

# Variable hiatus in Persian

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# Highlights

- In this talk, we present results of two experiments showing variable hiatus in Spoken Persian.
- Our production experiment reveals that variation is restricted:
  - elision of first vowel, which is cross-linguistically common (Casali 1997) is never attested
  - elision of the second vowel is rare with monosegmental suffixes
- The perception experiment confirms that elision of the second vowel is predominant in polysegmental suffixes, but rare with monosegmental suffixes.

# Spoken Persian

- Many languages allow hiatus and others ban it. Spoken Persian presents an intermediate situation.
- When two underlying vowels appear at the root-suffix boundary /V-V/, the surface realizations vary between:
  - VV hiatus
  - V<sub>2</sub> elision
  - V?V epenthesis
- This variation is related to the length of the suffix (Jam 2015; Yazarlou 2014; Dehghan & Kord 2012):

|        | 'our'       | 'his/her' | 'my'      | 'the'    |          |
|--------|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| dæftær | dæftær-emun | dæftær-ef | dæftær-æm | dæftær-e | 'office' |
| baba   | baba-mun    | baba-ʃ    | baba-m    | ??*/baba | 'dad'    |
|        | baba-ʔemun  | baba-ʔef  | baba-ʔæm  | baba-ʔe  |          |
|        | baba-emun   | baba-ef   | baba-æm   | baba-e   |          |
|        | *bab-emun   | *bab-ef   | *bab-æm   | *bab-e   |          |

# This study

We conduct two experiments to investigate how hiatus varies in Spoken Persian:

## ① production

- small elicitation-based experiment
- the principal aim is gauge the variation within and across speakers

## ② perception

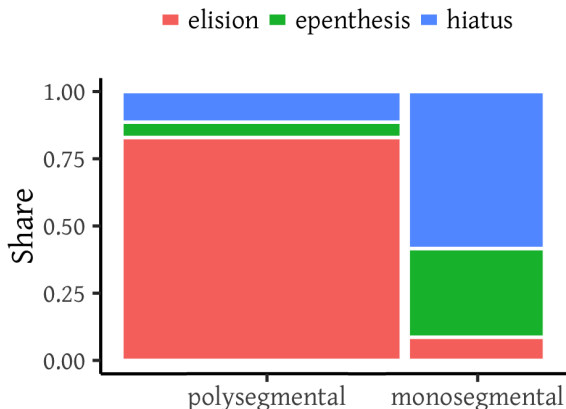
- larger controlled experiment
- designed to specifically investigate the relationship between the three principal variants and their dependence on suffix length

# Production: Methods

- Stimuli: 108 roots, 17 V-initial suffixes:
  - $V_1$ : {i, e, a, o, u}
  - $V_2$ : {i, e, æ, a, o}
  - Suffix length: -V, -VC, -VCVC
  - Root stratum: native, loanwords, nonce words
- Word-formation production experiment:
  - Familiarization stage: researcher provided C-final root + V-initial suffix
  - Main task: participant derived V-final roots + (the same) V-initial suffix
- 7 participants completed the experiment (mean age = 30)

# V<sub>2</sub> elision, epenthesis and hiatus depend on suffix length

- V<sub>2</sub> elision, epenthesis, and hiatus are the most frequent variants.
- The productions depend on suffix length (1,202 tokens):



# Perception: Methods

- Stimuli:
  - 30 V-final nonce roots
  - 3 monosegmental (-V) suffixes, 3 polysegmental suffixes
- Procedure:
  - Each participant judged acceptability of 30 nonce paradigms.
  - Each paradigm consisted of a bare and derived root.
  - Each of the paradigms appeared under three conditions (elision, epenthesis, hiatus; randomized), for a total of 90 items per participant.
- 54 participants (mean age = 29) completed the experiment.

# Procedure

## Sample experimental item

1. I bought 3 \_\_\_\_\_ for dinner yesterday.
2. I ate 2 of the \_\_\_\_\_ today.



I accept = Y

I don't accept = N

۱. دیروز ۳ تا \_\_\_\_\_ برای شام خریدم.
۲. امروز ۲ تا از \_\_\_\_\_ رو خوردم.



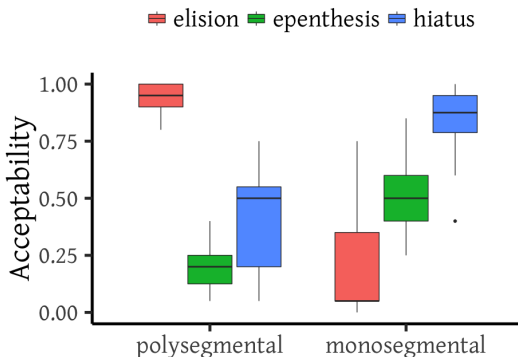
Y = می‌پسندم

N = نمی‌پسندم



# Results by variant and suffix length

- $V_2$  elision is the most acceptable variant with longer suffixes.
- Hiatus is more acceptable than epenthesis across conditions.



# Summary of results

We found that hiatus in Persian is variable:

- Variation in Persian is not random, but systematic.
- $V_2$  elision is the most common resolution with polysegmental suffixes, but rare with monosegmental suffixes.
- Hiatus and epenthesis are both possible, but the former is more frequent than the latter, regardless of suffix length.

# Conclusions

Bigger picture:

- This is the first study showing the productivity of  $V_2$  elision experimentally.
- Our experimental study shows that the hiatus resolutions typically found across languages can be observed variably in a single language.

# Thanks to ...

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