

## **A Contrastive Linguistic Analysis of Inflectional Bound Morphemes of English, Azerbaijani and Persian Languages: A Comparative Study**

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### **Abstract**

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This study aims at contrasting and comparing inflectional bound morphemes of English, Azerbaijani and Persian languages in details to pinpoint any similarities and differences between them. To do so, an inventory of Azerbaijani, Persian and English inflections with examples and illustrations are listed to highlight their similarities and discrepancies. There are restricted numbers of inflections in each language and are utilized to indicate aspects of grammatical function of a word. Results reveal that there are more varieties of inflections in Azerbaijani language than in English or Persian and; they share some common properties as well as several dissimilarities. English and Persian represent more irregularity in terms of plurality for nouns and affixation for verbs; Azeri incorporates numerous inflections into each category as well. The differences are the major source of difficulties for a native speaker of Azeri or Persian to learn English and vice versa. To overcome this, teaching should be effectively and efficiently managed at these different points to smooth the path for learners. Based on the findings of the study, some implications can be drawn for translators, textbook writers, syllabus designers, learners and instructors involved in language pedagogy.

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**Keywords:** contrastive analysis, Azerbaijani and Persian languages, inflectional morphemes

### **Introduction**

Contrastive analysis has been an essential and systematic branch of applied linguistics which deals with the linguistic description of the structure of two or more different languages.

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Such descriptive comparison and contrast serve to show how languages differ in their sound system, grammatical structure and vocabulary. This type of analysis can be used in language teaching, translation, and of course, designing syllabus among others, to point out the areas where the similarities and discrepancies between two or more languages are present.

Azeri language, also known as Azerbaijani, is the official language of the Republic of Azerbaijan, though some dialects of the language are spoken in several parts of Iran such as Azerbaijan Provinces, Ardabil, Hamedan, Gazvin and Zanjan Provinces. Azeri language can also be heard in parts of eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, and in southeastern area of the Republic of Georgia. Azeri people in Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan are bilingual. Worldwide, there are about 30 million or more native speakers of this language (Farzaneh, 1998). Persian (Farsi) is an Indo-European language, spoken and written primarily as an official language in Iran, Afghanistan, and a part of Tajikistan. It is written from right to left in the Arabic-like alphabet (Mace, 2003).

In all these places, English is incrementally becoming popular and essential due to educational, social events and circumstances and it has become a compulsory subject in schools and of course for families in the society. As English teachers, the paramount importance of learning and teaching English morphology should be recognized. The ability to acknowledge the components of words, i.e., affixes, roots and word families etc., is believed to be an important skill in language learning and teaching (Yarmohammadi, 2002).

Morphology and Bound Morphemes have become the focus by many experts in the field of linguistics and language teaching. Azeri and Persian EFL learners are to master explicitly or implicitly bound morphemes and inflections respectively. The complexity in learning English inflectional morphemes, which Azeri and Persian students are likely to encounter, seems to arise from different linguistic systems as well as different linguistic affiliation. Two reasons have been put forward for the considerable emphasis on this issue: the importance and necessity of inflectional morphemes in learning English and vice versa and the difficulty of mastering these types of structures for EFL and ESL learners. The idea appears even more complicated when these languages come in contact with each other and when speakers of Azerbaijani and Persian languages struggle to learn various types of inflectional bound morphemes.

To identify such amiss, despite many criticisms, contrastive analysis (CA) as a realm of applied linguistics was and still is a relatively underlying and sound basis for paving the way for EFL and ESL learners, instructors, syllabus designers, text book writers and translators (Fisiak, 1985).

For CA to take place, teachers of EFL and ESL must have an excellent command of Azeri and Persian (native language) as well as English (target language) so that they can grasp the problems that the learners will have to tackle in learning the target language and assist them to overcome difficulties. Considering the absence of studies on contrastive linguistic analysis of inflectional morphemes of English, Azerbaijani and Persian languages, the primary aim of this study is to pinpoint the similarities and discrepancies of these languages in terms of inflectional morphemes in order to help teachers, syllabus designers, textbook writers, translators as well as EFL and ESL learners to teach, design, translate and learn English inflections effectively. It is believed that in EFL learning, the learner is very much affected by his or her native language behavior; thus the problem of interference, while definitely not being the only reason for learning difficulties, can hardly be avoided. CA plays an important role in the recognition of language consciousness. Moreover, advanced learners can benefit from a direct comparison of their native language with the target one.

## **Review of Literature**

CA is defined as a realm of applied linguistics entailed in the comparison and contrast of two or more languages or subsystems of languages in order to determine both the dissimilarities and similarities between them (Fisiak, 1985). James (1989), on the other hand, defines CA as "a hybrid linguistic enterprise aimed at generating inverted (i.e., contrastive, not comparative) two valued typologies, and is founded on the assumption that languages can be compared" (p.3).

