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Heaviness in a Verb-final Language: Evidence from Persian

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Introduction

- Is the **short-before-long principle** universal?
 - Heavy constituents require more processing resources (e.g. Arnold *et al*, 2000 ; Stallings *et al*, 1998)
 - Costly constituents tend to be postponed
- Meanwhile, Hawkins's *Early Immediate Constituent (EIC)* principles predicts opposite tendencies
 - For head-initial and head-final languages (Hawkins, 1990 a.o.)
 - **Long-before-short** in head-final languages
 - Confirmed for Japanese by corpus and experimental data (Hawkins, 1994 ; Yamashita & Chang, 2001)

EIC principle in Japanese

[Mary-ga]	[kinoo	John-ga	kekconsi-ta	to]	it-ta	
Mary-NOM	yesterday	John-NOM	married	that	said	
Mary said that John got married yesterday.						
[Mary-ga]	[kinoo	John-ga	kekconsi-ta	to]	it-ta	
1	2	3	4	5	6	
[kinoo	John-ga	kekconsi-ta	to]	[Mary-ga]	it-ta	
1	2	3	4	5	6	

DO IO or IO DO ?
PP > NP (by 2 words)

[NP]	[NP]	[P]	V
1	2-3	4	5
[NP]	[P]	[NP]	V
1	2	3	4

Persian: Essential Properties

- Mixed head direction:
 - Head-final in verbal domain (SOV)
 - Head-initial elsewhere
 - e.g. Det N Mod, Prep NP, Comp P
 - EIC does not (always) work for Persian:
 - NP PP V
 - PP NP V

No preferential order is predicted by the EIC principle
 - Canonical word order is SOV
 - But variation is possible (SVO, VSO, etc.)
 - Depending on register, information structure, prosody, etc.
 - e.g. Goal arguments are post-verbal in oral/informal register
 - Clausal complements are strictly post-verbal
 - Differential Object Marking (DOM)
 - A definite and/or specific DO is always marked with =*rā* (cf. ex 4)
 - An indefinite non-specific DO is **not** marked (cf. ex 1 – 3)
 - Most prominent hypothesis for complement ordering is the DOM criterion
 - Marked DOs can be separated from the verb → NP PP V order
 - Unmarked DOs should be adjacent to the verb → PP NP V order (Karimi, 2005 a.o.)
 - Part of this hypothesis has been shown not to hold in corpus data (Faghiri & Samvelian, 2013)
- Object of this study:**
Preferential order between the DO and the IO in the preverbal domain

Corpus Study

Corpus:
Bijankhan corpus : 2,6m tokens, from newspapers, annotated for POS, freely available
Verbs were lemmatized and potentially ditransitive verbs were extracted (42k tokens, 122 types)

Dataset (908 tokens, 82 lemmas):
Selection of sentences out of

1. A random sample of 2000 tokens: 541 occ.
2. All instances of verbs 'to send' and 'to pour' (low frequency)
3. Random samples of verbs 'to give' and 'to take' (very high frequency)

Mixed-effect logistic regression
Dependent variable: Order (NP PP V = 1)
Fixed effects:
1. DO type
2. Relative length (nb of words): log(NP) – log(PP)
Random effect: Verb lemma

Average preference of 59% for NP-PP-V order

4 DO types (based on preliminary observations)

Bare

(1) Maryam *be* Nima *ketāb* dād
Maryam to Nima book gave
'Maryam gave a book/books to Nima.'

Bare-Modified

(2) Maryam *be* Nima *ketāb=e tārix* dād
Maryam to Nima book=EZ* history gave
'Maryam gave a history book/history books to Nima.'

→ DO type determines the relative order in 87% of cases

Indefinite

(3) Maryam *čand ketāb=e qadimi* *be* Nima dād
Maryam some book=EZ old to Nima gave
'Maryam gave some old books to Nima.'

Marked (= *rā*)

(4) Maryam *in ketāb=rā* *be* Nima dād
Maryam this book=DOM to Nima gave
'Maryam gave this book to Nima.'

