

# Bare noun vs. indefinite objects in Persian and their anaphoric uptake

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In Persian, bare noun objects with the marker *-ra* (BN-*ra*) are typically analyzed as definite, whereas BN objects without *-ra* (BN- $\emptyset$ ) have been argued to be pseudo-incorporated, yielding a number-neutral indefinite reading with limited potential for anaphoric uptake (Modarresi 2014). We have argued that BN objects are always interpreted as definite, but that BN- $\emptyset$  occur in the scope of existential closure over an event, and are functionally dependent on that event. This creates the effect of number neutrality, and also explains why anaphoric uptake is limited (cf. Krifka & Modarresi 2016). In the current presentation we focus on the difference of anaphoric potential of BN- $\emptyset$  and of indefinite objects marked by the indefinite article *yek* (IDF), with the goal to shed light on the differences in the mechanism of such update. We tested the naturalness of the anaphoric uptake by singular, plural, or number-neutral covert anaphora. The first experiment used self-paced reading (following a similar design by Law & Syrett 2017 on Mandarin), with no significant result. The second experiment relied on acceptability judgements, showing that IDFs make the best antecedents (except for plural anaphors, due to a number conflict). However, BN- $\emptyset$  make surprisingly good antecedents as well. The third experiment required selecting the best anaphoric expression; overt singular anaphora was clearly preferred for IDFs, whereas for BN- $\emptyset$ , overt singular and covert anaphora were selected about equal, with plural anaphora a distant third. We interpret this as evidence that BN- $\emptyset$  introduce discourse referents, but that they are less accessible than when introduced by IDF (contrary to Farkas & de Swart 2003, Dayal 2011). The low selection of plural anaphora we take as evidence that BN- $\emptyset$  are not generic (as in Aguilar-Guevara & Zwarts 2010) or number-neutral (Modarresi 2014) or contain a built-in sum operator (Schwarz 2014). We argue that the findings are compatible with Yanovich (2008) and Krifka & Modarresi (2016), who assume that the discourse referents of BN- $\emptyset$  are singular but have to be recovered by a slightly more complex process than with IDF.

**References:** • Aguilar-Guevara, A. & J. Zwarts. 2010. Weak definites and reference to kinds. In N. Li & D. Lutz (eds.), *Semantics and linguistic theory (SALT)* 20, 1-15. • Farkas, D. F. & H. de Swart. 2003. *The semantics of incorporation*. Stanford: CSLI Publications. • Krifka, M. & F. Modarresi. 2016. Number neutrality and anaphoric uptake of pseudo-incorporated nominals in Persian (and weak definites in English). *SALT* 26. 874–891. • Law, J. H. K. & K. Syrett. 2017. Experimental evidence for the discourse potential of bare nouns in Mandarin. *NELS* 47. • Modarresi, F. 2014. *Bare nouns in Persian: Interpretation, grammar and prosody*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Ottawa & Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. • Schwarz, F. 2014. How weak and how definite are weak indefinites? In A. Aguilar-Guevara, B. LeBruyn & J. Zwarts (eds), *Weak referentiality*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.