Three Types of Indefinites in Persian

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Construction	Form	Cardinality	CG	Projection
Definite	NP	$\lvert[\![\text{NP}]\!]\rvert = 1$	Yes	$\lvert[\![\text{NP}]\!]\rvert = 1$
Simple Indefinite	ye-NP	$\lvert[\![\text{NP}]\!]\rvert \geq 1$	No	-
Antidefinite	NP-i	$\lvert[\![\text{NP}]\!]\rvert \neq 1$	No	$\lvert[\![\text{NP}]\!]\rvert \neq 1$
Antisingleton Indefinite	ye-NP-i	$\lvert[\![\text{NP}]\!]\rvert > 1$	No	$\lvert[\![\text{NP}]\!]\rvert \neq 1$

Project Summary

Persian (Indo-European):

- No overt definiteness marker.
- 2 singular indefinite markers: ye and –i [1,2]
- Three indefinite constructions

Empirical Questions for each construction:

1. What is the cardinality implication?
2. Is it required to be common ground?
3. Is the implication projective [3,4]?

4. Theoretical Goals:

- Determining the semantics of ye and –i
- Providing a compositional analysis of ye-NP–i

1. Cardinality Implications

- All three indefinite constructions are acceptable when $\lvert[\![\text{NP}]\!]\rvert > 1$

[Context: Mr. and Ms. Karimi have two daughters and a son. They are all single. In this family …]

(1) a. age **ye-doxtar** ezdevāj kon-e, hanu doxtar e mojarad hast
if InD-daughter marry do-3.sg, still daughter EZ single is
"If a daughter marries, there is still a single daughter."
b. age **doxtar-i** …
c. age **ye-doxtar-i** …

- Only the simple indefinite (ye-NP) is acceptable when $\lvert[\![\text{NP}]\!]\rvert = 1$

(2) a. age **ye-pesar** ezdevāj kon-e, dige pesar e mojarad n-ist
if InD-son marry do-3.sg, anymore son EZ single NEG-is
"If a son marries, there is no single son anymore."
b. # age **pesar-i** …
c. # age **ye-pesar-i** …

- Antidefinites (NP-i) are commonly used to convey that $\lvert[\![\text{NP}]\!]\rvert = 0$

[Context: Eli thinks Reza has started smoking and is keeping cigarettes. Reza argues that he has no cigarettes and Eli is free to search anywhere. He says …]

(3) a. # age **ye-sigār** peydā kard-i, har-chi to beg-i
if InD-cigarette find do-2.sg, whatever 2.sg say-2.sg
"If you found any cigarettes, whatever you say."
b. age **sigār-i** …
c. # age **ye-sigār-i** …

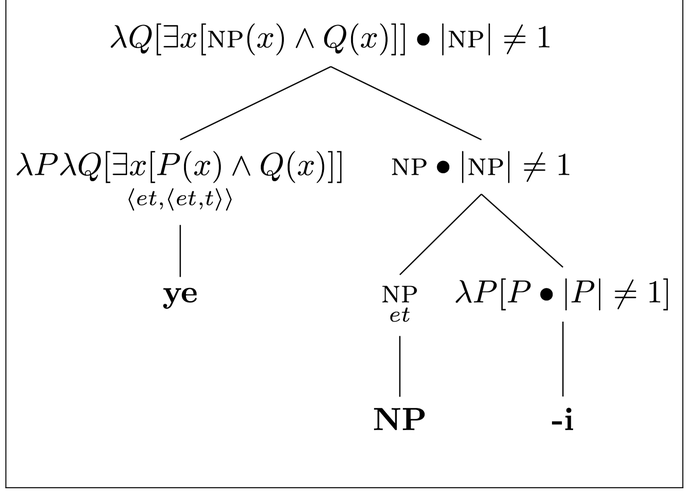
(4) (hich) **ide-i** na-dār-am
no idea-InC NEG-have-1.SG
"I have no idea."

Explaining an Old Puzzle

- -i differentiates RRCs from NRRCs.

(7) a. bache [ke xaste bud] neshast
child that tired was sat
"The child, who was tired, sat."
⇝ $\lvert[\![\text{child}]\!]\rvert = 1$
b. bache-i [ke xaste bud] neshast
child-InC that tired was sat
"The child who was tired sat."
⇝ $\lvert[\![\text{child}]\!]\rvert > 1$

4. Compositional Analysis



Antidefinite Distribution

- Non-veridical environments: questions, antecedent of conditionals, downward entailing environments e.g. under negation, restrictor of *har* ("every") and *hich* ("no")
- Restrictor of the indefinite determiner **ye** [6]
- NPs modified by adjectives or relative clauses (Subtrigging [7,8])
- On "what an NP" construction (e.g. *che pesar-i* – "what a boy!")

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2. Common Ground Status

- The cardinality implication of definites must be common ground (5) while indefinites do not have this requirement (6).

[Context: Eli's dad bought a new watch she does not know about. He leaves for work without it and later he notices and wonders if he left it on the table. He calls home and asks Eli …]

(5) # ru miz sā'at-o mi-bin-i ?
on table watch-OM MI-see-2.SG
"Do you see the watch on the table?"

(6) a. ru miz **ye**-sā'at mi-bin-i ?
on table InD-watch MI-see-2.SG
"Do you see a watch on the table?"
b. … sā'at-**i** … ?
c. … **ye**-sā'at-**i** … ?

3. Projection

- Applying the family-of-sentences diagnostic [5], we see that in entailment canceling environments:
- the implication of **–i** ($\lvert[\![\text{NP}]\!]\rvert \neq 1$) survives (2).
- The implication of **ye** can be targeted and canceled (6).
- the antisingleton indefinite (ye-NP-i) is equivalent to an antidefinite (NP-i) (1b and 1c).

Pragmatic Effects

- Ignorance: ye-NP-i signals the speaker or addressee cannot identify the witness.

[Context: Mona's phone had 65 photos but now has 64]

(8) a. ye-aks pāk shode
InD-photo clean became
"A photo is deleted!"
b. ye-aks-i … ⇝ does not know which

[Context: Eli asks Reza who he is going to dinner with tonight. Reza answers …]

(8) a. bā ye-dust-i ⇝ you don't know them
with InD-friend-InC
"with a friend!"

- Domain Widening: Given domain D and subdomain d, ye–NP is interpreted over d and ye-NP-i over D.

[Context: A dance party with many boys and girls; Mona went to the party with two of her boy friends and …]

(9) a. ba ye-pesar raqsid ⇝ a boy with Mona
with InD-boy danced
"danced with a boy."
b. ba ye-pesar-i … ⇝ a boy at the party

- Indifference: ye-NP-i signals speaker indifference.

(10) a. ye-kart bardār
InD-card take
"Pick a card!"
b. ye-kart-i … ⇝ does not matter which