



Persian of Tehran: towards a new rise of simple verbs?

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A. Introduction

1. Complex verbs and simple verbs in Persian

- Simple verbs in Persian: very restricted (closed class)
- Complex predicates widely used
 - CP = non-verbal element + light verb, e.g. *ḥarf zadan* 'to speak (word + hit)'
 - the only productive process for denominal verbs in Persian (e.g. CIANCAGLINI 2011:3)
 - highly productive pattern cross-linguistically (BUTT 2010:52)

Table 1. The status of complex predicates
ex.: 'to reply'

	complex predicate	simple verb
French	<i>donner une réponse</i>	<i>répondre</i>
German	<i>Antwort geben</i>	<i>antworten</i>
Persian	<i>javāb dādan</i>	∅

BATENI (1990): several new simple verbs in the last decades:

Table 2. New simple verbs in Persian (examples from BATENI 1990's study)

simple verb	meaning	complex predicate	
<i>tiġ-idan</i>	'to defraud'	<i>tiġ zadan</i>	(blade hit)
<i>šal-idan</i>	'to limp'	<i>šal zadan</i>	(limp hit)
<i>šut-idan</i>	'to shoot (football)'	<i>šut kardan</i>	(shot do)
<i>sor-idan</i>	'to slide'	<i>sor x^wordan</i>	(slippery eat)

2. Discovering new simple verbs

- our data:
internet fora and blogs, messaging services, conversations

Table 3. New simple verbs in Persian (our data)

simple verb	meaning	complex predicate
<i>fekr-idan</i>	'to think'	<i>fekr kardan</i>
<i>šoḥbat-idan</i>	'to discuss'	<i>šoḥbat kardan</i>
<i>čāt-idan</i>	'to chat'	<i>čāt kardan</i>
<i>guš-idan</i>	'to listen'	<i>guš kardan</i>
<i>baḥs-idan</i>	'to have an argument'	<i>baḥs kardan</i>
<i>ḥarf-idan</i>	'to talk'	<i>ḥarf zadan</i>
<i>zang-idan</i>	'to call (telephone)'	<i>zang zadan</i>
<i>`aks-idan</i>	'to take a picture'	<i>`aks gereftan</i>
<i>dars-idan</i>	'to study'	<i>dars xundan</i>

B. Acceptability tests

3. Questionnaires, sampling and data collection

- acceptability of verbs tested by presenting sentences containing new simple verbs
- sentences rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disapprove) to 7 (strongly approve)
- all speakers: middle-class, urban background, higher education
- native speakers of Persian, born and living in Iran
- speakers selected through “snowball system”: contact persons suggested other probands
- sentences read to the speakers in face-to-face meetings, by telephone or through WhatsApp

Table 4. Verbs in our study

simple verb	meaning	complex predicate
<i>fekr-idan</i>	‘to think’	<i>fekr kardan</i>
<i>şoḥbat-idan</i>	‘to discuss’	<i>şoḥbat kardan</i>
<i>čat-idan</i>	‘to chat’	<i>čat kardan</i>
<i>guš-idan</i>	‘to listen’	<i>guš kardan</i>
<i>baḥş-idan</i>	‘to have an argument’	<i>baḥş kardan</i>
<i>ḥarf-idan</i>	‘to talk’	<i>ḥarf zadan</i>
<i>zang-idan</i>	‘to call (telephone)’	<i>zang zadan</i>
<i>`aks-idan</i>	‘to take a picture’	<i>`aks gereftan</i>
<i>dars-idan</i>	‘to study’	<i>dars xundan</i>
Pseudo-verbs:		
<i>*bāvar-idan</i>	‘to believe’	<i>bāvar kardan</i>
<i>*qahr-idan</i>	‘to sulk’	<i>qahr kardan</i>
<i>*yād-idan</i>	‘to learn’	<i>yād gereftan</i>

Table 5. Categories and terminology
(ex.: *zangidan* ‘to call’ in 1st SG)

category	morphology	structure	meaning
present	<i>mi-zang-am</i>	IPFV-PRS-1SG	‘I call / am calling’
present prog.	<i>dār-am mi-zang-am</i>	HAVE.PRS-1SG IPFV-PRS-1SG	‘I am calling right now’
past	<i>zangid-am</i>	PST-1SG	‘I called’
imperfect	<i>mi-zangid-am</i>	IPFV-PST-1SG	‘I was calling’
past prog.	<i>dāšt-am mi-zangid-am</i>	HAVE.PST-1SG IPFV-PST-1SG	‘I was calling that moment’
subjunctive	<i>be-zang-am</i>	IRR-PRS-1SG	‘that I call’
imperative	<i>be-zang-Ø !</i>	IRR-PRS-IMP2SG	‘call!’

