection. It

will be further shown that although a comparable process might have taken place in some other West Iranian languages, Kurmanji Kurdish dialects for instance, grammaticalization has not proceeded in the same way and at the same rate, resulting in a more complex picture for the different uses of the Ezafe.

The fact that the Ezafe has gone through such a process is not surprising in itself. Indeed, the reanalysis of clitic⁵ function words as inflectional affixes is commonplace in the history of a variety of languages. In Old Persian, The Ezafe is a function word forming a syntactic constituent with the phrase or the clause on its right (Haider and Zwanziger 1981). Given its enclitic status (at least in Modern Persian), it could be assumed that the conflict arising from the requirement for two opposite directions of attachment – morphosyntactic attachment to the right and phonological attachment to the left – has been resolved by the reanalysis of the Ezafe as a nominal inflectional affix, thus aligning morphosyntactic attachment with phonological attachment. As we shall see, this evolution has been facilitated by the fact that in Middle Persian, the Ezafe particle has ceased to function as a relative particle, specializing as a device for nominal attribution.

It should be mentioned at this point that the affixal view of the Ezafe suggested here is not claimed to be appropriate for all those Iranian languages in which the Ezafe construction is available, neither does it imply that, when considered as an affix, the Ezafe exhibits the same range of properties in all related languages. These properties are determined by various factors: the overall set of the nominal inflectional affixes in each language, their organization into subsets, the properties of the subset which the Ezafe belongs to, the complementary distribution of the members in the same subset and their interplay with the members of other subsets. Since West Iranian languages can differ with respect to these points, the properties of the Ezafe can be subject to variation from one language to another. These claims will be substantiated by data from Persian and Kurmanji, which differ in some important respects as to their nominal inflectional morphology.

This paper, which adopts a descriptive perspective, is organized as follows.⁶ The next section provides an overview of the basic features of the Ezafe construction. The third section reconsiders some puzzling restrictions on the Ezafe construction in Persian pointed out by Samiian (1983) and revisited in subsequent studies. A morphological account, in terms of constraints on affix stacking, is outlined to account for these restrictions. Building on the conclusions in section (3), section (4) examines to what extent the analysis suggested for the Persian data

⁵ The term “clitic” is used here with a phonological understanding: “(...) a (pro- or en-) clitic is a stressless “little” word that lacks independent accent, and that (as a result) depends prosodically on an adjacent word (Anderson 2005: 1).

⁶ For a formal treatment of the Ezafe construction in Persian within the framework of Head-driven Phrase Structure, see Samvelian (in press).

could be generalized to other Iranian languages and how cross-linguistic variation with respect to the Ezafe construction can be accounted for.

2 The Ezafe construction: an overview

The Ezafe construction is a specificity of those languages that display a head-initial word-order pattern within their NP (e.g. Persian, Kurdish dialects, Hawrami, Zazaki, Kermanian dialects, etc). The correlation between the head-initial word order pattern and the availability of the Ezafe can probably be accounted for on historical grounds. The enclitic Ezafe has its origin in a demonstrative-relative morpheme in Old Iranian. In Persian, it can be related to *hya* (*tya-*), a demonstrative, linking the head noun to adjectival modifiers, to the possessor NP and also to a relative clause in Old Persian:

- (2) *kāra hya manā (...)*⁷
‘my army, the army which is mine’
- (3) *kāsaka hya kapautaka*⁸; *kāsaka hya axšaina*⁹
‘the blue stone’; ‘the dark stone’
- (4) *vivānam jatā utā avam kāram hya dārayavahauš xšāyaθiyhyā*.¹⁰
‘Beat Vivāna and this army which declares itself as a proponent of the king Darius.’

Darmesteter (1883) and Meillet (1931) note that *hya* (*tya-*) is not a simple linker, but that it further has a demonstrative value. The demonstrative *hya* (*tya*) can function as a head by itself:

- (5) *ima tya adam akunavam*¹¹ ‘This is what I did’

Hya (*tya-*) becomes *-i* in Middle Persian and progressively loses its demonstrative value to end up as a simple linker. Contrary to Persian, Kurdish and Zazaki have still a so-called “Demonstrative Ezafe”, different from the affixal Ezafe, which functions as a demonstrative pronoun heading nominal phrases:¹²

⁷ B. II, 87, quoted by Meillet (1931) § 407.

⁸ Darius, Suse I, 37, quoted by Meillet (1931), § 382.

⁹ Ibid 39, § 382.

¹⁰ B. III, 58, quoted by Meillet (1931), § 409.

¹¹ B. IV, 3, quoted by Meillet (1931), §409.

¹² This point will be argued farther.

