

REMARK

Gilaki reverse Ezafe: The two faces of a nominal linker

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Abstract

This paper examines a nominal linker (known as reverse Ezafe) in the Caspian language Gilaki. It is shown that the nominal linker in Gilaki is in fact the realization of two different morphosyntactic elements with distinct properties. In doing so, we also highlight the differences between reverse Ezafe and Ezafe, found in Persian and other Iranian languages. This study has implications for the typology of nominal linkers, leading to the conclusion that superficially similar linking elements, both within a language and across languages, may in fact have different syntactic properties and as such should be analyzed as distinct phenomena.

KEYWORDS

attributive, Ezafe, genitive, Gilaki, nominal linkers, Persian, reverse Ezafe

1 | INTRODUCTION

In many Iranian languages, a linking element appears between a noun and (some of its) modifiers, such as an adjective or a possessor. The best known case of such a linker is the Ezafe (hereafter EZ), studied extensively in Persian (Ghameshi, 1997; Kahnemuyipour, 2014; Karimi & Brame, 1986; Larson & Samiiian, 2020; Samiiian, 1994) and some other Iranian languages

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(e.g., Kurdish: Kalami, 2020, Samvelian, 2006; Zazaki: Gündoğdu et al., 2020, Kahnemuyipour & Peters, 2019). In these languages, the EZ appears between the noun and its postnominal modifiers: N-EZ A; N-EZ Possessor; N-EZ A-EZ Possessor. In a subset of Iranian languages, most notably Caspian languages, these same modifiers are prenominal, and yet a linker, known as reverse EZ (hereafter REZ), appears between the prenominal modifier and the noun: A-REZ N; Possessor-REZ N; Possessor-REZ A-REZ N (see Larson, 2009). The naming of the linker as “reverse” reflects the fact that the order of the noun and its modifiers in the REZ languages appears to be the reverse of the EZ languages and is not based on the properties of the linker itself.

This paper investigates the distribution of REZ in Eshkevarat Gilaki (Northwestern Iranian, Caspian, hereafter Gilaki).¹ At first sight, this element looks very similar to the EZ found in Persian, Kurdish and some other Iranian languages. Here, we compare Gilaki REZ with Persian EZ and argue that these two elements should be characterized differently in spite of their apparent similarity. We further argue that Gilaki REZ is in fact the realization of two different morphosyntactic elements. In Section 2, we provide an overview of Persian EZ and our typological predictions regarding the distribution of this nominal linker. We also lay out the distribution of Gilaki REZ. In Section 3, we establish the difference between Gilaki REZ and Persian EZ based on some phonological and morphosyntactic properties. In this section, we also argue that what is known as REZ has a dual function and hence represents two distinct morphosyntactic elements. We provide data from other genealogically related and unrelated languages supporting this claim. In Section 4, we further investigate the dual nature of Gilaki REZ and provide some initial thoughts on what each of these morphosyntactic elements may represent. Section 5 concludes the paper and discusses the implications of our findings for the typology of nominal linkers.

2 | PERSIAN EZAFE AND GILAKI REVERSE EZAFE: AN OVERVIEW

In this section, we provide an overview of the distribution of EZ and REZ in Persian and Gilaki, respectively.

2.1 | Persian Ezafe

Persian EZ (also found in many other Iranian languages such as Kurdish) appears between a noun and its postnominal modifier (N-EZ Mod), and is repeated on subsequent modifiers, if they are present, except the last one (N-EZ Mod₁-EZ Mod₂-EZ Mod₃), as in (1). (1a) shows an attributive noun, (1b) is an adjective, (1c) shows iterativity, and (1d) is a possessor. In (1e) and (1f), we see a contrast between two types of prepositions. Nominal prepositions (1e) require EZ, while true prepositions (1f) do not (Ghomeshi, 1997; Kahnemuyipour, 2014; Karimi & Brame, 1986; Larson & Samiiian, 2021; Samiiian, 1994, among others).² The properties of these two types of prepositions will be examined in Section 3.1.

¹Eshkevarat Gilaki is spoken in a number of towns and villages in the eastern part of the Guilan province of Iran. It is possible that some of the properties of REZ discussed in this paper do not extend to other variants of the language. We leave a detailed cross-dialectal study to future research. The Eshkevarat Gilaki data are provided by the second author of the paper, a native speaker of this variant of Gilaki.

²It is worth noting that Ezafe appears on a noun, when modified by a PP, regardless of whether the P is nominal or not (see Kahnemuyipour, 2014, among others).

- (1) Presence of EZ with post-nominal modifiers in Persian
- | | | | | | |
|----|---------------------|---------|----|-----------------|-----|
| a. | (ye) kif-e | čarm | b. | (ye) mard-e | čāq |
| | a bag-EZ | leather | | a man-EZ | fat |
| | ‘a/the leather bag’ | | | ‘a/the fat man’ | |
| c. | sag-e qahveyi-ye | bozorg | d. | ketāb-e ali/man | |
| | dog-EZ brown-EZ | big | | book-EZ Ali/I | |
| | ‘big brown dog’ | | | ‘Ali’s/my book’ | |
| e. | pošt-e dar | | f. | az tehrān | |
| | behind-EZ door | | | from Tehran | |
| | ‘behind the door’ | | | ‘from Tehran’ | |

Persian EZ appears only with postnominal modifiers (1) and never with prenominal elements.

