8 The Performative Utterance (*inšā*)

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8.1 The Definition of *inšā*

A latter-date coinage, the term *inšā* (literally 'creation, composition') entered the rhetorical discourse only in the fourteenth century after being a juridical term in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) for decades. It is one term shared by both law and linguistics. Pierre Larcher has devoted many works to the notion of *inšā* in both realms (Larcher 1991; 1998; 2007 among others). Such a notion relates to the function of specific formulas in Islamic law: marrying, divorcing, and other acts all take their juridical effect under a spoken utterance. In the following paragraphs, we will see how the science of meanings integrated the notion of *inšā* as a topic of language analysis.

The science of meanings considers as *inšā* 'performative utterance' any utterance that is not subject to the criterion of truth (see § 2.3). Thus, the category of *inšā* encompasses questions, orders, prayers, vocative expressions, exclamations, and juridical performatives, among others. As the list shows, *inšā* does not mean that it is impossible to decide between true and false, but rather that truth is irrelevant to the category.

A further definition applies to *inšā* and has to do with the effects of an utterance. Unlike statements, the so-called *ḫabar*, *inšā* utterances act on the world instead of describing it. Many authors in the Arabic grammatical tradition considered *inšā* an act which is complete at the very moment of uttering a specific formula (or immediately after that). The same view is held in the Persian science of meanings. While the speaker utters an *inšā*, he simultaneously performs a speech act that affects external reality. For example, only through a question can the speaker obtain a reply from the addressee. Whether the requests have a felicitous outcome is also part of the issue, as will be shown. However, what matters most is that the act of uttering gives the request a chance of being realised. The manuals on the science of meanings describe *inšā* as an utterance whose content is realised only through verbalisation.

Based on such a definition, scholars maintain that the notion of *inšā* is identical or very close to that of performative utterance that Austin 1962 introduced in contemporary Western studies (Larcher 1991, 251; Šamīsā 1994, 40-4; Larcher 1998). It must be noted that the Arabic linguistic tradition foreshadowed the notions of constative and performative in the distinction between *ḫabar* and *inšā*. As it is now customary to translate the term *inšā* as performative (in support, see Bohas, Guillaume, Kouloughli 1990, 130-1; Larcher 1991, 252; Harb 2020, 237-8 fn. 145), I will adopt *inšā* and performative utterance in this outline as equivalents.

8.2 Requests and Non-Requests

While al-Sakkākī spoke about *ṭalab* 'request, jussive utterances' as opposed to *ḫabar* (Simon 1993, 309 ff., 392), later scholars grouped requests together with exclamations as part of the wider category of *inšā*. Such a development is still perceivable in the division of performative utterances into two subcategories: utterances entailing a request (*ṭalabī*) and not entailing a request (*ġayr-i ṭalabī*). Request performatives comprise order (*amr*), interdiction (*nahy*), question (*istifhām*), unattainable or counterfactual wish (*tamannī, tamannā*), and vocative expressions (*nidā*). Non-request performatives include exclamatory expressions of praise (*madḥ*), blame (*ḏamm*), wonder (*taʿaǧǧub*), hope (*riǧā, taraǧǧī*), oath (*qasam*), and contractual formulas (*ṣīġa-yi ʿuqūd*). Scholars debate whether *duʿā* 'supplication, prayer' is a request or a non-request.[1]

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[1] See Riḍānižād 1988, 300; Humāyī 1991, 100; Šamīsā 1994, 135 and 138 note 3; Aḥmadnižād 2003, 99.

Both requests and non-requests aim to achieve the speaker's goal but differ in the timing of their achievement and the role of the addressee. Requests of the *ṭalabī* type need some time after the utterance in order to engage the addressee. For example, by saying *biyā* 'Come!' the speaker expects the addressee to obey the command to come near. The request is ultimately successful only if the addressee comes closer to the speaker. Successful communication in this case depends on what the speaker says and how the addressee reacts. In contrast, a non-request is a performative utterance that contains an appeal that is realised at the same time as the speaker articulates the utterance. For example, an utterance of praise, such as *āfarīn* 'Well done!' manifests the will to praise and at the same time fulfils the praise. The aim is to congratulate someone. The expressions of praise, blame, wonder, hope, oath, as well as contractual formulas are immediately effective. In terms of Austin's terminology (1962), they are 'felicitous' in themselves. In this view, *inšā* performatives are either calls to action or actions themselves.

