Variable hiatus in Persian

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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
  - VV V₂ elision
  - V?V epenthesis
- This variation is related to the length of the suffix (Jam 2015; Yazarlou 2014; Dehghan & Kord 2012):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>‘our’</th>
<th>‘his/her’</th>
<th>‘my’</th>
<th>‘the’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dæftær</td>
<td>dæftær-emun</td>
<td>dæftær-e</td>
<td>dæftær-æm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>baba</td>
<td>baba-mun</td>
<td>baba-ʃ</td>
<td>baba-m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>baba-ʔemun</td>
<td>baba-ʔeʃ</td>
<td>baba-ʔæm</td>
<td>baba-ʔe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*bab-emun</td>
<td>baba-ʃ</td>
<td>baba-æm</td>
<td>*bab-e</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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)
V₂ elision, epenthesis and hiatus depend on suffix length

- V₂ elision, epenthesis, and hiatus are the most frequent variants.
- The productions depend on suffix length (1,202 tokens):

![Bar chart showing share of elision, epenthesis, and hiatus in polysegmental and monosegmental contexts]
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
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.
- V₂ 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 V₂ elision experimentally.
- Our experimental study shows that the hiatus resolutions typically found across languages can be observed variably in a single language.
Thanks to . . .

- our participants
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References I


References II


