



PERSIAN VERBS A CHAFEAN ANALYSIS

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Most students of Modern Persian grammar have recognized at least two types of verbs simple and compound The simple verbs, whose number is relatively small,¹ consist of one word such as daštaen "to have", xordæn "to eat", zaedaen "to hit", etc Compound verbs consist of a combination of one of a number of simple verbs and one or more lexical items baer daštaen "to lift, to take", zaemin xordæn "to fall", haerf zaedaen "to speak", etc Furthermore, most grammarians have sub-classified the compound verbs on the basis of the part-of-speech, inherent or derived, classification of the lexical item (i e noun, adjective, preposition, or adverb) that combines with the simple verb³

Rubinehik (1971) divides the compound verbs into what he calls prefixed and compound verbs Prefixed verbs are formed by joining different dependent words, mainly preposition to a simple verb baer daštaen "to take, lift", baer-xordæn "to be offended", etc Compound verbs, however, are formed by a combination of nouns or adjectives with simple verbs zaemin xerdaen "to fall down", baz kaerdaen "to open", haerf zaedaen "to speak", etc

The main reason for differentiating a simple verb (with a complement) from a compound verb seems to lie in the fact that the meaning of a compound verb differs from the meaning of each element in that verb For example, in sentence (1)

1 maen šam xordaem I ate supper

šam "supper" is a noun that functions as the object of the verb xordæn

But in sentence (2)

2 maen zaemin xordaem. I fell down

the noun zaemin "earth" is not an object for the simple verb xordæn "to eat", rather zaemin xordæn is a unitary semantic

concept, an intransitive verb, only distantly related to the meaning of its verb constituent.

The most recent studies on various aspects of Persian syntax are a few unpublished Ph D dissertations (Palmer (1970), Moyne (1970), Stilo (1971)) In their attempts to deal with Persian within the framework of Generative grammar, they have recognized the simple-compound distinction between verbs. They have tried to generate the two types of predicate constructions through formalized rules While each of these studies has provided us with valuable bits of information on various aspects of Persian syntax, they have hardly any insightful thing to say about the actual syntactic-semantic processes involved in the formation of compound verbs Moyne differentiates the simple transitive verb predicate construction from that of a compound verb by considering the latter as frozen structures in lexicon They are not generated by any base rule (Moyne 1970 81) For example, he differentiates between sentences (1) and (2) by generating (1) through the base rules but not sentence (2) To consider the process of compound-verb formation as "frozen" is to disregard the productive nature of this syntactic phenomenon

In Modern Persian, compound verbs are used to introduce new semantic concepts (e g , telefon kaerdaen "to telephone"), to replace verbs of Arabic origin (e g , daer xast kaerdaen for taelaebidaen "to ask"), or to provide new ways of expressing an already existing semantic concept (e g , gul zaedaen for faeriftaen "to deceive") It is interesting to note how new compound verbs are formed for new concepts Not too long ago the concept of airplanes flying was introduced to the Persian community In their language, the Persians had a word for flying (paeridaen) as is seen in

3. kaebutaer aez deraext paerid The pigeon flew from the tree

But when they saw the planes flying, they did not use the simple verb paeridaen to express the action performed by the plane, rather they formed a compound verb, paervaz kaerdaen, a combination of paervaz, a nominal derivative from paeridaen, and a simple verb, kaerdaen "to do" Therefore, sentence (4) is grammatical but (5) is not

4 haevapeyma daer aseman paervaz mikonaed
The plane flies in the sky

5 *haevapeyma daer aseman mipaeraed*

Examples like telefon kaerdaen "to telephone" and paervaz kaerdaen show the productive nature of compound verb formation

I maintain that the process of compound verb formation could be explained within Chafe's (1970) theory of linguistics. This study is an attempt to demonstrate the applicability of his theory with some modification to a limited number of Persian verbs, however, further research is necessary to account for the formation of all compound verbs.

