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## THE STRUCTURE OF PERSIAN VERBS AND THEIR ROLE IN WORD FORMATION

**Abstract:** The article deals with the structure of Persian verbs, i.e. simple, prefixed and compound verbs, as well as verbal phrases, intransitive verbs, prefixed compound verbs and singular intransitive verbs. Their role in the language system and word formation has been discussed. The fact that simple and prefixed verbs in modern Persian are much less common than compound verbs has been substantiated and analyzed based on the views of the scholars of Iranian studies. The paper examines the argument that several meanings are realized by a single verb, and this in turn makes the verb polysemantic is due to the fact that the number of simple and prefixed verbs in Persian is not so large, and that new simple and prefixed verbs almost ceased to be formed. However, it also shows a difference of opinion that the small number of simple verbs in Persian is due to their polysemantic character. Simple verbs are discussed in more detail and their role in word formation is considered in the example of the verb *sāxtan*. It has been found that the verb is involved in the formation of more than 53 new words and over 25 new compound verbs, and actively used as a light verb in the construction of a number of compound verbs.

**Key words:** simple verbs, prefixed verbs, compound verbs, verbal phrases, intransitive verbs, prefixed compound verbs, singular intransitive verbs, derivatives of the verb *sāxtan*.

**Language:** English

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### Introduction

In Persian, as in all languages, verb is regarded as one of the most important lexical elements that is actively involved in sentence formation. According to the Iranian linguist Parviz Natel Khanlari, “verb is the most important element that represents predicate and if a sentence consists of only one word, it definitely belongs to a verb group. Sentence structure is impossible without a verb” [18, pp.13-14]. Many Iranian linguists such as H. Anvari, H. Ahmadi Givi [4], Sh. Mohutiyon [15] and U. Tabibzada [24] have also considered the verb as the most important element of the sentence.

A Russian scholar of Iranian studies Y.A. Rubinchik emphasizes that in Persian, the verb occupies an important place among other parts of

speech, and notes that it “stands out not only for its richness and diversity of meanings, but also for its abundance of forms”. [20, p.197].

There are different yet contradictory views on the grammatical forms of Persian verb, depending on the type of their formation. It is known that Y.A. Rubinchik distinguishes the following structural types of verb units: 1) simple verbs, 2) prefixed verbs and 3) compound verbs [20, pp.204-229]. However, long before Y.A. Rubinchik established this classification, the Iranian linguist P.N. Khanlari stated in his research that from the structural point of view there are five types of verbs in Persian, and in addition to the three types of verbs mentioned above, he added another two ones: verb phrases (عبارت های فعلی) and intransitive verbs (فعل های ناگذر)

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[16, pp.43-76], while other Iranian linguists H. Anvari and H.A. Givi classifies Persian verbs into six types: 1) simple verbs (فعل های ساده); 2) prefixed verbs (فعل های پیشوندی); 3) compound verbs (فعل های مرکب); 4) compound verbs with a prefix (فعل های پیشوندی مرکب); 5) verb phrases (عبارت های فعلی); 6) singular intransitive verbs (فعل های لازم یک شخصه) [3, pp.18-74].

The types of verbs mentioned by Iranian linguists in contrast to Y.A. Rubinchik, such as compound verbs with prefixes, verbal phraseological units and singular intransitive verbs, are included in compound verbs by Russian and Uzbek scholars of Iranian studies.

The number of verbs in the Persian language is less than the number of verbs in other languages. According to Gulam Hussein Sadriafshor, author of "Farhang-e fārsi-ye emruz" (Dictionary of Modern Persian) [21], in the Persian language there are about 600-700 verbs from ancient times to the present day, most of which are compound verbs [9]. According to Y.A. Rubinchik, the types of word formation in the Persian verbal system are very limited, and it can be seen that simple and prefixed verbs, unlike other word groups, are formed mainly by means of derivational affixes, i.e., by affixation, which are not numerous in Persian. However, the Iranist scholar states that even the formation of new verbs by affixation took place in ancient times, and new simple and prefixed verbs in modern Persian almost ceased to be formed [20, p.204]. All this has led to the fact that in modern Persian, simple and prefixed verbs are much less common than compound verbs.

Mohammed Bashir Hussein in his book "List of Persian verbs and their meanings" was able to collect more than 2000 simple verbs from 8 authoritative dictionaries and ancient Persian works, and explained their meanings in alphabetical order [25]. However, due to the fact that in this book the types of simple verbs that have undergone certain lexical and grammatical changes as well as archaic words are identified as separate verbs, their number exceeded two thousand, although 9 out of 10 simple verbs in the list is almost never used in modern Persian.

