

Another Look at Persian Râ: A Single Formal Analysis of a Multi-Functional Morpheme
 Simin Karimi
 University of Arizona

The morpheme *-râ* has been typically treated as a differential object marker which appears on presuppositional (definite or specific) direct objects. The unmarked word order has been generally shown to place the object+râ in a higher position than the unmarked object, hence suggesting a topical interpretation of elements carrying this element. There are, however, several cases in which the morpheme *-râ* appears on DPs other than the direct object, including: nominal adverbs (1) and raised nominals out of an object (2). Although *-râ* does not mark subject DPs and objects of prepositions, this element also marks subject DPs raised out of an embedded clause (3), as well as DPs corresponding to object clitics of prepositions (4). Finally, it marks raised DPs out of possessor constructions (5).

The question then is: what is the real function of *-râ*?

In this paper, I discuss the morpheme *-râ* within the framework of a general case system in line with Marantz's (1991) *disjunctive case hierarchy*. On the basis of the data mentioned above, I motivate a new analysis of *-râ* which indicates that this element marks specific DPs that have been valued for *dependent* case (Yip et al. 1987, Marantz 1991, Baker 2017). In contrast to Marantz for whom dependent case is a post-syntactic phenomenon, however, I argue that accusative case is structurally assigned downwards in syntax by a head that introduces an external argument, representing an extended version of Burzio's Generalization.

This paper also builds on work by Preminger (2011a, 2014) and Kornfilt & Preminger (2014), which argue, on the basis of Sakha (a Turkic language), that nominative (as well as absolutive, and within the DP, genitive cases) are simply the morphological form afforded to noun phrases whose case features have not been valued in the course of the derivation. This means that subject DPs are not checked for case. In the absence of a clear indication of case-stacking in Persian (cf. Schütze 2001, Yoon 2004, on Korean; and Richards 2012, on Lardil), this theory correctly predicts that raised subjects of embedded clauses may only appear with *-râ* if the matrix verb introduces an external argument (3), but not otherwise (the first clause in 6).

Finally, the analysis in this paper is extended to those cases in Modern Classical Persian where *-râ* marks a variety of distinct DPs other than objects (e.g. 7). It is demonstrated that all those cases are accounted for by an analysis based on dependent case marking in Modern Persian.

- (1) shab-e pish-o aslan na - xâbid-am
 night-Ez last-râ at all neg – slept.Past-1SG
 ‘As for last night, I didn’t sleep at all.’ Or:
 ‘It was last night (as opposed to some other time) that I did not sleep at all.’
- (2) pro mâshin-o dar - esh-o bast-am
 car-râ door-its-râ close.Past-1SG
 ‘As for the car, I closed its door.’
- (3) Ali-ro pro fekr mi-kon-am [(ke) e barande be-sh-e, (vali
 Ali-râ thought Asp-do-1SG that winner Subj-become-3SG but
 Maryam-ro ne – mi – dun - am [~~(ke) e barande be-sh-e~~.]
 Maryam-râ Neg-Asp-know-1SG that
 ‘As for Ali, I think he wins, (but I don’t know about Maryam).’

- (4) Pari-ro bâ-hâsh harf zad-am
 Pari-râ with-her talk hit.Past-1SG
 ‘As for Pari, I talked with her.’
- (5) Ali-ro *pro* mâmân-esh - ro did-am.
 Ali-ro mom-his râ saw.Past-1SG
 ‘As for Ali, I saw his mom’
- (6) Ali (*ro) ghat’i-e (ke) barande mi-sh-e (vali
 Ali -râ certain-is that winner Asp-become-3SG but
- Maryam-ro ne-mi-dun-am ~~barande~~ mi-sh-e
 Maryam-râ Neg-Asp-know-1SG winner Asp-become-3SG
- ‘As for Ali, it is certain that he wins, (but I’m not sure about Maryam).’
- (7) a. amir-râ zakhm-i zad-am
 king-râ wound-Ind hit.Past-1SG
 ‘As for the king, I wounded (him).’
- b. pâdshâh - râ pesar-i bud
 king - râ son-Ind was.Past
 ‘As for the father, there was a son.’

Selected references

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