Previous studies conducted by Krzeszowski (1990), Fisiak (1985) clarify that CA is concerned with solving the problems that language learners have in learning EFL or ESL. Ellis (1989) and Sajavaara (1977) in their books assert that CA was rooted in the practical need to teach L2 in the most efficient way possible. As Lado (1957) makes clear: "the teacher who has made a comparison .... will know better what the real problems are and can provide for teaching them. So the origins of CA were pedagogic"(p. 2).

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) and pedagogical contrastive researches may be studied with the insight stated by Fries (1945): "The most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner" (p. 9).

To Fries, native language effect was influenced by old habits while some of them were potentially efficient and useful, and some others were harmful. Fries (1945) and Lado (1957) argued that it is of paramount importance to develop and expand materials particularly designed for different groups of learners belonging to different linguistic backgrounds. They believed that a language teacher has to take advantage of the findings of cross-linguistic distinctions. Lado made CA explicit by stating that L1 plays a very important role in SLA. Lado (1957) mentions that: "individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meanings ... when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as practiced by natives" (Lado, p. 2).

The linguistic and psychological aspects of CA were at the root of the pedagogical component of Lado's theory. Generally, there are two forms of CAH: **strong version**, and **weak version** (Fisiak, 1985; Ziahosseiny, 1999). The early formulation of the CAH is called the strong version as it claims a high predictive power. It is based on Lado's assumption that (1957): "the student who comes into contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements ... that are different will be difficult (p. 2).

Following the criticism of the strong version of CA, Wardlaugh (1970) proposed a more tenable weak version of CA. The weak version he writes, "starts with the evidence provided by linguistic interference and uses such evidence to explain the similarities and differences between the two systems" (p.15). This version does not claim to be predictive but aims at identifying which errors are the results of LI interference. The difference is reflected in the analytic procedure it employs. Therefore, the weak form of the hypothesis claims only to be diagnostic. The CA can be utilized to pinpoint which errors are the results of interference (Khansir, 2012).

Revising the literature and annals of CA, there are plenty of studies contrasting various aspects of languages with English; and there are also some remarkable researchers who have made efforts to compare and contrast English and Persian. Yarmohammadi (2002) has done a wide variety of researches in English and Persian and in one of his studies, he has thoroughly contrasted both languages in terms of phonology, vocabulary and grammar but no attention was paid to bound morphemes. He has compared, juxtaposed and predicted some difficulties for Persian learners of English. Fatemi and Ziaei (2012) carried out an analysis based on out-of-context translation of Persian and English and its probable problems in EFL classroom. Hayati and Kalanzadeh (2005) investigated Iranian EFL learners' difficulties in utilizing English linking verbs in collocation with particular adjective. Their results demonstrated Iranian learners' difficulty in internalizing linking verbs.

Unfortunately, few studies have contrastively inquired into Azeri and English or Azeri and Persian and so on. Torabi (2002), for instance, has done an exhaustive and noticeable research in Azeri and English; it is basically and generally about the fundamental importance of teaching Azeri learners' mother tongue in schools as bilinguals and he has also taken into accounts phonological discrepancies and similarities between Azeri and English but less about morphological components. He has depicted phonological problems for learners encountering English language. Ahranjani (2011) has compared number system of the noun in Azeri and English and has revealed both similarities and dissimilarities between them. As mentioned above, there are few studies in terms of Azeri and English or Azeri and Persian and almost all have confined themselves to one or two aspects of languages. Comparatively speaking, this study is the first one looking into inflections in details between three languages.

Nevertheless, there are still many applied linguists who strictly believe that CA has a predictive essence. In fact, no one can deny the potential impact of CA studies in certain fields (Fisiak, 1985). However, despite all heated controversies surrounding the field of CA and strong critical voices, many language teachers from various corners of the world as well as a large number of applied linguists have found Contrastive studies functional in language teaching, materials development etc. It is also helpful in dealing with the learning problems students confront (Fisiak, 1985; Keshavarz, 2003).

Fisiak (1971) asserts that CA has a great pedagogical value precisely in day-to-day teaching in the classroom, and it is a useful technique for presenting language materials to the learner and is one of the characteristic aspects of a method of teaching as well. He believes that the native language of the learner is a very powerful element in SLA and one which cannot be removed from the process of learning.

### **Morphology and Bound Morphemes**

Morphology is the study of the form or structure of words in a specific language, and of their categorization (Brinton, 2000). A **morpheme** is the smallest component of a word that has grammatical function or meaning. For example, **mowed**, **mown**, **mowing**, and **mows** can all be analyzed into the morphemes {mow} + {-ed}, {-n}, {-ing}, and {-s}, respectively. None of these last four can be further divided into meaningful units and each occurs in many other words, such as **worked**, **sawn**, **sneezing**, **cooks** (Falk, 1998; Yule, 2006).