P.N. Khanlari criticizes the opinions of previous linguists and lexicographers about the large amount of simple verbs, noting that the number of simple verbs in the Persian language is less than three hundred [16, p. 44]. Another researcher S. Karimi suggests that in modern Persian, given the amount of simple verbs in real use, their number can reach a maximum of 130 [12]. As reported by another Iranian linguist A. Sadeghi, in modern written and spoken Persian, no more than 115 simple verbs are used [23, pp. 236-246]. In his article "The Persian language is barren?" [26], Bateni also presents the results of a study conducted by students at the University of Tehran to determine the number of simple verbs used in oral and written speech. According to the study results, the

number of simple verbs is more than 115, and if the number of simple verbs currently used in written and oral speech, but with a lower frequency of use, is added, this number reaches about 150-200.

The fact that the number of Persian verbs, especially simple and prefixed verbs, is not so large, and that new simple and prefixed verbs are not formed today, leads to the verbalization of several action-related meanings by one verb, which, in turn, makes the verb become polysemantic word.

Indubitably, there are researchers who argue otherwise. In particular, an Iranian researcher L. Sharifi notes that one of the main reasons for the low number of simple verbs in Persian is their polysemantic character [13, p.12]. While disagreeing with the conclusion of the researcher that polysemy led to a decrease in the number of simple verbs, we adhere to his opinion that polysemy is inherent in many simple verbs by his example of the verb افتادن [oftādan]. Indeed, many simple verbs in the Persian language are polysemous, and the same simple verb is often used to express different meanings in different contexts. This can be seen in the example of the lexical-semantic variants of the simple verb خواستن [xāstan]:

In the encyclopedic dictionary of Ali Akbar Dekhoda "Loghat-nameh Dekhoda" [6] the verb خواستن [xāstan] has two meanings: 1) to ask; 2) to demand; in the explanatory dictionary of Muhammad Muin "Farhang-e muin" [14, p. 1449] this word has seven meanings: 1) to ask, to beg; 2) to demand; 3) to want; to desire; 4) to dream, to wish; 5) to need; 6) to order; 7) call forth; in his explanatory dictionary "Farhang-e Amid" [1] Hassan Amid offers nine (including two archaic) meanings: 1) to ask, to require; 2) to be inclined; 3) to intend; 4) to love; 5) to call forth; 6) to need; 7) to hope; 8) to dream; 9) to want; in the explanatory dictionary of Hassan Anvari "Farhang-e bozorg-e Sokhan" [2, p. 2853-2854] the word خواستن [xāstan] comes in eighteen (including six archaic and five colloquial) meanings: 1) to ask, to demand; 2) to call; 3) to demand debt; 4) to be in need; 5) to intend; 6) to be inclined; 7) to love, to want to see; 8) to long, to wait, to hope and etc. In the Persian-Russian dictionary of Y.A. Rubinchik [19, pp. 573-574] six meanings of the word خواستن [xāstan] are listed in four lexico-semantic groups: 1) to want, to intend; 2) to ask, to call, to offer; 3) to call forth; 4) to need.

Polysemy also occurs with prefixed verbs that are least common among Persian verbs:

برداشتن [bar-dāstan] 1) to take off, to lift; 2) to take, to take with oneself; 3) to copy, to write down, to take (copy, photo, etc.); 4) to fill, to fill up, to cover (water, sound, etc.); 5) to pick up, to collect (crop); 6) to take, to buy; 7) to take together, to bring together; 8) to endure, to stand; 9) to remove, to delete; 10) to steal; 11) to take off, to take a part; to cut out (part of the body, etc.); 12) to take away, to put away.

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In addition, simple and prefixed verbs in Persian can serve as auxiliaries in compound-verb formation and create a meaning distant from the original meaning. Example:

تایید کردن *to prefer*, دانستن *to make sure*, etc.  
تاب برداشتن *to become pregnant*, تاب برداشتن *bend*, درز برداشتن *yoriq (darz) to crack*, etc.

Although there are polysemous verbs that make up most of the Persian verbs or that are more common than simple and prefixed ones, polysemy does not apply to most compound verbs. Verbs that serve as synonyms or functional equivalents of long-standing simple verbs as well as most of the compound verbs in Persian that are formed with the help of loan words borrowed from foreign languages, primarily Arabic [23, pp.236-246] have one or two more connotational meanings in addition to the denotational meaning. But there are also many polysemantic verbs among them. The following verb can be a good example as one of the most polysemantic verbs in the Persian language:

بررسی کردن [barresi kardan] 1) *to investigate, to examine*; 2) *to study, to peruse*; 3) *to ponder*; 4) *to discuss*; 5) *raise an issue*; 6) *to explore* and etc.

