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### Iranian Influence on Turkish Syntax: Post-verbal Order in East Anatolian Turkish

*İrani Dillerin Türkçenin Sözdizimi Üzerindeki Etkisi: Doğu Grubu Ağızlarında Yüklem Ardına Atılan Unsurlar*

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**Abstract:** This study examines the post-verbal order in East Anatolian Turkish within the concept of language contact. Iranian and Turkic varieties have been in intensive contact as neighboring languages for nearly a thousand years. In a vast linguistic area-Arexes-Iran linguistic area- stretching from the Central Asia to the Caucasus and central Anatolia, a great number of languages have been scrutinized with regard to their shared contact-induced mechanisms. Little attention, however, has been paid to the degree of Iranian influence on the syntactic features of East Anatolian Turkish despite located in the same region.

Although Iranian influence can be observed in different degrees in the entire Turkish dialects, most intensively influenced language areas are the Southeastern Anatolia and the southern borders of the Eastern Anatolia where bilingual speaker population is high. Thus, this paper zooms in on the Iranian-induced word order features of East Anatolian Turkish based on the spoken data collected from the cities Diyarbakır, Elâzığ, Tunceli, Van, and Bitlis. The findings reveal that the Iranian influence on post-verbal word order exerts itself on four syntactic domains: *dative elements* expressing direction and purpose, *direct objects* of verb of saying and perception, *adverbial clauses*, and *modal structures*. These contact-induced innovations appear to be triggered by modal Iranian codes. In all sections, the evaluations are supported with the relevant equivalent examples from possible contact languages.

**Structured Abstract:** This study aims at exploring the extent of Iranian influence on the word order of East Anatolian Turkish (EAT). Iranian and Turkic varieties have shared an intense linguistic relationship for almost a millennium, resulting in significant syntactic convergence. Despite the extensive study of Iranian influence on various Turkic varieties, the syntactic features of EAT have been relatively understudied. This research aims to fill that gap by examining spoken data from cities Diyarbakır, Elâzığ, Tunceli, Van, and Bitlis where bilingual population is high. Comparative analysis with Iranian languages is conducted to identify syntactic parallels. In all sections, findings are supported by the equivalent examples from possible contact languages, i.e. Persian, Kurmanji, and Zazaki.

The findings reveal that the Iranian influence on EAT's post-verbal word order exerts itself on four syntactic domains: *dative elements* expressing direction and purpose, *direct objects* of verb of saying and perception, *adverbial clauses*, and *modal structures*.

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In standard Turkish, dative elements indicating direction and purpose precede the main verb. However, in EAT, these elements often occur post-verbally. This mirrors the structure found in Iranian languages like Persian, Kurmanji, and Zazaki. Unlike standard Turkish, dative elements often occur in postverbal position in EAT. Even though the verb *git-* ‘to go’, *ver-* ‘to give’ and *başla-* ‘to start’ does not allow indirect object to be in postverbal position in standard Turkish, inverted sentence order is frequently used in EAT. EAT consistently positions the dative elements of these verbs post-verbally, similar to the structure in Iranian languages. *Ne zaman Koyunum geTse benim evime, biraħma.* ‘Whenever my sheep goes to my home, don’t let it then.’

The examples that most clearly show the word order deviation from standard Turkish appear in sentences with the verbs of saying and perception in EAT. For instance, in Persian, the verb *goften* ‘to say’ precedes the quotation. In EAT, a sentence like *Oğlan demiş ben senin bohçeni alem* ‘The kid said: ‘I will take your parcel’ shows the direct object following the verb, unlike standard Turkish. The same order tendency can be observed with the complement clauses of verbs of perception in EAT. The verb *gan-* for instance (< TT *kan-*) does not allow postverbal direct object in Standard Turkish. In EAT, on the other hand, direct object in these sentences follows the verb consistently: *Ėandı ki bu işi bizim başımıza getiren Kulegirendi.* ‘He was convinced that Kulegiren was responsible for what happened to us’.

As the previous studies on Turkic-Iranian language contact, most of the Turkic varieties under Iranian languages, including EAT, uses the Turkic optative marker *{-(y)A}* to express the Iranian subjunctive mood, leading to the replacement of Turkic non-finite clauses with Iranian modal finite clauses. This is seen in sentences with hypothetical verbs, purpose clauses and modal constructions. Following the neighbouring Iranian languages, in EAT, verbs that are used to refer to a hypothetical situation or to express a wish, suggestion etc., takes subjunctive subordinate clauses. Therefore, on the modal of Iranian subjunctive mood, EAT almost completely replaced the Turkic non-finite subordinate clause constructions and replaced them with Iranian postverbal subordinate clauses, which are connected to the main verb with the copied Iranian optional conjunction *ki* as in the following example: *utandım senin yanına getiram* ‘I was ashamed to bring it to you’.

EAT frequently employs post-verbal purpose clauses connected with the conjunction *ki*, a pattern copied from Iranian languages. For example, *çeşmeye gel ki görem* ‘Come to the fountain so that I see you’ shows the purpose clause following the main clause, an Iranian wordorder feature uncommon in standard Turkish.

Lastly, EAT adopts Iranian modal constructions where the subordinate verb appears in the optative-subjunctive mood at the end of the sentence. This construction is evident in expressions of *(in)ability*, *volition*, and *necessity*. For instance, as in the example *ben daha edemam gidam* ‘I cannot go anymore’, EAT uses the optative-subjunctive form, a reflection of Iranian type modal verb+subjunctive constructions.

The study highlights the significant Iranian influence on the syntactic structure of EAT, showcasing the deep-rooted linguistic interaction between Iranian and Turkic languages in the region. The syntactic changes in EAT underscore the impact of prolonged language contact and bilingualism among the populations.

**Key words:** Language contact, word order, syntax, East Anatolian Turkish, Iranian languages.

**Öz:** Bu çalışma, Doğu Grubu Ağızlarında sıklıkla gözlemlenen devrik tümce yapılarını dil ilişkileri bağlamında incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Orta Asya’dan Kafkasya ve Anadolu’ya kadar uzanarak Doğu Grubu Ağızlarını da içine alan Aral-İran dilbilim bölgesinde İranî diller ile Türkçenin çeşitli değişimleri yaklaşık bin yıldır komşu diller olarak yoğun temas içinde bulunmuşlardır. Dil ilişkileri sonucunda bölgedeki İranî diller ile Türkçenin değişimleri arasında dilin hemen her aşamasında kopyalamalar gerçekleşmiştir. Alanyazında bu dil sahasında yaşayan birçok dil, dil ilişkileri bağlamında incelenmiş olsa da Doğu Grubu Ağızlarının sözdizimsel özellikleri üzerindeki İranî etki üzerine yeterli çalışma olmadığı görülmektedir.

