

Verb Construction in Mazinani Dialect: A Bridge from Pahlavi to New Persian

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Mazinan, a village and the center of a rural district, is a subdivision of Sabzevar City located in the eastern part of Razavi-Khorasan Province. The fact that this village has been mentioned and described as a cultivated town in *hodud al-alam men al-mašriq ila l-maqrib* (see Sotudeh, 1983) written in the 10th century A.D. indicates that Mazinan is at least 15 centuries-old. The only language spoken in this old area is Mazinani Dialect of Persian. The most outstanding difference between the dialect and standard New Persian is due to the morphosyntax of its pronominal enclitics which behave much more similarly to those of Middle Persian (See Mazinani, 2008).

It's generally believed that, diachronically, the dialects spoken in rural areas change slower than their standard counterparts because of which they may indicate a midpoint between the courses of change from the so-called Middle to New languages. This characteristic adds to the significance of studying dialects as promotional sources of investigating the causes of linguistic/typological change since a successful answer to the question of how such a change occurs in the generation-to-generation transmission of language is of some theoretical importance; it may "tell us much about the nature of parameters, the kind of primary linguistic data required to set them to a particular value, whether there are default values, and potentially many other matters" (Roberts, 2007, p. 109).

After Mazinani (2008), this is the second academic research done to describe and record another linguistic aspect of this dialect i.e. verb construction. Observing some formal variations in the construction of a particular tense with different verbs, we decided to answer the following questions:

1. In which tense constructions of Mazinani Dialect (MD) are the aforementioned variations observed?

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2. Keeping an eye to verb constructions in Middle Persian, what is the possible justification behind the observed formal variations and the respective dissimilarities of the Dialect to SNP?

2. Methodology

This study was carried out by a descriptive-analytic approach to compare and contrast some verb constructions of MD to those of SNP and MP. We used SNP's grammatical terms/tenses/definitions to describe different verb constructions in MD. The APA alphabet was used to transcribe the data of MD and SNP; the data of MP were also written by McKenzie's method of transcription. Closing the eyes to the phonological processes because of which MD may seem hard to decipher to SNP speakers, there are no significant morphological/syntactic mismatches between these two counterparts, except for their clitic systems; consequently, due to lack of space we focused on recording the conflicting verb structures of MD and SNP.

3. Tense structures compared and contrasted

Present Simple Construction:

SNP: /mi-/¹ + Present Stem +AGR

MD: /me-& mo-/² + Present Stem + AGR

MP: Present Stem +AGR

Except for some phonological divergences, there is no morphological/structural difference between MD and SNP in terms of Present Simple Construction. The SNP, MD, and MP's paradigms of Subject Agreement Suffixes are [am, i, ad, im, id, an(d)]³, [om, i, a, im, e, .e.n(d)], and [om, ē(h), ēd, ēm, ēd, ēnd] respectively. However, the MP's AGR suffixes did not attach to past stems, i.e. the combination of 'present stems + PAST'.

Present Subjunctive Construction:

SNP: /be-& bo-/⁴ + Present Stem + AGR

MD_{structure 1}: /be-& bo-/ + Present Stem + AGR

MD_{structure 2}: Present Stem + AGR

MP: Present Stem + Subjunctive AGR

Present Subjunctive Tense is of two variations in MD, the dominant one of which is exactly constructed the same as that of SNP and the other one is reminiscent of that of MP. Keep it in mind that MP had a distinctive paradigm of AGR suffixes

1 Durative Morpheme

2 Durative Morpheme

3 1sg, 2sg, 3sg, 1pl, 2pl, 3pl respectively.

4 Subjunctive Morpheme

attaching to present stems to signify Present Subjunctive: this paradigm is [ān, āy, ād, ām, ād, ānd].

Past Simple Construction:

SNP: Present Stem + PAST+ AGR¹

MD_{structure 1}: Present Stem + PAST +AGR

MD_{structure 2}: /be- & bo-/ + Present Stem + PAST + AGR

MP: (host=Pronominal Enclitics_{ERG}) + ... + (bē) +Past Participle²

Past simple Tense is also of two variations in MD one of which is exactly constructed the same as that of SNP while the second one has kept on carrying a currently-meaningless element from MP. In MD, structural variations are in complimentary distribution in terms of using a particular verb.

Present Perfect Construction:

SNP_{structure 1}: Past Participle³ + /?-/ + AGR (*used for all, other than 3sg*)

SNP_{structure 2}: Past Participle + /?ast/+ AGR (*used only for 3sg*)

MD_{structure 1}: Past Participle + /y-/ + AGR (*used for all, other than 3sg*)

MD_{structure 2}: Past Participle + /-st/ + /-a/_{3sg} (*used only for 3sg*)

MP_{structure 1a}: Intransitive Past Participle + /h-/ +AGR (*used for all, other than 3sg*)

MP_{structure 1b}: Transitive Past Participle + /h-/ +AGR (*used for all, other than 3sg*)

MP_{structure 2a}: Intransitive Past Participle + /ēst/⁴ + AGR

MP_{structure 2b}: Transitive Past Participle + /ēst/ + AGR

/?-/ and /y-/ are phonologically changed forms of the AUX /h-/ in MP which means ‘to be + PRESENT’ and functions as Perfective Aspect Morpheme in SNP & MD.

Two Present Perfect structures have been at work in MP made by adding two AUX paradigms to past participles. MP’s 1b & 2b structures are considered passive due to the transitivity of the main part i.e. past participle. So, in such constructions the AUX agreed to the formal subject of the sentence i.e. the real object of the verb.

Interestingly, led to a mixed paradigm, the gap in 3sg form of the paradigm [h + AGR] in MP has been filled by the 3sg form of the other AUX i.e. ēstad in MD (See two variations of MD).

Future Simple Construction:

SNP: /xah-/⁵ + AGR + (Present Stem + Past)

MD: /xa/ + (Present Stem + Past) + AGR

1 SNP & MD’s 3Sg Subject Agreement Suffix is Ø in past tenses

2 MP’s Ergative Constructions

3 SNP & MD’s Past Participle: Present Stem + PAST + Participle-Making Morpheme /e/& /a/.

4 The present stem of ‘ēstādan’ which literally means ‘to stand’

5 Future AUX

Despite SNP, MD's AGR suffixes attach to the end of the main verb rather than the AUX.

4. Conclusion

In this study, we focused on analyzing the construction of MD's verbs in different tenses in which there was found a sort of inconsistency to SNP. Consequently, Present/Past/Future Simple, Present Subjunctive, and Present Perfect were studied along with keeping an eye to their equivalents in Middle Persian and the following results were achieved: a) the dialect's AGR suffixes are more correlated with their counterparts in MP than SNP; b) Simple Past's construction was also seen of two variations- different from and the same as SNP; c) Present Perfect's paradigm was considered to be a blend of two Present Perfect variations existing in MP; and d) over all, the observed dualities and results remind the researchers of the Hawkins' (1983) 'Dual Acquisition Hypothesis' and, therefore, the dialect's mid-state in comparison to MP and SNP. Moreover, a trace of MP's ergative system was seen in only one verb both in its past and present tenses.

Key words: Verb construction, Present perfect, **Ergative dual acquisition**, Middle persian.

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