

## **Evaluation of processing principles on word order variation in the languages of Northwest Iran**

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This study will focus on the effects of processing principles on word order variation in the languages of Northwestern Iran, viz. Armenian, Mukri Kurdish, and Northeastern Kurdish (Indo-European), Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (Semitic), and Azeri Turkic (Turkic), all of which under the superstratum of Persian as the official language of Iran. ‘Target’ is a label for the semantic roles of Goals of MOTION and CAUSED-MOTION verbs; Recipients of GIVE verbs; Addressees of SAY verbs. In all of these constituents the event structure of direction is usually expressed via flagging with adpositions or case marking. Since Beneficiaries of BENEFICIARY verbs, resultant states of CHANGE-of-STATE verbs, and metaphorical destinations of SHOW and LOOK verbs are flagged with the same adpositions, they are included in the study as well. OVT (object-verb-Target) is the most frequently attested word order in this study’s corpus, and it is considered an areal feature, i.e., a contact-induced phenomenon (cf. Haig 2021). Other common patterns attested in this study but less frequent than OVT word order are OTV, TVO, TOV, VTO, and VOT. Following the descriptive works of Behaghel (1909) and Greenberg’s (1961) generalizations on word ordering, Hawkins (1994, 2004, and 2008) puts forward syntactic weight as an explanation for possible word order preferences in a language based on production considerations (cf. Rijkhoff 2004: 261-312). In this presentation I will not distinguish different processing principles from each other empirically, but instead I will give an overview of the main concept and the methods applied in the length and distance calculations in order to evaluate the role of syntactic weight (also known as end weight effect), on Target word-ordering tendencies. The main goal of this evaluation is to provide a different cross-linguistic perspective to the explanations offered in processing principles, and to test these explanatory principles to determine whether or not they are of any relevance for the study of word order in spoken languages. Furthermore, I will test the results against the acceptability judgment experiment and word order patterns among native speakers. My research examines the word order of Targets in three sets of narrative speech corpora: (a) published sources, (b) personal fieldwork, and (c) crowdsourced experiments. The results will be indicated in statistical diagrams which place the tendencies in a hierarchy and which show whether the postverbal positioning of Targets can be explained as an areal feature.