Contrastive Analysis of Aspectual Oppositions in English and Persian

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Abstract

This article aims at contrasting aspectual oppositions in English and Persian in the context of the novel *The Old Man and the Sea*, and its translation by Daryabandari (1983) as the data. Unlike English, in Persian perfective and imperfective forms are morphologically marked. While the vast majority of English simple past forms are translated into Persian by past perfective forms, only less than a quarter of them are translated into this language by past imperfective forms. Most English verbs translated into Persian by past perfectives mainly include past progressives, infinitives and gerunds. In translating English gerunds, simple present forms, prepositional phrases and infinitive forms one normally uses Persian past perfective forms. All Persian non-past forms take *mi-* obligatorily and they are used in translating a wide range of English non-past forms including simple present and infinitive forms. English simple past forms are mainly used in expressing single events, habits, states and conditionals, whereas the vast majority of Persian past perfectives are used in expressing perfective situations. English simple present forms are mainly used in expressing habits, facts or perfective situations, whereas, Persian non-past forms are mainly used in expressing perfective or progressive situations either in present or future, as well as habits and facts.

Keywords: Aspectual Oppositions, Perfective, Imperfective, Non-past, Simple Present, Simple Past

1. Introduction

In any natural language, speakers can express the same thought in different ways, depending on a variety of factors, including the context, topic, means of expression, emphasis, audience and the like. The reader/listener normally makes certain inferences and, accordingly, interprets what s/he reads/hears.

The assumed shared knowledge among the members of a society with the same language makes it possible for the writer/speaker to choose the desired structures to encourage the desired interpretation from the part of the reader/listener. This shared knowledge leads one to write/say certain points clearly and to assume others to be understood by the reader/listener.

Your choices of structures, according to context of situation, mainly depend on your knowledge of semantic-pragmatic characteristics of your language system.

The above issues gain a double significance when it comes to translating from one language into another. Practical translation, even for very skilled people, is a tough task. This is mainly so because languages differ from each other in different respects. First, corresponding syntactic categories, especially verbs, may be of different semantic features. The ways in which semantic properties combine to identify entities and ideas do not necessarily follow the same pattern among different languages. Second, interactions among tense, time and aspectual oppositions in any one language may differ greatly from those in others. Third, verb moods and auxiliaries often function differently in expressing aspectual oppositions in various languages.

Regarding difficulties in translating verbs, El-Dash and Busnardo (2003) discuss interesting points directly related to our discussion:

Any translation involves choice. The source text reflects the semantic and syntactic options and constraints of the original language, as well as pragmatic expectations of the intended audience. Problems arise when the linguistic selections and pragmatic practices of the source text find no equivalents in the target language. This lack of equivalence can involve a whole gamut of potential differences, from semantic gaps and collocational constraints to contrasting syntactic usage and pragmatic and interpretive practices ... a translator unfamiliar with the reportedly shared experiences assumed by the original writer will face a number of problems, often aggravated by other potential sources of difficulty.

(El-Dash and Busnardo, 2003, p. 1825)

Similar meanings are not necessarily expressed by the same structures in two different languages. Consider the following:

(1) *Saadi golestăn ră dar qarn-e haftom nevešt-e ast-ø* [narrative past]

   Saadi Golestăn comp in century-link seventh write.ps-ptcpl be.nps-3sg

   Saadi wrote *Golestăn* in the seventh century Hejra. [simple past]

The above would be used as an answer to a question like (2):

(2) *Saadi golestăn ră key nevešt-e ast-ø?*   [narrative past]

   Saadi Golestăn comp when write.ps-ptcpl be.nps-3sg/write.ps-3sg

   When did Saadi write Golestăn?

Many Persian past perfectives and past imperfectives are rendered into English by the same verbal form, namely, simple past:

(3) a. *'faqat sedâ-ye šekâftan-e daryâ râ mi-šenid-ø...'* [p.175] [past imperfective]

   only voice-link breaking-link sea comp impf-hear.ps.3sg

   'He... only heard the breaking of the ocean....' [p.82]

(3) b. '*vali măhi băz xodaš ră răst kard-ø*' [p.184] [past perfective]

   But fish again himself comp right did.ps-3sg

   'But again the fish righted himself' [p.92]

According to the context, in (3a), the past imperfective *mi-šenid-ø* 'heard' indicates that the speaker repeatedly heard the sound of the breaking of the ocean, whereas, in (3b), the past perfective *răst kard-ø* 'righted' represents a single event. Their English equivalents, however, are simple past.

2. Objectives of the Study

This paper aims at comparing and contrasting aspectual oppositions in Persian and English. The context of the study is *The old man and the sea* by Ernest Hemingway (1952) translated into Persian by Daryâbandari (1983) and the data will be extracted from these two sources. In spite of similarities between the two languages, it seems that they differ significantly from each other in certain aspectual respects. The present research focuses on both formal and semantic-pragmatic sides of comparison and contrast.

3. Theoretical Frameworks

As far as English is concerned, the classification of aspectual oppositions proposed by Comrie's (1976) will be implemented as a theoretical framework.

Since this classification is not suitably applicable into Persian, a modified version, proposed by Rahimian (1995) will be used in discussing Persian aspectual oppositions.

'Aspect' is defined as "... different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation" (Comrie, 1976, p.3, following (Holt, 1943, p.6)). Consider the following:

(4) *'Pisu-hâ … âb râ mi-šekâft-and, tâ vaqti mâhi-hâ be âb oftâd-and* [p.126]
    Dolphin- pl water comp impf-cut.ps-3pl, till when fish-pl to water fall.ps-3pl
    'The dolphins were cutting through the water…, when the fish dropped' [p.31]

In both Persian and English sentences in (4), the first verb indicates the background to an event which is presented by the second verb. The first Persian verb presents a situation with reference to its internal structure.

This meaning is technically referred to as imperfective. Persian, but not English, is among languages which have a certain verbal form to express such meaning, so we regard this language as having imperfective aspect.

In each of the above sentences, the second verb presents the situation as a single event without any reference to its internal structure. Here, the speaker views the situation as a 'single unanalysable whole, with beginning, middle, and end rolled into one'. Verbal forms having such meaning are referred to as perfective. Persian belongs to languages which have perfective aspect because it contains a certain verbal form to express a perfective meaning.

One can hardly discuss 'aspect' without referring to 'tense' and 'time'. In order to identify the position of the present research with regards to 'tense' and 'time', Comrie (1985) will be used as a framework.

4. Literature Review

To the best of this researcher's knowledge, contrastive analysis of Persian and English aspectual oppositions remains to be investigated. However, a number of studies have separately discussed aspectual oppositions in each of the two languages. Moreover, a number of contrastive studies between English and languages other than Persian have been conducted. An overview of each of these studies seems necessary here.

