Development of the progressive construction in Modern Persian

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Abstract

Since its first mention in 1888, the Modern Persian progressive construction with dāštan "to have" has received little attention as far as its tense domain and source are concerned. Based on an analysis of 143 cases of present and past progressive tenses collected from several literary works between 1907 and 2010, this paper presents an account of the development of this newly formed yet ever-increasingly used construction in Modern Persian. Applying Vendler's (1967) framework to classify the situations, this analysis shows that the Modern Persian progressive construction is used with achievement, accomplishment and activity situations, mostly denoting an imminent action in the case of achievements, and an ongoing action in the case of accomplishments and activities. Furthermore, in the light of the distinctive structure of this construction, which is identified as a Serial Verb Construction (SVC), the SVC with bar dāštan "to set off" is proposed as the source of the construction in question.

Keywords: modern Persian; progressive tenses; serial verb construction; periphrastic construction

1. Introduction[1]

This paper deals with a newly formed verbal construction in Modern Persian, which uses the auxiliary verb *dāštan* 'to have' together with the three imperfective forms of the main verb: present, past, and evidential. Both the auxiliary and the main verb appear as finite verbs, inflected for person and number, and taking the same mood. Examples (1)-(3) represent these three progressive constructions:

(1)
ādam-hā	dār-and	mi-āy-and
person-PL	have-3PL.IMPF.PRES.	come-3PL.IMPF.PRES

People are coming.

(2)
dāšt	mi-mord
have-3SG.IMPF.PT	die- 3SG.IMPF.PAST

He was dying.

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(3)

zāheran	dāšte	sabzi	mi-xaride
apparently	have-3SG.IMPF.EV.	vegetable	buy-3SG.IMPF.EV.

Apparently he was buying vegetables.

Perhaps due to the fact that the progressive construction "has not yet fully integrated into literary Persian" (Windfuhr 2009:461), this construction has received but little attention since its first mention in 1888. However, the scholars are called upon to do a thorough study of this construction in (Keshāvarz 1962) and (Dehghan 1972), and the topic has been considered as "an interesting case for diachronic and sociolinguistic research" in (Windfuhr 1979:102).

In this paper, first previous accounts of the Modern Persian progressive construction are reviewed. Then, the literary works that have been used in collecting data are introduced, and an analysis of the collected data is presented. The result of the analysis is then compared to the previous accounts, showing that none of the accounts could be considered as adequate. Finally, a possible origin for this construction is proposed, and the morphological and semantic development of the progressive construction from that origin is delineated.

2. A review of the previous literature on the Modern Persian progressive construction

Zhukovskij (1888) seems to have been the first who reports on the use of this construction in colloquial Persian. He mentions the progressive present and past tenses only, calling the former as *aoristus* and the latter as *praeteritum*. According to Zhukovskij, progressive present refers to an immediate future action, and can be compared with the French present of *aller* with an infinitive. Progressive past, on the other hand, has the meaning of a past which has just been completed, and is comparable to the French present of *venir de* with an infinitive.[2] Later on, Lorimer (1916:469-70) points to the use of the progressive tenses with the verb 'to have' in the Gabri dialect of Persian, the dialect then spoken by the Zoroastrians in Yazd and Kerman. He calls the construction as "a special idiom" which is used when "stress is laid on the actual course of the action". He also mentions that the same construction is common among the non-Zoroastrians of Kerman too.

Looking into the grammars of Persian, *Persian grammar* by Lambton, first printed in 1953, seems to be the first one which mentions this construction. Lambton (1963:160) points to the progressive present and past constructions, calling them continuous present and past, and translates them just as Lorimer. *Grammair du person contemporain* by Lazard, first printed in 1957, is the only grammar that in addition to the progressive present and past, lists the progressive evidential form too. Lazard (1992:160) calls the latter as the "completed past". Among the grammars of Persian in the Persian language, Vahidiyān (1963), Bassārī (1969) and Farshidvard (1969) are perhaps the first ones that mention this construction, for which different terms such as *malmus* 'realized', *modāvem* 'continuous' and *jāri* 'ongoing' are suggested (the last two by Yarshater(1970: 670 fn. 6)).

