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EZAFE IN THE CONTEXT OF CPS: Evidence from three Iranian languages

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Abstract: The present study investigates the distribution of the Ezafe (EZ) morpheme in adnominal clauses in three Iranian languages, namely Persian, Kurmanji (Northern Kurdish), and Zazaki, demonstrating that the behavior of EZ in these languages challenges the case analysis of EZ, suggesting instead a compatibility with the inversion analysis of EZ. In contrast to the prediction made by the case analysis, it is shown that EZ is required before [–N] modifiers such as CPs. First, EZ is consistently used in restrictive relative clauses (RCs) in all three languages, with Persian using an allomorph of EZ in this context, contrasting with Kurmanji and Zazaki, which use the regular form of EZ. Non-restrictive RCs present divergence: while Persian does not allow EZ in this environment, Zazaki and Kurmanji employ regular and anaphoric EZ (AEZ) forms, respectively. Following de Vries (2006), non-restrictive RCs are treated as restrictive RCs with a silent head, aligning the distribution of EZ in these languages with its distribution after a silent noun: Persian lacks EZ here, while Zazaki and Kurmanji use EZ and AEZ, respectively. Second, in Noun-Complement Clauses (NCCs), Kurmanji and Zazaki consistently use regular EZ, while Persian offers two options: the allomorph of EZ used with CPs or no EZ at all. Two possible structures are proposed for NCCs, one with and one without inversion, attributing the distribution of EZ to the structure involving inversion. This study shows that EZ is present in CP contexts and its distribution in these languages follows from the general behaviour of EZ and the syntax of N-CP structures.

Keywords: Ezafe, Iranian languages, relative clauses (RCs), noun-complement clauses (NCCs), CPs, silent noun.

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Introduction

1. Introduction *

In many Iranian languages, a linking element known as 'Ezafe' (hereafter EZ) appears between a noun and its postnominal modifier, including possessors, and is repeated on subsequent modifiers, if they are present, except the last one (Samiian 1994; Ghomeshi 1997; Samvelian 2007; Larson and Yamakido 2008; Haig 2011; Kahnemuyipour 2014; Larson and Samiian 2020, 2021; among others), as indicated in the following schema with multiple modifiers:

(1) N-**Ez** MOD_1-**Ez** MOD_2-**Ez** MOD_3

The form of the Ezafe morpheme is invariant (barring minor phonological modifications) in Persian, where it appears as *-e* (or *-ye* after a vowel), as illustrated in (2).

(2) Ezafe in Persian

a. *(ye)* *boz-e* *siāh*
a goat-EZ black
'a/the black goat'

b. *(ye)* *mard-e* *čāq*
a man-EZ fat
'a/the fat man'

c. *sib-e* *qermez-e* *bozorg*
apple-EZ red-EZ big
'red big apple'

d. *ketāb-e* *Ali/man*
book-EZ Ali/1SG
'Ali's/my book'

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In certain Iranian languages, such as Kurmanji (Northern Kurdish), the EZ morpheme cross-references the phi-features of the head noun and definiteness, as illustrated in (3). The Kurmanji Ezafe morpheme agrees with the feminine 'goat' in (3a/3a') whereas it agrees with the masculine 'man' in (3b/3b'). Moreover, the definiteness ('the goat / the man') vs. indefiniteness ('a goat / a man') of the head noun is reflected on the Ezafe vowel, as shown by the distinction in (3a/a') and (3b/b'). Gender distinction is neutralized in the plural (3c), and phi feature agreement remains consistent in both the modifier and possessor environment (compare 3a and 3d).

(3) Ezafe in Kurmanji

a. *bizin-a* *reş*
goat-EZ.F black
'the black goat'

a'. *bizin-ek-e* *reş*
goat-INDF-EZ.F black
'a black goat'

b. *mirov-ê* *qelew*
man-EZ.M fat
'the fat man'

b'. *mirov-ek-î* *qelew*
man-INDF-EZ.M fat
'a fat man'

c. *sêv-ên* *sor-ên* *mezin*
apple-EZ.PL red-EZ.PL big
'the big red apples'

d. *kitab-a* *Ali/min*
book-EZ.F Ali/1SG.OBL
'Ali's/my book'

In another Iranian language, Zazaki, Ezafe inflects for number, gender and case. The forms in (4a/b/c) represent the Direct forms of the Ezafe morpheme. The different forms of Ezafe can be seen clearly when the modified noun is placed in various case positions. For instance, when the masculine modified noun is the subject of a transitive clause in the present tense (a DIR case position), the DIR form of the Ezafe is used. Meanwhile,

when the modified noun appears in an oblique context, e.g. the direct object of a present-tense verb, the OBL form of the Ezafe is used. We can see the contrast between the DIR and OBL forms of Ezafe in the masculine singular, *-o* and *-ê*, respectively, in (4d/e).

(4) Ezafe in Zazaki

a. *bız-a* *sıpê*
goat-EZ.F white
'the white goat'

b. *kutık-o* *sıpê*
dog-EZ.M white
'the white dog'

c. *sol-ê* *sıpê*
shoe-EZ.PL white
'the white shoes'

d. [*Kutık-o* *sıpê*] *mın*
dog-EZ.M.DIR white 1SG.OBL
vin-en-o.
see-PRS-3SG.M
'The white dog sees me.'

e. *Ez-a* [*kutık-ê*
1SG.DIR-PROG.1SG dog-EZ.M.OBL
sıpê] *vin-en-an.*
white see-PRS-1SG
'I see the white dog.'