İranî etki, Türkiye Türkçesi ağızlarının tamamında farklı derecelerde gözlemlense de en yoğun etkilenen dil sahaları iki dilli nüfusun yoğun olarak bulunduğu Güneydoğu Anadolu ve Doğu Anadolu Bölgesinin güney sınırlarıdır. Bu nedenle, çalışmada Doğu Grubu Ağızlarında görülen İranî kaynaklı sözcük diziliş özellikleri Diyarbakır, Elâzığ, Tunceli, Van ve Bitlis illerinden yapılan derlemeler temel alınarak incelenmiştir.

Çalışmada, Doğu Grubu Ağızlarında yüklem ardına atılan unsurlar; yön ve amaç ifadeli tümleçler, söylem ve algı eylemlerinin dolaysız nesneleri, zarf işlevli yantümceler ve kiplik yapıları olmak üzere dört altbaşlıkta incelenmiştir. Çalışmada adı geçen unsurlarla oluşturulan devrik tümce yapılarının Türkçenin dil tipolojisine aykırı özellikleri vurgulanarak bu kullanımların bölgedeki İranî dillerle olan temastan kaynaklandığı iddia edilmiş ve değerlendirmeler ilgili temas dillerinden eşdeğer örneklerle desteklenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Dil ilişkileri, devrik tümce, sözdizim, Doğu Grubu Ağızları, İranî diller.

## Introduction

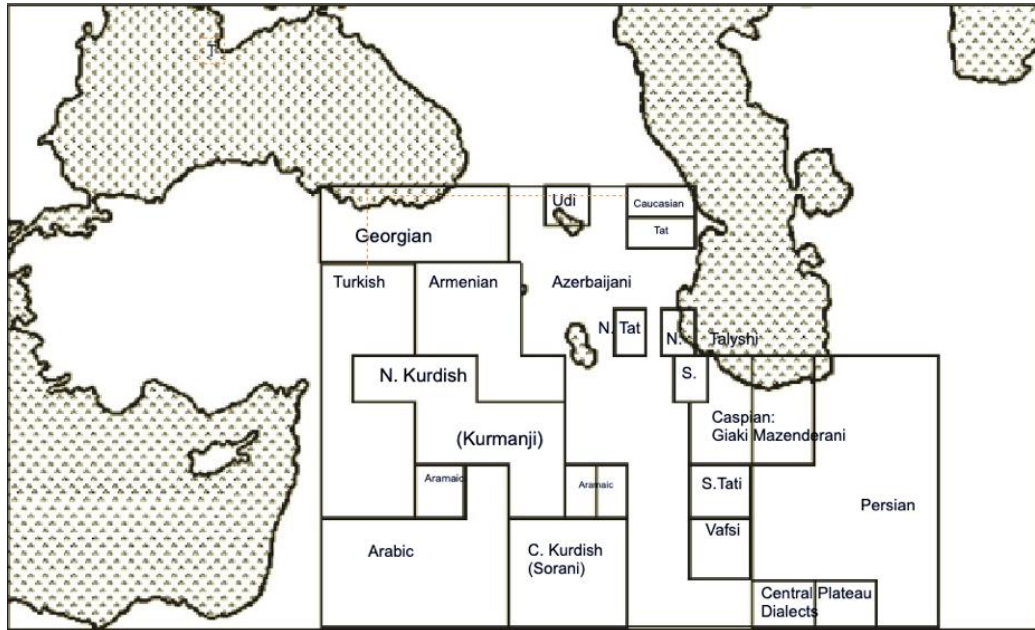
Iranian-Turkic language contact has a long history. During the 11th century, the invasion of the Saljuqs has brought a massive number of Turkic population into Iran, Iraq and Anatolia (Bulut, 2018b: 399). Since then, the dominance of the region has changed between Turkic and Iranian states causing bilateral movement of the population between Iranian and Turkic tribes. The successive invasions of Safavid and Ottomans in the region paved the way for the formation of the socio-linguistic structure that is very suitable for intensive language contact (Bulut, 2006:187). The coexistence of the Iranian and Turkic languages, especially Oghuz Turkic varieties, as neighboring languages for nearly a thousand of years has led to the realization of intensive language contact between typologically different languages. Intensive language contact has led to non-Turkic copies to be seen in all Turkic varieties with different gradations. Starting from Turkic varieties in Iran, gradual Iranian effect can saliently be observed until West Anatolian dialects.

In addition to the geographical proximity and historical contact with Persian, bilingual population of East Anatolia also favors the Iranian influence. Many speakers of the area have an Iranian mother tongue (Kurmanji and/or Zazaki) and Turkish as their second language (Johanson, 1998; Keskin, 2010; Öpengin, 2010). Kurmanji and/or Zazaki speakers in the region acquire Turkish in their daily life and through education, as the official language is Turkish, which shows bilingualism in EAT can be described as ‘natural bilingualism’ (Kesmez, 2015: 159).

Although Turkic varieties under strong Iranian influence have been extensively studied (c.f. Soper 1987, Erickson 2001, Kırıl 2001, 2005 Bulut & Kırıl, 2004, Johanson & Bulut, 2006, Bulut 2000, 2007, 2016, 2018a, 2018b, Erfani, 2012) Iranian influence on East Anatolian Turkish (EAT) has not been subject to detailed linguistic studies. Therefore, the aim of the study is to determine the contact-induced syntactic changes in EAT and to contribute to draw isoglosses by showing the extent to which these features overlap with other Turkic varieties under Iranian influence.

## 1. Arexes-Iran linguistic area and EAT

Linguistic area is defined as a geographic region in which genealogically different languages have influenced each one another, resulting in remarkable linguistically similar features. The *Araxes-Iran linguistic area* (AILA), identified by Donald Stilo (2015) as the first researcher to recognize it as a linguistic zone, encompasses a region marked by significant ethnic and linguistic diversity across the South Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), Northern Iran, Northern Iraq, and Eastern Turkey. EAT, as determined in Karahan (2011), is a sub-region within the Araxes-Iran linguistic area, where members of different language families have influenced each other.

