

Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)

# Perfect verb forms as markers evidentiality in Persian

Master's Thesis in Linguistics

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## Abbreviations

DIR	Directive
DUR	Durative
EV	Evidential
EZ	Ezāfe
IMPERF	Imperfective
INDIR	Indirective
OBJECTIVE	Objective marker
P.PERF	Past perfect
PAST	Simple past
PERF	Perfective
PL	Plural
PRES	Present
PROG PERF	Progressive Perfect
SG	Singular
3	Third person

# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Topic and goals

In this thesis, I will look at the relevant linguistic literature on evidentiality in Iranian languages in order to investigate and account for the evidential (and epistemic) meaning of perfect tense in Persian, which is an Iranian language. More specifically, this thesis will be concerned with the understanding and investigation of likely epistemic functions of perfect tense in data collected from sources such as Iranian journals, literature, and weblogs.

In this thesis, I will pursue the following goals:

- I will review several scholars' views on evidentiality and I will try to investigate whether there is any evidential system in Iranian Persian, according to their point of view.
- I would like to know whether Persian is among the languages that have evidentiality as a grammatical category.
- I want to investigate the evidential use of perfect tense in Persian.
- I will try to find out whether perfect tense is associated with epistemic uncertainty in Persian.

## 1.2 The Persian language

Persian is a member of the Indo-Iranian language group, itself is a branch of the Indo-European family. In many sources it is called Modern Persian. Persian, or Farsi, is the national language of people in Iran. Also, it is spoken in Tajikistan and widely in Afghanistan and it is named Tajik and Dari accordingly. According to Lazard (1975) and Frye (1975) the Persian language is classified according to three historical periods: Old Persian (the language of Achaemenid, 550-331 B.C.E), Middle Persian (the official language of Sassanid empire remained at least two centuries after Arab conquests of Iran in 650 C.E) and New or Modern Persian which at the period of early Islamic times was called Farsi or Farsi-Dari. Modern Persian is also a continuation of Middle Persian. All of these three Persian language groups, unlike other languages and dialects of the Iranian group such as Avestan, Parthian, Soghdian, Balochi, and Pashto, represents the same language at the three stages of history and still can be easily recognized from other dialects of north-western and eastern Iran.

In this thesis, I will try to investigate and present evidentiality in Modern Persian of Iran through my examples. From now on, I use the term Persian for the present-day language of people in Iran.

Persian has SOV (subject-object-verb) word order. As for morphological system, Persian has a rich

morphology. In Persian, there are many verbal inflections that specify tense, mood, person, number, aspect, and negation. If evidentiality is grammaticalized in perfect forms in Persian, it seems necessary to take a look at the perfect verb system in Persian. I extract the following table (1) from Windfuhr (2009) that represents the verb *raftan* ‘to go’ in different aspects in third person.

Table 1 Inflectional paradigm for the Persian Verb ‘Raftan’

Imperfective	Perfective	Resultative-	stative
Present	<i>mi-rav-ad</i>	<i>raft</i>	<i>raft-e ast</i>
Evidential	<i>mi-[raft-e] ast</i>	<i>[raft-e] ast</i>	<i>[raft-e bud-e] ast</i>
Past	<i>mi-raft</i>	<i>raft</i>	<i>raft-e bud</i>

Consider examples (1a) and (1b) below. The former shows perfective verb inflection and first-hand information while 1(b) with the perfect verb *rafte-ast* ‘has gone’ marks second-hand information.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1) a. Mary <i>raft</i><br/>         Mary 3.SG.PAST.went DIR<br/>         ‘<i>Mary went.</i>’</p> | <p>b. Mary <i>rafte-ast</i><br/>         Mary 3.SG.PERF.went INDIR (EV)<br/>         ‘<i>Mary has gone.</i>’</p> |
|---|--|

In chapter 2, I will try to investigate the difference between perfect forms of the verbs and evidentiality in Persian based on previous literature.

### 1.3 Method

Since I found few linguistics written works on evidentiality in Persian, I would like to use previous literature on evidentiality as one of my method of data collecting. In chapter 2, the data consists of previous accounts on evidentiality. These include attested data and experimental and conducted examples that were collected through interviews. The examples in chapter 2 are attested and used by several scholars, which makes the data quite reliable. In order to investigate the possibility of epistemic effects from perfect tense in Persian, I collect new authentic data from utterances in media, literature, and internet. I need to mention that the reported interpretation of the collected data in chapter 3 are based on my intuition as a native Persian speaker with sufficient competence. The data have not been used before in any literature as examples of evidential (epistemic) use of perfect in Persian.

#### 1.4 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is organized as follows: In chapter 2, present a summary and make a short analysis of previous works on evidentiality. In chapter 2, I try to find out the scholars' point of view on evidentiality, the relationship between evidentiality and perfect tense and the epistemic inference of evidentials in Persian. Also, I will conclude whether their findings carry over to Persian. In chapter 3, I investigate the epistemic uses of perfect tense base on new data. Chapter 4 is devoted to conclusion and a summary of all the previous chapters.



## Chapter 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Aikhenvald

According to Aikhenvald (2006), evidentiality is a grammatical category whose primary meaning is source of information. That is, an evidential expression may signal whether the speaker saw what is being described, just made inferences about it based on some evidence, or were told about it, for instance. Aikhenvald makes a claim that there is a sort of ‘universal inventory’ of possible grammatical and lexical categories of evidentiality and each language makes a different set of choices from this inventory. Thus, languages which have ‘evidentiality’ as a grammatical category vary in how many types of evidentiality they mark. Some languages just mark information reported by someone else, some other languages just distinguish firsthand and non-firsthand sources, whereas others distinguish two terms including eyewitness and noneyewitness, or reported and everything else. A few languages have up to six or more evidential terms.

#### 2.1.1 Languages with several evidential categories

Aikhenvald (2006, p.320) renders several examples from Tariana, an Arawak language in the multilingual area in northwest Amazonia, in which evidential marking is obligatory. According to Aikhenvald, omitting the evidential marker will lead to an ungrammatical or highly unnatural sentence in this language. Some examples from Tariana are given below. First, consider example (2) below. This example is appropriate if one saw Jose playing football.

- (2) *Juse irida di-manika-ka*  
*Jose football 3p.masc.sg-play-REC.P.VISUAL*  
*‘Jose played football (we saw it)’*

If one just heard the noise of a football game but could not see what was happening, (3) is the thing to say in Tariana:

- (3) *Juse irida di-manika-mahka*  
*Jose football 3p.mas.sg-play-REC.P.NONVISUAL*  
*‘Jose played football (we heard it)’*

If one sees that the football is not in its normal place in the house, and Jose and his football boots are gone, these details are enough for us to infer that Jose is playing football. This is expressed as follows:

- (4) *Juse irida di-manika-nihka*  
*Jose football 3p.mascsg-play-REC.P.INFERRED*  
*'Jose played football (we infer it from visual evidence)'*

If Jose is not at home on a Sunday afternoon, one can utter (4):

- (5) *Juse irida di-manika-sika*  
*Jose football 3p.mascsg-play-REC.P.ASSUMED*  
*'Jose played football (we infer it from general knowledge)'*

Finally, if one learnt the information that Jose played football from someone else, then (6) with a reported evidential is the only correct option in Tariana:

- (6) *José irida di-manika-pidaka*  
*Jose football 3p.masc.sg-play-REC.P.REP*  
*'Jose played football (we were told)'*

### 2.1.2 Aikhenvald's classification of evidential systems

The examples from Tariana in the previous section illustrate a language in which evidentiality is obligatory and subsumes several sub categories. It is, however, not common for languages to express such a variety of evidential categories. Aikhenvald (2006, p.321) divides languages with grammatical evidentials into subtypes, depending on how many information sources acquire distinct grammatical marking. Some language types with two-way evidential distinctions are listed below:

A1. FIRSTHAND VS. NONFIRSTHAND. Firsthand terms refer to information acquired through vision (or hearing or other senses), and the nonfirsthand terms include information acquired by inference or verbal report or any other senses other than seeing. According to Aikhenvald, Iranian and Turkic are among the languages that belong to this system.

A2. NONFIRSTHAND AND EVERYTHING ELSE. The nonfirsthand evidential covers a large domain of information which acquired through senses other than seeing or through hearsay and inference, same as Caucasian languages or Finno-Ugric languages.

A3. REPORTED (HEARSAY) AND EVERYTHING ELSE. Systems which have one reported evidential covering information acquired through someone else's narration. This system is widespread all over the world.

A4. SENSORY EVIDENCE AND REPORTED WHICH REFERS TO SOMETHING THAT ONE HAS SEEN, HEARD, SMELT OR FELT. This system is common among many Australian languages.

All the above evidential systems (A1 to A4) have two terms. Other systems may make more distinctions and include other information sources such as sensory (visual, heard, smelt, felt), hearsay (reported, quotative), and inference, to mention a few.

As for Persian, Aikhenvald claims the distinction between firsthand and nonfirsthand is relevant, since Persian is an Iranian language. The difference between firsthand and nonfirsthand information refers to how the information source is acquired. While in firsthand the speaker saw (or heard or acquired through other senses) directly what is being described, with nonfirsthand terms the speaker refers to the information acquired through inferring or reporting other's information. Furthermore, Aikhenvald states that in Iranian languages perfect forms may achieve nonfirsthand meaning. Therefore, this can be relevant to perfect tense in Persian as an Iranian language and it will be investigated in the next chapter.

