
Licensing Left Branch Extraction: Revisiting the role of morphology

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This study refines the established correlation between rich nominal morphology and the possibility of Left Branch Extraction (LBE) (Bošković 2013 a.o.), by focusing on novel data from Persian. Persian allows only one LBE-pattern: a numeral-classifier-complex (NCC) may be sub-extracted, despite having no nominal morphology. Comparing LBE-data from Persian and German shows that morphology alone is neither necessary nor sufficient for licensing LBE.

In colloquial Persian, numerals have to be accompanied by a classifier. There are two types of classifiers: semi-lexical (e.g. *šāxe* ‘stem’) and functional (only *tā*). These two can appear together in the order shown in (1a); numerals cannot appear alone, as in (1b). The modified N appears without plural morphology; i.e. there is no number-agreement in Persian DP (cf. Shirzad & Darzi 2023).

- (1) (a) do (tā) šāxe gol (b) do *(tā) gol
two tā stem flower two tā flower ‘two flowers’

There is one exception: *tā* is in complementary distribution with *yek* ‘one’.

- (2) (a) yek (*(tā) šāxe gol (b) yek (*(tā) gol
one tā stem flower one tā flower ‘one flower’

Persian allows for extraction of the NCC for information structural reasons, unless the numeral appears alone (NB *yek*+lexical classifier is extractable):

- (3) **haft tā/*yek** dīšab **film** dīd-īm
seven tā one last night movie watch:PST-IPL
‘we watched seven/one movie(s) last night.’

Analysis. Given the observation in (3) and the fact that NCCs pass other constituency tests, I propose that NCCs are constituents (contra Shirzad & Darzi 2023’s complex-head analysis). Numerals other than *yek* have to be nested within an NCC that is merged as the specifier of a functional category in the nominal domain, while *yek* can be part of two configurations; it can be part of the specifier NCC or merge as a higher head (Num⁰) that takes the NP as its complement. In the latter case, it cannot undergo extraction.

Conclusion. By comparing Persian NCC-extractions and German wh-extractions, we show that languages may (dis)allow LBE for reasons beyond morphology.

References: • Bošković, Ž. (2013). Adjectival escapades. *Proceedings of Formal Approaches to Slavic Linguistics* 21, Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1–25.
• Shirzad, A. & A. Darzi (2023). Type shifting and the number system in Persian. *Journal of Researches in Linguistics* 15(1), 137-158.