In the following paragraphs, I will provide examples of the categories treated in the Persian manuals. It should be noted that the original Arabic taxonomy of the various types of *inšā* does not distinguish the speech act and the formal means of expressions by which the speech act is realised (Simon 1993, 311 fn. 632). In Arabic, for each category of performatives there is a dedicated form. The same is not always valid for the Persian linguistic tradition as it will be shown.

8.3 Order (*amr*)

The science of meanings defines an order (*amr*) as a command given by a superior to someone lower in rank. The term *amr* also applies to the dedicated verbal form to express orders, the imperative. Examples of imperatives are then *bāš* 'be!' or *bigīr* 'take!'. If the rank of the addressee equals or surpasses that of the speaker, different techniques should be used to call the addressee to action. For instance, questions are a good strategy when a command should be most politely and respectfully imparted (on this and other secondary meanings of questions see also § 8.5).

In addition to its basic function, the imperative also has secondary meanings. The various possible interpretations and effects of an imperative are discussed in detail in the manuals. In the following, I will focus on a selection of examples in which orders appear in seemingly inappropriate contexts.

The imperative actualises summoning God to provide help and assistance. Manuals call it *duʿā* 'supplication, invocation, prayer'.[2] Although God's rank is superior to that of the poets, the imperative is one of the poets' favourite strategies to address God. The context, the addressee, and the relationship with the speaker show that the imperative is not intended as an order but should be understood differently. Among the many possible examples, we may quote one line by Ḥāfiẓ. The poet directs his supplication to the Lord in the imperative mood by employing the phrase *sabab-ī sāz* 'devise some means':

> *yā rab sabab-ī sāz ki yār-am ba salāmat*
> *bāz āyad u birhānad-am az band-i malāmat*[3]

> O Lord, devise some means whereby my friend might in safety
> Come back and release me from the bondage of reproach.

Imperatives often turn out to be requests or entreaties (*iltimās*). This condition happens when a peer relationship binds the speaker and the addressee. If none of the two can command the other, the imperative downgrades from command to simple request. Kazzāzī maintains that the imperatives *bar ḫīz* 'jump up!', *dar dih* 'hand round!', and *ḫāk bar sar kun* 'put to shame!' in the following line exemplify *iltimās*. Consequently, one should assume that the position of the poetic persona of Ḥāfiẓ and the cupbearer is a peer relationship in:

> *sāqiy-ā bar ḫīz u dar dih ǧām rā*
> *ḫāk bar sar kun ġam-i ayyām rā*[4]

> O wine-boy, jump up and hand round the bowl:
> Put the sorrows of the day to shame.

Further use of the imperative encompasses *iršād* 'giving guidance, showing the right way'. Guidance, according to the manuals, differs from orders and entreaties. The distinction is not built on a particular formal basis. One should assume it depends on the context. Examples are the admonishing imperatives in *ḫāmūš bāš* 'shut up!', *tark-i zabān gūy* 'hold your tongue!' and *hama gūš bāš* 'open your ears!' in this advice penned by Niẓāmī:

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2 The term *duʿā* evokes a private act. Though often translated as 'prayer', it should not be confused with the obligatory ritual prayer codified in Muslim practice.

3 Quoted in Kazzāzī 1991, 219. Ḥāfiẓ 1983, 196, *ġazal* 90, v. 1. Avery 2007, 131.

4 Quoted in Kazzāzī 1991, 219. Ḥāfiẓ 1983, 32, *ġazal* 8, v. 1. Avery 2007, 30.

gar pur-iy az dāniš ḫāmūš bāš
tark-i zabān gūy u hama gūš bāš[5]

If you are full of knowledge, shut up!
Hold your tongue and open your ears!