- (2) Absence of EZ with pre-nominal modifiers in Persian
- | | | | | | |
|----|------------------------|-------|----|----------------|-------------------------|
| a. | do (tā) – (*e) | ketāb | b. | in-(*e) | ketāb |
| | two CL-EZ | book | | this-EZ | book |
| | ‘two books’ | | | ‘this book’ | |
| c. | in-(*e) do (tā) – (*e) | ketāb | d. | har/hič-(*e) | ketāb-(i) |
| | this-EZ two CL-EZ | book | | each/no-EZ | book-INDEF ³ |
| | ‘these two books’ | | | ‘each/no book’ | |

When there is a combination of prenominal and postnominal modifiers, the contrast with respect to the absence of EZ with the former and its appearance with the latter become more evident (3).

- (3) Persian EZ with pre-nominal and post-nominal modifiers combined
- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|---------|----------|-------------|
| in | do | ketāb-e | qatur-e | jāleb |
| this | two | book-EZ | thick-EZ | interesting |
| ‘these two interesting thick books’ | | | | |

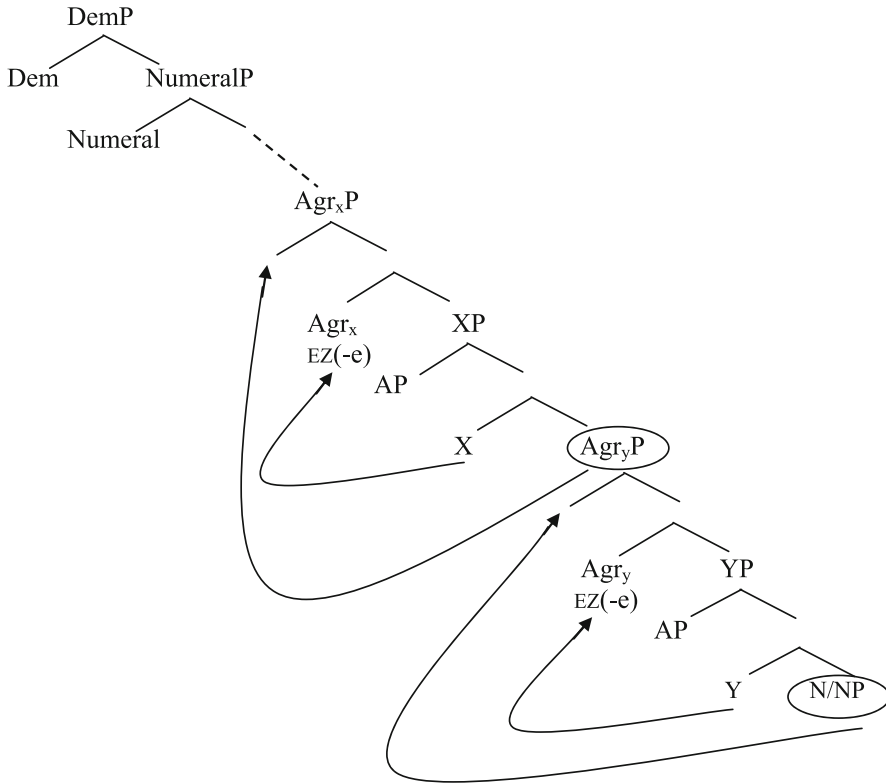
The above facts in Persian highlight a clear correlation between the presence of EZ and the order of nominal elements. The noun marks a clear boundary for the EZ marker: all elements preceding it lack the EZ, while the noun itself and all elements following it (except the final one) are marked with the EZ. The schemas in (4) illustrate the correlation between the EZ and the order of nominal elements. (4a) represents the most productive pattern, found in the EZ construction, where the noun is followed by the EZ and a postnominal modifier such as an adjective or a possessor (see (1)). The pattern in (4b) is what is observed with prenominal modifiers such as a numeral or a demonstrative (see (2)). The pattern in (4c) with a postnominal modifier and no EZ is restricted to a group of left-headed compounds, not discussed in this paper (see Kahnemuyipour, 2014). Crucially, (4d) with a prenominal modifier and the EZ is not observed in Persian.

- (4) **Correlation between the Ezafe and order of nominal elements**
- | | | |
|------------|-----|---|
| a. N-EZ | Mod | Most common: Fully productive syntactically |
| b. Mod | N | Prenom. modifier |
| c. N | Mod | Limited to some compounds |
| d. *Mod-EZ | N | Gap in Persian (apparently filled by Gilaki, see below) |

³The indefinite marker is obligatory with the negative quantifier *hič* ‘no,’ suggesting that it is a negative polarity item (NPI). This issue has no bearing on our discussion.

Kahnemuyipour (2014) builds on the asymmetry in (4) and develops a roll-up analysis of Persian EZ, according to which the noun phrase is head-final in a strictly right branching structure, with adjectives in specifier positions of functional projections above the noun. In addition to the projections that house the adjectives, there are intermediate Agr projections that enable the roll-up derivation, shown schematically in (5).