A broad distinction can be made between two types of morphemes. There are free morphemes that can stand by themselves as single words, for example, **open**. There are also bound morphemes which cannot normally stand alone and are typically attached to another form, exemplified as **re-**, **-ed**, **-s**. The inventory of affixes that constitutes the set of bound morphemes can be divided into two types as **Derivational** and **Inflectional** morphemes. The second set of bound morphemes, the focus of this study, which is the process of adding an affix to a word or varying it in some other way according to the rules of grammar of a languages is called inflection. In English, for instance, verbs are inflected for 3<sup>rd</sup>-person singular (she **ponders**) and for past tense (she **spelled**). Most nouns may be inflected for plural (lions, clouds etc.). These are not utilized to generate new words in the language, but rather to display aspects of the grammatical function of a word. Inflections are used to indicate if a word is plural or singular, if it is past tense or not, and if it is a comparative or possessive form. English has eight inflectional morphemes (Trask, 1999; Brinton, 2000; Aarts & McMahon, 2006).

### **Azerbaijani and Persian Languages**

Azerbaijani or Azeri, is a member of the Turkic realm of the Altaic language family, which consists of about 20 languages. Azerbaijani belongs to the **Oghuz Seljuk** sub-group.

Like all Turkic languages, Azerbaijani is **agglutinative**, that is, grammatical functions are depicted by adding suffixes to stems. Separate noun suffixes display gender, number, and case. All the Turkic languages, including Azeri, are highly synthetic, i.e., words are inflected by means of suffixes (Farzaneh, 1998). For instance, **Türk-lə-ş-dir-əbil-sa-x** which means *if we can make (somebody) become like Turks*; literally, there are six inflections plus one stem. All Azeri words, like other agglutinative languages, are lexically and grammatically independent components: grammatical meanings and grammatical connections are constructed by mono-semantic inflections which follow the stem and the root of a word (Vazinpour, 1969; Hadi, 1995; Farzaneh, 1998).

Like English and Azeri, Farsi has an affixitive morphology. In other words, suffixes, prefixes and some infixes are incorporated to Farsi words to alter the meaning. Since Farsi is read from right to left, what seems to be the end of a word to an English reader is actually the beginning; prefixes might at first appear to be suffixes. Like English and Azeri nouns, Farsi nouns are affixed to denote possession and plurality etc. (Bageri, 2002; Mace, 2003).

## Methodology

### Procedure

In order to contrast and compare inflectional bound morphemes of English, Azeri and Persian languages and to identify their similarities and dissimilarities, inventories of English, Azeri and Farsi inflections, i.e. their set of affixes, were gathered, studied, and elaborated with some examples, and with English meanings. Eventually, after comparison, the researchers ended up with a series of statements about similarities and differences between these languages.

### Design

The design of the present study is comparative-analytic which concentrates on the comparison and contrasting inflections of English, Azeri and Persian languages. The data is analyzed and illustrated through the contrastive method.

## Data Analysis

### English Inflectional Morphemes

Inflections, as mentioned earlier, vary the form of a word in order to display certain grammatical characteristics. English has only eight inflectional morphemes, listed in Table 1, along with the properties they demonstrate. Except for {-en}, the forms depicted in Table 1 are the **regular** English inflections. They are regular because they are the inflections attached to the vast majority of verbs, nouns, and adjectives to indicate grammatical properties such as tense, number, gender and case (Brinton, 2000; Yule, 2006) as follows:

**Table 1: The Eight English Inflectional Morphemes**

	MORPHEME	GRAMMATICAL FUNCTION	EXAMPLE
NOUN	plural	Marks as more than one	<b>regular:</b> mugs, spas, buses
			<b>irregular:</b> sheep, phenomena, children
VERB	possessive	Marks for ownership	the man's, Mike's, the boy's
	3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular present	Marks to agree with singular third person	reflects, forms, proves
	past tense	Marks for past action.	<b>regular:</b> inquired, analyzed, cooked
			<b>irregular:</b> put, taught, shrank
present participle	Marks present participle	eating, being, screaming	
past participle	Marks past participle (follows be or have):	<b>regular:</b> proven, taken, eaten	
		<b>irregular:</b> drunk, hung; waited (same as past tense)	
ADJECTIVE	comparative	Marks for comparison	faster, nicer, slower
	superlative	Marks as superlative	fastest, nicest, slowest, quickest

### Inflections for Nouns

In English, the class **noun** corresponds to inflectional categories **number** and **possessive** case. In English, nouns are twofold, i.e. **singular**, which denotes one, and **plural**, which represents more than one, and is indicated with (s). The plural suffix /-s/ may be attached to the base form which is singular to change it to plural. This plural suffix has three allomorphs, i.e., /-s/, -z, and -iz/. (Aarts & McMahon, 2006).



It is worth noting that plurality in English is baffling at times and, in writing and pronunciation, it needs more attention to be taken by learners and the following spelling rules should be observed. The regular plural suffix **-s** is inflected to singular nouns e.g.: *hands, bats*, to denote more than one. The suffix **-es** is inflected to singular nouns ending in [s, ss, sh, (t)ch, x, and z] e.g.: *boxes, watches*.

It is incorporated to singular nouns ending in **-y** preceded by a consonant and the **-y** is dropped and **-ies** is added to form the plural as in **opportunity, opportunities; fly, flies** etc. Nouns ending with **-y** preceded by a vowel take the plural suffix **/-s/** as in **boys, bats**. For nouns ending in **-o**, **-es** is attached to form the plural: **vetoes, torpedoes** and so on (Alimohammadi & Khalili, 2006).

