

Ph.D. Thesis Abstracts:

An Antisymmetric, Minimalist Approach to Persian Phrase Structure

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In this thesis, I investigate phrase structure in Persian within the Minimalist framework of Chomsky (1995, 1998). Adopting Kayne's (1994) Linear Correspondence Axiom, which examines the relation of hierarchical structure and linear order, I propose a head-initial analysis for Persian, and develop an analysis of SVO word order based on the examination of all lexical and functional categories.

Prior to investigating categories which are common to other languages, I examine the *Ezaf* Phrase (*EzP*), a functional phrasal category specific to Persian. The *EzP* is headed by a morpheme which may be phonetically realized as *e/ye* or null \emptyset . This morpheme regulates the occurrence of more than one complement in DPs/NPs and APs. Like the other phrasal categories investigated, the *EzP* is shown to follow the *Spec-Head-Complement* configuration (of the *Linear Correspondence Axiom*).

My argumentation for a head-initial configuration for Persian, and the implication of a basic SVO word order is based largely on evidence for noun phrases and verb phrases. I provide support for a DP analysis of Persian nominal phrases, and demonstrate that both DPs and lexical NPs display a head-initial configuration. While Persian VPs exhibit both VO and OV word order in unmarked sentences, I argue that they consistently display a head-initial configuration, an analysis which is theoretically preferable to one based on dual directionality. I support my proposal for a head-initial analysis of VPs and a basic SVO word order in Persian with a variety of empirical evidence about verbal complements, including the exclusive post-verbal generation of CP

complements, the placement of clitics, and the position of adverbs relative to verbal heads and their complements.

While concentrating on DPs and VPs, I further support my analysis of a head-initial configuration for Persian by examining the Spec-Head-Complement configuration in APs, PPs, IPs and in less detail, the internal structure of CPs and TopPs. On the basis of both theoretical and empirical evidence, I propose a head-initial analysis for all phrasal categories in Persian. In conclusion, I turn to diachronic data which also provides evidence of the Spec-Head-Complement analysis I have proposed for Modern Persian.

Past Temporal Reference in Early African American Correspondence

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This study employs the methods of comparative and variationist linguistics in a new data source, letters by semiliterate 19th-century Liberian immigrants, to confirm and extend the findings of earlier studies on the past temporal reference system of Early African American English (AAE). In the first half of the study, the strongest linguistic constraints on the choice of bare verb forms match precisely those described for large-scale studies of spoken (diaspora) Early AAE: the bare form results from consonant cluster simplification in weak verbs, and from lexical preferences attested through the history of English in the case of strong verbs. Conditioning factors proposed to result from earlier creole influence on Early AAE (anteriority, remoteness, or clause type) did not play a significant role.

The second half of the study concerns multiple verb forms, especially the present perfect, described by previous studies as marginal or non-existent in AAE. In contrast, present perfect forms in this corpus are frequent and favoured by all the English-derived conditioning factors tested in this study: ambiguity of temporal orientation and relation, recent or continuing events, negation, extended time adverbials, and *since* clauses, as well as by non-statives. This conditioning, especially taken in concert with the variability of bare verb forms, suggests that the present perfect has long been part of AAE, with its rarity in other corpora due to genre-based differences in the frequency of contexts requiring its use.

The study provides new evidence in the history of the development of African American varieties of English, as well as demonstrating the utility of variationist analysis in resolving problems of linguistic system membership. Combining variationist and comparative analytical methods, it places AAE within the context of the development of the English language.

Master Thesis Abstracts:

Quirky Subjects: Do they exist in Persian?

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This thesis studies the nature of certain subject-like NPs in Persian and examines whether or not they can be considered “Quirky Subjects”. Quirky subjects are subject-like NP’s that bear non-nominative case and a non-agentive theta role, yet have some properties of subjects. This work demonstrates that subject-like NPs in Persian are neither subjects nor, quirky subjects. In fact, they are “Left-dislocated constituents”. In these constructions the reason for the default format of the verb is the nature of the subject, which is the psychological state rather than the subject-like NP (experiencer). Moreover, the notion of “Subject” and “Subjecthood” will be discussed and the claim that subject is not a rigid concept will be supported.

“The Role of Verbal Prefixes in Slavic: Evidence from Slovenian Locative Denominal Verbs”

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The thesis investigates the role of verbal prefixes in Slavic, grounding the discussion in the context of Location/Locatum denominal verbs in Slovenian. In Section 1, I introduce the topic of locative denominal verbs, briefly review traditional claims about Slovenian

Prefixation, show why the issue of semantic aspect (situation type) has in Slavic linguistics long been neglected, and finally summarize four major recent articles on Slavic prefixation. In Section 2, I provide minimal-pair examples which support Spencer & Zaretskaya's (1998) claim that the net role of prefixes is the introduction of a resultative change of state; the minimal pairs come from locative denominal verbs. The perfectivity of prefixed verbs is a side-effect of the resultative change of state. In Section 3, I argue that prefixes on directed motion verbs do not contribute directionality, as standardly assumed, but rather a state/location. I provide minimal-pair evidence from the complementary distribution of the prefix *pri-* 'at' and the preposition *k* 'to'. In Section 4, I propose to derive the resultativity (telicity) of prefixed verbs compositionally, employing Pustejovsky's (1991) event composition. In Section 5, I support Strigin & Demijanow (2001) by showing that prefixes only introduce a state and are thus eventualities, rather than eventuality type modifiers, as proposed by Filip (2000, to appear). Again, minimal-pair evidence comes from locative denominal verbs. In Section 6, I account for some data from Filip (to appear) that--on her interpretation--seem to constitute counterexamples to my claims. I further propose that in directed-motion constructions, Slavic prefixes are not to be

treated on a par with Goal/Source-PPs. I argue that the prefix introduces the State (Location), while the PP introduces the Path. Section 7 gives some implications of the analysis and a conclusion.