

# **The Representation of Main Phonetic Processes in Shirazi Accent**

**Nastaran Tavakoli**

Department of linguistics, Science and Research Branch,  
Islamic Azad University,  
Nom.168, alley 19, Imane Jonoobi Street,  
Moallem Square, Shiraz, Fars, Iran  
Postal code: 71859-94386  
e-mail: nastaran\_ty@yahoo.com

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## **Abstract**

Shiraz, the capital of Fars province, with an area of 178,891 square kilometers is located in southwest of Iran. Most people of Shiraz talk in Shirazi accent which is a variety of western modern Iranian languages and dialects. Based on a field work and with a phonetic approach, this writing attempts to describe main phonetic processes in Shirazi accent. The present paper begins with a short introduction to Iranian languages and their historical periods; after that a definition of “dialect” and “accent” will be given, then the phonological system (consonants and vowels) of Shirazi accent will be introduced, and then the most prominent phonetic processes in Shirazi accent will be described in detail in comparison with Standard Persian (speech variant). The findings in this research show that among main phonetic processes in Shirazi accent, “mutation” (particularly “consonant mutation”), “elision” and “vowel harmony” have the highest and “metathesis” and “addition” have the lowest frequency.

**Keywords:** Iranian languages, vocal change, main phonetic processes, Shirazi accent.

## **1. Introduction**

Shiraz, the capital of Fars province, with an area of 178,891 square kilometers is located in southwest Iran in mountainous region of Zagros. Northward, it is bounded to Marvdasht, Southward to Firuzabad and Jahrom, Eastward to Fasa and Neyriz and Westward to Kazeroun and Mamassani and a part of Behbahan and Sepidan. With about 1500 m. above sea level, it has a nice climate.

Shiraz is one of the big cities of Iran and also the birthplace of Sadi and Hafez: two world-famous Iranian poets. During the time of the Saffarian, the Ale-booye and the Zandiyye dynasties it was the capital of Iran.

Most people of Shiraz talk in Shirazi accent which is a variety of western modern Iranian languages and dialects.

The Iranian languages are a branch of Indo-Iranian, which is one of the main divisions of the Indo-European family of languages. (Amoozgar & Tafazzoli, 1997, p.11) The Iranian languages are divisible on a chronological basis into three periods: Old Iranian, Middle Iranian and Modern Iranian. (Same) Old Iranian (from about 1200 B.C. to about 300 B.C.) includes two languages represented by texts: Old Persian and Avestan, and a number of other dialects which are but very slightly known like Median and Scythian. (Abolghassemi, 2003, p.14,15 & Bagheri, 2005, p.43)

Middle Iranian (from about 300 B.C. to about 900 A.D.) includes two branches: Western Middle Iranian: Arsacid Pahlavi and Sasanian Pahlavi; and Eastern Middle Iranian: Sogdian, Scythian, Chorasmian and Bactrian. (Amoozgar&Tafazzoli, 1997, p.12)

New Iranian (from about 900 A.D. onward) includes hundreds of dialects and accents; Persian, the formal language of Persia is the most important. Pushtu, Baluchi, Kurdish and Ossetic are other important Modern Iranian languages. (Abolghassemi, 2003, p.259)

Since “The major part of history and cultural identity of people is hidden in their language and dialect”(Crystal,2006,p.7) and as Oliver Vandel Holmes puts it, “Each dialect is a temple containing the soul of its speakers and guards them”(Same,p.85), dialectology, as a branch of applied linguistics holds a high position in modern linguistics. Studying dialects and their various aspects not only provides raw materials for other language researches, but also can help comprehend other language universals. Therefore the study of main phonetic processes in Shirazi accent and indicating their similarities and differences with standard Persian is the main subject of this paper.

It should be noted that the language data used in this study are mainly gathered through field study, in addition to getting benefit of the linguistic perception of the writer who is the native speaker of Shirazi accent to have an even more precise analysis of the data.

## 2. Dialect and Accent

Dialect is sometimes defined as an incorrect and inferior variety of standard languages common in remote regions. While in linguistic point of view, dialects are to be considered as language, even though they are not “Formal” languages.

Dialects of a language are, in fact, varieties of that language with differences in phonetics, structure and vocabulary. If the difference among two or more varieties is limited only to phonetics, they are called accents. Each language can have different dialects and accents and at the same time each dialect can have a variety of accents.

