The Suffix that Makes Persian Nouns Unique

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The nominal suffix -e in Farsi is a uniqueness marker.
It makes bare nominals definitely definite!
It makes indefinites scopally specific.
Definiteness in Persian
• No article or marker of definiteness like *the* in English.
Definiteness in Persian

- No article or marker of definiteness like *the* in English.
- Two indefinite markers:
  - i. The indefinite determiner *ye*.
  - ii. The indefinite clitic *-i*.
Definiteness in Persian

- No article or marker of definiteness like *the* in English.
- Two indefinite markers:
  - i. The indefinite determiner *ye*.
  - ii. The indefinite clitic *-i*.
- Two markers that cut across the definite/indefinite classification:
  - i. The object marker *-rā*.
  - ii. The suffix *-e*. 
### Roadmap

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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- What does -e do?
  1. N vs. N-e → The suffix makes the noun definitely definite!
  2. ye-N vs. ye-N-e → The suffix makes the noun scopally specific.
  3. 1 & 2 → -e marks uniqueness.
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- What does *-e* do?

1. N vs. N-e → The suffix makes the noun definitely definite!
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## Roadmap

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- What does -e do?

1. **N vs. N-e** → The suffix makes the noun definitely definite!
2. **ye-N vs. ye-N-e** → The suffix makes the noun scopally specific.
3. 1 & 2 → -e marks uniqueness.
Empirical Observations
## Nominal Constructions

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Bare Nominals

**Generic Example**

$C_{Gen}$: Amir is discussing cars and their problems. He says:

(1) māshin havā-ro ālude mi-kon-e  
   car air-OM polluted MI-do-3.SG  
   “Cars pollute the air.”
Bare Nominals

**Generic Example**

\(C_{Gen}:\) Amir is discussing cars and their problems. He says:

(1) māshin havā-ro ālude mi-kon-e  
   car air-OM polluted MI-do-3.SG  
   “Cars pollute the air.”

**Indefinite Example**

\(C_{indef}:\) Amir is crossing the street without checking the traffic. Leila stops him and says:

(2) māshin mi-zan-e be-het  
   car MI-hit-3.SG to-2.SG  
   “Some car is gonna hit you.”
Bare Nominals

Definite Example

$C_{\text{def}_1}$: Amir and Leila have one car only. One day Amir comes home and says:

(3) māshin xarāb  shod-e
    car       broken become.PST-3.SG
  “The car’s broken.”
Bare Nominals in Tehrani Farsi can be definite, indefinite, or generic.
### Nominal Constructions

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C_{Gen}: Amir is discussing cars and their problems. He says:

(4) māshin havā-ro ālude mi-kon-e
   car air--OM polluted MI-do-3.SG
   “Cars pollute the air.”
**N**

$C_{Gen}$: Amir is discussing cars and their problems. He says:

(4) māshin havā-ro ālude mi-kon-e  
car air--OM polluted MI-do-3.SG  
“Cars pollute the air.”

**N-e**

#$C_{Gen}$  $C_{def_3}$: Amir shows the video of an old car with a smokey exhaust. He says:

(5) māshin-ē havā-ro ālude mi-kon-e  
car-UM air--OM polluted MI-do-3.SG  
“The/that car pollutes the air.”
C_{indef}: Amir is crossing the street without checking the traffic. Leila stops him and says:

(6) māshin mi-zan-e be-het
car MI-hit-3.SG to--2.SG
“A car is gonna hit you.”
\( C_{\text{indef}} \): Amir is crossing the street without checking the traffic. Leila stops him and says:

(6) \text{māshin mi-zan-e be-het} \\
\text{car MI-hit-3.SG to--2.SG} \\
“A car is gonna hit you.”

\( C_{\text{def}_4} \): Amir is walking in a parking lot. A car is backing out. Leila stops him and says:

(7) \text{māshin-\textit{e} mi-zan-e be-het} \\
\text{car-UM MI-hit-3.SG to--2.SG} \\
“The/that car is gonna hit you.”
C_{def_1}: Amir and Leila have one car only. One day Amir comes home and says:

(8) māshīn xarāb shod-e
car broken become.PST-3.SG
“The car’s broken.”
Amir and Leila have one car only. One day Amir comes home and says:

(8) māshin xarāb shod-e
    car broken become.PST-3.SG
    “The car’s broken.”

(9) māshin-e xarāb shod-e
    car-UM broken become.PST-3.SG
    “The/that car’s broken.”
Adding -e to a bare nominal makes it (definitely) definite.
## Nominal Constructions

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Leila looks out the window. She says:

(10) ye zan dam-e dar-e
    Indef.D woman close-EZ door-3.SG
    “A woman is at the door.”
Leila looks out the window. She says:

\[(10)\] ye zan\_e dam-e dar-e
Indef.D woman close-EZ door-3.SG
“\textit{A woman is at the door.}”

Leila looks out the window. She says:

\[(11)\] ye zan-e dam-e dar-e
Indef.D woman-UM close-EZ door-3.SG
“\textit{A woman is at the door.}”
What is the difference between ye-N and ye-N-e?
What is the difference between ye-N and ye-N-e?
Answer: Scope! ye-N-e always takes wide scope!
“Amir wants to marry a girl.”
(12) Amir mi-xā-d bā ye doxtar ezdevāj kon-e
Amir MI-want-3.SG with In.D girl marry do-3.SG
“Amir wants to marry a girl.”
1. ∃ > WANT
2. WANT > ∃
(12) Amir mi-xā-d bā ye doxtar ezdevāj kon-e
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Amir MI-want-3.SG with In.D girl-UM marry do-3.SG
“Amir wants to marry a girl.”
1. ∃ > WANT
(14) emruz hame be ye ostād salām kard-im
today everyone to İndef.D professor hello do-1.PL
“Today everyone said hello to a professor.”
Scope with the Universal Quantifier

