Antisingleton Indefinites in Persian

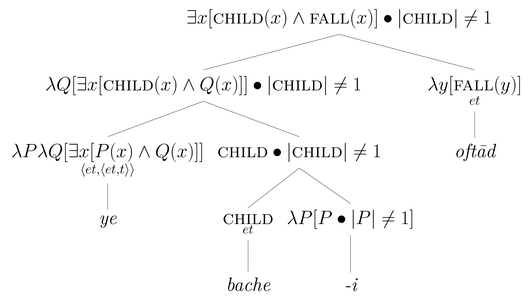
Masoud Jasbi
Department of Linguistics, Stanford University
Contact Info: masoudj@stanford.edu

Summary

- Persian has no overt marker of definiteness but there are two singular indefinite markers: the determiner ye and the clitic -i.
- Their presence/absence on an NP creates four constructions:
  1. Bare NP (Definite) 2. ye-NP (Indefinite)
  3. NP-i (Antidefinite) 4. ye-NP-i (Antisingleton Indefinite)
- Empirical Questions:
  1. What are the implications of each construction with respect to the cardinality of the NP extension?
  2. Are these implications PROJECTIVE[1] when the FAMILY-OF-SENTENCES[2] diagnostics is applied?
  3. Are they required to be COMMON GROUND (CG) between discourse participants?
- Answers:

	Construction	Form	Implication	Projective?	CG?
1	Definite	NP	$[\![\text{NP}]\!] = 1$	Yes	Yes
2	Indefinite	ye-NP	$[\![\text{NP}]\!] \geq 1$	No	No
3	Antidefinite	NP-i	$[\![\text{NP}]\!] \neq 1$	Yes	No
4	Antisingleton Indefinite	ye-NP-i	$[\![\text{NP}]\!] > 1$	-	No

- Theoretical Goals:
  1. Determining the semantic contribution of each indefinite marker.
  2. Providing a compositional account for antisingleton indefinites.
- Proposals:
  - ye is an existential quantifier.
  - The indefinite clitic -i is an identity function on properties with non-at-issue implication: $[\![\text{NP}]\!] \neq 1$.
  - The combination of an existence ($[\![\text{NP}]\!] \geq 1$) and an antidefinite ($[\![\text{NP}]\!] \neq 1$) implication results in an antisingleton implication ($[\![\text{NP}]\!] > 1$).



References & Acknowledgements

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1. Definites

- Setting generic uses aside, bare nominals carry EXISTENCE and UNIQUENESS implications [3].

(1) [$_s$ bache] [$_v$ oftād]
child fall.PERF.3.SG
"The child fell."

|NP|=	0	1	2+
	#	✓	#

  - (1) is felicitous when there is one and only one child in the relevant context; or it is possible to contextually restrict the domain to a single individual.

- The existence and uniqueness implications of bare nominals are projective.

(2) age bache oftād be-gu
if child fall.PERF.3.SG SUB-say.2.SG
"If the child fell, tell (me)."

|NP|=	0	1	2+
	#	✓	#

  - (2) is felicitous when there is one and only one child in the relevant context.

- They also need to be common ground between the discourse participants.
  - (1) and (2) cannot be used out of the blue and as a way to inform the addressee of the child's existence and uniqueness.
  - If they are uttered out of the blue, certain conditions must be met so that they can be ACCOMMODATED[4].

2. Indefinites

- "ye-NP" carries an existence implication but not uniqueness.

(3) [$_s$ ye bache] [$_v$ oftād]
Indef.D child fall.PERF.3.SG
"A child fell. / (Only) one child fell."

|NP|=	0	1	2+
	#	✓	✓

  - (3) is compatible with singleton[5] and non-singleton interpretations.

- The existence implication of a "ye"-indefinite is not projective.

(4) age ye bache oftād be-gu
if Indef.D child fall.PERF.3.SG SUB-say.2.SG
"If a child fell, tell (me)."

|NP|=	0	1	2+
	✓	✓	✓

  - (4) no longer carries the existence implication that (3) did.

- The existence implication of the indefinite determiner need not be common ground between the the discourse participants.
  - (3) can be uttered out of the blue as a way to inform the addressee of a child's existence.

3. Antidefinites

- "NP-i" is licensed in downward-entailing environments or under entailment cancelling operators (cf. "dependent indefinites" [6]).
- "NP-i" may have an empty extension or an extension with more than one individual. It the extension cannot be a singleton.

(5) age bache-i oftād be-gu
if child-Antidef.C fall.PERF.3.SG SUB-say.2.SG
"If any child fell, tell (me)."

(6) takshākh-i n-ist
unicorn-Antidef.C NEG-be.3.SG
"There is no unicorn."

|NP|=	0	1	2+
	✓	#	✓

  - (5) cannot be used to talk about a specific (single) child. In (6), "-i" appears on an NP with an empty extension.

- (5) and (6) also show that the antidefinite implication of the indefinite clitic is projective since they are already in entailment canceling environments.
- The antidefinite implication of "NP-i" need not be common ground between the discourse participants.
  - (5) and (6) can be uttered out of the blue; when it is not mutually known that there are many children or that there is no children.

4. Antisingleton Indefinites

- Antisingleton indefinites carry an ANTISINGLETON implication[7].

(7) [$_s$ ye bache-i] [$_v$ oftād]
Indef.D child-Antidef.C fall.PERF.3.SG
"A child fell."

(8) ye takshākh-i n-ist
Indef.D unicorn-Antidef.C NEG-be.3.SG
"One of some unicorns isn't (here)!"

|NP|=	0	1	2+
	#	#	✓

  - (7) and (8) convey that there is more than one child/unicorn in the relevant context. Compare (8) with (6).

- An **antidefinite** implication ($[\![\text{NP}]\!] \neq 1$) survives when we test the "ye-NP-i" construction for projection.

(9) age ye bache-i oftād be-gu
if Indef.D child-Antidef.C fall.PERF.3.SG SUB-say.2.SG
"If any child fell, tell (me)."

|NP|=	0	1	2+
	✓	#	✓

- The antisingleton implication need not be common ground between the discourse participants.
  - (7) can be uttered out of the blue; when it is not mutually known that there are many children.