The focus of the current study is the distribution of EZ in the context of nouns followed by CPs, both relative clauses (RCs) and so-called noun-complement clauses (NCCs) in three different Iranian languages, namely Persian, Kurmanji and Zazaki.[1]

One prominent analysis of EZ takes it to be a case assigner required before all [+N] elements (Samiian 1994; Larson and Yamakido 2008; Larson and Samiian 2020, 2021). This type of analysis predicts that adnominal elements which are [–N] should not be preceded by EZ. Persian non-restrictive RCs seem to provide support for this analysis as they are not preceded by EZ. Meanwhile, restrictive RCs are preceded by a (so-called

[1] For a more detailed description of Ezafe in these three (and several other) Iranian languages, see Taghipour and Kahnemuyipour (2023).

relative) particle *-i*, phonologically distinct from the regular EZ *-e*. This particle has been analyzed as an allomorph of EZ, which then presents a counter-example to the case analysis (Kahnemuyipour 2014). The idea that Persian *-i* before restrictive RCs is a form of Ezafe finds further support in Kurmanji and Zazaki, which use the regular form of EZ with restrictive RCs. Under this view (*contra* the case analysis), EZ is used uniformly before a modifier, regardless of its [+/−N] status. Non-restrictive RCs in Kurmanji and Zazaki add an interesting twist to the discussion, as in these contexts, both languages allow EZ. While Zazaki uses the regular form of EZ preceded by prosodic break, Kurmanji employs a different type of EZ known as anaphoric EZ (AEZ).

We argue in this paper that the distribution of EZ in the context of adnominal clauses in Kurmanji and Persian poses a serious challenge to the case analysis of EZ, which predicts that [–N] modifiers should not require the presence of EZ. We further demonstrate that the facts from these two languages are instead compatible with the inversion analysis of EZ (Kahnemuyipour 2014), given a proper understanding of the syntax of N–CP structures.

This paper is structured as follows. The next section provides a brief overview of two prominent syntactic analyses of Ezafe, namely the case analysis and the inversion analysis, and the predicted distribution of Ezafe in N–CP structures. Section 3 presents the distribution of Ezafe in the context of RCs in Persian, Kurmanji and Zazaki providing arguments against the case analysis. We argue that the distribution of EZ in the context of RCs in these languages follows from the general behavior of EZ and the syntax of relative clause structures. Section 4 discusses the distribution of Ezafe in the context of NCCs in these three Iranian languages and provides two possible structures for NCCs: (i) NCC as the subject of predication for the projection of the head noun, with the surface order derived as a result of inversion of NP around CP, and (ii) NCC as (a subpart of) the predicate for the projection of the head noun with no inversion involved. We posit that while Persian allows both strategies, Kurmanji and Zazaki employ the former only. This division corresponds to the optional or obligatory presence of a nominal linker. Section 5 presents concluding remarks with empirical and theoretical implications.

2. Two syntactic accounts of Ezafe: Case or Inversion

As a distinguishing grammatical feature of noun phrases in many Iranian languages, Ezafe has been a source of interest for theoretical linguists. Two prominent syntactic accounts of Ezafe take EZ to be either *a case assigner* (Samiian 1994; Larson and Yamakido 2008; Larson and Samiian 2020) or *a*

reflex of inversion (Kahnemuyipour 2014). The case analysis of EZ assumes a DP structure where all NP modifiers originate postnominally and as [+N] elements they need to be case-licensed. Under this view, while the head noun is case-licensed by D, all other [+N] modifiers (including adjectives, possessors, etc.) are case-licensed by EZ. Thus, for example, in (2c)-(3c) repeated here as (5a)-(5b), the first EZ case-licenses "red" and the second EZ "big".

(5) a. Persian
sib-e *qermez-e* *bozorg*
apple-EZ red-EZ big
'big red apple'

b. Kurmanji
sêv-ên *sor-ên* *mezin*
apple-EZ.PL red-EZ.PL big
'the big red apples'

The case analysis of EZ makes the prediction that [–N] modifiers should not require (or even desire) the presence of EZ. In particular, if a head noun is followed by PP or CP, no EZ should be required between them (Samvelian 2007; Kahnemuyipour 2014).[2] This study focuses on the N–CP context, investigating how this prediction of the case analysis of EZ fares with the facts in Persian, Kurmanji and Zazaki.

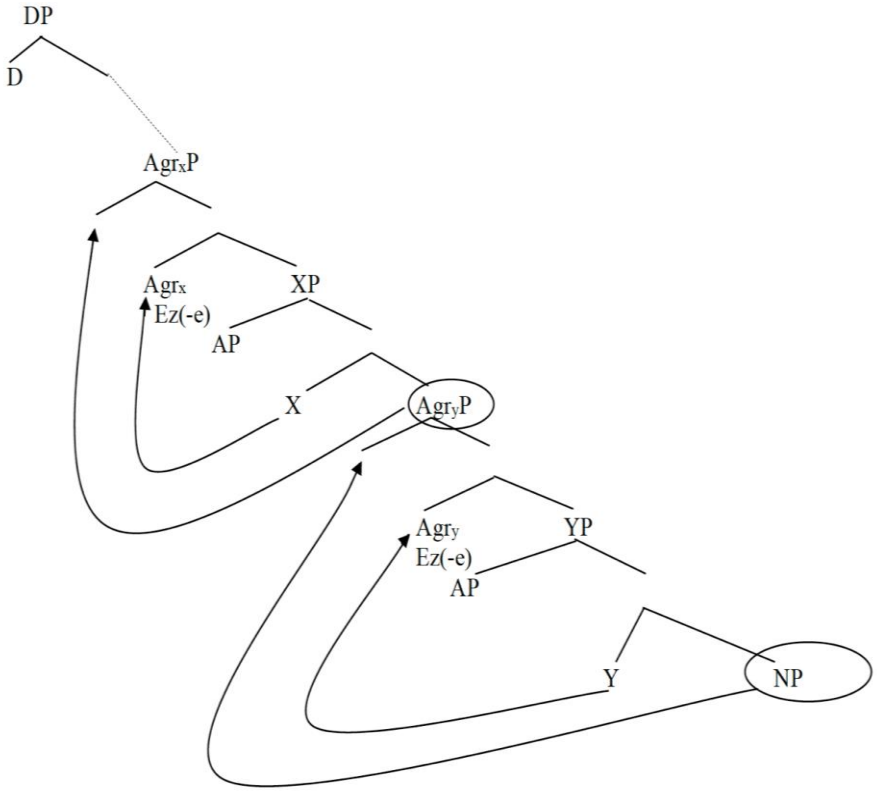
According to the inversion analysis of Ezafe, the noun phrase in Ezafe languages is taken to be head-final, with the modifiers residing in the specifiers of projections above N.[3] In addition to the projections which house the modifiers, there are intermediate projections which enable the roll-up derivation, shown schematically in the tree diagram in (6). Under this view, the Ezafe marker can be seen as the surface realization of the suggested inversion process (akin to den Dikken's 2006 linker). Crucially, this account

