

Infinitive in the Language of Azerbaijani Tats: A Sociolinguistic Aspect

Gulsum Huseynova ¹

¹ *Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Linguistics named after Nasimi*
115 H. Cavid Avenu, Baku, Azerbaijan

DOI: [10.22178/pos.128-9](https://doi.org/10.22178/pos.128-9)

LCC Subject Category: L7-991

Received 25.02.2026

Accepted 25.03.2026

Published online 31.03.2026

Corresponding Author:

[Gulsum Huseynova](#)

© 2026 The Author. This article is licensed
under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0](#)

License 

Abstract. The verbal system of the Azerbaijani Tats differs to some extent from those of other Iranian languages, including the non-conjugating verb forms. The verbal system of the Tat language, which belongs to the south-western group of the Iranian language family, has been studied by V. S. Miller, A. L. Grunberg, M. Hajiyev, and others. For the first time, the infinitive is being studied based on materials collected from different Tat dialects and accents, and its similarities and differences with other Iranian languages are being examined. The article discusses the existence of infinitives in a specific type and tense. It is noted that infinitives serve a syntactic function in the Tat dialects and accents, as in Azerbaijani. Thus, infinitives can act as an attribute in attributive constructions. Infinitives have both verb-related and noun-related features. In both Azerbaijani and Tat, infinitives, like nouns, can act as subjects and objects in a sentence.

Keywords: Azerbaijani Tats; infinitive; auxiliary parts of speech; sociolinguistic aspect.

INTRODUCTION

The verbal system of the Tat language, which belongs to the south-western group of the Iranian language group and is considered one of the new Iranian languages, has been studied by V. Miller, A. Gryunberg, L. Pireyko, M. Hajiyev, and others [1–5]. The verbal system of the Azerbaijani Tat language, including the non-conjugated forms of verbs such as the infinitive, participle, and adverbial participle, has been described in detail in the monograph devoted to the language of the Lahij Tats [6]. These forms represent a significant component of the grammatical system and reveal important typological features of the language.

The infinitive indicates the name of an action but does not express grammatical categories such as person, number, tense, or mood. In the Azerbaijani language, the infinitive is formed with the suffixes *-maq* and *-mək*, for example: *yazmaq* “to write”, *görmək* “to see”, *fikirləşmək* “to think”. Since the infinitive denotes the name of an action, it possesses certain verbal properties, including the category of negation: *fikirləşmək* – *fikirləşməmək*, *yazmaq* – *yazmamaq*, *görmək* – *görməmək*.

The infinitive also shows nominal characteristics, which allow it to function similarly to a noun in

the sentence. Because of this dual nature, the infinitive occupies a special position in the grammatical system of the language. The investigation of infinitives in the Tat language is therefore important both for the study of Iranian languages and for the broader understanding of verbal-nominal categories.

METHODS

The present study is based on the analysis of linguistic materials collected from various dialects of the Tat language, including Lahij, Absheron, Guba, and Shamakhi dialects. The research also relies on the works of several scholars who have studied Iranian and Azerbaijani linguistics, particularly those of S. Jafarov, M. I. Hajiyev, and other researchers of the Tat language. Moreover, the research methodology for this study is based on comparative-historical and descriptive linguistic analysis. We examine the formation of the infinitive across various Tat dialects (Lahij, Gonaqkend, Shamakhi, and Absheron) and contrast them with the Azerbaijani system.

The author [7] focused on the infinitive and its suffixes in his separate works and sought to interpret the history of its formation within the context of word-formation. He noted that, as an

example of the process of the formation of new lexical-grammatical suffixes as a result of the substantivisation of words with grammatical-lexical suffixes in the Azerbaijani language, words with the suffixes *-maq // -məsi ilə -ma // -mə* lost the features of voice, negation and others that are related to verbs and entered the ranks of nouns formed from verbs. In his opinion, there is no common feature other than phonetic similarity between the infinitive suffix and the suffix that forms a noun from a verb or the so-called light infinitive *-ma // -mə* [7].

The infinitive indicates the name of the action, but does not indicate its person, quantity, time, or form. For example: *işləmək* (to work), *baxmaq* (to look at), *düşünmək* (to think), etc. The infinitive is formed with the suffix *-maq // -mək*. Since the infinitive indicates the name of the action, it has several properties related to the verb: a) Category of negation: *düşünmək-düşünməmək* (to think - not to think), *işləmək-işləməmək* (to work - not to work), *bilmək-bilməmək* (to know - not to know), etc.

