This study proposes to analyze the EZAFE, a morphological exponent that appears mainly in Western Iranian languages, as a morpheme. Using both synchronic and diachronic evidence, we show that the EZAFE is both phonologically and functionally incoherent in Kurdish dialects, Persian and old Persian respectively. This begs the question as to why such inconsistent elements would survive across change. We argue that it is the predictive nature of the morpheme that explain its persistence in these languages.

EZAFAE, from Arabic *idda* meaning ‘addition’, is important in the structure of Western Iranian noun phrases (Kahnemuyipour2014, Samiian1994, Samvelian2007, among others). Hence, Persian and Kurdish feature an EZAFE marker, which strictly appears in NPs and attaches to heads with a non-empty list of dependents. An NP may contain more than one EZAFE: each dependent induces its own EZAFE marking on the head it modifies. These modifiers can be either adjuncts or complements. Examples 1-12 provide examples from Persian and Kurdish. In each case, the head noun is modified by one or more adjectival adjuncts in definite and indefinite forms. In Sorani and Southern Kurdish, the EZAFE takes the *ī* form in an indefinite NP while within the domain of a definite NP, it appears as *a*. In Kurmanji, bare nouns indicate definiteness and EZAFE inflects for gender, number and definiteness.

**Persian**

1. **sag e bozorg**
   - *big dog*

2. **sag e siāh e bozorg**
   - *big black dog*

3. **sag siāh bozorg e**
   - *the big black dog*

**Sorani Kurdish** (Central Kurdish)

4. **gamāl=ī zil**
   - *big dog*

5. **gamāl=ī zil=ī rash**
   - *big black dog*

6. **gamāl=a zil=a rash=aka**
   - *the big black dog*

**Southern Kurdish**

7. **gamāl gawrā**
   - *big dog*

8. **gamāl sia y gawrā**
   - *big black dog*

9. **gamāl siā gawrā=ga**
   - *the big black dog*

**Kurmanji Kurdish** (Northern Kurdish)

10. **kūcik-ē mezin ü reş**
    - *a big dog*

11. **kūcik-ekī mezin ü reş**
    - *a big and black dog*

12. **kūcik-ē mezin ü reş**
    - *the big and black dog*

Not all dependents induce an EZAFE though. For example, Persian does not allow EZAFE with definite nouns (6) and in Sorani Kurdish, the appearance of EZAFE is not quite predictable on a head noun with PP dependents (13-15) or on prepositions as heads with their own NP dependents (14-15). The EZAFE shows a similar inconsistency in Sorani NPs that include CP dependents. As illustrated in 16, the EZAFE can appear with *ka* ‘that’ while it cannot appear in 17.

13. **pyāw=ī barz ba klāw=ēk**
    - *tall man with a hat*

14. **kitēb lasar ūra bēuk=aka**
    - *book on the small shelf*

15. **kitēb lārbāra=y zmānnāsi**
    - *book on linguistics*

16. **ganda1 ī ka min bin=im**
    - *corruption that I saw*

17. **aw pyāw=a (*y)* ka l-āwē āy-bēn-ī**
    - *the man that you see there*
In Haig (2011)’s account of the origins and distribution of EZAFE in Old Iranian, he suggests that the marker was a nominalizer which had two functions: it served as a relative pronoun and a demonstrative or anaphoric marker (18)-(19). While Northern Kurdish has retained these functions, in Persian and other Kurdish dialects it has explicated to serve other functions. The forms found in Persian and Kurdish have changed and as previously noted in the case of Sorani, EZAFE features an allomorphy (4)-(6).

(18) Dārayavaum hya manā pītā
     Darius.ACC hya.M.NOM 1s GEN father
     ‘Darius who (was) my father’

(19) ima tya adam akunavam
     this hya.NEUT.ACC 1s NOM do.PST.1S
     ‘this (is) that/which I did’

Haig indeed noted that while the EZAFE has historically been systematically marked, it has gradually become functionally redundant or attracted new functions in Western Iranian. With the loss of case and gender and the intrusion of a complementizer, the EZAFE lost its relativizing, anaphoric and complementizing functions yet persists as an NP marker across these languages (Figure 2). It is clear that despite EZAFE’s inconsistent distribution in PPs and CPs in Sorani and Southern Kurdish, speakers can predictably use it to accurately mark a head’s dependent.

Such forms support the validity of the morphomic approach to morphological analysis and are consistent with the behavior of morphomes across language change (Maiden1992). Morphomes are in effect patterns of variation that are not purely motivated by phonology, syntax or semantics but rather involve a systematic mapping between arbitrary classes of morphosyntactic features and arbitrary sets of morphophonological forms (Figure 1) (Aronoff1994).

![Figure 1](image1.png)

![Figure 2](image2.png)

EZAFE’s persistence across time in the face of incoherence bolsters a morphomic approach. Patterns of alternation that are phonologically and functionally inconsistent or ‘irregular’ survive through time because they serve a predictive function. In other words, the EZAFE morphome serves to make predictions about its distribution in Western Iranian languages. The predictive function of morphemic elements is seen as forming part of the implicational mechanism at the heart of language learning (Blevins2016) and by extension language change (Maiden2018).

References