+ NEG forms

Two questionnaires

Questionnaire A

45 sentences in total

3-5 sentences for each verb
(incl. pseudo-verbs)

All verbal categories included

42 respondents

1,890 observations (45 x 42)

age:	18-24	25-30	31-39	40-58	total
gender:					
men	3	5	1	2	11
women	14	7	6	4	31
sum	17	12	7	6	42

Questionnaire B

512 sentences:

all possible combinations of
persons and verb forms
(without pseudo-verbs)

10 respondents

5,120 observations (512 x 10)

age:	18-24	25-30	31-35	total
gender:				
men	2	1	2	5
women	1	2	2	5
sum	3	3	4	10

Questionnaire A:

تست مقبولیت (فارسی محاوره)

..... : سن

..... : جنسیت

..... : محل سکونت

در اینجا افعال ساده ای وجود دارند که شما باید آنها را خوانده و مطابق با نظر و احساس خود به آنها نمره قبولی بدهید (نه مطابق با قوانین دستور زبان استاندارد) نمره باید بین ۱ تا ۷ باشد

کاملاً موافقم (۷)

خیلی موافقم (۶)

موافقم (۵)

نظری ندارم (۴)

مخالقم (۳)

خیلی مخالفم (۲)

کاملاً مخالفم (۱)

- 1 - [fekar.2PL.SBJV-NEG] (شماها) خوب میشه اگه بهش تفکرین .../
- 2 - [harf.1SG.PRS-PROG] من دارم با ماماتم میخرفم .../
- 3 - [dars.3SG.PST] دیروز به خونه رفت و درسید .../
- 4 - [cat.3PL.PST-NEG] امروز خیلی نچتیدن چون اینترنت قطع بود .../
- 5 - [zang.2PL.PRS-PROG] (شماها) به کی دارین میزنکین؟ .../
- 6 - [gu.2PL.IMP] (شماها) باید به باباتون میگوشتیدین .../
- 7 - [zang.1PL.PST] دیروز به مامان زنگیدیم .../
- 8 - [harf.1SG.PST-NEG] امروز با دوستم نخرفیدم .../
- 9 - [bahs.3PL.PST] امروز بیرون رفتن و جلوی همه بحثیدن .../
- 10 - [fekar.1PL.PRS] بهش میفکریم و هماهنگ میکنیم، باشه؟ .../
- 11 - [harf.3PL.IMP-PROG] داشتن با برادرشون میخرفیدن .../
- 12 - [cat.2PL.IMP-NEG] !لطفا تا دیر وقت نچتن .../
- 13 - [dars.2PL.IMP-POS] !خونه برین و بدرسون .../
- 14 - [sohbat.3PL.PST] امروز بیرون رفتن ولی خیلی نصیحتیدن .../
- 15 - [fekar.1SG.IMP-PROG] داشتم به دوستم میفکریدم وقتی که زنگ زد .../
- 16 - [harf.1PL.SBJV-POS] بیا یکم بخرفیم .../
- 17 - [bavar.1SG.PRS] این که میگن رو نمیآورم .../
- 18 - [gu.3PL.SBJV-POS] باید به بابام بگوشتن و متوجه بشن .../
- 19 - [harf.2SG.IMP-NEG] !زاد نخرف لطفا .../
- 20 - [dars.3PL.IMP-PROG] داشتن میدرسیدن وقتی که مامانشون اومد .../
- 21 - [fekar.3PL.PST-NEG] امروز به حامد اصلاً تفکریدن .../
- 22 - [zang.2PL.IMP] (شماها) نباید بهم میزنکیدین امروز؟ .../
- 23 - [gu.2SG.IMP-POS] بیا به آهنگ جدید شاهین نجفی بگوشت .../
- 24 - [sohbat.2SG.IMP-PROG] با کی داشتی میصحبتیدی وقتی که نبودم .../
- 25 - [dars.1PL.PRS] بعداً خونه میزنیم و یکم میدرسیم .../

- 26 - [bahs.2SG.IMP-POS] !اگه مشکل داشتی برو باهاتش بحث .../
- 27 - [qhr.1SG.PRS] اگه بهم مسیج ندی میفهرم .../
- 28 - [zang.3SG.SBJV-NEG] اگه نزنکه خوشحال میشم .../
- 29 - [bahs.1PL.IMP-PROG] ما خونه بودیم و داشتیم میبحثیدیم .../
- 30 - [cat.3SG.IMP] خونه بود و داشت با دوستش میچتید .../
- 31 - [gu.1SG.PST] امروز به رادیو گوشیدم .../
- 32 - [zang.2SG.IMP-POS] لطفاً بهم به موقع بزنک .../
- 33 - [yad.1SG.PST] به لطفت خیلی چیزهای جدید یادیدم .../
- 34 - [sohbat.1SG.SBJV-POS] امروز باید باهات صحبتیم .../
- 35 - [bahs.3SG.SBJV-POS] نمیخواه باهات بحثه .../
- 36 - [fekar.2SG.IMP-POS] !لطفاً بهم یکم بفکر .../
- 37 - [bavar.1PL.PRS] حرفتو باوریدیم .../
- 38 - [cat.3PL.SBJV-NEG] بپز که نچتن چون دیر شده .../
- 39 - [gu.2PL.PRS-NEG] (شماها) چرا اصلاً به باباتون نمیگوشتین؟ .../
- 40 - [dars.3SG.SBJV-NEG] امروز ترجیح میدم ندرس .../
- 41 - [sohbat.1SG.PRS-PROG] من دارم با دوستم میصحبتیم .../
- 42 - [bahs.1SG.PRS-PROG] من دارم با دوستم میبحثم چون دیر اومد خونه .../
- 43 - [sohbat.2PL.IMP-NEG] !تو کتابخونه نصیحتین .../
- 44 - [cat.1PL.PRS-PROG] داریم با مامان میچتیم، میخواهی بهش سلام کنی؟ .../
- 45 - [yad.1SG.PRS] به لطفت خیلی چیزهای جدید مییادم .../