**Figure 1:** Arexes-Iran linguistic area (adopted from Stilo, 2018: 348)

AILA presents extensive linguistic interaction, leading to the sharing of numerous linguistic features among six distinct linguistic entities in five different language families, including two branches of Indo-European (Stilo, 2015).

Stilo (2018: 345) demonstrates the following the most common syntactic features shared by AILA languages:

1. The absence of the infinitive form, a characteristic shared with Balkan languages, is notable. Despite the presence of an infinitive or equivalent verbal noun in most AILA languages, the subjunctive form is employed following modal verbs and some main verbs, even when the subjects of both verbs are the same.
2. The typical sentence order is verb-final. Although SOV order is prevalent in these languages, it is not strictly adhered to, as definite nouns may occasionally appear after the verb.
3. The modal (or main verb) is not consistently positioned at the end of the clause and may not always directly precede the subordinate verb it governs, although there is some flexibility in its placement.
4. Singular forms of nouns are generally used following numerals.
5. A numeral classifier is used between the numeral and the noun ("three grain apple"). The classifier systems of these languages are very simple, not usually exhibiting more than two classifiers, although a few others are sometimes used.

Although these five characteristics exhibit a typologically distinctive perspective, this study will focus on the first three, which exhibits non-Turkic characteristics (for the numeral classifier system in AILA, see Stilo, 2018).

## 2. Some general remarks of the typological features of the languages in discussion

Turkic and Iranian<sup>1</sup> languages differ from each other structurally in several respects. Since Greenberg's universals (1963), it is widely known that some languages 'tend consistently to put modifying or limiting elements before those modified or limited, while others just as consistently do the opposite' (Greenberg, 1963:76) and this main syntactic pattern mostly correlates with the order of subject and object in languages. Turkic, as its V-final, agglutinative and left-branching character, presents all patterns of a consistent OV language. As a result of its typology, Turkic languages i) orders dative elements and adverbial clauses before verbs, ii) orders the heads at the end of the phrases, iii) does not tend to use finite-clauses, and iv) does not have modal verb+subjunctive constructions. Although Iranian languages' main word order is SOV, they present most of SVO pattern. They allow postverbal position of dative elements (directions, recipients, addressee) and adverbial clauses. Iranian languages are head-initial in terms of constituent order of relative clauses<sup>2</sup>, use finite clauses and modal verb+subjunctive structures.

## 3. Data

Although Iranian influence can be observed in the entire EAT with different gradation, most intensively influenced language areas are the Southeastern Anatolia and the southern borders of the Eastern Anatolia where bilingual speaker population is high. For this reason, the evidences given in the study were collected from language areas where bilingual speakers are concentrated within the boundaries of EAT. In this context, the texts in the studies on the dialects of Diyarbakır (Erten 1994), Elâzığ (Gülensoy & Buran 1994), Tunceli (Tosun, 1996), Kars (Ercilasun, 2002), Van and Bitlis (Gökçür 2012) constitute the materials of the study. Evidences from contact languages are taken from linguistic studies insofar as possible. Since detailed studies on Kurmanji and Zazaki are lacking, some of the examples are prepared by the author for Kurmanji and by the native speakers for Zazaki.

## 4. Post-verbal elements in EAT

As discussed in Section 2, Turkish is characterized as a consistently V-final language. Nevertheless, due to its use of suffixes to indicate syntactic functions, Turkish allows postverbal elements. This flexibility in word order, however, is subject to several constraints, including focus and information structure, as noted by Erguvanlı (1984) and İşsever (2000). In Sections 5.1 and 5.2, we examine the deviations in word order that occur despite these constraints.

### 4.1. Postverbal position of dative elements

In standard Turkish, dative case indicates direction, beneficiary and purpose of an action expressed by the verb and precedes the main verb:

Standard Turkish:

- (1) [...] *ne zaman Kitapsan'a gitsem alıyordum.*  
 what time Kitapsan:DAT GO:COND:1SG al:PST:PRG:1SG  
 'Whenever I go to Kitapsan, I would buy (one).'
- (2) *mp3 playeri Nursel'e verdim.*  
 mp3 player:ACC Nursel:DAT give:PST:1SG  
 'I gave mp3 player to Nursel.'
- (3) *Seni görmeye geldim.*  
 you:ACC see:INF:DAT come:IPST:1SG

<sup>1</sup> Although, the three possible contact languages in discussion, Persian, Kurmanji, and Zazaki have different structural features in several respects, as will be shown in following chapters, they display adequate level of syntactic and morphosyntactic similarities to be treated as one, which is called 'Iranian' through the paper.

<sup>2</sup> Within the framework of this study, finite clause structures and head-initial structures will not be addressed. For the use of finite subordinate clauses in EAT, see Akkuş (2019) and Sağlam & Buran (2022); for head-initiality and relativization strategies, see Bulut (2006).

‘I came to see you.’

Although Persian mostly presents V-final characteristics, postverbal position of the dative elements is very common in colloquial Persian (Yousef, 2018:266). In postverbal order, the morphological marker (*be* “to”) of the dative element is optional. In this case, the dative element is marked by word order (4a). In other potential contact languages in the region, Kurmanji and Zazaki, dative elements indicating directivity have postverbal position as a rule (5-6) (Haig, 2015).

Persian:

(4) [...] *hamsarash*                      *be*                      *Mashhad*                      *bargasht*.  
          spouse:POSS:3SG                      to                      Mashad                      return:PST:3SG

(4a) [...] *hamsarash*    *bargasht* *Mashhad*  
          ‘his/her spouse returned to Mashhad.’ (Yousef, 2018:266).

Kurmanji:

(5) *waxtê*                      *çê*    *bê*                      *mālê*  
          when                      go:PST:3SG    to                      house:OBL

‘When he went to the house’ (Haig, 2015:419).

Zazaki:

(6) *lāžek*                      *šino*    *dewdā*                      *xo*.  
          boy                      go:PRS:3SG    village:EZ                      REFL

‘The boy goes to his village.’ (Paul, 2009:567).

Unlike standard Turkish, dative elements often occur in postverbal position in EAT. As can be seen in the examples below, even though the verb *git-* ‘to go’, *ver-* “to give” and *başla-* “to start” does not allow indirect object to be in postverbal position in standard Turkish (1-3) inverted sentence order is frequently used in EAT (7-9). However, unlike their Iranian counterparts, dative marking {- (y)A} is not optional for the postverbal dative elements in EAT. It should also be noted that infinitive purpose clauses with dative as in (9) are rarely used, since purpose clauses mostly have a finite verb in EAT (see 6.2). However when infinitive constructions is used, it is mostly ordered post-verbally (9).

