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RUSSIAN AND PERSIAN CONDITIONALS IN CONTRAST

JALAL RAHIMIAN*

Summary

This paper aims at presenting contrastive analysis of Russian and Persian conditionals. The data is attested by native linguists. Among most considerable findings one can point to the following cases. Persian, unlike Russian, contains various structural choices in both possible and impossible conditionals. Persian impossible conditionals are neutral to time and aspect whereas Russian one is only neutral to time. Since structural choices in Persian are far more than those in Russian, this language is more concise in expressing conditional concepts with semantic and stylistic details. Persian conditionals contain at least fourteen different structural combinations in all whereas Russian carries less than six combinations all together. Accordingly, in a number of cases one is obliged to use a single Russian form as an equivalent to up to six different Persian combinations. Therefore, some of semantic/stylistic differences shown through different Persian structures would be dependent on the context in Russian.

Key Words: Conditional sentences, perfective, imperfective, past, non-past, future.

Introduction

Some dimensions of conditionals are directly associated with issues such as 'mood' and 'modality' in different languages. This implies the special position of conditionals in linguistic studies in different languages. From a semantic point of view, conditionals, as Declerck and Reed (2001) put it, is a topic of research not only in linguistics but also in philosophy and cognitive science which implies multi-dimensional importance of conditionals. However, the present study focuses on linguistic side of conditionals. On a language-general scale, conditionals are divided into two main

categories: real vs unreal (cf Palmer 2001)), or as a number of linguists put it, 'possible' vs 'remote possible' (cf Huddleston and Pullum (2002)).

Different languages are equipped with certain means to express such concepts related to conditionality of events and situations. The relations between forms and meanings expressed by those forms are not straightforward in the language. Moreover, the ways different languages express conditionals do not necessarily correspond one another. Among different languages of the world, Russian and Persian (Farsi) show considerable differences in the realm of conditional sentences. The present paper aims at conducting an analysis of conditionals which will be oriented towards comparison with Russian. An immediate application of such study would be in classes where Persian speakers learn Russian or where Russian speakers learn Farsi. In this research a clear distinction is made between formal and semantic categories.

The design of this study is as follows. First, in each part, the phonemic transcription of a Persian sentence is presented which will be followed by an English gloss for each Persian lexical item. In the third and fourth lines English and Russian equivalents are presented respectively. Next, the form and meaning of each Persian conditional sentence is analyzed and discussed. Finally, Each Persian sentence and its Russian equivalent will be compared and contrasted in terms of formal and semantic features.

Literature review

The vast majority of Persian grammars, including Rahimian (1995) and Mahootian (1997) contain a section on conditionals. Since most of such grammars present a notional account of conditional sentences, their analyses and descriptions sketch an unrealistic picture of Persian conditionals. A considerable amount of research in English has been conducted in domain of conditionals, including, Quirk, et al (1985), Dancygier (1999), Declerck and Reed (2001), and Huddleston and Pullum (2002). Declerck and Reed (2001) present a detailed classificatory analysis of conditionals in English. They also work on different concepts such as 'tense' and 'connectives' which are directly associated with conditionals as well as different kinds of patterns normally used in expressing conditionality. It seems that in any sort of analytic study on conditionals, the two monumental works by Quirk, et al (1985) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002) are of use. The latter, as an inspiring work, presents an argumentative analysis of conditionals which can be used as a model in studying conditionals in different languages because, as any other topic, they have a language-general view of conditionals in their book. 'Modality' which is, directly or indirectly, associated with conditionals is analyzed thoroughly on a cross-linguistic base and enough practical data by Palmer (2001). Theoretical dimension of modality is also discussed expertly by Porter (2009). One should not disregard leading role of Kratzer's on Porter's work. Portner (2009) in the context of *Modality* with a semantic-pragmatic approach touches upon conditionals. Von Stechow (2011) and Von Stechow (2012) cut across the shared borders between philosophy and linguistics in terms of conditionals. In other words, one can say, he has a philosophical view of a linguistic topic. As far as Russian is concerned, there are a number of authentic modern Grammars, including Dunn

and Khairov (2009), where 'Russian conditionals' are discussed. This source seems more recent compared to other available sources.

