

# Strong definites in colloquial Persian and referentiality

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Persian has no definite article, while bare nouns express definite or generic readings (Ghomeshi 2003, Krifka & Modarresi 2016). Modern Colloquial Persian has the additional referentiality marker *-e* (*-he* after vowels, *-ye* after *j*), which can optionally be combined with bare nouns in typically “strong referential” readings, such as deictic and anaphoric uses of definites, as in (1) and (2).

- (1) *Ketāb-e ru mize.* [deictic]  
**book-e** on table.be.3SG  
'The book is on the table.'
- (2) *Ye arus va damād-ro didam.* [anaphoric]  
a bride and groom-ACC saw.1SG  
**Arus-e xeyli xošgel bud.**  
**bride-e** very beautiful was.3SG  
'I saw a bride and groom yesterday. The bride was very beautiful.'

We argue that the marker *-e* marks referentiality and not just anaphoricity, as is often assumed in the literature for strong definites (e.g., Schwarz 2009, Jenks 2018). See the referential/non-referential reading in (3a) vs. (3b), respectively. While (3a) in a clear referential reading, i.e. the *fastest runner*, can refer to Ali, the same is not possible in (3b), where the expression refers to whoever will be the winner. In (3b), *-e* is ungrammatical:

- (3) a. *Esme saritarin davande(-he) chi bud?*  
name.of **fastest runner(-e)** what was.3SG  
'What was the name of the fastest runner?'  
b. *Saritarin davande(\*-he) barande.ye jāyeze miše.*  
**fastest runner(\*-e)** winner.of award become.3SG  
'The fastest runner will be the winner of the award.'

In sum, the referentiality marker *-e* in Colloquial Persian can be used with strong definites. This provides novel evidence that the contrast between weak and strong definites is based on referentiality, and not on anaphoricity.

**References:** • Ghomeshi, J. 2003. Plural marking, indefiniteness and the noun phrase. *Studia Linguistica* 57(2), 47–74. • Jenks, P. 2018. Articulated definiteness without articles. *Linguistic Inquiry* 49(3), 501–536. • Krifka, M. & F. Modarresi. 2016. Number neutrality and anaphoric update of pseudo- incorporated nominals in Persian (and weak definites in English). In M. Moroney, C.-R. Little, J. Collard & D. Burgdorf (eds.), *Proceedings of SALT 26*, 874–891. Austin, TX: University of Texas. • Schwarz, F. 2009. *Two types of definites in natural language*. University of Massachusetts Amherst dissertation.