- (6) *yê dwê ...* *yê sêyê* (Kurmanji Kurdish)
 DEMEZ second DEMEZ third
 ‘the second one, the third one’ [Mackenzie 1961: 163]
- (7) *kitêb-î min o hî to* (Sorani Kurdish)
 book-ez my and DEMEZ your
 ‘my book and yours’

2.1 Adjectival modifiers and the possessor NP

When available, the Ezafe generally links the head noun to its adjectival modifiers and to the possessor NP, as illustrated by the following examples:

- (8) *lebâs-e sefid-e maryam* (Persian)
 dress- EZ white- EZ Maryam
 ‘Maryam’s white dress’
- (9) *kiras-êk-î şin-î Narmîn* (Sorani Kurdish)
 dress-IND.S-EZ blue-EZ Narmîn
 ‘a blue dress of Narmin’s’
- (10) *mâl-â mazin-â Narmîn-ê* (Kurmanji Kurdish)
 house-EZ.F.S big-EZ.F.S Narmîn-OBL.F
 ‘Narmin’s big house’
- (11) *yân'a -y gawr'a-w şuânay* (Hawramani)
 house.F.S-EZ big.F.S shepherd.OBL.M.S
 ‘the sheperd’s big house’ [Makenzie, 1966: 19]

Before going through the study of other constituents occurring within the Ezafe domain, let us mention that there is no necessary correlation between the head-initial word order pattern within the NP and the Ezafe. Some South-western Iranian languages, which are very close to Persian, dispense with the Ezafe. In different Kermanian dialects, for instance, the Ezafe, although available, due to a close and longstanding contact with Persian, is hardly ever used or is optional:

- (12) *oftâv garm Arabestân*
 sun hot Arabia
 ‘The hot sunshine of Arabia’ [Lecoq 2002: 70]

Similar facts are also observed in some North Western Iranian languages, such as Tâti dialects (Lecoq 1989) or in Southern Kurdish dialects (Fattah 2000).

2.2 Ezafe within adjectival and Prepositional phrases

The complement of an adjective can also be introduced by the Ezafe:

- (13) Maryam **mašqul-e** **kâr** ast (Persian)
 Maryam occupied-EZ work be.PRES
 ‘Maryam is busy working’
- (14) Narmîn **xarîk-î** **îş-a** (Sorani Kurdish)
 Narmîn occupied-EZ work-COP.3.S
 ‘Narmin is busy working’
- (15) Azâd **âşiq-ê** **Narmîn-ê** ya (Kurmanji Kurdish)
 Azad in love-EZ Narmin-OBL.F.S be.PRES.3.S
 ‘Azad is in love with Narmin’

The fact that adjectives can take the Ezafe is not surprising. Indeed, adjectives behave like nouns in many respects, so that in Persian, for instance, it is quite impossible to establish a distinct class of adjectives, and several items are indistinctly used as nouns or adjectives, depending upon the context.

More surprising is the use of the Ezafe with some prepositional heads. This occurs in Persian, for instance, as illustrated by the following examples:

- (16) a. barâ-ye maryam b. aleyh-e Maryam
 for-EZ Maryam against-EZ Maryam
 ‘for Maryam’ ‘against Maryam’

It has been argued by Ghomeshi (1997) that prepositions occurring with the Ezafe are not in fact prepositions, but nouns. Real prepositions (e.g. *bâ* “with”, *az* “from”), by contrast, never occur with the Ezafe. This assumption is arguably appropriate for locative prepositions, such as *zir* “under”, *pošt* “behind”, which are originally nouns and display a range of nominal properties: the phrase they head can function as the subject or the direct object of a sentence. It faces however serious problems when applied to items such as *barâ* “for”, *alâraqm* “despite”, and *aleyh* “against”, which have none of the distributional and morphological properties of nouns. For instance, the constituents they head can never be the subject or the direct object of a sentence. Consequently, the analysis of these items as nouns is exclusively motivated by the fact that they can be marked by the Ezafe. Not only is it unclear what such an analysis could gain from it, but also more mysterious is the way it could work. Contrary to Ghomeshi (1997), I will consider these items as prepositions, which implies that, with regard to the Ezafe, prepositions have two subtypes: those which take the Ezafe and those which do not take the Ezafe.

2.2 Other types of constituents linked by the Ezafe

Apart from its typical uses to introduce adjectives and the possessor NP, the Ezafe can introduce prepositional phrases, adverbial phrases and (reduced)

relatives. The possibility for prepositional phrases to be introduced by the Ezafe in Persian is illustrated by the following attested examples:

- (17) ne-mi-tavânest-am tasmim be-gir-am
 NEG-TMA-can.PAS-1.SG decision AM-take-1.S
sobh-hâ-ye [**bâ mândar**]_{PP} râ bištar dust dâr-am yâ
 morning-P-EZ with mother RÂ more like.PRES-1.S or
sobh-hâ-ye [**bâ kabutar-hâ**]_{PP} râ.
 morning-P-EZ with pigeon-P RÂ
 ‘I could not decide whether I loved better the mornings with mother or the ones with the pigeons’

(*Yek ruz mânde be eyd-e pâk* (novel), Z. Pirzâd, p.80)

- (18) ruz-e [qabl az dastgiri-e farmânfarmâ
 day-EZ before of arrest-EZ Farmânfarma
 va pesar-ân-aš]
 and son-PL-PAF.3.SG

