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Expressions of future in Classical and Modern New Persian

Carina Jahani

1 Introduction¹

In the grammatical category *tense*, i.e. time location of an action or a state, there are three possible sub-categories, namely past (i.e. before the deictic centre), present (i.e. including the deictic centre) and future (i.e. after the deictic centre). The deictic centre may either be the speech moment, in which case we are dealing with absolute tense, or any other moment, which gives relative tense. Tense is also closely related to two other categories, namely *aspect* and *mood*, aspect being the internal temporal constituency of a situation, and mood expressing the speaker's attitude towards the situation, particularly its likelihood or necessity.

In Iranian languages, as well as in most other Indo-European languages, the basic grammaticalised tense distinction is that between past and non-past (see also Comrie 1985: 44-45).² When it comes to marking future time reference (as opposed to reference to the present time within the non-past³ tense), there are various strategies found in Iranian languages. The purpose of this paper is to make a detailed investigation of strategies employed for marking future time reference in written New Persian, both in its classical and modern variety. In Modern New Persian factual prose and fiction are described as two different varieties, since they show a considerable amount of divergence. This study does not include spoken Persian.⁴

The main focus of the paper will be on future time reference in main arguments. However, the study will inevitably also touch upon future time

¹The theoretical framework for this paper is mainly that presented by Comrie (1976, 1985), Palmer (2001) and Dahl (2006).

²See also Crystal (2003: 196), who suggests this two-way tense distinction for English.

³The term "non-past" tense will be used in this article for what is normally referred to as present, or present-future, tense in grammatical descriptions of Persian.

⁴My own observations indicate that the strategies found in fictional dialogue, which is a way of representing spoken language, also occur in the actual spoken language. This subject, however, needs a study of its own, in which different registers of the spoken language would be analysed.

reference in hypotactic constructions expressing, e.g. the condition for or purpose of the main argument, and modal constructions expressing, e.g. future necessity, desire or intent. The focus will also be on absolute future, i.e. future time reference with the speech moment as the deictic centre.⁵ The method employed is analysis of selected prose texts from different genres and time periods written by a number of different authors.

2 Future time reference

Future time reference has a strong link to modality. A future action or state is by definition uncertain, since it has not yet taken place. Palmer (2001: 104-105) notes that “[t]he future is not fully known and it is always no more than a reasonable assumption that a future event will ensue”, that “[t]here are... plenty of examples of future tenses that are historically derived from subjunctives”, and finally that “[o]ther languages have future tenses that have their origins in a modal-type auxiliary.” Thus, the future is “epistemologically radically different from both what is behind us—the past—and what is taking place at this moment—the present. Future states of affairs cannot be perceived or remembered, although they can be the subject of our hopes, plans, conjectures and predictions.” (Dahl 2006: 704).

In languages that have the main tense opposition between past and non-past, often verbs of motion, obligation, volition, ability or doubt are used to indicate future time reference (Ultan 1978: 110-114, Dahl 2006: 705),⁶ but at the same time, several of these languages allow the use of the general non-past tense together with lexical or contextual resources to indicate future time.

The grammaticalisation process of periphrastic constructions involves what Dahl (*ibid.*: 705) calls “pragmatic strengthening” and “semantic

⁵There are instances in New Persian where past verb forms are employed for future actions or states. Such instances are, e.g. temporal and conditional subordinate clauses which precede the main clause. The use of past tense in these hypotactic constructions is best analysed as relative past with the main clause as the deictic centre. Also, for immediate future Modern New Persian uses a past tense form of the verb, namely \emptyset -marked past (also sometimes called preterite). This can also be regarded as relative past, i.e. the completion of the action is so imminent that the speaker views it as already completed.

⁶In Indo-European (Germanic and Romance) languages we find, e.g. the English constructions ‘I am going to,’ ‘I shall,’ and ‘I will’ (see Berglund 2005: 32-33), the French and Spanish periphrastic expressions of future time ‘je vais’ and ‘voy a’, and the Swedish expression for future time ‘jag skall’.

bleaching”, i.e. the meaning of, e.g. a volitional verb has to be strengthened and at the same time the volitional element is gradually bleached off. Eventually the auxiliary verb may merge with the main verb as an affix and thus a new morphologically marked form is established. He also notes that “[n]ormally, future-marking devices start out in main clauses, which are bearers of the illocutionary force of an utterance” (*ibid.*).

Dahl further discusses the distinction between intention-based and prediction-based future, but notes that “[a] straightforward grammatical opposition based on the distinction between intention-based and prediction-based future time reference is less common than one would perhaps think” (*ibid.*: 706). The concept of intention-based versus prediction-based future will play a major role in the investigation of future time reference in the present study. Verbs of motion seem to stand semantically closer to prediction-based than intention-based future in the same way as verbs of volition are clearly more closely related to intention-based than to prediction-based future. However, it will be noted in the present investigation that Persian only uses verbs of volition for both intention-based and prediction-based future time reference.

3 Strategies for marking future time reference in Persian⁷

As in several other Indo-European languages, there are two main strategies for marking future time reference in Persian:

1. lexical or contextual means of expressing the future with the verb in the non-past tense
2. periphrastic verbal constructions with an ‘upgraded,’ i.e. ‘pragmatically strengthened’ and ‘semantically bleached’ verb of volition as the auxiliary.

Morphological marking of future time is only marginally encountered in Persian.