Keshāvarz (1962) and Dehghan (1972) have two scholarly articles dedicated to this construction. The former claims that there has been no record of this construction until a century ago, mentioning a couple of instances in classical and early modern Persian where other constructions, including imperfective present and past, were employed in the sense of progressive. He then examines the progressive construction in Tajik Persian as well as in some dialects of Iran including Gilaki and Talyshi, and finds out that none of them use the auxiliary verb 'to have'. One should note that they are also different from the Modern Persian progressive construction in that none of them have both the auxiliary and the main verb inflected. Rather, the participial or infinitive form of the main verb is used together with the inflected form of an auxiliary, which is 'to stand' in Tajiki and 'to

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[2] As regards the form, his reported form for the present progressive tense is the same as that shown in (1) above, but that of the past progressive is different from (2); according to him, both the verb *dāštan* and the main verb appear in perfective past. Given the fact that in *dāštan*, the forms of imperfective and perfective past are identical, there only seems to be an error in recording the main verb in perfective, rather than in imperfective past

be' in Gilaki and Talyshi.[3] Keshāvarz continues that the progressive construction with the verb 'to have' is not found in any of the foreign languages known to Iranians either, and thus, it could not have entered the language through borrowing.

Calling the progressive present, past and evidential forms as progressive present, past, and perfect respectively, Dehghan (1972) describes the first two as follows:

> "The progressive present denotes "(a) an action in the process of being completed at the time of speaking, although it may have begun in the past; (b) an action which will be going on in the future before some other action or state of being (rare) e.g. 'when you return, I will be (in the process of) writing'; (c) an action which will be completed right away, i.e. in the very near future (very rare) e.g. 'I am about to come; I come right away', and the progressive past "is used to express an action that had begun in the remoter past, was in the process of being performed at the time spoken of, and may either have ceased by the commencement of some other action or may have continued for some time afterward, e.g. 'when I came away he was [still] (in the process of) writing'(the action continued); 'I was writing [when] the light went off' (the action ceased)"[4]. (Dehghan 1972:199-200)

The further remarks made by Dehghan (1972: 200-1) are rearranged by Windfuhr (1979: 102-3) as follows:

1- In this construction, negation is blocked

2- The progressive construction is impossible with the stative verbs, such as "to have" and "to be";

3- With verbs of progress such as *mordan* 'to die' and compound verbs with *šodan* 'to become' the progressive construction takes the inchoative meaning 'to be about to'.

Windfuhr (2009:452) lists the following functions for imperfective tenses, i.e. imperfective present and past, in Modern Persian:

- Habitual-iterative and generic, 'they (always, generally) go, leave' in present, and 'they (always, generally) went, left' ˷ 'would go, leave' ˷ 'used to go, leave' in past;

- Progressive, 'they are/were going, leaving';

- Intentional, 'they are/were about to go, leave';

- Future ʿthey will go, leaveʾ in present, and ʿthey would go, leave (the next day, etc.)ʾ in past.

In his section on the extended verb system of Modern Standard Persian, then, Windfuhr (2009:461-2) points to the progressive, remarking that "functionally, it (=progressive) disambiguates the progressive and imminent-future functions of the imperfective, but has not yet emptied the latter of that function".

3. Description of data collection and the methodology used to analyze the data

Dehghan (1972:202) mentions that his examination of "a substantial amount of nineteenth century Persian writing", including the writings which seem to reflect the colloquial language of the time[5], does not show any progressive construction with *dāštan*. As mentioned above, the use of this construction in colloquial Persian

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[3] See Tajiki: xānd-e   istād-e ast   "He is reading"
                    read-PART   stand-3SG.RES/STAT.PRES
        Gilaki: sho-on   dar-am   "I am in the action of going = I am going"
                    go-INF   in -COP.1SG.PRES

[4] In favor of space, the Persian transcription of the examples, which seem to be made-up ones, is excluded from the quotation.

[5] He particularly mentions the Qarāchadāghi's translations into Persian of several plays by Akhundoff, and the Persian version of James Morier's *Hajji Baba of Isphahan* by Mirzā Habib of Esfahān.

was first briefly reported in the late 19th century by Zhukovskij, who in addition to two made-up examples of the progressive past and present, records a progressive present form in a satirical folk song popular around the same time. The earliest attestation of this construction in Persian writings seem to occur in *Čarand parand*, literally 'fiddle-faddle', the collection of satirical essays by Dehkhodā (1879-1956), which were published in the newspaper Sur-e Esrāfil in the years 1907-1908.

