

4-22-2022

Word Formation in the Dari Language

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WORD FORMATION IN THE DARI LANGUAGE



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INTRODUCTION

This poster describes the morphology of the Dari language, as gathered by students in LING 498, the Linguistics capstone course in linguistic field methods. During the Spring 2022 semester, our group met weekly with Selda Delsooz, a native of Afghanistan and speaker of the Qabul dialect of Dari, to document her mother tongue. Dari (ISO 639-2 code: prs) is an Indo-European language spoken widely in Afghanistan, and is considered a variety of the Persian language. Ms. Delsooz was born and raised in Afghanistan, and arrived in Boise in July 2021. She is currently enrolled as a Boise State student in the Business Administration major.

What are linguistic field methods?

Field methodology in documentary linguistics involves gathering linguistic data from native speakers of a language that is under-documented in linguistic literature. Although Dari is widely spoken (there are over 20 million speakers), it was selected as the language used for our course because of the influx of speakers arriving in Boise from Afghanistan as resettled refugees this academic year. Using methodologies employed in documentary linguistics, linguists collect language data in order to explore its structures at the sound, word, sentence, and discourse levels.

Field methods as Capstone

Documenting the distinct linguistic features of an unfamiliar language requires students to rely on their understanding of the wide variety of linguistic structures found in the world's languages. The course provides a hands-on approach to learning and allows students to gain skills they can apply to future academic and career pursuits.



<https://www.britannica.com/place/Afghanistan>

VERB AGREEMENT

Verb agreement refers to the different ways that verbs change form in order to “agree” with the person or thing that is doing the action. In Dari, the endings of verbs change based on the subject of the verb. This means that verb agreement is expressed morphologically.

English Gloss	Dari
I run	midavam
You run	midavit
He/she runs	midavat
We run	midavim
They run	midavand

NOUNS & NOUN CASES

Nouns in Dari are distinct from verbs in the type of morphology they take. For example, Dari nouns will take the suffix *-ha* to indicate plurality as seen in the following examples:

Singular	Plural
gul 'flower'	gulha 'flowers'
haiwun 'animal'	haiwunha 'animals'

Additionally, morphology is used to denote noun cases. Dari uses a nominative-accusative system, which means that subjects of transitive and intransitive verbs have the same form, while objects of transitive verbs have a different form. The nominative case is unmarked and the accusative case is marked with the enclitic *=ra*, as seen in the following examples:

- (7) gul jugufa mikon-at 'flower' 'bloom'-3sg
'The flower blooms.'
- (8) man gul=**ra** ma'hkam migir-am
1sgPRO 'flower'=ACC 'hold'-1sg
'I hold the flower.'

Another noun case that Dari encodes morphologically is the benefactive (or dative) case, which includes beneficiaries and recipients. To mark this noun case, the proclitic *ba=* is used. This can be seen in the following examples:

- (9) man awaz mixwan-am 1sgPRO 'sing'-1sg
'I sing.'
- (10) man **ba=**fəma awaz mixwan-am
1sgPRO BEN=2sgPRO 'sing'-1sg
'I sing to/for you.'

NEGATION

To make a sentence negative, Dari attaches the clitic **na=** onto the verb, as seen below.

- (1) tawaqof ku 'Stop!'
tawaqof **naku** 'Don't stop!'
- (2) bas ku 'Stop!'
bas **naku** 'Don't stop!'
- (3) ob hanuz dʒuʃ **na=mi** xora
'water' 'yet' 'boil' NEG=PRES 'eat'
'The water is not boiling yet.'
- (4) ob ba dʒuʃ xordan juro **na=karda**
'water' 'of' 'boil' 'eat' 'start' NEG='do'
'The water has not started boiling.'

TENSE

To indicate that an action takes place in either the present or future, Dari uses the proclitic **mi=**, as seen below.

- (5) man jak gul=**ra** gerift-am
1sg 'the' 'flower'=ACC 'hold'-1sg
'I held the flower.'
- (6) man gul=**ra** ma'hkam **mi=giram**
1sg 'flower'=ACC 'tight' PRES='hold'
'I hold a flower.'

NOUN COMPOUNDING

Compound nouns are a combination of two or more words in order to make another word. In Dari, it tends to be quite literal in terms of how it translates back into English, as seen in the following examples.

Locations

- (11) Hospital: **jafoxo'na**
jafo-xo'na
'healing'-'house'

- (12) Library: **kɪtabxanā**
kɪtab-xanā
'book'-'house'

Accessories

These compound nouns are a combination of the body part in which it is worn + **bænd** 'band'.

- (13) Necklace: **gərdænbænd**
gərdæn-bænd
'neck'-'band'

- (14) Belt: **kæmærbænd**
kæmær-bænd
'waist'-'band'