In the majority of Persian works, aspectual oppositions are discussed in the context of tense and aspect of verb phrases. Presenting six different verb phrases, Meshkat-o-deeni (2000) writes about past perfective, past imperfective

and perfect aspects in Persian. However, for no specific reason, he fails to recognize non-past imperfective which is quite significant in Persian.

In analyzing the functions of the Persian verb prefix *mi-*, Rahimian (1998) discusses different aspectual uses of past and non-past verbs in Persian. For him an indicative verbal form is always either perfective or imperfective. While perfective verbs are always past tense, imperfectives are either past or non-past.

Rahimian (2007) shows how grammatical aspect differs from its semantic-pragmatic counterpart in Persian verb phrases. He argues that one does not necessarily expect a one-to-one correspondence between the two aspects.

Persian speakers, for instance, may use a present progressive structure not for a situation in progress but for an event about to happen.

Mahootian (1997) presents a confusing account of 'aspect' in Persian. In her account one cannot find a clear distinction between 'aspect' as a category of form and 'aspect' as a category of meaning. She discusses over ten different aspects which include both formal and semantic aspectual categories.

Vahidian Kamyar and Omrani (2000) present an account of different Persian aspects in the context of verbs tenses without mentioning the term 'aspect, as many Persian grammars do. Their account includes 'perfect', 'perfective', 'imperfective' and 'progressive' aspects.

Making a distinction between aspect as a lexical category and aspect as a grammatical issue, Olsen (1994) studies two related phenomena in human languages. In the light of the first type, the capacity of verbs, as well as other lexical categories in describing the way in which situations develop or hold in time, is revealed. The second type is associated with the function of verbal auxiliaries and affixes in presenting the development or the result of situations

at a given time. This article with its semantic-pragmatic approach will help us in analyzing our data.

Believing in interdependence of 'mood', 'tense' and 'aspect', Lyons (1995) regards English progressive (e.g. '*x* is/was opening the door') as the major grammaticalized aspectual distinction versus non-progressive (e.g. '*x* opens/opened the door'). However, this does not mean that there are no other types of aspectual distinctions in English. In fact, one can discuss considerable context-dependent aspectual oppositions in this language.

In the context of a contrastive study in Greek and English, Horrocks and Stavrou (2003) note that 'languages show a systematic correlation between the presence of a grammaticalized opposition between perfective and imperfective aspect lexically/morphologically encoded in verb forms'.

This type of opposition in English and Persian will be looked into in this study.

As far as formal aspect of the verb as a single inflectional lexical item is concerned, English has a very simple and straightforward aspectual system: an English verb as such is either present perfective or past perfective.

Depending on the context, perfective and imperfective situations can be expressed by the above forms. Further aspectual oppositions in this language are expressed by certain auxiliaries accompanied by lexical verbs.

Progressive and perfect are two typical examples of aspect in English cited in Radford (2004). These two aspects are expressed by proper forms of auxiliaries **be** and **have** followed by main verbs. Radford also extends the notion of 'aspect' to non-finite forms such as **taken** which he regards as perfect participle.

5. Finite Forms

5.1. English Finite Forms

In English finite forms are not normally morphologically distinguished from one another. Recognizing that 'be' is an exception to the rule, we use it in Figure 1 to visualize how indicative and non-indicative forms can be distinguished from each other:
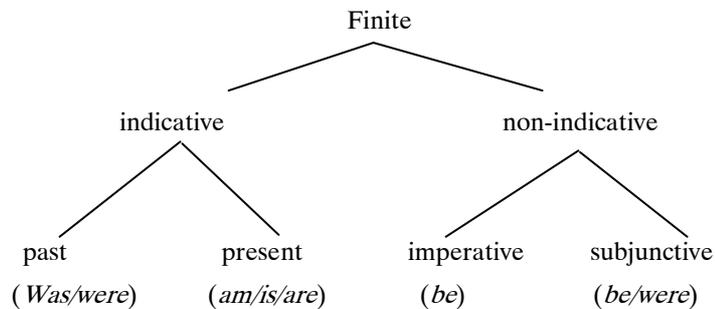
```
                              Finite
                    _____/      _____
              indicative                    non-indicative
              /      \                        /        \
          past      present            imperative    subjunctive
       (Was/were)  (am/is/are)            (be)         (be/were)
```

Figure 1. English finite forms

5.2. Persian Finite Forms

Unlike English, Persian finite verbal forms are formally distinguished from one another. A finite verb is either indicative or non-indicative. An indicative form appears either in the past or non-past form. Past forms include perfective and imperfective. All indicative non-past forms are always imperfective. Non-indicative forms contain imperative and `subjunctive. Consider the verb *raft-an* 'go' which is inflected for second person singular in Figure 2:

Finite
```
                    Finite
                   /      \
           indicative      non-indicative
            /      \          /        \
         past    non-past  imperative  subjunctive
         /  \        |
 perfective imperfective imperfective
```

perfective   imperfective   imperfective   imperative   subjunctive

raft-i   *mi-raft-i*   *mi-rav-i* *bo-ro-ø*   *be-rav-i*

go.ps-2sg   impf-go.ps-2sg   impf-go.nps-2sg   imprav-go.nps-2sg   nin-go.nps-2sg
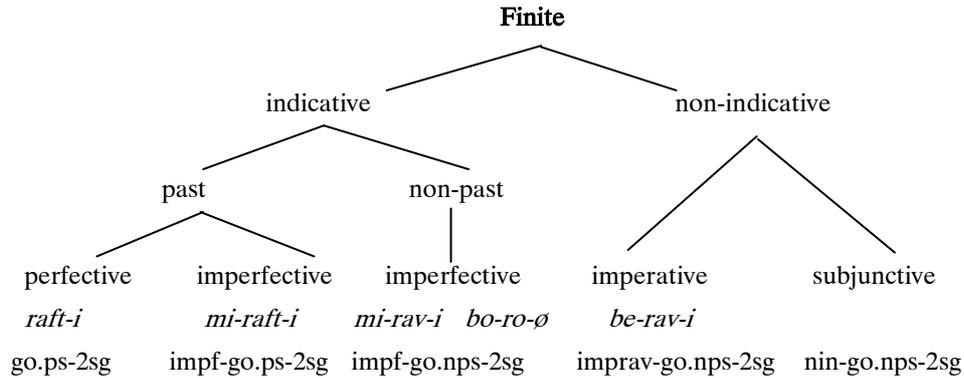
Figure 2. Persian finite forms

5.3. English and Persian Formal Aspectual Oppositions with Indicatives

As far as form is concerned, based on Figures 1 and 2, one can visualize formal aspectual oppositions with indicatives in the two languages as shown in Table 1:

Table 1. English and Persian aspectual oppositions

English and Persian aspectual oppositions with indicatives			
English	Simple Past (perfective)		Simple Present (perfective)
Persian	Past perfective	past imperfective	Non-past imperfective