[2] As is well established in the literature on Persian and other Iranian languages more generally (Samiian 1994; Ghomeshi 1997; Karimi and Brame 2012; Kahnemuyipour 2014; Larson and Samiian 2021; among others), P(reposition)s are divided into two main classes, nominal Ps which take the Ezafe marker, and true Ps which do not. Accordingly, an EZ is expected between a noun and a modifying PP if the P is a nominal P and not a true P. In this paper, we are abstracting away from the N–PP context (see Samvelian 2007; Kahnemuyipour 2014; Larson and Samiian 2021, Kahnemuyipour and Taghipour 2024, for discussion).

[3] This structure is in line with other roll-up analyses of DP structure in other languages within the framework best known as cartography (Cinque 2002, 2005, 2010; Shlonsky 2004, 2010, among others).

does not predict a blanket absence of EZ in the context of N–CP, an issue we turn to immediately below.

(6) Deriving the Ezafe construction via roll-up movement



In the following sections, we argue that the distribution of EZ in the context of RCs and NCCs in Persian, Kurmanji and Zazaki poses serious challenges to the case analysis of EZ, which predicts that [–N] modifiers should not require the presence of EZ, whereas the facts from these three languages are instead compatible with the inversion analysis of EZ, which predicts that EZ is used uniformly before a modifier, regardless of its [+/−N] status.

3. Ezafe in the Context of Relative Clauses (RCs)

3.1. Persian

In the previous section, we discussed how the case analysis of EZ predicts the absence of EZ in the context of [–N] modifiers of NP. In apparent accordance with this, Persian non-restrictive RCs are not preceded by EZ (7).

(7) a. *Dust-e* *Hasan,* *ke* *tu* *Tehrān*
friend-EZ Hasan that in Tehran
dars *mi-xun-e*,
lesson DUR-read.PRS-3SG
xeyli *bāhush=e.*
very smart=COP.PRS.3SG
'Hasan's friend, who is a student in Tehran, is very smart.'

b. *Xāhar-e* *man,* *ke* *tu* *Tehrān*
sister-EZ 1SG that in Tehran
dāneshju=e, *emruz*
student=COP.PRS.3SG today
mi-yā-d *injā.*
DUR-come.PRS-3SG here
'My sister, who is a student in Tehran, is coming here today.'

Meanwhile, restrictive RCs are preceded by a (so-called relative) particle *-i* (8), which is phonologically distinct from the regular EZ *-e*.

(8) a. *Zan-**i*** *ke* *az* *Tehrān*
woman-**i** that from Tehran
umad-e *xeyli*
come.PST-PERF very
bāhush=e.
smart=COP.PRS.3SG
'The woman who has come from Tehran is very smart.'

b. *Mard-**i*** *ke* *dār-am* *bāh=āsh*
man-**i** that have-1SG with=3SG
telefon-i *sohbat* *mi-kon-am*,
phone-ADJ speak DUR-do.PRS-1SG
pesar-xāl=am=e.
son-uncle=1SG=COP.PRS.3SG
'The man whom I am talking to on the phone is my cousin.'

This particle has puzzled Persian syntacticians for a long time. In Kahnemuyipour (2014), this particle is analyzed as a grammatically-conditioned allomorph of EZ.[4] In dialects of Dari (Persian spoken in Afghanistan), the same form *-i* is used as regular Ezafe, e.g. *doxtar-i xord* 'little daughter', as well as with restrictive RCs (9), cf. (8a), lending further support to the idea that the particle used with restrictive RCs in Iranian Persian is an allomorph of Ezafe (see also Samiian and Larson's 2023 discussion of their example (16b)). If this approach to *-i* is correct, and if, as standardly assumed, restrictive relative clauses are [–N], (8) and (9) undermine the case analysis of EZ.

(9) *Zan-**i*** *ke* *az* *Tehrān* *āmada*
woman-**i** that P Tehran come.PST-PERF
besyār *hushyār* *ast.*
very smart COP.PRS.3SG
'The woman who has come from Tehran is very smart.'

3.2. Kurmanji and Zazaki

Further support for the idea that EZ is at work in restrictive relativization comes from Kurmanji (10) and Zazaki (11), which use the regular form of EZ uniformly in front of any restrictive modifier (regardless of its [+/−N] status), including RCs:

(10) a. *Jin-a* *ku* *ji* *Stenbol-ê*
woman-EZ.F that P Istanbul-OBL
hat-iy-e *gelek* *zîrek* *e.*
come.PST-3SG-PERF very clever COP.PRS.3SG
'The woman who has come from Istanbul is very clever.'

b. *Mêrik-ê* *ku* *ez* *bi* *telefeon-ē*
man-EZ.M that 1SG.DIR P telephone-OBL
pê *ra* *xeber* *di-d-im*
P.3SG.OBL Prt. Info PROG-give.PRS-1SG
pismam-ê *min* *e.*
cousin-EZ.M 1SG.OBL COP.PRS.3SG
'The man whom I am talking to on the phone is my cousin.'

