

Extended Abstract

The study of Persian morpheme “ta” in the speech of Azerbaijani speakers

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Introduction

Borrowing is one of the consequences of language contact, during which elements or structures are transferred from one language to another. Borrowing has different types, which are referred to as lexical borrowing, grammatical borrowing and phonological borrowing. Among the functional morphemes (prepositions, conjunctions, etc.), borrowing of prepositions rarely happens. Conjunctions are located between content words such as nouns and functional morphemes such as prepositions; therefore, their entry into another language is easier than prepositions. The morpheme “ta” is a constituent that plays a role as a preposition or a conjunction in the Persian language due to its uses in various contexts of the language. The abundant use of the Persian morpheme “ta” as a conjunction in the speech of Azerbaijani speakers and the limited use of the same morpheme as a preposition in the speech of some speakers (Azerbaijani-Persian bilinguals) led to the analysis of the occurrence of the Persian morpheme “ta” in the language and speech of Azerbaijani speakers according to the views expressed in the realm of language contact, including the view of Myers-Scotton (1993-2006).

Theoretical Framework

Various viewpoints, such as Moravcsik (1975), Thomason and Kaufman (1998), Matras (2009), and Seifart (2017) have explained the hierarchy of borrowing or the restrictions

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governing lexical and grammatical borrowing by providing many examples from different languages of the world. Multiple linguistic categories do not function identically and simultaneously in the transfer from one language to another language or languages. This prompted the mentioned linguists to draw the hierarchies of borrowing of linguistic constituents and constructions and to analyze the reasons behind the back and forth of different linguistic categories in the realm of borrowing.

According to Myers-Scotton (1993-2006), a loanword first appears in the speech of bilinguals, which is called a code-switched word, then this word enters into the speech of monolinguals and becomes a loanword due to its frequent use in the borrowing language; therefore, it can be said that linguistic code-switching is the root of the phenomenon of borrowing. Code-switching and borrowed elements are located along a continuum or spectrum, and code-switched elements may become borrowed elements over time in a linguistic community.

Data and Methodology

The present research was corpus-based, and the data was collected from the linguistic interactions of 36 speakers of different regions (villages and cities) of East Azerbaijan and Ardabil provinces. 12 of the speakers were monolingual Azerbaijani. Azerbaijani-Persian bilinguals were also divided into two groups. A group of 12 people (normal bilinguals) who had general literacy and another group of 12 people who had higher education (university students or having a bachelor's degree or higher). From the collected data, 804 Persian “ta” morphemes were extracted. The Persian morpheme “ta” appeared as both a conjunction and a preposition in the speech of the speakers, and the frequency of its use in different meanings was shown in Table 1. In general, it can be said that the current research was descriptive-analytical. First, the phonetic manifestation of the Persian morpheme “ta” as conjunctions and prepositions with their corresponding meanings and frequencies were collected. Then, the data was analyzed following the dominant paradigm related to language contact.

Table 1.

The frequency of the use of the Persian morpheme “ta” as a conjunction and preposition in the speech of the speakers

Morpheme types	Different meanings of the morpheme “ta”	Speakers			Frequency	Total
		Educated bilingual	Normal bilingual	Monolingual		
Conjunction	1. Reason & result	✓	✓	✓	320	699
	2. As long as/ when	✓	✓	✓	305	
	3. Once	✓	✓	✓	36	

	4- Condition	✓	✓	✓	16
	5- Doubt	✓	✓		12
	6- Since	✓	✓		10
Preposition	1- Expressing the end of time, place or thing	✓	✓		93
	2- Expressing the difference between two things or two people	✓	✓		12
					105

Data analysis and Results

The analysis of the data indicated that the Persian morpheme “ta” has appeared as both types of functional elements (conjunction and preposition) in the linguistic interactions of Azerbaijani speakers. As shown in Table 1, the Persian morpheme “ta” as a conjunction has been observed in the speech of all Azerbaijani speakers, while the same morpheme as a preposition has found phonetic manifestation only in the speech of Azerbaijani-Persian bilinguals, and monolingual Azerbaijani speakers have not used these morphemes as prepositions. Also, the frequency of using the conjunction “ta” was more than the preposition “ta” in the speech of all speakers (monolingual and bilingual). Therefore, Azerbaijani speakers have used both grammatical roles (conjunction and preposition) of the Persian morpheme “ta” with different meanings in different contexts of the language. Of course, the frequency of their use was also different. The most frequent use of the morpheme “ta” in the speech of speakers was dedicated to the use of “ta” to express "reason", and the least frequent use of this morpheme was used to express "since".