45 contextualized sentences, e.g.:

*emruz tarjih mi-d-am beh=eš **na-zang-am***
today preference IPFV-give.PRS-1SG to=PC3SG NEG-call.PRS-1SG
'I'd rather not call him today.'

harf=et=o **bāvar-id-im*
word=PC2SG=FOC believe-PST-1PL
*intended meaning: 'We believed what you said (lit. your word).'

- Verbs: all persons; negative/positive
- TAM forms: present, subjunctive, imperative, past, imperfect + progressive forms

Two questionnaires

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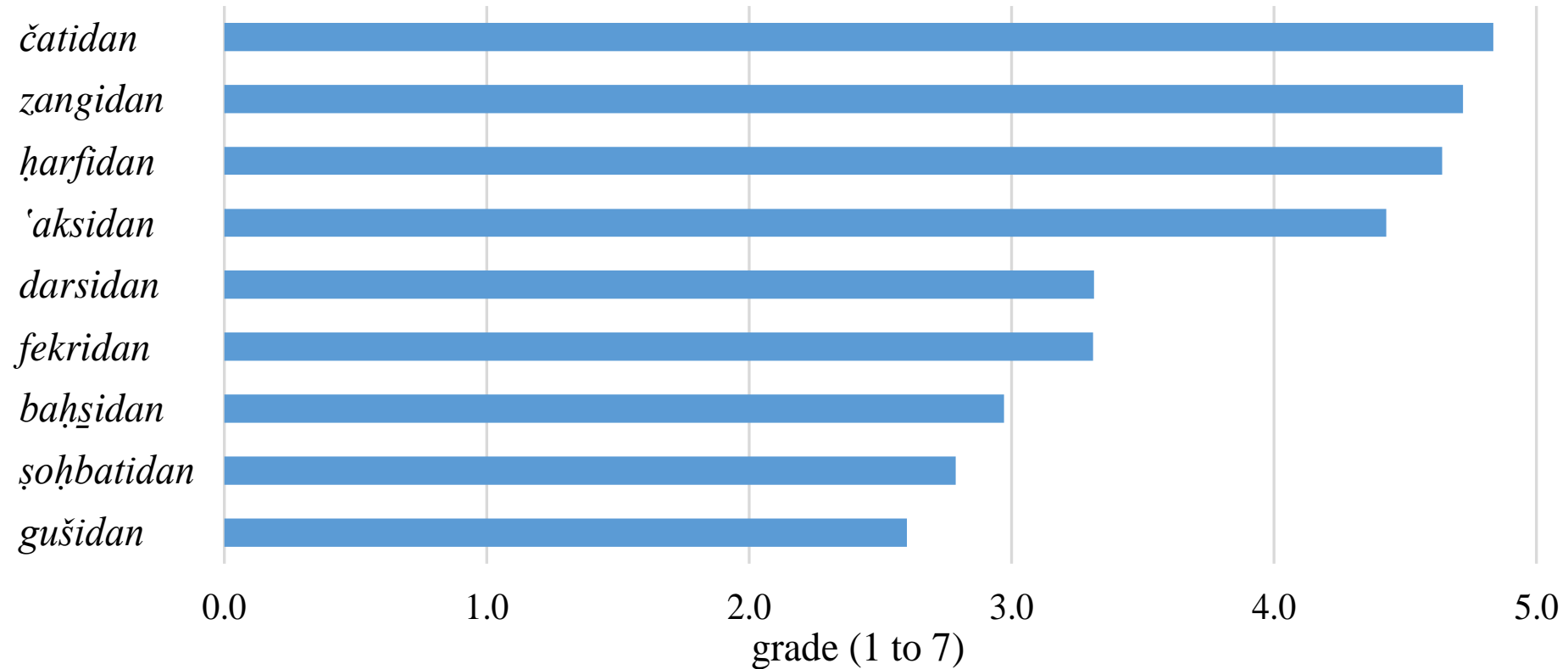
age:	18-24	25-30	31-35	total
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4. Results