### 2.1.3 Past perfect and evidentiality as an “evidential strategy”

Aikhenvald (2004) mentions a semantic connection between perfect and non-firsthand evidentials. As mentioned in the previous section, non-firsthand evidentials cover the information sources inference and second-hand information. Aikhenvald (2004) argues that the primary meaning of perfect is to focus on results of an action and to relate past events to the present time. In other words, when using a perfect form, the speaker indicates an inference based on traces or results of a previous action/state – which is very similar to what non-firsthand evidentials do. Aikhenvald furthermore quotes Comrie(1976) and Johnson(1971; 2000) who claim that perfect verb forms may extend their non-firsthand meanings to cover verbal reports. Non-firsthand extensions of perfects are found in many Caucasian and Iranian languages. According to Aikhenvald (2004, p.112) “distanced past” in Persian covers several related meanings, such

as actions which take place in the distant past or actions presented as a result of indirect experience such as hearsay, inference or assumption.

Aikhenvald (2004, p.113) renders the Georgian perfect system as a case of evidential extension rather than evidentiality proper, as described in section 2.1. In the Georgian system the non-firsthand evidential is not a separate category with a number of distinct paradigms. According to Aikhenvald, in this language perfect can be used to refer to a past action which the speaker did not himself witness but presumes happened based on current consequences or because someone has reported it. This shows that perfect in Georgian has nonfirsthand meaning as an extension of its major meaning of result, and Aikhenvald claims the same extensions of perfect are found in many Iranian languages. She quotes Nazarova (1998, p.23-4) when claiming that in the language Ishkashim, which is part of the Pamir subgroup of Iranian languages, along with other Iranian languages, perfect forms are employed to report information acquired from someone else as well as for non-firsthand information and assumptions concerning something which has already taken place.

Aikhenvald quotes Hadarcev (2001, p.119) when mentioning that in modern Persian the perfect continuous can acquire non-firsthand meaning and the imperfective may refer to information acquired firsthand. Consider the following Persian examples from Aikhenvald (2004, p.114):

(7)

- a. *“Tuye xane-yeman ke kar mikard hamishe sher mixand”*  
*In house-PRON: 1pl SUB work do:IMPF:3sg always poetry recite:IMPF:3sg*  
[The neighbor’s wife said] ”When he worked at our place, he always recited poetry (IMPERFECTIVE FIRSTHAND READING)”.
- b. *Boland boland mixande ast*  
*Loudly loudly recite:PERF.CONT:3sg*  
(According to her), he recited (poetry) very loudly (PERFECT NON-FIRSTHAND READING)’

Aikhenvald renders the examples in (7a) and (7b) in order to present Hadarcev’s claim saying that perfect continuous in Persian can acquire the non-firsthand meaning, and imperfective may refer to information acquired firsthand. In example (7a), the sentence in direct speech part is marked with imperfective. The neighbor’s wife is eyewitness to the fact that the master used to recite poetry loudly. In this context, the imperfective form *mixand* is used to refer to the firsthand information while in (7b) the lady’s words are retold by the speaker. According to Aikhenvald (2004), in example (7b) the perfect continuous verb

*mixande ast* is what makes it clear that the content of the sentence is nonfirsthand reported information.

Aikhenvald mentions distinctions between resultatives and perfect expressed in some languages. The resultatives acquire nonfirsthand extensions and perfect may imply that the speaker actually saw what has happened. I should say that in the above example in (7b) with the perfect form *mixande ast* the speaker heard about the action; he has not seen it and he has just acquired the information from someone else. With the imperfective form *mixand* in (7a), on the other hand the information source is firsthand.

Perfects, resultatives and past tenses with perfective meaning often give rise to small evidentiality systems such as A1 & A2 in the overview in section 2.1.2. Aikhenvald labels such evidential connotations of non-evidential categories “evidential strategies” which can be expanded to grammatical evidentiality. As mentioned in section 2.1.2, these evidential strategies typically lead to nonfirsthand evidential meaning. Aikhenvald (2004) argues that in such evidential systems the completive and/or resultative meaning is similar to a nonfirsthand evidential. Aikhenvald presents Turkish and Iranian languages among languages where non-firsthand evidentials originate in anterior and perfect forms.

Aikhenvald (2004, p.116) also points out that perfects and resultatives as evidential strategies may develop epistemic extensions if they acquire the full range of nonfirsthand meanings. That is, perfect forms may lead to extended meanings similarly to non-indicative moods such as conditional, dubitative, and so on, with the meanings of probability and doubt. These interpretations Aikhenvald calls epistemic extensions. In my view, the connection between nonfirsthand information and epistemic uncertainty is quite obvious. Information that one has directly observed will often be more trustworthy than information that one has from someone else or only based on inferences. Thus, since the past perfect in Persian is used to express second-hand information, we may expect that the form is associated with epistemic uncertainty as well. Aikhenvald (2004) does not say anything explicitly about the Persian perfect and whether it has epistemic extensions, though. Thus, this is an interesting question to investigate in the next chapter.

## 2.2 Lazard (2001)

### 2.2.1 Evidentials in Balkan and Middle Eastern languages

Lazard (2001) introduces a new analysis of evidentials in Balkan and Middle Eastern languages. He also introduces some thoughts about cross-language comparisons of grammatical systems dealing with evidentiality, proposed by Plungian (2001). The starting point for Lazard is Saussure’s distinction between

a grammatical category's significant and signifié. Lazard states that in a language, the evidential could be named grammaticalized when in the grammatical system of that language there is a specific form (*significant*), whose semantic-pragmatic content (*signifié*) refers to the source of information conveyed by the discourse. As Lazard mentions, although all languages have some means of qualifying utterances by introducing references to the origin of information, not all languages have an evidential grammatical category. English and French, for example, have no morphological evidential in their verbal system. Evidential meanings are rendered by expressions such as *it seems, as it appears, as I see, as I have heard, it is said, and reportedly*. Such expressions are part of the lexicon and in these languages evidentiality has not been grammaticalized.

According to Lazard (2001, p.360), it is possible to say that evidential meanings are not conveyed by specific forms but occasionally expressed by forms whose central meaning is something else. The verb form 'perfect' may often have such uses. As Lazard discusses, the central value of this verb form denotes a past situation that keeps some relevance in present.

According to Lazard (2001, p.360), most languages in South Eastern Europe and Western Asia (e.g. Albanian, Bulgarian, Turkish, Western Armenian, and Persian) also have an evidential grammatical category. All these languages have sets of verb forms derived from the perfect which form an evidential register in opposition to the neutral register. Thus, the speaker may choose between the evidential register which is functionally marked and the neutral register which is unmarked and indicates nothing concerning the source of the information. According to Lazard, the evidential register does not imply that the speaker has witnessed the fact but implies that speaker knows it by hearsay or inference or has come to know in some other indirect way.

### 2.2.2 The 'meditative' system

According to Lazard (2001, p.361), in Balkan and Middle Eastern languages, the evidential has three main uses: hearsay, inference and the so-called mirative or admirative. In other words, it may be used to saying of other people, to inferences drawn from the evidence of traces of events or to perceptions of unexpected events at the very moment of speaking. As Lazard says, the first two values are well known and he quotes an example of the third from Tajik Persian since Persian is rarely cited among languages possessing the evidential category. Tajik Persian is a local variety of Persian spoken in Central Asia. Although they are distinct, generally both Iran and Tajik Persian share many similarities. In the Tajik Persian example in (8), the speaker reaches into his pocket, is surprised to find it empty and says:

- (8) Pul-am na-bud-ay  
Money-CLIT:1SG NEG-be-EV:3SG  
I have no money (as I see)  
(From Lazard 2002, p. 361)

Lazard (2001) presents example (8) as a mirative use in Tajik Persian which is seen rarely, according to Lazard (2001), in Iranian languages. In (8), the speaker's utterance shows an unexpected event at the very moment of speaking. Example (8) can be interpreted in a way that the speaker, out of blue, figured out that his money which was supposed to be in his pocket/wallet does not exist anymore.

I should mention that also in Iranian Persian one may indicate an unexpected, surprising event the same way as in (8), i.e. by use of the perfect verb form as an evidential marker. In the next chapter, I devote a section (3.3.3) to investigate whether this is the case in Persian or not.

Lazard mentions that since the three uses- hearsay, inference and mirative - are found as subcategories of the same category in a number of languages belonging to different families and spoken in different parts of the world, their association could not be accidental: They must have something in common. Lazard believes that the common feature of the three uses is a rather abstract mental operation. The opposition is not direct vs. indirect knowledge, old vs. new knowledge, assimilated vs. unassimilated knowledge; it is an opposition at the morpho- syntactic level between forms indicating nothing about the source of information and the forms referring to the source of the information without specifying it. According to Lazard, the three kinds of evidential forms point to the speaker's *becoming aware* of the facts. In the case of hearsay, for example, the evidential implies '*as I have heard*'; in the case of inference it implies '*as I infer*'; in the case of unexpected perception it implies '*as I see*'. The speaker somehow split into two persons, the one speaking and the one who has heard, inferred, or perceived. Lazard's claims that since the three meanings are expressed by the same forms, they should be subsumed under a common semantic value. This can be paraphrased '*as it appears*', regardless of whether the appearance arises from hearsay, inference or perception. The operation creates a distance not between the speaker and the event, as Slobin and Aksu (1982) claim, but between the speaker and his or her own discourse or between the speaker as the person acquiring evidence and the person expressing it. In neutral expression, speakers adhere to their own discourse by virtue of the linguistic intercourse. In evidential expression - implying '*as it appears*' - they distance themselves from what they are saying. Their utterances are no longer neutral but statements mediated by (unspecified) references to the evidence. For this reason this kind of particular evidential operation might be called 'meditative', according to Lazard (2000) Meditative discourse has markers implying distance with respect to the source of knowledge. For this reason, in languages having

the meditative category, evidential (meditative) verb forms are morphologically and functionally marked and are opposed to unmarked forms.