There are also several irregular ways of forming a plural as follows: There are seven nouns that their vowels are varied to represent plurality: **man, men; knife, knives; ox, oxen; bacillus –bacilli** etc. The last but not least, several nouns are used only in the singular as in: **music, advice; physics, linguistics**, etc.

Salim (2013) argues that different languages abound variations in the number and kind of case devices. Some languages (Chinese) don't possess case markings at all but English nouns are marked in writing for the category **possession** by an inflectional suffix (**'s**) in the regular nouns and by (**-s**) in the plural nouns. The pronunciation of the possessive suffix is identical with that of the plural suffix (**s**). The possessive suffix **/-s/** is attached to the end of the singular noun not ending in (**s**) as in **Matt's book**. The apostrophe **/'** is inflected after the plural (**s**) in plural nouns as in **boys' ball**. There is also another structure to represent possessiveness in English and it is symbolized with (**of**) and denotes possession to inanimate objects such as **the legs of the table; the roof of the house** etc.

### Inflections for Verbs

Verbs in English are suffixed with inflections to signify grammatical states viz past and present tense, past participle etc. As the Table 1 presents, there are four inflections for verbs in English. The morph that identifies noun plurals, which is symbolized orthographically by **-s** and phonemically as **/z/**, and **/iz/** is the same form as the morph that marks 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular verbs. **Past participles** are likewise labeled by the morph **-ed** (**/d/**), while **present participles** and **gerunds** are indicated by the morph **-ing**, (Trask, 1999).

However, due to its long and complicated history, there are many irregular verb forms in English, which might be irregular in a variety of ways. Primarily, irregular words may use different inflections than regular ones: for instance, the customary past participle inflection of a regular verb is {-ed}, but the past participle of **take** is **taken**. Second, irregular forms may include internal vowel changes, as in **steal/stole**, **grow/grew**, and **sing/sang**. Irregular forms present the abstract status of morphemes. Thus, the word **caught** represents {catch} and {past tense}; **went** symbolizes {go} and {past tense} (Falk, 1998; Aarts & McMahon, 2006).

### **Inflections for Adjectives.**

In order to compare two things, **comparative** form of an adjective is used. For example, the comparative form of **high** is **higher**, and the comparative form of **exciting** is **more exciting**. If you want to say that one thing is **quicker**, **more fascinating**, etc. than all the others of a group of things, the **superlative** form of an adjective is utilized. For example, the superlative form of **high** is **the highest**, and the superlative form of **exciting** is **the most exciting**. It should be noticed that if the adjective is one syllable long, **-er** or **-est** to it, is added; if the adjective is three or more syllables long, the words **more** or **most** before it, is attached. Not all adjectives follow the normal rules. Some adjectives have completely irregular forms. The most common ones are: **good, better, best; bad, worse, worst** etc. (Spencer & Zwicky, 2007).

### **Azeri Inflectional Morphemes**

In Azeri, word meanings are altered by fixing other words on to the root as direct suffixes. There is regularity in Azeri grammar but the difference is that it is composed of post-positions which are inflected directly to nouns or other parts of speech to change their meaning. This utilization of suffixes is called **agglutination**, semantically meaning **a sticking-on to...** The characteristic feature of agglutinative languages is that a large number of so-called **sticker-suffixes** are incorporated to the unchangeable root of the words. These suffixes express syntactic relations in the sentence. This is opposed to English which uses individual prepositions by the same token (Householder & Lotfi, 1965):

Table 2: Azerbaijani Inflectional Morphemes

	MORPHEME	GRAMMATICAL FUNCTION	EXPONENT	EXAMPLE
NOUN	plural	Marks as more than one	-lar	kitab- <b>lar</b> (the books), göz- <b>lar</b> (the eyes)
			-lər	gül- <b>lər</b> (the flowers), əl- <b>lər</b> ( <b>the hands</b> )
	possessive	Marks for ownership	-ün un in ın -nün nun nin nın	adam- <b>ın</b> ev-i (the man's house) // suy <b>un</b> dadı (water's taste) // ana-m- <b>ın</b> bağça-sı (my mother's garden)
VERB	present tense	Marks to agree with the present tense.	-(y)ir(ır,ur,ür)	yaz gəl <b>ir</b> (spring comes) // oxu-y- <b>ur</b> (he/she reads) // yaz- <b>ir</b> (he /she writes) // ged- <b>ir</b> (he/she goes)
	past tense	Marks for past action.	-dı di du dü	iç- <b>d</b> i-m (I drank) // gör- <b>dü</b> -n (you saw) // yağış yağ- <b>d</b> ı (It rained) // göy gurulda- <b>d</b> ı (the sky thundered),
	present participle	Marks present participle (follows by <i>ing</i> in English).	-məkdə məqdə anda əndə // -(y)an/ən	yaz-makda-yam (I am writing) // oxu- məkdə-yam (I am reading) gələndə (upon coming // oxuyanda (upon reading) gal-an (who is staying) // gələn (who is coming) // oxu-yan (who is reading)
	past participle	Marks past participle	-miş miş müş müş // -dıg dik duq dük diy düy	quru- <b>muş</b> (dried) // gör- <b>müş</b> (seen) // danış- <b>miş</b> söz (discussed words) bil- <b>dig</b> -in-iş (known) // yaz- <b>dig</b> -in kitab (written book)
ADJECTIVE	comparative	Marks for comparison.	-raq rak	kök- <b>raq</b> (fatter) // soyuq- <b>raq</b> (colder) // yaxşı-raq (better) // pisrək (worse)