There are considerable differences between the verbal system in Classical and Modern Persian. In the classical language, three different morphologically marked verb forms with non-past (present/future) time reference are encountered, namely the \emptyset -marked non-past (present stem + personal endings), this non-past form with the verbal prefix *be-*, and the same form with the verbal prefix (*ha*)*mi-*.

⁷Hereafter the term Persian will be used to denote the New Persian language.

These verbal prefixes were already used in Middle Persian. Nyberg (1974: 46) describes one use of *bē* in Middle Persian as, “denoting the perfective aspect of the act, *viz.* that it comes to an end, or has its limit: with the *pret.* it gives it the sense of an act completed in the past...with the *pres.* it denotes the completion of the act in the future”.⁸ For *hamē* he gives the meaning ‘always’ but notes that “often the original sense has faded” and that *hamē* functions as a preverb “denoting perduration or iteration” (*ibid.*: 91).

In the modern language, the *Ø*- and the *be*-marked forms have merged and are, although not totally interchangeably used,⁹ found to indicate irrealis modality,¹⁰ whereas the form with the *mi*- prefix denotes realis modality.

In Classical Persian the form with the (*ha*)*mi*-prefix denotes mainly a durative, progressive or iterative action¹¹ but in Modern Persian it is this very form that is grammaticalised as non-past indicative (realis modality), including future time reference.

There are also in Persian two periphrastic constructions for future time reference, both based on the verb *x^vāstan* ‘to want’. They are thus modal constructions with a volitional verb as the auxiliary grammaticalised to indicate future time reference. One of these constructions, *Ø*-marked non-past form of *x^vāstan* + full or shortened infinitive (*x^vāham kard(an)*), is used both as a modal construction of volition and for both intention-based and prediction-based future time reference in Classical Persian, but only for future time reference (intention-based and prediction-based) in Modern Persian. This construction will be referred to as “volitional construction 1” in the analysis of the data found in sections 3.1 and 3.2 of this paper.

The second construction, *mi*-marked non-past form of *x^vāstan* + non-past subjunctive (*mi^vāham bekonam*), is used both as a modal construction of volition and for intention-based future time reference in Modern Persian. The grammaticalisation process of this construction is thus underway in the language right now, and the study of this process may give interesting in-

⁸For comprehensive accounts of the prefix *be*- in Classical Persian, see e.g. MacKinnon (1977), Lazard (1963: 298-326), and Windfuhr (1979: 94-96).

⁹In the negative form the *be*-prefix is never present. In the positive form it is normally present, but some compound verbs only employ it facultatively, while others cannot take it at all.

¹⁰The terms “indicative” and “subjunctive” are normally used in grammatical descriptions of Persian. The corresponding terms used by Palmer (2001: 1-2) are “realis” and “irrealis.” Realis and indicative are used interchangeably in this paper. The same applies to irrealis and subjunctive.

¹¹Note, however, that Lazard (1963: 285, 289) finds it used in early Classical Persian also for immediate future and for a prolonged or repeated action in the future.

sights as to how the pragmatic strengthening and semantic bleaching of the other construction took place in Classical Persian. This construction will be referred to as “volitional construction 2” in the analysis in section 3.2 below.

Thus it is important to note that even if a verb of volition is used in these constructions, and they thus stand semantically closer to intention-based future than to prediction-based future and can be assumed to have started out as referring to intention-based future, volitional construction 1 is already in early Classical Persian found to indicate both types of future time reference, whereas the two examples of volitional construction 2 found in Modern Persian indicate intention-based future. (In fn. 24, however, the possibility of using this construction also for prediction-based future is discussed.)

Grammatical descriptions of Persian refer to different strategies for marking future time reference.¹² Phillott (1919: 508, 226) calls the non-past tense form (both *Ø-*, *be-*, and *mi-*marked) “indefinite future” and the construction with *x^vāstan* + short infinitive “definite future”. For the latter form he remarks that it “is seldom used in modern colloquial, the Present tense taking its place on all occasions...It is, however, still used by the Afghans and Indians, who seldom use the Present tense for the Future. By Persians it is used in correct writing.”

Lazard (1992: 145, 158-159) refers to the use of the *mi-*marked form in Modern Persian for future time reference only in the colloquial language. The construction with *x^vāstan* + short infinitive (volitional construction 1) is by Lazard described as expressing “future action” and “a denied hypothesis related to the future.” He also refers to the *mi-*marked non-past form of *x^vāstan* + non-past subjunctive (volitional construction 2) as expressing “the idea of ‘being on the point of’...particularly in colloquial language” (*ibid.*: 159).

Mahmoodi Bakhtiari (2002: 75) does not limit the use of the *mi-*marked form for future time reference in Modern Persian to colloquial language. He proposes that the construction with *x^vāstan* + short infinitive may indicate that “the speaker’s attitude is based on an observed state preparatory to a predicted event, rather than on a commitment to a subjective future truth”, which may indicate that this construction is more used for prediction-based future than for intention-based future (*ibid.*: 107-108).

¹²For other descriptions of future time reference in Classical and Modern Persian, see e.g. Foucheour (1981: 163-164), Lambton (1974:150, 154), Thackston (1993: 93-94), Windfuhr (1989: 536-537), and Xānlari (1346:39, 41).

3.1 Classical Persian

It may be useful to divide the Classical Persian texts into two phases in time,¹³ the early classical period (10th–12th century A.D.) and the late classical period (13th–15th century A.D.).