To illustrate his point, Lazard quotes a short example in Persian taken from a comedy in colloquial language, here represented in (9). The characters of this comedy wonder about the presence of a policeman in front of their house, and one of them tell the other what a third party has seen:

- (9) Sob-e sahar nane dide-bud-esh baz-am jelo xune rah mirafte  
Morning-LIG dawn Pn had.Seen-CLIT: 3SG again before house way was.going  
'At dawn Naneh had seen him, he was again walking in front of the house.'

As Lazard says, the perfect verb form *mirafte* (was going) is an evidential signaling that the information was obtained from someone else than the speaker, in this case Naneh. The information is thus no longer new and the speaker is neither surprised by it nor in doubt about it but only reports it as hearsay. Interestingly, the other perfect verb form *dide bud* (had seen) is not an evidential. This piece of information is as new (or old) as the other, but the speaker feels no need to mark it as hearsay because it is insignificant. So, as opposed to languages in which evidentiality is an obligatory grammatical category, one marks evidentiality only when this is significant in Persian.

I agree with Lazard's claim when he states that in some languages like Persian, some verb forms derived from perfect can give evidential (mediative) register in opposition to its neutral register. In (9), he has rendered an example to describe a situation when two perfect forms of the verbs *dide- bud-esh* and *rah mirafte* can be employed in such a way that the former is not hearsay and it is not marked, while the latter is hearsay and evidential.

## 2.3 Perry (2000)

### 2.3.1 Evidentiality and epistemicity

Perry (2000, p.229) mentions that in some cases where a perfect verb is used the speaker signals that he has not witnessed the event or state that he reports in his utterance, or that he realized a fact just before he began to report. In such cases the speaker's statement is founded upon hearsay, presumption, inference, surmise or a surprising discovery. The semantic categories hearsay and inference have earlier been described under labels such as 'indirective' and 'mediative' and Perry proposes the name "epistemic" for all these verb forms. Perry (2000, p.251) explains that epistemic utterances include judgments on the nature and validity of the speaker's knowledge on his own topic. According to Perry, in most varieties of Persian,



certain functions, and several forms derived from the perfect tense (past participle + auxiliary ‘to be’), have been known as epistemic in various ways. According to Perry (2000), the epistemic uses in Persian are usually derived from past perfect, as in (10a) below and durative perfect, as in (10b).

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 10) <i>a. karde- ast</i><br>ppart aux-3sg | <i>b. mi karde-ast</i><br>DUR ppart aux-3sg |
|---|---|

Perry establishes his framework according to Lazard (1985) and Windfuhr (1982) which presents and examines a matrix of valuable material from written Standard Persian. Perry’s main sources are 1) Afghan Persian, 2) Southern Tajik Persian and 3) Northern Tajik Persian, which are closely related dialects to Iranian Persian. Perry arranges the empiric material under five subcategories of epistemicity. Some of his examples in each category seem to be semantically appropriate in Iranian Persian as well. The examples that will be presented in section 2.3.2 below are those examples that are appropriate in Iranian Persian.

### 2.3.2 Quotative: Past and present reference

Perry (2000, p.232) renders examples of a quotative category. In (9), the perfect form *rafte-ast* indicates that the speaker’s knowledge is derived from hearsay. The speaker implies that he does not personally know that Ahmad has gone to a trip but he has been told this by someone else. In fact, the speaker quotes explicitly the statement which he has heard from someone else.

- (11) *Shenidam ke Ahmad diruz be safar rafte- ast*  
I-have-heard that Ahmad yesterday to journey gone. to be.3SG-Perfective  
‘I’ve heard that Ahmad went on a trip yesterday.’

In (11), Perry (2000) presents a conditional utterance that can illustrate the quotative inferential condition. In (11), the interlocutor has been told by someone that a friend has left in the morning. After a while, the friend does not show up. Therefore, the speaker addresses that person and says to him that if their friend left in the morning, he should have arrived now.

- (12) *Agar sobh harekat karde- ast,*  
If morning set-out he-has-done- to be.3SG-Perfective

*bayad ta hala peydayash shode bashad*

must till now appear-he have-become

‘If [as you say] he left in the morning, he should have appeared by now.’

According to Perry, in all major Persian dialects, a perfect or past perfect form may indicate that the speaker’s knowledge is derived from hearsay, whether explicitly acknowledged or assumed from the context. As indicated in sentence (11) the perfect verb form *rafte-ast* is epistemic in Perry’s sense since the speaker signals that he has not witnessed the state that he reports and he just reports what he has heard. In (11), Perry’s point is that the speaker is less certain about his utterance as he has not witnessed his utterance. According to Perry sentence (12) is “pseudo-conditional”: it is epistemic and it can illustrate the quotative and/or inferential modes quite well. Data (12) can be epistemic in a sense that the speaker casts a level of uncertainty on his statement. In my view, the utterance is epistemic because the speaker is less certain about second-hand information than the first-hand one. Example (12) is a conditional construction which is introduced by *agar* (*‘if’*). “If” here means “given the fact that ...” It is as a comment on a past event which is relevant to the present. So sentence (12) grants that (as the speaker has been informed) the male person referred to did leave this morning.

### 2.3.3 Mirative

Perry (2000, 234) presents another category of epistemicity, i.e. the mirative. He renders several examples of this category but all from Tajik or Afghanian dialects. Although all examples are from other varieties of Persian, I was able to extract two examples out of Perry’s examples which can be adapted to Iranian Persian according to my intuitions as a Persian native speaker. First, consider example (8), which Perry attributes to Lazard (2000). The example is repeated here for convenience:

- (8) Pul-am        na-bud-ay  
Money-CLIT:1SG NEG-be-EV:3SG  
I have no money (as I see)  
(From Lazard 2002, p. 361)

Example (8) can occur when the speaker touches his pocket and all of a sudden he gets to know that his pocket is empty. Example (8) is the original example in Tajik through which the speaker expresses his state of mind on discovering the fact that was not previously known. In (13) below, I provide an example in

Iranian Persian that is semantically equivalent to (8). This example has the same interpretation as (8). The difference is the application of another verb *gom-shode* in this sentence. The verb form used for this utterance is perfect. In (13), the function of the perfect form can be characterized as a response to an unexpected event.

(13) *Pul-am gom- shode!*

Money-my lost-become.3SG.PERF

‘Oops, I lost my money.’

In my view, although the mirative function of the perfect tense is rare in Iranian Persian and it is more common with aorist/ preterit, there could still be some rare situation in which this phenomenon can occur in perfect tense as in the above example in (13).

#### 2.3.4 Inferential: Past and Present

The sentence in (14) is selected examples in Persian that has been presented by Perry (2000). The perfect tense has epistemic function and the perfect /imperfect verb forms are indirective (secondhand knowledge).

(14) *Alan ou ra dide-and ke be xane –ye baradarash mi-rafte-ast*

Now he-Obj have-seen.3PL.PERF that to house-of brother-his IMP-has-gone.3SG

‘They saw him just now on his way to his brother’s house.’

In the example above the speaker is not a witness and he just reports what he has been told. According to Perry (2000, p.240) the inferential mode expresses presumption on the basis of evidence. He argues that such inferential statements are most probably true. In my view, this utterance has to do with epistemicity in the sense that the speaker would take less responsibility or certainty upon his utterance.

#### 2.3.5 Presumptive: Past and present

Perry (2000, p.241) introduces another subcategory of inferential called presumptive. A presumptive sentence offers no evidence other than common experience or expectation. According to Perry, although

the epistemic subcategories of inferential may create a hierarchy of probability, such presumptive sentences are probably true.

All the examples that Perry (2000, p.251) provides for the presumptive function are in Afghan/Tajik dialects and not in Iranian Persian. In the next chapter, I will test this inferential subcategory through some sentences in Iranian Persian.

### 2.3.6: Speculative: Past and present

Perry (2000) describes another epistemic subcategory of inferential, namely speculative, in which the statements leave the question open. Speculative or conjectural statements express the speaker's judgment of what is possibly true or ask the interlocutor to speculate. Example (15) below is an example in Iranian Persian that Perry mentions as the epistemic speculative inferential category.

- (15) *šāyad u eštabāh karde-ast*  
perhaps he mistake has-made  
'Perhaps he's made a mistake.'

This example is a speculative statement that refers to an event that possibly occurred in the past. According to Perry (2000), a speculative sentence, depending on context, can be inferential or presumptive in nature. In (15), one speculative adverb *šāyad* 'perhaps' is used explicitly to imply speculation. The interlocutor in a context judges the action of third person relying on the information reported to him. In (15), the perfect verb *eštabāh karde-ast* has an epistemic use in which it marks a secondhand knowledge.

To sum up this section, we have seen that Perry (2000, p.243) argues that the scope of epistemic verb forms extends in reference to present and future time. He quotes Lazard's statement when he says that the meditative in Iranian Persian is only concerned with past tense. Perry (2000, p.243) presents several examples under five subcategories of epistemicity referring to present and future only in Afghan and Tajik Persian. However, this is not the case in Iranian Persian.

Considering all provided data by Lazard and Perry, I agree with their point of view that epistemic use of verbs in Iranian Persian only exists in past tense.