‘The day before Farmânfarmâ’s and his sons’ arrest’

(*In se zan* (novel) , F. Behnud, p. 65)

The same situation applies to different Kurdish dialects:

- (19) xânu-y la sar şâx (Sorani)
 house-EZ at on mountain
 ‘the house on the mountain’
 (20) mâl-â lisar çîyâ-y (Kurmanji)
 house-EZ.F.S on mountain-OBL.M.S
 ‘the house on the mountain’

Once again, contrary to what has been claimed in some previous studies (Ghoemshi 1997, Larson and Yamakido 2005), there is no ban on the presence of PPs within the Ezafe domain, whatever be the type of the head preposition.

The situation is more contrasted with respect to relative clauses. In Persian, only reduced relatives can be linked to the head noun by the Ezafe:

- (21) aks-e [çâp šode dar ruznâme]
 photo-EZ publication become.PP in newspaper
 aks-e râvi-e dâstân ast
 photo-EZ narrator-EZ story be.PRES
 ‘The photo published in the newspaper is the photo of the story’s narrator’
 (*Dâstanha-ye mahbub-e man*, A. Darvišian, p. 274)

- (22) in javân-e [az suis bar gašte]_{RRC}
this young-EZ from Switzerland return.PP
‘this young man returned from Switzerland’
(In se zan ‘These three women’ (novel), F. Behnud, p. 55)
- (23) * ketâb-i-e ke ru-ye miz ast
book-RESTR-EZ that on-EZ table be.PRES
(tentatively) ‘The book that is on the table’

Kurdish, by contrast, allows for all relative clauses to be introduced by the Ezafe:

- | | | | | | |
|------|----------------------------|-------------|--------|-------------|------------|
| (24) | mirov-ê | ku | min | dît-î | (Kurmanji) |
| | man-EZ.M.SG | that | I.OBL | see.PAST | |
| | 'the man whom I saw' | | | | |
| (25) | aw | şâr-a-y | (ka) | dît-mân | (Sorani) |
| | that | town-DEF-EZ | (that) | see.PAS-1.P | |
| | 'The town that we visited' | | | | |

In Kurmanji, even a non-relative subordinate clause which is a dependent of a noun can be introduced by the Ezafe, as illustrated by the following example:

- (26) bi xayâl-â [ko aw ji bâjêr darkati bûn]
at imagination-EZ.F.S that they from city out were
'Imagining that they were outside the city...'
[Bedir Khan and Lescot 1970]

From the facts discussed in this section, it can be established that contrary to what has been claimed in some previous studies (see Ghomeshi 1997, Kahnemuyipour 2000, Larson and Yamakido 2005, Samiian 1983 and 1994):

- Phrasal constituents, and not only words, can be linked to the head noun by the Ezafe.
- Prepositional phrases headed by “real” prepositions (i.e. prepositions that cannot take the Ezafe) can occur within the Ezafe domain.

From (a) and (b) I conclude, contra Ghomeshi (1997), that Persian nouns can dominate phrasal material and consequently can project NPs. In other words, the Ezafe domain is not a domain of X°s adjunction. This implies that the restrictions on the Ezafe construction, if any, cannot be accounted for on the basis of the assumption that Persian nouns do not project phrases.

Furthermore, given the fact that the major argument invoked by Samiiian (1994) and Larson and Yamakido (2005) in favor of the case-marker analysis of the Ezafe is the impossibility for the PPs headed by prepositions such as *be* ‘to’ (i.e. P1

prepositions) to be linked to the head noun by the Ezafe, I conclude that (b) provides evidence against such an analysis.¹³

The question remains then of how restrictions such as those illustrated by the following examples can be accounted for:

- (27) * ketâb-i-e Maryam
 book-IND-EZ Maryam
 (putatively) ‘a book of Maryam’
- (28) * hamsâye-ye negarân-e bačče-hâ-yaš-e Maryam
 neighbour-EZ worried-EZ child-P-PAF.3.P-EZ Maryam
 (putatively) ‘Maryam’s neighbour who is worried about his children’

I will suggest a morphological account of these restrictions in terms of position class morphology (Stump 2001) where collections of items (here suffixes) compete for realization in a single position.

3 A affixal view of the Ezafe

In this section, an affixal analysis of the Ezafe will be outlined. On the basis of distributional, prosodic and morphological criteria, two major sets of inflectional affixes within the Persian NP will be established. The members of the first set, i.e. the definite suffix *-(h)e*¹⁴ and the plural suffix *hâ*, may be considered as word-level inflectional affixes: they attach to the head (i.e. the noun) within the NP and cannot

¹³ One referee has pointed out that (b) does not provide convincing evidence against the case-marker analysis of the Ezafe. Although I can understand that this analysis can certainly be reformulated to accommodate the data mentioned in (b), I shall not undertake such a task, basically because I do not share this assumption about the Ezafe. My only point is to underline the fact that Samiian’s and Larson and Yamakido’s analysis cannot be maintained as such because the data it relies on is not well-grounded. Viewing the Ezafe as a case-marker becomes even more problematic for these authors when other West Iranian languages are taken into account. Indeed, in almost all the groups of Kurdish dialects and in Zazaki, restrictive relative clauses can be introduced by the Ezafe. Note again that the fact that the Ezafe does not introduce relative clauses is also invoked by Larson and Yamakido as convincing evidence for the case-marker analysis of the Ezafe.

