

Vocalization shifts in the formal and informal registers of the Kabuli Dialect

In the conversational and colloquial registers of the Kabuli dialect a number of distinct shifts take place. In this section we will see a breakdown of these shifts.

In your studies of the Persian language you have learned the morphological endings for the six pronouns in the language. Below we will see the instances wherein these morphological endings are modified in the Kabuli dialect. These changes can be divided in either a final vowel change, a removal of a final letter, or the addition of a letter.

Students can practice vocalizing these differences to better understand and hear the shifts. Additionally, watch the assigned videos which include a popular pop song by Ahmad Zahir and an interview with another popular singer, Zahir Huwaida.

We will use the verb کردن (*to do*) for the below exercise. Please begin with the pronoun column and move to the left.

Change	Transliteration	Conversational or colloquial ending	Transliteration	Formal ending	Pronoun
Final vowel and/or loss of ِ r	kardom / kadom	کردم \ کدم	Kardam	کردم	من
Loss of ِ r	Kardi / kadi	کردی \ کدی	Kardi	کردی	تو
Loss of ِ r	Kard / kad	کرد \ کد	Kard	کرد	او
Loss of ِ r	Kardaim / kadaim	کردیم \ کدیم	Kardaim	کردیم	ما
loss of ِ d and loss of ِ r	Kardain / kadain	کردین \ کدین	Kardaid	کردید	شما
Loss of ِ d and loss of ِ r	Kardan / kadan	کردن \ کدن	Kardand	کردند	آنها

Here are some example sentences. Students can first work on identifying which pronoun the verb is connected to and then transliterate the sentence to align with the shifts that occur in the Kabuli dialect.

امروز چی کردین؟

نمی دانم چی کنم!

بسیار کار خراب کردی.

او هیچ به حرفم توجه نکرد.

ما را پیشتر نگفتید؟

Now let us work with another verb to see if the same rules apply. It is important to remember that the shifts will be one or a combination of the following: a final vowel change, a removal of a final letter, or the addition of a letter.

Below we'll work with another verb: رفتن (*to go*). Please begin with the pronoun column and move to the left.

Change	Transliteration	Conversational or colloquial ending	Transliteration	Formal ending	Pronoun
Final vowel change	Raftom	رفتم	Raftam	رفتم	من
None	Rafti	رفتی	Rafti	رفتی	تو
None	Raft	رفت	Raft	رفت	او
None	Raftaim	رفتیم	Raftaim	رفتیم	ما
loss of ډ d and addition of ن n	Raftain	رفتین	Raftaid	رفتید	شما
Loss of ډ d	Raftan	رفتن	Raftand	رفتند	آنها

Notice that shifts are not always occurring and in most cases the shift is minor and will neatly match the shifts and absence of such shifts we see for the verb رفتن listed above.

We will once again look at some sample sentences to aid students in locating the pronoun connected to the verb and shift. Please write the transliteration of the below sentences based on the Kabuli dialect.

دیروز کجا رفتید؟

نخیر، آنجا نفرتم.

راشد خانه رفت.

When the verb conjugation shifts from positive to negative (I went vs. I didn't go) no additional modifications take place. Thus the previously noted shifts in the conversational and colloquial formations and registers remain. The only requirement, similar to formal grammar, is to incorporate the ن *n* of negation as a prefix.

Let us review this by revisiting the conjugations for the verb رفتن but this time include the negative form of the verb as well. Please begin with the pronoun column and move to the left.

Change	Transliteration	Conversational or colloquial ending - Negative	Transliteration	Conversational or colloquial ending - Positive
Final vowel change	naRaftom	نرفتم	Raftom	رفتم
None	naRafti	نرفتی	Rafti	رفتی
None	naRaft	نرفت	Raft	رفت
None	naRaftaim	نرفتیم	Raftaim	رفتیم
loss of ɔ d and addition of ɒ n	naRaftain	نرفتین	Raftain	رفتین
Loss of ɔ d	naRaftan	نرفتین	Raftan	رفتین

Finally, let us review one more verb and see what kind of changes occur. We will now work with the verb دادن (*to give*). Please begin with the pronoun column and move to the left.

Change	Transliteration	Conversational or colloquial ending	Transliteration	Formal ending	Pronoun
Final vowel change	Dādom	دادم	Dādam	دادم	من
None	Dādi	دادی	Dādi	دادی	تو
None	Dād	داد	Dād	داد	او
None	Dādaim	دادیم	Dādaim	دادیم	ما
loss of ɔ d and addition of ɒ n	Dādain	دادین	Dādaid	دادید	شما
Loss of ɔ d	Dādan	دادن	Dādand	دادند	آنها

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Notice that similar to the verb رفتن the verb دادن follows the same pattern in shifts or their absence in comparison to the formal endings and vocalization. Lastly, as noted in other lessons, the written script always maintains the formal orthography and endings. This will be true for newspaper, advertising, official documentation, written correspondences, etc. However, we will notice the conversational or colloquial shifts maintained in some novels and informal social media writing.

At this point, please refer to the video/audio material related to this shift in pronunciation. You can further practice the shifts by writing down the verbs you hear in the Kabuli dialect.