According to Chafe (1970) the verb which is the central and controlling element in a sentence could be specified by various selectional semantic and inflectional units. Selectional units, that is, state, process, action, process-action, state-ambient, and action-ambient, determine not only the presence of accompanying nouns but also the choice of a verb root. These units may be inherent in a particular verb or derivationally added to it.

I believe the structure of compound verbs in Persian cannot be accounted for without an understanding of the function and the structure of simple verbs. In fact, I would claim that the process of compound verb formation is but a surface realization of the underlying semantic units and processes involved in the structure of simple verbs. Therefore, I will begin my analysis by describing the structure of a few simple verbs with the framework of Chafe (1970). Throughout this paper I will assume some familiarity with his theory.

Let us examine the different forms of the verb suxtaen "to burn" in the following sentences:

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 6 | ketabaem suxt | My book burnt |
| 7 | morad ketabaemra suzand | Morad burnt my book |
| 8 | ketabaem suzteast | My book is burnt |

In (6) suxt, the 3rd person singular of the past tense of suxtaen, denotes the process that occurred to its patient, to ketabaem "my book". In (7) suzand "burnt" is the 3rd person singular form of the past tense of suzandaen "to burn", the so-called causitive form of suxtaen. It requires an agent, Morad, to perform the action and a patient, ketabaem "my book", to undergo the process. The difference between the meaning of the verb in (6) and (7) is due to a semantic process that Chafe (1970: 129) characterizes as

15	morad nan-ra borid	Morad cut the bread
16	nan be asani borid	The bread cut easily
17	nan boride aest	The bread is cut

In (15) borid, the 3rd person singular past tense of boridaen, is a process-action verb with Morad the agent. In (16) borid has derivationally become a process verb. Chafe (1970: 131) characterizes this semantic derivation by

Rule 3	process	—— ———>	process
	action		<u>root + deactivative</u>
	<u>root</u>		

That is, a process-action verb root could be converted into a process root by the addition of a derivational semantic unit, deactivative. Now if we apply Rule (2) to the result of (3) the result will be a derived state verb. Sentence (17) has precisely such a verb, and its semantic structure could be characterized by (18)

18	V
	state
	<u>root + deactivative + resultative</u>

The following sentences contain action verbs where the noun Morad acts as the agent of the verb

19	morad daevid	Morad ran
20	morad xaendid	Morad laughed

Chafe's treatment of action verbs is rather sketchy. Besides the obligatory agent noun, he claims, some of these verbs may require the presence of other nouns such as, beneficiary, and complement. As far as the main selectional semantic units of state, process, action, and process-action are concerned, Chafe does not change the action verbs into any other verbs. He does not think that the inherently action verbs undergo any derivational processes similar to those of other verbs. In this section I would like to show that such is not true with Persian. Sentences (21) and (22) seem to be clearly derived from (19) and (20) respectively.

21	morad mehdira daevand	Morad made Mehdi run
22	morad mehdira xaendand	Morad made Mehdi laugh

Sentences (19) and (20) each have one noun Morad which bears an agent relation to the verb. Both sentences could be appropriate answers to

23. morad če kard kaerd. What did Morad do?

Sentences (21) and (22) which contain two nouns, Morad and Mehdi, could also be answers to sentences (23). While these sentences look like process-action ones, Mehdi does not seem to be a patient as one expects in process-action verbs.

Sentences (21) and (22) suggest that Chafe's outline of semantic structure for verbs needs some modification. Besides the fact that action verbs undergo some derivational changes, the resulting changed sentences seem to have two nouns, both of which could be considered to be agents. I have made certain suggestions to extend Chafe's proposal elsewhere.⁴ These modifications are necessary if one wants to account for the following English sentences

24. Morad walked across the stage.

25. Morad walked the queen across the stage.

The Persian data clearly indicates that there is a difference between the role of Morad and Mehdi in (21) and (22). While Mehdi is the person who "ran" and "laughed", Morad is the person who caused Mehdi to undertake the action. Morad may or may not have participated in the same action, but he certainly caused or instigated the action. We are forced either to change our concept of the semantic unit "patient" or postulate an additional semantic unit called instigator besides those proposed by Chafe.