- Total: more than 7000 observations
- statistically significant differences:
 - individual verbs,
 - age and gender of the speaker,
 - region,
 - TAM form

4.1. The individual verbs

Figure 9. Acceptance rate of the individual verbs

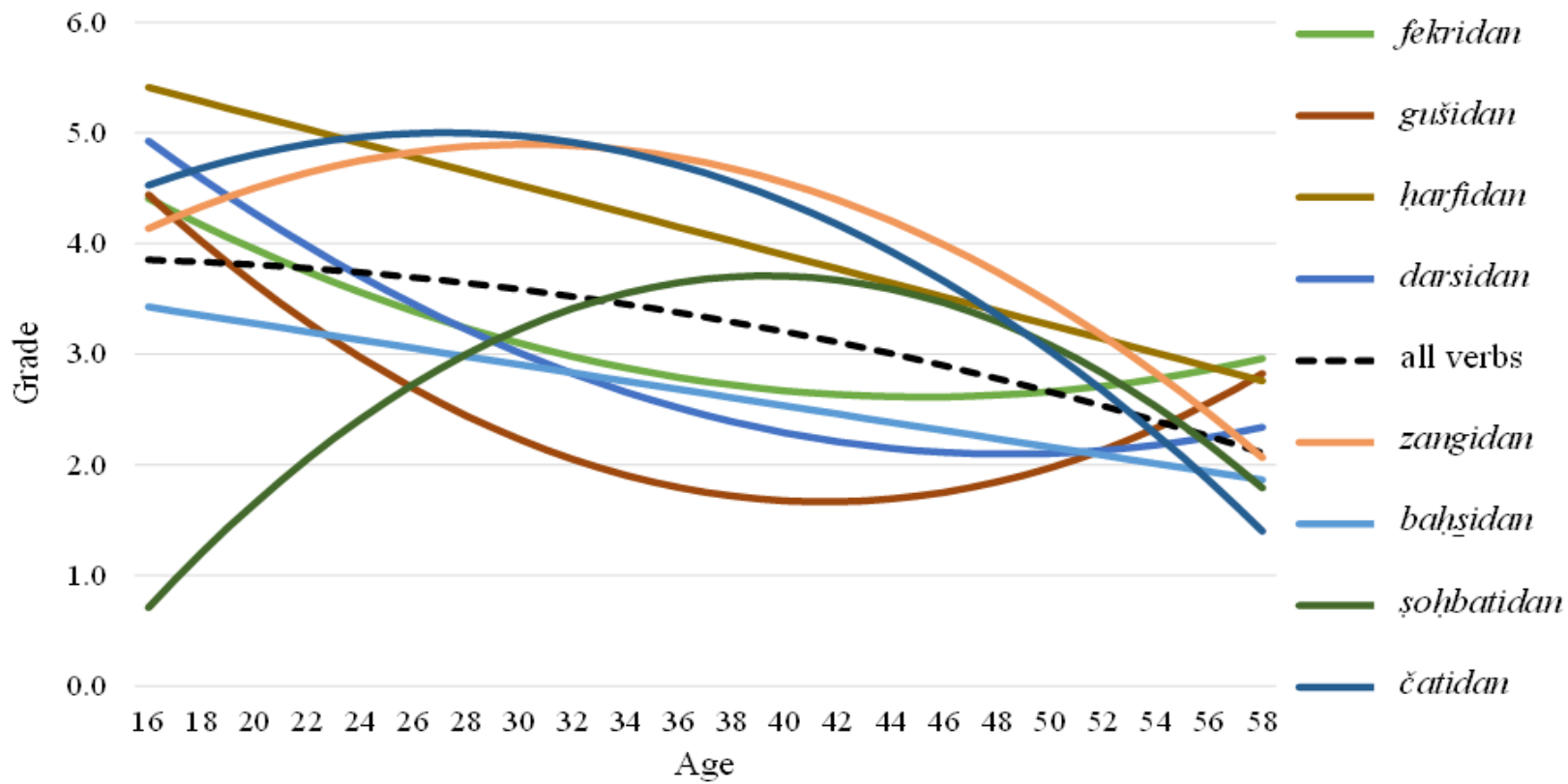


(Simple mean of the grades.

Regression analysis using gender, age, location and grammatical form as control variables yields almost same result.)