6. Semantic-Pragmatic Aspectual Oppositions

6.1. English

In his account of aspectual oppositions, Comrie (1976) makes the first division between perfective and imperfective situations. According to him, an imperfective situation is either habitual or continuous. A continuous situation is either progressive or non-progressive. The latter refers to stative situations, whereas the former presents situations in progress as shown in Figure 3:
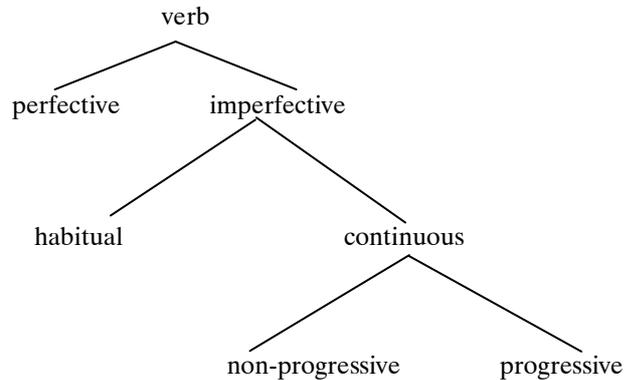
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```
                          verb

              perfective        imperfective

                        habitual           continuous

                                   non-progressive      progressive
```

Figure 3. Comrie's classification of aspectual oppositions

In spite of no morphological distinction between perfective and imperfective in English, such distinctions are contextually conceivable. Consider the following pair, for instance:

(5) *'The breeze was fresh now and he **sailed** on well'* [p.104]

(6) *'When he **sailed** into the little harbor the lights of the Terrace were out...'* [p.121]

In the above we deal with the same form of the verb, i. e. *sailed;* however, regarding the context, the first instance reflects an imperfective process, whereas the second presents a perfective event.

As for habitual situations, there is a separate aspect in English. *Used to* plus an infinitive, and *be used to* plus an *-ing* form of the verb are used to express a habit in the past and present time references respectively. A continuous situation is either progressive or non-progressive. The latter refers to states and is reflected by state verbs, whereas the former is expressed by the progressive auxiliary followed by *-ing* form of the verb:

(7) *'He used to come to the Terrace sometimes too in the older days'* [p.19] [habit]

(8) *'He was shivering with the morning cold'* [p.22][prog]

(9) *'I fear the Indians of Cleveland'* [p.13][non-prog]

 "Progressive and non-progressive are not in general interchangeable, nor can one of these in general be replaced by the other" (Comrie, 1976, p. 33).

Habitual situations in the past time may also be presented by either a simple past form or an auxiliary such as 'would' plus an infinitive:

(10) *'But you went turtle-ing for years off the Mosquito Coast'* [p.10][habit]

(11) *'When they were hungry they would bite at an oar ...'* [p.108][habit]

6.2. Persian

As shown before, perfective and imperfective are morphologically marked in Persian. Persian imperfectives are accompanied by the prefix *mi-*. It is a marker of imperfective aspect and is mostly used to express imperfective aspectuality.

We draw a distinction between 'aspect' which is a category of form and 'aspectuality' which is a category of meaning. Accordingly, while any verb accompanied by *mi-* is regarded as imperfective, it may or may not express imperfective aspectuality, depending on the context. Consider the following examples:

(12) *'hâlâ havâs-am râ jam-e kâr-am mi-kon-am, ...'* [p.148]
      Now senses-pl com together-link work-poss impf-do.nps-1sg
      'Now I will pay attention to my work ...' [p.54]

(13) *'bâd hamvâr mi-vazid-ø'* [p.199]
      Breeze steady impf-blow.ps-3sg
      'The breeze was steady' [p. 106]

As far as form is concerned, both of the verbs in (12) and (13) are imperfective. However, in semantic-pragmatic terms, the latter presents an imperfective situation in progress in a period prior to the speech time, whereas the former indicates a perfective event to happen after the speech time.

In Persian, imperfectives indicate either repetition or continuation of a situation. While, the latter is necessarily progressive, the former expresses either a habit or non-habitual situation:

(14) *'bâ har ĉarx-i ke mâhi mi-zad-ø u rismân pas mi-gereft-ø ...'* [p.182]

    With each turn-indef that fish impf-hit.ps-3sg he thread back impf-get.ps-3sg

    'With each calm placid turn the fish made he was gaining line ...' [p.90]

The first verb, *mi-zad-ø* 'would hit' indicates an event which occurred repeatedly before the speech time, whereas, the second, *pas mi-gereft-ø* 'would gain' expresses a process which was in progress for some period of time. Now, consider the following:

(15) '*... agar gorosneh bud-and âdam râ ham dar âb mi-zad-and*' [p.201]

    ... if hungry be.ps-3sg human comp also in water impf-hit. ps-3pl

    '... they would hit a man in the water, if they were hungry' [p.108]

According to the context, example (15) indicates a habit of the sharks which is hitting a man and it may occur anytime. Persian examples (13-15) support the following classification of aspectual oppositions for Persian as shown in Figure 4:
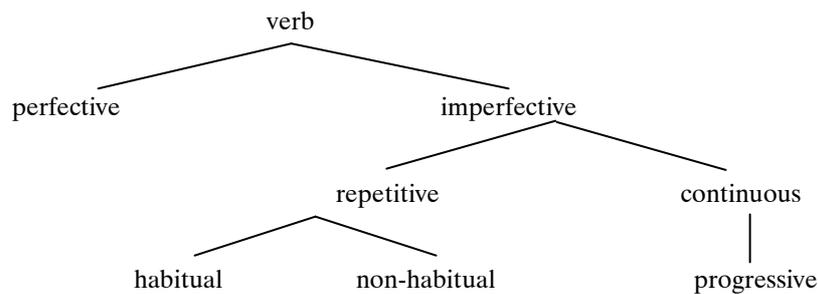

Figure 4. Persian aspectual oppositions

7. Data Analysis