A brief description of the Persian literature in late 19th and early 20th centuries is in order. Soroudi (1993:214) mentions that the Persian prose was "ornate and abstruse" at the beginning of the 19th century, but gradually a tendency towards simpler styles was observed among many writers of the time. Different factors such as the introduction of printing in 1816-17, the appearance of the first newspaper in 1837, and extensive contacts with European countries should be held responsible in forming such a movement. Therefore, simple prose style and the use of everyday idioms and expressions, according to Soroudi, characterize the innovative literary works of late 19th century. After the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, this simplifying trend was developed further by writers, poets, and political activists, with ʿAli Akbar Dehkhodā being one of the most prominent ones. Dehkhodā's style in *Čarand parand* is described by Yusefi (1990:793) as embracing the modes of spoken language, using popular idioms, vocabulary, and manners of expression. This newly formed simple prose style, more closely related to the colloquial language, was to be followed by later writers, including Mohammad ʿAli Jamālzāde (1892-1997), who wrote the first Modern Persian short story, published in 1921.

The following books/short stories were examined in search for the progressive construction with *dāštan*: the Qarāchadāghi's translations into Persian of three plays by Akhndoff as appeared in (Rogers, 1890), *Čarand parand* by Dehkhodā, as published in (Dehkhodā, 1983); the total of 34 short stories and 2 excerpts of novels by Jamālzāde written in 1921-1974, consisting of the 6 short stories in *Yeki bud yeki nabud*, first published in 1921, as appeared in (Jamālzāde 1966), 9 short stories and 2 excerpts of novels, originally published in the period of 1942 to 1964, as appeared in (Jamālzāde 1999), the 7 short stories in *talx va širin* first published in 1955, as appeared in (Jamālzāde 1955), the 12 short stories in *qessehā-ye kutāh barā-ye baččehā-ye rišdār* first published in 1974, as appeared in (Jamālzāde 2001); two plays written by Yaʿqubi, *zemestān-e 66* and *neveštan dar tāriki*, performed respectively in 1998 and 2010, as appeared in (Yaʿqubi 1998) and (Yaʿqubi 2010).[6]

A common characteristic of the texts mentioned above and examined in this research is their close connection to the colloquial language of the time. Soroudi (1993:215) mentions that the plays of Akhundoff use "different levels of the spoken language in the original Turkish, a feature that was emulated in the Persian versions". She continues that Dehkhodā in his *Čarand parand* "adopted colloquial language and storytelling techniques" (Soroudi 1993:216), and thus laid the foundations of modern Persian prose literature. Jamālzāde, on the other hand, in the preface to his first book, *Yeki bud yeki nabud*, praises the European writers for their simple style which is closely related to the vernacular language of their people, and calls upon the Persian writers to denounce the ornate language of the elite and develop the same simple communicative prose style. As regards the most recent works mentioned above, both Yaʿqubi's plays, *zemestān-e 66* with its direct historical references to the Iraq-Iran war (1980-88), and *neveštan dar tāriki* referring to the 2009 Iran presidential election, are meant to depict the society of contemporary Iran. The main characters in both plays represent the youth of Iran today, and both plays were performed in Tehran in the recent years. Considering all these factors, one can make sure that the language of the plays should reflect the colloquial language of contemporary Iranian people, particularly that of the youth.

The data is described in the framework of Vendler's classification of situations, which distinguishes between "activities", "accomplishments", "achievements", and "states" (Vendler 1967: 97-121).

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[6] These works are henceforth abbreviated as TPP (*Three Persian plays*), CP (*Čarand parand*), YK (*yeki bud yeki nabud*), CJ (the collection of Jamālzāde's works appeared in (Jamālzāde 1999)), TSH (*talx va širin*), BR (*qessehā-ye kutāh barā-ye baččehā-ye rishdār*), Z66 (*zemestān-e 66*), NT (*neveštan dar tāriki*)

4. Results of data collection

Table 1 shows that whereas the progressive forms do not appear at all in the translations of the *three Persian plays* of Akhundoff, which arguably (see above) reflect the Persian language of the late 19th century, the two plays of Yaʿqubi, having approximately the same number of words as that of the *three Persian plays* and belonging to the same genre, are filled with these forms, containing 66 cases of progressive present and 13 of progressive past. Although *Čarand parand* and the short stories of Jamālzāde do not belong to the same genre, Dehkhodā, as mentioned above, adopts storytelling techniques in his *Čarand parand*, which would justify a comparison between this work and Jamālzāde's collection of short stories. As the table shows, progressive forms appear in the short stories of Jamālzāde five times more frequently than in *Čarand parand*.

No instance of progressive evidential tense was found in the examined data, and while it is noteworthy that in *Čarand parand*, which has apparently the earliest attestations of the progressive construction in Persian literature, both progressive present and past are attested, in other works, progressive present clearly outnumber the progressive past.