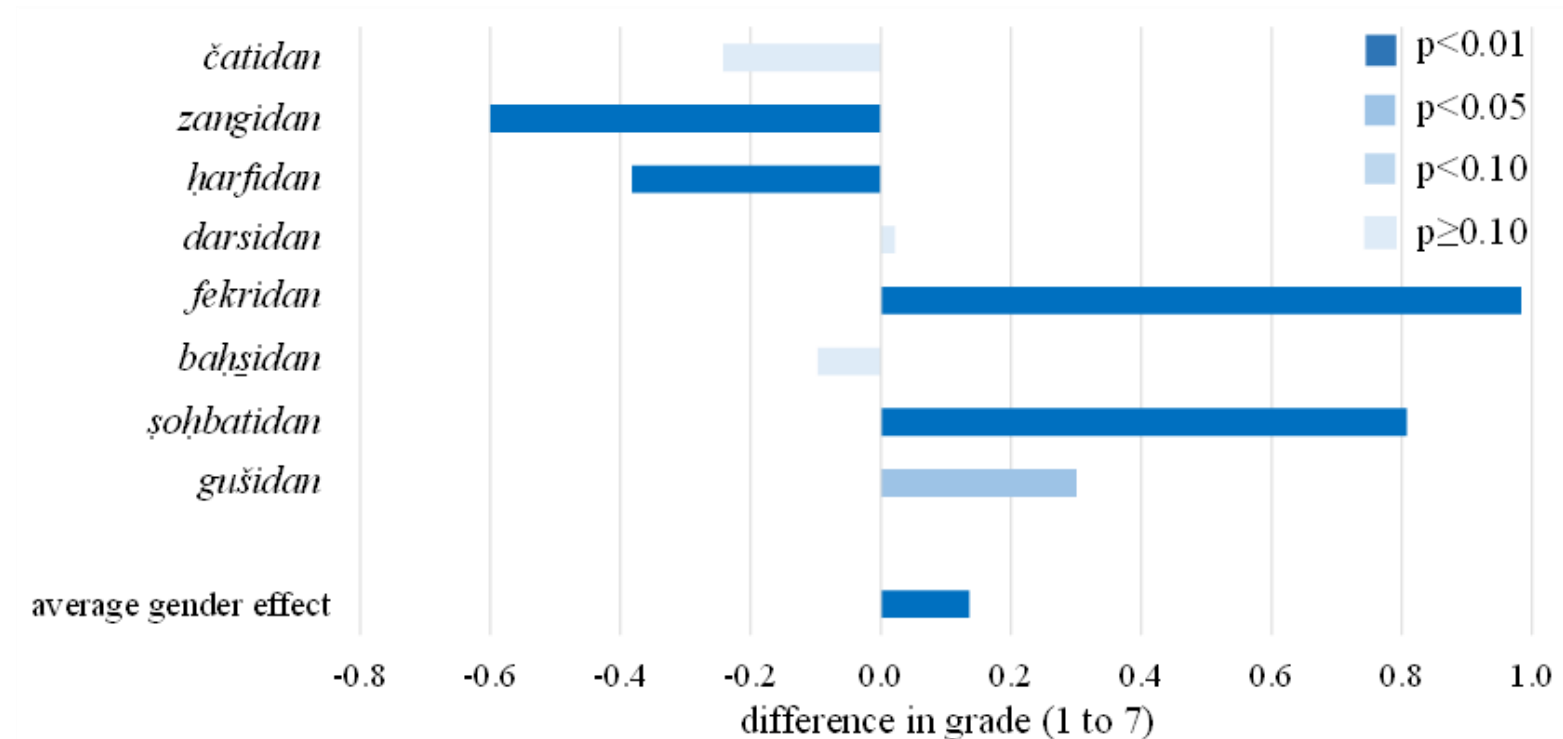
4.2. The age effect

Figure 10. Acceptance rate of the individual verbs depending on age



4.3. The gender difference

Figure 11. Acceptance rate of the individual verbs by gender

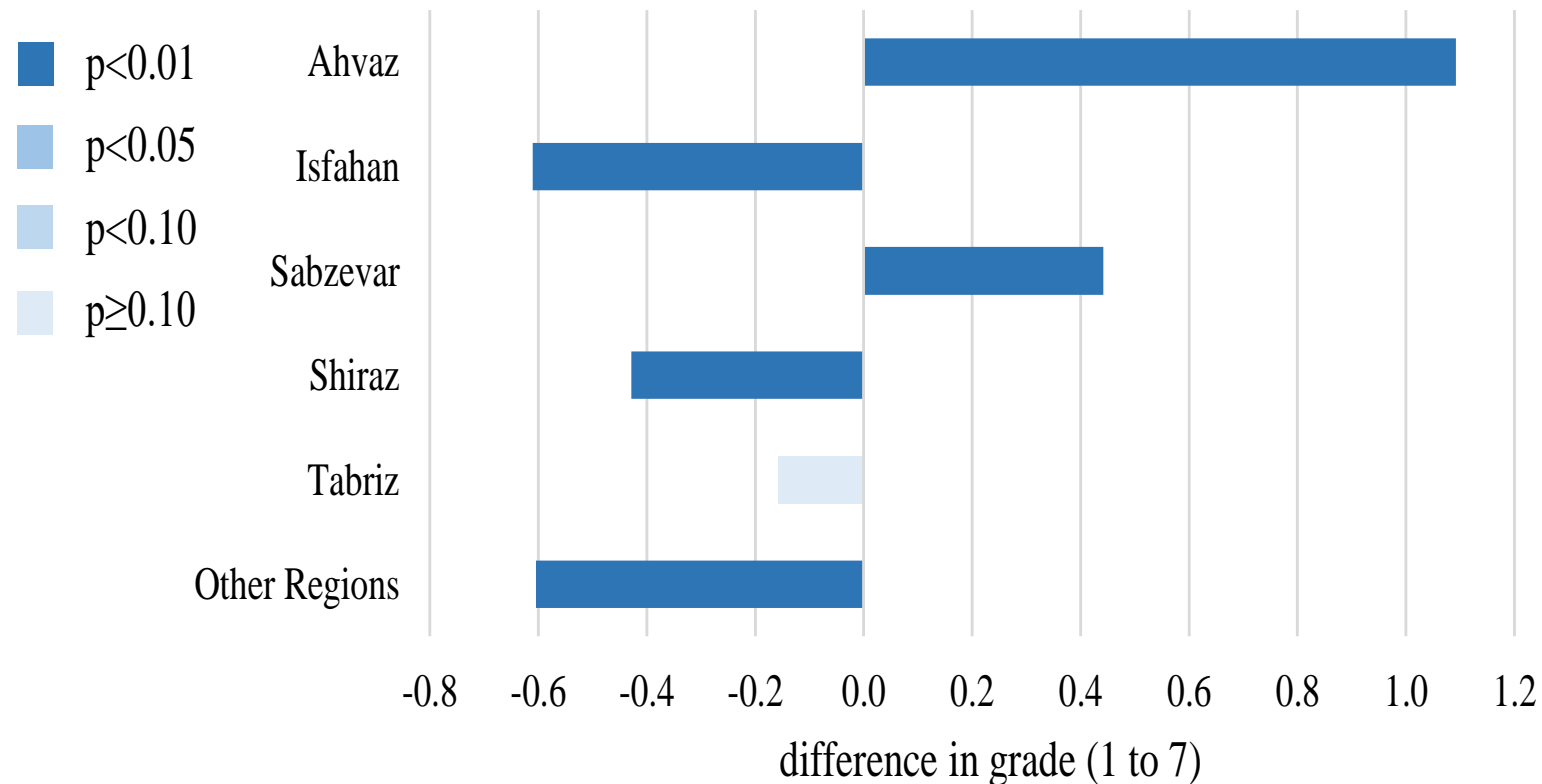


(differences in grades given by men compared to grades given by women, controlled for age.