Conditionals

Conditional structures typically are composed of *protasis* and *apodasis*, or, in grammarians' jargon, *if clause* and *main clause*. However, the real picture of conditionality is not always that much succinct and straightforward, as many conditionals may appear without the conjunction *if* while others, carrying *if*, would not necessarily express conditionality. In addition, in Farsi we can talk of categories which do not necessarily correspond to any of categories normally discussed in languages like English.

Conditionals are, in general, categorized into two main groups based on whether the actualization of events/situations are possible or impossible, i.e. real vs unreal, or *Indicative* vs *Subjunctive* (counterfactual) conditionals, as Kaufmann (2006:6) puts it. Formal means and structures used to express conditional concepts do not necessarily correspond to one another in different languages. Besides, In the rest of the paper, first Persian and Russian conditionals will be discussed and analyzed separately; then they will be compared and contrasted to find their similarities and differences.

Conditional sentences

A conditional is normally known as a sentence composed of two clauses: a dependent clause introduced by a conjunction such as 'if', 'unless', etc. and a main clause whose fulfilment would be the result of actualization of the dependent clause. (e.g. *If she comes I will go*). Conditionals are typically divided into 'possible' and 'impossible'. A possible conditional is the one whose fulfilment is possible at/after speech time. Impossible conditionals are those whose fulfilment was/is/will be impossible. A number scholars divide impossible conditionals into 'impossible' and 'remote possible' conditionals. Remote conditionals are those whose fulfilment is quite unlikely at present or future whereas impossible conditionals were not actualized in the past.

Possible conditionals

I. Subjunctive protasis, + non-past imperfective apodasis

The most common way of expressing a possible conditional in Persian is to use the structure with subjunctive mood of the verb in the *protasis* and non-past imperfective mood in the *apodasis*:

1. *Agar to nāmeh rā be-nevis-i man ān rā mi-xān-am*
If you letter DOM nin-write.subjun-2sg I it DOM impf-read.nps-1sg
If you write the letter, I will read it
Если ты напишешь письмо, я его прочитаю.

The above is a typical example of Persian possible conditionals. It would be used in a context where the speaker guarantees to read the letter provided the addressee writes it. Accordingly, both events would happen after speech time. The forms of Persian verbs in (1) are subjunctive and

non-past imperfective respectively. Although, formally, there is an imperfective verb in the main clause, no imperfective event is engaged in this sentence. Accordingly, there is no one-to-one correspondence between formal aspect and semantic aspect of the main clause. In fact, Persian non-past indicative verbs normally appear with the prefix *MI-* which is the marker of imperfective formal aspect of the verb.^[1] Tense and time of both clauses are non-past. Rahimian (1998) presents a comprehensive account of the prefix *MI-* which has an important role in almost all Persian conditional sentences. As far as Russian equivalent in (1) is concerned, tense and aspect of both verbs are future and perfective respectively. However, the time of both events in both languages will be some non-specific time in future. According to example (1), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>be-nevis-i</i>	Subjunctive	Non-past	Irrelevant
Russian equivalent	Напишешь	Indicative	Future	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>mi-xān-am</i>	Indicative	Non-past	Imperfective
Russian equivalent	Прочитаю	Indicative	Future	Perfective

It should be mentioned that in Persian direct object marker (*rā*) marks the object 'letter' as definite while in Russian there is no such marker and the letter can be interpreted as definite or indefinite, depending on the context.

II. Subjunctive protasis, future apodasis

The same meaning as in the above, can be expressed through a fairly different structure in Persian. Here, the verb of the apodasis is subjunctive as the above, but the verb of the apodasis is future which is composed of the auxiliary *xāh* plus short infinitive of the main verb. Consider the following, for example:

2. *Agar nāmeḥ rā be-nevis-i man ān rā xāh-am xānd*
 If letter DOM nin-write.subj-2sg I it DOM will-1sg read.infv
 If you write the letter, I will read it
 Если ты напишешь письмо, я его прочитаю