¹⁴ There is no overt definite article in standard Persian, though colloquial Persian has a definite suffix, realized *-he* after a vowel, and *-e* in other contexts

be separated from it by any other inflectional affix. Furthermore, they bear lexical stress and cannot have wide scope over the coordination of two nouns.

The members of the second set, i.e. the Ezafe, the determiner *-i* and personal enclitics, will be argued to be phrasal affixes: they occur at the right edge of nominal non-maximal projections, and are located after Set (1) inflectional affixes. It will be further argued that their status, or more precisely their membership of the same set, can account for the ungrammaticality of (27) and (28) above.

The members of the first set, i.e. *-(h)e* and *-hâ*:¹⁵

- a) are in complementary distribution.
- b) occur on the head noun within the NP.
- c) cannot be separated from their host by another inflectional affix.
- d) bear lexical stress.
- e) cannot have wide scope over coordination.

Crucial to our discussion here is the fact that, contrary to the indefinite *-i*, the definite *-(h)e* may combine with the Ezafe, as shown by the following example:

- (29) in bâr âhang hamân-i bud ke **pesar-e-ye**
 this time melody same-RESTR be.PAS that boy-DEF-EZ
 film-e hendi barâ-ye doxtar-e mi-zad
 film-EZ Indian for-EZ girl-DEF MA-beat.PAS
 ‘This time the melody was the same as the one the boy in the Indian film
 was playing for the girl.’

(*Sâz dahani* (short story), Zoya Pirzâd.)

This is expected, since *-(h)e* and the Ezafe are not members of the same set, while the Ezafe and the indefinite *-i* belonging to the same set are rival possibilities for the same slot.

The members of the second set, the Ezafe, the indefinite *-i* and different forms of personal enclitics exhibit the following properties:

- a) They are in complementary distribution.
- b) They do not necessarily occur on the head noun within the NP and can attach to the right edge of some intermediate projections.
- c) They are compatible with Set (1) affixes and are placed after them.
- d) They do not bear lexical stress.
- e) They can have wide scope over coordination.

Let us return to the ungrammaticality of (27) and (28) above. In my account, these examples are excluded because the Ezafe, the indefinite *-i* and the personal enclitic *-yaš* belonging to the same set are rival possibilities for the same slot.

¹⁵ For a detailed discussion of *-(h)e*, see Samvelian (in press).

In this perspective, the data in (27) and (28) receive a purely surface-based account, in terms of constraints on affix stacking, with no need for syntactic constraints. If this account is appropriate, it is expected that such examples would become grammatical in case of a reordering of the constituents within the NP so that affix stacking is avoided. This indeed seems to be the case, given the contrast between (30a) and (30b):

- (30) a. * qahremân-e [rânde šode
 hero-EZ drive.PP become.PP
 az mihan-aš]-e in roman
 from homeland-PAF.3.S]-EZ this novel
 ‘the hero of this novel, who is driven away from his homeland’
 b. qahremân-e [az mihan-aš
 hero-EZ from homeland-PAF.3.S
 rânde šode]-ye in roman
 drive.PP become.PP]-EZ this novel
 ‘the hero of this novel, who is driven away from his homeland’

Let us mention by the way that in Sorani, Kurmanji and Hawramani the Ezafe suffix combines with the indefinite suffix:

- (31) hasp-ak-î boz ‘a grey horse’ (Kurmanji)
 horse-IND.S-EZ grey
 (32) kit’eb-ew-i si’âw ‘(a) black book’ (Hawramani)
 book.M.S -EZ black.M.S

Consequently, there is no incompatibility between indefiniteness as such and the possessor NP. The contrast between the behavior of the Persian indefinite *-i*, on the one hand, and the indefinite suffixes in Kurmanji, Sorani, and Hawramani, on the other hand, could be accounted for in terms of position class morphology: in Kurdish and in Hawramani, the Ezafe and the indefinite determiner do not occupy the same slot, while in Persian they do.

4 To What extent can affixal analysis be generalized?

As noted previously, though highly expected, the process of reanalyzing the Ezafe as an inflectional affix has not necessarily been accomplished in the same manner and at the same rate in all Iranian languages. In this section, I will examine the properties of the Ezafe in Kurmanji Kurdish, where the rich allomorphic variation of the Ezafe and its interplay with other inflectional affixes provides enlightening

insight into the question of its status. It will be shown that some forms of the Ezafé are clearly affixal, while others are probably best regarded as syntactic linkers.