[4] The connection between Ezafe and the so-called relative particle finds support from a historical perspective, as the Persian Ezafe is taken to be a descendent of the Old and Middle Persian 'relative connector', used to connect the noun with the post-nominal restrictive relative clause (Samvelian 2007, Skjærvo 2009, Kahnemuyipour 2014, also Moyne and Carden 1974).

(11) a. *Cinik-a* *ki* *Istembul* *ra*
woman-EZ.F that Istanbul P
am-a *zaf* *derg* *a.*
come.PST-3SG.F very tall COP.PRS.3SG.F
'The woman who has come from Istanbul is very tall.'

b. *Merık-o* *ki* *ez* *telefon* *de*
man-EZ.M.DIR that 1SG.DIR telephone P
tey *qeşi* *ken-an,*
together with speak do.PRS-1SG
lac-ê *ap-ê* *mın*
son-EZ.M.OBL uncle-EZ.M.OBL 1SG.OBL
o.
COP.PRS.3SG.M
'The man whom I am talking to on the phone is my cousin.'

Non-restrictive RCs in Kurmanji and Zazaki add an interesting twist to the data presented above. In these contexts, both languages allow EZ. While Zazaki employs the regular form of EZ preceded by a prosodic break (12), Kurmanji uses a different type of EZ, which is known as anaphoric EZ (AEZ) (13) (Haig 2011). Anaphoric EZ is distinguished from the regular EZ by the use of an initial glide. This is in contrast to Persian, which does not use EZ at all in cases of non-restrictive relativization (7).

(12) a. *Embaz-ê* *Hesen-i,* *o* *ki* *Istanbol*
friend-EZ.M.OBL Hasan-OBL EZ.M.DIR that Istanbul
ra *ama,* *zaf* *gureci* *yo.*
P come.PST.3SG very hardworking COP.PRS.3SG.M
'Hasan's friend, who came from Istanbul, is very hardworking/capable.'

b. *Wu-a* *min,* *a* *ki* *çend* *asmiyo*
sister-EZ.F 1SG.OBL EZ.F that some month
nê-ven-en-an, *en-a* *suk-i.*
NEG-see-PRS-1SG come.PRS-3SG.F town-OBL
'My sister, whom I haven't seen in months, is coming to town.'

(13) a. *Heval-ê* *Hasan,* *yê* *ku* *li* *Stenbol-ê*
friend-EZ.M Hasan AEZ.M that P Istanbul-OBL
xwand, *gelek* *zîrek* *e.*
read.PST.3SG very clever COP.PRS.3SG
'Hasan's friend, who was a student in Istanbul, is very clever.'

b. *Xwişk-a* *min,* *ya* *ku* *çend* *meh*
sister-EZ.F 1SG.OBL AEZ.F that some month
min *ne-dît-i-ye,* *îro* *tê*
1SG.OBL NEG-see.PST-PERF-3SG today PROG.come.PRS.3SG
mal-ê.
home-OBL
'My sister, whom I haven't seen in months, is coming home today.'

3.3. Summary

The distribution of Ezafe in the context of relative clauses in these Iranian languages is summarized in the table below.

Table 1. Distribution of EZ with Relative Clauses in Persian, Kurmanji and Zazaki

	Restrictive RCs	Non-restrictive RCs
Persian	EZ (*-i*)	—
Kurmanji	EZ	AEZ
Zazaki	EZ	EZ

Once we take the so-called relative particle in Persian to be an allomorph of EZ, the distribution in the context of restrictive RCs shown in Table 1 can be understood as the regular use of EZ with modifiers more generally. In other words, EZ can be said to appear uniformly before a restrictive RC in Kurmanji, Zazaki and Persian alike, with the only difference that Persian uses an allomorph of EZ in this context.

3.4. The analysis of non-restrictive relativization and Ezafe

For the syntax of non-restrictive relativization, we follow de Vries (2006), who proposes that the relative clause is a restrictive modifier of a noun phrase headed by a silent noun or nominal proform. Under this view, the relativized noun phrase specifies the content of the projection of the physical head noun, and is connected to it via asyndetic coordination, established in the 'colon phrase' in the structure in (14a).

(14) a. [$_{:P}$ [$_{DP}$ *John*] [**:** [$_{DP}$ D [$_{NP}$ ONE/PERSON$_{Ø}$] [$_{CP}$ *who loves Mary*]]]]
b. *John, who loves Mary = John, viz., THE ONE/PERSON who loves Mary*

From (14), the distribution of EZ with Kurmanji and Zazaki non-restrictive RCs follows directly, as it matches the distribution of EZ following a silent N more generally: while Persian does not allow EZ in these contexts, Zazaki and Kurmanji use EZ and AEZ, respectively, (15). In other words, the presence or absence of EZ with non-restrictive RCs is not an idiosyncratic property. If a language like Persian does not allow the presence of EZ after silent Ns, no EZ will be used with non-restrictive RCs (15). If a language, such as Kurmanji or Zazaki, allows for the presence of EZ after a silent N, the same linker is used in the context of non-restrictive RCs, (16).[5]

---

[5] One might think that an approach that takes non-restrictive RCs to be enveloped in a projection of a silent head noun which is, in turn, juxtaposed to the projection of the overt head noun could introduce a novel opportunity to take EZ with non-restrictive relative clauses to be the reflex of case assignment (*à la* Larson and Samiian), if one assumes there to be a case relation between the head noun and the silent-headed NP (indubitably [+N]) that envelops the RC. Coupled with a perspective on the distribution of EZ in the context of silent nouns more generally, this could conceivably capture the relevant facts. But assuming there to be a case relation between the overt head noun and the silent-headed NP asyndetically coordinated with it would be quite problematic, for the following reasons. First, case is usually taken to be associated with overt Ns, not silent ones. Second, in other silent-N EZ contexts (see (16) as well as (i) below), no overt N precedes the silent N, making it unlikely that a case-based approach could capture all silent-N cases uniformly. Lastly, on a de Vries-style asyndetic coordination approach (on which the relationship between the projection of the overt head noun and the projection of the silent noun is one of asyndetic coordination), case assignment to the second conjunct is unexpected in light of the fact that case is not normally assigned to second conjuncts separately, let alone by or from the first conjunct.

