

Efficient behavior and Target word order variation in low-resource languages of northwestern Iran

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In the study of word order variation, Hawkins (1994, 2004) and Gibson (1998, 200) argued that certain word order patterns are easier for communication or comprehension. The objective in this study is to examine processing principles as an explanation for Target word order variation (e.g., Behaghel 1909/10; Hawkins 1994, 2004, 2014; Gibson 1998, 2000; Wasow 2002). The term “Target” (T) covers several semantic roles such as physical Goals of MOTION and CAUSED-MOTION verbs, metaphorical Goals of SHOW and LOOK verbs, Addressees of verbs of speech, i.e., SAY verbs, Recipients of verbs of transfer, i.e., GIVE verbs, Resultant-States of Change-of-State verbs, and in part, also EXPERIENCERS and BENEFICIARIES (Asadpour 2022a, b, c). My term ‘Target’ derives its origin from Haig’s discussion of “Goals” (Haig and Thiele 2014: 1). Haig gradually expanded this category by also incorporating destination, direction, or local goals of movement and caused-motion verbs, recipients, and addressees encoded by “full NPs” (Haig and Thiele 2014: 1; Haig 2015: 407, 2017: 408). Eventually his work encompassed final-states and “LVC’s (Light Verb Complements) of the light verb *kirin* ‘do’ as well (Haig 2022: 5), see examples below for illustration.

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| 1. [Mukri Kurdish, TONI corpus, CS_124c]
V P T
<i>da-řo-m</i> <i>bo</i> <i>madrasa-y</i>
IPFV-go.PRS-1SG to school-OBL
'(I) go to school .' | 2. [Northeastern Kurdish, TONI corpus, AD_03]
V P T
<i>čũ</i> <i>sa</i> <i>dāy-e</i>
go.PST.3SG on tree-OBL
'(he) went on top of the tree .' |
| 3. [Armenian, TONI corpus, 8-1.19a]
 V T
<i>ēt'um</i> <i>im</i> <i>dproç</i>
go.PST COP.1SG school
'(I) was going to school .' | 4. [Jewish Neo-Aramaic, Khan 2008: 428, J149A]
X V T
<i>yreqli,</i> <i>edyéli</i> <i>belá</i>
run.off.PST.1SG come.back.PST.1SG home
'(I) ran off and came back home .' |
| 5. [Azeri Turkic, TONI corpus, 4-1]
 V T
<i>bābā</i> <i>gēd-ax</i> <i>Mašhad-a</i>
father go.SBJV.PRS-1PL Mašhad-DAT
'Father, let's go to Mašhad .' | |

In this study, I will evaluate whether in Target constructions, the sample languages exhibit efficient communication behavior especially when there are options to select between shorter and longer elements or structures with less or larger dependency between the syntactic constituents. The data will be tested on the basis of three sets of narrative speech corpora: (a) published sources (e.g. Khan 2008; Kiral 2001; Öpengin 2016), (b) personal fieldwork (TONI corpus), and (c) crowdsourced experiments. The sample languages are low-resource languages of northwestern Iran such as Mukri Kurdish (Iranian), Northeastern Kurdish (Iranian), Armenian (Indo-European), and Turkic languages (Turkic), all considered to be left-branching languages, and Neo-Aramaic (Semitic) which is considered to be right-branching. The predominant postverbal placement of a specific group of semantic roles called Target requires further investigation.

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