One more case suggests imperatives express the permissibility (*ibāḥa*) of different options at the addressee's discretion.[6] If two imperatives appear to be in conflict, the speaker's goal could be to allow the addressee free choice. The idea is that one or another action makes no difference. The speaker does not command, suggest, or praise the actions he orders. Instead, he encourages the addressee to exercise discretion in choosing between the imperatives. The notion is illustrated by the idiomatic use of the word *ḫwāh*, the imperative of the verb 'to want'. Compare the correlation of *ḫwāh... ḫwāh...* 'would (you)... or would (you)..., either... or...' followed by the imperative *gīr* 'take!' in the following example:

ḫwāh muṣḥaf gīr bar kaf ḫwāh ǧām [a]z raff-išān
harči ḫwāhī kun walīkan mardumāzārī makun[7]

Either take the book in your hand or the cup from the shelf,
Do what you want, but never harm anyone!

Finally, the imperative alerts (*tahdīd* 'threat') the addressee to the consequences of an action. In the following line, the warning imperative 'do!' aims to produce a change of attitude in the addressee. The speaker foresees that pursuing bad habits has dire consequences. Thus, the imperative in *harči ḫwāhī bikun* 'Do whatever you want!' only superficially allows any action:

harči ḫwāhī bikun ḫudā-yī hast
karda rā kayfar u ǧazā-yī hast[8]

Do whatever you want! A God indeed exists.
For what one has done, there will be punishment and retribution.

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5   Quoted in Aḥmadnižād 2003, 101. Niẓāmī 1956, 115, *Maḫzan al-asrār*.

6   On *ibāḥa*, see also § 4.9.

7   Quoted in Humāyī 1991, 102.

8   Quoted in Kazzāzī 1991, 221.

8.4 Interdiction (*nahy*)

Interdiction (*nahy*) is a request made by someone superior to the addressee to not do a specific action. The dedicated grammatical form is the negative imperative (*nahy*), which in Persian takes a negative prefix. Examples are, in classical Persian, *makun* 'don't do' and modern Persian *nakun* 'don't do'. The former example features the prefix *ma* which specifically marks the prohibitive in classical Persian. Manuals generally illustrate examples taken from classical poetry, so interdictions are mainly built upon the prefix *ma*.

Order and interdiction generally occupy separate sections in the manuals. The category of interdiction offers a rare case where the Persian science of meanings distinguishes between positive and negative forms. The reason for such distinctiveness seems twofold: linguistic and historical. On one hand, classical Persian had a specific negative prefix *ma*, which applied to the imperative (e.g. *makun* 'don't' do') and the precative (e.g. *mabād* 'let it not be') only.[9] The negative prefix *na*, however, has generally supplanted *ma* in modern Persian in every negative clause. On the other hand, Persian manuals follow the distinction made in the Arabic model. Positive and negative forms of the Arabic imperative employ completely different verbal modes. These circumstances explain why orders and interdictions occupied independent sections of the Arabic science of meanings and ended up as two categories in Persian manuals.

Persian scholars seem sometimes uncomfortable with separating orders and interdictions. Humāyī (1991, 101 fn. 3), for example, suggests that positive and negative imperatives in Persian should be intended as one. Thus, he discusses the two under the same heading. In fact, quite predictably, the secondary meanings of orders and interdictions are similar. The following is a selection: supplication (*du'ā*), entreaty to a peer (*iltimās*), threat (*tahdīd*), wish (*tamannī*), giving guidance (*iršād*), contempt (*taḥqīr*), blame, or reproach (*tawbīḫ*).

8.5 Question (*istifhām*)

Questions (*istifhām*) are intended as requests for information. The dedicated linguistic form is the interrogative sentence, often introduced by interrogative words. Asking for information is the primary communicative goal, provided the speaker does not own that evidence. The science of meanings identifies two possible scenarios. In the first, the speaker suspects that a certain event or circumstance has occurred but wants to verify it. Since the speaker is uncertain

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[9]   On the Persian precative, see Lazard 1963, 338-9.

about his hypothesis, he asks for confirmation from someone who is informed about the facts (e.g. 'Is it…?'). A yes/no answer is appropriate in this case. In the second scenario, the speaker is already sure that a given event or circumstance has occurred but wants to know more (e.g. 'What is it?'). The speaker has to converse with an informant in order to learn further details. In this case, the answer will not be limited to the yes/no pair.