Data analysis includes the following stages: **a**) extracting all Persian perfective and imperfective forms and their English equivalents from the two texts, **b**) identifying and classifying uses of the above verbal forms based on the contexts of the two texts, **c**) discovering each English verbal form used as an equivalent for each Persian verbal form, **d**) classifying English and Persian equivalents in a contrastive way.
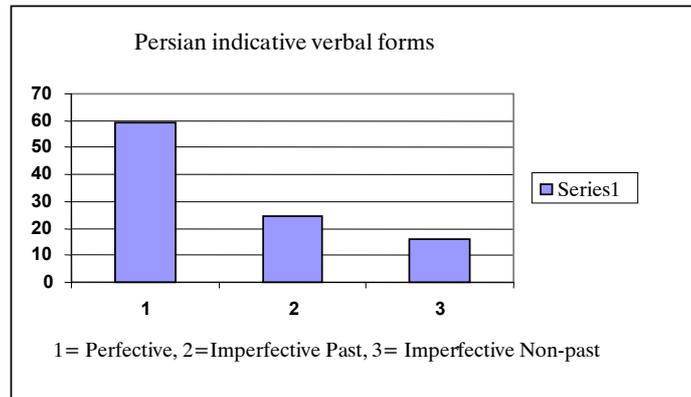
7.1. Verbal Forms of the Two Texts
7.1.1. Persian

The whole Persian text includes 2363 indicative forms: 1405 past perfectives, 576 past imperfectives and 382 non-past imperfectives. Since the verb prefix *mi-* is virtually obligatory with non-past forms, Persian lacks any non-past perfective forms. Since the whole text is a narrative in the past time, it is quite normal that the majority of the verbs appear in past perfective as shown in Table 2 and Graph 1. For practical reasons all negative verbs were disregarded.

Table 2. Persian indicative verbal forms

Persian Indicative forms			
Past		Non-past	
Perfective	Imperfective	Imperfective	**Total**
1405	576	382	2363
59.46%	24.375%	16.165%	100%

**Graph 1. Persian indicative verbal forms**

7.1.2. English

According to our search in the English text, it contains 1714 finite verbs, including 1504 simple past and 210 simple present forms. Other verbal forms of the English text, including infinitives, present participles and past participles were disregarded except for the cases where their equivalents appear finite verbal forms. Our justification for this treatment was that we started the search for the verbs with the translation text on the assumption that the procedure of discovering aspectual oppositions in Persian seems more straightforward compared to those in English. This is mainly so because past perfectives and past imperfectives are morphologically marked in Persian; see Table 3 and Graph 2:

Table 3. English inflectional forms of the text

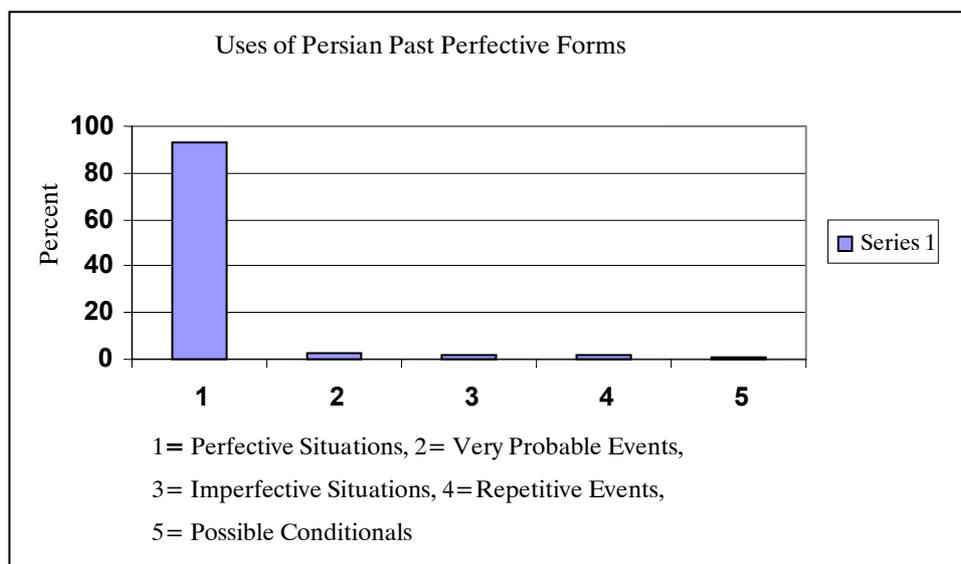| Past and present English verbs of the text		
Simple past	Simple present	Total
1504	210	1714
87.75%	12.25%	%100

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Past and Present English Verbs
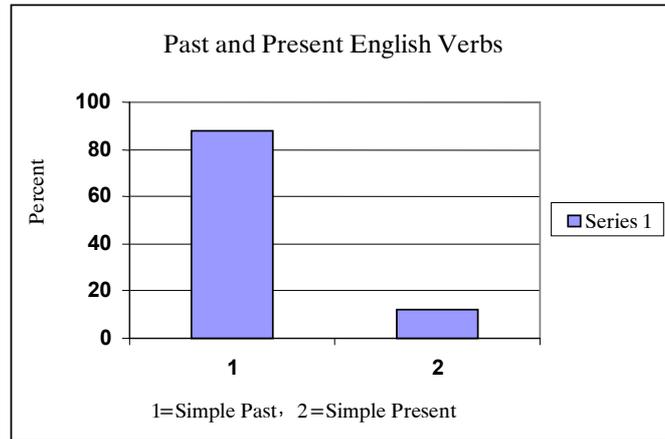
Graph 2. English inflectional forms of the text

7.2. Uses of Persian Past Perfective Forms

Our analysis of 1405 Persian past perfective forms indicates that 1310 verbs are used in expressing a single event in the past time; 36 verbs refer to events which are very probable to happen; 23 verbs are used in expressing imperfective situations; 21 verbs represent repetitive events, and 15 verbs refer to possible conditionals. An example of each use will be presented in Table 4 and Graph 3:

Table 4. Uses of Persian past perfective forms

Perfective situations	Very probable events	Imperfective situations	Repetitive events	Possible conditionals	Total
1310	36	23	21	15	1405
93.32%	2.56%	1.637%	1.494%	1.067%	%100

Uses of Persian Past Perfective Forms

[Bar chart with y-axis "Percent" ranging 0 to 100, x-axis values 1–5, with "Series 1" legend]

1= Perfective Situations, 2= Very Probable Events,

3= Imperfective Situations, 4=Repetitive Events,

5= Possible Conditionals

Graph 3. Uses of Persian past perfective forms

a. Perfective Situations

According to the context, the speaker views example (16) as a single un-analyzable situation in which some people picked up the gear from a boat. Here, neither the internal structure of the situation, nor its beginning, middle or end is of any relevance:

(16) *'vasâyel râ az qâyeq bar-dâšt-and'* [p.104] [perfective event]

     Means comp from boat up-pick.ps-3pl

    'They picked up the gear from the boat' [p.11]

b. Very Probable Events

The following is used in a context where the boy gets the cast net and sets out to go for sardines. Interestingly, the Persian verb (*raft-am*) is a past perfective form expressing an event just about to happen. This means the boy expresses the sentence exactly at the moment he is about to go to hunt sardines:

 (17) *'man raft-am dombăl-e sărdin'* [p.108]

    I go.ps-1sg after-link Sardin

    'I go now for the sardines' [p.14]

c. Imperfective Situations

The following reflects a chain of similar events, namely catching fish, which continued constantly for 21 days:

(18) *'se hafteh har ruz măhi-hă-ye dorošt gereft-im'* [p.100]

    Three week every day fish-pl.link big catch.ps-1pl

    '... we caught big ones every day for three weeks' [p.6]

d. Repetitive Events

Persian past perfective forms can be used in expressing repetitive events. In the following, for instance, the old man cut six strips:

(19) *'vaqti ke šeš terišeh borid-ø …'* [p.150]

    When that six strip cut.ps-3sg

    'When he had cut six strips …' [p.55]

e. Possible Conditionals

Past perfective forms are frequently used in conditional structures. In the following example *gereft-i* 'you got' is the verb of the protasis of a conditional construction. The speaker regards it possible for the addressee to hook some fish, so he offers him help. English equivalents for such Persian forms are normally simple present, as **hook** in the following:

(20) '... *Age ye ĉiz-e dorost o hesâbi gerft-i biâ-im komak'* [p.104]