According to Perry, if epistemic utterances comment on the nature, limits or validity of the speaker's knowledge of his topic, it follows that such comments should include that his knowledge may be second-hand, inferential or that it may have come as a surprise.

In sum, Perry (2000) argues that different subcategories of inferential may constitute a hierarchy of probability and thus epistemicity. Perry (2000, p.251) explains that epistemic utterances include judgments on the nature and validity of the speaker's knowledge on his own topic. These judgments remark that not only his knowledge on the topic can be second-hand, inferential and /or surprise but it may be undeniable and definite by the virtue of commonsense experience and belief. Perry (2000) agrees that there is a tendency in Persian to select a form of the perfect tense in order to differentiate a narrative statement with an eyewitness utterance. According to Perry, a problem which can arise here is to distinguish between – on the one hand - the meanings of the perfect verb forms and -on the other - their epistemic nuances'.

He states that in order to suggest a detailed analysis for indirectives, mediated and evidentials, the main question that should be answered, is this: 'What is the nature of the temporal, aspectual and semantic role of the perfect tense and its derivatives'. In the next chapter, I will try to examine the boundaries between the functions of perfect tense in Persian.

#### **2.4 Jahani (2000)**

Jahani (2000) makes use of the term 'indirectivity' in her account of Persian evidentiality, a term first suggested by Lars Johanson (1996). The term indirectivity, in Jahani's paper is used to refer to the indirect information achieved through the report of another person (which is called 'reportative') or it refers to the knowledge obtained through inferences and drawing conclusions (which is called 'inferential'). In order to answer the question whether a grammatical category of indirectivity exists in written Persian, Jahani quotes Windfuhr (1982, p.285) and Lazard (1985, p.28) when stating that the function of the inferential forms differ from that of the direct forms. This function allows the speaker to remove himself from direct responsibility for the truth of an event. Jahani (2000, p.186) claims that the only mention of colloquial language in the discussion of indirectivity in Persian exists in Windfuhr's work (1987, p.537). Jahani argues that there is a distinction between the literary register and the colloquial language in Persian. Jahani quotes Windfuhr (1987, p.537) when she says that the perfect form of the verbs that have been described as inferential in Windfuhr's earlier works, express remote past in the literary register but are not limited to literary register and frequently exist in colloquial language without referring to remote past. She argues that what has been expressed in the category of inference mainly includes second hand knowledge, conclusion and reminiscence. According to Jahani the main reason of her interest to study this subject is the lack of comprehensive investigation in spoken Persian. She has conducted an interview with some native Persian speakers who live in Sweden.

### 2.4.1 The interviews

In the experiment that Jahani (2000) performed, the number of persons interviewed was eleven, out of which two were men and nine were women. They all were native speakers of Persian, they came to Sweden as adults and they speak Persian with their family at home. In the interview, several scenes have been described to persons. The scenes were set in a way to obtain both reportative and inferential uses of the perfect verb forms in direct and indirect speech in order to compare these two categories. I rewrite below some of the scenes and sentences that were set by Jahani (2000, pp.188-194). We will see Scene number 1 set in order to get examples of how to express indirective-inferred information. To obtain samples of indirect-reportative speech, scene number 3 was set. In each scene Jahani (2000) presents one alternative scene in order to *contrast* direct versus indirect information and elicit information for comparing the two categories.

By presenting Jahani's work, it would be interesting to figure out which verb forms are more likely to be elicited in Persian when one contrasts sentences with firsthand vs. nonfirsthand and direct vs. indirect statements.

Jahani (2000) presents Windfuhr's groups of verbs. She classifies them into two groups, A and B. She argues that in utterances with inferential (evidential) meaning it is more common to use the verbs in group B, which are perfective. Jahani (2000) quotes Lazard and Windfuhr when stating that perfect indicative forms such as *kardám* etc (below) have a double function of expressing both a completed action with an ongoing result in the present and an indirective action with a perfective aspect.

#### Group A

*passé aoriste: (simple past): past, -reported, -anterior,*

*e.g. kárdam, kárdai, kárd, kárdim, kárdin, kárdan*

*passé durative (continuous past): past, -reported, -anterior, imperfective*

*e.g. mikárdam, mikárdai, mikárd, mikárdim, mikárdin, mikárdan*

*passé parfait (pluperfect): past, -reported, +anterior, perfective*

*e.g. kardé budam, kardé budí, kardé bud, kardé budim, kardé budin, kardé budan*

*passé progressif (progressive past) : non-reported progressive past*

*e.g. dāštam mikárdam, dāšti mikárdi, dāšt mikárd, dāštim mikárdim, dāštin mikárdin, dāštan mikárdan,*

*Group B*

Either *present*, +*anterior*, *perfective* or *past*, +*reported*, -*anterior*, *perfective*

Either *présent parfait* or *passé distancié aoriste* (*perfective indicative*)

e.g. *kardám, kardí, kardé,, kardím, kardín, kardán*

*Passé distancié parfait* (*no existing traditional English term*): *past*, +*reported*, +*anterior*, *perfective*

e.g. *kardé budàm, kardé budì, kardé bude, kardé budì, kardé budìn, kardé budàn,*

*reported progressive past* : *dāšté mikarde*

Below I present some of the scenes that Jahani (2000) uses in her study along with the results.

**Scene 1(a):** I have got a dog. One day I bake a cake and put it on the kitchen table without realizing that the dog is in the house. I leave the kitchen and when I return the cake is gone and the dog is sitting beside the table. No other person has been in the house since the cake was baked. Later my daughter comes home and asks for a piece of the cake that I had told her. I was going to bake today (the smell of which is also still in the house).

The answers in 16-20 are different answers produced by the informants to Scene 1 (a). In sentence 16 to 19 the perfect verb *xorde* has been used by the people who participated in the interview. The utterance describes the situation outlined in Scene 1 (a), in which case they think or speculate that the dog ate the cake and they did not see it personally. Only in 20 the simple past form *xord* is applied.

16. *sag Keiko xorde*

dog cake to eat.3SG. PERF

‘the dog has eaten the cake.’

17. *Fekr mikonam sage keikro xorde*

thought I make dog this cake in to eat.3SG. PERF

‘I assume that the dog has eaten the cake.’

18. *Mesl-e in ke sage keikaro xorde*

like-of this that dog cake to eat.3SG. PERF

‘Evidently the dog has eaten cake.’

19. *be nazar mirese ke sage keikaro xorde*  
to view it reaches that dog cake to eat.3SG. PERF  
'Evidently the dog has eaten cake.'

20. *Sage xord*  
dog to eat.3SG. IMP  
'The dog ate.'

Scene 1(b) and the corresponding responses produced by the informants are presented below.

**Scene 1(b):** The same scene as in 1(a), but when I return to the kitchen I see that the dog is busy eating the cake. In that case, what do I tell my daughter, when she later comes home and asks for piece of cake?

21. *Sag keikro xord*  
dog cake to eat.3SG.S.PAST  
'The dog has eaten the cake.'

22. *In pedar suxte hamaro var dašt xord*  
this father burnt all to take to eat.3SG. S.PAST  
'This rascal took and ate it all.'

23. *Sag xord-eš*  
dog to eat.3SG.S.PAST -OBJ.PN  
'The dog ate the cake.'

24. *Sag xord/ xorde*  
dog to eat. S.PAST/PERF  
'The dog ate /has eaten the cake.'

According to Jahani (2000, p.191) in the scene 1 when the speaker has not witnessed what has happened, but draws a conclusion from the result that he/she can see. The common verb form that was chosen by informants in scene 1(a) is *xorde*, which is the perfect indicative form, and mentioned in group B. Although there are few occurrences of simple past tense like *xord*. And when the speaker witnessed the



action like answers 21 to 24 in 1(b), it is very common to use simple past which is here the verb *xord*, although the perfect verb form *xorde* can be used as an alternative for simple past form of the verb. Jahani (2000, p.194) argues, in the case of inferred information the perfect is the preferred verb form by the informants. Also, she mentions that in many instances a marker is chosen by informants along with perfect form of the verb to indicate that the information is secondhand, such as *fekr mikonam* ‘I suppose’, *ehtemalan* ‘probably’, *mesl-e inke* ‘it seems that’, *hatman* ‘certainly’, *šāyad* ‘maybe’, *zāheran* ‘apparently’.

In scene 2(a) and 2(b) below, Jahani (2000) describes a situation for the participants in which a contrast is made between cases where the speaker reports something he has not experienced himself (but has been told by others) and the experience that speaker sees personally.

**Scene 2(a):** You have been on a journey to Iran. When you return to Sweden you tell your spouse/brother/sister (who we assume also lives in Sweden) about weather in Iran, about your family, etc. What do you say?

25. *al'an naro iran čun hava xeili garm e*  
do not go (2.sg) Iran because weather very warm is  
*ye ruz **daštam** tu xiabun **rah miraftam***  
one day to have in street way to go  
*inqadr daq bud ke asphalt daq šode bud*  
so hot it was that asphalt hot to become  
*kaf-e kaš-am **mičasbid** nemitunestam dorost qadam vardaram*  
sole-of shoe-my to stick to be able(neg.) proper step take  
‘Don’t go to Iran now, because the weather is very warm. One day I was walking in the street, it was so hot that the asphalt had turned hot. The sole of my shoe was sticking (to it). I could not walk properly.’
26. *Iran bad **nabud***  
Iran bad to be (neg.)  
‘Iran was not bad’

**Scene 2(b):** your husband/wife/brother/sister has been on a journey to Iran. When he/she tells you about the family, the weather etc in Iran. You in your turn tell one of your friends what you have been told. What do you say?