In the language of Azerbaijani Tats, the negation of verbs is formed through the morphological element *-na // -nə // -ma // -mə*. The negation category *-na // -nə* is used with all forms of the verb. For example: *naraft* "he did not go" (Lah.), *nə kutirə boşu* "he did not say" (Ab.), *nəraftan* "not to go" (Gonaqk.), *nə çağustən* (Guba), *nə nöystən* "not to cut through" (Ab.), etc.

Examples:

1. *Dərs nə xundən, xuba sı nistü.* "Not studying is a bad thing".

2. *Ve nöyştən bə ki, çı basoxtəni.* "What are you doing to someone by not writing?", etc.

-Ma // -mə negation feature is formed only with the imperative form of the verb. For example: *mara* "don't go", *məgire* "don't cry", *məyo* "don't come", etc.

Examples: *Mara mə yü bə möti, Biyo bira bə öti.* "Don't tell your mother. Go and bring water", etc. *Bo unca məniş.* "Don't sit there", etc.

In other Iranian languages, the negation category of the verb is slightly different *ir**: *nai*-Old Pers. *naiy.* *av.* *nört.* *sogd., khwarazmian,* *sak ne* – Middle Pers. *ne,* *kl. fars. ne- / na-, Modern Pers. nə-, tac., dəri xəz. na- bəluc. na-* [5].

-ma // -mə. *Digər İran dillərində ir*.* *ma-; Old and Middle Persian ma-, Av. ma-, Classical Persian ma-,*

Modern Persian ma-, Tajik, Dari ma-, Baluj ma-, etc.

In Talysh, one of the New Iranian languages, negation of the verb is expressed by the prefixes *ni-, mə-, nə-, na-, and -ni* [8]. In Tajik, negation of the verb is formed using the prefixes *na-* and *ma* [9].

Unlike in the Absheron dialect, in other Tat dialects and accents, the parallel use of the negative signs "*mə*", "*nə*", and "*na*" can also be observed.

M.I.Hajiyev notes that this phenomenon is not characteristic of the language of the Cimi Tats [5]. Thus, in almost all Tat dialects, for example, the word "*etmə*" ("do not do") is used in the form "*mara*". These words are no longer found in the form "*nəsan*" and "*nəra*", or they do not have the form characteristic of the Tat language [5].

In the Shamakhi dialect of the Tat language, the negation signs for verbs are "*nə*", "*ma*", and "*mo*"; unlike the language of the Gonaqkend Tats, when some verbs in the Shamakhi dialect accept the negation element, they take a different form. For example, in the Gonaqkend dialect, the auxiliary verb "*saxtən*" (to do) remains the same in the Shamakhi dialect as "*saxtən*". However, in the Gonaqkend dialect, the negation of this verb is not "*məsan*", but it takes the form "*etmə*". In the Lahij dialect, one of the other Tat dialects, the verb *saxtən* in negation uses "*məni*", whereas in the Absheron dialect, as in the Malhem dialect, it uses "*məsan*" [7].

Let's compare: In Indo-European languages, the negative particle is *me*, in Sanskrit *ma (mə)* *aketa-ma*, in Old Persian *-mə*, etc.

The particle "*ma*", which in ancient languages had a strictly limited function of prohibition, loses this function in modern languages. Parallel forms with the simple particle of negation "*na*" appear. Some functions of negative particles characteristic of Iranian languages are not found, for example, the comparative function of the particle "*nə*" [10].

In the ancient Indo-Iranian written literary texts, such as the Vedas and the Avesta, the negative particle "*nə*" appears in the comparative degree of adjectives. Although this usage as a comparative function has completely disappeared in many modern Indo-European and Iranian languages, it still exists in the Tat language. This rare archaic linguistic phenomenon is particularly interesting as an archaeological-linguistic example. In Tat, the particle "*nə*" is used with adjectives in

the comparative degree to indicate superiority or augmentation. For example: *in həç tan azu xultərü* (lit: It is as if it is better than that).

In the Tat language, the infinitive form of verbs is formed through the suffixes *-an, -ən, -tan // -tən, -dən, -rən*. For example: *amaran // umaran* – “to come”, *avardən // uvordan* – “to bring”, *aşdı birən // barış birən* – “to reconcile”, *nöyştan // nöyşdən* – “to write”, *cori vərən // cevi vərən // raftan* – “to sweep”, *saxtən // soxdən* – “to do” (auxiliary verb), *vənciran // ənciran* – “to chop”, *vaxıştan // vaxuşdən // ağah birən* – “to wake up”, etc.

