

On Progressive Aspect in Some Iranian Languages

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Abstract

Some Iranian languages spoken in the shores of the Caspian Sea or their origin was the region, also in Balochi and Bashgardi spoken in southeastern Iran, there is a specific construction for progressive aspect not seen in other Iranian languages. This paper deals with the morphological and syntactic features of the progressive form, the constituents, and their functions; and shows how this construction relates with the most common source of progressive aspect. The results show that the progressive form derives from a locative expression comprised of three basic elements: the main verb in the form of the infinitive, verbal noun, present participle, or imperfect; a copula usually used as enclitic and attached to the other constituents; and a locative adposition express the locative meaning, omitted in some varieties. A fourth element may be seen in some varieties meaning ‘in the act of, busy’ that originally is a noun form of a postural verb used to denote postural notion in the construction. The meaning of the locative construction which gives rise to the progressive is ‘be at doing something’.

Keywords: Aspect, Progressive, Iranian languages, Verb.

1. Introduction

Some Iranian languages spoken in the shores of the Caspian Sea (Talyshi, Gilaki, and Tati) or their origin was the region (Hawrami and Zazaki), also in Balochi and Bashgardi spoken in southeastern Iran, there is a specific construction for progressive aspect formed by the nominal form of the verb, enclitic form of copula and a locative adposition. This paper deals with the morphological and syntactic features of the progressive form, the constituents, and their functions in the given languages; and shows how this construction relates with the most common source of progressive aspect.

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2. Theoretical Framework

While tense locates situations in time, usually with reference to the present moment, Aspect is concerned with the internal temporal constituency of the one situation. The progressive aspect is grammatical category that express incomplete action or state in progress at a specific time. It expresses an action as ongoing at reference time and applies typically to dynamic predicates and not to stative ones. Thus the progressive is typically used for actions that require a constant input of energy to be sustained. It is not uncommon to find progressives referred to as durative or continuative in reference grammars (Bybee et al, 1994: 125). The progressive shows a very strong tendency to have periphrastic rather than inflectional expression, this indicates that progressive constructions are relatively young grammaticalizations, and their lexical sources are often transparent (Bybee & Dahl, 1989). Explicitly locative phrases seem to be the most common sources for the progressive aspect. These usually take the form of a copula plus a locative adposition and a nominalized form of the verb. Blansitt (1975) divides sources for progressives into copula and non-copula sources, ignoring the fact that some copulas incorporate location and some do not, as well as the fact that some copula constructions are accompanied by locative adpositions while some are not. The locative notion may be expressed either in the verbal auxiliary employed or in the use of adpositions indicating location. The verbal auxiliary may derive from a specific postural verb, such as 'sit', 'stand', or 'lie' or it may express the notion of being in a location without references to a specific posture but meaning only 'be at', 'stay', or, more specifically, 'live' or 'reside'. The original function of the progressive is to give the location of an agent as in the midst of an activity (Bybee et al, 1994: 134).

3. Methodology

In this paper, after an introduction on aspect and progressive aspect, the morpho-syntactic features of the locative construction is examined, used in some Iranian languages including Gilaki, Talyshi, Southern Tati, Northern Tati, Balochi, Bashgard, Hawrami, and Zazaki.

4. Result & Discussions

Locative expression for progressive aspect is seen in Gilaki, where the main verb as infinitive followed by an enclitic form of copula suffixed to locative adposition used to form the progressive: *ba tundi koya šuon -dər=i* ? 'where are

you going so fast' Another way that locative meaning may enter into the progressive construction is through the use of the word *kəɾə* meaning 'doing' plus the main verb form: *kəɾə xurdən dəɾə bum* 'I was eating'. Also, in this category are expressions used in Talyshi *čayi čašme kâr=in âv karde* 'his eyes are watering (he is tearing)' which consists of the infinitive, the copula plus the word *kâr* 'doing'. Another example is southern Tati where the same expressions are used: *az mišim kore raz* 'I am going to the garden', which uses imperfect instead of the infinitive. Northern Tati also shows the same construction but without the adposition. The locative notion is expressed by the copula, like Keringani: *dur kâšte-i-ne* 'I am planting a tree'. It is also used for expected future: *čani sor gāndem kâšte-i-ne* 'next year I will plant wheat'. Hawramai and Zazaki now spoken in the Kurdo-phone regions but their origin is from Caspian shares, show similar construction for progressive, Hawraami: *zārōlake xarikene musāy musā* 'the children are sleeping'. This construction consists of "xarik" 'busy, engaged in' followed by an enclitic copula and a double expression of the main verb in the form of infinitive and imperfect. locative expression for progressive is also seen in Balochi and Bashgardi as an areal feature shares in southeastern Iran. Balochi: *man gušag-ā –un* 'I am speaking', with an infinitive suffixed in *–ag* followed by an enclitic copula and without locative adposition. But also, with the present participle: *ā əngo kār kənān-ynt* 'he is still working'. As we saw in Keringani, some varieties of Balochi use progressive for expected future: *ā begəa gvāzi kənəgā bit* 'he will play tonight'.

5. Conclusions & Suggestions

The results show that the progressive form in the given Iranian languages derives from a locative expression comprised of three basic elements: the main verb in the form of the infinitive, verbal noun, present participle, or imperfect; a copula usually used as enclitic and attached to the other constituents; and a locative adposition express the locative meaning, omitted in some varieties. A fourth element may be seen in some varieties meaning 'in the act of, busy' that originally is a noun form of a postural verb used to denote postural notion in the construction. The meaning of the locative construction which gives rise to the progressive is 'be at doing something'.

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