Due to the character of many of the Classical Persian texts, i.e. factual prose such as historical chronicles, legends of saints, mirrors for princes, travelogues etc. with narrative passages mainly in the past tense there is only very limited expression of future to be found in them. Most occurrences of future time reference are found in hypotactic constructions expressing conditions, temporal circumstances in the future, purpose, etc. and in modal constructions expressing necessity, volition, possibility, doubt, etc.

1. Lexical or contextual means of expressing the future with the verb in the Ø-marked non-past form:

Early Classical Persian¹⁴

- (1) dar āxar zamān qoum-i *peidā āyand* ke iṣān-rā rāfezi x^vānand. agar iṣān-rā dar yābi bekoš ke iṣān kāfar-and ‘ali goft yā rasulollāh ‘alāmat-e iṣān če *bāšad* rasul goft be namāz-e ādine *hāzer našavand* va jamā‘at *nakonand* va namāz-e jenāze *nakonand* va dar salaf ʔa‘n *zanand*

“In the last days there will be found a people who will be called ‘*rāfezi*.’ If you find them, kill them, for they are infidels. Ali said: Oh prophet of God, what will their sign be? The prophet said: They will not be present in the Friday prayer, and they will not assemble, and they will not pray over the dead, and they will treat their predecessors with sarcasm.” (Siyāsat. pp. 206-207)

- (2) fardā be tamāšā-ye daryā mehmān-e man-i
“Tomorrow you will be my guest watching the sea.”(Siyāsat. p. 223)

¹³See also Jahani 2000, where the same division has been made. The time between 1500-1900 is often described as a transitional period of literary stagnation and re-awakening. A study of texts also from this period was outside the scope of this study.

¹⁴Unstressed grammatical suffixes, except personal endings on verbs, are separated from the head by means of a hyphen.

- (3) az ān nāx^vištanšenāsi ke vei ba xodāvand dar harāt kard dar ruzegār-e amir maḥmud yād kardam x^vištan-rā negāh natavānestam dāšt va biš čenin sahv-i *nayoftad*¹⁵
 “I came to think of the impudence that he did towards [my] lord in Herat during the time of Amir Mahmud. I could not control myself, and such a mistake will not occur again.” (Tārix-e Bei. p. 212)

Late Classical Persian

- (4) qāziyān o atbā‘-e iṣān va dayyuṣān abad ol-ābād dar duzax *bāšand* va bā ham soḥbat *dārānd* va šaṭranj-e ātašin *bāzand*
 “The judges and their followers and the cuckolds will be in hell forever and will have fellowship with each other and play ‘fire-chess.’” (‘Obeid p. 250)
- (5) pir-e zan goft tā har se jam‘ nagardid man amānat *nadaham*
 “The old woman said: I will not give the deposit until all three of you are gathered.” (Hezār p. 679)

In these examples, the \emptyset -marked non-past verb form is used, and the future time reference is expressed by lexical means, e.g. adverbs of time such as *dar āxar zamān* ‘in the last days’ (ex. 1) and *farḏā* ‘tomorrow’ (ex. 2) and by context. This is a common way of expressing future time reference, and there are several examples of it both in the early and the late classical texts studied.

2. The non-past form morphologically marked with the prefix *be-*

Early Classical Persian

- (6) in-ast ḥasanak va ruzegār-aš va goftār-aš...in bud ke x^vod be zendegigāh gofti ke marā do‘ā-ye neišāpurian *besāzad* va nasāxt
 “This is Hasanak and his days and his words. This was what he himself said during his lifetime: The intercession of the Neishapurians will arrange things for me, but it didn’t.” (Tārix-e Bei. p. 215)

¹⁵In Classical Persian the *be-* and *na-* prefixes can occur together (i.e. *benakonad*) (Lazard 1963: 277-278). The form *nayoftad* can therefore be analysed as the \emptyset -marked non-past form. In Modern Persian the *be-* and *na-* prefixes never occur together.

Late Classical Persian

- (7) āzār-e x^vod majuy ke in ‘oqbat bar man be yek nafas be sar āyad va bazah-e ān bar to jāvid *bemānad*
 “Don’t seek harm for yourself since this punishment on me will be ended in one breath but its guilt will remain on you forever.”¹⁶
 (Golestān p. 44)

The *be*-marked form is thus encountered for future time reference, although not very commonly in the texts investigated. This form is, in addition to future time reference, very often used in contexts of irrealis modality. Also the \emptyset -marked form is often encountered in such context. The irrealis modality may be indicated by a modal auxiliary (see ex. 10), by the clause structure (see exs. 8, 10, 12¹⁷) or by other lexical or contextual means.

- (8) šāpur kasān bar gomāšt tā u-rā *begirand*
 “Shapur appointed people to capture him.” (Fārsnāme p. 62)
- (9) amir goft tā dar in bāb *biyandišam*
 “The emir said: Let me think about this.” (Tārix-e Bei. p. 206)
- (10) agar nabiz x^vori bāyad ke *bedāni* ke čegune bāyad x^vord
 “If you drink wine you must know how one should drink.”
 (Qāb. p. 37)
- (11) qozāt-rā farmudim ke agar in jamā‘at-e mojremān ke gārāmāt-e išān mo‘ayyan-ast pas az in gārāmāt noubat-i digar bā gonāhhā mo‘āvedat *konand* guš o bini *beborand*
 “We ordered the judges that, if this group of criminals, whose fines have been defined, after these fines again return to [their] sins, they should cut off their ears and nose.” (Hezār p. 799)
- (12) zanān-e besiyār kon tā farzandān-e to besiyār *gardand* va yādegār-e to andar jahān *bemānad*
 “Marry a lot of women in order to have many children so that your name may remain in the world.” (Bahār. p. 50)

¹⁶An innocent man whom the king has sentenced to death says this to the king and thereby saves his life.