	Year of publication	Genre	Total number of words (approximately)	Total number of PROG. forms	Frequency of PROG forms[7]
The three Persian Plays	1890	Play	23500	0	0
Čarand parand	1907-1908	Satirical essays	25500	2 1 PRES 1 PT 0 EV	0.008
The collection of Jamālzāde's works	1921-1974	Short story	169000	62 41 PRES 21 PT 0 EV	0.037
Two plays by Yaʿqubi	1998, 2010	Play	21000	79 66 PRES 13 PT 0 EV	0.376

Table 1

5. Discussion of the results

The following observations can be made regarding the 35 instances of progressive past found in the examined works:

- All of them are in the indicative mood.

- None of them is negative.

- The distribution of the cases among the four kinds of situations is as follows: 13 cases of accomplishments, 12 cases of achievements, and 10 cases of activities.

- **List of accomplishment situations (13 cases)[8]: (1)** *be šahr āvardan* 'to bring to the city'; **(2)** *man rā divāne kardan* (2 times) 'to make me mad'; *šekam rā pāre kardan* 'to rip the belly apart'; *yād dādan ke*

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[7] This is calculated as (total number of PROG forms/total number of words)*100.

[8] In the lists that follow, situations are categorized chronologically into three groups; (1), (2) and (3) indicate that the situations appear in Dehkhodā, Jamālzāde and Yaʿqubi's works respectively.

čegune bāyad... 'to teach how one should...'; *xod rā halāk kardan* 'to kill oneself'; *ānjām yāftan* 'to be accomplished'; *(asbāb-e kār) mohayyā šodan* 'to get ready (for something)'; *ādat kardan be...* 'to get used to...'; *bargaštan be manzel* 'to return home'; **(3)** *āmadan be xāne* 'to come home'; *raftan be xāne* 'to go home'; *az Āzādi tā punak pāy-e piyāde raftan* 'to walk from Azadi (square) to Punak (street)'

- **List of achievement situations are (12 cases)**: **(2)** *xaffe šodan* 'to choke (intr.)'; *mordan* (2 times) 'to die'; *be ārezu-ye xod rasidan* 'to reach one's goal'; *divāne šodan* 'to become mad'; *tarakidan* (2 times) 'to burst out (intr.)'; *šāx dar āvardan* 'to (start) growing horn (out of astonishment)'; *kās šodan* 'to lose one's patience'; *az nafas oftādan* 'to run out of breath'; **(3)** *xāb-am bordan* 'to get asleep'; *divāne šodan* 'to become mad'.

- **List of activity situations are (10)**: **(2)** *ālbālu gilās čidan* '(literally) to pick sour cherry (and) cherry'; *nazdik šodan* 'to approach'; **(3)** *raftan* 'to go'; *hammām kardan* 'to bathe'; *raqsidan* 'to dance'; *gerye kardan* 'to cry'; *aks gereftan* (2 times) 'to take pictures'; *tarrāhi kardan* 'to draw/design'; *bāzi kardan* 'to play'.

- When used with activities and accomplishments, the progressive past denotes a continuing action in the past. It can be used either absolutely (16 cases) (as in 4), or with a reference to a perfective past action coinciding (6 cases) or interrupting (1 case) the continuing action in question (as in 5).

(4)

nowruz	*dāšt*	*nazdik*	*mi-šod*
Nowruz	have-3SG.IMPF.PT	close	become-3SG.IMPF.PT

Nowruz (=the beginning of the Persian new year) was approaching. (BR: 84)

(5)

dāšt-am	*hammām*	*mi-kard-am*	*sedā-ye*	*enfejāri*	*šanid-am*
have-1SG.IMPF.PT	bath	do-1SG.IMPF.PT	sound-of	explosion	hear-1SG.IMPF.PT

When I was bathing, I heard the sound of an explosion (Z66:30)

- When used with achievements, the past progressive denotes a situation that was about to be realized in the near future (as in 6).

(6)

dāšt-am	*dorost o hesābi*	*divāne*	*mi-šod-am*
have-1SG.IMPF.PT	completely	mad	become-1SG.IMPF.PT

I was about to become completely mad (BR:149)

The following observation can be made regarding the 108 instances of the progressive present found in the examined works:

- All of them are in the indicative mood.

- None of them is negative.

- The distribution of situations is as follows: 64 cases of activities, 21 cases of accomplishments, and 23 cases of achievements.

