

Areal typological study on the progressive in northern Iran

The study deals with the progressive in the varieties spoken along the Caspian Sea starting in the province of Mazandaran in northern Iran and moving up towards south-eastern Azerbaijan, focusing primarily on the Iranian varieties Mazandarani, Gilaki, Tati and Taleshi. The data has mainly been collected through grammatical descriptions, in a couple of cases informants have also been consulted. Due to various detailed descriptions of the tense and aspect pattern in the area, 50 neighboring villages and cities are included in the study. It will be shown that when it comes to the progressive, detailed data on geographically close varieties is highly fruitful since varieties that are described as the same (language or dialect) may have completely or slightly different progressive constructions. Some data on non-Iranian varieties, such as Turkic varieties, Neo-Aramaic and Nakh-Daghestanian varieties, and their progressive and/or present tense patterns will also be presented for comparison since it may well be that the origin of the progressive patterns under discussion is non-Iranian.

In the area mainly two patterns are used for the marking of the progressive function, what will be referred to as the DAR gram family and the KAR gram family. The definition of *gram* and *gram family* is adopted from Dahl & Bybee (1989:52) and Dahl (2000:7–8). It is then assumed that all the constructional patterns presented as DAR constructions are either inherited or borrowed from one another. The same is assumed for all the constructional patterns presented as KAR patterns. However, this assumption is not based on diachronic data, which is sparse or nonexistent, but is hypothesized due to structural and phonological similarities as well as geographic closeness. In examples 1 and 2, present and past tenses of DAR and KAR constructions are given for Babolsari and Rashti respectively.

1. Babolsari, Mazandarani (Stilo to appear 2012 mg)¹

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|----|--------------|---------------|----|-------------------|---------------|
| a) | <i>dar-ε</i> | <i>šúmme.</i> | b) | <i>dayy-ε</i> | <i>ší(i).</i> |
| | DAR.PRS-3SG | go.PRS.1SG | | DAR.PST-3SG | go.PST.2SG |
| | 'I am going' | | | 'You were going.' | |

2. Rashti, Gilaki (Stilo 2001:665 mg)

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|----|----------------|----------------|----|-----------------|-------------------|
| a) | <i>kára</i> | <i>gir-ám.</i> | b) | <i>kára</i> | <i>gift-i-m.</i> |
| | KAR | take.PRS-1SG | | KAR | take.PST-IPFV-1SG |
| | 'I am taking.' | | | 'I was taking.' | |

The DAR gram family includes a locative element which is phonologically close to *dar/dār/da*. The data will show that the DAR constructions can be divided into 4 main types depending on structural and functional features as presented in Table 1. As can be seen, Type 1 and 2 constructions have the same function span, while Type 2 and 3 share the main structural pattern of using a postposed DAR element in varying degrees of inflectionality together with a non-finite element. Thus, as we follow the Caspian Sea from Mazandaran up to the southern parts

¹ *mg* refers to 'my glossing'.

of Azerbaijan, the constructions within the DAR gram family change from periphrastic to inflectional, from preposed to postposed and from functioning as progressives to marking the present or past imperfective. Structurally, the Type 1 pattern differs radically from the rest as it is periphrastic, has a preposed DAR element and involves a finite form of the main verb. Functionally, the Type 3 pattern is most often a marker of the general present in the present tense and of the past progressive in the past tense. In Type 4, the pattern is used for the present and past imperfective and is thus not a progressive gram.

TYPE	FUNCTION	STRUCTURAL FEATURE	LANGUAGE GROUP
Type 1	DAR: PROG	DAR [...] V _{FIN} periphrastic, preposed, finite main verb	Mazandarani
Type 2	DAR: PROG	V _{INF} -DAR OR V _{INF} DAR (semi-)inflectional, postposed, non-finite man verb	Gilaki, Tati
Type 3	DAR: PRS DAR: PST.PROG	V _{INF} =DAR clitical, postposed, non-finite main verb	Taleshi
Type 4	DAR: IPFV	V _{INF} -DAR inflectional, postposed, non-finite main verb	Taleshi of Shuvi

Table 1. Function and structure of DAR constructions.²

The KAR gram family involve an element which is realized as *kar/kār/kārə* or similar. This element originates from *kār* 'work, doing' (Windfuhr 1989:256). Structurally and functionally, the KAR gram family is more homogenous than the DAR gram family although we do see the same change from the progressive to the imperfective. The KAR gram family is also in most cases, at least according to the data available, limited to the meeting point between the Iranian provinces Gilan, Ardabil, East-Azerbaijan and Zanzan. The majority of varieties including in the KAR gram family are Tati.

The study illustrates that the progressive is a gram type which is often borrowed or calqued and which often undergoes structural change and fusion. This is assumed to be both due to the structural nature of the progressive, i.e. it being periphrastic, and the functional nature, i.e. it having a somewhat pragmatic function. The data illustrated that as the structural pattern of the progressive becomes more grammaticalized, the functional span of the pattern become more mature. It is also shown that it is language contact rather than ancestry which has created this areal cline as constructions adjust or copy both their structural and functional spans to/from neighboring varieties. The study concludes that the patterns found cannot be accounted for if we do not assume pattern or material borrowing as part of the process.

References

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² In Table 1, DAR:PROG refers to a DAR construction with the progressive function, FIN refers to finite and INF to infinitive.

Windfuhr, Gernot. 1989. New West Iranian. In Rüdiger Schmitt (ed.), *Compendium linguarum Iranicarum*, 251–262. Wiesbaden: L. Reichert.