



Modal Forms for Permission in Gilaki: A Historical Approach

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Abstract

In Gilaki, four forms are used to express permission: *vâhâštân*, *bedâ*, *benə* and *tânəstân*. Some of these forms indicate the issuance of permission and some indicate the request for permission. These forms are the result of the grammaticalization of the forms that had lexical functions in the old periods of Iranian languages. In this article, the process of grammaticalization of the forms which represent permission has been investigated based on the data from Avestan, Old Persian, Middle Persian, and Persian literary texts. In most languages, permission is represented either through the grammaticalization of verbs that imply abandoning and leaving or through the grammaticalization of verbs that imply the concept of ability and are also used to express probability. In the Gilaki, the forms *vâhâštân* and *bedâ*, from the root *harz / hard*, which means "to leave", survived in the old period of Iranian languages. *Benə*, from the infinitive *nehan*, in addition to the lexical meaning of "putting", was used in a stage of language evolution to express the meaning of "leaving" and then its imperative verb was grammaticalized to express the concept of permission. *Tânəstân* is also from the root *tav* meaning "to be able" in the old period of Iranian languages. This form in the course of evolution, in addition to the modal concept of ability, is also used to express possibility and permission.

Keywords: grammaticalization, Gilaki, modality, permission.

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Expression of permission is one of the modalities which is represented in Gilaki by *vâhâštân*, *bedâ*, *benə* and *tânəstân*. In this paper, we intend to examine these

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linguistic forms from the grammaticalization point of view, and by using the diachronic data of Iranian languages.

2. Theoretical framework

According to Bybee (1994), there are two ways to express the concept of permission diachronically: first, the grammaticalization of the verbs that mean "to allow" and "to have permission", and second, the development of the verbs which imply physical and mental ability into root possibility and then into the concept of permission. During the process of development, the concept of ability includes all external and internal conditions that make the occurrence of things possible and all the social and physical conditions that enable or allow the agent and the speaker to do something. In addition, in many languages of the world, the verbs which mean "to leave", and "to abandon", have developed into forms to express permission.

3. Methodology

Gilaki data for permission requests and permit issuance is provided by the field method, and based on the linguistic intuition of one of the authors. By using data from Avestan, Old Persian, Middle Persian and post-Islamic Persian literary texts, we have shown what functions the forms of expressing the concept of permission have had in the past periods of Iranian languages and what changes they have gone through to become grammatical tools for expressing permission in Gilaki.

4. Results & Discussion

Vâhâštân is composed of the prefix *vâ-* and the infinitive *hâštân*, which means "to put", "to leave", "to abandon" and "to allow" and its present stem is *vâhal-*. *Hâštân* is the residual from the *harz/hard* root, in old Persian and Avestan, which means "to leave", or "to abandon". In Middle Persian and Persian literary texts, *hišt* and its present stem *hil-*, are used to indicate abandoning and leaving objective and abstract things and also the process of doing things. Using the verb in contexts where abandoning something is done to achieve a specific goal, has gradually caused the verb to lose its original meaning, abandon, and acquire the meaning of permission. In the majority of middle Persian sentences, the action that is permitted to be done through the use of the verb *hištan*, or the specific purpose for which the use of *hištan*, allows its fulfilment or non-fulfilment, is presented in the form of complete and non-complete infinitives. In Persian literary texts, *hištan* is used pre-verbally, within a subordinate clause and with a conjunction. In Gilaki, the conjunction has been removed from the beginning of the subordinate clause and *vâhâštân* is used both to issue permits and to request permission.

Bedâ is another form in Gilaki for asking permission. This form is obtained through phonological reduction and the loss of morpheme boundary in the phrase **be hel tâ*. The infinitive *nehan*, means, "to put something somewhere", "to permit" and "to abandon". *Bene*, the imperative form with the prefix *be*, is used for asking permission.

Bene, the imperative form with the prefix *be*, is used for asking permission. In the old period of Iranian languages this verb, from the root *dâ* and the prefix *ni-*, is used to mean "put something somewhere". In middle Persian, both the present stem *nih-* and the past stem *nihād* are used with the same meaning. In Persian literary texts, *nihadan*, without locative adverbs means, "to abandon", "to leave", and sometimes "to leave alone, to give up", is used with the conjunction *tâ* and a subordinate clause. Abandoning and leaving something when it is done to accomplish a task or achieve a specific goal, has caused the interpretation of allowing and asking for permission in the mind of the language speakers. In Gilaki *bene* is used to represent asking for permission by moving to the initial position of the sentence and removing the conjunction.

Tânâstân simultaneously represents the concepts of physical and mental ability, possibility and permission. This verb is a residual of the root *tav* in old Persian and Avestan, which means "to have the ability ". In middle Persian, *tuwân* and *tuwânist* have been common to denote the concept of physical and mental ability. Ability also implies the concept of possibility. The ability to do something is the possibility and probability of its occurrence. Therefore, the concept of the ability to do something also implies the possibility of its realization. In middle Persian *tuwân*, in some contexts especially in interrogative contexts has represented permission. In these contexts, *tuwân* describes a condition in which the agent or the speaker can do something. Gradually, with the expansion of the use of this verb to express such concepts in Gilaki, *tânâstân* is used to issue and request permission.

5. Conclusion & Suggestions

The forms of expressing modal concepts in all languages have emerged through the grammaticalization of two lexical forms, the first of which are the verbs which mean "to abandon", and "to leave". *Vâhâstân*, *bedâ* and *benâ* are such verbs. *Bedâ* and *vâhâstân* the residual forms from the root *harz/hard*, lose their lexical meanings and are only used grammatically. The lexical meaning and grammatical function of *nehan* coexist with each other. This verb, from the root *da* and with the prefix *ni-*, originally meant "to put" and then has obtained the meaning of "to abandon", and in Gilaki, its imperative form has been used to express permission. The second way of representing the concept of permission is verbs that imply the concept of ability and are used in a stage of development to express the concept of possibility. In Gilaki *tânâstân* a residual form of the root *tav* is used to express ability, possibility and permission.

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