(i) a. Kurmanji

Ez	hesp-ê	reş	na-xwaz-im,	**yê**
1SG.DIR	horse-EZ.M	black	NEG-want.PRS-1SG	AEZ.M
spî	di-xwaz-im.			
White	PROG-want.PRS-1SG			

'I don't want the black horse; I want the white one.' (Gündoğdu 2023: 13)

b. Zazaki

Ez-a	kıtab-ê		suri	nê	ê
1SG.DIR-PROG	book-EZ.M.OBL		red	not	EZ.M.OBL
kıhoyi	g-en-a.				
blue	get-PRS-1SG				

'I get the blue book not the red one.' (Gündoğdu and Bulan 2023: 15)

(15) Persian

Man	*xodkār-e*	*ābi-ro*	*bā*	*Ø$_N$(*-e) .*
1SG	pen-EZ	blue-RA	with	EZ
qermez	*avaz*	*kard-am.*		
red	change	do.PST-1SG		

'I exchanged the blue pen with a red one.'

(16) a. Kurmanji

Min	*qelem-a*	*şîn*	*bi*
1SG.OBL	pen-EZ.F	blue	with
Ø$_N$(-ya)*	*sor*	*guhart.*	
AEZ	red	change.PST.3SG	

'I exchanged the blue pen with the red one.'

b. Zazaki

Mın	*qelem-a*	*şin-ı*	*bı*	*Ø$_N$*(-a)*
1SG.OBL	pen-EZ.F	blue-OBL.F	with	EZ.F
sûr-a	*vurn-a*		*ya.*	
red-OBL.F	change.PST-3SG.F		Part	

'I exchanged the blue pen with the red one.'

So far, we have looked at the distribution of EZ in the context of RCs in Persian, Kurmanji and Zazaki and shown how it follows from the general distribution of EZ and the syntax of RCs. Next, we consider the Noun-Complement Clause context.

4. Ezafe in the Context of Noun Complement Clauses (NCCs)

Kurmanji and Zazaki NCCs are always linked to the head N with EZ (N-EZ CP) as illustrated in (17) and (18), respectively, while Persian has been claimed to lack EZ in NCC contexts (19).

(17) Kurmanji

a.

Hêvi-ya	*ku*	*Şah*	*ji*	*Îran-ê*		
hope-EZ.F	that	Shah	P	Iran-OBL		
derkev-e,		*roj*	*bi*	*roj*	*winda*	*bû.*
SBJV.go out.PRS-3SG		day	with	day	lose	COP.PST.3SG

'The hope that Shah would leave Iran faded over time.'

b. *Ew* *gotegot-a* *ku* *vaksîn/derzî* *bêkêr*
DEM.DIR rumor-EZ.F that vaccine useless
e *di-b-e* *sedem-a*
COP.PRS.3SG PROG-become.PRS-3SG reason-EZ.F
xem-an.
concern-OBL.PL
'The rumor that the vaccine is useless is causing concern.'

(18) Zazaki

a. *omıd-**o*** *ki* *şax* *İran* *ra*
hope-EZ.DIR.M that Shah Iran P
veci-yo *roc bı roc* *bi*
leave.PRS-3SG.M day by day become.PST.3SG
kemi.
Less
'The hope that Shah would leave Iran faded over time.'

b. *a* *xeber-**a*** *ki* *derjin/aşi*
DEM.F rumor/news-EZ.F that vaccine
bêfaydı *o* *sebeb-ê*
useless COP.PRS-3SG.M reason-EZ.PL
qısawat-ı *ben-a.*
problem-OBL.F SBJV.COP.PRS-3SG.F
'The rumor that the vaccine is useless is causing concern.'

(19) Persian

in *omid (*-e)* *ke* *Shāhæz* *Irān* *xahæd=ræft*
this hope -EZ that Shah from Iran will=go
'the hope that the Shah will leave Iran' (Larson and Samiian 2020: 200)

Larson and Samiian (2020) attribute this difference to the alleged [+N] status of CPs in Kurmanji, as opposed to Persian. They base their claim that CPs are [+N] in Kurmanji but [–N] in Persian on the following argument with respect to relative clauses. They suggest that Kurmanji *ku* is a relative pronoun while Persian *ke* is a complementizer based on the observation that cross-linguistically, relative clauses introduced by a complementizer allow resumptive pronouns but RCs with a relative pronoun do not. Persian allows resumption under relativization under certain circumstances while Kurmanji does not; *ergo*, Kurmanji *ku* is a relative pronoun but Persian *ke* is a complementizer.