EAT<sup>3</sup>:

(7) [...] *ne zaman*                      *Qoyunum*                      *geTse*                      *benim evime,*                      *biraħma*  
          Whenever    sheep:POSS:1SG    go:COND:3SG    my    house:POSS 1SG:DAT.    let:NEG:1SG

‘Whenever my sheep goes to my home, don’t let it then.’ (Gökçür, 2012:361)

(8) *saçımın*                      *telında*                      *iki*                      *tel*                      *veracam*                      *sana*.  
          hair:POSS1SG:GEN    barba:POSS3SG:ABLtwo    barba    give:FUT:1SG                      you:DAT

‘I will give you two of my hair strand.’ (Gülensoy&Buran, 1994:201)

(9) *ben başladım*                      *saban*                      *yapmaya*.

I    start:PST:1SG                      fear    do:INF:DAT

‘I started feering.’ (Gülensoy&Buran, 1994:143)

Postverbal order of dative elements is frequently seen in other Turkic varieties across the region, which indicates that the deviation in word order is a syntactic copy from Iranian languages (Bulut, 2018a, 2018b; Kırıl, 2001). See examples from Iraq-Turkic, Sonqor, and Iranian Azerbaijan below:

Iraq-Turkic:

(10) *para*                      *vərrəm*                      *sənə*  
          money                      give:AOR:1SG                      2SG:DAT

‘I will give you money.’ (Bulut, 2018a:368)

<sup>3</sup> Different phonetic transcriptions are used in the collections used. In this study, we stuck to the phonetic transcriptions used in the cited studies.

Sonqor Turkic:

- (11) *vä bu gälmi Sonqore*  
 and this come:PRF Sonqor:DAT  
 ‘and this (guy) came to Sonqor.’ (Bulut 2018b: 428)

Iranian Azerbaijan:

- (12) *Mirza Bayer geddi Teflisä [...]*  
 Mirza Bayer go:PST:3SG Tblisi:DAT  
 ‘Mirza Bayer went to Tblisi.’ (Kıral, 2001: 78).

#### 4.2. Postverbal position of direct objects of verbs of saying and perception

The examples that most clearly show the word order deviation from standard Turkish appear with the verbs of saying and perception in EAT. Although standard Turkish orders direct objects of these verbs preverbally, EAT consistently positions them postverbally following Iranian neighbouring languages.

The verbs ‘to say’ in Iranian languages, Persian *goften*, Kurmanji *gotin* and Zazaki *vatın*, precedes the direct quotation as a rule:

Persian:

- (13) [...] *goft ke eshtehā nadārad* (Yousef, 2018:162)  
 say:PST:3SG CONJ appetite:PL NEG:have:3SG  
 ‘He/she said that he/she is not hungry/ had no appetite.’

Kurmanji:

- (14) *jînikê dîsa got, -Erê, ma ne wilo ye?*  
 woman again say:PST:3SG yes PTC NEG such AOR  
 ‘The woman said once again, ‘Yes, that’s how it is, isn’t it?’ “(Thackston, 2006, s.80)

Zazaki:

- (15) *Mî tora va ‘Ewro gurê mi est.’*  
 I you:DAT say:PST 1SG today work:EZ 1SG AOR  
 ‘I said to you ‘I have things to do today.’

In contrast with Iranian languages, in standard Turkish the object of the verb *de-* ‘to say’ precedes the verb as a rule (16). The only exception to this rule occurs when the object is connected to the verb with the conjunction *ki*, which is an Iranian copy (17). Another equivalent verb *söyle-* ‘to say’ and *sor-* ‘to ask’ in standard Turkish orders direct object preverbally and requires non-finite structures (18-21)<sup>4</sup>:

Standard Turkish:

- (16) ‘*Senin düşmanın var mı?’ dedi.*  
 you:GEN enemy:POSS:2SG exist INT say:PST:3SG  
 (17) *Dedi ki senin düşmanın var mı?*  
 say:PST:3SG CONJ you:GEN e nemy:2SG exist INT  
 ‘He/she said/asked (me): ‘Do you have an enemy?’  
 (18) *Düşmanımın olduğunu söyledi.*  
 enemy:1SG:GEN exist:NOM:3SG:ACC tell:PST:3SG

<sup>4</sup> The only exception to this rule is the sentences with Turkish conjunction *diye* (*Düşmanın var mı diye sordu?* ‘He/she asked me whether I have an enemy.’) in which complement clause is still in preverbal position.

- (19) \**Söyledi ki düşmanın var.*  
 tell:PST:3SG CONJ enemy:2SG exist:COP:3SG  
 ‘He/She said (to me): ‘You have an enemy’
- (20) *Düşmanımın olup olmadığını sordu.*  
 enemy:1SG:GEN exist:GER exist:NEG:GER:3SG:ACC ask:PST:3SG
- (21) \**Sordu ki düşmanın var mı?*  
 ask:PST:3SG CONJ enemy:2SG exist INT  
 ‘He/She said/asked (me) whether I have an enemy.’

In EAT, the word order in such sentences is often similar to that of Iranian languages and copied Iranian conjunction *ki* (<ke) is often omitted:

- (22) *Oğlan demiş ben senin bohçeni alem.*  
 kid. say:PRF:3SG. I you:GEN fardel:POSS:2SG:ACC. take:SUBJ:1SG  
 ‘The kid said (to her/him): ‘Let me take your parcel.’ (Gülensoy & Buran, 1994:62)

The verb *söyle-* ‘to say’ and *sor-* ‘to ask’, on the other hand, not only positions the complement clause postverbally but also allows finite clauses in EAT (Sağlam & Buran, 2022).