The morpheme “ta” as a conjunction with the meanings “even, however, as a result, be careful, a sign of harming someone”, after verbs such as to say, to command, etc. was not observed among the collected data. Also, Azerbaijani speakers have not used the Persian morpheme “ta” as a preposition with the meaning of sequence and succession.

Conclusion

The appearance of the Persian morpheme “ta” as two functional elements (conjunction and preposition) in the language and speech of Azerbaijani speakers based on two criteria of the frequency of use of non-native morpheme in the receiving language, as well as the use of the same morpheme by different ranges of speakers was investigated. The frequency of the use of morphemes and being monolingual or bilingual speakers are two valid criteria that Myers-Scotton (1993-2006) relied on to explain the process of entering and stabilizing linguistic elements from one language to another, during which most of the linguistic constituents first appear in the speech of bilinguals and gradually and with the high frequency

and usage, they enter into the speech of monolinguals and are fixed as borrowed elements in the receiving language. According to Myers-Scotton, the process of the entering of the Persian morpheme “ta” into the speech and language of Azerbaijani speakers can be shown in Figure 1.

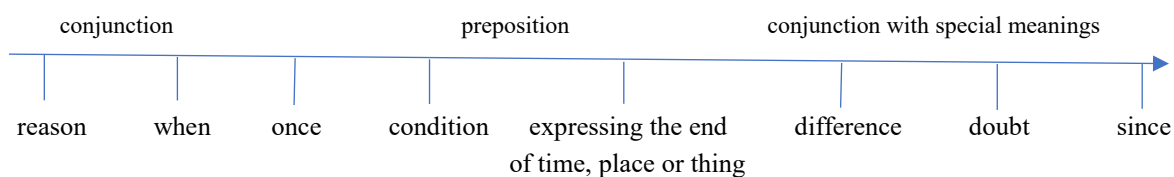


Figure 1. Continuity of entering of the Persian morpheme “ta” into the speech and language of Azerbaijani speakers

The two criteria of the frequency of use and the path for entering the linguistic element in the speech and language of monolinguals are proofs of the borrowing of the morpheme “ta” as a conjunction in the Azerbaijani language. In addition, historical evidence (previous studies) also emphasized that the conjunction “ta” played a role in the Azerbaijani language as a borrowed element. Consequently, the morpheme “ta” as a preposition and a conjunction in certain meanings and as a code-switched element is still phonetically rendered in the speech of bilinguals, and it may gradually enter into the speech of monolinguals and become part of borrowed elements in the Azerbaijani language. The studies on language contact have mostly focused on the results of borrowing, while the code-switching borrowing continuum has highlighted the path for entering and establishing non-native elements in the host language. Entering the Persian morpheme “ta” into the speech of Azerbaijani speakers is also an indication of the gradual process of transferring functional elements from one language to another language that, in the context of this study, has been analyzed under the framework of code-switching-borrowing.

Linguistic contact in a bilingual or multilingual society is a natural event which is followed by phenomena such as language code-switching, borrowing, convergence, etc. In our country, which is an example of countries with rich linguistic and dialect diversity, Persian language acts as the dominant language due to its official, literary and cultural status, and the features and elements of the Persian language continue to be transferred to other languages and dialects like Azerbaijani in line with linguistic convergence. As in the current study, an attempt was made to study part of this convergence in the form of using the Persian morpheme “ta” in the speech and language of Azerbaijani speakers.

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