27 . *ba šouhar-am harf mizadam mige hava dar iran inqadr garm e*  
 with husband- my letter to hit he says weather in Iran so much warm it is  
*mige ke kařš-eř ke plastiki bude mičasbide be asphalt-e xiabun*  
 he says that shoe-his that of plastic to be to stick to asphalt-of street  
*inqadr ke asphalt daq řode bude az garma*  
 so much that asphalt hot to become from heat

‘I talk to my husband, he says that weather in Iran is so warm. He says that his shoes which were made of plastic were sticking to the asphalt of the street. The asphalt had turned so hot from the heat.’

28. *Xahar-am mige iran xub bude razi bude*  
 sister-my says Iran good to be satisfied to be  
 ‘My sister says Iran was good, she was satisfied.’

In Scene 2(a) the speaker has witnessed the event directly and in scene 2(b) the information is noneyewitness and secondhand. According to Jahani (2000, p.195) when a personal experience is told, the common tenses are those of group A above. For example, in 25 the continuous past *rah miraftam* ‘was walking’ is chosen by informant when she is describing a self-experienced situation. In 25, the imperfective verb *mičasbid* is applied to show an eyewitness utterance while in 27 which is the contrast situation of utterance 25; the continuous perfect verb *mičasbide* ‘has been stuck’ is used to show a noneyewitness situation. In another sentence 26, the speaker used the simple past verb *nabud* ‘was not’ to describe his direct information whereas by using the perfect form *bude* ‘has been’, it can be inferred that the speaker just reports what he/she has heard. In the reportative sentences of scene 2 we can see that when another person’s experience is being told, it is very common that informants choose a perfect tense in group B. Jahani (2000) states that it is evident that there is a preference of the forms described by Windfuhr as +reported in reported speech, whereas -reported forms are the only ones used when a personal experience is told. She agrees that most of the persons interviewed stressed that is proper and good speech to use the forms from group B in reported speech.

#### 2.4.2 The verb forms in Past tense in Spoken Persian

The main question to be answered in Jahani’s (2000) investigation is whether there is a grammaticalized category of indirectivity in past tense in Persian. Jahani (2000, pp.189-190) outlines two groups of verb

forms in past tense. She claims that there is only a difference in phonological stress between these two groups of verbs and it takes a trained ear to hear the difference in stress in the other persons. In other words, while verbs in group B mostly apply in indirective utterances the group A are more applicable in direct sentences and the slight difference in the stress of these two groups needs a trained ear to be distinguished in spoken language. Since in Persian language, it is easier to distinguish the perfective and imperfective verb forms in third persons, Jahani (2000, p.189) has formulated the interviews in way that most of the answers appeared in third person singular as it is the safest forms.

In conclusion, Jahani (2000) states that it is clear that the indirective meaning of group B forms are very strong especially in various concepts of indirectivity in narrated events such as assumptions and indirect evidence. Jahani (2000) conducted more interviews with less educated persons in order to figure out whether the use of group B has something to do with educational level. She states that the data achieved from this interview indicates that this is the case, at least to a certain degree. She agrees that the data from this interview is in accordance with the examples from written language in Lazard (2000). Jahani (2000, p.202) quotes Windfuhr's conclusion that the function of inferential forms differs from that of the direct forms, allowing the speaker to remove himself from direct responsibility for the truth of an event. She adds that group B forms allow a distance or removal between speaker and the action.

In my view, Jahani's investigations and interviews is in line with my thesis as she certifies by her examples and data that in no witness utterances, Persian speakers are more likely to use perfect forms of the verbs. This means that perfect tense can represent non firsthand information.

## **2.5 Plungian (2001)**

### **2.5.1 Cross-linguistic classification**

Plungian (2001, p.349) discusses the cross-linguistic classification of evidential values and proposes a typology of evidential systems. Plungian discusses grammatical typology resting on the fact that grammatical systems of the world's languages are comparable. If grammatical values are comparable, they should have something in common and this something is semantics, according to Plungian. Thus the grammatical systems and their values must have some independent semantic content. The semantic content is universal and mostly language-independent but the difference between grammatical and lexical expression is language-specific. The same semantic elements (e.g., repeatedly, recently, etc.) may have grammatical expression in one language and lexical expression in another. Also some semantic elements seem not to be grammaticalized in any language. Those semantic elements which are grammaticalized in at

least one language form a privileged semantic area called ‘universal grammatical space’. So how are these interrelations elements to be modeled? According to Plungian, the universal grammatical inventory includes semantic elements which are grammaticalized (i.e., expressed by affixes and/or auxiliaries from closed paradigm-like classes) in at least one natural language. Each particular grammatical marker comes to express either only one or several universal values (e.g. either ‘Iterative’ or ‘Habitual’, depending on the context). Evidential values are not exempted from this rule. Every language treats the evidential semantic domain in different ways.

### 2.5.2 Evidential values

Plungian (2001, p.351) agrees that evidential values indicate the source of information the speaker has for a described situation P. There are three main types of such information sources according to Plungian:

- (i) The speaker has observed P directly ( yields a visual value)
- (ii) The speaker has received P directly but not visually. In this category there is distinction between two cases. When the observer’s eyes are not used and when they are not needed. In the former case the perception of P is non-visual but could be presumed as visual. For example, when somebody is running into the house, it could be heard or seen or when a flower smells; these are Sensoric values. The latter case refers to those situations where visual perception is not possible at all, such as one’s own intentions, desires, or all inner states (mental& physical). This yields an ‘Endophoric’ value. This value has specialized markers in Tibetan languages.
- (iii) The speaker has not perceived P directly, being separated from P in space or time but he/she has had access to other kinds of information about P. As Plungian discusses, in most frequent classifications there are three possibilities: either the speaker has observed directly another situation which is pointing to P (captured by ‘Inferential’ value), or he/she knows something which suggests P is probable (yields ‘Presumptive’ value), or she/he got the information from other person(s) (a ‘Quotative’ value).

Plungian mentions that Quotative is the only evidential value which refers to a true mediated knowledge. In other cases, the speaker either has access to P or to some indirect manifestations of another observer. Plungian concludes that the most indirect evidence about P is reserved for ‘the Quotative’.

Plungian (2001) introduces evidential systems which prefer the parameter of speaker’s involvement and only have one opposition of Quotative (‘Mediated’) vs. non-quotative (‘personal’) forms, such as

Lezgian, Latvian, and Quechua. On the other hand, there are some systems in which most prominent opposition is that of direct vs. indirect access. Representatives of latter kind are found among 'inferential' Balkan, Caucasian or Ob-Ugrian systems. Alongside of these two simple systems, there are other complex systems where both parameters have importance. Plungian mentions Tibetan languages, Samoyedic or Californian Indian languages as languages which have at least three types of evidence: direct evidence, reflected evidence (i.e. personal indirect access), and mediated evidence.

In order to make the elementary evidential value clear, Plungian (2001, 354) presents the short paraphrases below:

A. Direct evidence (including direct access to P)

Visual

Sensoric: I perceive (d) P'

Endophoric: I feel (felt) P'

B. Reflected evidence (including direct access to some situation Q related to P)

Synchronous inference: P, because I can observe some signs of P'; cf. *he must be hungry*

Retrospective inference: because I can observe some traces of P'; cf. *he must have slept there* (because we see his untidy bed, etc.)

Reasoning: 'P, because I know Q, and I know that Q entails P'; cf. *today there must be a fair in Salzburg* (because I know the routine of this region, etc.)

C. Mediated evidence ( including neither direct nor reflected access to P )

Quotative: 'P, because I was told that P'; cf. *they say he's leaving; He is said to have left, etc.*

Although Plungian (2001) presents a comprehensive overview of evidential semantic by modifying Aikhenvald's classification of evidential values but I would focus on Aikhenvald's and other linguists' classification as they are more relevant to Persian.

### 2.5.3 The relation between evidentiality and modality

Plungian (2000, p.354) presents epistemic modality as a domain in which evidentiality and modality overlap. As Plungian describes when the speaker has no direct knowledge of P, a question of probability arises. Although he does not give a specific description for epistemic modality but it can be inferred from his precise statement that epistemic modality indicates the degree of commitment of the speaker to his /her

comment. An epistemic marker contains more evidential properties when the source of the speaker's hypothesis is specified. Not all evidential markers are modal as they do not necessarily imply an epistemic judgment. According to Plungian, generally, one can say that the reliability of information usually depends on how it was obtained: Visual information is considered to be most reliable and therefore expressing a higher degree of epistemic certainty. The less direct the information, the less reliable it is likely to be. Plungian calls these types of systems 'modalized evidential systems'. Modalized systems tend to treat forms expressing visual evidence as unmarked. The Balkan systems belong to this type. The strong modal system of Balkan accounts for the presence of admirative uses of their evidential markers. Plungian in his work introduces the overlapping of evidentials and modals. According to Plungian 'admirative value' is not an evidential meaning, but a modal meaning covered by the domain of expectation, because it deals with special kind of judgment; a judgment concerning with the speaker's expectations. Plungian maintains that 'admirative' is not a kind of evidential meaning and it is worth studying not as a category as itself, but in the larger context of expectation.

In sum then, Plungian (2001) provides an overview of main types of existing systems where evidentiality is marked as a verbal category. In his classification Plungian takes into account Aikhenvald's classification with some modification. According to Plungian, each elementary evidential value is either direct evidence, reflected evidence or mediated evidence. Plungian mentions the conception of "access" as the basis on which the speaker makes an assertion about a situation. To be more precise, this concept refers to the way that speaker indicates the source of information referred to in a particular speech situation.