    ... if one thing-link alright and respectable take.ps-2sg come.nps-1pl help

    '... if you hook something truly big we can come to your aid' [p.10]
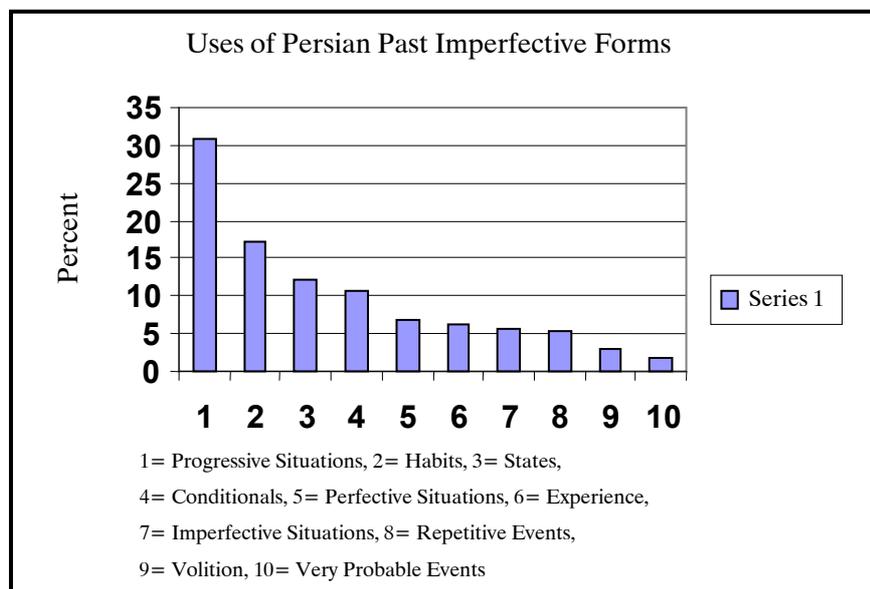
7.3. Uses of Persian Past Imperfective Forms

576 past imperfective forms were discovered from the Persian text. According to the data, Persian past imperfectives have at least 10 different uses. They are

used in expressing progressive situations, habits, states, conditionals, perfective situations, different types of experience, imperfective situations, repetitive events, desire to do certain things, and very probable events as shown in Table 5 and Graph 4:

Table 5. Uses of Persian past imperfective forms

Progressive situations	Habits	States	Conditionals	Perfective situations	Experience	Imperfective situations	Repetitive events	Volition	Very probable events	Total
178	99	70	62	40	36	33	31	17	10	**576**
30.92%	17.18%	12.15%	10.76%	6.94%	6.25%	5.72%	5.38%	2.95%	1.73%	**%100**

Graph 4. Uses of Persian past imperfective forms

a. Progressive Situations

According to the data, the most frequent uses of Persian imperfectives belong to progress situations. In the following, for instance, *mi-raft-ø* reflects a situation in progress. English expresses such situations through a periphrastic construction: the proper form of the progressive auxiliary *be* followed by present participle of the main verb:

(21) '… *va qâyeq tond mi-raft-ø* [p.174]

     … and boat fast impf-go.ps-3sg

     '… and the boat was going fast' [p.81]

A Persian progressive situation can also be expressed by an imperfective form preceded by the auxiliary, *dâšt-an* 'have':

(22) '… *sepas vaqti ke pir-mard dâšt-ø rismân râ jam mi-kard-ø …*' [p.143]

     … then when that old man prog.ps-3sg line comp sum impf-do.ps-3sg

     '… Then, while the old man was clearing the lines …' [p.47]

b. Habits

It is generally believed that Persian past imperfectives are widely used in expressing habits. This view is supported by the fact that the data contains 98 imperfective forms expressing habits. The role of the context and lexical elements is crucial in habitual interpretation of the situation. In the following, for instance, besides the verb, *hamišeh* 'always' plays a significant role in habitual interpretation of the situation:

(23) '… *Va hamišeh mi-raft-ø …*' [p.99]

     … And always impf-go.ps-3sg

     '… And he always went down …' [p.5]

c. States

One of the means of expressing sates in Persian is to use past imperfective forms. The data contains 70 cases expressed by imperfectives. The following

example, for instance, is used in a context where the writer tells the reader how the sea seems to him:

(24) *'ăb nili-ye tond bud-ø, čenăn ke benafš mi-zad-ø'* [p.126]

   Water dark-link strong be.ps-3sg, as that violet hit.ps-3sg

  'The water was dark blue now, so dark that it was almost purple' [p.32]

d. Conditionals

It is a common practice for Persian speakers to express both open and remote possibilities by past imperfective forms. As far as the data is concerned, in 62 cases imperfective forms express either remote or open possibilities. In 46 cases the sentences express remote possibilities, whereas in 16 cases this form represents open possibilities.

In the following example, for instance, the verb *mi-bord-am-et* "I'd take you out" expresses a remote possibility because the speaker is not permitted to take the boy out. In the English equivalent the sentence contains *would* plus an *infinitive*:

(25) '*Agar bačče-ye man bud-i, ... bâ xod-am mi-bord-am-et'* [p. 103]

   If son-link I be.ps-2sg, ... with myself-poss impf-take.ps-1sg-2sg.obj

  'If you were my boy I'd take you out and ...' [p.9]

As an example for open possibilities one can refer to the following which is used in a context where it is possible for the man to eat the fish with some lemon or salt:

(26) '*Agar bǎ kami ǎblimu yǎ namak mi-xord-i čandǎn bad na-bud-ø'* [p.151]

   If with little lemon-juice or salt impf-eat.ps-2sg so bad neg-be.ps-3sg

  'It would not be bad to eat with a little lime or with lemon or with salt' [p.56]

e. Perfective Situations

Persian Imperfective forms can also be used in expressing perfective situations. In the following, for instance, every now and then one of the people in a boat said something:

(27) '*gahgăhi kasi dar qăyeq harfi mi-zad-ø*' [p.119]

     Sometimes someone in boat word impf-hit.ps-3sg

     'Sometimes someone would **speak** in a boat' [p.25]

f. Experience

Persian speakers would use imperfectives to express an experience. In the following, for example, the old man could see the boats:

(28) '*piremard qăyeq-hă-ye digar ră mi-did-ø*' [p.122]

     Old-man boat-pl-link other comp impf-see.ps-3sg

     'The old man **could see** the other boats' [p.28]

g. Imperfective Situations

In the following, the imperfective form of the verb *mi-kešid-ø* 's/he would pull' indicates that the speaker considers the situation in terms of its internal structure. Here, temporal details of the situation are of concern. In the English equivalent, the imperfective interpretation of the situation is mainly reflected by the adverbial phrase *steadily* because English lacks an imperfective form of the verb:

(29) '*mâhi qâyeq râ ârâm mi-kešid-ø va qâyeq dar dâlân abr piš mi-raft-ø*' [p.174]

     fish boat comp slow impf-pull.ps-3sg and boat in tunnel cloud front impf-go.ps-3sg

     'The fish pulled on steadily and the boat moved into the tunnel of clouds' [P.81]

If the imperfective *mi-kešid-ø* 's/he would pull' is replaced by the perfective *kešid-ø* 's/he took' in the above, its interpretation will change. However, in both cases, the verb form of the English translation will be the same.

h. Repetitive Events

As far as the data is concerned, 31 Persian past imperfective forms express repetitive events. For instance, the following example is used in a context where the old man beats the fish on the head repeatedly:

(30) '... *bă sedă-ye toxmăq ke be kalle-aš mi-kubid-i*,' [p.102]

    ... with sound-link stick that to head-poss impf-club.ps-3sg

    '... the noise of you clubbing him ...' [pp. 8-9]

i. Volition

Past imperfective forms can be used in expressing situations which are regarded as desirable for the subject. Such sentences mainly appear in wish clauses. The following, for instance, is used in a context where the speaker is willing to see the fish which is not at least possible at speech time.

(31) '*kâš mi-did-am-eš*' [p.140]

    would-it-be impf-see.nps-1sg-3sg.obj

    'I wish I could see him' [p.44]

j. Very Probable Events

Past imperfective forms are proper means for giving accounts of events which were quite probable to happen sometime prior to the speech time. The following, for instance, is used in a context where the speaker is explaining what nearly happened at some point of time in the past:

(32) '*dăšt-ø qăyeq ro darb-o-dăqun mi-kard-ø*' [p.102]

    prog.ps-3sg boat comp ruined impf-do.ps-3sg

   '... he nearly tore the boat to pieces' [p.8]

7.4. Uses of Persian Non-past Forms

The verb prefix *mi-* is virtually obligatory with non-past forms. Accordingly, both perfective and imperfective situations are expressed by non-past imperfectives. The results of the search in the Persian translation indicate that 382 non-past imperfective forms have been used in the text. These verbs are used in expressing eight general concepts which are shown in Table 6 and Graph 5:

Table 6. Uses of Persian non-past imperfective forms

Future events	Facts	Progressive situations	Habits	Perfective situations	Very probable events	Volition	Imperfective situations	Total
125	71	60	40	33	22	20	11	**382**
32.72%	18.58%	15.70%	10.47%	8.63%	5.76%	5.23%	2.87%	**%100**
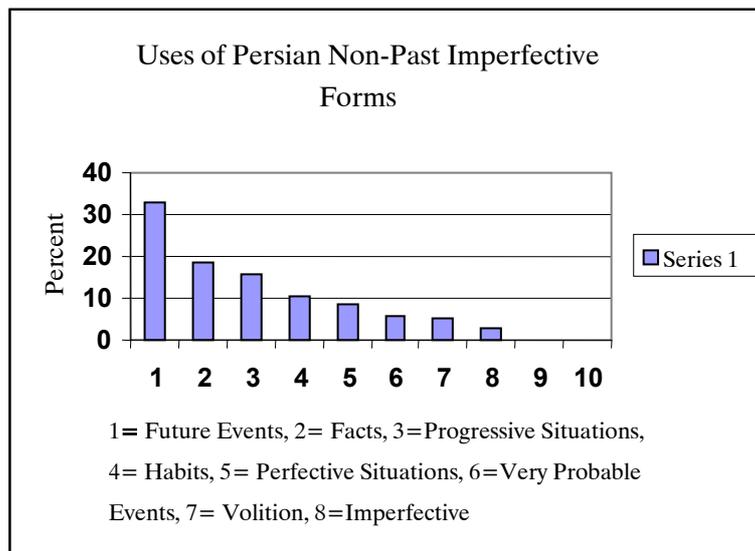
Graph 5. Uses of Persian non-past imperfective forms

a. Future Perfective Situations

One of the most common ways of expressing future perfective events in Persian is to use non-past imperfective forms. The following, for instance, is used in a context where the speaker decides to have dinner at home and informs the addressee of his decision. All such forms are normally rendered to English by a future construction:

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(33) *'xuneh šâm mi-xor-am'* [p.106]

    home dinner impf-eat.nps-1sg

    'I will eat at home' [p.12]

A formal alternative in expressing future events is the future auxiliary, *xâh* 'future auxiliary' followed by short infinitive form of the main verb which was not found in the text at all. The difference between the two is mainly a matter of style. Thus, example (28) will change as follows:

(34) *'xuneh šâm xâh-am xord'*

    home dinner fut.nps-1sg eat.ps.infv

    I will eat dinner at home

b. Facts

Non-past imperfective forms can be used in expressing general facts. The following, for instance, is used in a context where the speaker points to the fact that looking into the sun in the morning would cause pain:

(35) *'ammă sobh češm-e ădam ră mi-zan-ad'* [p.124]

    But morning eye-link human comp impf-hit.nps-3sg

    'But in the morning it is painful' [p.30]

c. Progressive Situations

As the Persian data shows, in 60 cases imperfective forms (with/without the progressive auxiliary *dăšt-an* 'have') are used in expressing progressive situations. The following, for instance, is used in a context where the speaker sees the school of fish moving out very fast:

(36) *'dâr-and xeili tond va xeili dur mi-rav-and'* [p.126]

    prog.nps-3pl much fast and much far impf-go.nps-3pl

    'They are moving out too fast and too far' [31]

In the following example the imperfective form (without *dăšt-an* 'have') also expresses a progressive situation. It is used in a context where the old man is moving towards the shore:

(37) '*ammă ănjă ke mi-rav-i havă badtar ast-ø*' [p.54]
         but there that impf-go.nps-2sg worse be.nps-3sg
         'But it is rougher where you are going ...' [p.148]

d. Habits

Current habits are normally expressed by non-past imperfective forms in Persian. For example, the following imperfective verb *bidâr mi-š-an* 'they awake' indicates that it is a habit for young boys to get up late in the morning:

(38) '*... baĉehâ dir-tar bidâr mi-š-an*' [p.115]
         ... child-pl late-comprav awake impf-become.nps-3pl
         '... Young boys *sleep late* ...' [p. 20]

e. Perfective Events

According to the data imperfective forms can also be used in expressing perfective events. In the following, for instance, the imperfective verb *padid mi-ăy-ad* 'appears' conveys a perfective event. It is used in a context where the speaker explains how brown blotches may appear on the skin:

(39) '*lakke-hăy-e qahvei ... ke az ... ăftăb padid mi-ăy-ad* [p.100]
         blotches-link brown ... that of .... sun appearing impf-come.nps-3sg
         'The brown blotches ... the sun brings ... [p.5]

f. Very Probable Events

In 22 cases among the data, non-past perfective forms are used in expressing very probable events. Regarding the context and the background knowledge, in the following, for instance, the speaker expects the fish to be killed:

(40) '*in mi-koš-ad-eš*' [p.137]
         thin impf-kill.nps-3sg-3sg.obj
         'This will kill him' [p.43]

g. Volition

Whenever the speaker would like to express his eagerness, aim or decision for something, s/he would use an imperfective form. For example, in the following the speaker conveys that he is eager to go:

(41) *'del-am mi-xǎ-d be-gir-am'* [p.102]

     Heart-poss impf-want.nps-3sg nin-take.nps-1sg

    'I would like to go' [p.8]

h. Imperfective Situations

Interestingly, less than %3 of imperfective forms is used in expressing imperfective situations. One of such uses is shown in the following where, according to the context, the subject of the sentence is continually thoughtful of the narrator of the story and his friend, namely the old man:

(42) *'xeili be mâ mi-ras-e'* [p.111]

    much to we impf-reach.nps-3sg

    'He is very thoughtful for us' [16]

8. English and Persian Verbal/Non-Verbal Forms in Contrast

As far as form is concerned, an English verb which is inflected for person/number is either *simple present* or *simple past*. However, in Persian a three-way contrast holds. A Persian inflectional form appears either in *past perfective* or in *past imperfective* or in *non-past imperfective*. This implies that one cannot expect a straightforward formal aspectual contrast between the verbal systems of the two languages. It follows that while Persian past perfectives are morphologically distinguished from past imperfectives, English lacks such a distinction. This is why the distinction between past perfective and past imperfective situations in English is basically context dependent.

Accordingly, in translating from English into Persian, it seems quite plausible to expect either a past perfective or a past imperfective form in Persian, depending on the context.

In addition to the above significant differences between the two languages, the analysis of the data revealed many practical difficulties and differences between the two languages. For instance, eleven different English categories, including simple past forms, gerunds, modals+ infinitives, prepositional phrases and infinitives were all translated into Persian in the form of *past perfective*.

1172 (about 83%) English simple past forms are rendered to Persian in the form of past perfectives. However, in 233 (about 17%) cases, forms other than simple past, including simple present, past progressive and gerunds are translated into Persian in the form of past perfectives. For example, in 89 cases, a modal plus an infinitive are rendered into Persian by past imperfectives. Similarly, 61 English past progressives are translated into Persian by past perfectives as shown in Table 7 and Graph 6:

Table 7. Persian past perfectives and their English equivalents

| Persian past perfectives in the translated text and their English equivalents												Total
Persian	1172	55	51	28	26	25	17	11	7	5	5	3	**1405**
Percentage	83.4	3.91	3.63	1.99	1.85	1.78	1.2	.78	.49	.35	.35	.21	100
English equivl.	Simple past	Gerund	Simple present	Prepositional phrase	Modal + infinitive	Empty	Past perfect	Infinitive	Present perfect	Past progressive	Noun phrase	Adjective phrase	
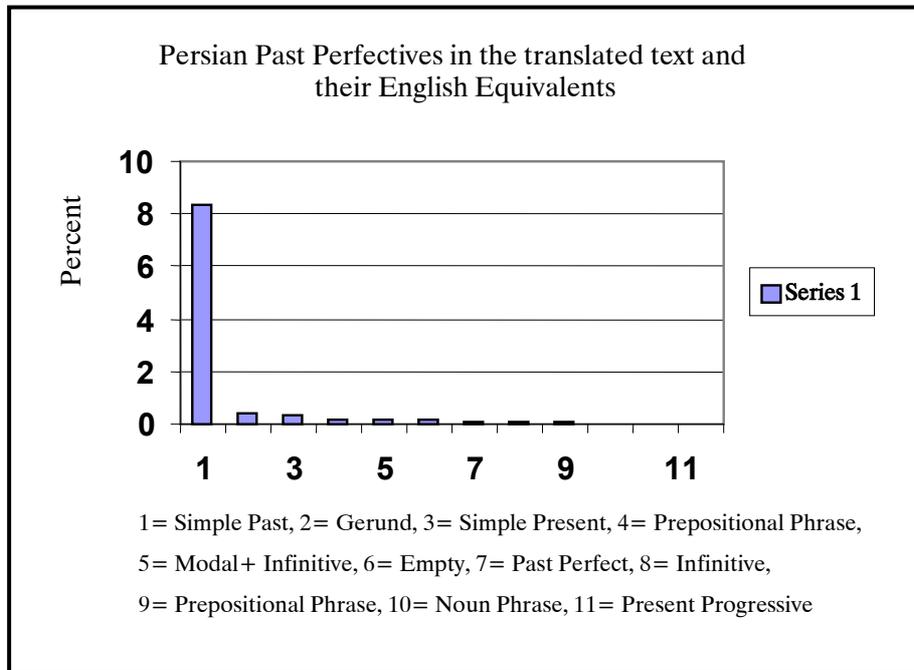
Graph 6. Persian past perfectives and their English equivalents

About half of Persian past imperfectives of the translated text have English equivalents other than simple past. In 89 cases, for example, a modal plus an infinitive have been rendered into Persian by past imperfectives. In 61 cases English past progressives are translated into Persian in the form of a past imperfectives. Similarly, 50 English gerunds are conveyed into Persian by past imperfectives. All these indicate how wide are the range of uses of Persian past imperfective; see Table 8 and Graph 7:

Table 8. Persian past imperfectives and their English equivalents

| Persian past imperfectives in the translated text and their English equivalents												Total
Persian	306	89	61	50	19	15	11	10	7	7	1	**576**
Percentage	53	15.45	10.6	8.68	3.3	2.6	1.9	1.73	1.21	1.21	.173	**100**