¹⁷Sentence no. 12 may have two interpretations, one modal “in order to have many children” and another consecutive with future time reference “so that you will have many children.” I adopt the first interpretation here.

3. The non-past form morphologically marked with the prefix *mi-*

There are no examples of the *mi*-marked form for future time reference in the texts representing early Classical Persian selected in this investigation. Note, however, that Lazard refers to its use for future time reference in his study of early Classical Persian prose texts (see fn. 11).

Late Classical Persian

- (13) in morǧ ma-rā xabar dād ke laškar-i *miresad* ke sardār-e išān to-yi
 “This bird informed me that an army would (lit. will)¹⁸ arrive whose
 commander you are.” (Bahār. p. 49)
- (14) agar bimāri ‘ešq-ast ṭabib *miyābi*
 “If the illness is love, you will find a doctor.” (Hezār p. 670)

The use of the *mi*-marked form not only for imperfective aspect (e.g. iterative, progressive, durative actions and states) but also for future time reference has to do with the restructuring of the non-past tense system throughout the classical period from primarily marking aspectual distinctions to mainly marking modal distinctions. The prefix *be-* gradually takes on the role of marking irrealis modality (subjunctive) and *mi-* realis modality.

4. Volitional construction 1

The construction with the verb $x^v \bar{a}stan$ ‘to want’ + short or long infinitive appears both as a modal construction to express volition, and to express an intention or future time reference.¹⁹ This construction, which is common both in early and late classical texts both for volition and for future time reference, and not only intention-based future (see exs. 18, 22, 23) but also prediction-

¹⁸Note the use of the tense form of the direct speech also in reported speech in Persian.

¹⁹Note also another construction used parallel to the $x^v \bar{a}ham kard/kardan$ construction to express volition. This is the construction with either a past or a non-past form (\emptyset -marked, (*ha*)*mi*-marked or *be*-marked) of the verb $x^v \bar{a}stan$ + a non-past form (either \emptyset -marked or *be*-marked) of the main verb. This construction in its non-past form is the one that in Modern Persian is used not only for volition but also for future time reference (intention-based future), in this article called volitional construction 2.

- i. čun mehmān mast šavad va *bex^v āhad ke ravad* yek bār va do bār $x^v \bar{a}heš$
 kon va tavāzo‘ namāy va magozār ke beravad
 “When the guest gets drunk and wants to leave, urge him once or twice and
 show courtesy and do not allow him to leave.” (Qāb. p. 41)

based future (see exs. 15, 16, 25), is particularly interesting. Its variant with the short infinitive is in Modern Persian grammaticalised to indicate only future time reference, particularly prediction-based future. A considerable number of examples of this construction found in the texts studied are presented below in order to show the range of meaning it can have in Classical Persian:

Early Classical Persian

- (15) goft čand nāli ke xodā-ye ta‘ālā to-rā farzand besiyār dāde-ast va az to besiyār *x^vāhad budan* va to-rā bar hame jahān pādešāhi *x^vāhad budan*
 “He said, why are you complaining, since God, may he be exalted, has given you many children and you will have many descendents, and you will reign over all the earth.” (Tārix-e Bal. p. 10)
- (16) dānest ke taxt-e molk pas az pedar u-rā *x^vāhad bud*
 “He knew that the throne of the kingdom would be his after his father.” (Tārix-e Bei. p. 204)
- (17) be ƣaram bāyad nešast ke ḥasanak-rā ānjā *x^vāhand āvord*
 “You should take a seat in the pavilion because Hasanak will be brought there.” (Tārix-e Bei. p. 209)
- (18) *nax^vāham raft* tā āngāh ke xodāvand naxospad
 “I am not going to leave (I don’t intend to go, I will not leave) until my lord has gone to sleep.” (Tārix-e Bei. p. 212)
- (19) sar-aš-rā be bağdād *x^vāhim ferestād* nazdik-e xalife
 “We want (intend, are going) to send his head to Baghdad, to the Caliph.” (Tārix-e Bei. p. 214)
-
- ii. hamānā ke az ḥayāt-e *x^v*od be tang āmade-i *mix^vāhi* ke az in meḥnat *xalāš šavi*
 “It seems that you have got tired of living and want to be delivered from this suffering.” (A person seeking revenge for his father’s death says this to someone who introduces himself as his father’s killer.) (Bahār. p. 57)
- iii. pas har ke xodā-ye ta‘ālā u-rā mağzub-e ġazab-e *x^v*od gardānide bāšad to *x^vāhi* ke bar u *raḥmat koni* “So you want to be merciful towards whomever God, the exalted, has made a target of his wrath.” (‘Obeid p. 254)
- iv. moqaddam *mix^vāst* ke ān soxan-rā *biyārāyad* va be nou‘-i behtar *beguyad*
 “First he wanted to embellish that word and say it in a better way.” (Hezār p. 849)