In my view, although Plungian's statement about the epistemic modality is not the exact case in Persian, it gave me the inspiration to raise the question: Does the perfect tense have any epistemic function in Persian? This question will be investigated in the next chapter.

## **2.6 Summary: State of the art and remaining questions**

In this chapter, I tried to condense the findings of several scholars with regard to evidentiality in Persian. All of them celebrate the fact that in Persian there are sets of verb forms derived from perfect that constitute an evidential register. Although all agree upon the fact that Persian perfect may have evidential meaning, they do not grant the same definition for it. While Aikhenvald (2004, 2006) and Plungian (2001) use the term evidentiality, Lazard (2001) defines it as mediative; Jahani (2000) adopts the category indirectivity and Perry (2000) proposes the word epistemic. The authors differentiate their terminology as they consider some distinction between the evidential functions. Although in general they believe that

evidentiality is a grammatical category that has source of information as its primary meaning, some authors like Lazard (2001) claim that mediative (evidential) has nothing to do with the source of information. Lazard argues that in evidential expressions, speakers distance themselves from what they are saying.

In fact, these authors write about the same phenomena in different perspectives. All of them try to make a classification for evidential values and their functions. While Aikhenvald (2004) presents evidentials in different subtypes depending on the number of information sources they acquire, Plungian (2001) discusses the cross-linguistic classification of evidential values and he proposes a typology of evidential systems based on the distinction between direct, reflected and mediated evidence. Lazard (2001) discusses the grammaticalization of evidentiality in different languages and in his work he makes more specific attention to evidential markers in Iranian languages. Although Lazard (2001) does not show any objection to Plungian's table of evidential values, he disagrees with Plungian's opinion, in which epistemic judgment is mixed up with evidential reference, when he claims that the mediative variety of evidentiality does not imply doubt or any epistemic judgment. Perry (2000) in his writing does not show any disagreement with other linguists upon evidentiality, although he adopts the term epistemic for the verb reflecting evidential meaning. He subsumes functions of Persian perfect, out of which several functions convey epistemic meaning, in different varieties of Persian by testing them in various data. In an empirical work, Jahani (2000) tries to figure out whether a grammatical category of indirective exists in Persian and she tests this question by conducting the interviews.

To sum up, in the discussion of evidentiality in Persian, an uncontroversial issue is that there is a link between evidentiality and perfect tense. Although all authors come to the same conclusion that perfect forms are employed to signal the evidential meaning of a verb in Iranian Persian, the authors do not agree upon the definitions of evidentiality and its semantic domain. While some authors believe that evidentiality does not mix with epistemic meaning, others discuss the epistemic forms and functions of perfect tense in Persian. Although I do not deny the authors' opinions about evidentiality in Persian, I would like to test the relationship between perfect tense and epistemicity based on new data in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3 An investigation of epistemic uses of the perfect verb form in Persian

### 3.1 Introduction

In chapter 2, I presented previous studies on evidentiality in Persian, arguing that Persian has means of expressing evidentiality. Evidentiality in Persian is not signaled by a specific single marker, but is rather derived from the perfect forms. According to the linguists' claims in the previous chapter, perfect tense can have a double function, one of which is an evidential function, in addition to its ordinary resultative role. In chapter 2, I presented different scholars' point of view on evidentials. In general, they follow the idea that the evidential encodes source of information. According to the literature presented in chapter 2 (Lazard 2001, Aikhenvald 2006, Perry 2000), in Iranian Persian the types of information source signaled by perfect tense is nonfirsthand as opposed to firsthand information, in other words, indirect evidence as opposed to direct evidence. Indirect evidence can be subcategorized into inferential, reportative and mirative.

In addition to the above mentioned observations, Perry (2000) suggests that the term 'epistemic' reflects the functions of Persian perfect verb forms, including hearsay report, an inferential use, and a presumed, speculative or admirative action. According to Perry (2007), the epistemic uses invite the hearer to focus on the nature and medium of the speaker's information in order to figure out how the information is acquired. Whereas Perry (2000) sees epistemicity as having to do with the "nature, limits or validity of the speaker's knowledge of his topic", which is a very wide definition that covers all evidential uses, a different and narrower definition of epistemicity is reflected in e.g. Aikhenvald's work and in Nuyts (2001). According to Nuyts (2001, 21) the epistemic category refers to the "evaluation of the chances that a certain hypothetical state of affairs under consideration (or some aspect of it) will occur is occurring or has occurred in a possible world". In other words, epistemicity in this sense has to do with how certain the speaker is that what he describes is true.

In this chapter I will investigate, based on new data, whether the Persian perfect verb forms can be used to express inferential, reportative (hearsay), and mirative meanings, and whether the perfect verb forms necessarily signal epistemic uncertainty in the narrow sense for each of the evidential functions.

### 3.2 Evidential and non-evidential uses

Let me first illustrate the distinction between the evidential use of perfect tense and its ordinary use. In (29) and (30), I simply show two utterances out of which (29) describes a situation where the action is completed in the past while the result is still remained to the present. In (29), the perfect construction *bude*



*ast* 'has been' has the ordinary perfective meaning. In (29) it is said that Tehran has been set as the capital of Iran since 1785 and the utterance is still related to the present time as Tehran is still the capital of Iran. In another example, (30), the writer has applied the past perfect verb *taxmin zade bude ast* 'had estimated' as a non-witness function of the perfect form to quote the observation of a third person. The writer quotes the estimation of Sir Tomas Herbert to give the idea to his readers of how small Tehran was at that time, while the writer distances himself from this secondhand information.

(29) *Tehran az sal-e 1785 pāyetaxt-e Iran bude ast.*<sup>1</sup>  
 Tehran from year 1785 capital-EZ Iran was.3SG.PERF  
 'Tehran has been capital of Iran since 1785.'

(30) *Sir Tomas Herbert ke dar sal-e 1627 miladi az Tehran didan karde*  
 Sir Tomas Herbert that in year-EZ 1627 of Tehran visit did-PERF  
*tedad-e xanehaye ān ra se hezar taxmin zade bude ast.*<sup>2</sup>  
 number-EZ houses it OBJM three thousands estimate was.3SG.PERF  
 'Sir Tomas Herbert who visited Tehran in 1627 has estimated that there were three  
 thousands houses in Tehran.'

Utterances (29) and (30) illustrate two different functions of the perfect forms in Persian: (29) indicates a resultative interpretation while (30) shows that the source of information is reportative and the speaker narrates what he has acquired from someone else. In fact, the perfect form *bude ast* in (29) is applied to signal an indirect act of speech. Therefore, the perfect verb in (30) can be labeled an evidential.

Data (31) is an example about primitive men. Searching different scientific sources, I learned that generally Iranian writers/translators would prefer to use perfect form when they describe the way that primitive men used to live.

(31) *ensanhay-e avalie dar gharha mi-ziste-and*  
 human-EZ primitive in caves DUR- live.PERF-3.PL  
 'primitive men used to live in the caves.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This example is taken from :Wikipedia, Farsi <https://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.irna.ir/fa/services/180/%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85%DB%8C>

<sup>3</sup> This data is taken from <http://bigbangpage.com/> in 12.01.2015

In (31) the perfect form is used to describe a situation in which the action is done in a period in the past and now it is closed. This sentence is not as a presumption or hearsay but it expresses a real action whose evidence is still observable and it has been approved as a fact. In (31) the durative perfect verb *mi-zistend* ‘have been living’ does not have evidential (or epistemic) use. Later, in data (36) and (37), I will investigate the evidential use of the durative perfect form and will examine whether or not it has epistemic extensions.

As mentioned above, one question that follows from the previous literature is whether or not the function of the perfect form in (30) and (31) necessarily goes along with an epistemic reading, suggesting that the speaker is not certain that the state-of-affairs described is true. In the following, I will try to investigate this, based on new authentic data which was mainly gathered through social media and literature.

### 3.3 Data and findings

#### 3.3.1 Inferential evidential data

As I mentioned before, the Persian perfect verb forms may encode different evidential meanings. In this chapter, I test the context of authentic examples to figure out whether Persian perfect is compatible with an inferential evidential interpretation. In inferential evidentials the speaker infers the situation based on the perception of result of the action or he infers the situation based on the intuition, logic, previous experience, etc.

Data (32) is extracted from a scientific report published in the Farsi service of BBC. The report is about the latest obtained achievements about life on the planet Mars. The author refers to the structure of the rocks and soils on the surface of Mars and reaches the scientific conclusion that water flew on the surface of Mars millions of years ago. In (32), the journalist applies the perfect form *jaryan dashte* ‘has flown’ to show his perception based on current findings on the surface of Mars.

(32) *No-e sanghaye rooye Merix neshan midahad ke zamani āb rooye  
sort-EZ rock.PL on mars show give that while water on  
sath-e in sayareh jaryan dashte*

surface this planet flow keep. PERF

‘The feature of soils on Mars reveals that there has been water flowing on Mars.’<sup>4</sup>

In (32) the writer does not give the impression of epistemic uncertainty in his statement. According to my intuition, the author used a perfect form of the verb to encode second hand information rather than his uncertainty of his utterance. In (32) if the writer uses simple verb form, he gives the impression that he has observed the occurrence personally.

Data (33) shows another example of the evidential verb form with inferential meaning. The utterance is taken from an Iranian blog writer who writes his diary in his weblog. In one part of his story, he talks about his friend who has recently been informed about her cancer. By seeing her red face, he gets to realize that she has been crying. The author has applied the perfect verb *gerye karde* ‘has cried’ in his story.