Persian sentence (2) expresses a meaning roughly similar to what is expressed by sentence (1). However, they differ in terms their use. Sentence (1) is quite common in colloquial and informal contexts and situations while sentence (2) would be used in formal situations and styles. Accordingly, the range of uses of the second sentence is limited compared to that in the second one. Russian equivalent for both Persian sentences is the same. However, such differences is not common in Russian is one can find any at all. According to example (2) mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>be-nevis-i</i>	Subjunctive	Non-past	Irrelevant
Russian equivalent	Напишешь	Indicative	Future	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>xāh-am xānd</i>	indicative	future	Perfective
Russian equivalent	Прочитаю	Indicative	Future	Perfective

III. Past perfective protasis, non-past imperfective apodasis

Another Persian construction used in expressing a possible conditional with a meaning similar to those in 1 and 2 is a sentence with simple past tense form of the verb in protasis and non-past imperfective or future in apodasis:

3. *Agar to nāmeh rā nevešt-i man ān rā mi-xān-am*
 If you letter DOM write.ps-2sg I it DOM impf-read.nps-1sg
 If you write the letter, I will read it
 Если ты напишешь письмо, я его прочитаю.

The verb of the protasis in sentence (3) is past perfective; however it expresses a hypothetical situation in future which is basically similar to what is expressed by sentences (1 and 2). However, sentence (3), though expresses a possible conditional, has its special use and it would be used in a context where the speaker is not that optimist toward the actualization of the event expressed in the protasis. In other words, while sentences (1 and 2) express neutral possibility of an event and the speaker has no bias toward the actualization of the situation, sentence (3), expresses the bias of the speaker towards the event in question. Moreover, it is less frequent in everyday use of Persian, and is not used in formal situations. As far as I know Russian, the same equivalents used for Persian sentences (1 and 2) is used for sentence (3). According to example (3), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>nevešt-i</i>	Indicative	past	Perfective
Russian equivalent	Напишешь	Indicative	Future	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>mi-xān-am</i>	Indicative	Non-past	Imperfective
Russian equivalent	Прочитаю	Indicative	Future	Perfective

IV. Non-past imperfective protasis and apodasis

A fourth sub-category of possible conditionals is a construction with non-past imperfective form of the verb in both protasis and apodasis. Here, the whole event would happen after speech time, but protasis precedes the apodasis chronologically. This type of conditional is less common than the others and is used in somewhat special situations. Consider the following:

4. *Agar to nāmeḥ rā mi-nevis-i man ān rā mi-xān-am/xāh-am xānd*
 If you letter DOM impf-write.nps-2sg I it DOM impf-read.nps-1sg/will-1sg read.infv
 Given you write the letter, I will read it
 Раз ты напишешь письмо, я его прочитаю.

The above would be used in a context where the addressee has already guaranteed the actualization of the event which is to be expressed in the protasis. Based on the guarantee, the speaker prefers an indicative mood of the verb in the protasis over the subjunctive. When the actualization of the event expressed in the protasis is quite probable this version of possible conditionals is normally preferred over the one expressed in sentences (1-3). The protasis appears either in non-past imperfective or in future construction, depending on the level of formality. Future construction is used in formal and written Persian. According to example (4), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>mi-nevis-i</i>	Indicative	Non-past	Imperfective
Russian equivalent	Напишешь	Indicative	Future	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>mi-xān-am</i>	Indicative	Non-past	Imperfective
Russian equivalent	Прочитаю	Indicative	Future	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>xāh-am xānd</i>	Indicative	Future	Perfective
Russian equivalent	Прочитаю	Indicative	Future	Perfective

V. Present perfect protasis and apodasis

In Farsi, speakers may use present perfect structures in both protasis and apodasis to express a specific conditional which seems to belong exclusively to Farsi. Here, based on what is reported to the speaker, s/her expresses his/her view toward the situation/event in question. Consider the following:

5. *Agar to nāmeḥ rā nevešte-i man ān rā xānde-am*
 if you letter DM written-2sg I it DM read.ptcpl-is.presp-3sg