- (20) doulat be kamāl reside-ast va bande az češm-e bad hamitarsad namidānād ke in kār be kojā *x^vāhad resid*
 “The state has reached its fullness and I am afraid of the evil eye. I do not know how this will end.” (Siyāsat. p. 203)
- (21) man goftam āh dariḡā in angoštari ke agar dānestami ke malek be haqiqat dar angošt *nax^vāhad kard* va dar daryā *x^vāhad andāxt* bāri bepaziroftami ke man hargez čenān yāqut nadide budam
 “I said ‘alas for such a ring. If I had known that the king²⁰ indeed will not (does not intend to) put it on his finger and will throw it into the sea, I would definitely have accepted it’ because I had never seen such a ruby.” (Siyāsat. pp. 223-224)
- (22) čun bazah *x^vāhi kard* bār-i bazah-e bimaze makon šarāb ke *x^vori x^voštār x^vor* va samā‘ ke šenavi *x^voštār šenou*
 “When you want to (intend to, plan to) sin, then do not commit tasteless sin, when you drink wine, drink the best, and when you listen to music, listen to the best.” (Qāb. p. 40)
- (23) va in mohemm ke man piš migiram laškarhā-rā ba *x^vištan nax^vāham bordan* joz andak-i va bone o tajammol-e pādešāhi bar *nax^vāham dāšt*
 “And on this important [mission] which I undertake, I will not (do not intend to) take armies with me, just a few, and I will not (do not intend to) take with me baggage and royal luxuries.” (Fārsnāme p. 67)

Late Classical Persian

- (24) homā-ye eqbāl čun āšiyāne-ye kas-i-rā ma’vā *x^vāhad sāxt* va šedā-ye edbār āstāne-ye digar-i-rā molāzemat *nemud* agarče miyān-e išan darajāt nik motafāvet-ast ān yek-i dar ouj-e doulat va digar-i dar xašiš-e mazellat ammā mostaqbal-rā qellat-e ālat va za‘f-e hālat az edrāk be maqšud māne‘ nist
 “When the phoenix (humā) of prosperity wishes to make the roof of one man its abode, and the owl of misfortune to haunt the threshold of another, though their stations be widely different, the one in the zenith of good fortune and the other in the nadir of abasement, yet neither scarcity of equipment nor feebleness of condition prevents the fortunate man from attaining his goal.” (Jahāngošāy p. 14; translation by Boyle in Juvaini (1958: 19))

²⁰The king is the interlocutor and the word malek could therefore also be translated ‘you’ or ‘my king’.

- (25) mifarmāyand ke bar mā kašf šod ke ruḥ-e nāteqe e‘tebār-i nadārād...va miguyand ke ānče anbiyā...farmude-and ke u-rā kamāl o noqšān-i nist va ba‘d az farāq-e badan be zāt-e x^vod qā‘em o bāqi x^vāhad bud maḥāl-ast
 “People say that they have discovered that the “speaking soul” does not exist... and they argue that what the prophets have said, i.e. that it (the soul) is perfect and flawless and that it will be fixed and everlasting in its own nature after the separation from the body, is absurd.” (‘Obeid p. 235)
- (26) moqarrabān-e salāṭin čun kasān-i-and ke be kuh-i boland bālā miravand ammā ‘āqebāt be zalāzel-e qahr o navāzel-e dahr az ān kuh x^vāhand oftād va šakk nist ke oftādan-e bolandtarān ša‘btar x^vāhad bud va be zir āmadan-e forutarān sahltar
 “The favourites of the sultans are like people who climb a high mountain but finally due to eruptions of fury and misfortunes of this world will fall down from that mountain, and there is no doubt that it is harder for those higher up to fall and easier for those who are lower to come down.” (Bahār. p. 46)
- (27) goft...čenin gamān mibaram ke az masāfat-e dur āmade-ast va gorosne-ast nax^vāstam ke vei-rā gorosne gozāram pas goft emruz če x^vāhi x^vord goft ruze x^vāham dāšt
 “He said:...I believe that he has come from far away and is hungry. I did not want to leave him hungry. Then he said: What are you going to (do you intend to) eat today? He answered: I am going to fast.” (Bahār. p. 55)
- (28) fesād-e in kār šad sāl-e digar zāher x^vāhad šod
 “The corruption of this deed will be evident in a hundred years.” (Hezār p. 792)
- (29) az mafsade-ye ān mosammi-i ke ba‘d-e u x^vāhad bud andiše kard
 “He thought about the mischief of the [man] appointed to be [king] after him.” (Hezār p. 805-806)
- (30) mitarsam ke in ḥekāyat-e man bāqi mānad dar a‘qāb-e mā va ‘ār-i bovad mā o ra‘y-e mā-rā bā in hame yād x^vāham kard tā ‘elm-e torā ziyādat gardānam
 “I am afraid that this story of mine will remain among our descendants and be a shame to us and our prudence. Even so, I intend to tell it in order to increase your knowledge.” (Hezār p. 806)

- (31) tā...šahrhā ke eskandar az fārs xarāb kard ābādān nakonad
nax^vāhad ārāmīd
 “He will not rest until he has rebuilt the towns in Fars that Alexander destroyed.”
 (Hezār p. 812)
- (32) be sabab-e tark-e vašiyat-e u tašviš-i va āšub-i dar jahān *x^vāhad ofīād*
 “Due to the neglect of his last will there will be anxiety and disturbance in the world.”
 (Hezār p. 814)
- (33) čun jāmedār biyāmad befarmud ke emruz *nax^vāham pušīd* jāmedār
 jāme-rā bebast va be sarāy āvord
 “When the robe-keeper came, he said that he would not²¹ put [the robe] on today. The robe-keeper folded it and took it home.”
 (Hezār p. 837)

