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Some Gestures, Sounds and Words in Spoken Persian

Some parts of the body that are not normally used in speech may convey some meaning in conversation. In the persian Language as in many other languages, a special voice or a gesture such as closing and opening of the eyes or waving hands may carry a special meaning. Very often a mere gesture without any word may convey a message. For example agreement or disagreement may be shown merely by moving the head down or up without any utterance.

In addition to these cases, natural reactions of the body under certain circumstances such as change of the colour of the face as the result of fear or excitement can be taken into consideration. But since they do not frequently happen I am not going to have a detailed discussion here. what will be discussed here are those sounds and gestures which are commonly used in the everyday speech of the people of Tehran which a non-persian student who wishes to learn persian needs to get familiar With, Three categories of them is given in the following:

A. Gestures:

For a better understanding of the function of gesture in

a speech, films, pictures, and slides may be employed by means of which the meaning of a gesture may well be explained. This of course requires a considerable amount of time as well as technical possibilities. Obviously there are so many gestures such as movement of the hands and the changes of the face while speaking, which convey the same meaning in many languages. Nevertheless the understanding of these meanings for the students who are learning Persian as a foreign language deserves a special observation.

B. Voices:

Here are some common voices of the Spoken Persian:

1. /ow/ This is a substitute for /āy/ or /āhāy/ which are used to address someone. This voice however does not carry any respect to the person who is being addressed.

It may be pronounced as /owy/ for example instead of saying /ey āgā/ one might say /ow āgā/. This is an impolite expression and foreign students have to be aware of its meaning and avoid its usage in a normal situation, otherwise it will be taken as an insult.

2. /hā/ and /āhā/ These voices are used to indicate amazement and emphasis. It is used when people of younger ages are told to do or not to do something, for example: /Unjā be čizi dast nazarīhā/.¹

1. a. When a word to which /hā/ is added ends in vowel, /hā/ will be pronounced /yā/. b. /hā/ May be used instead of yes or no which won't be polite if used by a younger person. c. /hā/ May be used to confirm the completion of an action, for example /hā dorost šod/. d. If /ā/ and /hā/ are used together with definition it will mean that a job is done easily, for example /inke kāri nadāre, bebīn ā-hā/.

3. /de/ This form frequently occurs in Tehrani accent. It occurs in the following terms:

/de/ accompanied by /he/ or /ha'/ is used as an objection and is usually followed by /če ma'ni dāre/.

/ehe/ is used as a surprise when somebody is not true in his claim such as /ehe na bā bā/.

/de/ may occur in front of an utterance along with /na/ at the end to indicate the impatience of the speaker, for example one can say /de boro na/, /de begū na/.

4. /e/ Which is usually repeated for three times, is used to indicate the amazement or regrets against an action.

5. /hoom/ If accompanied with the moving of the speaker's face will carry different meanings as the following terms:

It may be used to indicate the confirmation of a reasonable action in which case the brows of the speaker will go up while his eyes are opened and his mouth is closed.

/hoom/ In such cases will be pronounced longer than normal.

If brows and eyes are narrowed down /hoom/ indicates explanation in which case it is pronounced shorter than normal.

c. phrases & Words:

1. /āre/ This word is frequently used for agreement and confirmation. It may carry different meaning if pronounced differently.

For example if /ā/ is stressed with a long voice, it will indicate incredibility such as /āre. gofti-o bāvar kardam!/ or /āre june to/.

2. /ob-hop-xob/ These forms are used to tell a driver to stop.

3. /unāhā=unāhāš/ This form is used to point to something looked for.

4. /āx jūn/ Is used to show one's joy for a happy news.

5. /ey bābā/ Is used to show one's regret and amazement about an unexpected incident.

6. /ey dād,o bī dād/ This is used when the speaker wants to show his anger against what he has just heard.

7. /engār/ It is used to indicate hesitation and conditional agreement from the part of the speaker.

8. /boro bābā/ Is used when one is not interested in what he just heard.

9. /bezan berím/ This is equivalent to "start" and or "leave". It is used when a vehicle is about to depart.

10. /bah bah/ Is a mark of joy and happiness and admiration for a very good thing.

11. /baha/ Is opposite of /bah bah/ and is used to show unhappiness and objection.

12. /vāh vāh/ Is mostly used by ladies to indicate an unpleasant situation.

13. /vāy/ Indicates a big worry about what is heard. This form if followed by preposition /bar/ is used to indicate fear and threat.

14. /dí dí hālā/ Is used to indicate an undesired or unpleasant result. It is also used to show that one did expect the exact thing that happened.

15. /hālā mīgí čekār konam/ This construction is used in reply to a protest when the speaker wishes to say he is

indifferent and irresponsible.

16. (āfarín) Is used to admire someone.

There are more categories of impolite words in Spoken persian that deserve observation and attention. The writer hopes to have some opportunity to take them into consideration in near future.

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