Given you have written the letter, I have already read it

Если ты написал письмо, то я его прочла

The above would be used in a context where the speaker, based on the guarantee given to him/her that the protasis has already been actualized, says that the apodasis has actualized following the actualization of the protasis. As far as the concept 'guarantee' is concerned, this subcategory expresses a similar meaning to that in (IV). However, the two differ in terms of the time of the situation; while the whole situation in the former would happen in non-past time (after speech time), the whole situation in the latter normally actualizes in past time (before speech time). According to example (5), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>nevešte-i</i>	Indicative	Present	Perfect
Russian equivalent	Написал	Indicative	Past	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>xānde-am</i>	Indicative	Present	Perfect
Russian equivalent	Прочла	Indicative	Past	Perfective

VI. Subjunctive perfect protasis, present perfective apodasis

When the speaker is not sure regarding prior actualization of the situation/event in question, s/he would use 'perfect subjunctive' for the protasis:

6. *agar to nāmeḥ rā nevešte bāš-i u ān rā xānde ast-∅*
 if you letter DM written be.subj-2sg s/he it DM read.ptcpl is.presperf-3sg
 If it is the case that you have written the letter s/he has read it

Если ты написал письмо, то он/она его прочел/прочла.

The above would be used in a context where the speaker is not certain if the letter in question has been written. Accordingly, he says that provided the situation expressed in the protasis is a reality, reading of the letter has been done. According to example (6), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>nevešte bāš-i</i>	subjunctive	Present	Perfect
Russian equivalent	Написал	Indicative	Past	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>xānde ast-∅</i>	Indicative	Present	Perfect
Russian equivalent	Прочел/ прочла	Indicative	Past	Perfective

C. Impossible conditionals

The account of Persian 'impossible conditionals' is more complicated than that of 'possible conditionals' for two reasons. First, with impossible conditionals, not only non-past time situations but also past time ones are engaged. Secondly, the choices of structural combinations between protasis and apodasis in impossible conditionals are more various compared to those of possible ones.

I. past imperfective protasis and apodasis

In the first sub-category, the verb of both protasis and apodasis appears in past imperfective form:

7. *agar to nāmeḥ rā mi-nevešt-i man ān rā mi-xānd-am*
 If you letter DOM impf-write.ps-2sg I it DOM impf-read.ps-1sg
 If you wrote the letter this moment, I would read it
 Если сейчас бы ты написал письмо, то я бы его прочел.

According to example (7), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>mi-nevešt-i</i>	Indicative	Past	Imperfective
Russian equivalent	Написал	Indicative	Past	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>mi-xānd-am</i>	Indicative	Past	Imperfective
Russian equivalent	Прочел	Indicative	Past	Perfective

Depending on the time adverbs of the protasis and apodais, the above would be interpreted in various ways in terms of time of the event in question. Accordingly the following scenarios can be imagined:

- a. protasis with past time, apodasis with past time (example 8)
- b. protasis with past time, apodasis with present time
- c. protasis with past time, apodasis with future time
- d. protasis with present time, apodasis with present time
- e. protasis with present time, apodasis with future time
- f. protasis with future time, apodasis with future time

Examples (8) to (13) are based on the above scenarios respectively:

8. *agar to diruz nāmeḥ rā mi-nevešt-i man dišab ān rā mi-xānd-am*
 If you yesterday letter DOM impf-write.ps-2sg I last night it DOM
 impf-read.ps-1sg

If you had written the letter yesterday, I would have read it last night

Если бы ты написал письмо вчера, то я бы прочел его вчера вечером.

The above would be used in a context where the speaker knows that the addressee did not write any letter, so by using the above sentence, the speaker informs that s/he would have written it. The adverbs *diruz* 'yesterday' and *dišad* 'last night' indicate that the time of both the protasis and apodasis is past.

Now consider the following:

9. *agar diruz nāmeḥ rǎ mi-nevešt-i man alān ān rǎ mi-xānd-am*

If yesterday letter DOM impf-write.ps-2sg I now it DOM impf-read.ps-1sg

If you had written the letter yesterday, I would read it right now

Если бы ты написал письмо вчера, то я бы прочел его сейчас.