- **List of activity situations (64 cases)**: **(2)** *āvardan be taraf-e mahbas* 'to bring towards the prison'; *raftan be taraf-e behešt* 'to go towards the heaven'; *(howz) āb-ash rā bardāshtan* 'to take out its water' (used for a pool); *harf zadan* (2 times) 'to speak'; *javidan* 'to chew'; *makidan* 'to suck'; *bordan be jā-hā-yi ke...* 'to take to places where... '; *nazdik šodan be pāyetaxt* 'to approach the capital'; *xāb didan* 'to see a dream'; *kāstan* (2 times) (intr.) 'to decrease'; *pāyin va bāla raftan* 'to go up and down'; *suxtan* 'to burn'; *qesse goftan* 'to tell stories'; *seyr kardan* 'to wander'; **(3)** *neveštan* (2 times) 'to write'; *raftan* (3 times) 'to go'; *kardan* 'to do'; *xāb didan* 'to see a dream'; *goftan* (3 times) 'to say'; *gerye kardan* (2 times) 'to cry'; *gir dādan* 'to insist annoyingly'; *harf zadan* (4 times) 'to speak'; *negāh kardan* 'to look'; *masxare kardan* 'to mock'; *zang zadan* 'to ring'; *in kār-hā ra kardan* 'to do these things'; *gedāyi kardan* 'to beg'; *bāzjuyi kardan* 'to investigate'; *be kasi fekr kardan* 'to think about someone'; *nax-e dandān kardan* 'to floss'; *bahs kardan* 'to discuss'; *xāndan* 'to read'; *čune zadan* 'to bargain'; *kam va kam-tar šodan* 'to become less and less'; *nazariyye pardāzi kardan* 'to give theories'; *defāʿ kardan* 'to defend'; *xordan* (2 times) 'to eat'; *goft*

o gu kardan 'to have a conversation'; *zendegi kardan* (3 times) 'to live'; *ziyāde ravi kardan* 'to exceed one's limits'; *qadam zadan* (2 times) 'to stroll'; *towhin kardan* 'to insult'; *be...saxt gereftan* 'to treat... severely'; *mahrum kardan* 'to deprive; (in the context in question) to misbehave'; *jafā kardan* (2 times) 'to misbehave'; *zabt kardan* 'to record'; *kār kardan* 'to work'; *zadan* 'to beat'; *eʿterāf kardan* 'to confess'.

- T**he list of achievement situations (23 cases)**: **(2)** *aql az sar-am paridan* 'to lose one's mind'; *(howsele) sar raftan* 'to run out of patience'; *koštan* '(in the context in question) to kill by shooting'; *xaffe šodan* (2 times) 'to choke (intrs.)'; *falaj šodan* 'to become mutilated'; *(dokān) dar o taxte šodan* (2 times) 'to go bankrupt' (used for a business); *mordan* (1 times) 'to die'; *az hāl raftan* 'to faint'; *oftādan* (2 times) 'to fall'; *mahkum kardan* 'to find guilty'; *residan* 'to arrive'; *az miyān raftan* 'to become extinguished'; *bačče šodan* 'to become a child'; **(3)** *mordan* (2 times) 'to die'; *didan* (2 times) '(in the context in question) to come to realize'; *qushi rā gozāštan* 'to hang out the phone'; *(SMS) ferestādan* 'to send (used for a text)'; *šart-bandi kardan* 'to bet';

- **List of accomplishment situations are (21 cases)**: **(1)** *āmadan* 'to come'; **(2)** *be qabrestān bordan* 'to take to the cemetery'; *bordan* (2 times) 'to take (someone/something away)'; *māsidan* 'to accomplish'; *pāšne-ye sabr va howsele-ye man rā az jā kandan* 'to make me lose my patience'; *mesl-e barf āb šodan* 'to become melted like snow'; *xarāb kardan* (2 times) 'to destroy'; *(dandān) dar-āmadan* '(teeth) to come out'; *(āftāb) qorub kardan* '(sun) to set'; *deqkosh kardan* 'to kill someone by making them so sad'; *kār-e xod rā kardan* 'to accomplish one's job'; **(3)** *telefon rā vasl kardan* 'to plug in the phone'; *yād-am āmadan* 'to come to my mind'; *enteqām gereftan* 'to take revenge'; *āmadan* 'to come'; *šamʿ rā xāmuš kardan* 'to blow out candles'; *qāneʿ kardan* 'to persuade'; *tahmil kardan* 'to impose one's opinion'; *jā oftādan* 'to settle down'.

