

PA5.2 – Left Branch Extraction in Hyperbata

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I. The form-meaning mismatch

- This project investigates Left Branch Extraction (LBE) in hyperbata (Discontinuous phrases). LBE is defined as the extraction of the leftmost NP out of a complex NP. (Ross 1967)
- Hyperbata are examples of many: 1 form-meaning mismatches, where non-adjacent elements in a sentence are perceived as one single phrase.

- Empirical domain: change in the pattern**

- Persian shows different patterns of LBE-licensing in different historical stages, e.g. extraction of adjectives is possible in Avestan (ex.1), but not in Modern Persian (ex.2):

- (1) [...] *anairiianqm taṭ daxiiunqm vərəθrāi uzjasaiti*
non.Iranian.GEN.PL DEM.NOM.N land.GEN.PL defense.DAT amount.3SG.PRS
‘[...] that amounts to the defense of the **non-Iranian lands**.’ (Y Av., N50.8)
- (2) **tarsnāk man film-hā ro mi-pasand-am*
scary I film-PL OM PROG-like.PRS-1SG
‘I like **scary films**.’

- Research questions**

- What are relevant factors for triggering LBE?
- How does emergence or loss of these factors interact with the possibility of LBE?
- How is the distribution of different types of LBE?
- How can LBE be syntactically analyzed? (e.g. as movement or base-generation etc.)

II. Methodology and Hypotheses

- Method**

- The data is gathered by a corpus study on the following 3 stages of Persian:

Old Persian	6th—4th centuries BCE
Middle Persian	3rd century BCE—7th century CE
New Persian	since the 7th century CE

- Avestan (Central Iranian, 1500—400 BCE) is also considered for the Old era to compensate for the limitations of the Old Persian corpus.
- Hypotheses**
 - LBE-licensing conditions become more restricted in Persian over time.
 - The loss of overt inflection from Middle Persian onwards might have triggered this restriction.

III. Expected results and discussion

- The following factors have been identified in the literature as relevant for licensing/blocking LBE:
 - Rich overt morphology in the nominal domain (Reeve 2018)
 - Nature of DP/NP: existence of articles (Bošković 2008)
 - Information Structure (Fanselow & Féry 2006 among others)
- Considering the following properties of Persian, along with the restriction of LBE in the language over time, is crucial for evaluating existing theories:
 - The loss of overt inflection in the nominal domain from Middle Persian onwards
 - The consistent absence of articles in all stages
 - The possibility of topical and focal left dislocation in all stages
- From a broader perspective, articles and information structurally triggered movements do not appear to correlate with changes in LBE in Persian.
- This suggests that the loss of morphology is a relevant factor in triggering this change.
- It remains to be investigated which other morpho-syntactic changes may correlate with specific changes in LBE-licensing.

IV. Consequences and follow-up questions

- As in other branches of IE LBE and other types of split are far more frequent in Ancient Iranian than in later stages. The same holds true for other traits commonly associated with so-called non-configurationality.
- How can these parallel developments be explained? Are seemingly unrelated patterns like LBE and pro-drop structurally connected? If so, how?
- These general questions can be translated into a precise diachronic research program:
- If the observed parallels are due to chance, change in one property would not be expected to affect the others. If, on the contrary, they are intrinsically connected, a careful diachronic study should reveal if and how the development of tighter word order is tied to or even determined by the change of other properties.
- This program will be carried out by P5.3.