The above would be used in a context where the speaker knows that the addressee did not write the letter in question and informs that should the letter have been written s/he would read it at the speech time. The adverb *diruz* 'yesterday' indicates that time of the protasis was past time whereas *dišad* 'last night' shows that the time of apodasis is present and necessarily refers to the speech time.

Consider the following:

10. *agar diruz nāmeḥ rǎ mi-nevešt-i man fardā ān rǎ mi-xānd-am*

If yesterday letter DOM impf-write.ps-2sg I tomorrow it DOM impf-read.ps-1sg

If you had written the letter yesterday, I would read it tomorrow

Если бы ты написал письмо вчера, то я бы прочел его завтра.

The above sentence would be used in a context where the speaker who knows that the addressee did not write the letter the day before, says that s/he would have been able to read the letter the day after the speech time.

According to the fourth scenario, the time of both protasis and apodasis is present and necessarily at speech time:

11. *agar alān nāmeḥ rǎ mi-nevešt-i alān ān rǎ mi-xānd-am*

If now letter DOM impf-write.ps-2sg now it DOM impf-read.ps-1sg

If you wrote the letter now, I would read it right now

Если бы ты написал письмо сейчас, то я бы прочел его сейчас же.

The above would be used in a context where it is impossible for the letter in question to be read at the speech time because the addressee has no decision to write any letter at the speech time. The tense of the verbs in both parts of the sentence is past, but the time of the events, according to the context, is present.

According to the fifth scenario the protasis is in speech time but the apodasis is in future:

12. *agar alān nāmeḥ rǎ mi-nevešt-i fardā ān rǎ mi-xānd-am*

If now letter DOM impf-write.ps-2sg tomorrow it DOM impf-read.ps-1sg

If you wrote the letter now, I would read it tomorrow

Если бы ты написал письмо сейчас, то я бы прочел его завтра.

The above is used in a context where the speaker knows that the addressee does not write the letter in question. However, the speaker expresses that s/he would have been ready to read the letter should the addressee had had decided to write it.

Consider the sixth scenario where both protasis and apodasis is future. Here, we are talking about a hypothetical even/situation which is not to actualize. Knowing that the addressee is not going

to write the letter in question next day, the speaker uses the above sentence to show that s/he would have read it:

13. *agar fardā nāmeḥ rā mi-nevešt-i ān rā mi-xānd-am*

If tomorrow letter DOM impf-write.ps-2sg it DOM impf-read.ps-1sg

If you wrote the letter tomorrow, I would read it tomorrow

Если бы ты написал завтра письмо, то я бы его завтра прочитал.

As shown in sentences (8-13), the tense and aspect of all Persian verbs is past imperfective. However, all these verbs are compatible with present, past and future time adverbs. Moreover, none of the verbs express imperfective events though they carry imperfective marker *mi-*. In fact all the above Persian verbs imply perfective events in one of the present, past or future times. Accordingly, one can claim that Persian past imperfective forms of the verb are neutral to time and aspectuality. Unlike in Persian, all Russian equivalents of (8-13) appear in perfective past. In all examples from (8) to (13) tense, mood and aspect of the sentences are the same as those in example (7).

II. past perfect protasis and apodasis

One way to express impossible conditionals in Persian is to use past perfect structures in both protasis and apodasis. However, in Russian the only choice in expressing a similar meaning is 'past perfective' because this language lacks any past perfect form. The time of the whole situation is past. The following would be used in a context where the speaker gives his/her view regarding an event which was not actualized in the past.

14. *agar nāmeḥ rā nevešte bud-i ān rā xānde bud-am*

If letter DOM written was.perf-2sg it DOM read.ptcpl was.pasperf-1sg

If you had written the letter I would have read it

Если бы ты (тогда) написал письмо, то я бы его прочел.

According to example (14), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>nevešte bud-i</i>	Indicative	Past	Perfect
Russian equivalent	Написал	Indicative	Past	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>xānde bud-am</i>	Indicative	Past	Perfect
Russian equivalent	Прочел	Indicative	Past	Perfective

III. past perfect protasis, past imperfective apodasis

A third sub-category of 'impossible conditionals' is where the protasis appears in past perfect but the apodasis is past imperfective. Russian equivalent of the above is past perfective:

15. *agar nāmeḥ rā nevešte bud-i ān rā mi-xānd-am*

I letter DOM written was.pasperf-2sg it DOM imperf.read.ps-1sg
 If you had written the letter I would have read it
 Если бы ты написал письмо, то я бы его прочитал.