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



The analysis schematized in (5) is in line with other roll-up analyses of determiner phrase (DP) structure in other languages within the framework best known as cartography (Cinque, 1996, 2002, 2005, 2010; Shlonsky, 2004, 2010, among others). These analyses assume a universal base merge order of elements in a right-branching structure and account for various possible and impossible word orders across languages. For example, according to Greenberg's Universal 20 (as restated in Cinque, 2005), in prenominal position the order of demonstrative, numeral, and adjective (or any subset thereof) conforms to the order $\text{Dem} > \text{Num} > \text{A}$, and in postnominal position the order of the same elements (or any subset thereof) conforms either to the order $\text{Dem} > \text{Num} > \text{A}$ or to the order $\text{A} > \text{Num} > \text{Dem}$. In other words, there is no language with prenominal demonstratives, numerals, and adjectives in which the order of these elements is reversed. These analyses capture the asymmetry with respect to word order between languages with prenominal and postnominal modifiers by suggesting a universal right-branching base order of $\text{Dem} > \text{Num} > \text{A} > \text{N}$. If we further assume that variation with respect to word order is the result of movements

initiating with the noun, the possible and impossible orders in this regard can be accounted for.⁴

Under the view presented above, the EZ marker can be seen as the surface realization of the suggested inversion process in (5) (akin to den Dikken's, 2006 linker). For example, when the NP rolls around the AP in the specifier of YP, the EZ appears in the Agr_y head, leading to the N-Ez Adj pattern (4a).⁵ This inversion process continues if there are more modifiers involved, for example, the AP in the specifier of XP. Importantly, in (5), the numerals and demonstratives are heads, higher in the structure, and not involved in the roll-up movement. This is why these prenominal modifiers do not involve an EZ marker (4b). The generalization in (4d) is crucial here. If EZ is the result of roll-up movement in a right-branching structure, then one should not find it on prenominal modifiers. When there is no inversion, there should be no EZ. In other words, the EZ can be seen as another manifestation of the asymmetric pattern predicted by an approach that takes the noun phrase to be universally right-branching and head-final, with word order differences arising from movements initiated from the noun. Under this view, EZ should only be found with postnominal modifiers. As mentioned above and discussed in more detail in the next subsection, Gilaki has a nominal linker that appears on prenominal modifiers, hence seemingly posing a challenge to this generalization. We will argue below that this Gilaki REZ is a fundamentally different morphosyntactic element from the Persian EZ and is crucially not the result of inversion.

2.2 | Reverse Ezafe in Gilaki

As noted above, Caspian languages, represented here by Gilaki, appear to question the gap in (4d), as attributive adjectives and possessors are prenominal and yet require a nominal linker, known as REZ. REZ is also used in two other contexts involving PPs. For one, Gilaki adpositions, which are mostly postpositional, require REZ on the noun complement.⁶ In addition, REZ is also used on a PP modifying a noun. These four contexts are exemplified in (6). In (6a), we see an example of a noun with an attributive noun and an adjective, both of which carry the REZ marking. In (6b), a possessor has been added to the example in (6a) and we can see that the possessor is also marked with REZ. (6c) shows a simple postpositional phrase with REZ appearing on the noun complement. In (6d), we see two instances of REZ, one on the complement of P (similar to 6c) and one on the whole PP modifier.⁷

⁴The picture presented here is overly simplified for ease of exposition. Further investigations have shown that of the 24 logical possibilities of ordering the four elements Dem, Num, A, and N, 14 are found across languages. Cinque (2005) provides an account of the possible and impossible orders within a cartographic framework.

⁵It should be noted that the N/NP includes number marking and should perhaps be labeled as NumP. Also, the NP cannot include PP complements. As with other roll-up analyses, PPs under this view should be introduced in specifiers of higher projections (see Kahnemuyipour, 2014).

⁶There are a couple of adpositions that are prepositional and behave like Persian prepositions, taking EZ on the P itself, for example, qabl "before," ba'd "after." This may be the result of borrowing from Persian.

⁷An anonymous reviewer raises the possibility that the REZ suffixed to the postposition sər "on" may belong to the postposition alone rather than linking the whole PP to the noun təxtə "board." Under this view, sər "on," which is a nominal postposition, is taking REZ similarly to any other noun in the language. While this interpretation is consistent with (6d), it should be noted that REZ appears on PPs even when the P is not nominal, see footnote 12, ex. (ii).

- (6) a. zərd-ə čərm-ə kif
 yellow-REZ leather-REZ bag
 ‘(a) yellow leather bag’
- b. hasən-ə zərd-ə čərm-ə kif
 Hasan-REZ yellow-REZ leather-REZ bag
 ‘Hasan's yellow leather bag’
- c. dər-ə pušt
 door-REZ behind
 ‘behind the door’
- d. [divār-ə sər]-ə təxtə
 wall-REZ on-REZ board
 ‘the board on the wall’

Meanwhile, similar to Persian, Gilaki demonstratives and numerals are pronominal and do not take REZ (7).⁸

- (7) i šiš tə səbz-ə dəftər
 this six CL green-REZ notebook
 ‘these six green notebooks’

Before we highlight some differences between Persian EZ and Gilaki REZ in the next section, it is important to note that with respect to order alone, Gilaki is clearly not a true mirror image of Persian. Such a language would be one with a mixture of pronominal and postnominal modifiers, with only pronominal ones taking a linker. We see in (7) that elements such as numerals and demonstratives, which are pronominal in Persian and do not take EZ, are also pronominal in Gilaki and lack REZ. A true mirror image of Persian would be a language that would have these elements as postnominal. We are yet to come across such a language among Iranian languages with linkers. If we assume universal right-branching structures (à la Kayne, 1994) and take EZ-like nominal linkers to be the result of syntactic inversion (roll-up movement), this gap in the typology of nominal linkers follows. This is because the only way such elements could be postnominal would be for the NP to roll around them, which should lead to the appearance of EZ. In other words, there is no way to get these high elements in the postnominal position without the appearance of EZ-like nominal linkers.

⁸The example in (7) may raise an alternative explanation for the absence of REZ. As the classifier ends in a vowel, the absence of REZ may be attributed to the resolution of vowel hiatus in Gilaki, which normally deletes the second vowel. Meanwhile, examples such as (i) show that other measure terms, which are consonant-final, behave similarly and no REZ is used.