This construction is found in more examples of intention-based future and volition (exs. 18, 19, 21-23) than of prediction-based future (exs. 15, 16, 20) in early Classical Persian. This is but natural since the construction is a volitional construction. It is, however, noteworthy that it also is found for prediction-based future already in one of the earliest Classical Persian works, i.e. *Tārix-e bal‘ami* (ex. 15). In the late Classical Persian works this construction occurs as often for prediction-based (see exs. 25, 26, 28, 29, 32) as for intention-based (see exs. 27, 30, 33) future, but at the same time it is still, at least at the end of the 13th century (e.g. in *Tārix-e jahāngošāy*), used as a modal construction for volition (ex. 24).

It thus seems that this construction was mainly, but not exclusively, used for volition and intention-based future in early Classical Persian and that it gradually became more and more common also in prediction-based future throughout the classical period. Even so, it was still in the late classical period used, though less frequently, for modal expressions of volition. At the same time, the variant with the long infinitive is no longer found in late Classical Persian. We thus see that the pragmatic strengthening and semantic bleaching of this construction took at least more than 300 years, from mid-10th century (Bal‘ami) to late 13th century (Joveini). Further studies of late classical texts may give examples of modal-volitional use of this construction even later.

²¹See fn. 18.

3.2 Modern Persian²²

In Modern Persian we are dealing with both spoken language (although outside the scope of this article) and various genres of written language. This investigation is limited to factual prose and fiction. Grammatical descriptions of Modern Persian (see above and fn. 12) refer to the use of the non-past indicative verb forms for the future, some in less detail, others paying more attention to different registers of the language. The non-past realis (indicative) form in Modern Persian is the one with the *mi*-prefix. We thus have a lexical/contextual marking of the future also in Modern Persian.

As for the morphological form with *be-*, it is in the modern language grammaticalised, in variation with \emptyset , as a marker of irrealis modality (subjunctive). However, in some occurrences of this *be*-marked form in the text studied this form seems to be used for future time reference rather than irrealis modality (see exs. 37, 41, 42 below).

The volitional construction 1 with the verb *x'āstan* 'to want' + short infinitive is, on the other hand, grammaticalised for future time reference, and does not express volition in the modern language. Its use is restricted, however, mainly to certain registers of the written language and also to formal spoken language.

An investigation of approximately 70 pages of factual prose and 70 pages of fiction in Modern Persian chosen at random gives at hand that a further investigation of texts belonging to different genres and written at different times may show interesting variations when it comes to expressing the future. All the factual prose texts investigated here are written after 1979, but the fiction is written during a longer time span, and here texts from before and after 1979 (the year of the Revolution) are considered separately. Below the findings from these texts will be presented.

Factual prose

In the factual prose texts, there are altogether 34 occurrences of future time reference, 26 of these employ the volitional construction 1, seven use the non-past indicative and mark the future with lexical or contextual means, and one occurrence is a *be*-marked form. It may be interesting to note that in newspaper texts, only the volitional construction 1 is employed. There seems to be a strong tendency towards obligatory use of this construction for future time reference in factual prose, and particularly when prediction-

²²Also including Dari and Tajik. For Tajik, see e.g. Rzehak (1999: 17, 86-87).

based future is intended (see ex. 34).

1. Volitional construction 1:

- (34) hargāh fa‘āliyathā-ye āmuzeši va toujihi-ye kāfi piš az saršomāri anjām napazirad, mizān-e deqqat-e āmārḥā-ye nahāyi pā’ in *x^vāhad bud*
 “Whenever sufficient teaching and explanation does not take part before the census, the level of exactness in the statistical outcome will be low.” (Saršomāri p. 361)
- (35) in *x^vod baḥs-i-ast ke dar jā-yi digar va zamān-i digar be ān x^vāhim pardāxt*
 “This is a discussion that we will engage in at another place and another time.” (Saršomāri p. 363)

2. Lexically/contextually marked future with *mi*-marked form of the non-past form:

- (36) dar šad sāl-e āyande nazdik be nim-i az 6000 zabān-e moujud dar jahān yā az miyān *miravand*, yā dar ḥāl-e az bein raftan *x^vāhand bud*
 “In the coming hundred years almost half of the 6000 existing languages in the world will either be lost or be in the process of becoming extinct.” (Jahāni p. 136)

3. The non-past form morphologically marked with the prefix *be*-

- (37) mišavad pišbini kard ke dar šad sāl-e āyande bein-e 50 tā 90 dar šad az šeš hezār zabān-e moujud az bein *beravand*
 “It can be predicted that in the coming hundred years between 50 and 90% of the six thousand existing languages will become extinct.” (Jahāni p. 142)

Fiction

In fiction written before the Islamic Revolution (1979), there are seven occurrences of the volitional construction 1 for future, six in non-dialogue and one in dialogue, and there are 34 occurrences of a non-past indicative verb form, i.e. lexical or contextual marking of the future, all in dialogue. There are, furthermore, six *be*-marked forms where the future time referenced seems stronger than the irrealis modality. In the post-revolutionary

texts, there are 17 future time references, all in dialogue, using the non-past indicative verb form. There are also other constructions used for future time reference in the texts investigated, namely the progressive-ingressive construction²³ (twice—both in pre-1979 texts), and the volitional construction 2 (twice—both in post-1979 texts).²⁴ Examples:

1. Volitional construction 1 in non-dialogue:

- (38) *midānest ke gereftan-e zan-e digar bar badbaxti-ye u x^v āhad afzud*
 “He knew that taking another wife would (lit. will)²⁵ increase his
 misfortune.” (H.M. p. 79)

2. Volitional construction 1 in dialogue:

- (39) *agar ġeir az man va doxtar kas-e digar in dour o barhā bāšad afsāne*
ašar-i nax^v āhad dāšt
 “If someone else than me and the girl is somewhere around here,
 the tale will not work.” (Afsāne p. 225)

3. Lexically/contextually marked future with *mi*-marked form of the non-past tense:

- (40) *avval savār-e māšin bešim ba ‘d barā-t qāqā ham mixaram*
 “Let’s first get on the bus, then I will buy ‘goodies’ for you.”
 (Bačče p. 20)

4. The non-past form morphologically marked with the prefix *be-*:

- (41) *ba ‘d-e šām enšā’ allāh sar-e ḥāl miyāi va ḥesābi gap mizanim ...*
enšā’ allāh ke be ḥaqq-e xodā inṭouri beše
 “After supper, hopefully, you will come round and we will chat a
 lot. Hopefully, by God, it will be like this.” (Zanbur. p. 13)

²³The progressive-ingressive construction marks aspect in Modern Persian and is normally used for actions that are in progress (e.g. ‘I am writing a letter now’) or are about to start (e.g. ‘I am leaving now’).

²⁴Both these examples are of intention-based future. However, when this paper was presented and discussed an example of prediction-based future from Modern Persian was brought up and discussed, namely:

i. *mesl-e inke bārun mix^v ād biyād*
 “It seems like it is going to rain.”

²⁵See fn. 18.

- (42) yek ruz ham az ‘omr-am bāqi bāšad talāfi *bekešam* ke ru-ye nān
bekoni sag nax^vore
“If only one day of my life is left, I will take such a revenge that if
it were spread on bread not even a dog would eat it” (i.e. a terrible
revenge). (H.M. p. 82)

5. The progressive-ingressive construction:

- (43) quč‘ali če be mouqe‘ āmadi. man *dāram miram*. x^vāharat-rā tanhā
nagožār
“Quchali, how well on time you came. I am leaving (i.e. I intend to
leave any moment). Don’t leave your sister alone.” (Afsāne p. 227)

6. Volitional construction 2:

- (44) kei miyāre? vaqti ke ‘arusi kardim. ‘arusi? *mix^vāi ‘arusi koni?*
“When will he bring it (the comb)? When we have got married.
Married? Are you going to get married?”²⁶ (Šok. p. 247)

4 Concluding remarks

The primary strategy for Persian when it comes to expressing future time reference is lexical/contextual marking with the non-past form of the verb. In written language, it is the one encountered the most commonly in Classical Persian (with a \emptyset -marked verb form) and in the fiction genre of Modern Persian (with a *mi*-marked verb form).

The periphrastic constructions used in Persian are based on the verb ‘to want’, thus volitional constructions. When it comes to written Modern Persian, obligatory use of the volitional construction 1 for future time reference seems to be on its way of being established in some registers, particularly in factual prose. A morphological marking of future time reference with the verbal prefix *be-* plays a very marginal role.

²⁶The meaning of this sentence is not: ‘Do you want to marry?’, since the person talking is a small girl, who would prefer to play rather than getting married and who promises her playmates that her husband will bring them gifts, e.g. dolls and combs. Further on in the story (*ibid.*) she also says:

- i. *mix^vād barā-mun xune besāze*
“He (the husband) is going to build us a house” (not “he wants to build us a house”).

Strategies	Early Classical Persian	Late Classical Persian	Modern Persian (factual prose)	Modern Persian (fiction)
Non-past with \emptyset -marking	exs. 1–3	exs. 4–5	—	—
Non-past with <i>be</i> -marking	ex. 6	ex. 7	ex. 37	exs. 41–42
Non-past with <i>mi</i> -marking	—	exs. 13–14	ex. 36	ex. 40
Volitional construction 1	exs. 15–23	exs. 24–33	exs. 34–35	exs. 38–39
Volitional construction 2	—	—	—	ex. 44
Progressive-ingressive construction	—	—	—	ex. 43

Table 1: Strategies for marking future time reference in Classical and Modern Persian

A major part of this article has been devoted to an investigation of the grammaticalisation process of the volitional construction 1. It is clear that this has taken place over several hundred years, when this construction was gradually pragmatically strengthened and semantically bleached from its volitional meaning to expressing merely future time reference, particularly prediction-based future.

The present study also raises many questions and therefore invites to further studies of future time reference in Persian. It may be assumed that the volitional constructions found in use also for future time reference at first enter the domain of intention-based future and then spread also to prediction-based future. A question that would need a deeper investigation is how this spread has taken place for volitional construction 1. As we have seen, already in early Classical Persian this construction was used both for intention-based and prediction-based future.

Another question is whether this construction may be “moving on” to expressing prediction-based, rather than intention-based, future in the modern language. In the factual prose investigated this construction is more often found to express prediction-based (exs. 34, 38, 39) than intention-based future, even if there are also examples of the latter (ex. 35). Should the spread of volitional construction 2 also to future time reference be seen in the light of this pragmatic strengthening of volitional construction 1?