## Inflections for Nouns

In Azerbaijani, there is a progressive vowel assimilation principle that is generally known as **vowel harmony**. Accordingly, the vowel of any suffix is conditioned and harmonized by the vowel of the last syllable to which that suffix is added, for example, if there is a soft vowel (e, ə, i, ö, ü) in the stem, then the inflection must be soft, if there is a hard vowel (a, ı, o, u) in the stem, then the vowel of the inflection must be hard. In nouns, for instance, the plural suffix is **-lar** for back vowel words and **-lər** for front vowel words (Hadi, 1995; Ahranjani, 2011).

The case marking generates a **possessive** relationship between the nominal components which are incorporated to and another nominal components. The second component usually comes after the first substantive. The case marking inflection is usually rendered into English with **of** or **'s**. The case marking suffixes in Azeri are **-n** (in): **a.** after nouns ending in a consonant, **-ün un in in** are used (*toyuğ-un* = of hen) and **b.** after nouns ending in a vowel, **-nün nun nin nin** are used (*ütü-nün* = of iron). In structures that comprise two nouns, the first two nouns that make up a simple genitive-possessive compound are regarded as a regular noun, the possessor, taking the genitive inflection, with the third noun taking the possessive suffix (Farzaneh, 1998; Ahranjani, 2011), as in:

1. **a. ev-in qapi-si** = the door of the house
- b. ev-in qapisin-in rang-i** = the color of the door of the house.

## Inflections for Verbs.

The **present tense** is formed by adding **-(y)ir**(*ır,ur,ür*) to the verb root. For example: *işləmək* (to work) *işlə-y-ir* (works); *gəlmək* (to come) *gəl-ir* (comes); and *bil-ir-lər* (they know) etc. There is neither a definite article, nor gender pronouns in Azerbaijani. A single word (**o**) signifies **he, she, and it**, and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular is only identifiable when there are no words or letters after the inflections; namely there are just roots and inflections attached together (Vazinpour, 1969).

The **simple past tense** in Azeri indicates a past action absolutely known to or experienced by the speaker as well. A set of personal suffixes are used with simple past tense endings. For simple past tense these (*-dı di du dü*) suffixes are utilized (Hadi, 1995; Farzaneh, 1998). Consider the following examples:

2. Singular	mən (I)	yaz-di-m	(I wrote)
	sən (you)	yaz-di-n	(you wrote)
	o (he, she, it)	yaz-di	(he/she wrote)
Plural	biz (we)	yaz-di-q	(we wrote)
	siz (you)	yaz-di-niz	(you wrote)
	onlar (they)	yaz-di-lar	(they wrote)

Azerbaijani has several **participles** that are used as adjectives. English has only two, namely the present and the past participles. In Azeri, the participles, for instance, (-dıg dik duq dük diy düy) are one of the most frequently used ones, e.g. **göndər-diy-iniz** (that which you sent). There are another suffixes inflected to words to indicate past participle, present or past perfect as in: **gör-müş** (seen), **al-mış** (bought), etc. The inflections for present participle in Azeri are (-mækdə məqdə; -anda əndə;-an/ən) which are marked by **-ing** in English, for instance, **gəl-mækdə-dir** (coming); **ged-əndə** (upon leaving); **oxuy-an** (who is reading), etc. (Householder & Lotfi, 1965; Hadi, 1995).

### Inflections for Adjectives

In order to express **comparativeness** in Azerbaijani, the suffixes **-raq** and **-rak** (old-fashioned) for some words and the adverb (daha) for all words, which mean **-er** and **more**, are used. Like English, these suffixes and the word (daha), in some words, can be used interchangeably to indicate comparative adjective, e.g. **yaxşı-raq** or **daha yaxşı** (better). There is no inflectional suffix for superlative in Azeri and it is expressed by the words **ən** and **lap** (in colloquial): **ən/lap böyük** (the biggest); **ən/lap gözəl** (the most beautiful) (Hadi, 1995; Farzaneh, 1998).

### Persian Inflectional Morphemes

Like Azerbaijani and English, Persian possesses a rich morphology dominated by affixations. Verbs are affixed in the language and signify tense and aspect, and agree with subject in person and number. The language does not make use of gender. A single word (u = او) represents **he**, and **she** as Azeri. Like Azeri, Persian verbs usually stands at the end of its sentence or clause. Simple and compound verbs are distinguished in Persian. A simple verb is one whose infinitive consists of one word such as **bāftən** (to weave) and a compound verb consists of a non-verbal part and a simple verb, e.g.: **kar kərdən** (to work) (Bageri, 2002; Mashkur, 2009).