The darker the blue, the higher the statistical significance (low value for p).)

4.4. The regional difference

Figure 12. Regional differences in acceptance rates: grades relative to Tehran



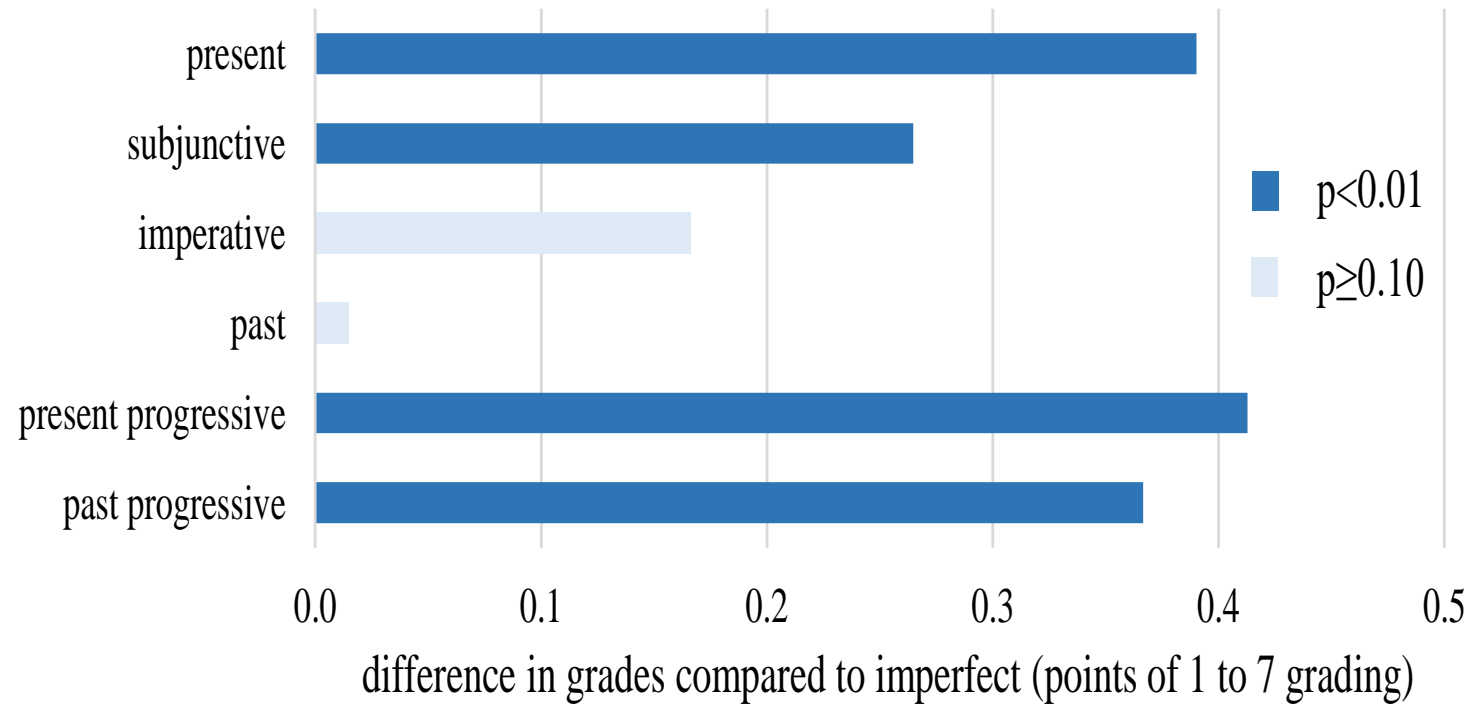
“Other regions”: Bandar Abbas, Bojnord, Gorgan, Kermanshah, North Khorasan, Lahijan, Lar, Lorestan and Zanjan.