This argument has four limitations. First, from the conclusion that Kurmanji *ku* is a relative pronoun (and as standardly assumed, in SpecCP), nothing follows regarding the specification of the relative CP for the feature [+/–N] as CPs do not 'inherit' their categorial feature content from the operator in their specifier; the external distribution of relative clauses is not determined by the categorial features of the relative operator. Second, the conclusion that Kurmanji *ku* is a relative pronoun does not straightforwardly carry over to the syntax of noun-complement clauses (though see Krapova and Cinque (2015), where NCCs are analyzed as reduced relative clauses; cf. fn. 6 below), whose presumed specification for the feature [+/–N] remains largely unsupported. Third, the distribution of Persian and Kurmanji CPs elsewhere is identical: CPs cannot be used as clausal subjects in either language without an additional nominal element, e.g. a demonstrative (20), and in both Persian and Kurmanji, CP complements are post-verbal unlike nominal arguments, which are preverbal, (21/22). Therefore, the claimed contrast between Kurmanji and Persian is not robustly supported. It is worth noting that CPs have the same distribution in Zazaki as well, as shown in (23).

(20) a. Persian

**(in)*	*ke*	*vāksan*	*bifāyde*	*ast*
this	that	vaccine	useless	COP.PRS.3SG
kāmelan	*doruq=e.*			
totally	lie=COP.PRS.3SG			

'That the vaccine is useless is totally false.'

b. Kurmanji

Ew ku	*derzî*	*bêkêr*	*e*
DEM	that vaccine	useless	COP.PRS.3SG
hemû	*derew*	*e.*	
all	lie	COP.PRS.3SG	

'That the vaccine is useless is all a lie.'

(21) Persian

a. Nominal arguments

Man	*ketāb-o*	*mi-xun-am.*
1SG	book-RA	DUR-read.PRS-1SG

'I am reading the book.'

b. CP complements
Un ne-mi-dun-e ke man ketāb-o
3SG NEG-DUR-know.PRS-3SG that SG book-RA
mi-xun-am.
DUR-read.PRS-1SG
'S/he doesn't know that I am reading the book.'

(22) Kurmanji
a. Nominal arguments
Ez kitab-ê di-xwîn-im.
1SG.DIR book-OBL PROG-read.PRS-1SG
'I am reading the book.'

b. CP complements
Ew ni-zan-e ku ez
3SG.DIR NEG-know.PRS-3SG that 1SG.DIR
kitab-ê di-xwîn-im.
book-OBL PROG-read.PRS-1SG
'S/he doesn't know that I am reading the book.'

(23) Zazaki
a. CP as a clausal subject
A ki derjin/aşi bêfaydı o
DEM.F that vaccine useless COP.PRS-3SG.M
sebeb-ê qısawat-ı ben-a.
reason-EZ.PL problem-OBL.F SBJV.COP.PRS-3SG.F
'That the vaccine is useless is causing concern.'

b. CP complements
A ne-zan-a ki ez
3SG.DIR.F NEG-know.PRS-3SG.F that 1SG.DIR
kitab-ı wan-en-an.
book-OBL.F read-PRS-1SG
'She doesn't know that I read the book'

c. Nominal arguments
Ez kitab-ı wan-en-an.
1SG.DIR book-OBL.F read-PRS-1SG
'I read the book.'

Finally, a closer examination casts doubt on Larson and Samiian's basic claim about the absence of resumptive elements in Kurmanji CPs and

associating it with the relative pronoun status of *ku*. Larson and Samiian first observe that Kurmanji does not allow resumptive pronouns in direct object position in RCs, as shown in (24). Based on the assumption that resumptive pronouns cannot occur in RCs introduced by a relative pronoun, they suggest that the impossibility of resumptive pronouns in this language can only be explained if *ku* 'that' is considered as a relative pronoun.

(24) keçik-a [ku min (*wê) doh dît]
girl-EZ.F that 1SG.OBL (her) yesterday see.PST.3SG
zehf rind bû.
very pretty was
'The girl whom I saw (*her) yesterday was very beautiful.' (Larson and Samiian 2020: 208)

However, in cases of relativization of P-objects, Kurmanji permits the use of Ps that have a pronominal element contracted onto them. Thus, in (25) the form *jê* is an amalgam of the preposition *ji* and the 3SG Oblique pronoun *wê/wî*.

(25) keçik-a [ku min jê ra gul
girl-EZ.F that 1SG.OBL P.3SG.OBL Prt rose
şand] çû Stenbol-ê.
send.PST.3SG go.PST.3SG Istanbul-OBL
'The girl whom I sent roses [to her] went to Istanbul.' (Larsonand Samiian 2020: 208)

If we consider the contracted prepositions as resumptive forms, then a sentence like (25) poses a problem for Larson and Samiian's basic claim about the absence of resumption in CPs in Kurmanji. Zazaki has a distribution similar to Kurmanji in these contexts: again, resumption is not possible with direct objects but available in the prepositional context.[6]

Let us now return to the distribution of EZ in the context of NCCs in Persian. We noted in (19) that EZ is not used in such contexts. However, under the right circumstances, Persian allows for the possibility, largely overlooked in the literature, of using the same particle *-i* used with restrictive RCs in the context of NCCs. The particle was analyzed as an allomorph of EZ

[6] The empirical generalization about the distribution of resumption may need to make reference to the status of the pronominal proforms as *clitics*: those Iranian languages that employ clitics (Persian, Central Kurdish) permit resumption while those that lack clitics (Kurmanji, Zazaki) disallow resumption (except with P-objects, where resumption is forced due to a general ban on P-stranding). We leave a more thorough investigation of the involvement of clitichood in resumption for future research.

in section 3. We see in (26)–(27) that while absence of EZ is grammatical, the use of the *-i* allomorph of EZ is also allowed (cf. (19)).[7]

(26) {*in/un* *edeā /* *(in/un)* *edeā-**yi***} *ke* *vāksan*
this/that claim/ this/that claim-**i** that vaccine
xatarnāk=e=ro *man* *matrah* *na-kard-am.*
dangerous=COP.PRS.3SG=RA 1SG mention NEG-did-1SG
'I didn't bring up the claim that the vaccine is dangerous.'