- (i) du zəbil čaya
 two MEASURE tea ‘two bags of tea’

The same issue may be raised with respect to the vowel-final demonstrative *i*. While demonstratives are all vowel-final in Gilaki, in another Caspian language Tati, shown in (ii), demonstratives are not vowel-final and yet they do not take REZ. These facts support the general point about the absence of REZ with demonstratives, numerals and classifiers.

- (ii) em ketāb
 this book ‘this book’

That still leaves us with the question of what REZ is. Is it an element just like Persian EZ, only appearing in the reverse order, hence challenging the generalization in (4d)? Does it have a different morphosyntax? In the remainder of the paper, we will argue that Gilaki REZ has properties that clearly distinguish it from Persian EZ and also show that what is known as REZ is in fact the realization of two distinct morphosyntactic elements.

3 | GILAKI REZ VERSUS PERSIAN EZ

In this section, we take a closer look at Gilaki REZ showing that it should be distinguished from Persian EZ. We also provide evidence from Gilaki and other Iranian and non-Iranian languages to support the dual nature of Gilaki REZ.

3.1 | REZ ≠ EZ; REZ₁ ≠ REZ₂

We noted above that Persian prepositions are divided into two main classes: true and nominal. This division is based on certain syntactic properties. For example, nominal (but not true) prepositions can be pluralized (8a), case marked, or appear with demonstratives (8b) (Samiian, 1994).

- (8) a. zir-ā / pošt-ā / tu-ā / *az-ā / *dar-ā
 under-PL behind-PL in-PL from-PL in-PL
 b. un zir/tu/pošt-(r)o did-am. / *in/un dar-o did-am.
 that under/in/behind-ACC see.PST-1SG this/that in-ACC see.PST-1SG
 ‘I saw the underneath/inside/behind.’

Gilaki postpositions exhibit the same behavior with respect to their nominal versus true adpositional status. The Gilaki facts in (9) parallel the Persian facts in (8).

- (9) a. bun-ən / pušt-ən / men-ən / *ji-ən / *hamra-ən
 under-PL behind-PL in-PL from-PL with-PL
 b. u bun/men/pušt-ə bed-em.
 that under/in/behind-ACC see.PST-1SG
 ‘I saw the underneath/inside/behind.’
 c. *u ji/hamra bed-em.
 that from/with see.PST-1SG

Crucially, unlike Persian, in which only nominal prepositions take EZ (10), in Gilaki noun complements of both nominal and true postpositions take REZ (11). This underlines an important difference between EZ and REZ.

- (10) a. zir-*(e) miz (nominal P) b. az-*(e) hasan (true P)
 under-EZ table from-EZ Hasan
 ‘under the table’ ‘from Hasan’
 (11) a. miz-*(ə) bun (nominal P) b. hasən-*(ə) ji (true P)
 table-REZ under Hasan-REZ from
 ‘under the table’ ‘from Hasan’

The facts in (10) and (11) are also important in the context of Larson's (2009, 2019) analysis of REZ as a "concordializer," an element that is attached to [+N] categories such as adjectives to allow case concord with another nominal element such as N. This analysis makes the prediction that only nominal postpositions in Gilaki should require REZ on the preceding complement, as case concord should only be expected of nominal elements. We see in (11) that REZ is required regardless of the nominal status of the adposition and thus cannot be seen as an element that facilitates case concord, as suggested by Larson (2009, 2019)⁹

Moreover, a closer look at the Gilaki data reveals a distinction between two types of REZ. One type (REZ₁) appears in the context of possessives (6b) and PPs, that is, both on the complement of P (6c) and on the modifying PP (6d). The second type (REZ₂) appears on adjectives or attributive nouns (6a, 6b). There are three systematic differences between REZ₁ and REZ₂, which we lay out in the following text.

First, while REZ₂ is part of the phonological word of the element it attaches to and as such is stressed, REZ₁ is always unstressed (12), where stress is marked in **bold**. Note that in Persian, EZ is consistently unstressed, as any other clitic or inflectional affix, highlighting another difference between EZ and (one type of) REZ. In this respect, Gilaki REZ₂ behaves like a derivational suffix in that it receives stress. It is worth noting that in Persian, Gilaki, and many other Iranian languages, stress is word-final, with derivational suffixes (unlike inflectional ones) being included in the domain of stress (see Kahnemuyipour, 2018 for an overview of Persian prosody).

- (12) a. čərm-ə kif
 leather-REZ bag
 'a leather bag'
- b. səbz-ə dəftər
 green-REZ notebook
 'a green notebook'
- c. has**ən**-ə xonə
 Hasan-REZ house
 'Hasan's house'
- d. div**ār**-ə sər
 wall-REZ on
 'on the wall'

Second, while the phonological realization of REZ₂ is conditioned by the form of the base it attaches to, REZ₁ is realized invariantly. This distinction is dependent on the number of the syllables of the base. REZ₂ obligatorily appears on one-syllable adjectives (13), but it is banned on many disyllabic adjectives (14a,b) (while optional with some (14c)), and is entirely banned on multisyllabic adjectives (15).¹⁰ REZ₁ does not show this sensitivity to syllable count. As shown in

⁹Larson attributes the presence of EZ and REZ in Iranian languages to the nominal status of their adjectives, more generally. In a language like Persian, with postnominal modifiers, he suggests that EZ is a case marker and that all [+N] elements need case. While D assigns case to N, EZ is inserted to assign case to the [+N] elements following the noun such as the adjective (see Kahnemuyipour, 2014 for arguments against a case analysis of EZ). Under Larson's analysis, in REZ languages, the "nominal" status of adjectives leads to their needing a concordializing element (namely REZ) to allow case Concord throughout the DP and with the nominal head. The adposition facts above undermine Larson's "concordializer" analysis of REZ. Meanwhile, Larson's analysis is similar with ours in one respect: it takes EZ and REZ to be distinct elements.