English equivalent	Simple past	Modal + infinitive	Past progressive	Gerund	Simple present	Empty	Past perfect	Infinitive	Prepositional phrase	Noun phrase	Present progressive	
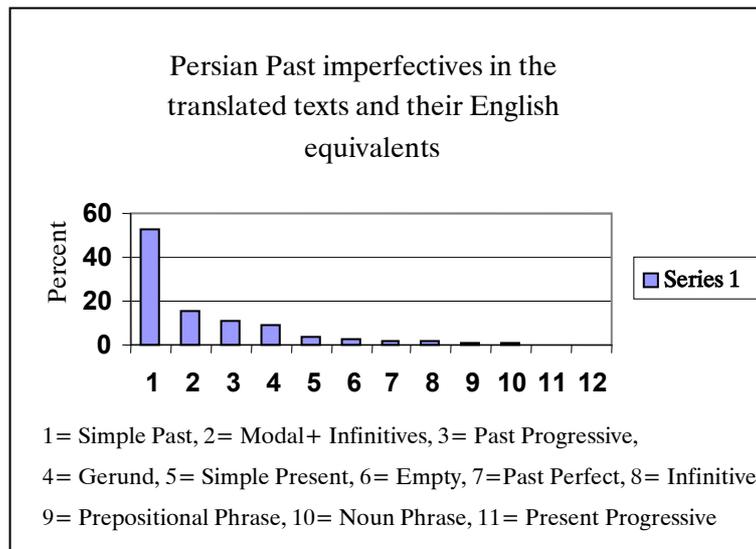
Graph 7. Persian past imperfectives and their English equivalents

That over 60% of Persian non-past imperfectives have English equivalents other than English simple present forms implies the multifunctional nature of Persian non-past imperfective. According to the data, in 137 (about 23%) cases a modal plus an infinitive is translated into Persian by a Persian non-past imperfective as shown in Table 9 on page 34 and Graph 8:

Table 9. Persian non-past imperfectives and their English equivalents

Persian non-past imperfectives in the translated text and their English equivalents													Total
Persian	140	137	30	26	12	12	9	5	4	3	3	1	**382**
Percentage	36.64	35.86	7.85	6.81	3.14	3.14	2.36	1.3	1.04	.78	.78	.26	100
English Equivalent	Simple present	Modal + infinitive	Present progressive	Simple past	Gerund	Empty	Past progressive	Prepositional phrases	Noun phrase	Infinitive	Present perfect	Past perfect	
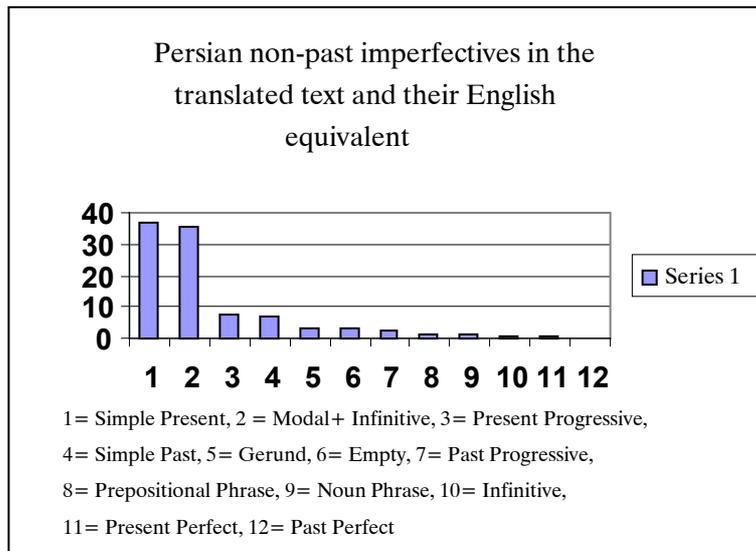
Graph 8. Persian non-past imperfectives and their English equivalents

9. Conclusion

Contrastive analysis of aspectual oppositions of the two languages reveals obvious similarities as well as considerable differences between them. As far as

English simple past forms are concerned, over 80 percent of English verbs are translated into Persian through Persian past perfectives. As far as semantic-pragmatic issues are concerned, over 90 percent of Persian past perfectives are used in expressing perfective situations. However, not all English simple past forms are used in expressing single events. In fact, out of 1504 English simple past forms, 359 verbs are used in expressing non-perfective situations.

Morphologically, English does not make a distinction between perfective and imperfective situations. By contrast, this distinction is formally marked in Persian. In fact, 306 English simple past verbs are translated into Persian through past imperfectives. Besides, 270 Persian past imperfective forms are mainly used in translating English structures such as a modal plus an infinitive; a past progressive; a gerund] and a past perfect.

Obligatory occurrence of Persian imperfective marker *mi-* leads the translator to translate the vast majority of English simple present forms as well as modalized structures into Persian through non-past imperfective forms. As far as semantic-pragmatic side of the issue is concerned, Persian non-past imperfective forms are mainly used in expressing concepts such as future events, facts, progressive situations, habits and perfective events. According to the findings of the research, one can claim that:

1. As far as non-past perfective/imperfective oppositions are concerned, both in Persian and English the role of context is crucial because in neither of the languages the distinction is formally marked. However, the two languages differ in that Persian non-past verbal forms are virtually imperfective while English simple present verbs are formally perfective.

2. While perfective/imperfective contrast is formally marked in Persian, such a distinction is basically context dependent in English. In the

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majority of the cases English simple past forms are used as equivalents for both Persian past perfective and imperfective forms.

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Symbols and Notational Conventions

In Persian examples, the first line of each example represents the transcribed form of the Persian sentence. In the second line (the gloss line), two types of components are represented: lexical items, and grammatical items. A hyphen separates two components of a single word. A full stop indicates that they do not correspond to distinct segmental units of the Persian: two items separated by a full stop thus corresponds to a single item in the Persian citation. The symbols used to gloss grammatical items are as follows:

Comp	=	complement marker
impf	=	imperfective marker
indef	=	indefinite marker
infv	=	infinitive
nps	=	non-past marker
obj	=	objective pronun
comprav	=	comparative
ps	=	past marker
pl	=	plural marker
ptcple	=	past participle
sg	=	singular
poss	=	possessive marker
link	=	linker
nin	=	non-indicative mood marker
neg	=	negative marker

The citation line presents the phonemic representation of Persian forms. Three consonants which are specifically are used in Persian plus Persian vowels are as follows. The rest consonants are roughly comparable to those in English:

Symbols	Phonemic features	Examples	
q	voiced, post-velar, stop	*qâb*	`frame'
x	voiceless, post-velar, fricative	*xăki*	`khaki'
?	voiced, glottal, stop	*az*	`from'
i	unrounded, high, front	*xâki*	`khaki'
e	unrounded, mid, front	*del*	`heart'
a	unrounded, low, front	*man*	`I'
u	rounded, high, back	*kuh*	`mountain'
o	rounded, mid, back	*do*	`two'
ă	rounded, low, back	*bâd*	`wind'