

# Split Headedness in Persian

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This paper examines the word order typology of Persian. Since the basic word order is SOV, a cursory hypothesis might be that the language is head-final. However an abundance of evidence from other structures in the language would easily invalidate this notion. For example, adpositions precede noun phrases, desideratives precede verb phrases, and nouns precede genitives and relative clauses. This could lead us to view Persian as head-initial, with the verb-object relation forming an exception (Comrie, 1989, pp. 98, 211; Mahootian, 1997, p. 5)

An alternative to categorically classifying Persian as either head-initial or head-final is split headedness. Roberts (2000) designates categories in Pashto as being either functional (head-initial) or lexical (head-final). A similar analysis could be applied to Persian. This division allows us to glean insights into the relationship between lexicality and headedness.

However an important sentential generalization gets overlooked when viewing Persian as either strictly head-initial (even with the possibility of movement) or split headed based on functional vs. lexical categories. Of the 18 head-dependent relations investigated in this paper, all of the head-final relations involve main verbs or passive auxiliary verbs as heads. Building on previous work by the author, this paper proposes a split headed analysis of Persian based on structural categories. I will show evidence suggesting vP and lower predicate structures are head-final, while higher structures are head-initial.

## References

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- Mahootian, S. (1997). *Persian*. Descriptive Grammars. Routledge, London.
- Roberts, T. (2000). *Clitics and Agreement*. PhD thesis, The Massachusetts Institute of Technology.