Dialects are divided in two groups: Social and Local. Social dialects are those current among people with common social, economic or cultural positions. Local dialects are those common in different geographical regions.

## 3. Shirazi Accent Sound System

### 3.1 Consonants

As in Persian, this accent contains 23 consonants as follows:

Phone Persian Equivalent	Phonetic Description	Phonetic Sign
پ	Voiceless, Bilabial, Stop	/p/
ب	Voiced, Bilabial, Stop	/b/
ت، ط	Voiceless, Dental, Stop	/t/
د	Voiced, Dental, Stop	/d/
ک	Voiceless, Velar, Stop	/k/
گ	Voiced, Velar, Stop	/g/
ق، غ	Voiced, Uvular, Stop	/q/
همزه، ع	Voiceless, Glottal, Stop	/ʔ/
چ	Voiceless, Affricate, Alveopalatal, Stop	/tʃ/
ج	Voiced, Affricate, Alveopalatal, Stop	/dʒ/
ف	Voiceless, Labiodental, Fricative	/f/
و	Voiced, Labiodental,	/v/

	Fricative	
ث، س، ص	Voiceless, Alveolar, Fricative	/s/
ذ، ز، ض، ظ	Voiced, Alveolar, Fricative	/z/
ش	Voiceless, Alveopalatal, Fricative	/ʃ/
ژ	Voiced, Alveopalatal, Fricative	/ʒ/
خ	Voiceless, Uvular, Fricative	/x/
ح، ه، هـ	Voiceless, Glottal, Fricative	/h/
م	Voiced, Bilabial, Nasal	/m/
ن	Voiced, Dental, Nasal	/n/
ل	Voiced, Alveolar, Lateral	/l/
ر	Voiced, Alveolar, Trill	/r/
ی	Palatal, (Semi-Vowel) Approximant Voiced	/y/

Points on Consonant Distribution:

- All existing consonants in this accent can appear at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the word like their counterparts in Standard Persian.
- Phoneme /ʃ/ can be omitted in the middle and at the end of the word as: /saʔb/ → /sa:b/: “difficult”, /ʃamʔ/ → /ʃa:m/: “candle”.
- In Shirazi accent /h/ in the middle of the word is usually omitted as: /ʃahr/ → /ʃa:r/: “city”, /behtar/ → /be:tar/: “better”; this phoneme is also omitted at the end of the word after phoneme /ā/ like: /čāh/ → /čā/: “well”, /rāh/ → /rā/: “road”.

### 3.2 Vowels

Like standard Persian, this accent has 6 simple vowels (short and long) as follows:

Phonetic Sign	Phonetic Description	Phone Persian equivalent
/i/, /ī/	Closed, Front, Spread	ای
/e/	Semi-closed, Front, Spread	إ
/a/	Open, Front, Spread	آ
/ā/	Open, Back, Spread	آ
/o/	Semi- closed, Back, Round	اُ
/u/, /ū/	Closed, Back, Round	او

This accent has 5 diphthongs as follows:

Phonetic Sign	Phone Persian equivalent	Example	Meaning
/ay/	ای	/ʔ ay/	If
/ey/	ای	/beytar/	Better
/oy/	ای	/voyso/	Stand (imperative verb, 2d.sg.)
/āy/	ای	/ʔ āyevāye/	Wandering
/ow/	او	/dowr/	Around

As in standard Persian, in Shirazi accent no word begins with vowel, also /a/ seldom appears at the end of the word.

## 4. Main Phonetic Processes in Shirazi Accent

“Phonetic units affected by syntagmatics are changed. These changes are called Phonetic processes.” (Haghshenas,1992, p.147)

### 4.1 Elision

Sometimes under certain conditions a phone is omitted from speech chain. Generally there are two elision processes in language.

