

چکیده مقاله

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A Semantic Analysis of the Subjunctive verb forms of the Persian Language

هدف اصلی این مقاله اثبات این مطلب است که مفاهیم ارائه شده برای صیغه‌های مضارع التزامی ز ماضی التزامی در کتابهای دستور زبان فارسی دقیق و علمی نیست. برای نیل به این منظور تعدادی از تعاریف موجود مورد نقد و بررسی قرار خواهد گرفت. پس از اثبات نادرستی تعاریف پیشنهادی، نویسنده مقاله تلاش خواهد کرد تا معنی و مفهومی دقیق و علمی برای هر یک از ریختهای فعلی فوق‌الذکر ارائه کند.

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In the Name of Allah

A Semantic Analysis of the Persian Subjunctive Verb Forms

Two of the most interesting verb forms of the Persian language are the so-called 'Mozare? Eltezami' and 'Mazi-e Eltezami'. 'Mozare? Eltezami' is formed by attaching the prefix

be-, and a personal ending to the present tense root¹ of the verb. Thus, 'Mozare? Eltezami' raftan 'to go' is be.ravam, be.rav.i, etc.

Mazi.e Eltezami, is formed from the past participle of the main verb and a form of the copula verb budan 'be'. Therefore, 'Mazi.e Eltezami' of raftan 'to go' is raft.e bash.am, raft.e bashi, etc.

Determining the exact meaning of the above mentioned verb forms does not, however, seem to be an easy task. The Iranian, and non-Iranian grammarians have all maintained that these two verb forms express modal notions such as doubt hesitation, uncertainty, obligation, condition, etc. To indicate this, some of the definitions suggested for these verb forms will be quoted herebelow.

Whenever the occurrence of the action is not definite, the verb form to be used will be 'Eltezami'

(Khanlari, 1971, p 29)

(Translation is mine)

'Mozare? Eltezami' refers to an action the occurrence of which involves doubt, hesitation, request, etc.

(Qarib et al; 1973, P 29)

(Translation is mine)

'Mazi.e Eltezami' is that which expresses 'doubt', hesitation, request, etc.

(Qarib et al; 1953, p 35)

The Subjunctive Present (i.e. Mozare? Eltezami) is used in subordinate clauses to express a state or action about which there is an element of doubt

(Ellwell Sutzen; 1963, p 151)

The Subjunctive Past (i.e. Mazi.e Eltezami) is used to refer to an action or state in the past about which there is an element of doubt

(ibid, p 153)

The Present Subjunctive is used in subordinate clauses, in reference to a present or future event or condition about which there is some doubt.

(Lambton; 1960, p 67)

The Perfect Subjunctive (i.e. Mazi.e Eltezami) is used in reference to a past event or condition about which there is some doubt

(ibid, p 69)

A close investigation of the aforementioned definitions will nonetheless show that they are inaccurate and inconsistent with the linguistic facts of the Persian language. The first reason is that it is not at all clear why these two Persian verb forms - unlike the other verb forms of the Persian language-happen to express

the semantic notion of doubt or hesitation in addition to referring to a state or action (in the present, future, or past). Is it for instance the prefix *be-* of the present subjunctive (Mozare? Eltezami) which makes this verb form to express the notion of doubt and uncertainty, or is it the verb stem which expresses this notion?

A Similar question can be posed with respect to the past subjunctive (Mazi.e Eltezami). Why does the so-called Mazi.e Eltezami refer to a state or action in the past and at the same time expresses the semantic notion of 'doubt' hesitation, uncertainty, etc, whereas the present perfect tense, for instance, does not do so? Is it the past participle or the verb *budan* 'to be' which causes this verb form to express the notion of doubt?

The next reason why the former definitions of Mazie and Mozare? Eltezami are inaccurate and unacceptable is that these verb forms are, by no means only used in sentences involving doubt, hesitation, uncertainty, obligation, etc. Consider the following sentences.

1. *Ki be to goft be.rav.i?*

*who to you said subj marker - go - you
who told you to go?*

2. *Na.goft.am ta behal bayad raside bashad*

*neg tell I till now must arrived be didn't I tell you that he should
have arrived until now?*

In the above examples, the actions expressed by *Mozare? Eltezami* and '*Mazi.e Eltezami*' respectively have certainly taken place, and it would, as a result, be wrong to associate these verb forms with the notion of doubt or hesitation.

The present author would, however, maintain that a more scientific and accurate analysis would be to state that *Mozare? Eltezami* and *Mazi.e Eltezami* only refer to a state or action - like other verb forms of the Persian language - and it is the presence of modal expressions such as *bayad* 'must', *shayad* 'Perhaps', *ehtemahan* 'likely', etc which express semantic notions such as doubt, hesitation, obligation, and condition. In other words, the present writer claims that in Modern Persian, *Mozare? Eltezami* (the present subjunctive) and the simple present tense, both refer to a state or action in the present or future time; the only difference being that the former is restricted to subordinate clauses and the latter to main clauses. That is to say *Mozare? Eltezami* (the Present subjunctive) and the simple present tense (i.e. *Mozare? Ekhbari*) are in complementary distribution.

A similar analysis is actually offered for the perfect subjunctive (*Mazi.e Eltezami*) and the present perfect tense along the following lines:

The present perfect tense and the so-called *Mazi.e Eltezami* have exactly the same meaning and are in complementary distribution, one being restricted to main clauses and the other to

subordinate clauses.

An interesting implication of this analysis is that Mazie Eltezami does not refer to a past action the occurrence of which is uncertain or doubtful, but rather like the present perfect tense it refers to an action which happens in the past and its results continue into the present time.

To summarize, the present author believes that the previous treatments of the Persian subjunctive verb forms, i.e. Mozare? Eltezami and Mazie. Eltezami are incorrect and imprecise. None of these verb forms actually refers to an action or state about which there is an element of doubt. Rather, they have the same meaning as Mozare? Ekhbari (the simple present tense) and Mazie Naqli (the present perfect tense) respectively, and are in complementary distribution with these verb forms. The reason which can be mentioned in support of the claim that Mazie Eltezami and Mazie Naqli literally have the same meaning is that they are both formed from the past participle of the main verb and a form of the verb budan 'to be'. It is, therefore, logical for them to have the same meaning.

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پانوشته‌ها:

1. According to most scholars, each Persian verb has two roots or stems: a present stem and a past stem.
2. Two Linguistic items are said to be in complementary distribution when they have the same meaning but do not occur in exactly the same linguistic environment. This notion was originally used in phonology to refer to the phonological relationship holding between the allophones of a given phoneme, but it is now used in Syntax as well.