(33) *az chehre ghermez shode-ash malum bud ke modatha gerye karde*  
from face red become.PN.3SG appear is. PAST that while cry do. 3SGPERF  
‘It was obvious of her red face that she had been crying for a while.’<sup>5</sup>

In (33) the speaker does not intend to show any uncertainty and doubt in his utterance.

Data (34) is written by an Iranian sport journalist. The writer follows the life of a famous football coach who has resigned recently and left his football team. Since the sport reporter was not able to find the football coach to set an interview with him about his recent decision, the reporter just infers from his previous information or experiences that the coach should be in his own villa in the northern part of Iran in order to be with his family and get some rest.

(34) *labod dobare shomal rafte va esterahat karde*  
perhaps again north go.3SG.PERF and rest do.3SG.PERF  
‘maybe he went to the north and he took a break’<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Data is collected from <http://www.bbc.com/persian> , November 2015

<sup>5</sup> Data is collected in <http://www.bbc.com/persian/science> November 2015

<sup>6</sup> The data is collected from <http://www.bartarinha.ir/> Date: December 2015

In (34) the writer tries to make a conclusion based on his own previous experience or intuition. He uses the lexical epistemic marker '*labod*' to encode his uncertainty on his statement. And by applying perfect form of the verb he intends to assure the reader that he has not observed the news himself.

Datum (32), (33) and (34) illustrate the use of inferential evidentials in Persian. In (32) the writer mentions to the existence of water on Mars in the past and he infers from the observable findings on Mars that water flew on it millions of years ago. The perfect verb form *jaryan dashte* 'has flown' is applied in this context to signal the evidential meaning. The case is the same for (33). The writer's inference is based on observable evidence, which is the red face of the girl who has been crying although he himself did not see her crying. In (33) the writer uses the perfect verb *gerye karde* 'has cried', in order to convey the evidential meaning. By using the perfect tense in (33), the reader will simply get that the writer has not seen the event directly. Also, in (34) the perfect verbs *rafte* 'has gone' and *esterahat karde* 'has rested' are employed to signal an inferential meaning. The journalist in (34) speculates about the current place of the coach, presumably based on his perception or previous knowledge about the coach's habits. It could also be that the journalist has not obtained any observable findings or information from which he can infer the current place of the coach. In fact, data (34) exemplifies an inferential evidential based on reasoning and premises with which the perfect verb is compatible and the speaker indicates his uncertainty by using an epistemic marker. Therefore it follows from the three examples that perfect form does not necessarily encode the speaker's uncertainty of his utterance. And it is not the case in any of these examples that speaker seems more uncertain about his utterance by using perfect form than any other verb forms.

To sum up, perfect tense in Persian can achieve inferential meanings and does not necessarily indicate epistemic uncertainty.

### 3.3.2 Reportative evidential data

According to the linguists' discussions which I showed in chapter 2, sets of verbs derived from the perfect tense can also be used to signal a reportative (i.e. hearsay) meaning in Persian. According to Perry (2006) perfect forms can be used to report a non-witnessed action which has been completed in the past.

Data (35) is an example from a scientific article in which the writer reports information about solar winds. He narrates secondhand information through the perfect form of the verb *budeand* 'have been'. The writer narrates Dr' Halkas' comment about the solar winds which used to happen many years ago in the solar system but they do not occur now. The author has applied the perfect verb *budeand* 'have been' in order to show that the information is acquired by someone else. Although the speaker has obtained second-

hand information the evidential perfect form *budeand* 'have been' does not encode any doubt about the content of utterance.

- (35) *Dr.Halkas gofte-ast ke bādhaye xoršidi pištar dar tarix-e manzume šamsi bištar budeand*  
Dr.Halkas said.PERF.3SG wind.PL solar before in history. EZ system solar more were. PERF  
'According to Dr. Halkas, the solar winds used to be more in the history of solar system.'<sup>7</sup>

The perfect verb *Budeand* in (35) has an evidential interpretation. The author has not acquired the data himself and just presents the secondhand information. He just expresses it as a report of what he saw or read in an article by Dr. Halkas. Interestingly, the perfect verb *gofte-ast* has no epistemic function because it just indicates that Dr.Halkas' statement has been completed in the past. Explicitly the speaker does not seem uncertain whether this is true.

Data (36) below is part of a short story in which a man is looking for his fiancée. On his way to find her, he got informed by the neighbors that they have seen his fiancée while she was going towards the cottage by the river.

- (36) *hamsayeganash ou ra dide-and ke be samte kolbey-e ān sooy-e roudkhane mi-rafte-ast*  
neighbors his.PN.3SG OBJECTIVE see-PERF that toward cottage-EZ that side river has<sup>8</sup>  
been going-DUR.PERFECTIVE.EV  
'his neighbors told that they saw her while she was going toward the cottage in another side of the river.'

In (36) the durative perfect verb *mirafte-ast* 'was going' signals that the information was received from someone else, which is the neighbors, and not the speaker. Although there is the perfect verb *dide-and* 'have seen' it is not used as hearsay while the verb *mirafte-ast* gives rise to the hearsay meaning in this sentence. Durative perfect forms are frequently used in literature and journalistic reports to describe a durative action which was accomplished in the past. By using the durative perfect forms the writer is able to distance himself from the secondhand information. According to my intuition, in (36) the durative perfect form *mi-rafte-ast* gives rise to a pragmatic inference through which the speaker takes less responsibility on his own comments, which decreases the degree of commitment to his utterance.

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<sup>7</sup> Data 35 is taken from <http://www.bbc.com/persian/science> in December 2015

<sup>8</sup> The example 36 is taken from a weblog : <http://facenama.com/view/post:50264213>

Data (37) is taken from an old story published in a weblog. The author narrates the story of an abstemious man who was passing the road and on his way when something caught his attention. He narrates it as follows:

(37) *ye rooz Seyed Mehdi Ghavam dāšte barmigašte xune ke yeho ye chizi nazar eš ro jalb mikone...*  
one day Mehdi Ghavam have return.3SG. PROG PERF home that suddenly one thing idea.3SG  
OBJECTIVE attract. PERF<sup>9</sup>

‘Once upon a time, something caught the attention of Seyed Ghavam on his way back to home.

In (37), the progressive perfect construction *dāšte barmigašte* ‘was going back’ is applied to indicate a non-witnessed action. In (37), the speaker is able to distance himself from the secondhand information. The progressive perfect *dāšte barmigašte* presents a hearsay action which is viewed and completed in the past. The progressive perfect forms are very common in colloquial Persian of Iran to report or narrate secondhand information or inferential statements. In addition, applying the progressive perfect construction is attested among writers in re-narrations of the old mythical stories. In fact, (37) is an example of the re-narration of an old story by a writer on his own website.

Datum (35), (36), and (37) show that perfect verb forms are compatible with reportative evidential meanings in Persian. The data also shows that an evidential verb form can be used even if the speaker is not casting any doubt of the truthfulness of the content of the utterance. In other cases, such as (36) and (37), the speaker may reflect less certainty as he re-narrates second-hand information. So, the data support Aikhenvald’s view that epistemic uncertainty is just a common ‘extension’ (pragmatic inference) or ‘overtone’ of many evidentials and not necessarily part of the semantics of the evidential marker.

### 3.3.3 Mirative evidential data

As presented in 2.2.2, Lazard (2001) argues that mirativity is among the common uses of many evidential markers. According to what was presented by Lazard as the definition of mirativity, the speaker expresses an event which has happened in the past but he discovers it unexpectedly or surprisingly at the present time by an inference or hearsay. Data (38) describes a situation in which a woman in the novel is suspicious about her husband. She speculates that he is having an affair with their mutual friend Maryam. One day she

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<sup>9</sup> The example 37 is taken from a weblog : <http://bivatan.blogspot.com/1391/01/23/post-405/>

finds two old flight tickets in her husband's pocket and one of the tickets belonged to Maryam. Upon seeing this, she exclaims:

- (38) *tamam-e in moddat dāšte behem khianat mikarde(ast)*  
all. EZ this time has.3.SG.PERF to me cheat do. DUR.3.SG.PERF.PRES  
'he has been cheating on me for so long!'<sup>10</sup>

In another context, I try to test whether also other perfect forms are compatible with mirativity in Persian. In (39), I met accidentally an old friend Anne and she told me that another old friend Miriam, with whom I lost contact many years ago, has become a successful writer and that she has recently published a book. After hearing this news I said:

- (39) *Miriam ketbab nevešte!*  
Miriam book write.3. SG.PERF  
'Miriam wrote a book!'<sup>11</sup>

So, I would state that data (39) is an example of mirative use because it is in accordance with Lazard's definition for mirative use. Data (40) is taken from a story in which the first character has some mental problems and she is always suspicious about the things taking place around her. One night when she is going out of her place, all of a sudden, she feels that something bad is going to happen. Upon having this feeling, she says to herself that:

- (40) *in bar be delam barat šode ke karha xarab mišavad*  
this time to my heart reach become PERF that things destroy become  
'It has come to my mind that everything is going to be destroyed this time.'<sup>12</sup>

The speaker uses the perfect verb *barat šode* 'has come to my mind' to express the feeling that at the moment of her speech comes to her. Like a mirative evidential, the event is unexpected and surprising to

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<sup>10</sup> The data 38 is elicited from a conversation with an Iranian friend in October 2015

<sup>11</sup> The data 39 is elicited from a conversation with an Iranian person in November 2016

<sup>12</sup> Data 40 is part of an Iranian Novel written by Gholamhossein Saebi which is published in an Iranian weblog : <http://nasrian.persianblog.ir/post/144/>

the speaker and the speaker distances herself from the emotional situation which she describes. The perfect form *barat šode* ‘has felt’ in (40) indicates an action which happens in the present time and it can be leading to the future. In (40) the source of information is not specified and the speaker does not seem to express epistemic uncertainty. (40) is almost the same as the use of the forms that Lazard has shown in his example in (8) but the difference is that Lazard (2001) presents (8) as an example of mirative in Tajik and not in Iranian Persian while data (40) is in Iranian Persian. So, I would argue that if (40) is an example of an evidential function of perfect tense. (40) is a rare case among Persian evidentials that refers to the present experience. Mirative evidentials in Persian are usually compatible with past experience.

