

Urdu *ezafe* — Phrasal Affix or Clitic?

Urdu has several different ways of expressing possession, two of which are highly relevant for this workshop: the genitive and the *ezafe* construction. The genitive ((1)), is semantically unremarkable, but is morphosyntactically unusual in that the genitive *k-* seems to be a clitic (Butt and King 2005) that incorporates into the prosodic word on its left, but shows gender and number agreement with the head noun to its right (cf. Payne 1995 on other Indic languages). Historically, it is taken to derive from a participial of *kar* ‘do’.

- (1) a. paakistaan=kii hukuumat
Pakistan=Gen.F.Sg government.F.Sg
‘Pakistan’s government’
- b. paakistaan=kaa fer
Pakistan=Gen.M.Sg lion.M.Sg
‘Pakistan’s lion’

The Urdu *ezafe* construction is unusual, as it does not follow the usual head-final pattern (cf. (1) vs. (2)), is mostly restricted to a high register, and is not very productive, but ranges over a complex range of semantic expressions similar to those found in compounding and which include possession. (2) is thus semantically equivalent to (1a).

- (2) hukuumat=e paakistaan
government=Ez Pakistan
‘the government of Pakistan’

Historically, the Urdu *ezafe* is a loan from Persian. Persian *ezafe* has been discussed extensively (Samvelian 2007, Gomeshi 1997, Samiiian 1994). In a recent paper, Samvelian (2007) analyzes it as a phrasal affix (Zwicky 1987) and therefore as being part of nominal inflection in the morphological component.

In contrast, our investigation of Urdu *ezafe* suggests that its morphosyntactic status is like that of the Urdu genitive and that the empirical data points towards both being clitics which are prosodically attached to the left as part of postlexical phonology (e.g., both attach to phrases rather than single words and display scope over coordination). However, the *ezafe* licenses a complement to the right, the genitive to the left.

A close look at Samvelian’s data and argumentation shows that a similar analysis could be applied to Persian. Her argumentation for the status of a phrasal affix includes an application of the haplology criterion (Miller 1992), that the *ezafe* is “choosy” about what it attaches to (Anderson 2005), and that postlexical clitics by definition cannot have access to word-level properties, but that *ezafe* must (because of its “choosiness”).

This latter point has been made several times (e.g., Miller 1992, Anderson 2005), but seems to us to involve a misunderstanding of the architectural interfaces. For example, the Urdu genitive *k-* in (1) was argued to be a clitic in Butt and King (2005), but just like non-clitic and non-affixal determiners often do, it must simultaneously be able to

access word-level properties in order to agree with the head noun. That is, “choosiness” is not a valid argument for morpheme status.

We present an analysis and computational demo within Lexical-Functional Grammar’s modular architecture that shows how an analysis of both the Urdu genitive *k-* and *ezafe* as independent syntactic (not morphological) items with independent lexical entries can still do justice to their status as “choosy” clitics which are postlexically incorporated into a prosodic word. We also discuss Samvelian’s analysis and suggest a similar analysis for Persian *ezafe*.

References

- Anderson, Stephen R. 2005. *Aspects of the theory of clitics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bresnan, Joan. 2000. *Lexical-Functional Syntax*. Blackwell.
- Butt, Miriam and Tracy Holloway King. 2005. The status of case. In V. Dayal and A. Mahajan, eds., *Clause Structure in South Asian Languages*, pages 153–198. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Dalrymple, Mary. 2001. *Lexical Functional Grammar*. Elsevier Ltd.
- Gomeshi, Jila. 1997. Non-projecting nouns and the Ezafe construction in Persian. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 15(4):729–788.
- Miller, Philip H. 1992. *Clitics and constituents in phrase structure grammar*. New York: Garland.
- Payne, John. 1995. Inflecting prepositions in indic and kashmiri. In F. Plank, ed., *Double Case*, pages 283–298. London: Academic Press.
- Samiian, Vida. 1994. The Ezafe construction: Some implications for the theory of X-bar syntax. In M. Marashi, ed., *Persian studies in North America*, pages 17–41. Bethesda: Iranbooks.
- Samvelian, Pollet. 2007. A (phrasal) affix analysis of the Persian *ezafe*. *Journal of Linguistics* 43:605–645.
- Schmidt, Ruth Laila. 1999. *Urdu — an essential grammar*. New York: Routledge.
- Zwicky, Arnold. 1987. Suppressing the z’s. *Journal of Linguistics* 23(1):133–148.