- (23) *söylüyor ki «ğarı, ben bir haşıl yuduzdum.*  
 tell:PRS:3SG CONJ wife: I a haşıl lose:PST:1SG  
 ‘He says: ‘My wife, I have lost a haşıl (kind of food) in the game.’ (Ercilasun, 2002, s. 164)
- (24) *soriller ki padişahlar hangi sarayda [...] ötürüler.*  
 ask:PRS:3PL CONJ sultan:PL which palace:LOC live:PRS:3PL  
 ‘They ask: Where do sultans live?’/‘They ask where do Sultans live?’ (Ercilasun, 2002, s. 191)

The same order tendency can be observed with the complement clauses of verbs of perception in EAT. Note that the verb *ğan-* (< TT *kan-*) ‘to be convinced’ in (27) does not allow finite subordinate clause in standard Turkish (Sağlam & Buran, 2022):

- (25) *ama bilidiş ölecaş.*  
 but know:PROG:PST:1PL die:FUT:3SG  
 ‘but we knew that s/he was going to die.’ (Gökçür, 2012: 327)
- (26) *annadım ki birbirlerini gırdılar.*  
 understand:PST:1SG CONJ each other:POSS:1PL:ACC slaughter:PST:3PL  
 ‘I understood that they slaughtered each other.’ (Gülensoy & Buran, 1994:75)
- (27) *Ğandı ki bu işi bizim başımıza getiren Külegirendi.*  
 believe:PST:3SG CONJ that thing:ACC we:GEN head:3SG:DAT bring:PART Külegiren:COP:PST:3SG  
 ‘He was convinced that Külegiren was responsible for what happened to us’ (Ercilasun, 2002: 331)

In other Turkic varieties under Iranian influence the direct objects of verbs of saying and perception mostly follow the main verb as in EAT, which show that the deviated word order with these verbs is Iranian copy. See the examples in Turkic varieties in Iran (28) and Iraq (29):

Kalhor of Bayâdestân:

- (28) *Dedim ki ilan çok daha varde.*  
 say:PST:1SG CONJ snake many more exist:COP:PRS:3SG  
 ‘I said that there were many more snakes.’ (Bulut, 2018b: 435)

Iraqi Turkmen:

- (29) *Bildî ki b" qızçı edrî b" işî.*  
 learn:PST:3SG CONJ this girl:POSP do:PRS 3SG this task:ACC



‘He understood that he (the young man) does this for the girl’s sake.’ (Bulut, 2000: 168)

## 6. The use of optative {-y)A} as subjunctive: Post-verbal position of subordinate clauses

As is known although subjunctive and optative mood overlaps with each other in several respects, they have distinct functions and contexts where one is preferred over another. While optative mood is used for expressing desire, wish, hopes etc., subjunctive is used for expressing various states of unreality such as wishes, suggestions, possibilities, hypothetical situations, or commands. Therefore, subjunctive is used in broader contexts across languages, including Iranian languages. In Persian, for example, subjunctive (*khale iltizami* - حال التزامی) is a dependent mood selected by verbs of different semantic classes, such as volition (*xastæn* ‘want’), permission (*ejaze-dadæn* ‘allow’), prohibition (*mæmnu’-kærdæn* ‘prohibit’), direction (*dæstur-dadæn* ‘order’), suggestion (*towsiye kærden* ‘advise’, *pis’næhad-kærdæn* ‘suggest’), verbs of fear (*tærsidæn* ‘be afraid’), and commission/implication (*mæjbur-budæn* ‘have to’, *mæjbur-kærdæn* ‘force somebody’) and some modals (*momken-budæn* ‘may’), etc. (Darzi & Kwak, 2015:2). In Persian subjunctive mood is mostly restricted to depended clauses in agreement with cross-linguistic observation and purpose clauses are necessarily in subjunctive mood (Darzi & Kwak, 2015:2)<sup>5</sup>.

As is discussed in earlier Turkic-Iranian contact studies (Kıral, 2001; Bulut, 2000; Demir & Aslan, 2010) historical and modern Turkic varieties have extended the use of Turkic optative marker ({-(y)A}<Old Turkic {-GAY}) onto the modal of Iranian subjunctive mood. Through a process of *semantic mapping assimilation* (Gast & van der Auwera, 2012), the utilization of the Turkic optative marker use has been extended to subordinate clauses to express irrealis value. This expansion has led to the disuse of Turkic-type non-finite clauses, as will be exemplified in the next section.

### 6.1. Hypothetical verbs

Verbs that are used to refer to a hypothetical situation or to express a wish, suggestion etc. takes subjunctive subordinate clauses in Iranian languages. Therefore, subordinate clauses of the verbs that indicate a certain situation or action which is not known or certain to have taken place at the moment are in subjunctive mood. As in Persian examples below (30-31) when the main verb indicates the action indicated in subordinate clause did not take place at the moment of speech, the verb in subordinate clause is marked by subjunctive (*avorden* in (30) and *giriften* in (31)). In Iranian languages subordinate clauses follows the main verb:

Persian:

(30) *Hicalet mikesem in ra berat biyarem.*  
shame PRS:pull:1SG that ACC for:POSS:2SG SUB:bring:1SG

‘I am ashamed to bring it to you.’

(31) *Men mitersem (ki) polisha me(n)ra begirend.*  
I PRS:scare:1SG CONJ officer:PL I:ACC SUBJ:hold:3PL

‘I was scared that officers will arrest me.’

Standard Turkish, on the other hand, lacks subjunctive mood. As exemplified below, verbs in subordinate clauses of hypothetical verbs<sup>6</sup> are either nominalized by infinitive markers (32) or linked to the main verb by Turkish obligatory conjunction *diye* (33a).

Standard Turkish:

<sup>5</sup> Following the Iranian model, conditional clauses can also be in optative-subjunctive mood in the Turkic varieties under Iranian influence (see Bulut, 2018b).

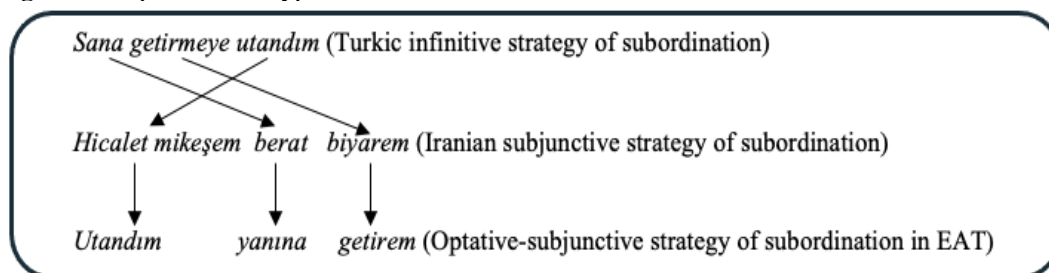
<sup>6</sup> The term *hypothetical* in this section is used to cover various semantic classes of verbs indicating the action is not taken place.