The above would be used in a context where the addressee presents his/her view regarding a letter which had never been written by the addressee. The main difference between (14) and (15) lies in the fact that in (14) the time of the apodasis is necessarily past while in (15) the time of the apodasis would be past, present or future, depending on the context. For instance, if one inserts a time adverb such as *alčn* 'now' before the verb of the apodasis in (15), the time of the apodasis will be present. According to example (15), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>nevešte bud-i</i>	Indicative	Past	Perfect
Russian equivalent	Написал	Indicative	Past	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>mi-xānd-am</i>	Indicative	Past	Imperfective
Russian equivalent	Прочитал	Indicative	Past	Perfective

IV. past imperfective protasis, past perfect apodasis

Another means of expressing an impossible conditional in Persian is to use a past imperfective form in the protasis and a past perfect form in the apodasis. The only choice to express the same meaning in Russian is to use a past perfective form in both protasis and apodasis:

16. *agar nāmeḥ rā mi-nevešt-i ān rā xānde bud-am*
 If letter DOM impf-write.ps-2sg it DOM read.ptcpl was.pasperf-1sg
 If you had written the letter I would have read it
 Если бы ты писал письмо, то я бы его прочел/прочитал.

The above would be used in a context where the letter in question was not written by the addressee. The only time for such situations is past. Looking at different forms of Persian impossible constructions and their Russian equivalents, we come to the conclusion that in Russian, unlike in Persian, the range of structural choices is seriously limited. As seen, in Persian we have different combinations of past imperfective/past perfect. Sometimes, both protasis and apodasis appear either in imperfective or in past perfect. Sometimes, the protasis and apodasis are in imperfective or past perfect respectively, or vice versa. In all Russian equivalents for the above, the verbs appear in past perfective. As far as semantics is concerned, in both languages we deal with single events where no imperfective situation is engaged though in Persian the form of the verb is either past imperfective or past perfect. In other words, in Persian there is no one to one correspondence between formal and semantic sides of conditional sentences. However, with impossible conditionals, in Russian equivalents we always use past perfective forms in both protasis and apodasis no matter what form is used in Persian. Accordingly one can say there is a one-to-one correspondence between formal and

semantic categories in impossible conditionals in Russian. According to example (16), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>mi-nevešt-i</i>	Indicative	Past	Imperfective
Russian equivalent	бы писал	Indicative	Past	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>xānde bud-am</i>	Indicative	Past	Perfect
Russian equivalent	прочел/прочитал	Indicative	Past	Perfective

D. Residual categories

There are certain Persian common categories which do not fit any of classes discussed in the above. They will be discussed in the following.

a. past perfective protasis, imperative apodasis

In Persian, sometimes the sentence carries *agar* 'if' but the content of the sentence is different from the general trend of ordinary conditionals. Here, *agar* expresses a meaning comparable to an English phrase such as 'if it happens' or 'in case'. For example the following sentence has a meaning as: 'if it happens that you write the letter read it to me':

17. *agar nāmeḥ rā nevešt-i ān rā barāy-am be-xān-ø*

If letter DOM write.ps-2sg it DOM for-me nin-read.imprav-2sg

Should you write the letter, read it to me

Если случится так, что ты напишешь письмо – прочти мне его вслух.