In Kurmanji Kurdish, which has maintained morphological gender, the *Ezafê* displays different forms according to the gender and the number of the head noun. Furthermore, a distinction is made between primary and secondary forms.¹⁶

Primary Ezafe		
	MASC	FEM
SG	$-\hat{e}$	$-\hat{a}$
PL	$-\hat{e}n$	$-\hat{e}n$

Table (1)

- | | | | | | |
|---------|----------------------|--------------|----|----------------|-------|
| (33) a. | kur-ê | ganç | b. | kaç-â | ganc |
| | boy-EZ.M.S | young | | girl-EZ.F.S | young |
| | ‘young boy’ | | | ‘young girl’ | |
| c. | kur-ên | ganç | d. | kaç-ên | ganc |
| | boy-EZ.P | young | | girl-EZ.P | young |
| | ‘young boys’ | | | ‘young girls’ | |
| e. | mal-â | mazin-â | | narmin-ê | |
| | house-EZ.F.S | grand-EZ.F.S | | Narmin-OBL.F.S | |
| | ‘Narmin’s big house’ | | | | |

At first sight, it may be tempting to consider the Ezafe as a mark of concord between the constituents occurring within the noun phrase and the head noun. In order to account for the fact that the Ezafe occurs also on the head noun, which seems paradoxical with a concord-marker view of the Ezafe, it could be assumed that the Ezafe is a simple clitic attaching to the left, though forming a syntactic constituent with the following element. Attractive though it may seem, this assumption does not provide an appropriate account for the behavior of the Ezafe.

4.1 The Ezafe and case endings

A significant point to be mentioned at this point is that there is no proper suffix for plurality or gender, which are expressed in case-endings. Thus, in the direct case,

¹⁶ The Kurmanji examples in this section, were not sourced, are elaborated during working sessions with two male Kurmanji native speakers from the region of Amedi (Dohuk, North of Irak), respectively 26 and 28 years old. They grew up in Kurdistan and obtained their undergraduate degree at the University of Erbil. They have been living in Paris for about five years now, where they are PhD students.

nouns occur in the same form, regardless of the fact they refer to a singular or plural entity and irrespective of their gender:

- | | | | | | |
|---------|----------------------|--------------|----|--------------------------|------------------|
| (34) a. | kur | di-hê | b. | kur | di-hê-n |
| | boy | AM-come.PRES | | boy | AM-come.PRES-3.P |
| | 'The boy is coming' | | | '(The) boys are coming' | |
| (35) a. | kaç | di-hê | b. | kaç | di-hê-n |
| | girl | AM-come.PRES | | girl | AM-come.PRES-3.P |
| | 'The girl is coming' | | | '(The) girls are coming' | |

In the oblique case, on the contrary, nouns display different forms according to their number (and gender):

- | | | | | | |
|---------|-----------|----|---------------|----|-------------|
| (36) a. | jin | b. | jin-ê | c. | jin-ân |
| | woman.DIR | | woman-OBL.F.S | | woman-OBL.P |
| (37) a. | kur | b. | kur-î | c. | kur-ân |
| | boy.DIR | | boy-OBL.M.S | | boy-OBL.P |

However, in case the noun is followed by an element linked by the Ezafe, again there is no distinction between nouns in the direct or oblique case:

- | | | | | |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------------|
| (38) a. | jin-ê | kaç | dît | |
| | woman-OBL.F | girl.DIR | see.PAS | |
| | 'The woman saw the girl' | | | |
| b. | jin-â | ganc | kaç-â | ganc dît |
| | woman-EZ.F.S | young | girl-EZ.F.S | young see.PAS |
| | 'The young woman saw the young girl' | | | |
| c. | *jin-ê-â | ganc | kaç-â ganc | dît |
| | woman-EZ.F.S-OBL.F.S | young | girl-EZ.F.S | young see.PAS |
| | (putatively) 'The young woman saw the young girl' | | | |

Thus, case endings and the Ezafe cannot occur together. This supports the view of the Ezafe as an inflectional affix indicating a dependency relation between the noun and the constituent that follows it. Viewed as such, the Ezafe suffix and the case affix are similar to the extent that both are markers of dependency relations. But contrary to the case suffix, which marks the dependent of a head, the Ezafe suffix marks the head, and not the dependent. The fact that they cannot be simultaneously attached to the same host implies that they must be realized in the same slot. A similar view has been defended by Schroeder (1999). Other facts support this assumption. Let us consider the following example:

- (39) min-ê bêçâra bibîna
 I.OBL.EZ.S.M poor look.IMPER
 ‘Look at me, the poor’ (Look at me who am a poor)

The independent pronoun *min* ‘me’ is in the oblique case, nevertheless it can be followed by the Ezafe affix. Consequently, the ungrammaticality of (38c) cannot be accounted for in terms of the incompatibility of the latter with a case-marked item but simply in terms of constraints on affix stacking. The same constraint is responsible for the ungrammaticality of (40b):