**Table 3: Persian Inflectional Morphemes**

	MORPHEME	GRAMMATICAL FUNCTION	EXPONENT	EXAMPLE
NOUN	plural	Marks as more than one	-hā (ها) –(y)ān (ان)	ketab-hā (the books), mard-ān (men), gedā-yān (brggars)
			-āt (ات) in (ین) un (ون)	xāter-āt (memories) / mohassel-in (students) / ruhani-un (mullahs)
	possessive	Marks for ownership	-(y)e	kafš-e Ali (ali's shoe) / çeşmha-ye Sara (Sara's eyes)
VERB	present tense	Indicate the present tense.	prefix <i>mi-</i>	mi-guy-əm (I say) / mi-rāv-əm (I go)
	present participle	Marks present participle	dār (plus present personal endings and present tense)	dār-əd mixəndəd (he/she is laughing) / dār-im bāzi mikonim (we are playing)
	past participle	Marks past participle	-e	xord-e (eaten) / rəft-e (gone) / xərid-e (bought) / āməd-e (come)
ADJECTIVE	comparative	Marks for comparison	tər (تر)	çaq-tər (fatter) / sərd-tər (colder) / ziba-tər (more beautiful)
	superlative	Marks for superlative	tərin (ترین)	bələnd-tərin (the highest) / xətərnak-tərin (the most dangrous)

### Inflections for Nouns

In Persian, the **plural** form of a noun denoting a person is made by adding the suffix **-ān** (ان) after consonant and **-(y)ān** after vowels to the singular form (**mehmān-ān** = guests; **āgā-yān** = gentlemen); for the plural form of a noun, not denoting a person, the suffix **-hā** (ها) (**gozāreš-hā** = reports) is inflected. However, in modern Persian, there is tendency to add **-hā** (ها) to many nouns denoting people as in (**əfsər-ān** or **əfsər-hā** = officers). Three other plural forms viz **-āt** (ات), **-in** (ین) and **-un** (ون) , borrowed from Arabic and used for words taken from Arabic, survive in literary style and are utilized for a few words as alternatives for **-ān** and **-hā** in everyday Persian (Mace, 2003).

The inflection **-āt** (ات) is Arabic so-called **sound feminine plural** and is attached to certain words ending in consonant and not denoting persons: **heivānāt** (animals). It is also used with words ending in silent **-e** (ه) and **āt** (ت) as in: **hekāyāt** (singular), **hekāy-āt** (plural) = stories; **molahezeh** (singular), **molahez-āt** (plural) = regards. In imitation of Arabic, this suffix is also incorporated to some native Persian words denoting things and ending silent **-e** (ه) and the plural takes the form **jāt** (جات) as in **mive-jāt** (fruits) and **ruznāme-jāt** or **ruznāme-hā** (newspapers) (Ziahosseiny, 1999).

The inflections **-in** (ین) and **-un** (ون) are Arabic so-called **sound masculine plurals** as well. They are inflected to certain nouns signifying male persons. After the consonant, the suffix is **-in** (ین); after the letter **i** (ی), the suffix is **-un** (ون), for instance: **motārjem-in** (translators); **estemari-un** (colonialists). Eventually, Arabic irregular or so-called **broken plural** (mokəssər), in which no suffix is attached but the word's form is changed and it is similar to irregular nouns in English as in: **šəxs** = a person (singular), **əšxas** (plural) = persons etc. (Mace, 2003).

In Persian, the **genitive** case connects two or more words to each other. Possessiveness is symbolized with the enclitic **-e** (-ye after vowels), Persian so-called **ezāfe**. The genitive enclitic is inflected to all the words that are related to the head word and complement it (Mashkur, 2009; Ahranjani, 2011); Look at the following instances:

3. a. **ketāb-hā-ye Ali** (Ali's books) (Persian)
- b. **Ali-nin Kitab-lar-i** (Ali's books) (Azeri)
- c. **ərbāb-e həlqehā** (Lord of the rings). (Persian)

The **ezāfe** can be repeated in a string; further any noun in the expression may have a demonstrative adjectives, e.g: **budje-ye hokumət-e Kuwait** (the Kuwait government's budget). It is also utilized with nouns to link two nouns which are in *apposition*, namely the same in identity; the **ezāfe** (-e) is suffixed to the first noun as in: **xiābān-e Shəhriyār** (Shahriyar street). It also has other functions in apposition forms which are beyond the scope of this study (Bageri, 2002; Ahranjani, 2011).