The above would be used in a context where, as the speaker, I do not really know whether the addressee is going to write the letter in question or not though its writing seems very improbable to me. Accordingly, I ask him/her to read it to me if it happens that s/he write the letter. Accordingly, it is debatable if 'conditional' is a suitable label for such constructions at all. As seen, the form of Persian verb in the protasis is past perfective while that in Russian is present perfective. According to example (17), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>nevešt-i</i>	Indicative	Past	Perfective
Russian equivalent	Напишешь	Indicative	Future	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>be-xān-ø</i>	Imperative	Non-past	-----
Russian equivalent	Прочти	Imperative	Non-past	-----

Persian verb of the protasis in (17) can also appear in non-past imperfective:

18. *agar nāmeḥ rā mi-nevis-i ān rā barāy-am be-xān-ø*
 If letter DOM impf.write.nps-2sg it DOM for-me nin-read.imprav-2sg
 If you write the letter (for sure), read it to me
 Если (/Как) будешь писать письмо – прочти мне его.

The above would be used in a context where, as the speaker, I am confident that the addressee is going to write the letter in question. Accordingly, I ask him/her to read it after it is written. In other words, here the actualization of the event is quite probable and close to reality. The best Russian equivalent for such a sentence seems to be a 'future' construction. According to example (18), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>nevešt-i</i>	Indicative	Past	Perfective
Russian equivalent	Напишешь	Indicative	Future	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>be-xān-ø</i>	Imperative	Non-past	-----
Russian equivalent	Прочти	Imperative	Non-past	-----

Yet, Persian verb of the protasis can also be in subjunctive form:

19. *agar nāmeḥ rā be-nevis-i ān rā barāy-am be-xān-ø*
 If DOM nin-write.subj-2sg it DOM for-me nin-read.imprav-2sg
 If you write the letter read it to me
 Если напишешь письмо – прочти мне его.

The above would be used in a neutral context, i. e., the possibility of the letter to be written is as much as its possibility not to be written. Accordingly, one can claim that it is not important for me, as the speaker, whether the letter is written or not; here, I just ask the addressee to read it to me after it is written. In Russian, this neutrality of the situation is expressed through the use of present perfective form of the verb in the protasis. According to example (19), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>be-nevis-i</i>	Subjunctive	Non-past	-----
Russian equivalent	Напишешь	Indicative	future	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>be-xān-ø</i>	Imperative	Non-past	-----
Russian equivalent	Прочти	Imperative	Non-past	-----

According to the above discussion, one can say that (17) and (18) are least and most probable respectively in terms of actualization.

b. Past perfective protasis and apodasis

Sometimes there is an inconclusive verbal quarrel between the speaker and the addressee on an event. While the speaker insists that what happened was not done by him/her, the addressee firmly believes that it was done by him/her. For example, the following would be used in a context where, after a long verbal quarrel, the person accused of breaking the glass witnesses that the speaker is not convinced that the glass was not broken by him/her uses the following sentence in order to put an end to the fruitless discussion:

20. *Agar livān rā šekast-am xub kard-am*

If glass DM break.ps-1sg good do.ps-1sg

If I broke the glass I did a good thing

Если я и разбил стакан, то правильно сделал.

According to example (20), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>šekast-am</i>	Indicative	Past	Perfective
Russian equivalent	Разбил	Indicative	Past	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>kard-am</i>	Indicative	Past	Perfective
Russian equivalent	сделал	Indicative	Past	Perfective

c. conditionals lacking conditional marker *agar* 'if'

Sometimes the sentence lacks any conditional marker, including *agar* 'if', but it is regarded as a conditional sentence due to its meaning. The following would be used as a warning to the addressee:

21. *dars na-xān-i, mardud mi-šav-i*

lesson neg-nin.read.subj-2sg failed impf.become.nps-2sg

(If) you don't study, you will fail

Не будешь учиться – провалишь экзамен.

According to example (21), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>na-xān-i</i>	Subjunctive	Non-past	-----
Russian equivalent	будешь учиться	Indicative	Future	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>mi-šav-i</i>	Indicative	Non-past	imperfective
Russian equivalent	Провалишь	Indicative	Future	Perfective

One can replace the verb of the apodasis in (21) with a future form of the verb. While both (21) and (22) express the same meaning, the latter is more formal:

22. *dars na-xān-i, mardud xāh-i šod*
 lesson neg-nin.read.subj-2sg failed willt-2sg become.infvtv
 Не будешь учиться – провалишь экзамен.

