Persian Possessive Construction Left Dislocation based on Optimality Perspective

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1. Introduction
This study investigates non-canonical syntax in the Persian language from a non-hierarchical perspective, emphasizing the significant role of information-structural triggers, including topic and focus, in shaping the non-canonical order of left-dislocated possessive constructions. We apply Optimality Theory (Prince & Smolensky, 1993; 2004) to account for the grammatical and pragmatic properties of these constructions. Additionally, we utilize Syntax First Alignment (Newson, 2004; 2010) to explore the constraints and discourse-pragmatic reasons for left-dislocated possessive constructions, particularly those related to left dislocation in Persian.

While left dislocation may resemble preposing, it differs in that a co-referential pronoun occupies the canonical position of the marked constituent (Schiffrin & Hamilton, 2008). Dabir-Moghaddam (2005) explains that left dislocation involves moving an item to the sentence-initial position, with a resumptive pronoun taking its original place.

2. Materials and methods
This research follows a descriptive-analytical approach, and the sample sentences consist of colloquial language, extracted from conversations and relevant sources. We aim to investigate several properties, including whether the left-dislocated constituent serves as an argument or an adjunct, the status of the 1st argument as an explicit or omitted pronoun, and the possibility of double-topicalization in Persian possessive constructions.

3. Results and discussion
Applying Alignment Syntax and the theoretical framework of Optimality Theory, this paper demonstrates that specific constraints, such as Precedence (x p y or x f y), Adjacency (x A y), and Faithfulness ($FAITH_{PRAG}$) play a crucial role in forming left dislocated possessive constructions in Persian. These constraints are organized using structural elements, denoted as Features and Conceptual Units. Features can be either grammatical (e.g., argument and adjunct) or discourse-functional (e.g., topic).

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Starting out from the assumption that the discourse function of an input element is represented as a feature or a set of features and following Nagy (2013), the following bundles of discourse features seem to be possible in Persian Left dislocation.

- [new] ([contrast]), ⟶ discourse –new element or focus
- [about] ([contrast]) ⟶ discourse-old element or topic
- [new] [about] ([contrast]) ⟶ new topic, typically surfacing as Left dislocation
- Absence of discourse features ⟶ neutral element

Accordingly, there can be some constraints regarding the discourse features including [contrast] A [about] and [contrast] A [new]. Some other types of constraints applying in the analysis of Possessive construction consist of [NEW] p D_{ARG}, ROOT p [ARG, ADJ] > ROOT p D_{PRAG}, or ARG1 p [ARG, ADJ].

By considering discourse features such as [new] ([contrast]), [about] ([contrast]), [new] [about] ([contrast]), and the absence of discourse features, constraints like [contrast] A [about] and [contrast] A [new] are applied. Additional constraints are related to the features of [ARGUMENT], [NEW], [ABOUT], [CONTRAST], and [ADJUNCT]. The results show that violating constraints related to the subject and topic leads to suboptimal structures. Although the violation of higher-ranked constraints like faithfulness and the precedence of argument1 (subject) results in severe violations, it does not render the structures ungrammatical, as syntax allows for flexibility.

4. Conclusion
The analysis shows that pronominal clitic attachment to the verb leads to a violation of the argument domain's presence in the verbal root and the presence of arg2 in the argument domain, both of which are critical violations. Clitic attachment to a particle or preposition in other candidates does not result in fatal violations. The presence or absence of a subject pronoun does not impact the evaluation significantly, as both explicit and dropped subject pronouns encounter constraints similarly.

This research confirms that double topicalization is feasible in Persian, with the first left dislocation affecting the 2nd adjunct and the second left dislocation targeting the 1st adjunct. This indicates that the constituent undergoing left dislocation in possessive construction in Persian is the adjunct, not the argument. Additionally, the study underscores the effectiveness of Optimality Theory and Syntax First Alignment in analyzing left dislocation in Persian possessive constructions.