- In most cases (60 cases of activities, and 20 cases of accomplishments), the progressive present used with activities and accomplishments describe an ongoing action (as in 7).

(7)

did-im ...	*javāni*	*rā ....*	*dār-and*	*mi-āvar-and*	*be taraf-e*	*mahbas*
see-1PL.PERF.PT	young	DIR.OB.MK	have-	bring-3PL.IMPF.PRES	toward 3PL.IMPF.PRES	prison

We saw that they are bringing a young man to the prison (YK:40).

- As regards the 4 remaining cases of activities and 1 case of accomplishment, which all occur in the most recent works, i.e. the Yaʿqubi's plays, 2 cases denote a habitual action, (8) and (9), 1 case denotes a near future action (10), 1 case expresses a historic (progressive) present (11), and 1 case denotes an iterative action (12).

(8)

sāl-hā-st	*ke*	*in tu*	*dār-am*	*kār mi-kon-am*
year-PL.MK-COP.3SG.PRES	that	inside	have-1SG.IMPF.PRES	work-1SG.IMPF.PRES

It is years that I have been working inside (here). (NT:62)

(9)

bišter-e	*vaqt-hā*	*ke*	*man*	*dār-am*	*harf mi-zan-am,*
most –of	time-PL.Mk	when	I	have-1SG.IMPF.PRES	talk-1SG.IMPF.PRES

to	*aslant*	*havās-et*	*be*	*man*	*nist.*
you	at all	attention-your	to	me	COP.3SG.PRES.NEG.

Most of the times, when I am talking, you don't pay attention at all. (Z66:42)

(10)

beh-eš	*goft-am*	*mā*	*dār-im*	*mi-ri-m*	*holand*
to-him	say -1SG.PERF.PT	we	have-1PL.IMPF.PRES	go-1PL.IMPF.PRES	the Netherlands

I told him we are about to go to the Netherlands. (NT:35)

(11)

vaqti	*čini-hā*	*dār-an*	*tabbati-hā*	*rā...*	*mi-zan-an,*
When	Chinese	have-3PL.IMPF.PRES	Tibetan-PL.MK	DIR.OB.Mk	beat-3PL.IMPF.PRES

Yeho	*ye*	*Budāyi*	*xodesh*	*rā*	*mi-suzun-e*
suddenly	one	Buddhist	himself	DIR.OB.MK	burn-3SG.IMPF.PRES

When Chinese are beating Tibetans..., suddenly a Buddhist man burns himself. (NT: 60)

(12)

Nāhid	*dār-ad*	*šamʿ-hā*	*rā*	*yeki yeki*	*xāmuš*	*mi-kon-ad*
Nahid	have-3SG.IMPF.PRES	candle-PL.MK	DIR.OB.MK	one one	still	kardan-3SG.IMPF.PRES

Nahid is blowing out the candles one by one (Z66:14)

- In most cases (20 cases out of 23), the progressive present used with achievements refers to an action in the near future (as in 13).

(13)

did	*howsele-ye*	*man*	*dār-ad*	*be koli*	*sar mi-rav-ad*
see-3SG.PERF.PT	patience-of	my	have-3SG.IMPF.PRES	totally	run out-3SG.IMPF.PRES

He saw that my patience is running out (YK:59)

- In the remaining 3 cases of achievements, in 2 cases, the use of the adverbs *rafte rafte* "gradually" (BR:33), and *ruz be ruz* "day by day" (BR:229), together with the progressive present gives the sense of an ongoing action to the achievement situations in question, and in 1 case, the adverb *tekke tekke* "part by part" (TSH:180) gives the sentence an iterative interpretation.

To sum up, the progressive past and present in the data are mainly used to refer to i) an ongoing action, ii) an imminent action. Few cases of the present progressive exhibit three further functions, i.e. habitual, iterative, and historic present. Table 2 shows the distribution of the cases based on their functions.

	ongoing	imminent	habitual	iterative	historic present
Progressive Past (35 cases)	23	12	0	0	0
Progressive Present (108 cases)	82	21	2	2	1

Table 2

Based on Table 2, we could now evaluate Dehghan and Windfuhr's description of the progressive tenses mentioned above. Dehghan's account fails to include the imminent function of the progressive past, which constitute one third of the cases in our data, and both his examples, exhibiting the ongoing function of the progressive past, have a reference to a perfective past action, whereas in our data, two third of the cases use the progressive past absolutely. As regards his description of the present progressive, function (a) corresponds to ongoing function of the progressive present, function (b) is non-attested in our data, and function (c), which is described as "very rare", corresponds to the imminent function of the progressive present, which constitutes %20 of the cases. Our results are in more accord with Windfuhr's description, where the progressive tenses are said to "disambiguates the progressive and imminent-future functions of the imperfective"(Windfuhr 2009:462). In this description, however, it is not clear what is exactly meant by "imminent-future function of the imperfective", since in his section on the imperfective past and present, Windfuhr lists four functions, none of them named explicitly as imminent-future.