As mentioned above, the fact that most verbs in the Persian language have a higher degree of lexical variation (i.e., they can enter into a syntactic relationship with other words) also allows them to express different meanings in different contexts. L. Sharifi in his article on the meanings of the simple verb افتادن [oftādan] used in different contexts, i.e., lexical-semantic variants, shows how high the lexical variation degree of this verb is. He finds out that this verb is involved in a syntactic relationship with words belonging to different parts of a sentence and different parts of speech, and denotes up to eighty meanings [13, p.12]. In the following sentences and phrases given by the author, we can see that the simple verb افتادن [oftādan] is syntactically related to other words and participates in the formation of various meanings:

سیب از درخت به زمین افتاد (به معنی «سقوط کردن»):

*The apple fell from the tree (in the meaning "to fall"):*

در پی ما افتادند (به معنی «آمدن»):

*They followed us (in the meaning "to come");*

نمی دانم در آن حال به چه خیال افتاده بودم (به معنی «داشتن»):

*I don't know what I was thinking at that time (in the meaning "to have");*

فشار خونم افتاد پایین (به معنی «کم شدن»):

*My blood pressure has dropped (in the meaning "to drop", "to decrease");*

این جعبه خیلی سنگین است، دستم افتاد (به معنی «بی رمق شدن»):

*This box is very heavy, my hands got tired (in the meaning "to get tired").*

Another point worth considering is the role of simple and prefixed verbs in expressing an action and in the sentence structure. Only these simple verbs, the number of which is much smaller than compound

verbs, are active in morphological derivations, which means that on the basis of one simple verb at least 5-10 new words can be formed. It should also be noted that simple verbs play a significant role in the formation of prefixed and compound verbs in the Persian language. For example, while examining derivatives of the simple verb *sāxtan* in the dictionaries of Dehkhoda, Mo'in and Sokhan, and in a two-volume dictionary edited by Y.A. Rubinchik, the followings are found. Before proceeding with the examples, however, it should be noted that special studies are required to determine how these derivatives are formed and what type of word formation they refer to, whether they are productive or unproductive. Therefore we shall only cite the derivatives to give an overall picture:

ساخت و پاخت، ساخت و ساز، ساخته آمده، ساخته و پرداخته، ساز و رسم، ساز و ساخت، ساز و سامان، ساز و سوز، ساختگی، ساختمان، ساختنی، ساخته، سازش، سازشکار، سازشکاری، سازشنامه، سازگار، سازگاری، سازمان، سازمان دهنده، سازمند، سازمندی، سازندگی، سازنده، سازوار، سازواری، سازور، ساخته کاری، سازمائی، سازماندهی، سازمان بندی، سازشکارانه، سازگار، سازگاری، سازه، سازش ناپذیر، ساختمان سازی، ساختار، ساختارگرا، ساختارگرایی، سازمانده، ساخت شناسی، ساخت هرنگ، ساخته روی، ساخته کاچار، ساخته لگام، ساخت زر، ساخت آماج، سازجفت، بد ساخت، خوش ساخت، ساخت، ساز.

In addition, there are many words that are formed by the semi-suffix ساز *sāz* to mean "create", "restore" and "build":

بخاری ساز، ساعت ساز، آینه ساز، آهنگ ساز، فیلم ساز، چاقو ساز، دارو ساز، خاتم ساز، مجسمه ساز، ترانه ساز، بخاری ساز، قفل ساز، ساعت ساز، دوچرخه ساز، سمور ساز، دست ساز، نوساز...

The considerable amount of compound verbs formed with the simple verb *sāxtan* can also be illustrated below.

**The verbs formed from the verb stem in the present tense:**

ساز آمدن، سازش دادن، سازش داشتن، سازش کردن، ساز کردن، سازگار بودن، سازگاری کردن، ساز گرفتن، سازمان دادن، سازمان یافتن، سازوار آمدن، سازوار شدن.

**The verbs formed from the verb stem in the past tense:**

ساخت انداختن، ساخت و پاخت کردن، ساختگی کردن، ساخت افکندن، ساخت فرو کردن، ساخت تمام کردن، ساخته شدن، ساختمان کردن، ساخت فرو گشادن، ساخت گشادن، ساخته کردن، ساخته کاری کردن، ساخته بودن.

As we have seen, a single simple verb is involved in the formation of more than 53 new words and more than 25 new compound verbs.

Furthermore, the verb *sāxtan* is used in the construction of a number of compound verbs as a second component.

The use of compound verbs in the Persian language is of a wide scope, and as Y.A. Rubinchik notes, the most common type of verbs in today's Persian are also compound verbs. [20, p. 216]. In Persian, compound verbs not only verbalize more important actions and processes, but also perform functions that are usually fulfilled in other languages

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by simple verbs [20, p. 217]. P. N. Khanlari mentions that the number of compound verbs in the Persian language is greater than the number of simple verbs, and many simple and prefixed verbs are squeezed out of modern vocabulary by the compound verbs. Subsequently, he claims that in modern Persian, new compound verbs, unlike simple and prefix verbs, continue to be formed and introduced into language [17, p.13, 95-96]. Russian Iranist Y.A. Rubinchik also indicates that today, when it is necessary to express an action, process or state in a language that was not

previously realized by a verb, compound verbs are formed instead of simple or prefixed verbs [20, p.218].

A characteristic feature of the Persian verbal system, i.e. a relatively small number of verbs, in particular, the number of simple and prefix verbs, on the one hand, and a larger number of compound verbs in comparison with simple and prefix verbs, on the other, serves as the main factor in the various constructions of lexical-semantic variants of Persian verbs.

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