- (32) *Bunu sana getirmeye utaniyorum.*  
 that:ACC you:DAT bring:INF:DAT shame:PRS:1SG  
 ‘I am ashamed to bring it to you.’
- (33) *Polislerin beni tutuklamasından korktum.*  
 officer:PL:GEN I:ACC arrest:INF:3SG:ABL scare:PST:1SG
- (33a) *Polisler beni tutuklayacaklar diye korktum.*  
 officer:PL I:ACC arrest:FUT:3PL CONJ scare:PST:1SG  
 ‘I was scared that officers will arrest me.’

EAT, on the other hand, presents significant deviations from the Turkic pattern. Although both finite and non-finite clauses are used, the frequency of use differs from standard Turkish. Unlike standard Turkish, EAT displays fewer verbal nouns and gerunds. On the modal of Iranian subjunctive mood, EAT almost completely replaced the Turkic non-finite subordinate clauses and replaced them with Iranian postverbal counterparts, which are connected to the main verb with the copied optional conjunction *ki*.

- (34) *utandım senin yanına getiram.*  
 be ashamed:PST:1SG you:GEN beside:DAT bring:OPT:1SG  
 ‘I was ashamed to bring (it) to you.’ (Gülensoy & Buran, 1994:212)
- (35) *cécimleri Kıymezdile yère sereler.*  
 kilim:PL:ACC have heart to do:NEG:PST:3PL. floor:DAT lay out:OPT:3PL.  
 ‘They wouldn’t have hearth to lay out the kilims to the floor.’ (Gökçür, 2012:421)

**Figure 2:** Copied Iranian type of subordinate clauses in EAT



The tendency of using postverbal subjunctive subordinate clause can be observed in other Turkic varieties of the region:

Iranian Azerbaijanian:

- (36) */.../man görxuram ki färhänge särzäminhå:ye şeni*  
 I scare:PRS:1SG CONJ culture:EZ land:PL:EZ desert  
*bombâ:ran altında beynnän gessün*  
 bomb:PL beneath:GEN:LOC flat:ABL gO:SUB:3SG. (Kıral, 2001: 61)

‘I fear that the culture of the desert countries will be destroyed by the bombing.’  
 (translation mine)

## 6.2. Postverbal position of purpose clauses:

In Turkish, purpose clauses can be finite or non-finite. Finite purpose clauses are all marked by either the Iranian copied conjunction *ki* (A), which stands at the beginning of the subordinate clause in optative mood as in *Geldim ki seni göreyim* ‘I came here to see you’ or by *diye* (B), which stands at the end of the subordinate clause in optative mood or in present and future tense, as in *Seni göreyim/görürüm/göreceğim diye geldim* ‘I come to see you’. If the subject of the

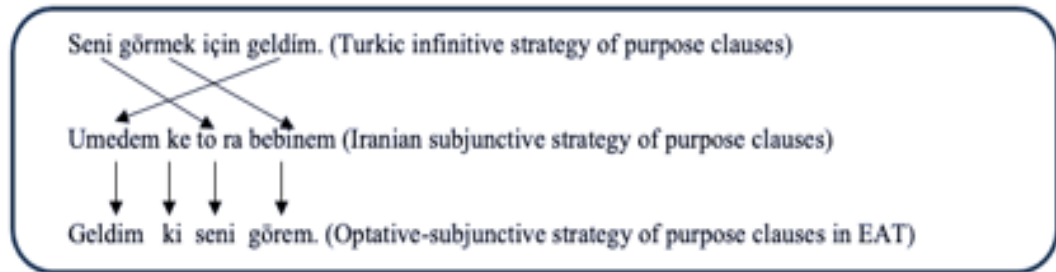
subordinate clause and the main clause is the same, non-finite clauses are formed by a verbal noun in {-mAk} + postposition *için* (C), as in *Seni görmek için geldim* ‘I came to see you’ and a verbal noun in dative case (D), as in *Seni görmeye geldim*; if the subordinate clause and the main clause have different subjects the construction of {-mA + agentive personal suffix} combined with the postposition *için* (D), as in *Çocuğu seni görmesi için getirdim* ‘I brought the kid to see you’ is used.

Among the four types of purpose clauses mentioned above, three of them have Turkic pattern, as can easily be recognized by the word order. While in (B), (C) and (D) the purpose clauses precedes the main clause, in (A), which is an Iranian copy, the purpose clause follows the main clause.

The most frequently used type of purpose clauses in EAT is (A), the construction imitating Iranian pattern. EAT replaced the Turkic type finite and non-finite purpose clauses with Iranian finite clauses which conjugated to the main verb with the Iranian conjunction *ki*. Therefore, purpose clauses in EAT precedes the main verb causing inverted sentence order. Note that similar with Iranian subjunctive, the verb of the purpose clauses with Iranian pattern can be in optative-subjunctive mood in EAT, which mostly functions as infinitive in standard Turkish:

- (37) *ğapida behliyeler meni tutuğliylar.*  
 door:DAT wait:PRS:3PL I:ACC arrest:OPT:3PL  
 ‘They are waiting at the door to arrest me.’ (Gökçür, 2012, s. 340)
- (38) *çeşmeye gél ki görem.*  
 fountain:DAT come:IMP:2SG CONJ see:OPT:1SG  
 ‘Come to the fountain, so that I see you?’ (Tosun, 1996: 215)

**Figure 3:** Copied Iranian type of purpose clauses in EAT



The inverted sentence order with purpose clauses is widespread among the other Turkic varieties under Iranian influence. Bulut (2018a, 2018b) mentions the same tendency in Iraq-Turkic and Kahlaj of Bayâdestân:

Iraq-Turkic:

- (39) *Gälmäzsiz mäne aparasız o däligä?*  
 come:AOR:NEG:2PL I:ACC bring:OPT:2PL this hole:DAT  
 ‘Won’t you (2pl) come along to guide me to this cave?’ (Bulut, 2018a, s. 376)

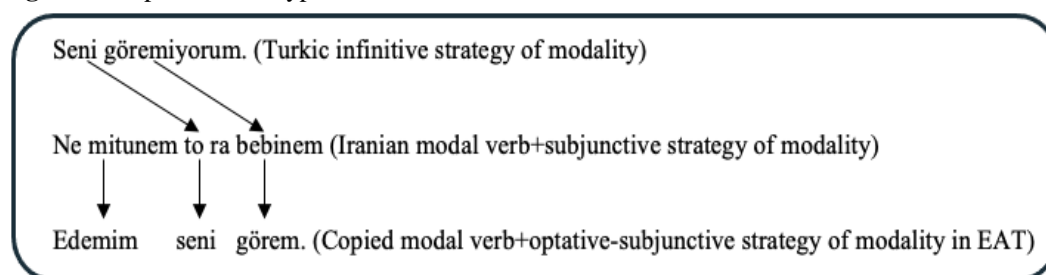
Khalaj of Bayâdestân:

- (40) *yarı gecä Al gälär munuğ uşayın apara*  
 midnight Al come:AOR:3SG her chid:POSS:3SG:ACC take away:OPT:3SG  
 ‘At midnight the Al comes to take her child away.’ (Bulut, 2018b: 438).