Establishing the functions of the progressive tenses exhibited by our data, it is now possible to look into the earliest works, especially the *Three Persian Plays*, where there is no instance of such construction, in order to find out what parallel constructions represent ongoing and imminent actions there. It is observed that in most cases imperfective tenses, past and present, are used, as in (14) and (15), while in two cases, (16) and (17), perfective present[9] and past are employed.

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[9] Windfuhr (1979:90) recognizes this form, i.e. inflected form of *xāh* "to want" followed by the apocopated infinitive of the main verb, as one of the two forms of the perfective present. In his later book, i.e. (Windfuhr 2009), however, he does not mention this form.

(14)
Aruj	*jelo*	*be-rav-im*	*be-bin-im*	*ki-st*	*mi-āy-ad*
Aruj	forward	go-1PL.SUBJ	see-1PL.SUBJ	who-COP.3SG	come-3SG.IMPF.PRES

Aruj, let's go forward, see who is coming. (TPP:93)

(15)
bābā-t	*pošt-e*	*xāne*	*bā*	*čupān-ān*	*harf mi-zad*
father-your	back-of	house	with	shepherd-PL.MK	speak-3SG.IMPF.PT

Your father was speaking with the shepherds at the back of the house (PTT:134)

(16)
bar xiz	*az*	*injā*	*bo-ro*	*Divān beygi*	*injā*	*xāhad āmad...*
stand up-2SG.IMPV	from	here	go-2SG.IMPV	Divān Beygi	here	come-3SG.PERF.PRES

(*Tārrudi*   *pā mi-šav-ad*   *mi-rav-ad.*   Dar   in   hāl   *Divān beygi mi-ras-ad)*
 Tārrudi   stand up-3SG.IMPF.PRES   go-3SG.IMPF.PRES   in   this   moment   divān Beygi   arrive-3SG.IMPF.PRES

Stand up, go out of here! Divān Beigi is coming here. (Tārrudi stands up, goes. In this moment, Divān Beygi arrives) (TPP:104)

(17)
be	*dād-am*	*be-ras-id*	*ke*	*xaffe*	*šod-am*
to	cry-my	come-2PL.IMPV	that	choked	become-1SG.PERF.PT

Come to my help since I am becoming choked.

6. The origin of the progressive construction in Modern Persian

So far the attempts to establish the origin of the newly formed progressive construction in Modern Persian have been focused on the use of the verb 'to have' in this construction (Keshāvarz 1962, Dehghan 1972, Vafaeian 2012). Not finding similar progressive constructions with the verb 'to have' in any of the Old and Middle Iranian languages, different dialects spoken in Iran, and foreign languages known to Iranians such as English, French, Russian and German, therefore, the attempts have not been successful in proposing a possible source for this construction. It seems, however, that the more distinctive feature of this construction, other than the choice of the auxiliary verb, is the fact that both the auxiliary and the main verb appear as finite verbs, i.e. both of them are inflected for person and number. This feature distinguishes the progressive construction from other periphrastic verbal constructions of Modern Persian, such as the resultative-stative tenses and the perfective present tense[10], where only the auxiliary verb gets inflected, and the main verb appears in the form of a participle or apocopated infinitive, as in (18) and (19).

(18)
xaride	*-am*
buy-PART	COP.1SG

I have bought

(19)
xāh-am	*xarid*
want-1SG.PRES.	buy-APOCOPATED INF.

I will buy.

Furthermore, it is observed that in the progressive construction, both auxiliary and the main verb take the same mood, which distinguishes this construction from "modal constructions and subordinate clauses implying potential actions and states" (Windfuhr 2009:457), where the second verb always appears in the subjunctive mood, as in (20).

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[10] See footnote 9.