¹⁰This property of REZ₂ is more properly identified as phonologically conditioned allomorphy. In other words, REZ₂ has two allomorphs: -ə and Ø (null). The latter appears in the context of most disyllabic and multisyllabic adjectives. This

(16a) and (16b), REZ₁ obligatorily appears on multisyllabic nouns in a PP and a possessive DP, respectively. Crucially, Persian EZ does not show any such sensitivity, as it is invariably realized on a nominal host, irrespective of the phonological context.¹¹

- | | | | | | | | |
|------|----|-------------------------------|--------|-----------|------------------|---------------|-----|
| (13) | a. | čərm*(-ə) | kif-ən | b. | čāq*(-ə) | asb-ən | |
| | | leather-REZ | bag-PL | | fat-REZ | horse-PL | |
| | | ‘leather bags’ | | | ‘fat horses’ | | |
| (14) | a. | xujur (-*ə) | māšin | b. | xušhal(-*ə) | vəčə | |
| | | good-REZ | car | | happy-REZ | child | |
| | | ‘(a) good car’ | | | ‘a happy child’ | | |
| | c. | ye | tə | sifid(-ə) | čərm-ə | goron(-ə) | kif |
| | | one | CL | white-REZ | leather-REZ | expensive-REZ | bag |
| | | ‘one cheap white leather bag’ | | | | | |
| (15) | a. | dömötün(-*ə) | ādəm | | | | |
| | | jealous-REZ | person | | | | |
| | | ‘a jealous person’ | | | | | |
| | b. | bi-xaset(-*ə) | dār | | | | |
| | | without-benefit-REZ | tree | | | | |
| | | ‘a useless tree’ | | | | | |
| (16) | a. | emtəhān-ə | mən | b. | roməzən-ə | kitāb | |
| | | exam-REZ | in | | Ramezan-REZ | book | |
| | | ‘in the exam’ | | | ‘Ramezan's book’ | | |

Third, in ellipsis contexts where the head noun is elided, REZ₁ remains on the stranded modifier. This is shown in (17) for the possessor context and in (18) for the PP contexts. Example (18a) shows the stranding of REZ₁ on the nominal complement of a P, and (18b) shows the stranding of REZ₁ on the PP modifier,¹² while REZ₂ cannot (19). It should be noted that REZ₁ appears as [i] instead of a schwa, when followed by a gap, as seen in its second appearance in (17) and (18).

kind of sensitivity to the number of syllables of the base is also found in the *-er/-est* and *more/most* variation in English comparatives/superlatives.

¹¹In addition, unlike Persian EZ that is obligatorily present in all phonological environments, REZ gets deleted in the context of vowel hiatus.

¹²It should be noted that this property does not extend to the use of REZ₁ in the context of Ps consistently. REZ₁ cannot be stranded on the complement of a true P (i). Also, when a true P is the head of a modifying PP, it does not allow REZ stranding (ii). We leave further investigation of this contrast in the behavior of REZ₁ stranding in elliptical contexts involving true versus nominal Ps for future research.

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|-----------|-----------|---------|-------------|-------------|--|---------|--|
| (i) | tu | akbər-ə | ji | māšin | hagit-i | na | kerim(-*i). | | |
| | you | Akbar-REZ | from | car | get.PST-2SG | not | Karim-REZ | | |
| | | | | | | | ‘You got the car from Akbar not from Karim.’ | | |
| (ii) | mi | xāxur | āb-ə | vasər-ə | dəvā | bogut | na | murq-ə | vasər(-*i). |
| | my | sister | water-REZ | for-REZ | fight | say.PST.3SG | not | hen-REZ | for-REZ |
| | | | | | | | | | ‘My sister said about the fight for water not the one for hens.’ |

- (17) mu meryəm-ə xudkār-ə vigit-em na hasən*(-i)
 I Maryam-REZ pen-ACC get.PST-1SG not Hasan-REZ
 ‘I got Maryam’s pen, not Hasan’s’
- (18) a. kitāb təxt-ə sər bəkət na miz*(-i).
 book bed-REZ on fell.PST.3SG not table-REZ
 ‘The book fell on the bed not on the table.’
 b. miz-ə sər-ə kitāb-ə vigit-i yā miz-ə bun*(-i)
 table-REZ on-REZ book-ACC get.PST-2SG or table-REZ under-REZ
 ‘Did you take the book on the table or the book under it?’
- (19) surx-ə xudkār bəkət na səbz*(-ə).
 red-REZ pen fall.PST.3SG not green-REZ
 ‘The red pen fell down, not the green (pen)’

The facts in (17)–(19) are reminiscent of Watanabe (2010) who uses similar ellipsis facts to argue for the dual status of the Japanese *-no* marker, which appears on a possessor or a numeral-classifier sequence. While in the possessor context, it can be stranded in ellipsis (20), with numeral-classifiers, it cannot (21). Watanabe treats the numeral-classifier *-no* as a linking element that requires an overt N following it for its morphological realization and takes the other *-no* to be a genitive marker.¹³

- (20) [Rooma-**no** hakai]-wa [Kyooto-**no** e] -yorimo hisan datta.
 Rome -no destruction-TOP Kyoto-no -than horrible was
 ‘Rome’s destruction was more horrible than Kyoto’s’
 (adapted from Watanabe, P. 67)
- (21) Taroo-wa [san-satsu-**no** hon]-o katta ga, Hanako-wa
 Taroo-TOP three-CL-no book-ACC bought though Hanako-TOP
 go-satsu (***-no**) katta.
 five-CL bought
 ‘Taroo bought three books, but Hanako bought five.’
 (adapted from Watanabe, P. 64)

With these facts from Japanese, we turn to further cross-linguistic data providing support for the proposed dual function of REZ. Table 1 summarizes the properties of REZ₁ and REZ₂, examined above.