1. Historical elision: In which a phone is omitted from certain phonetic chains during the time, having passed historical procedures of the phone subject to certain historical-linguistic structures. (Same, p.157)

2. Structural elision: which is pursuant to the language sound system and governs phone combination in speech chain, that is, whenever a syntagmatics between segments occur, that is contrary to the language sound system or seems difficult based on language phonetic nature, a phonetic unit is omitted from speech chain to solve the problem.(Same, p.158) Beside historical and structural elision, there also exist some exceptional elisions for which no justification can be found. (Same, p.159)

#### 4.1.1 Middle Elision

##### 4.1.1.1 Voiced elision

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Minute	/daqiqe/	/daqqe/
To blow up	/tarakidan /	/terkidan/
Face to face, opposite	/ruberu/	/rubru/
Upstairs	/bālāxune/	/bāl̄xune/
With all due respect	/balānesbat/	/balnesbat/

##### 4.1.1.2 Consonant elision

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Near	/nazdik/	/nazik/
Really, truly	/rāsti/	/rāsi/
To swallow	/qurt-dādan/	/qut-dādan/
Wink	/češmak/	/čišak/

##### 4.1.1.3 Vowel & Consonant elision

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Just now, this very instant	/hamin-hālā/	/ham-hālo/
Owner	/sāheb/	/sāb/
Pretext	/bahune/	/bune/
Villager	/dahāti/	/dāti/

### 4.1.2 Ending Elision

#### 4.1.2.1 Voiced elision

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Addition, added	/ʔezāfe/	/ʔezāf/

Say (Imperative verb, 2d.sg.)	/begu/	/bug/
Slammer	/holofduni/	/holofdun/

#### 4.1.2.2 Consonant elision

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Is not, does not exist	/nis(t)/	/ni/
Open (Imperative verb, 2d.sg)	/vākon/	/vāko/
The day before yesterday	/pariruz/	/pariru/
Thing	/čiz/	/či/
This	/'in/	/'i/

#### 4.1.2.3 Vowel & consonant elision

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Come (Imperative verb, 2d.sg)	/biyā/	/bi/
I do not know.	/nemidunam/	/nam (i)/

### 4.2 Addition

Sometimes in certain conditions a phone (or a segment) is added to the speech chain. This process is called “Addition”. Like elision, addition follows language sound systems. That is whenever a syntagmatics occurs between language segments which is regarded as heavy based of the language phonetic nature or is contrary to language sound system, a chain segment is added to speech chain to remove this problem. (Same)

#### 4.2.1 Middle Addition

##### 4.2.1.1 Vowel

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Sour	/torš/	/toroš/

##### 4.2.1.2 Consonant

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Let (Imperative verb, 2d.sg.)	/bezār/	/beyzār/
Mosquito	/paše/	/paxše/
Suddenly	/yeho/	/yeyho/

##### 4.2.1.3 Consonant & vowel

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Ladder	/nardebun/	/navardebun/

## 4.2.2 Ending Addition

### 4.2.2.1 Vowel

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Agile	/jald/	/jaldi/
Dear, honey	/jun/	/juni/
Fast	/tond/	/tondi/
Quickly	/zud/	/zudi/

### 4.2.2.2 Consonant

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
A, an	/ye(k)/	/yey/
Tail	/dom/	/domb/
Wrestling	/košti/	/koštir/

## 4.3 Vowel Harmony

In vowel harmony a vowel affected by another vowel in adjacent syllable loses some of its phonetic features or takes the features of the adjacent vowel or takes features similar to that. Vowel harmony can be progressive or regressive. (Same, p.155,156)

**Some examples of progressive vowel harmony:**

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Cool	/xonak/	/xonok/
For (him/her)	/barāš/	/baraš/
Inside	/dāxel/	/dāxāl/
Two-ply	/dollā/	/dollo/

**Some examples of regressive vowel harmony:**

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Become (Imperative verb, 2d. sg.)	/bešo/	/bošo/
Get up (Imperative verb, 2d. sg.)	/pāšo/	/pošo/
Say (Imperative verb, 2d. sg.)	/begu/	/bugu/
Say (Imperative verb, 2d. pl.)	/begin/	/begin/
Sell (Imperative verb, 2d. sg.)	/befruš/	/bufruš/
Sign	/nešun/	/nušun/
Spring	/bahār/	/bāhār/
Throat	/galu/	/gulu/

#### 4.4 Assimilation

Sometimes a consonant loses some of its phonetic features in syntagmatic with another consonant and takes the phonetic features of its adjacent consonant instead. This process, perhaps one of phonetic universals, is called “Assimilation”. If this process causes one of consonants to turn completely into another consonant, it is called “Complete Assimilation”. However, if the assimilation does not end in complete assimilation, then it is called “Partial Assimilation.” (Same, p.152)

Assimilation can be progressive or regressive. In progressive assimilation, of two syntagmatic consonants, the one in the first place remains fixed and unchanged and the one in the second place is assimilated. In regressive assimilation, of two syntagmatic consonants, the one in the second place remains fixed and unchanged and the one in the first place is assimilated.