The action verbs do not seem to undergo any further derivational changes.

Now let us examine the state verbs. In all the above examples which dealt with state verbs, the verb was a derived one. They were the so-called past participle form of the verb followed by some form of the verb "to be". In Persian like those in English, except for a few experiential and benefactive verbs, most state verbs are what the traditional grammarians call adjective and participle, and are always accompanied by the verb "to be".

- 26 daer baz bud The door was open
 27 daer baz šod The door opened
 28 morad daerra baz kaerd Morad opened the door

Most grammars of Persian consider sentence (26) to contain a simple verb, but (27) and (28) each contain a compound verb šodaen "to become" and kaerdaen "to do" are called auxiliaries, especially in sentences where instead of an adjective, such as baz "open" a participle like šekaeste "broken" or raevan "going, flowing" is used

- 29 paenjere šekaeste bud The window was broken
 30 morad be maenzel raevan Morad was going home
 bud

It is not at all clear why one should consider sentences (26), (27), and (28) to contain two different classes of verbs, in fact, they all seem to have the same class of verbs. If (26) contains a simple verb, (27) and (28) must also contain simple verbs, too. The verbs in these sentences differ from one another in the same way that verbs of the sentences (6), (7), and (8) differ. If we accept Chafe's hierarchical system and consider state as the highest semantic selectional unit, sentence (26) would then be the basic semantic concept from which sentence (27) could be derived by Rule 4

Rule 4 state — — — —>> process
 root root + inchoative

This rule changes a state verb into a process verb. Sentence (28) is further derived from the application of the Rule 1 to the verb of sentence (27)

Sentences (26), (27), and (28) are similar to (6), (7), and (8) or to (15), (16), and (17) in that in each set there is a verb intrinsically state (26), process (6) and process-action (15), and the other two sentences in each set are derived from them by the appropriate application of Rules 1, 2, 3, or 4. The difference between these sets of sentences lie in the fact that intrinsically state verbs, which have surface marker, budaen "to be", regularly use šodaen and kaerdaen when they undergo semantic derivation. This is not always true of other types of verbs, even though when šodaen and kaerdaen appear with the latter, they definitely indicate the derivative nature of that particular verb

I have discussed the above sentences in Sharifi (1973a, and 1973b) and we shall discuss similar sentences in connection to gereftaen "to get" in the next paper (Sheik and Sharifi) in this volume. The simple verbs, xordaen "to eat" and kesidaen "to pull" seem to change their original meanings in sentences (37, 38) and (40 and 41) when they appear in a compound form. It is this seeming disparity between the meaning of the simple verb and their meaning as they appear in the compound form that has given the strongest motivation to divide the verbs into two groups of simple and compound. I have argued that the basic meaning of the simple verb is present in all of the compound verbs. To native speakers in (37 and 38) the notion of "consumption and absorption" and in (40 and 41) the idea of "pulling and drawing" is present. In addition, the verbs xordaen and kesidaen reflect the semantic selectional units of action which is necessary to change the nouns in each sentence through a derivational process into an action verb. This is not much different from the function of the so-called auxiliary verbs, šodaen and kaerdaen. If sentences (26, 28) in fact, contain simple verbs there is no justification for considering (37, 38, 41, and 42) as different.

NOTES

- 1 For an example of the traditional classification see Elwell-Sutton, 1963, pages 94ff
- 2 These are the infinitive forms of the verbs. The mark of an infinitive is the final -an of the word.
- 3 See Lambton 1961, pages 85ff
- 4 "Chafe's Action Verbs in Persian", a paper read before the Linguistics Section II of the 1974 Philological Association of the Pacific Coast, San Diego, California

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