- (40) a. mal-a [bira-yê min]-a biçuk
 house-EZ.F.S [brother-EZ.M.S I.OBL]-EZ.F.S small
 ‘my brother’s small house’
 b. * mal-a [van jin-an]-a biçuk
 house-EZ.F.S [dem.OBL.P woman-OBL.P]-EZ.F.S small
 (putatively) ‘these women’s small house’

As shown by (40a), the possessor NP is not necessarily the last member of the Ezafe domain in Kurmanji and it can be followed by adjectival modifiers. In both (40a) and (40b), the Ezafe is adjoined to a noun in the oblique case, which stands as the possessor within the possessor NP. The Ezafe adjunction is excluded in (41b), since the oblique case is realized by an affix, while in (40a) it is possible, because the oblique case is realized through Umlaut.

Haig (2004) rejects the affixal view of the Ezafe in Kurmanji, mainly because Ezafe can be iterated within the NP. The problem is resolved if one considers that the Ezafe is an affix attaching not only to lexical heads (N°s) but also to all intermediate projections of the latter (N's). In other words, the second occurrence of the Ezafe within an NP is an instance of phrasal affixation.

4.2 Ezafe, concord and coordination

Another range of data supporting the analysis outlined here concern the behavior of the Ezafe with respect to coordination. Let us consider the following examples:

- (41) a. kur u jin-ê di-bîn-im
 boy and woman-OBL.F.S AM-see.PRES-1.S
 b. jin u kur-î di-bîn-im
 woman and boy-OBL.M.S AM-see.PRES-1.S
 c. *jin u kur-ân di-bîn-im
 woman and boy-OBL.P AM-see.PRES-1.S
 d. jin-ê u kur-î di-bîn-im
 woman-OBL.F.S and boy-OBL.M.S AM-see.PRES-1.S
 'I see the woman and the boy'

As shown by these examples, when an NP that must be in the oblique case contains two conjoined singular nouns, Kurmanji displays different strategies: each conjunct can bear the oblique case ending according to its gender. But this does not seem to be the most frequently used strategy. Instead, the general tendency is to put the case ending only on the right most conjoined noun. In this case, the singular form of the case affix is required and the plural forms seem to be excluded, unless each conjoined noun has a plural reading. Thus, Kurmanji displays the strategy referred to as Closest Conjunct Agreement (Corbett 1991, Wechsler and Zlatic 2003, among others): agreement marking depends on the properties of only one conjunct, the one to which the case ending is adjoined.

Once again, the Ezafe suffix behaves in the same way as the oblique case ending:

- (42) a. *daftar-ak u qalam-ak-ên Narmîn-ê
 notebook-IND.S and pen-IND.S-EZ.P Narmin.OBL.F.S
 b. daftar-ak u qalam-ak-î Narmîn-ê
 notebook-IND.S and pen-IND.S-EZ.M.S Narmin-OBL.F.S
 c. qalam-ak u daftar-ak-a Narmîn-ê
 pen-IND.S and notebook-IND.S-EZ.F.S Narmin-OBL.F.S
 'one of Narmin's notebooks and pens'
- (43) a. *daftar-a sîr u qalam-ê ras-ên Narmin-ê
 notebook-EZ.F.S red and pen-EZ.M.S black-EZ.P Narmin-OBL.F.S
 b. qalam-î ras u daftar-a sîr-a Narmin-ê
 pen-EZ.M.S black and pen-EZ.F.S red-EZ.F.S Narmin-OBL.F.S
 c. daftar-a sîr u qalam-ê ras-ê Narmin-ê
 notebook-EZ.F.S red and pen-EZ.M.S black-EZ.M.S Narmin-OBL.F.S
 'Narmin's red notebook and black pen'

These facts provide further evidence in favor of the assumption that the Ezafe and the oblique case ending occupy the same slot when attaching to a head noun.

4.2. Is there an “Indefinite Ezafe” in Kurmanji ?

In some Kurmanji dialects, the Diarbekir dialect for instance, a further allomorphic variation is observed. Apart from the “Primary Ezafe” (Mackenzie 1961), there is a second paradigm of the so-called “Secondary Ezafe” forms:

Secondary Ezafe		
	MASC	FEM
SING	-î	-a
PLUR	-a	-a

Table (2)

Primary forms are attached directly to the noun. Secondary forms occur after the indefinite suffixes *-ak* and *-in*:

- (44) a. hasp-ak-î boz b. hasp-in-a boz
 horse-IND.S-EZ grey horse-P-EZ grey
 ‘a grey horse’ ‘grey horses’

In some studies (Rebuschi 2002, Larson and Yamakido 2005, among others), the difference between the two paradigms has been assumed to reflect (in)definiteness concord between the head noun and the Ezafe, and consequently the terms “Definite Ezafe” and “Indefinite Ezafe” have been used to designate each paradigm. The problem is that the so-called “Definite Ezafe” occurs not only after the definite suffix, but also after “bare nouns” and after numerals, as shown by the following example:

- (45) pênc kur-ên ganc (Diarbekir dialect)
 five boy-EZ.P young
 ‘five young boys’

Note that in this case, the whole NP has an indefinite reading. Furthermore, as mentioned by Mackenzie (1961), in some dialects, Surçi for instance, the Secondary Ezafe is used in all cases where the noun stem is followed by an affix, including the definite *aka*.¹⁷

- (46) mirow-aka-y xwârê ‘the lower man’ [Mackenzie 1961: 160]

¹⁷ The definite affix *-aka* is not available in all Kurmanji dialects. Thus the bare form of a noun can receive both a non-referential (kind denoting) or a definite reading, depending upon the context.