### 6.3. Modality

Turkish uses non-finite verbal forms to express various moods, as its typological tendency requires. The combination of main verb with a nominalizer suffix, mostly infinitival suffix {-mA} or {-mAk} or gerundium suffix {-A} and an auxiliary verb, e.g., *bil-* ‘to know’ for ability, *iste-* ‘to want’ for volutative, is the main structure for modality in Turkish. In Iranian languages, on the other hand, modality is expressed by modal verbs followed by main verbs inflected in subjunctive mood. As will be exemplified below, as a result of intensive contact with Iranian languages, many Turkic varieties in the region, including EAT, have changed Turkic non-finite modal expressions with Iranian subjunctive (Bulut 2000).

**Figure 4:** Copied Iranian type of modal constructions in EAT



#### (In)Ability

Turkish does not possess modal verbs and uses the combination of the gerundium suffix {-A} and the auxiliary verb *bil-* ‘to know’ to express ability (and possibility): {verb + A + *bil-* + Psuff.}. Although different preferences exist in terms of suffix and auxiliary verb selection, the same structure is used in all Turkic varieties<sup>7</sup>:

- (41) *Bu işi iki kişi bitirebilir.*  
 this work:ACC two person finish:GER:ABIL:PRS:3SG

‘Two persons can finish this job.’

- (42) *Öğleden sonra güneş açabilir.*  
 noon:ABL after sun open:GER:ABIL:3SG

‘Sun may shine this afternoon.’

In Iranian languages, in contrast to Turkish, modal auxiliary verbs are used for the expression of ability. With the subordinate verb in subjunctive mood at the end of the sentences the expression of ability is constructed with the modal verbs, Persian *tavānesten*, Kurmanji *kerden*, Zazaki *şayış*:

Persian:

- (43) *Tavānesti ketāb rā peydā (be)koni?*  
 modal verb:PRS:2SG book ACC find (SUBJ):DO:2SG

‘Could/did you manage to find the book?’

Kurmanji:

- (44) *Hûn dikarin bi tirkî biaxifin?*  
 you modal verb:2PL ABL Turkish SUBJ:speak:2SG

‘Can you speak Turkish?’

Zazaki:

- (45) *Ma neşa dêwi bıkışım*  
 we NEG:modal verb:PST giant SUBJ:kill:1SG

<sup>7</sup> All Oghuz varieties use the combination of {-a+*bil-* ‘to know’}, Kipchak and Qarluq varieties use the combination of {-a+*al-* ‘to take’} and Northeastern varieties use {-*ip+bol-* ‘to be’} to express ability (see Rentzsch, 2015; Ersoy, 2016).

‘We couldn’t kill the giant?’ (Werner, 2012:20)

In addition Turkic type structure with the unit {-Abil}, EAT uses the verb *et-* ‘to do’ as a ‘modal auxiliary verb’ and to express ability. The subordinate verb is in optative-subjunctive mood and ordered at the end of the sentences as in Iranian languages:

(46) *ben daha edemam gidam.*  
I no more do:IMPOSS:NEG:PRS:1SG go:OPT:1SG

‘I cannot go (there) anymore.’ (Gülensoy & Buran, 1994:216)

It should be noted that this type of expression of modality has very restricted usage in EAT. Iranian type of ability is exemplified only in negative sentences with present and past tense forms in our data.

(47) *İki kişi edemidi bitireydi.*  
two person do:IMPOSS:PRS:PST:3SG finish:OPT:PST:3SG

‘Two persons were not able to finish (it).’ (Erten, 1994:93)

We see similar structure with different modal verbs in other Turkic varieties across the Iranian region. Qaşqay, Sonqor and Khorasanî Turkic uses the verb *başar-* ‘to achieve’ (Atıcı, 2018; Gökdağ, 2016), while Iranian Azerbaijan *eyle-* ‘to do’ (Kıral, 2005). The fact that, unlike EAT, positive use of this construction can be found in these varieties shows that more intensive Iranian influence can be seen as one gets closer from periphersitic regions to the central Iran.

*Iranian Azerbaijanian:*

(48) *eliyābillār birbiriynān orda zindāgi eliyāllār.*  
do:ABIL:3SG together:ABL there:DAT life do:OPT:3SG

‘They can/manage to live there together.’ (Kıral, 2001: 85)

*Qaşqay:*

(49) *sān başayirāy gedāy.*  
you achieve:ABIL:2SG go:OPT:2SG

‘You can go.’ (Kıral, 2005:290).

*Sonqor:*

(50) *başardaḡ azerbaycanḡni keşer danışaḡ.*  
achieve<sub>1PST:1PL</sub> Azerbaijanian:ACC good speak:OPT:1PL

‘We could/managed to speak Azerbaijanian very well.’ (Atıcı, 2018:81)

*Volution*

In both standard Turkish and EAT, the modality of volution is expressed with the verb *iste-* ‘to want’. In standard Turkish, the head of the subordinate clause is non-finite verb forms with {-mA} or {-mAk}. When the subject of the modal verb and the embedded verb is different, Turkish uses {-mA + agentive personal suffixes} construction, while the infinitive in {-mAk} is used when they refer to the same person:

(51) *Gitmek istiyorum.*  
go:INF want:PROG:1SG

‘I want to go.’