## Inflections for Verbs

The **present tense** of Persian verbs (I do, I am doing) are structured with *present prefix* (*mi* = می) plus *present stem* and *present personal endings* viz **əm, i, əd, im, id** and **ənd**; the present prefix is commonly written detached to the verb. (Bageri, 2002; Mashkur, 2009). Consider the typical example in Persian present tense:

4. Persons	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	mi xān-əm (می خوانم)	mi xān-im (می خوانیم)
2 <sup>nd</sup>	mi xān-i (می خوانی)	mi xān-id (می خوانید)
3 <sup>rd</sup>	mi xān-əd (می خواند)	mi xān-ənd (می خوانند)

I read / I am reading, etc. in English for all.

For most remaining verbs, the present stem is irregular and has to be learned with the verbs (Mace, 2003; Mashkur, 2009). In Persian, the present tense is used for any current or impending action or situation and is also utilized to show present participle (I am doing):

5. a. **u mi-quyəd** (he/she says and he/she is saying).

b. **Çerā mi-xəndid?** (Why are you laughing? and why do you laugh?).

However, there is another structure to indicate present progressive (ing in English) in Persian with the prefix **dār** plus present personal endings (əm, i, əd, im, id and ənd) and present tense as in: **dār-i mi-xān-i** (you are reading); **dār- əm nāhār mi-xor-əm** (I am eating lunch) etc. (Yarmohammadi, 2002).

The **past tense** is formed with the *past stem* plus *past personal endings*. The formation of past stem is easy, i.e. remove the final **ən** (ن) from the long infinitive, for instance: **košt-ən** (to kill) is turned into **košt** (killed) and so on for all verbs in the language. The 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular form of the tense has no ending; for this form the past tense is identical to the stem itself. All past stems and endings, and hence all past tenses are regular and are stressed on the last syllable of the past stem, when the verb is affirmative (Mace, 2003). A typical instance as follows:

6. Persons	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup>	xānd-əm (خواندم) I read	xānd -im (خواندیم) we read
2 <sup>nd</sup>	xānd -i (خواندی) you read	xānd -id (خواندید) you read
3 <sup>rd</sup>	xān-d (خواند) he/she/it read	xānd-ənd (خواندند) they read.



**Participles** are adjectives derived from verbs. Like English, Persian has two participles: the present participle (doing) and the past participle (done). The latter is formed by inflecting the stressed ending **-e** to the past stem, for instance, **resid** (arrived), **resid-e** (arrived); **nevešt** (wrote), **nevešt-e** (written) etc. The ending **-e** (ه) might be similar to case marking **-e** at first sight, but unlike case marking, the ending **-e** (ه) is written orthographically (Bageri, 2002).

### Inflections for Adjectives

The **comparative** form of the adjective in Persian is made by suffixing **-tār** (تر) to the basic form of the adjective and the suffix takes the stress of the word, e.g.: **bozorg-tār** (bigger), **gerān-tār** (more expensive) etc. A few comparative forms are irregular in a way that they do not use the common form as a base, and in lieu of it, another form is utilized as in English, e.g: **xub** (good), **behtār** (better). The **superlative** form of the adjective is formed by inflecting **-in** (ین) to the comparative form **-tār** (تر) and the stress shifts on to the **-in** (ین) as in: **bozorg-tār-in** (the biggest), **gerān-tār-in** (the most expensive) and so on. The irregular form is made as the example: **behtār-in** (the best) etc. (Mace, 2003).

### Findings and Results

The CA of the inflections in English, Azeri and Persian languages, conducted in this study, reflects the following facts: **(1)** these languages share some characteristics in terms of inflectional affixations. The inflections are incorporated to signify number, possession, tense, comparison, etc. **(2)** Azeri is the most regular of them in terms of plurality and utilizes only two suffixes to indicate it (**-lar**, **-lər**). English uses a vast number of irregular forms borrowed from other languages; Persian also employs three loan-inflections as well as the so-called broken plurals from Arabic (**-hā** (ها), **(y)ān** (ان), **-āt** (ات), **-in** (ین), **-un** (ون)). The challenging part is the feasibility of both regular and irregular forms for some nouns in English and Persian. **(3)** English and Azeri are inflected to mark genitive case, but Persian applies the enclitic **-e** (so-called *ezāfe*) in lieu to indicate possessive relation which is not written orthographically but pronounced; the enclitic **-e** is applied for all possessive relations and is very regular.

(4) Genitive case in Azeri system is somehow intricate (-ün, -un,-in,-ın,-nün,-nun,-nin,-nın) and eight possessive inflections are used, due to vowel harmony, to represent it. English utilizes three constructions ('s, s', of) to mark it. (5) English verbs are suffixed to demonstrate 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular (**s**); Azeri are not affixed to show it, i.e. there is no grammatical gender in Azeri and nor suffix for 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular as well (there is only a stem plus **ir, ır, ur, ür**); the 3<sup>rd</sup> person in Persian for present tense is only recognizable by an ending (**əd**) as in (**mi-xān-əd** = he/she reads or is reading etc.). A single word (**o** for Azeri & **u** for Farsi) denotes **he, she**, in both. (6) Persian is prefixed (**mi**) to mark present tense; and Azeri employs four inflections to symbolize it (**-(y)ir, ır, -ur, -ür**). (7) English uses two constructions (regular & irregular) to display simple past tense; But Azeri utilizes a set of suffixes to represent it (**-dı, di, -du, -dü**); Persian doesn't include any inflections and is formed by removing endings from infinitives and is more regular than the others. (8) Persian structure does not generally differentiate between simple present (*I do*) and present participle (*I am doing*); the former is used to represent both. Present participle is only distinguishable in the context. However, there is another framework colloquially employed to signify it, namely **dār** (to have) followed by the present tense, e.g. **dār-əm minevis-əm** (*I am writing now*).