Consequently, the distribution of Primary and Secondary forms is not conditioned by the definiteness/indefiniteness of the noun, but by the morphological nature of the element to which the Ezafe is attached: primary forms are directly adjoined to the noun, while secondary forms occur when the noun to which the Ezafe affix must attach already contains an affix.

4.3. What about the “Demonstrative” Ezafe?

Some authors mention a third class of forms for the Ezafe, called “Demonstrative” (Mackenzie 1961):

Demonstrative Ezafe		
	MASC	FEM
SG	-yê	-yâ
PL	-yên	-yên

Table (3)

As noted by Mackenzie, the initial –y is frequently not realized, particularly when following a consonant, and the remaining vowel is then formally identical with the Primary Ezafe. These forms, which are not necessarily attached to a head, are used in the following cases:

- 1) preceding a noun, a pronoun or an adjective modifier and giving a possessive or a substantive sense to the whole group (p. 162).
- 2) in all cases when the modifier is separated from the head it modifies.
- 3) when the head noun is followed by more than one modifier.

For Haig (2004), the distinction between the Primary Ezafe and the Demonstrative Ezafe is largely superfluous given that they are functionally and phonologically identical. Consequently, Haig assumes a single Ezafe particle, which is not part of the morphology of the noun, but is rather the head of a particular type of construction, projecting to the Ezafe Phrase (p. 78).

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a detailed account of the Absolute Ezafe, I see two drawbacks with Haig’s analysis. First, the two native speakers whom I consulted reject (47) while they accept (48), where the Primary Ezafe is replaced by the Demonstrative Ezafe:

- (47) * mal-a [van jin-an]-a biçuk
house-EZ.F.S [dem.OBL.P woman-OBL.P]-EZ.F.S small
- (49) mal-a [van jin-an] ya biçuk
house-EZ.F.S [dem.OBL.P woman-OBL.P] DEMEZ.F.S small
‘these women’s small house’

If the Primary Ezafe and the Demonstrative Ezafe were one and the same morpheme, they would be expected to display the same distribution. This is not the case given the contrast between (47) and (48), which cannot be interpreted as a phonologically conditioned allomorphic variation. Furthermore, contrary to Haig's claim, there seems to be a phonological difference between the Primary and the Demonstrative Ezafe: the former is not accentuated, while the latter can bear stress. This is particularly clear in those contexts where the Demonstrative Ezafe is not preceded by a head noun, or any other item, within the NP.

Relying on these facts, I assume that the Demonstrative Ezafe is indeed distinct from the Primary Ezafe. Contrary to the latter, it is not part of the morphology of the noun and is probably best regarded as a "linker" (or a relative particle), like its ancestor in Old Iranian¹⁸.

To conclude, the data examined in this section revealed an intricate relation between the Ezafe and nominal inflectional affixes (number, gender and case). The fact that in Kurmanji Kurdish the oblique case ending and the Ezafe cannot co-occur was argued to provide evidence in favor of a morphological analysis of the Ezafe itself, ranking the latter among other nominal inflectional affixes. It was further assumed that the mutual exclusion between the Ezafe and the oblique case ending can be accounted for in terms of constraints on affix stacking.

Similar constraints are observed in other Iranian languages and require further investigation. In Hawramani, for instance, Mackenzie (1966) claims that the epithetic Ezafe is displaced by all inflectional morphemes (i.e. case, gender, number), while "the genitival Ezâfe displaces the singular oblique morphemes *-i*, *-e*, but is itself superseded by the masculine singular ending *-i*, feminine singular ending *-e*, and by both plural morphemes, direct *-e*, oblique *-â*" (p. 19). Contrary to Kurmanji and Hawramani, Zazaki allows for the oblique case ending to occur with the Ezafe (see Paul 1998). Thus, the constraints on affix stacking are not identical from one language to another.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, it was argued that the Ezafe in Persian is best regarded as an inflectional affix, attaching to a head noun and to some of its intermediate projections and marking them as awaiting a modifier or a single NP complement. It was further shown that the affixal analysis of the Ezafe could be applied to Kurmanji, though the Ezafe construction does not display the same range of properties as in Persian. These cross-linguistic variations were argued to result from two distinct factors:

¹⁸ The term « linker » is used here in a theory-neutral understanding.