(52) *Gitmesini istiyorum.*  
go:INF:POSS3SG:ACC want:PROG:1SG

‘I want him/her to go’

As can be seen in the examples below, to express volition, Iranian languages, on the other hand, use a left branching construction, i.e., a main verb indicating the request followed by a subordinate clause with the verb in subjunctive mood:

Persian:

- (53) *Mikhām ān name rā emruz benevisam.*  
 PROG:Want:1SG that letter ACC today SUBJ:write:1SG  
 ‘I want to write that letter today.’ (Yousef, 2018:229)

Kurmanji:

- (54) *Ez dixwazim biçim.*  
 I want:PRS:1SG SUBJ:go:1SG  
 ‘I want to go.’ (Thackston, 2006:43)

Zazaki:

- (55) *Ezo wazena destanê xo bîşuwa.*  
 I want:PRS:1SG hand:PL:GEN REFL SUBJ:wash:1SG  
 ‘I want to wash my hands.’ (Werner, 2012:9)

In EAT, both Iranian and Turkic pattern for expression of volition can be seen. Although the subject of the main and the subordinate clause is the same in the example (56) above, the use of Iranian left-branching construction of volition with same-subject sentences is rather sparse. Iranian type construction with optional conjunction *ki* is mostly preferred when the main and the subordinate clause has different subjects.

- (56) *intikam almağ isTiyiler.*  
 revenge take:INF want:PROG:3PL  
 ‘They want to take revenge.’ (Gökçür, 2012, s. 145)
- (57) [...] *babam isdedi ki anamı vura.*  
 father:POSS:1SG want:PST:3SG CONJ mother:POSS:1SG:ACC beat:OPT:3SG  
 ‘My father wanted to beat my mom.’ (Ercilasun, 2002:346)

Iranian type voluntative construction is widespread across the region. Most of the varieties under strong Iranian influence replaced the Turkic type nonfinite voluntative constructions with the Iranian counterpart:

Iranian Azerbaijanian:

- (58) *vä biri munun evin istirdi ala [...]*  
 and someone DEM:GEN house:POSS3SG:ACC want:PRS:PST3SG buy:OPT:3SG  
 ‘And someone wanted to buy his/her house...’ (Kıral, 2001:82)

Iraqi Turkmen:

- (59) *Îstîrî yês'n ö:zînü*  
 want:PRS 1SG eat:IMP 3SG RFL:ACC  
 ‘He wants to eat her.’ (Bulut, 2000: 167)

*Necessity*

In standard Turkish, the expression of necessity is established with eighter suffix {-mAII} or with the nominalized verb + *gerek* (or *lâzım*) which indicates the necessity. When the agent of the action of the verb has no importance for the communication, one can use the infinitive suffix {-mAk} instead of {-mA}:

- (60) *Biz bu kitabı okumalıyız.*  
 we that book:ACC read:NECES:1PL
- (61) *Bizim bu kitabı okumamız gerek.*  
 we:GEN that book:ACC read:INF:POSS:1PL necessary  
 ‘We have to read that book.’
- (62) *Bu kitabı okumak gerek.*  
 that book:ACC read:INF necessary  
 ‘This book has to be read.’

In addition to these constructions, EAT, uses a combination consisting of *gerek* (or *lâzım*) as the indicator of the necessity followed by a subordinate clause with the verb in subjunctive mood:

- (63) *Sen gerek bu işleri yapmıyasın.*  
 you necessary:AOR:3SG that job:PL:ACC do:NEG:OPT:2SG  
 ‘You ought not to do this kind of jobs.’ (Ercilasun, 2002:196)
- (64) *Gerek iki yömye vère san.*  
 necessary:AOR:3SG two wage give:OPT:3SG you:DAT  
 ‘He has to give you two days wage.’ (Gökçür, 2012:625)
- (65) *lazımdır ki garişdiralım.*  
 necessary:AOR:3SG CONJ mix:OPT:1PL  
 ‘We have to mix (it).’ (Gökçür, 2012:365)
- (66) *gereK bilem*  
 necessary:AOR:3SG know:OPT:1SG  
 ‘I need to know / It is necessary for me to know.’ (Tosun, 1996:151).

The fact that expression of necessity in Iranian languages is established with the same combination - a word indication the necessity with a subordinate clause whose verb is in subjunctive mood - leaves no doubt that this form of expressing necessity is an Iranian copy in EAT:

Persian:

- (67) *lâzem ast injā bemāni*  
 necessary copula here SUBJ:stay:2SG  
 ‘You must stay here.’ (Yousef, 2018:194)

Kurmanji:

- (68) *Lazim e tu Kurmancî bixivî.*  
 necessary copula you Kurmanji SUBJ:speak:2SG  
 ‘You must speak Kurmanji.’

Zazaki:

- (69) *Mā mejbūr ē to birişē*  
 we obliged COP you SUBJ:send:1PL  
 ‘We have to send you (there).’

## 7. Conclusion

This study has provided an exploration of the Iranian influence on the syntactic structure of EAT, focusing particularly on the post-verbal word order. Through the analysis of spoken data from Diyarbakır, Elâzığ, Tunceli, Van, and Bitlis, and comparisons with Iranian languages, it has

been established that Iranian languages have significantly influenced the syntactic patterns of EAT. The primary areas of influence identified are the post-verbal positioning of dative elements, direct objects of verbs of saying and perception, adverbial clauses, and modal structures.

Findings demonstrate that EAT often orders dative elements and direct objects in post-verbal positions, imitating the Iranian counterparts. This is a clear deviation from the standard Turkish word order, where these elements typically precede the main verb. The same tendency observed with the direct objects of verbs of saying and perception. Unlike standard Turkish, EAT positions the direct objects of these verbs postverbally.

Furthermore, the use of the optative {-*y*A} to express subjunctive mood in EAT reveals a shift from Turkic non-finite clauses to Iranian-type finite clauses. This change is evident in sentences with hypothetical verbs, purpose clauses, and modal constructions, where subordinate clauses frequently follow the main verb and are connected with the copied Iranian conjunction *ki*.

Additionally, the modal constructions in EAT, where expressions of (in)ability, volition, and necessity copied the Iranian modal structure, with the subordinate verb appearing in the optative-subjunctive mood at the end of the sentence.

Another finding of the study is the gradual influence of Iranian languages on Turkic varieties. Unlike other Turkish varieties under Iranian influence (Iranian Azerbaijani, Qashkay etc.), modal construction expressing (in)ability is only used in negative sentences in EAT.

To summarize, the findings underlines the significant Iranian influence on word order in EAT, illustrating the extensive linguistic interaction between Iranian and Turkic languages in the region. This syntactic convergence highlights the importance of considering language contact phenomena in understanding the development and variation within Turkic varieties.



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