	Bare	Bare-Modified	Indefinite	Marked
NP PP V	43 (16%)	23 (34%)	112 (77%)	404 (95%)
PP NP V	228 (84%)	44 (66%)	33 (23%)	21 (5%)
Total	271	67	145	425

Relative length is irrelevant for Bare DOs
NP ≤ PP in all cases

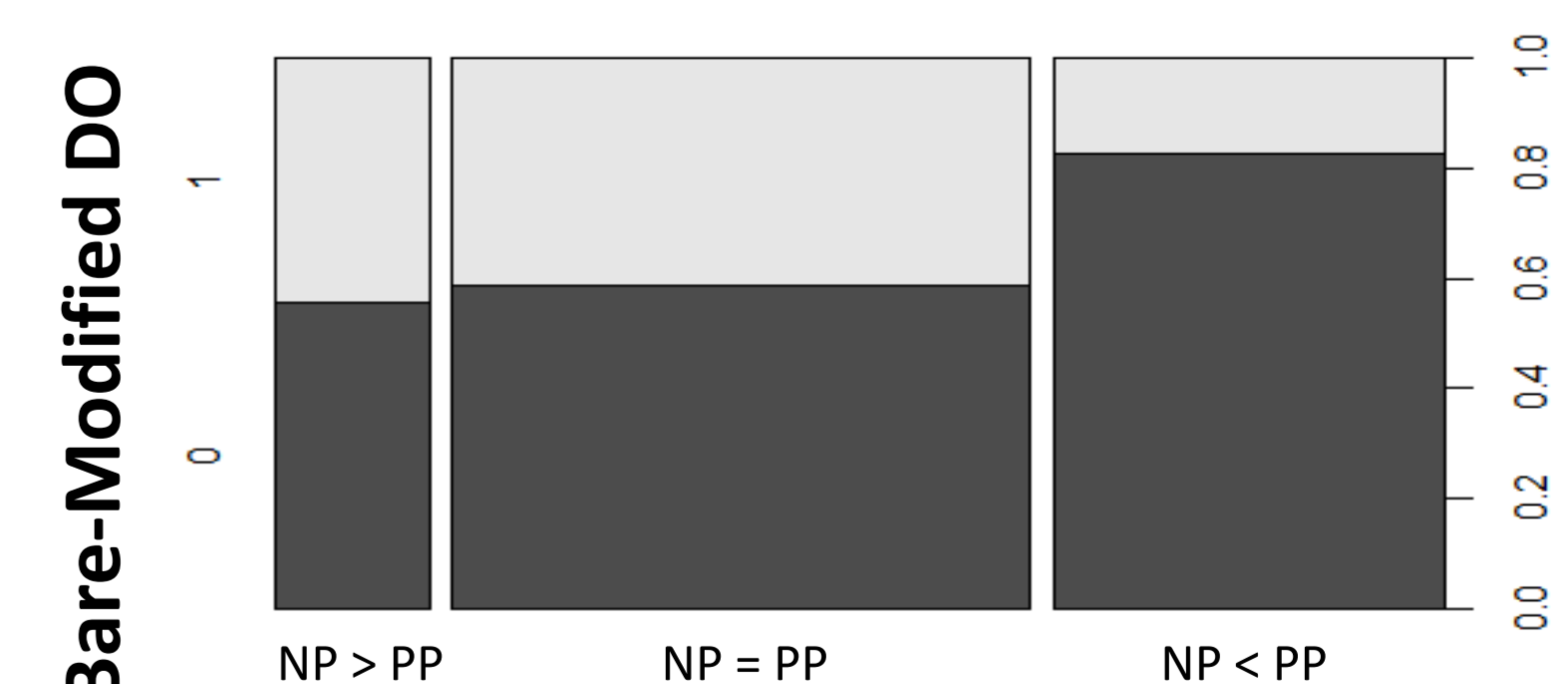
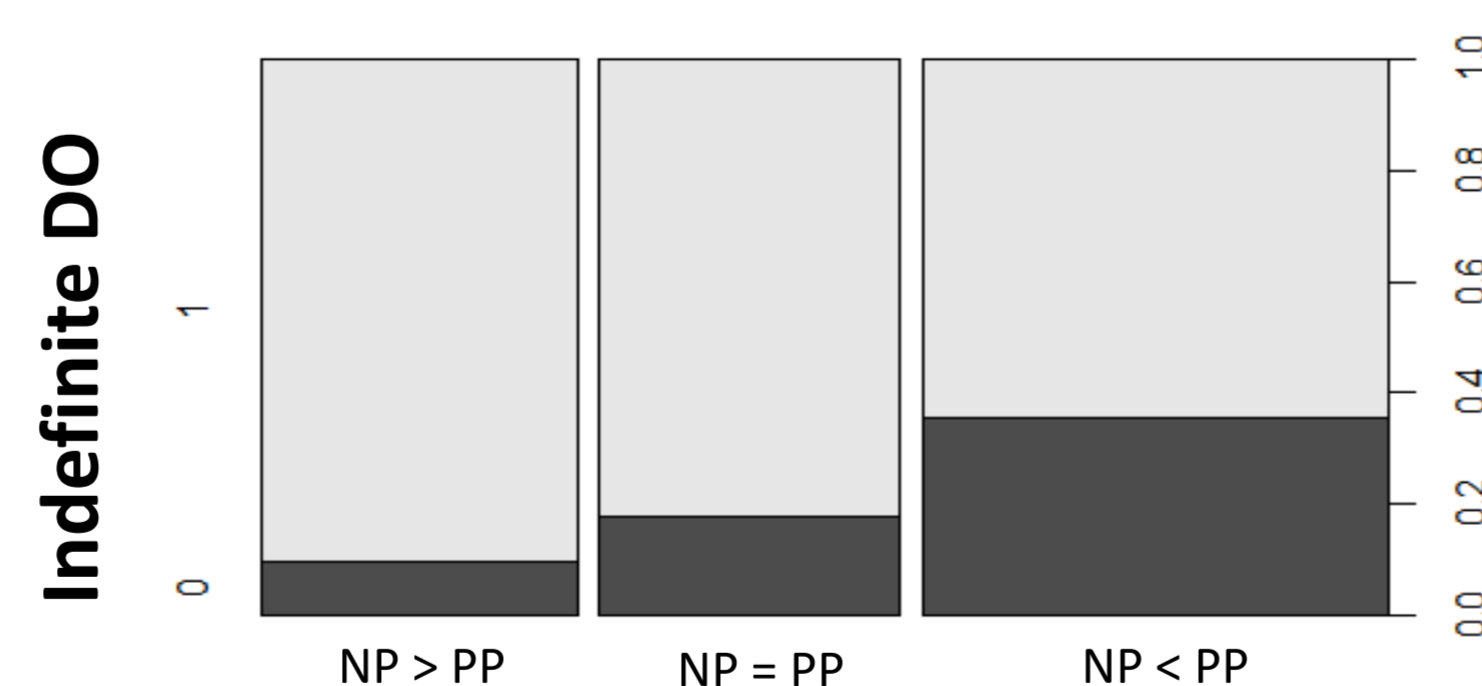
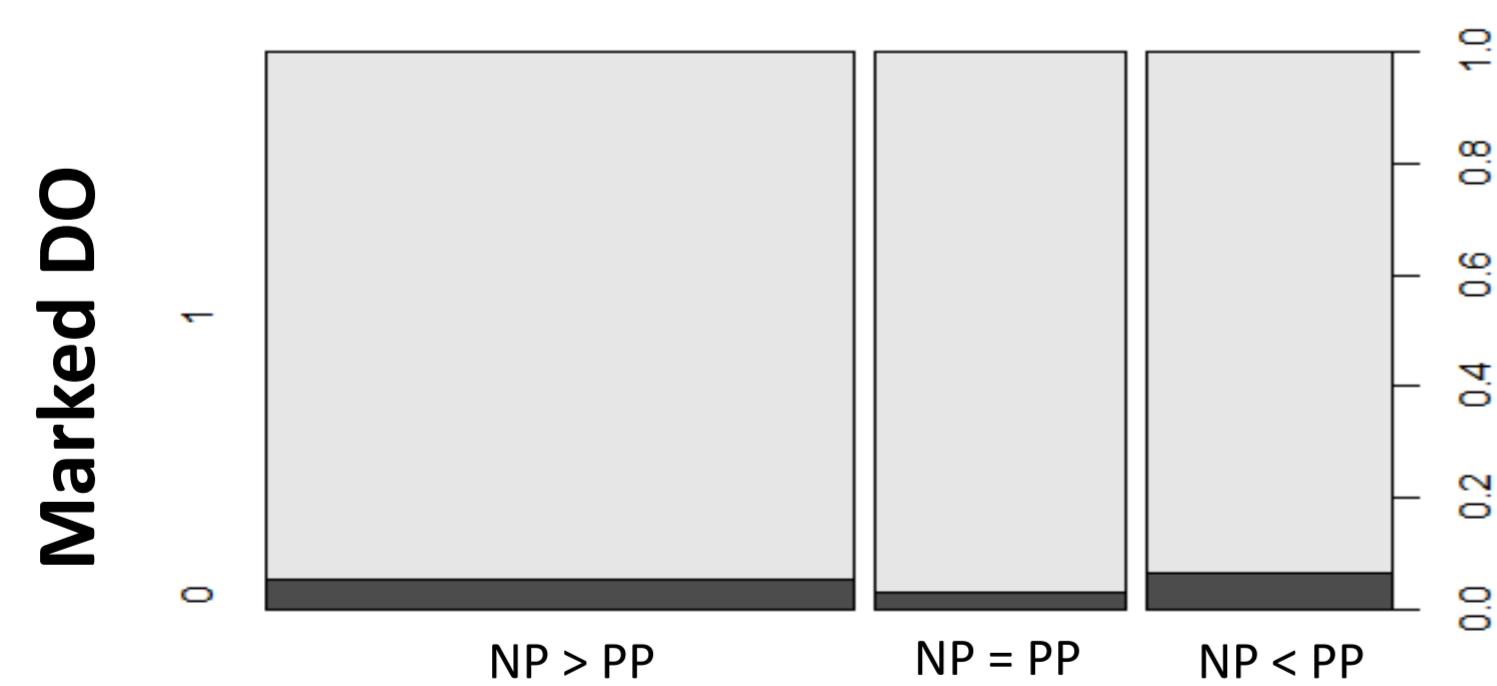
The relative-length plays a role in the choice of the relative order in the case of these DO types

* ez stands for the *Ezafe*, an enclitic which links the head noun to its modifiers and to the possessor NP

The Relative Length

Beyond the strong effect of DO type, **relative length** shows a significant effect (p-value < 0.001) corresponding to the **long-before-short** tendency

Shorter NPs prefer the PP NP V order significantly more often



1 : NP PP V
0 : PP NP V

→ Persian behaves like Japanese, confirming the long-before-short principle in OV languages

Discussion and Conclusions

- The short-before-long principle is not universal:
 - Not only Japanese (strictly head-final) but also Persian (mixed head-direction) presents the long-before-short tendency
 - The verbal position has to be taken into account in the effect of relative length on preferential order between verbal complements
 - Theories solely based on general principles ignoring linguistic parameters would eventually fail cross-linguistic validity
 - Theories proposing accounts in terms of dependency seems to be more appropriate
 - ❖ However Hawkins's *EIC* principles fails to account for Persian data
- In Persian the relative length plays only a secondary role while the DO type, which depends on the information status of the NP, plays the essential role
- We are currently running a number of experiments to explore the effect of information structure and the relative length independently