(9) Azeri incorporates three various inflectional categories to mark present participle (**ing**); the formation of present participle in English is very regular, namely one framework corresponds to all verbs. (10) Azeri comprises a significant number of inflections to characterize participles, but English only has two, i.e. present and past participle. (11) English employs two constituents (regular & irregular) for past participle. The structure of the regular form is conducted by inflecting (**-d** or **-ed**) to the verbs, but the structure of irregularity is not stable and switches from verbs to verbs. (12) Azeri utilizes two different categories to mark past participle and there exists some various sub-categories within each category. Persian is the most regular of all in terms of past participle and the stressed ending **-e (ə)** is inflected to the past stem for all verbs to form past participle. (13) Persian adjectives are regularly suffixed to construct comparatives (**tār**) and superlatives (**tārin**). Azeri makes use of two inflections for some adjectives and one independent adverb (**daha**) is used for all adjectives to express the comparatives. (14) There is no affix for superlative in Azeri, and the adverb (**ən**) is consistently employed for all adjectives in lieu.

(15) English deploys two suffixes for one-syllable adjectives (-er, -est) to mark comparatives and superlatives, and employs two adverbs (more, the most) for three or more syllables long adjectives to show comparatives and superlatives. Nonetheless, there is no consistency among them and there are some irregular forms as well.

## Discussion and Implications

From the above results, it can be inferred that English, Azeri and Persian languages abound in using inflections and share some joint properties as well as multiple distinctive differentiation. In the light of such results, the learning path of learners learning English, Azeri or Persian may be resolved. It is worthwhile noting that the presence or absence of some structures such as regularity or irregularity in one language must not be regarded or misinterpreted as flaws for one and strength for others. The differences in this study are highlighted to reveal feasible difficulties for learning these languages.

Technically speaking, the discrepancies and presence or absence of some structures between these languages might bring about some degrees of difficulties, among other sources, for learners as such *coalescence* or *convergence*, *underdifferentiation*, *reinterpretation* and *overgeneralization*, *overdifferentiation* and *split*. Thus, a systemic analysis and classification of differences and similarities can be of remarkable utility in not only predicting but also diagnosing as well as facilitating such errors to be taken into account by the text book writers and syllabus designers in the selection of the actual teaching material on the basis of several criteria such as frequency of occurrence and teachability. Grading is also the concern of contrastivists. The text book writer divides the language course into time segments, allocating more teaching time and learning time to items with a high degree of difficulty. Sequencing, that is, the ordering of teaching units can be most fruitfully based on the results of CA (Ziahosseiny, 1999).

Consequently, findings based on CA will sharpen the teachers' eye and equip them for diagnosis; nevertheless instructors' fundamental role in thorough acquaintance and conveyance of CA results must not be underestimated. These insights would enable us to answer questions such as, how is it that an Azeri or a Persian sentence containing 3rd person present singular subject can be realized in English and vice versa.

It should be born in mind that CA does not suggest a method or technique of teaching, rather it provides raw materials for methodologists, text book writers and syllabus designers as well as for instructors with **what of teaching**. They will, then, find **the how of teaching**. It is also asserted that the findings of CA furnish perfect yardstick for selecting testing items (Lado, 1957).

## **Conclusion**

The main objective of this study is depicting detailed descriptions of the discrepancies and similarities between English, Azeri and Persian in terms of inflectional morphemes to establish a linguistically incentive hierarchy of dissimilarities for syllabus designers, textbook writers, translators and teachers. The analysis reveals some similarities and multiple differences between the languages in terms of inflectional bound morphemes. These languages use inflections to represent aspects of grammatical functions of a word; in the meanwhile, they displays some differences and irregularities in affixations, and these inconsistency might result in some difficulties for learners.

Fisiak (1974, 1985) argues that contrastive studies are necessary prerequisites of successful language teaching and preparation of teaching materials. In the progress of learning and teaching a foreign language, CA cannot be omitted. The differences assist the learners get through the similarities and discrepancies between his mother tongue and the target language in order to enhance his knowledge.

To sum up, language is the most effective method of communication of human beings. In this paper, thanks to CA, the researchers illustrated affixes constituting Azerbaijani, Persian and English inflectional bound morphemes in details. CA although is old, is still relevant in assisting language teachers with their teaching methods and techniques. CA consistently make a contribution to our command of language structure and of the strong association acquired between language systems; therefore, CA is primarily concerned with linguistic matters and pedagogy. It is also hoped that the analysis and results of this paper satisfy the interest of the language teachers, translators, text book writers, syllabus designers as well as students.

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