According to example (22), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>na-xān-i</i>	Subjunctive	Non-past	-----
Russian equivalent	будешь учиться	Indicative	Future	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>xāh-i šod</i>	Indicative	Future	Perfective
Russian equivalent	Провалишь	Indicative	Future	Perfective

One can also replace the verb of the apodasis with a simple past tense one. This version basically expresses the same meaning as those in (21) and (22). However, it is a quite informal but serious warning to the addressee:

23. *dars na-xān-i, mardud šod-i*
 lesson neg-nin.read.subj-2sg failed become.ps.2sg
 (If) you don't study, you will (certainly) fail
 Не будешь учиться – (точно) провалишь экзамен.

According to example (23), mood, tense and aspect of Persian and Russian verbs are as follows:

Language	Verb of If clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>na-xān-i</i>	Subjunctive	Non-past	-----
Russian equivalent	будешь учиться	Indicative	Future	Perfective

Language	Verb of main clause	Mood	Tense	Aspect
Persian	<i>šod-i</i>	Indicative	Past	Perfective
Russian equivalent	Провалишь	Indicative	Future	Perfective

As seen, Russian equivalents for (21-23) are the same. This implies that Russian lacks lexical means to express such differences as discussed in Persian sentences. In fact, the range of structural choices in Russian is clearly narrow compared to Persian.

Conclusion

This paper presents an account of Modern Persian conditionals which is oriented towards comparison with Russian. According to this research, Persian has more various structural choices in expressing similar conditional concepts compared to those in Russian. As far as possible conditionals are concerned, in Persian there are at least six different structural combinations whereas in Russian there are two or three combinations to express similar meanings. However, certain precise semantic differences are expressed through different forms of the same verb for which there is no precise equivalent verbal forms in Russian. For example, as shown in the text of the research, there are Persian conditionals which differ only in that one carries a subjunctive and the other contains an imperfective form of the same verb, and this formal difference will result in precise semantic differences. In such cases Russian lacks two different verbal forms to express the same differences expressed in Persian.

In Persian, unlike Russian, imperfective verbal forms are frequently used in conditionals while no semantic imperfectivity is necessarily engaged (especially in impossible conditionals). In all Persian imperfective verbal forms the only Russian equivalent is perfectives. Russian equivalent for Persian non-past imperfective forms is future perfective. Russian equivalent for Persian past imperfective forms is past perfective in Russian. Russian equivalent for Persian present perfect forms is past perfective.

Persian easily makes a clear difference between formal and informal conditionals by changing verbal or lexical structure of the sentence. In Russian, it seems that such differences are not as common as those in Persian, or they are typically context dependent in this language.

Structural differences between the two languages in impossible conditionals are also noticeable. Russian is very much restricted in structural choices while Persian contains at least five different structural combinations whose details are reflected in the content of the research. In Persian, we have combinations of past imperfective and past perfect forms for which we have only past perfective in Russian. As shown, Persian impossible conditionals are neutral to time and aspectuality while Russian is just neutral to time but not aspectuality.

In Persian, as in Russian, some sentences carry conditional markers such as 'if' while it is

debatable if the sentence expresses any conditional concept at all. However, in both languages there are sentences which lack conditional markers but they express conditional concepts.

There is a section entitled 'Residual conditionals' where certain conditionals is discussed. Here, interesting differences between the two languages are revealed. One cannot find fixed common Russian equivalents for such Persian conditionals because they contain such special structures and verbal forms which are not normally used in Russian. Moreover, some of them are used in special or even exceptional contexts the details of which have already been explained in the body of the paper.

^[1]Two verb, namely, *bud-an* 'to be' and *dāšt-an* 'to have' which appear without the verb prefix 'MI' are exceptions.

Symbols and notational conventions

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
IMPVE	= imperative
INDEF	= indefinite marker
NEG	= negative marker
NIN	= non-indicative marker
NPS	= non-past marker
PRES PERF	= present perfect
PAS PERF	= past perfect
PL	= plural marker
PTCPL	= participle
SG	= singular

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***Jalal Rahimian** - Professor of Linguistics, Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, College of Humanities, Eram Square, Shiraz University, Shira, Iran e mail: jrahimian@rose.shirazu.ac.ir