(controlled for age and gender.

The darker the blue, the higher the statistical significance (low value for p).)

4.5. The TAM forms

Figure 14. Acceptance of simple verbs by tense and mood

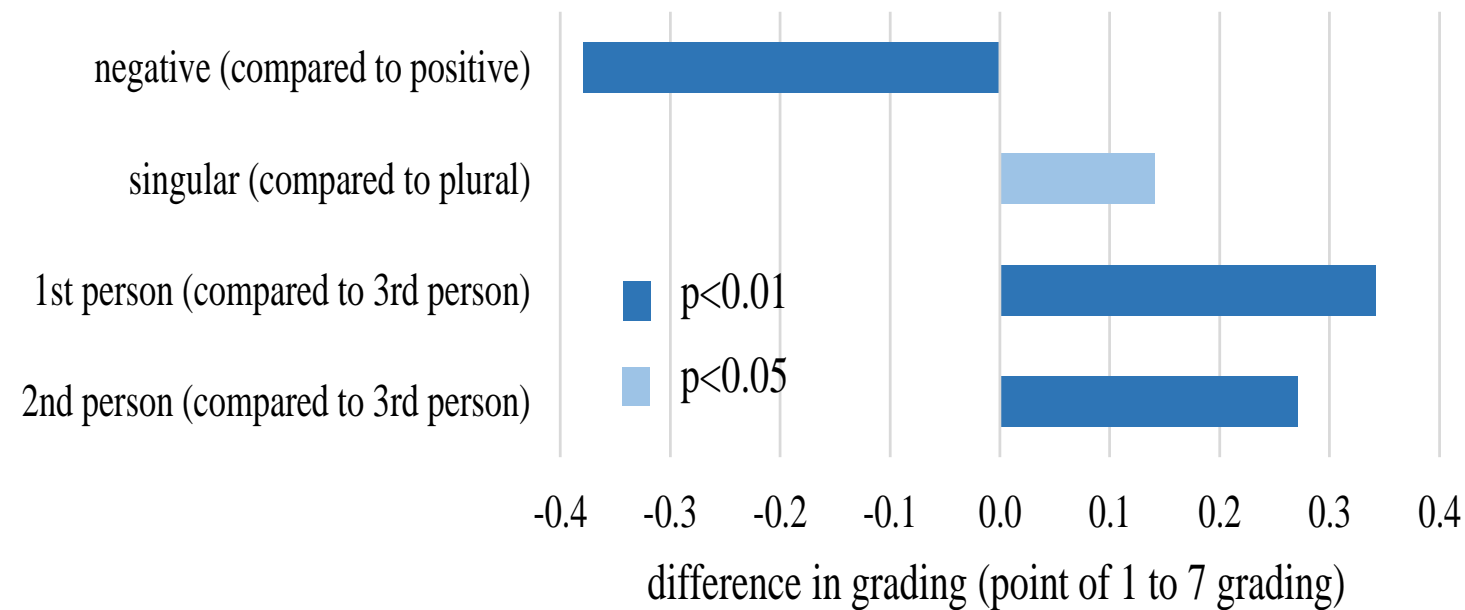


(controlled for age, gender and verb.)

The darker the blue, the higher the statistical significance (low value for p .)

4.5. The TAM forms

Figure 17. Acceptance of simple verbs by negative/positive, number and person



(controlled for age, gender and verb.

The darker the blue, the higher the statistical significance (low value for p).)