- a) The reanalysis-grammaticalization of the Ezafe has not proceeded in the same way and to the same rate in each language.
- b) The set of nominal affixes, their organization into subsets and consequently the constraints on affix stacking are not identical from one language to another.

This view of the Ezafe, though very different from the one suggested by Ghomeshi (1997), allows nevertheless to understand Ghomeshi's intuition about the word-like properties of the Ezafe construction. If the Ezafe is indeed an inflectional affix, then it could be expected that the shorter the nominal constituent to which the Ezafe is attached, the more "natural" or "grammatical" is the noun phrase containing the Ezafe construction.

References

- Anderson, Stephen R. 2005. *Aspects of the Theory of Clitics*: Oxford Studies in Theoretical Linguistics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bedir Khan, Emir J. and Roger Lescot. 1970. *Grammaire Kurde (Dialecte Kurmandji)*. Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve.
- Blau, Joyce. 1980. *Manuel de Kurde*. Paris: Klincksieck.
- Borer, Hagit. 1988. On the morphological parallelism between compounds and constructs. In *Morphological Yearbook*, eds. G. Booij and J. van Marle. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Corbett, Greville. 1991. *Gender*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Darmesteter, James. 1883. *Etudes iraniennes, I*. Paris: F. Vieweg.
- Den Dikken, Marcel. 2006. *Relators and Linkers: A Study of Predication, Predicate Inversion, and Copulas*. Cambridge (MA): The MIT Press.
- Fattah, Ismaïl K. 2000. *Les dialectes kurdes méridionaux*. Leuven: Peeters.
- Ghomeshi, Jila. 1997. Non-Projecting Nouns and the Ezafe Construction in Persian. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 15-4:729-788.
- Haider, Hubert, and Zwanziger, Ronald. 1984. Relatively attributive: The "ezafe"-construction from Old Iranian to Modern Persian. In *Historical Syntax*, ed. Jacek Fisiak, 137-172. Berlin: Mouton.
- Haig, Geoffrey. 2004. Alignment in Kurdish: a diachronic perspective. Habilitationsschrift, University of Kiel. (Available as pdf at: <http://www.linguistik.uni-kiel.de/KurdAlignment.pdf>).
- Hincha, Georg. 1961. Beiträge zu einer Morphemlehre des Neupersischen. *Der Islam*:136-201.
- Kahnemuyipour, Arsalan. 2000. Persian Ezafe construction revisited: evidence for modifier phrase. Paper presented at the *Annual conference of the Canadian Linguistic Association Conference*, Edmonton.

- Karimi, Simin and Michael Brame. 1986. A generalization concerning the EZAFE construction in Persian. Paper presented at the Western Conference of Linguistics, Vancouver.
- Larson, Richard K. and Hiroko Yamakido H. 2005. Ezafe and the Deep position of nominal modifiers. Paper presented at *Barcelona Workshop on Adjectives and Adverbs*, Barcelona.
- Lazard, Gilbert. 1992. *A Grammar of Contemporary Persian*: Mazda Publishers.
- Lecoq, Pierre. 2002. *Recherches sur les Dialectes Kermaniens*. vol. 39: Acta Iranica. Leuven: Peeters.
- Lecoq, Pierre. 1989. Les dialectes Caspiens et les dialectes du nord-ouest de l'Iran. In *Compendium Linguarum Iranicarum*, ed. R. Schmitt, 296-312. Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag.
- Mackenzie, David N. 1961. *Kurdish Dialect Studies*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Mackenzie, David N. 1966. *The dialect of Awroman (Hawraman-i Luhon). Grammatical sketch, texts, and vocabulary*. Copenhagen: Munksgaard.
- Meillet, Antoine. 1931. *Grammaire du vieux-perse*. Paris: Honoré Champion.
- Nichols, Johanna. 1986. Head-Marking and Dependent-Marking Grammar. *Language* 62:56-119.
- Paul, Ludwig. 1998. *Zazaki*. Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag.
- Rebuschi, Georges. 2002. Coordination et subordination. Deuxième partie : vers la co-jonction généralisée. *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique*, XCVII:37-94.
- Samiian, Vida. 1983. Origins of Phrasal Categories in Persian : An X-bar Analysis, UCLA.
- Samiian, Vida. 1994. The Ezafe Construction: Some Implications for the Theory of X-bar Syntax. In *Persian Studies in North America*, ed. M. Marashi, 17-41. Maryland: Iranbooks.
- Samvelian, Pollet. in press. A (phrasal) affix analysis of the Persian Ezafe. In *Journal of Linguistics*.
- Schroeder, Christoph. 1999. Attribution in Kurmanji (Nordkurdisch). In *Studien zur Phonologie, Grammatik, Sprachphilosophie and Semiotik*, eds. K. H. Wagner and W. Wildgen, 43-63. Bremen: Institut für Allgemeine und Angewandte Sprachwissenschaft.
- Stump, Greg. 2001. *Inflectional Morphology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wechsler, S., and Zlatic, L. 2003. *The Many Faces of Agreement*. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.