Based on the above considerations, the science of meanings groups questions into two major classes: *ṭalab-i taṣdīq* 'request of verification' or *ṭalab-i taṣawwur* 'request of conceptualisation'. The first type includes polar (yes/no) questions that verify the speaker's hypothesis. In other words, the whole utterance undergoes a truth evaluation. The second corresponds to an open-ended question, whose answer enables the speaker to conceptualise the details of an event. Only part of the utterance is under question, and the focus may be on any part of speech (predicand, predicate, patient, and the like).

Distinctive function words pertain to polar and open questions. The following list covers most of the interrogative words (*adawāt-i istifhām*) found in Persian manuals:

a. *či* 'what?' is used to ask about the true essence (*ḥaqīqat*) of something, the quality which describes it (*ṣifat*), the species (*ǧins*) or the name (*ism*) of a non-rational being. It also has a compound form *čīst* 'what is it?'.

b. *kī* 'who?' is used to ask about the identity (*taʿyīn*), name, or species of a rational being. It also appears in the compound form *kīst* 'who is…?'.

c. *čirā* 'why?' is used to ask about the reason or cause (*sabab*).

d. *čisān* 'how?' is used to ask about the way (*waḍʿ*) in which something is done.

e. *kudām* 'what? which (one)?' serves to identify (*taʿyīn*) or specify (*tamyīz*) an individual among many who share something in common.

f. *kay* 'when?' and *tā kay* 'how long?' inquire about time in terms of point or length of time.

g. *kuǧā* 'where?' is used to ask about spatial location (*taʿyīn-i makān*).

h. *čūn* 'how?' is used to ask about the reason or the quality (*kayfiyyat*).

i. *čigūna* 'in what way, of what kind?' is used to ask about the way or quality.

j. *čand* 'how much, how many?' is used to ask about the numerical quantity (*kamiyyat-i ʿadadī*).

k. *āyā* 'is it not?' introduces yes/no questions (*ṭalab-i taṣdīq*).

l. *magar* 'maybe, perhaps that not?' introduces yes/no questions and expresses a sense of uncertainty about the truthfulness of what is asked.

m. Compounds such as *čizamān* 'when?', *kīst ki* 'who is that?', *čiṭawr* 'in what way, how?', *čiwaqt* 'when?', *čiqadr* 'how much?' introduce questions as well.

n. Questions without an interrogative word. Unlike classical Arabic, Persian also features interrogative sentences that do not contain a dedicated or semi-dedicated morpheme. Persian yes/no questions may differ from the corresponding declarative sentence only in the intonation pattern.

A further classification distinguishes real questions from rhetorical ones. Thus, *istifhām-i taḥqīqī* 'question to ascertain (facts), real question' differs from *istifhām-i inkārī* 'denial question, question to deny'. The latter is a way to make a claim about a fact or opinion in an indirect form. For example, *Kay man īn ḥarf rā zadam*[10] 'When did I say that?'. The question, in this case, is a denial of the content stated in the interrogative clause ('I have never said that'). As such, it does not require an answer. Due to its unique *status*, the rhetorical question is understood as an informative utterance (*ḫabar*) expressed in the form of a performative utterance (*inšā*).

There are numerous cases in which the interrogative form serves purposes other than requesting information. Zāhidī (1967, 142) goes so far as to list twenty-six different uses. I have already mentioned questions used to make an order (*amr*) (see §§ 2.4 and 8.3). Here I will add an example where the question is meant to admonish (*tanbīh*) and an example to express wonder (*taʿaǧǧub*). Thus, the intended meanings of the following two questions are, respectively, 'I admonish you not to go so hastily' and 'What a disdain! What a judge!':

mabīn ba sīb-i zanaḥdān ki čāh dar rāh ast
kuǧā hamī rawiy ay dil bad-īn šitāb kuǧā[11]

Have no eye for the dimple in the chin: it's the pitfall in the way.
Where, heart, are you going so hastily? Where?