Soundwaves of Dissent, Soundscapes of the Spirit: Music, Language, and Politics in Afghanistan

Poetry, music, and song have been an integral part of the history and culture of the people of Afghanistan. Kabul in the 1960s and particularly in the 1970s experienced revolutionary turns in the way music was broadcast, broadened with influences from the region and the globe (including the US), and reflective of the social, political, and literary changes that were unfolding. No single person better represents both the hopes and heartbreaks of Afghanistan's music, and by extension—history, more than Ahmad Zahir: an innovative, remarkable, and peerlessly popular singer who was also the son of the country's prime minister. Ahmad Zahir's charisma, style, and prolific musical output in his short lifespan has become embedded in how the people of Afghanistan in general and the people of Kabul in particular relate to, recall, and attempt to reclaim a not-so-distant past where songs carried poetry from the classical cannon of Farsi mystical poetry as well as folklore and foreign artists. Music was also, with its symbolic language and layered poetry, an attempt to rebel against political shifts and injustices that the artists and people felt betrayed the nation. Long before Afghanistan became a site of perennial political fiasco and imported religious fanaticism, it was a place of pluralism, possibility, and powerful music. In this section, we will listen to an interview related to Ahmad Zahir and his life, as well as insights into Kabul before the Soviet invasion. Ahmad Zahir is to this day the most popular singer in Afghanistan, even though the singer's life was cut short under mysterious circumstances at the ripe age of 33 in the year 1979.

Lastly, Ahmad Zahir, should not simply be labelled as "Afghanistan's Elvis" for if we are to stamp him with the name of an American or Western artist we would need to incorporate multiple names in order to reflect the diversity, lyrical and musical range, and variety of the segments of society that celebrate and define key parts of their lived experiences by and with his songs. Thus Ahmad Zahir is a combination of Nat King Cole, Bob Dylan, The Beatles, and B.B King.

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BBC documentary: Remembering Afghanistan's Elvis

(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3csz4kd>)

As you listen to the BBC documentary please note five to seven key points or quotes which helped convey interesting insight into the artist, music in Afghanistan, and the social and political climate of that time. Is the music what you expected? Do you recognize any words or aspects of the Kabuli dialect in the song samples from the documentary? If so, please note them. What stands out about the way nostalgia echoes in the words of the interlocutors in the documentary? In what ways might nostalgia and a past that was violently taken away serve as a means of comfort during the difficulties and traumas for these individuals and by extension their children and grandchildren? What role does or can language play in healing and history? Please discuss these prompts in groups of two to three – ensuring that all group members have a chance to contribute their reflections.

Ahmad Zahir and the Politics of Language

Ahmad Zahir died at the young age of 33. His death has long been considered suspicious and a result of his increasingly political music. Two weeks prior to his death he had recorded poetic and politically fiery song interpreted to be a direct critique of the Soviet backed government in Kabul. The song based on a poem by the famed modern Iranian female poet Simin Behbahani titled: *Āsomān khālīst* – The sky is barren

Please listen to the entire song once. On your second listen, do your best to fill out the lyrics in the space provided below. Once done with filling in the lyrics, listen to the song a third time and reflect on the way Persian poetry and literature travel, complicating borders and boundaries established with the formation of Iran and Afghanistan and the requisite nationalization of nation-states. Moreover, what do you think the symbols in this song represent? For example, in what ways can we interpret the symbol of “the sky is barren” or the refrain of “*kī bord?*” (who robbed it?).

You can listen to the song via YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejeCqoMDmGM>

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آسمان خالیست، _____، روشنانش را _____؟

تاج ماهش، سینه _____؟

باغبان تنهاست، تنها، گرد او _____

_____، ارغوانش را که برد؟

_____ آسمان سبز بود

_____ نیست اینک جز _____؟

_____ آن چنار دیر سال _____

_____ آشیان _____ را که برد؟

Not all of Ahmad Zahir's songs were political. Many of his songs dealt with the palpitations and intensities of love, youth, and music as a source of joy and community. In fact, most of Ahmad Zahir's catalogue are recordings from live, intimate house parties referred to as *majlesi* (private gathering). These gatherings mainly occurred in Kabul and included both men and women in the audience. The background and acoustic sounds capture the vibrant joys and jolts of the era. In the second portion of this section, let us listen to another one of Ahmad Zahir's songs. An infectious and playful song with the refrain: *Zim Zim Zim*. The song captures the vocalization of someone enamored by the beauty of a beloved. How would you translate the song's refrain? Listen to the song and write down the refrain. Then write down the presence of the Kabuli dialect in the song. What conjugations and grammatical shifts related to the Kabuli dialect are present in the song? Think about the present tense, diphthongs, and the shifts in register that seamlessly occur in the song as Ahmad Zahir sings.

You can listen to the song via YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5m9x7O_3UQ

What do you think the following vocabulary in the song mean:

Word	Meaning
خمارت	
"کو به کو"	
"سارا به سارا"	
افسوس	
نیش	

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پیوسته

The third and final song in this series is his famous song: Laily Laily Laily jān. Please listen to the song, fill out the lyric sections below and then translate them. You may use a dictionary such as Haim or Aryanpour or an online resource such as: vajebyab.com

Are there any words that were difficult to understand or define? Discuss them with your professor and fellow students.

The song is available via YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBKKBD1-M5s>

_____ کردی _____ دل _____ ، لیلی، لیلی، لیلی جان، _____

_____ نامدی، وای وای، _____

چشم _____ ، مادر _____ داغت

_____ عاشق، _____ مادر

_____ ، _____ از بالا آمد

_____ یک _____ ، وای _____ چشمش _____