(14) emruz hame be ye ostād salām kard-im
today everyone to Indef.D professor hello do-1.PL
“Today everyone said hello to a professor.”
1. ∃ > ∀
2. ∀ > ∃
Scope with the Universal Quantifier

**ye N**

(14) emruz hame be ye ostād salām kard-im
today everyone to Indef.D professor hello do-1.PL
“Today everyone said hello to a professor.”
1. $\exists > \forall$
2. $\forall > \exists$

**ye N-e**

(15) emruz hame be ye ostād-e salām kard-im
today everyone to Indef.D professor-UM hello do-1.PL
“Today everyone said hello to a specific professor.”
1. $\exists > \forall$
### Scope with the Universal Quantifier

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“All the girls corrected all the mistakes of a boy.”
Scope with the Universal Quantifier

1. \( \exists > \forall > \forall \)
2. \( \forall > \exists > \forall \)
Scope with the Universal Quantifier

**ye N**

(16) hame-ye doxtar-ā hame-ye eshtebā-hā-ye ye pesar ro tasih
all-EZ girl-PL all-EZ mistake-PL-EZ Indef.D boy OM correct
do-3.PL

“All the girls corrected all the mistakes of a boy.”
1. $\exists > \forall > \forall$
2. $\forall > \exists > \forall$

**ye N-e**

(17) hame-ye doxtar-ā hame-ye eshtebā-hā-ye ye pesar-e ro tasih
all-EZ girl-PL all-EZ mistake-PL-EZ Indef.D boy-UM OM correct
do-3.PL

“There is a boy that every girl corrected all his mistakes.”
1. $\exists > \forall > \forall$
Sara always gets into a fight with some boy.
Scope with Temporal Adverbials

\[ \text{ye N} \]

(18) Sārā hamishe bā ye pesar davā-sh mi-sh-e
Sara always with Indef.D boy quarrel-3.SG MI-become-3.SG
“Sara always gets into a fight with some boy.”
1. \( \exists > \text{ALWAYS} \)
2. \( \text{ALWAYS} > \exists \)
### ye N

(18) Sārā hamishe bā ye pesar davā-sh mi-sh-e  
Sara always with Indef.D boy quarrel-3.SG MI-become-3.SG  
“Sara always gets into a fight with some boy.”

1. $\exists >$ ALWAYS  
2. ALWAYS $>$ $\exists$

### ye N-e

(19) Sārā hamishe bā ye pesar-e davā-sh mi-sh-e  
Sara always with Indef.D boy(-UM) quarrel-3.SG MI-become-3.SG  
“Sara always gets into a fight with some boy.”

1. $\exists >$ ALWAYS
(20) hame fekr mi-kon-an Ali bā ye doxtar ezdevāj kard-e
all thought MI-do-3.PL Ali with Indef.D girl marriage do-PF.3.SG
“Everyone thinks Ali has married a girl.”
### Scope with Belief Verbs

| (20) | hame fekr mi-kon-an Ali bā ye doxtar ezdevāj kard-e |
|  | all thought MI-do-3.PL Ali with Indef.D girl marriage do-PF.3.SG |
|  | “Everyone thinks Ali has married a girl.” |

1. \( \exists > \forall > B \)
2. \( \forall > B > \exists \)
### Scope with Belief Verbs

#### ye N

“Everyone thinks Ali has married a girl.”

1. $\exists > \forall > B$
2. $\forall > B > \exists$

#### ye N-e

“Everyone thinks Ali has married a girl.”

1. $\exists > \forall > B$
Summary

Adding -e to a bare nominal makes it (definitely) definite.
Adding -e to an indefinite enforces the widest scope reading.
Adding -e to a bare nominal makes it (definitely) definite. Adding -e to an indefinite enforces a widest scope reading.
Adding -e to a bare nominal makes it (definitely) definite. Adding -e to an indefinite enforces a widest scope reading. What meaning for -e can result in both these effects?
Adding -e to a bare nominal makes it (definitely) definite. Adding -e to an indefinite enforces a widest scope reading. What meaning for -e can result in both these effects? Uniqueness!
Does -e make an indefinite epistemically specific?
Does ye-N-e require the speaker to have a specific referent in mind?
Epistemic Specificity

Does -e make an indefinite epistemically specific?
Does ye-N-e require the speaker to have a specific referent in mind?

Examples

(22) dust-am eshtebāhi eskirin-shāt-e chat-esh-o bā ye friend-1.SG mistakenly screen-shot-EZ chat-3.SG-OM with In.D doxtar-e ferestād
girl-UM sent.3.SG
“My friend mistakenly sent me a screen shot of his chat with a girl.”
A Proposal
The clitic -e encodes a uniqueness implication.
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The clitic -e encodes a uniqueness implication. Adding it to a bare nominal makes it definite. Adding to an indefinite results in a singleton indefinite, making scope relations inert (Schwarzschild 2002).
The clitic -e encodes a uniqueness implication. Adding it to a bare nominal makes it definite. Adding to an indefinite results in a singleton indefinite, making scope relations inert (Schwarzschild 2002).
Formal Analysis
How can we implement these intuitions formally?
The car is broken.
A car is broken.
A specific car is broken.
The/that car is broken
• The nominal suffix -e in Farsi is a uniqueness marker.
• It makes bare nominals definitely definite!
• It makes indefinites scopally specific.
• An indefinite number of thanks to Cleo Condoravdi for continued help and support with this project.
References