īn či istiġnā-st yā rab w-īn či qādir ḥākim ast
k-īn hama zaḫm-i nihān hast u maǧāl-i āh nīst[12]

For the Lord's sake, what are this utter disdain and this puissant judge,
That all these wounds are suppressed and no scope [is] left for sighing?

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10 Quoted in Aḥmadnižād 2003, 108.

11 Quoted in Aḥmadnižād 2003, 109. Ḥāfiẓ 1983, 20, *ġazal* 2, v. 6. Avery 2007, 20.

12 Quoted in Aḥmadnižād 2003, 110. Ḥāfiẓ 1983, 160-1, *ġazal* 72, v. 5. Avery 2007, 111.

8.6 Wish (*tamannī, tamannā*)

The *tamannī* (or *tamannā*) is expressing the wish that something is true, knowing that it is unattainable or counterfactual. One wishes for something impossible by its very nature or for something impossible to realise at that moment (but possible in another situation).

The wish expresses itself with specific lexical markers. Many Persian features are intended to introduce impossible wishes. Besides *magar* 'may it be that…!' and *yā layta* 'if only!',[13] there are verbs of desire such as *ārzū kardan* 'to wish', *umīdwār būdan* 'to hope', *bū ki* 'would it be that…', *bāšad ki* 'would it be that…', *āyā buwad* or *buwad āyā* 'will it be…? could it ever be?', *āyā šawad* 'would it be…? could it ever be?', and *šāyad ki* 'if only, may it be…!'. However, the chief marker, the one most often mentioned in the manuals, is *kāš* 'how I wish!' and its variants *ay kāš, kāški, kāškī*. For example:

> *kāškī ḫāk būdam-ī dar rāh*
> *tā magar sāya bar man afkandī*[14]

> How I wish I were the dust on the road
> So that you may throw your shadow on me.

The authors of Persian manuals appear to be mainly concerned with lexical forms, while tending to overlook the role of morphological means, such as the verbal suffix *-ī* (as in *būdam-ī* in the example above) or the ending *-ād* of the precative.[15]

Remarkably, Persian manuals report some interrogative-like utterances under the heading of wish. Some of the expressions mentioned above employ *āyā*, a word that has already been introduced in the section on questions (see § 8.5). We may conclude that *āyā* is considered at different points of the manuals with different values. Scholars do not attempt to distinguish between the two functions of *āyā* in terms of primary and secondary meanings. I suspect Iranian scholars conceive any expression built on *āyā* in this section as a crystallised expression of wish, whose function operates regardless of the form. The potential interrogative nuance of the cluster of words *buwad āyā ki* fades away when it introduces an unattainable desire as in:

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13 In Arabic, a device directly intended for *tamannī* is *layta* 'if only'. See Simon 1993, 316-17; Jenssen 1998, 62.

14 Quoted in Zāhidī 1967, 140. Saʿdī 1939, 299, *ġazal* 538ṭ, [v. 8].

15 On the verbal suffix *-ī* to express regret, see Lazard 1963, 332 and Lenepveu-Hotz 2014, 139-62. On *-ād*, see Lazard 1963, 338-9.

buwad āyā ki dar-i maykadahā bugšāyand
girih az kār-i furū basta-yi mā bugšāyand[16]

Could it be that they would open the wine-shops' doors,
Undo the knot of our business tangled up in failure.

8.7 Vocative Expressions (*nidā*)

A vocative expression (*nidā*) aims to draw the attention of the addressee. The dedicated linguistic form, typical of calls and addresses, is the vocative (*nidā*).[17] Relevant Persian devices are *ay* 'o!', *way* 'o!', *ayā* 'o!', and the suffix *-ā* 'o!'. An example is *malik-ā* 'O King!' in:

malik-ā ḏikr-i tu gūyam ki tu pāk-ī u ḫudā-'ī
narawam ǧuz ba hamān rah ki tu-am rāhnumā-'ī[18]

O King! I invoke your name, for you are the Pure One and the Lord.
I take no other path than the one on which you guide me.