(20)
mi-xāst-am   xāne   be-rav-am
want-1SG.IMPF.PT   house   go-1SG.SUBJ
I wanted to go home (literally: that I go home) (taken from Windfuhr 2009:457)

On the other hand, many instances of similar construction as the progressive one, i.e. clauses which apparently contain two finite verbs sharing the same tense and mood inflection, as in (21)-(24)[11], are found in the examined works.

(21)
gozāšt-i   dar raft-i   be   hend
leave-2SG.PERF.PT   escape-2SG.PERF.PT   to   India
You left, escaped to India

(22)
mi-rav-i   doxtar...   rā...   nāxoš   mi-kon-i
go-2SG.IMPF.PRES   daughter   DIR.OB.MK   sick   make-2SG.IMPF.PRES
You go, make the girl sick (YK:105)

(23)
to   bāyad   be-šin-i   še ʿr   tarjome kon-i
you   should   sit-2SG.SUBJ   poem(s)   translate-2SG.SUBJ
You should sit, translate poems (NT:49)

(24)
biy-āy-id   be-r-im   tu-ye   ye   panāhgah
come-2PL.SUBJ   go-2PL.SUBJ   inside-of   one   shelter
Let us come, go inside of a shelter (Z66:23)

In the absence of a better term to call these constructions, they are henceforth called Serial Verb Constructions (SVC)[12]. Given the fact that the progressive construction with the verb 'to have' can be basically considered as a SVC, one might suggest that the grammaticalization of a SVC, whose first verb is formally related to *dāštan*, could be held responsible for the rise of such construction in Modern Persian. In view of this suggestion, I found 7 instances of a SVC with *bar dāštan*[13] as the first verb in the collected data, 1 case in the Three Persian Plays and 6 cases in Čarand parand, 3 of which are shown in (25)-(27). Dehkhodā (1958:858) lists different meanings for this verb, among which ʿazm-e rahil kardan 'to set off (intr.)'[14], which has been attested as early as in the 10th century, seems to work more appropriately in the case of our examples.

(25)
bar dār-im   be-rav-im   sar-e   morāfeʿe
set off-1PL.SUBJ   go-1PL.SUBJ   head-of   trial
Let us set off, go to the trial (TPP:41)

(26)
be   farangi-hā   na-guy-id   ke   bar dār-and...   be-nevis-and...
to   foreigner-PL MK   tell-2PL.IMPV.NEG that   set off-3PL.SUBJ   write-3PL.SUBJ
Don't tell (this) to the foreigners or they (will) set off, write that ….(CP:183)

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[11] In order to make the case clearer, these examples are translated literally.

[12] Sebba (1987:1) states that the authors usually apply Serial Verb Construction "fairly indiscriminately to constructions in which there is a sequence of the form V NP V NP or V NP V, where V is not obviously an infinitive", a condition which is fulfilled in the case of our examples.

[13] *Bar* 'up' is considered by Windfuhr (2009:448) as one of the three most frequently occurring preverbs in Persian.
[14] In this sense, *bar dāštan* is perhaps the shorter form of *rǎh bar dāštan* '(literally) to take the way', also listed in (Dehkhodā 1958:159, 227), which has just the same meaning as 'to set off'.

(27)

in	*bud*	*ke*	*ān-hā ...*	*bar dāšt-and*	*telegrāf kard-and...*
this	be-3SG.PERF.PT	that	he-PL.MK	set off-3PL.PERF.PT	telegraph-3PL.PERF.PT

Thus, they set off, telegraphed (that) …. (CP:168).

From the semantic point of view, the progressive constructions with *dāštan* are related to the SVCs with *bar dāštan* in that both can have a reference to an imminent action. As Table (2) shows, the imminent function of the progressive forms account for one fifth of the cases, and it is noteworthy to mention that in the earliest works, i.e. in Čarand parand and the collection of Jamālzāde's works, more than one third of the cases (22 out of 64) express an imminent action. In this regard, one is also reminded of the first account of the progressive construction, given by Zhukovskij, where denoting an immediate future action is mentioned as the only meaning of the present progressive tense.

7. Conclusion

Assuming the grammaticalization of SVCs with *bar dāštan* as responsible for the formation of the progressive construction in Modern Persian, the morphological and semantical development of the construction can be described as follows: as the SVCs in question undergo grammaticalization, the verb *bar dāštan* gets shorter by losing the preverb bar, and changes into *dāštan*. In the domain of semantic, the original meaning of the SVCs, i.e. denoting an imminent action, is preserved in the emerging progressive constructions, which gradually take on some other functions, more importantly denoting an ongoing action, too.

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