TABLE 1 Properties of REZ₁ and REZ₂.

REZ type	Primary stress	Syllable count sensitivity	Stranding under ellipsis
REZ ₁	✗	✗	✓
REZ ₂	✓	✓	✗

¹³Our intention here was to show that ellipsis has been used as a diagnostic previously to argue for the dual status of a linking element in an unrelated language. As an anonymous reviewer has aptly pointed out, a direct parallel cannot be drawn between the Gilaki and Japanese facts more generally. One clear difference is that Gilaki REZ does not appear on numerals (7), whereas the *-no* particle in Japanese does attach to numerals (21). In addition, according to the anonymous reviewer, the *-no* particle, which appears on attributive nouns and as such may be more similar to REZ₂ (see 13a), can in fact be stranded. This shows that a proper analysis of the Japanese (and Gilaki) ellipsis facts requires a more thorough investigation.

3.2 | Cross-linguistic support for the dual nature of REZ

We have argued above that Gilaki REZ has a dual nature, despite its uniform phonological realization (at least at a segmental level). Meanwhile, another Caspian language Taleshi exhibits a very similar distribution for REZ, with the striking difference that the two types of REZ we have identified as REZ₁ and REZ₂ have distinct phonological realizations as *-i* and *-a*, respectively. In (22a), (22b), and (22c), we see instances of REZ₁ used in the adpositional, possessive, and modifying PP contexts, and (22d) shows an example of REZ₂ used on an adjective (see Taghipour and Nabati, 2023 for further patterns of nominal linkers in Taleshi). These facts show clearly that the form of REZ₁ is distinct from REZ₂ in Taleshi, with the former appearing as *-i* and the latter as *-a*. These facts, in particular (22c), show clearly that the form of REZ used in the context of modifying PPs is REZ₁.¹⁴

- | | | | | | | |
|------|----|--|-----------------------------|----|--|-----------------|
| (22) | a. | hasən-i
Hassan-REZ
'from Hassan' | kā
from | b. | hasən-i
Hassan-REZ
'Hassan's book' | kitāv
book |
| | c. | [miz-i
table-REZ
'the wire under the table'] | bun]-i
under-REZ
wire | d. | bāhuš-a
intelligent-REZ
'an intelligent child' | xərdən
child |

The dual nature of REZ is further supported by similar facts from another Caspian language Tati.¹⁵ In Tati, similar to Taleshi, REZ₁ and REZ₂ have distinct phonological forms as *-e* and *-ə*, respectively. In (23a), (23b), and (23c), we see the realization of REZ₁ in the adpositional, possessive, and modifying PP contexts, and (23d) shows an example of REZ₂ used on an adjective. Similar to Taleshi, the data in (23c) shows that the REZ appearing with the modifying PPs in Tati is REZ₁, as it is realized as *-e* (see Taghipour and Rahmani, 2023 for further patterns of nominal linkers in Tati).

- | | | | | | | |
|------|----|---|--------------------------|----|---|---------------|
| (23) | a. | miz-e
desk-REZ
'on the table' | sar
on | b. | hasan-e
Hasan-REZ
'Hasan's house' | kiye
house |
| | c. | [miz-e
desk-REZ
'the book on the desk'] | sar]-e
on-REZ
book | d. | sowz-ə
green-REZ
'a green book' | ketāb
book |

Similarly, in Balochi (Northwestern Iranian), another REZ language, there is a phonological distinction between the REZ used on possessors and complements of P (our REZ₁, realized as *-ay*) and the one used on adjectives (our REZ₂, realized as *-ən*), as shown in (24) (from Jahani & Korn, 2009, who mark *-ay* as GEN and *-ən* as ATTR; see also Gündoğdu, 2023 for similar patterns in Balochi).^{16,17}

¹⁴The Taleshi dialect examined here is the variety spoken in Paresar, a town located in the northeastern part of the Gilan province of Iran.

¹⁵The Tati data are based on the Takestani dialect (Southern Tati) which is spoken in Takestan, a city located in the Qazvin province of Iran.

¹⁶There appears to be variation with respect to the distinctive phonological forms of REZ among Balochi dialects. We are abstracting away from such variations here and leave a closer examination of Balochi facts for future research. Also, REZ forms appear to reflect number distinctions in Balochi, not illustrated here.

¹⁷Another Northwestern Iranian language, Sangesari, also shows similar REZ patterns. In this language, the REZ used on noun complements of P (i), on possessors (ii), and on a modifying PP (iii) (our REZ₁) has a different form from the REZ used with adjectives (iv) (our REZ₂).