Vocative particles may be omitted if the contextual references (*qarīna*) are strong enough to permit the addressee to recognise that it is a call. In specific contexts, vocatives, supported by an appropriate frame of reference, can also convey secondary meanings. These include expressing rebuke (*zaǧr*), painful grief (*tawaǧǧuʿ*), sorrow (*taḥassur*), wonder (*taʿaǧǧub*),[19] astonishment (*taḥayyur*), or asking for help (*istiġāṯa*).

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16 Quoted in Rağā'ī 1961, 135. Ḥāfiẓ 1983, 410-11, *ġazal* 197, v. 1. Adapted from Avery 2007, 257. Adaptation was necessary here because Avery and Rağā'ī rely on different readings of the same poem.

17 On *nidā* in the early Arabic grammatical tradition, see Kasher 2013.

18 Quoted in Rağā'ī 1961, 158. Sanā'ī 1996, 653.

19 On *taʿaǧǧub* in Arabic, see Firanescu 2003.

8.8 Non-Request Performatives

According to the definition, the category of non-request performatives applies to utterances that do not entail a request and do not have truth-evaluable content. The category mainly comprises exclamatory forms. The list of subcategories identified in Persian manuals includes expressions of:

a. Praise (*maḏḥ*). It comprises utterances introduced by *ḫunuk ān ki* 'good is he who…', *ḫurram ān ki* 'happy is he who…', *zihī* 'how good…! what an excellent…!'.

b. Blame (*ḏamm*). Due to the scarcity of examples, it was difficult to find a specific Persian word of blame in the manuals. Perhaps an example is the use of *či* 'what a…' in *či intiẓār-i ḫastakunanda-yī* 'what a boring wait!'.[20]

c. Wonder (*taʿaǧǧub*). An example of this type is *wah ki* 'oh, what a wonder that…!'.

d. Contractual formulas (*ṣīga-yi ʿuqūd*). Juridical performatives serve to validate a contract or a legal act. As stated before, this point underlies the conflation of linguistic interest of both law and rhetoric. However, the topic is only marginal in the Persian science of meanings, which mainly focuses on efficient language having literary value.

e. Oath (*qasam*). Utterances are built on the formulas *wa-llāhi*, *bi-llāhi*, *ta-llāhi*, *ba ḫudā sawgand*, *qasam ba ḫudā*, or *sawgand bā ḫudā* '(I) swear by God!'.

f. Hope (*riǧā*, also called *taraǧǧī*). An example of this type is *ḫwaš-ā* 'happy may (he) be'. However, there is some uncertainty about the value of *ḫwaš-ā*. While Riḍānižād (1988, 301) interprets it as an expression of hope, Kazzāzī (1991, 200-1) maintains it is praise in the sense of 'happy is (he) who…'.

Persian scholars are quite elusive on the notion of non-request performatives. Although the category appears in several manuals, the number of examples is limited or null. Also, scholars disagree on the value of some forms and expressions. I believe accepting the Arabic taxonomy as a point of departure for Persian analysis is responsible for such irregularities. If we look at the list of non-requests in the Arabic model, most entries have a dedicated morpho-syntactical structure or a specific Arabic word, not to mention a specific grammar terminology to describe them. For example, al-Taftāzānī (1911, 224) lists the following: *afʿāl al-muqāraba* 'verbs of approximation (of action)',[21] *afʿāl al-madḥ wa-l-ḏamm* 'verbs of praise and blame' which

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20 Quoted in Šamīsā 1994, 135.

21 On which see Kouloughli 2007, 154-5 and Baalbaki 2016.

grammarians adopt for the expressions *niʿma* 'how good!' and *biʾsa* 'how bad!',[22] *ṣiyaġ al-ʿuqūd* 'contractual formulas', *qasam* 'oath', which is mainly conveyed by particles as *wa* or *bi-* '(I swear) by…', *laʿalla* and *rubba* 'perhaps', and *kam al-ḫabariyya* 'the constative how much'. The Arabic taxonomy described here covers both form and function. The Persian science of meanings, it seems, works in the opposite way: it focuses on the intended function and then searches for the various expressions that convey a similar one in Persian.

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22 On which see Kouloughli 2007, 155-6.