

-hâ Mobility and Noun Ellipsis

Saeed Ghaniabadi

University of Manitoba

In Persian DPs, when noun ellipsis occurs, the plural marker *-hâ* moves onto the right-adjacent attributive adjective (1a). In the absence of an attributive adjective, the plural marker is instead attached to its immediately preceding determinative, as illustrated in (1b):

	DETM	N	-PL	A	DP _{poss}
(1)	behtarin best	dânešju student	-hâ-ye -PL-EZ	javân-e young-EZ	dânešgâh university
	‘the best young students of the university’				
a.	<i>behtarin</i>	<i>dânešju</i>	{ <i>-hâ</i> }ye	<i>javân-hâ-ye</i>	<i>dânešgâh</i>
b.	<i>behtarin-hâ-ye</i>	<i>dânešju</i>	{ <i>-hâ</i> }ye		<i>dânešgâh</i>

This paper aims to provide an analysis of the distribution of plural marking in the N-ellipsis construction in Persian. In so doing, the study examines the properties of DP-internal constituents that allow noun ellipsis and plural marking. I show that with an elided noun, only an attributive adjective can host the plural marker *-hâ* in Persian DPs. I argue that what distinguishes the attributive adjective from other phrasal modifiers in the Ezafê domain is its head status. Building on morphological and syntactic diagnostics, I propose a structural split between head modifiers and phrasal modifiers. I suggest that head modifiers (attributive nouns and adjectives) are N⁰-adjoined, as proposed by Ghomeshi (1997), and phrasal modifiers (AP, PP, and DP_{poss}) are generated in SpecDP.

Plural marking in Persian is in general category sensitive in the sense that the plural marker cannot attach to elements other than nouns. This fact renders a syntactic account of plural marking in the N-ellipsis construction untenable. Adopting Distributed Morphology framework (Halle & Marantz 1993, 1994 and subsequent works), I propose that the plural morpheme is base-generated in syntax as an adjunct to a nominalized Root ($\sqrt{\text{ROOT}} - n$) and that the distribution of plural marking takes place postsyntactically at PF. I argue that the mobility of *-hâ* is motivated by a morphophonological requirement, imposed at PF, that (i) the plural marker *-hâ* must be visible and (ii) *-hâ* must always affix onto a phonologically realized head.

The need for displacing *-hâ* is shown to arise after Vocabulary Insertion and Linearization have taken place. At this point, the structure is subject to Local Dislocation Merger (Marantz 1988, Embick & Noyer 2001). When LD Merger applies, it creates a complex head by adjoining the plural marker onto its right-adjacent attributive adjective, as in (1a). If there is no element in the domain that can host the stranded *-hâ*, I propose, following Embick & Noyer (2001), that the structure undergoes *string vacuous* Local Dislocation, in which *-hâ* is allowed to appear on its left-adjacent determinative (1b).

-hâ mobility in the N-ellipsis construction seems to be a clear case in which a structure involving a null noun figures significantly in the morphology-phonology interface. The DM-based model of grammar provides a framework for this analysis in which the well-formedness of words is governed in accordance with language-particular criteria.