(27) {*in/un* *shāye'e/(in/un)* *shāye'e-**yi***} *ke* *vāksan*
this/that rumour/this/that rumour-**i** that vaccine
xatarnāk=e=ro *az* *ki* *shenid-i*
dangerous=COP.PRS.3SG=RA from who heard-2SG
'Who did you hear the rumour that the vaccine is dangerous from?'

The above facts present a further challenge for the case analysis of EZ, as the mere claim that Kurmanji CPs are [+N] and Persian CPs are [–N], itself already questionable, will not make the right prediction about the distribution of EZ in the NCC context. The case analysis would need to assume that CPs can be optionally [+N] or [–N] in Persian. There is no morphosyntactic distinction (or any other independently attested difference) between the CPs following the head N in the contexts with or without EZ to support this claim.

In the syntactic literature on NCCs, two main camps can be identified with respect to the analysis of these structures. One camp (Stowell 1981; Napoli 1989: 250; den Dikken 2006: 244) takes the NCC to serve at the subject of predication for the projection of the head noun (cf. '[that S] is the claim'), with the surface order derived as a result of inversion of NP around CP, as illustrated in (28).

(28) [$_{DP}$ *the* [$_{FP}$ [$_{NP}$ *claim*] [F [$_{RP}$ [$_{CP}$ *that S*] [RELATOR t_{NP}]]]]]

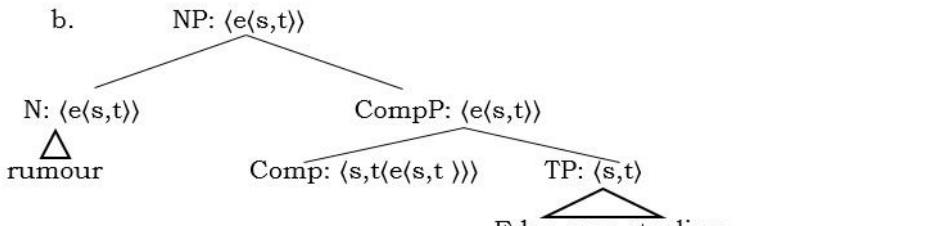
According to another prominent approach (Kratzer 2006; Moulton 2009, 2013; Krapova and Cinque 2015), the NCC serves as (a subpart of) the predicate for the projection of the head noun. Under this view, the surface order matches the base-generated order of constituents and no inversion is

[7] An anonymous reviewer points out that there are speakers who find examples (26) and (27) unnatural with *-i*, even in the discourse contexts we specify later in the text. We have checked these facts with several native speakers and they found the examples with *-i* acceptable so long as the clause is discourse-anaphoric or hearer-old. As shown in (26)-(27), the use of a demonstrative is obligatory in the examples without the particle *-i*, but optional in those with *-i*. Given this contrast, the examples with *-i* may be more readily accessible without the use of a demonstrative, as the absence of a demonstrative forces the use of *-i*.

involved. The *CP Predicate Hypothesis* (Kratzer 2006; Moulton 2009) has the complementizer turn the clause into a predicate: (29).[8] The Comp identifies the content of the noun with the proposition it embeds; e.g., the content of the rumour is the proposition that Edna was stealing, and the CP combines with the noun by predicate modification.

(29) a. rumour that Edna was stealing

b.



(Moulton 2013: 277)

On the assumption that (29) is correct as given, there is no functional head present between the noun and the CP and there is also no inversion. As we have discussed above, we see EZ as the exponent of the inversion process in syntax. The strategy in (29) is thus expected to give rise to absence of EZ. This matches Persian (19) and the versions of (26) and (27) that lack *-i*. These examples are outputs of (29). The versions of (26) and (27) that DO contain *-i* then likely differ in their syntax from their 'bare', EZ-less counterparts. The inversion operation that manoeuvres the NP around the CP in (28) is responsible for the emergence of EZ, in line with Kahnemuyipour (2014). Thus, the versions of (26) and (27) with EZ are outputs of (28).[9]

Importantly, the versions of Persian (26) and (27) with EZ differ from their 'bare' EZ-less counterparts not only in their syntax but also in their interpretation: the NCC in the versions of (26) and (27) with EZ is interpreted

[8] For Krapova and Cinque (2015), the predicativity of the NCC is a function of relativization: the NCC is treated as a subpart of a relative clause with a silent copula and a null relative pronoun (*the claim WHICH IS that S*). Though the Persian and Kurmanji NCC data are compatible with this analysis, we do not follow it in the text because support for the postulation of a relative clause with a silent copula and a silent left periphery is minimal and equivocal.

[9] Our analysis of NCCs in Persian relies on a head-initial syntax, mirroring the structure of verbs taking a complement clause. This could suggest that the kind of flexible headedness proposed for Persian verb phrases (see, for example, Karimi 2005) might extend into the nominal domain. We are grateful to a reviewer for bringing this to our attention.

as hearer-old, discourse-anaphoric.[10] This falls out naturally from a derivation along the lines of (28). The NCC is base-generated as a subject of predication. In syntactic situations in which a particular constituent can in principle be structurally represented either as a subject or as a non-subject (cf. the active/passive alternation), construal of this constituent as a subject shows a strong tendency to deliver a topical, hearer-old interpretation.

