**Pegah Faghiri, Pollet Samvelian, Barbara Hemforth.
“Is there a canonical order in Persian ditransitive
constructions? Corpus based and experimental
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- 1 This study is a continuation of a series of corpus-based and experimental studies on the relative order between direct object (DO) and indirect object (IO) in the preverbal domain in Persian. It provides complementary data on the subject and tries to display the interplay of a set of functional factors or "soft" constraints in determining this relative order. To meet this objective, first the authors discuss some challenges to the existing views based on their results from corpus-based studies, i.e., they pinpoint the considerable variation in the relative order of DO and IO for non-*rā*-marked DOs which questions the role of differential object marking as the only determinant factor in the word order. After classifying four types of DOs including *rā*-marked DOs, indefinite (non-*rā*-marked) DOs, bare-modified DOs, and bare DOs, they run a series of sentence completion experiments via web-based controlled questionnaires to ensure that their previous results were not (stylistically) biased. Furthermore, to evaluate the extent of variation observed in their data, they present comparable (corpus and experimental)

data on the relative order between the subject and the DO in transitive sentences, as a benchmark.

- 2 In their first experiment, they manipulate the length of IO in relation to the bare-modified DO to see its effect on the possible variations. This experiment replicates Faghiri et al. (2014)'s experiment with indefinite DOs, which showed a clear preference (68%) for the DO-IO order for these DOs as well as a significant effect of relative length. The results show i) a high tendency (90%) toward the IO-DO order for bare-modified DOs, and ii) a significant effect of relative length in favor of IO-DO order when the IO is longer. Their second experiment focuses on the length of bare DOs (unmodified vs. modified), and also check for the effect of animacy by its manipulation in IO. The results i) show that the preference for the IO-DO order is significantly less strong for bare-modified DOs than unmodified ones, and ii) suggest that animacy must play a role in ordering preferences between DO and IO. Their third experiment tries to compensate for the lack of comparable experimental data on the behavior of *rā*-marked DOs and indefinite (non-*rā*-marked) DOs, and to check for the effect of length between *i*-marked and *yek*-marked indefinite DOs. The results show a strong DO-IO order for *rā*-marked DOs (yet with more variation than observed in their corpus data), and a clear (yet moderate) DO-IO preference for indefinite DOs together, but no statistically significant difference between the two indefinite DO types. Their last experiment focuses on the effect of the relative length and animacy on the relative order between the subject and the DO. The results show a strong SOV order without any effects of relative length but a significant (however rather small) effect of animacy, since the rate of OSV is slightly higher when the subject is inanimate.
- 3 All in all, the study's new findings reinforce the conclusions of previous corpus and experimental studies, and shed more light on the effect of functional factors such as relative length and animacy on ordering preferences between constituents which are in line with "long-before-short" and "animate-before-inanimate" tendencies. Moreover, the authors introduce the "degree of determination" as the primary factor that determines the relative order between DO and IO, and reflects the degree of discourse accessibility of DOs (Gundel et al. 1993) which is in line with "given-first" preference in sentence production. Putting all pieces of the puzzle together, they relate all the observed preference patterns with "salient-first" preference. Finally, comparing the amount variation and effect of functional factors in the relative order between the subject and the DO, the authors argue against identifying an unmarked/canonical order for ditransitive sentences, comparable to SOV that clearly emerges as the canonical order of transitive sentences: while SOV operates to some extent as a "hard" constraint, the relative order between the DO and the IO results from the interaction of a set of "soft" constraints.

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