- (24) a. mnī brās-ay kitāb
I.GEN brother-GEN book
'my brother's book(s)'
c. mazan-ēn asp
big-ATTR horse
'big horse(s)'
- b. gis-ay puštā
house-GEN behind
'behind the house'

Turning to a genealogically unrelated language, Japanese, we see that attributive adjectives are marked with *-na/-i* (depending on adjective class, true vs. nominal) (25),¹⁸ which is distinct from the genitive marker *-no* used on possessors (26) (Larson & Yamakido, 2008). We saw above that *-no* may itself have two distinct functions (Watanabe, 2010).¹⁹

- (25) a. utukusi-i tori
beautiful-? bird
'beautiful bird'
c. kiree-na uti
clean-? House
'clean, tidy house'
- b. taka-i hon
expensive-? book
'expensive book'
d. sizuka-na umi
quiet-? sea
'quiet sea'
- (26) a. Taroo-no kyoodai
Taroo-GEN sibling
'Taroo's siblings'
b. Taroo-no hon
Taroo-GEN book
'Taroo's book'

In Section 2, we presented an analysis of Persian EZ which took EZ to be a reflex of an inversion process inside the noun phrase (see (5)). If we assume a universal right-branching structure (a la Kayne, 1994) and take the base structure of noun phrases to be head-final with modifiers in specifiers of functional projections above the noun, then no EZ should appear in languages (or structures) in which modifiers are prenominal (see (4d)). When there is no inversion, there should be no EZ. That implies that elements like the Gilaki REZ should be fundamentally different from the Persian EZ. In this section, we have provided evidence that Gilaki REZ and Persian EZ exhibit

- (i) miz-i žir
desk-REZ under
'under the table'
- (ii) hasən-i kif
Hasan-REZ bag
'Hasan's bag'
- (iii) miz-i sar-i gol
table-REZ on-REZ flower
'the flower on the table'
- (iv) šakil(-ə) kə
beautiful-REZ house
'beautiful house'

¹⁸The question marks in example (25) are directly taken from Larson and Yamakido (2008), indicating the unclear contribution of this morpheme.

¹⁹We have provided a simplified distribution of *-no*. Further data reveal that *-no* does not appear to be a straightforward genitive marker. An anonymous reviewer has brought our attention to the distribution of Japanese *-no* in the context of postpositions. While the *no*-marker is absent on the nominal complement of most Ps (i), some (nominal) Ps (*ue/shita* in (ii)) require the *no*-marker on the nominal complement, but these (nominal) Ps need to be supported by a true P (*-ni* in (ii)). Our focus here is the distinction between linking elements that appear on adjectives and those that appear elsewhere in a noun phrase.

- (i) Tokyo(*-no) kara
Tokyo from
'from Tokyo'
- (ii) kippu-ga [tsukue*(-no) ue/shita] ni aru
ticket-NOM desk-no top/bottom on exist
'A ticket is on/under the desk.'

distinct properties and as such should not be conflated. In addition, we have argued that what is known as REZ in Gilaki is in fact the realization of two distinct morphosyntactic elements and have provided additional cross-linguistic evidence that provides support for the dual nature of Gilaki REZ. This duality of REZ by itself presents an additional contrast with EZ. We conclude that REZ₁ and REZ₂ are morphosyntactic elements that are distinct from EZ and, crucially, not the result of an inversion process. This still leaves us with a question as to the nature of these morphosyntactic elements. This is the topic of the next section.

4 | WHAT ARE REZ₁ AND REZ₂?

Having established that the Gilaki REZ consists of two distinct morphosyntactic elements, in this section, we share some tentative ideas about what these morphosyntactic elements might be.

Starting with REZ₁, it can most straightforwardly be analyzed as a genitive case marker, as it is used to mark possessors (see above examples from Gilaki, Taleshi, Balochi and Tati).²⁰ Under this view, we can take postpositions in Gilaki (and other languages which show a similar distribution) as assigning genitive case (see Haig, 2019; Rastorgueva et al., 2012). Support for this proposal comes from the fact that, in Gilaki, pronouns come in different forms (namely nominative, accusative and possessive) and it is possessive pronouns (27) that are used as complements of adpositions (28).²¹

- | | | | | |
|------|----|--|----|--|
| (27) | a. | mi kitāb
my book
'my book' | b. | šeme ma:r
your mother
'your (pl) mother' |
|------|----|--|----|--|

- | | | | | |
|------|----|---|----|--|
| (28) | a. | mi ji
my from
'from me' | b. | šeme ji
you from
'from you (pl)' |
|------|----|---|----|--|

Meanwhile, recall from Sections 2 and 3 (repeated in (29) below) that PP modifiers also take REZ₁ in Gilaki. This may undermine a simple characterization of REZ₁ as a genitive case marker.²²

- | | |
|------|---|
| (29) | [divār-ə səɾ]-ə təxtə
wall-REZ on-REZ board
'the board on the wall' |
|------|---|

These facts are reminiscent of Hindi/Urdu –KA (Mahoon, 2019), which, like REZ₁, is used as a genitive marker (30a), as well as on NP complements of P (30b) and on PP modifiers (30c), all

²⁰Rastorgueva et al. (2012) glosses Gilaki REZ as genitive more generally.

²¹Other Caspian languages, Tati and Taleshi, do not clearly show this pattern because of syncretism in their pronominal system. In Tati and Taleshi, the pronouns used in possessive and adpositional contexts are the same as accusative pronouns. Some of these pronouns are even syncretized with their nominative counterparts.