4.5. The TAM forms

Figure 18. Differences in acceptance rates of negative/positive, number and person

	<i>čatidan</i>	<i>zangidan</i>	<i>ḥarfidan</i>	<i>darsidan</i>	<i>fekridan</i>	<i>baḥṣidan</i>	<i>šoḥbatidan</i>	<i>gušidan</i>
negative (comp. to positive)	-0.05	0.16	-0.39	0.20	-0.11	0.28	0.35	0.13
singular (comp. to plural)	0.20	0.63	-0.02	-0.10	-0.05	-0.58	-0.14	-0.07
1st person (comp. to 3rd)	0.07	0.25	0.55	0.32	-0.38	-0.12	-0.34	-0.34
2nd person (comp. to 3rd)	0.10	0.17	0.63	0.12	0.02	-0.05	-0.06	-0.33

(controlled for age and gender.

Red indicates lower relative grades, blue higher relative grades.)

C. Summary and conclusion

Social factors:

- lower acceptability with higher **age**: YES.
But: only for all verbs together, not for all individual verbs.
NB: significantly lower acceptability for the pseudo-verbs
- **gender**: higher acceptability among men.
But: significant differences for the individual verbs.
- higher acceptability in **Tehran**: NO.
But: significant differences for the individual regions.

Verb forms:

- lower acceptability for **NEG** forms: YES.
- higher acceptability for **SG**: yes (not statistically significant)
higher acceptability for **3rd person**: NO.
- TAM forms:
high values: PRS (*mi-zangam*),
low values: IMPF (*mi-zang-id-am*),
also high values: PROG (*dār-am mi-zang-am* and *dāšt-am mi-zang-id-am*),
also low values: PST (*zang-id-am*),
SBJV (*be-zang-am*) rather good vs. IMP (*be-zang*) rather low

Grammaticalisation issues

- complex predicates are the productive way of forming new verbs
- but: simple verbs continue to be formed
- Korn 2013: parallelism of grammaticalisation of AUX and development of light verbs
- CPs part of general trend: synthetic → analytical structures
- thus: rise of CPs could be expected to be unidirectional,
- which it isn't.

“Le renouvellement incessant du vocabulaire tient à l'essence de la langue, à sa fonction de moyen de communication entre les membres de la société, ce qui la relie directement à toute activité de l'homme dans toutes les sphères de son travail” TELEDGI (1951:143).

Thank you for your attention



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Simple verbs in Persian historically:

- conversion of the noun: *nām* “name” → *nām-* name.PRS
- formation of the past stem: -id: *nām-id-* name-PST

- *fekridan* 'to think', *gušidan* 'to listen', and *darsidan* 'to study' = more likely to be used by teenagers; refer to typical situations they find themselves.
- the other verbs are not restricted to a particular age range.
- *gušidan* 'listen' = counterpart of *guš kardan* (ear + do), used with the focus marker =*rā*, not *guš dādan* (ear + give) used with the preposition *be*.

- Also tested: three pseudo-verbs

Table 5. Pseudo-verbs in Questionnaire A.

pseudo-verb	intended meaning	(real) complex predicate
<i>*bāvaridan</i>	‘to believe’	<i>bāvar kardan</i>
<i>*qahridan</i>	‘to sulk’	<i>qahr kardan</i>
<i>*yādidan</i>	‘to learn’	<i>yād gereftan</i>

ex.: **ḥarf=et=o* *bāvar-id-im*
word=PC2SG=FOC believe-PST-1PL

*intended meaning: ‘We believed what you said (lit. your word).’

- additional simple verb: `*aksidan* 'to take a photo'.
- 7 sentences submitted to 6 respondents
(all female, 21-33 years)
= 42 observations

- Highest acceptance = *čatidan*, average of nearly 5 (4.84) of 7 points
- Following = *zangidan* and *ḥarfidan*, then *`aksidan* (4.43 points)
- *darsidan* and *fekridan* = 3.31 points of 7
- *baḥṣidan* and *šoḥbatidan* = 2.79 points of 7
- Least acceptance = *gušidan*, average of only 2.60 of 7

- New simple verbs might be characteristic of the younger generations?
- General tendency :
 - Better the grade = young people
 - Declining grades = older people

- *bağışdan* and *harfiden* = acceptance declines continually with age.
- *şoğbatidan* = curve with a peak at 39 years, decreasing on both sides.
- *çatidan* and *zangidan* = very slight rise; decline after the peak (around 30 years).
- *fekridan*, *guşidan* and *darsidan* = inverted curve
 - start out with good acceptance
 - followed by a marked decline

4.3. The gender difference

- Less marked than expected
- No major gender differences for the various tense, mood and person forms
- Men = slightly higher marks than women (0.18 points)
- But, important variation for the individual verbs:
 - *zangidan* and *ḥarfidan* = men show a lower acceptance
 - *šoḥbatidan* and *fekridan* = substantially higher