##### Instances of complete assimilation:

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Group, team	/daste/	/dasse/
Pack	/baste/	/basse/
Pistachio	/peste/	/pesse/
Winter	/zemestun/	/zemessun/
(they) worship	/miparastan/	/miparassan/

In all said above examples the assimilation is in progressive type.

##### Instances of incomplete assimilation:

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
A pair of tongs	/ʔambor/ , /ʔanbor/	/ʔmbor/
Cotton	/pambe/ , /panbe/	/pambe/
Following	/dombāl/ , /donbāl/	/dombāl/
Saturday	/šambe/ , /šanbe/	/šambe/

In all said above examples the assimilation is in regressive type.

#### 4.5 Consonant-vowel Assimilation

It is possible that regressive and progressive assimilation occur between a syntagmatic consonant and vowel. This frequently happens in Persian. For instance, in syntagmatics with all palatal consonants /š /, /ž /, /č / and /j /, /e / loses its half-closed feature and turns into “closed” although naturally they are pronounced closer than /e / because they are consonants. (Same, p.154)

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Eye	/češm/	/čiš/
How?	/četo(r)/	/čito(w)/
Joined	/yekki/	/yikki/
Six	(/šiš/ or) /šeš/	/šiš/

#### 4.6 Consonant Dissimilation

In this process which is contrary to assimilation, a consonant, common with its syntagmatic consonant in one or some phonetic features loses some of its common features and gain other phonetic features. Dissimilation process can be progressive or regressive. (Same, p.155) This process is much more unusual than assimilation.

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Difficulty	/moškel/	/mošgel/
Nobody	/hički/	/hiški/

Renewal	/tajdid/	/taždid/
Time	/vaqt/	/vaxt/

## 4.7 Mutation

Sometimes in speech chain, a chain segment turns into another segment with no justification within assimilation, dissimilation, vowel-consonant harmony or other processes. (Same, p.160) This process is called “Mutation”. The only justification for this process can be the inadequacy of phonetic chains.

### 4.7.1 Vowel Mutation

#### 4.7.1.1 /a/→/e/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Cramped	/tang/	/teng/
To do	/kardan/	/kerdan/
Square	/falake/	/felke/

#### 4.7.1.2 /e/→/a/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Beggar	/gedā/	/gadā/
(It is) not possible, not feasible	/nemiše/	/namiše/
White	/sefid/	/safid/

#### 4.7.1.3 /a/→/o/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
My book	/ketābam/	/ketābom/
Vesicle	/tāval/	/tovol/

#### 4.7.1.4 /o/→ /e/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Clouds (accusative case)	/ʾabrāro/	/ʾabrāre/
Me, to me, my	/mano/	/mane/
Strangers (accusative case)	/qaribāro/	/qaribāre/

#### 4.7.1.5 /e/→/o/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
(it) is soaked	/mixise/	/mixose/

#### 4.7.1.6 /o/→ /i/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
(he/she) got up	/pāšod/	/pāšid/
Melon	/xarboze/	/xarbize/

#### 4.7.1.7 /ā/ → /a/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Hey!	/yāllā/	/yallā/

#### 4.7.1.8 /ā/ → /i/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
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To fall	/ʔoftādan/	/ʔoftidan/
To stand up	/vāysādan/	/voysidan/

#### 4.7.1.9 /ā/ → /o/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
By God, honestly	/vāllā/	/vāllō/
Leg	/pā/	/po/
Mirror	/ʔāyne/	/ʔoyne/
Oh!, woe!	/vāy/	/voy/
Place	/jā/	/jo/
Why?	/čerā/	/čero/

#### 4.7.1.10 /ā/ → /u/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Autumn, fall	/xazān/	/xazun/
Letter	/nāme/	/nume/
Skirt, lap	/dāman/	/duman/

#### 4.7.1.11 /u/ → /o/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
To burn	/suzundan/	/suzondan/
To drip	/čekundan/	/čekondan/
To shake	/takundan/	/takondan/
To throw, to fly	/parundan/	/parondan/
To turn, to wring	/pičundan/	/pičondan/

#### 4.7.1.12 /o/ → /u/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
On, light	/ro(w)šan/	/rušan/

#### 4.7.1.13 /u/ → /i/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Samanoo (a kind of sweet food made of wheat bud juice and flour)	/samanu/	/samani/
Storm	/tufān/	/tifun/