In both contexts (38) and (39) the speaker shows her surprise upon what she sees or hears. As discussed in the previous chapter, Lazard (2001) argues that with mirative interpretations, the speaker has inferred the content of the utterance from the traces of unexpected events or from what other people have been saying. According to Lazard, the speaker can make a distance between himself and his utterance. In (38) the woman of the story unexpectedly finds the ticket in her husband’s pocket. She expresses her surprise by using the progressive perfect form *dāšte khianat mikarde* ‘has been cheating’ with an exclamatory intonation. By finding the ticket in her husband’s pocket she knows that what she states is true. In (39) the speaker gets surprised by hearing the unexpected news. The speaker shows her surprise by the perfect verb *nevešte* ‘has written’ with an exclamatory intonation form. Also (40) is an evidential. In none of the above mirative evidential verb forms does it seem likely that the speaker wants to express his uncertainty about his utterance, rather his surprise. So, these data support the observations in earlier sections that epistemic uncertainty is not encoded in the semantics of Persian evidentials.

### 3.3.4 Data with dubious function

Data (41) is part of a scenario in which two colleagues, Sara and Mary, are talking with each other at work. Sara informs Mary that another colleague, John, has recently resigned from his job. Mary is doubtful about John’s decision and she thinks that he may have made a mistake when he quit his job. After hearing the news, Mary shows her doubt or disagreement with this utterance:

- (41) *Šāyad ou eštabāh karde-ast*  
*perhaps he mistake did -3.SG-PERF*  
 ‘maybe he has made a mistake.’<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Data 41 is taken from part of my conversation with some Iranian friends



In data (41), Mary uses the perfect verb *eštabāh karde-ast* ‘has made the mistake’ to express her idea about John’s decision. Mary gets the information through hearsay from Sara. Therefore, she expresses her idea or feeling about the reported action by applying the perfect form *eštabāh karde-ast*. As Lazard suggested in 2.2 about evidentials, the speaker’s use of the perfect verb form in (41) has the effect that the speaker distances herself from what she says. Lazard (2001, p. 363) states that evidentials can be associated with presumptions and doubt when they are added to lexical items or modal auxiliaries, but the evidential forms themselves are neither dubitative nor presumptive, according to Lazard. I agree with Lazard and believe that this is the case in (41). In (41) the speaker reveals a degree of uncertainty in her comment by applying the lexical evidential *šāyad* ‘perhaps’ together with the perfect verb *eštabāh karde-ast* ‘has made mistake’. In (41) the speaker applies an epistemic marker *šāyad* to even strengthen her doubt upon her own utterance and there is an indication of the degree of commitment. Although it is much more common in Persian to use modal adverbs like *bayad* ‘must’ to imply an epistemic judgment, the speaker in (41) has applied a perfect verb to indicate her idea about a non-witnessed action. And in this utterance there is uncertainty and doubt which has been strengthened by an evidential marker. In (41), the information source of the speaker’s statement is not specified. That is, it is not specified whether she expresses her comment based on her presumption, hearsay or a fortuitous state of affairs. I would argue that the perfect verb can be applied with any kind of epistemic marker in order to point at the degree of speaker’s commitment and certainty about his own statement. By combining a lexical epistemic (evidential) marker with perfect form of the verb the speaker encodes his doubt about the truthfulness of his utterance. And this is the case when the information source of the speaker’s statement is not specified. So an epistemic interpretation can be inferred pragmatically in this context. Although in (41) the use of the perfect verb implies a degree of the speaker’s uncertainty about her speech act, this is not the case in the other above-mentioned examples. Therefore, I will argue that the evidential perfect tense in Persian does not necessarily mark epistemic uncertainty. Therefore, I prefer the term ‘evidential’ for the perfect form in Persian (in line with e.g. Aikhenvald), rather than ‘epistemic verb forms’, as proposed by Perry (2000).

### 3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have verified the hypothesis in the existing literature that perfect tense in Persian can have another function in addition to its ordinary use; it can function as an evidential marker. This was shown based on newly collected authentic data such as examples (29) and (30).

I have classified the evidential function of the perfect into three main categories which are hearsay, inferential and mirative. In each section I provided examples to test if the perfect tense is compatible with each of these uses. I argued in data (32-34) that perfect tense can be used to communicate inferential meaning. In data (35-37), I applied several types of perfect verbs in the examples which indicate that perfect tense can express reported information as well as having epistemic functions in some cases. Besides, by adopting Lazard's claim about mirativity (admirative) in Persian, in (38) and (39) and (40), I argued that mirativity is one possible effect of the perfect in Persian.

The data in this chapter has confirmed the previous findings on the epistemic inference in perfect verb form in Persian (as proposed in chapter 2). However, I need to mention that I did not find any previous statement about the difference in the level of uncertainty among the various interpretations of evidentials in Persian. In my data I noticed that epistemic uncertainty can be pragmatically inferred more easily among data where the source of information is inferences than with hearsay meaning. Among data with hearsay meaning, the one that has an authentic information source casts no uncertainty of truthfulness on the utterance. On the other hand, there is epistemic inference in re-narration and colloquial hearsay contexts.

To sum up, I conclude that perfect tense in Persian does not necessarily go hand-in-hand with epistemic uncertainty. Furthermore, I have found out that it is likely that mirative uses in Persian be used with present experience.

## Chapter 4 Summary

This thesis has focused on two aspects of evidentiality in Persian. The first part of the thesis consists of the findings and insights of other scholars about evidentiality and what they have claimed about evidentiality, perfect tense and epistemicity. The second part of the thesis is based on data that I collected in order to find out the probable relation between perfect form of the verb and epistemicity in Persian.

The main claim in the first part of the thesis is that perfect form of the verb can signal evidential meaning. Although all scholars acknowledge that perfect tense can signal evidential meaning, they do not share the same perspective on evidentiality. While Aikhenvald's (2006) view is that 'evidentiality is a grammatical category that has source of information as its primary meaning', in Lazard's (2001) point of view evidentiality is grammaticalized in languages with specific forms whose semantic-pragmatic content refers to the source of information. In case of evidential classification, they subsume it with regard to different perspective. While Lazard defines three uses for mediative, Aikhenvald renders different subtypes based on how many information sources are acquired. Aikhenvald (2006) argues that some languages have evidential-like extensions and they are known as evidentiality strategies and Lazard (2001) renders the terms *significant* and *signifié* to make a connection between semantic-pragmatic meaning of *significant* (specific form) and *signifié* which is the content. Through my research in Iranian data, I found out that Persian perfect can have epistemic extensions apart from its primary meaning. Perfect form is a specific form in Persian whose meaning can be reference to the source of information conveyed by the discourse. So, I argue that Persian is among languages which have evidentiality as a grammatical category. When it comes to epistemic meaning of the evidential verbs, Lazard (2001) and Aikhenvald (2006) argue that evidentiality has nothing to do with truthfulness, validity or responsibility of speaker's statement, while Perry (2000) proposes the term epistemicity for evidentiality and presents several examples in Persian in which he extends over the epistemicity in semantic domain of the perfect verb.

In an experimental work, Jahani (2000) makes use of the terms *inferential* and *indirectivity*. Through conducted interviews, she finds out that Persian speakers tend to use perfect form of the verbs in utterances with non-firsthand information in spoken Persian. All authors presents different examples in which present perfect encodes evidential meaning. In this part of the thesis, I tried to argue for my point of view along with the various scholars' ideas.

In the second part of the thesis, I tried to investigate whether perfect form of the verbs in Persian encodes information related to epistemicity. I collected authentic data to find out whether the speaker signals less certainty in his utterance when he uses an evidential perfect verb than when he uses other verb forms. By applying several examples with different evidential interpretations I tried to observe whether one

draws inferences about epistemic certainty in each data. Judging from the investigated utterances, I concluded that there is no epistemicity in the semantic of perfect evidential verbs, there was merely some pragmatic inference in some of the data. And in order to emphasize the uncertainty, speaker usually adds a lexical epistemic marker to reflect the uncertainty.

In Sum, I would argue that my data and findings on evidential perfect in Persian support prior views of some scholars like Aikhenvald (2004) and Lazard (2001). I tried to test Perry's (2000) point of view on epistemicity through my new data, but contrary to Perry, I found out that epistemic uncertainty is not part of the semantics of the perfect verbs in Persian. Also, I have argued that in some utterances, especially in colloquial context, it is likely that evidential perfect forms reflect epistemic meaning without applying any epistemic marker. I need to say that Persian speakers often prefer to communicate indirectly rather than directly, especially in colloquial utterances. So, epistemic uncertainty in perfect form of the verb would be inferred more often in spoken language than in official writings or literature.

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