²²In Section 3, we established that the REZ used on PP modifiers is REZ₁, as it is unstressed, is insensitive to syllable count, and can be stranded in elliptical contexts. Also, languages such as Taleshi and Tati, which have different forms for REZ₁ and REZ₂, show clearly that the form used with modifying PPs is REZ₁.

adapted from Mahoon (2019). It is worth noting that –KA has also been analyzed as a genitive marker (Butt & King, 2004, cf. Mahoon, 2019).²³

- (30) a. Pakistan ki hakumat
Pakistan KA.F government
'Pakistan's government'
- b. [[[us kitab] ke] uper]
that book.M KA.OBL on.top
'on that book'
- c. [panch sal tak] ka bachpan
five year until KA.M childhood
'the childhood of up to five-years-old'

Interestingly, Hindi/Urdu does not have a linker on adjectives. If, as we have suggested in this paper, REZ₁ and REZ₂ are to be analyzed as distinct morphosyntactic elements, the expectation is that some languages may have one but not the other. In this context, Hindi/Urdu can be seen as a language that has REZ₁ but not REZ₂. We leave a fuller account of the syntax of REZ₁ for future research.

We now turn to REZ₂. We have shown above that REZ₂ is an element that appears on attributive adjectives (or nouns) and has three properties: (i) It behaves like a derivational suffix in that it is included in the domain of lexical stress; (ii) Its morphological realization is conditioned by the number of syllables of the base it attaches to; (iii) It cannot be realized unless followed by an overt noun, which can be attributed to the phonological conditions this element can be realized in (akin to Watanabe's, 2010 analysis of the numeral-classifier *–no*).

We are still left with the question of what REZ₂ is. Some authors have treated the equivalent of this element in other languages as an attributive marker, for example, Jahani and Korn (2009), (24c) above (also Axenov, 2006 for Balochi, Belk, 2021 for Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish). Such an attributive marker may be viewed as an instantiation of JOIN, an operator that takes a predicative adjective and type-shifts it into an attributive one (see Baker, 2003; Belk, 2017; Truswell, 2004). This proposed operator does not typically have a morphological realization in many languages. Under this view, REZ₂ in Gilaki (and the other similar languages discussed above) can be seen as the morphological realization of this operator. We leave a closer examination of a possible JOIN analysis of REZ₂ to future research. One needs to investigate whether other languages across the world may have such morphological realizations of the JOIN operator. Are such realizations of the JOIN operator ever found in EZ languages? If not, why not? Finally, we showed above that there are languages like Hindi/Urdu that appear to have REZ₁ but not REZ₂. In a similar fashion, one may expect to find languages that only have REZ₂ but not REZ₁. Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish (Belk, 2021) may be an instance of such a language with REZ₂ and no REZ₁. In this language, as shown in (31) (from Belk, 2021), attributive adjectives (unlike predicative ones) carry an *–e* suffix, which can be seen as the realization of REZ₁. Meanwhile, other than the Germanic

²³Japanese also uses *–no* with PP modifiers (i). Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer for bringing this to our attention and providing the Japanese facts (see footnote 13).

- (i) a. [Tokyo kara] *(-no) kippu b. [haha e] *(-no) tegami
Tokyo from -no ticket mother to -no letter
'a ticket from Tokyo' 'a letter to my mother'

genitive marker, the language does not appear to use the equivalent of something akin to REZ₂ in other contexts.²⁴

- (31) a. (mit) de kleyn-e froy/man/kind
 (with) the small-E woman/man/child
 b. de froy/man/kind iz kleyn(*-e)
 the woman/man/child is small(-E)

5 | CONCLUSION

We have argued that the nominal linker in Gilaki is in fact the realization of two different morphosyntactic elements. These elements have distinct properties, and as we have seen in the cross-linguistic data above, sometimes even different forms. We have provided some speculations on what morphosyntactic elements REZ₁ and REZ₂ may represent.

In making the case for the reclassification of the Gilaki nominal linker into two morphosyntactic elements, we have also highlighted the differences between REZ and EZ. Following Kahnemuyipour (2014), we take EZ to be a reflex of the inversion process involved in the derivation of the noun phrase in languages such as Persian from a head-final base structure. With what is known as REZ, there is no inversion involved. We have shown that the so-called REZ is in fact the realization of two distinct morphosyntactic elements, which are homophonous in Gilaki, but have distinct forms in other Iranian languages such as Balochi, Taleshi, or Tati. One of them, which we have called REZ₁, is most closely aligned with a genitive marker, with a distribution that extends beyond core possessive constructions. The other one, our REZ₂, is best defined as a marker of attribution, with very distinct morphophonological properties both from REZ₁ and from EZ. Although the precise nature of REZ₁ and REZ₂ needs further investigation, we hope to have presented enough arguments to establish that EZ cannot be equated with either REZ₁ or REZ₂ or their combination, identified as REZ.

This study has implications for our typological understanding of nominal linkers. We have seen that elements that look alike, such as EZ and REZ, may in fact have different syntactic properties, and as such should be analyzed as distinct. Meanwhile, by looking at diverse languages such as Gilaki, Taleshi, and Balochi, and even genealogically unrelated languages such as Hindi/Urdu or Japanese, we may find elements that exhibit similar morphosyntactic behavior, rendering a unified analysis of these elements plausible.

Ultimately, we may conclude that what is known as nominal linkers is not a unified phenomenon. Before drawing strong conclusions, we need a careful cross-linguistic examination to identify the syntactic behavior of these apparently similar elements. Such an investigation may lead to different groupings of such elements beyond our expectations based on similarity in form or familial relations. While similar-looking elements in genealogically related languages (such as EZ and REZ in Persian and Gilaki) may prove to be distinct elements, other seemingly unrelated elements (such as the Gilaki REZ₁ and the Hindi/Urdu –KA) may be unified as the same morphosyntactic element.

²⁴We are grateful to Zoë Belk for a discussion of the JOIN operator, its possible connection to nominal linkers as well as the Hasidic Yiddish facts.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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