### 4.7.2 Consonant Mutation

#### 4.7.2.1 /v/ → /b/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Demon	/div/	/dib/
Fickle, unfaithful	/bivafā/	/bibafā/

#### 4.7.2.2 /b/ → /v/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Broth	/šurbā/	/šurvā/
Makeup	/bazak/	/vazak/
Turmeric	/zarčube/	/zarčuve/

**4.7.2.3 /y/ → /h/**

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
One by one	/yek (k)i- yek (k)i/	/hikki-hikki/

**4.7.2.4 /h/ → /y/**

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Better	/behtar/	/beytar/

**4.7.2.5 /z/ → /x/**

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
You (2d.sg.) will be defeated, you fail	/mibāzi/	/mibāxi/

**4.7.2.6 /l/ → /r/**

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Scattered	/paxšopalā/	/paxšoparā/

**4.7.2.7 /r/ → /l/**

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Ant	/murče/	/mulče/
Cypress	/sarv/	/salb/
Leaf	/barg/	/balg/
Sieve	/qarbāl/	/qalbāl/
Straw	/hasir/	/hasil/
The year before last	/pirārsāl/	/pilārsāl/
Wall	/divār/	/divāl/

**4.7.2.8 /y/ → /d/**

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Neighbor	/hamsāye/	/hamsāde/

**4.7.2.9 /t/ → /d/**

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Mattress	/tošak/	/došak/

**4.7.2.10 /d/ → /t/**

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
(If) he comes	/biyād/	/biyāt/
Kick	/lagad/	/laqat/

**4.7.2.11 /v/ → /y/**

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Mad	/divune/	/diyune/

**4.7.2.12 /f/ → /b/**

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Midnight	/nesfešab/	/nesbešab/

**4.7.2.13 /h/ → /n/**

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Knot	/gereh/	/geren/

#### 4.7.2.14 /k/ → /q/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Crow	/kalāq/	/qalāq/

#### 4.7.2.15 /x/ → /q/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Farsang (unit of length: 6 kilometers)	/farsax/	/farsaq/
grasshopper	/malax/	/malaq/

#### 4.7.2.16 /g/ → /q/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Hail	/tagarg/	/taqarg/
Kick	/lagad/	/laqat/

#### 4.7.2.17 /b/ → /q/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Wood	/čub/	/čub/, /čuq/

#### 4.7.2.18 /s/ → /š/

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Naughty	/toxs/	/toxs/, /toxš/

### 4.7.3 Sound Cluster Mutation to a Vowel

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Alone	/tanhā/	/tano/
Do not throw (2d.sg.)	/nandāz/	/nando/
It seems	/ʔengār/	/ʔengo/
Let (imperative verb, 2d. sg.)	/bezār/	/bezo/
Take (imperative verb, 2d.sg.)	/vardār/, /bardār/	/vardo/

### 4.7.4 Sound Cluster Mutation to a Consonant

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
(he, she, it) had	/dāšt/	/doš/, /došt/
It is apparent...	/peydāst/	/peydān/

## 4.8 Metathesis

Sometimes two consonants in a combination change their place by syntagmatic in a way first consonant takes the place of the second and the second consonant takes the place of the first. This process is called “Metathesis”. (Same, p.156) The frequency of this phonetic process which is a rather unusual type of sound change is low in Shirazi accent compared with other processes.

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
Cancellation	/fasx/	/faks/
Gibe	/ličār/	/ričāl/
Lock	/qofl/	/qolf/
Photograph	/ʾaks/	/ʾask/
Prescription	/nosxe/	/noxse/
roof	/saqf/	/safq/

#### 4.9 Compensatory Lengthening

A special type of change covering both vowels and consonants is a trend called “Compensatory Lengthening”. When a vowel is followed by two consonants and one of consonants is omitted, the previous vowel is lengthened to compensate the omitted phoneme.

Meaning	Standard Persian	Shirazi
After	/baʾd/	/ba:d/
Bedlam	/mahšar/	/ma:šar/
Effort	/saʾy/	/sa:y/
For, for the sake (of)	/mahz/	/ma:z/

#### 5. Conclusion

The findings in this research show that among main phonetic processes in Shirazi accent, “mutation” (particularly “consonant mutation”), “elision” and “vowel harmony” have the highest and “metathesis” and “addition” have the lowest frequency.

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