

## A Comparative Analysis of Aspect in Modern Spoken and Written Persian Language

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### Abstract

Usually, verbal conjugation in languages is done by encoding three kinds of information: tense, modality, and aspect. The main goal of this article is to classify different aspects, as well as to discover the similarities and differences of mood in the two written and spoken varieties of Modern Persian based on Kroeger (2005), Comrie (1976), and Jackendoff (1983). Data is collected either by using the sentences the author has encountered in the context or from the summary of the episodes 16-20 of the TV series “Shahbaz”. Moreover, I have used my own examples as a native speaker of Persian whenever it was needed. The results revealed that a change has occurred in spoken Modern Persian. Present perfect aspect in spoken Persian is going to be vanished. Except this issue as well as phonological differences any other differences related to the existence of different kinds of aspects like present perfect aspect, imperfective aspect, prospective aspect, etc. between the two varieties of the language were not seen. Finally, a new analysis of aspect classification in the form of a continuum of aspect has been offered.

**Keywords:** present perfect tense/ aspect in Modern spoken Persian, grammatical aspect, language change, aspect continuum, tense.

### Extended Abstract

#### 1. Introduction

Usually, verbal conjugation in languages is done by encoding three kinds of information: tense, modality, and aspect. The main goal of this article is to classify different aspects, as well as to discover the similarities and differences of mood in the two written and spoken varieties of Modern Persian.

Many linguists reviewed aspect in Persian. They have classified aspect in different ways. Moreover, as far as I have read different works, no one has mentioned the differences between the two different varieties of Modern Persian (written and spoken) with regard to aspect. I want to answer these questions: 1- How aspect can be analyzed in modern written Persian? 2- How aspect can be

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analyzed in Modern Spoken Persian? 3- What are the similarities and differences between Modern Written and Spoken Persian?

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Kroeger (2005), and Comrie (1976) have divided aspects into two major groups: lexical and morphological. They have also classified morphological aspect into perfect, perfective, and imperfective aspects. Then, they have distinguished two major subgroups of imperfective aspects as habitual, and continuous. Jackendoff (1983) has divided lexical aspect into two major groups: telic and atelic. In analyzing Modern Persian aspect, the mentioned framework has been used in this article.

## **3. Methodology**

Data is collected either by using the sentences the author has encountered in the context or from the summary of the episodes 16-20 of the TV series “Shahbaz”. I have watched these episodes, written down all the sentences, and extracted the examples which were needed. Moreover, I have used my own examples as a native speaker of Persian whenever it was needed. In order to analyze the data, I have used the above theoretical framework.

## **4. Results and Discussions**

In Modern Persian there are special inflectional affixes for tense. Present base takes the suffix “-Ø” as opposed to past base which takes the suffix “-t” or its allomorphs. There are six different suffixes for agreement according to number and person. Persian verbs are conjugated for aspect, tense and mood. But, usually the affixes which show these notions are not separated from each other, i.e., a portmanteau affix is used. For example, the prefix “mi” in “mixordam” shows continuous aspect as well as the indicative mood. The suffix “-d” shows the past tense, and the suffix “-am” shows first person singular. In Modern Written and Spoken Persian language, if the verb is in simple past there is no separate suffix for perfective aspect for example the suffixes “-d” and “-am” in [xordam] show tense, agreement, aspect, and mood.

For past perfect tense/aspect, the past participle of the verb plus the conjugated form of the auxiliary “budan” is used in Modern Spoken and Written Persian. For example, [xorde budam]. Of course, there may be some phonological differences in the spoken variety. In written variety, present perfect tense/aspect is formed by the past participle of the verb plus the conjugated form of “astan” which usually as a clitic attaches to the past participle of the verb. For example, in the written form [xorde?am] the past participle of the verb [xord], i.e. [xorde] as the host takes the clitic [-am] which shows present perfect tense/aspect. In spoken variety, for present perfect tense/aspect, usually the past participle of the verb and the suitable clitic form of the

auxiliary [astan] are not used. Instead of them, the root plus the inflectional affixes which show tense and agreement are used. For example, instead of the past participle of the verb[xord], i.e. [xorde] and the suitable clitic form, the root of the verb plus the inflectional suffixes which show tense and agreement are used like [xordam]. Sometimes instead of the deleted affixes, the vowel of the base is lengthened like [xorda:m]. Moreover, the place of stress is changed too. Instead of the first syllable, it falls on the last syllable of the conjugated verb. Sometimes even this lengthening is not observed.

### **5. Conclusions and Suggestions**

The results revealed that, as far as perfective, and imperfective aspects are concerned, the main differences between Written and Spoken Modern Persian varieties are phonological. This can be an issue of future investigations. There is a great difference between the two varieties is in present perfect tense/aspect. In fact, a change has occurred in spoken Modern Persian. Present perfect tense/aspect in spoken Persian is going to be vanished. Moreover, I found that contrary to previous studies, a binary classification of aspect has some overlaps, to some extent is ambiguous and not so accurate. In fact, there is a close and direct relation between grammatical realization of aspect and imperfectness on one hand and a close and direct relation between lexical realization of aspect and perfective aspect. For these reasons, I have proposed a continuum view of aspect in this article. On one side of the continuum different kinds of imperfective aspects are realized in grammatical forms and on the other side of the continuum different kinds of perfective aspects are generated lexically.

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