Turning to Kurmanji and Zazaki, one can conclude that only the strategy in (28) is used for the formation of NCCs, and as a result, EZ is always required. We noted at the outset that Kurmanji and Zazaki EZ is sensitive to the phi-features of the head noun, which we take to be a case of agreement. As such, one may relate the obligatory use of the inversion strategy in (28) (and the presence of EZ) to the requirement in Kurmanji and Zazaki morphosyntax to engage in a phi-feature agreement relationship with the head noun, exponed on EZ. This process can only be an outcome of (28) (as opposed to (29)). The Kurmanji and Zazaki examples in (17) and (18), respectively, are thus based on (28). Kurmanji and Zazaki shows no alternation between (28) and (29): the fact that the head noun must engage in phi-feature agreement with EZ entails that Kurmanji and Zazaki NCCs can only avail themselves of (28), in which the NCC is a subject. Because in both languages the NCC has no choice but to be syntactically represented as a subject (and consequently there is no alternation in this language between (28) and (29)), there is no information-structural effect associated in Kurmanji and Zazaki with the use of (28). As a result, the NCC in (17), (18) and similar such constructions in both languages can be either hearer-old or hearer-new.

Indeed, the correlation established here between NCC syntax and the presence of agreeing EZ finds further support from Central Kurdish (CK). For

[10] The EZ-less versions of (26) and (27), by contrast, are usable in both hearer-old and hearer-new contexts. This interpretive contrast between 'bare' and morphologically more complex NCC constructions is similar (though not identical) to the one Hankamer and Mikkelsen (2021) discuss with reference to the two types of NCC constructions found in Danish. In both Danish and Persian, the morphologically more complex version (employing EZ in Persian and a preposition in Danish) is only compatible with a construal of the information conveyed by the NCC as hearer-old. Danish differs from Persian, however, in that its 'bare' NCC construction apparently requires a hearer-new interpretation for the CP. Moulton's (29), from which we have derived EZ-less NCC constructions, is information-structurally neutral. The discursive versatility of Persian EZ-less (26) and (27) is directly in line with this. We will not address here the question of why Danish 'bare' NCC constructions are apparently not as flexible in discourse as their Persian counterparts.

instance, in the Silemani dialect of CK, NCCs are always linked to the head N with EZ (N-EZ CP), as illustrated in (30), similar to Kurmanji and Zazaki.[11]

(30) a. *aw* *bochūn-a* *bāw-á-yī* *ka* *sag*
DIST opinion-EZ common-DEF-EZ that dog
bawafa=ya
loyal=COP.3SG
'the common opinion that dogs are loyal' (Jambrović and Hassan 2023: 16)

b. *aw* *hiwa-ya-ī* *ka* *Shah* *Iran* *je*
DIST hope-DEF-EZ that Shah Iran P
da-hel-et *ba* *pey* *kat*
IND-leave.PRS-3SG P after ever
na-ma
NEG-remain/stay.PRS.3SG
'The hope that Shah would leave Iran faded over time.'

5. Conclusion

We have argued in this paper that the distribution of EZ in the context of adnominal clauses in Persian, Kurmanji and Zazaki follows from the general behaviour of EZ and the syntax of N–CP structures. In doing so, we have shown that the distribution of EZ in the N–CP context in Persian, Kurmanji and Zazaki poses a serious challenge to the case analysis of EZ, which predicts that [–N] modifiers should not require the presence of EZ. The facts from these two languages are instead compatible with the inversion analysis of EZ with the correct understanding of the syntax of N–CP structures. We

[11] Note that restrictive RCs in the Silemani dialect are also preceded by EZ (i), as we see in the other Iranian languages (Persian, Kurmanji and Zazaki) discussed so far. In contrast, non-restrictive RCs are not preceded by EZ in this dialect, and they follow a prosodic break as indicated by the comma (ii):

(i) sag-a bichūk-ak-ān-ī ka á-war-in
dog-EZ small-DEF-PL-EZ COMP PROG-bark-3PL
'the small dogs that are barking' (Jambrović and Hassan 2023: 16)

(ii) sag-a bichūk-ak-ān, ka hamū á-war-in
dog-EZ small-DEF-PL COMP all PROG-bark-3PL
'the small dogs, which are all barking' (Jambrović and Hassan 2023: 16)

There are further complications with respect to the distribution of Ezafe in the context relative clauses in Central Kurdish, e.g. the presence/absence of a complementizer and a possible complementarity with the indefinite marker, which warrant further investigation (MacKenzie 1961, McCaurus 2009, Haig 2019).

have posited that all these languages make use of EZ in the context of restrictive RCs, as expected. In Kurmanji and Zazaki, the regular form of EZ is used, while in Persian, an allomorph of EZ, which appears in the context of CPs, is used instead. With non-restrictive RCs, while Persian does not use EZ, Zazaki uses the regular form of EZ and Kurmanji uses a different type of EZ, known as anaphoric EZ (AEZ). We followed de Vries (2006) in analyzing non-restrictive RCs as restrictive RCs to a silent-headed NP. The distribution of EZ in Persian, Kurmanji and Zazaki non-restrictive RCs follows straightforwardly, as it matches the distribution of EZ following a silent N more generally.

With NCCs, Kurmanji and Zazaki use the regular EZ consistently, while Persian exhibits two options: the allomorph of EZ used with CPs or no EZ at all. We have posited two possible structures for NCCs: (i) NCC as the subject of predication for the projection of the head noun, with the surface order derived as a result of inversion of NP around CP, (ii) NCC as (a subpart of) the predicate for the projection of the head noun, with no inversion involved. While Persian was taken to allow both strategies, Kurmanji and Zazaki allow the former only. The distribution of EZ follows accordingly, with EZ only appearing in structures that involve inversion.

Like Kurmanji and Zazaki (and unlike Persian), several other Iranian languages show some form of agreement with the head N on EZ. In future work, we intend to investigate the distribution of EZ in the context of NCCs in Central Kurdish dialects as well as some other Iranian languages such as Hawrami to assess the tentative connection made here between NCC syntax and the presence of agreeing EZ in a language. More generally, the distribution of EZ in the context of both RCs and NCCs in other Iranian languages needs further investigation to test the proposals advanced in this paper and to gain a better understanding of the syntax of RCs, NCCs and the Ezafe constructions in Iranian languages and beyond.

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