A very interesting and important potential study would be that of different registers of spoken Modern Persian. How commonly is the volitional construction 1 used in spoken Persian and in what speech situations is it encountered? How common is the volitional construction 2? What other constructions for future time reference are found? A special investigation of volitional construction 2 will be particularly rewarding. Is it primarily used for intention-based future, or is it equally common for prediction-based future? Is it only used in the spoken language and in written dialogue, which is a way of representing the spoken language in writing, or has it also spread to non-dialogue passages in fiction?

A thorough diachronic study of the use of the two non-past forms of the Persian verb commonly found to express irrealis modality in Modern Persian (\emptyset - and *be*-marked) would also be rewarding and spread light on the restructuring of the Persian verbal system from the classical to the modern language.

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Corpus

The texts investigated for early Classical Persian are:

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- Ebn al-Balxi, *Fārsnāme*, ed. by G. Le Strange and R. A. Nicholson, London 1921. (Abbreviated Fārsnāme, pages chosen: 60-73 (line 3).)
- Keikāvos ebn-e Eskandar ebn-e Qābus ebn-e Vošmgir, *Qābusnāme*, ed. by Reuben Levy, Hertford 1951. (Abbreviated Qāb., pages chosen: 36-43 and 74-81.)
- Nāšer ebn-e Xosrou Qobādiyāni Marvazi, Abu Mo'in Ḥamid al-Din, *Safarnāme*, ed. by Moḥammad Dabir Siyāqi, Tehrān 1335 H.Š. (Abbreviated Safar., pages chosen: 1-10.)
- Neẓām ol-Molk (Abu 'Ali Ḥasan Ṭusi), *Siyar ol-moluk (Siyāsatnāme)*, ed. by Hubert Darke, Tehrān 1340 H.Š. (Abbreviated Siyāsat., pages chosen: 201-225.)

Classical Persian is here transcribed according to Modern Persian pronunciation conventions, which is not uncommon in studies of Classical Persian that do not particularly deal with phonological issues. Thus the vowels, which in the classical language were distinguished more by length than quality (a, ā, i, ī, ē, u, ū, o), are here transcribed according to their modern pronunciation and without differentiating between *majhul* and *ma'ruf* as a, ā, i, e, u, o.

The texts investigated for late Classical Persian are:

- *Hezār sāl-e naṣr-e pārsi*, vol. 3, ed by Karim Kešāvarz, Tehrān 1345 H.Š. (Abbreviated Hezār, pages chosen: 659-681 (*Sendbādnāme*), 787-816 (*Tārix-e Ṭabarestān*), 831-857 (*Javāme' al-ḥekāyāt*).)
- Jāmi, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, *Bahārestān*, ed. by Esmā'il Ḥākemi, Tehrān 1367 H.Š. (Abbreviated Bahār., pages chosen: 25-61.)

- Joveini, ‘Alā al-Din ‘Aṭā Malek ebn-e Bahā al-Din ebn-e Moḥammad ebn-e Moḥammad, *Tārix-e jahāngošāy*, vol. 1, ed by Moḥammad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Qazvini, Leiden 1911. (Abbreviated Jahāngošāy, pages chosen: 14 (line 3)–32 (line 11).)
- Sa‘di, [Šeix Mošleḥ al-Din], *Kolliyāt-e Sa‘di*, ed. by Moḥammad ‘Ali Foruḡi, Tehrān 1340 H.Š. (Abbreviated Golestān, pages chosen: 13-50 (the text *Golestān*, ch. 1).)
- Zākāni, ‘Obeid, *Kolliyāt-e ‘Obeid-e Zākāni*, ed. by Moḥammad Ja‘far Maḥjub, New York 1999. (Abbreviated ‘Obeid, pages chosen: 231-255 (the text *Axlāq ol-ašrāf*))

The texts investigated for Modern Persian fiction are:

- Afšār (Sistāni), Iraj, “‘Ašāyer-e brāhui,” in *Fašlnāme-ye ‘ašāyeri: Zaxāyer-e enqelāb*, no. 4, autumn 1367. (Abbreviated ‘Ašāyer, pages chosen: 43-55.)
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- Najafzāde Bārforuš, Moḥammad Bāqer, *Zanān-e dāstānnevis dar irān*, Tehrān 1375. (Abbreviated Zanān, pages chosen: 8-20.)
- Sanāyi, Mehdi, “*Tājikkān va zabān-e tājiki*,” in *Nāme-ye pārsi*, no. 6, autumn 1376. (Abbreviated Tājik., pages chosen: 127-132.)
- Seven news articles, all written after the Islamic Revolution and taken from the Internet, newspapers or magazines, comprising altogether ca. 20 pages. (Abbreviated News.)

The texts investigated for Modern Persian factual prose are:

- Āl-e Aḥmad, Jalāl, “*Bačče-ye mardom*,” published in *Se tār*, Tehrān 1357 H.Š. (5th printing). (Abbreviated Bačče, pages chosen: 17-25.)
- Behrangī, Šamad, “*Afsāne-ye moḥabbat*,” published in *Qešsehā-ye behrang*, Tehrān 1360. (Abbreviated Afsāne, pages chosen: 215-230.)
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- Šokufāyi-ye dāstān-e kutāh dar dahe-ye noxostin-e enqelāb, ed. by Şafdar Taqizāde, [Tehrān] 1372 H.Ş. (Abbreviated Šok., pages chosen: 113-119, 211-219, 239-273.)