In Tajik, the infinitive suffix is *-an* [11]. In other Iranian languages, such as Talysh, infinitives are formed by adding one of the suffixes *-t* to the verb stems (ending in a consonant) or *-y* (for some ending in a vowel) [8].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research demonstrates that the infinitive in the Tat language is a highly polyfunctional category, operating as a "verbal noun" that bridges the morphological properties of both systems. In its nominal capacity, the infinitive functions as a substantive, which is most evident in its ability to undergo declension and accept possessive suffixes. In the language of the Azerbaijani Tats, the infinitive serves various functions we mentioned above. For example: *sərbənüşvə // sərviimi raftən // raftən* – “to go downward”, *ə düil çağustən // ə dil şor birən* – “to rejoice from the heart”, *xandənə foydeyi* – “the benefit of laughing”, *xub xundana nəticəyi* – “the result of studying well”, etc.

Examples:

1. *Tı ve sərviimi raftən san biye rasi bə xune Əli.* – “By going downward, you will reach Ali’s home.”
2. *Xundənə foydeyi bə hənunə aydini.* – “The benefit of laughing is clear to everyone.”

One of the characteristic features of the infinitive is its use with postpositions. For example: *be xundan // bərəy xundən* – “for reading”, *ə xubi* – “it is good”, *be vustan // bərəy zistən* – “for living”, etc.

Example: *Be zistan ru vəyift və şərh.* – “He returned the city to making money.”

In Tat, infinitives change according to possession. For example: *xandanman // xandənmü* – “my smiling”, *xantanlı // xandəntü* – “your smiling”, *xandəni // xandənü* – “his/her smiling”, *xandənimy* – “our smiling”, *xandənışmun //*

xandənışmy – “your (plural) smiling”, *xandənışun* – “their smiling”, etc.

The verbal characteristics of the infinitive are as follows. Infinitives occur in both affirmation and negation. For example: *amuc soxtan (Ab.) // qarış soxtən (Lah.)* – “to mix”, *amuc nə nə saxtən // qarış na soxtan* – “not to mix”, *nöyştan* – “to write”, *nə nöyştan* – “not to write”, *bə rah doğan* – “to send off”, *bə rah nə doran* – “not to send off”, etc.

As in Azerbaijani, in Tat language infinitives occur in certain voices of verbs. For example: *amarən* – “to come”, *avardə saxtən* – “to make smb come”, *xundən* – “to read”, *xundə soxtan* – “to make smb read”, etc.

Infinitives also occur in certain tenses of the verb. As in Azerbaijani, in Tat, infinitives can be transitive or intransitive. For example: *dənışiran // deyişim* – “to look” (transitive), *suvundan* – “to burn” (intransitive), *burirən* – “to cut” (intransitive), etc.

In both Azerbaijani and Tat dialects, infinitives have a syntactic function. Infinitives function as modifiers in attributive constructions. For example: *xundana foydeyi* – “the benefit of studying”, *zistana rahi* – “the way of living”, etc.

Examples:

1. *Zistana rahirə yafte.* – “I have found the way of living”.
2. *İn xutirə savoli be işmun rəssi.* – “The reward of this closeness is sufficient for you”.

In Azerbaijani, infinitives denote only the name of an action and do not indicate person, number, tense, or form; they are formed with the suffixes *-maq and -mək*. For example: *oxumaq* – “to read”, *gəlmək* – “to come”, *yazmaq* – “to write”, etc.

1) Since infinitives denote the name of an action, they possess several verbal characteristics.

a) Category of negation in Azerbaijani: *yazmaq-yazmamaq* - to write-not to write, *bilmək-bilməmək* - to know-not to know, *dənışmaq-dənışmamaq* - to speak-not to speak, *düşünmək-düşünməmək* - to think-not to think, etc.

Negation category in Tat: *nöyştan - nə nöyştan, xundan - “to read”, nə xundan - “not to read”, etc.*

b) Category of voice.

In Azerbaijani: *yazmaq* - “to write”, *yazılmaq* - “be written”, *yazışmaq* - “type with smb”, *yazdırmaq* - “to have smb write”.

In the Tat language: *nöyştan, nöyştə biran, nöyştə sıxtan*.

Unlike Azerbaijani, the voice category in the Tat language infinitives is formed with auxiliary verbs.

For example: *Güllü xala məktub be nöyştə soxtan ye kəsi nə yoft*. – “Aunt Gullu could not find anyone to have the letter write”.

c) Category of transitivity. In Azerbaijani: *almaq* “to buy”, *bilmək* “to know”, *görmək* “to see” (transitive), *getmək* “to go”, *gəlmək* “to come”, *yatmaq* “to sleep” (intransitive).

In the Azerbaijani Tats language: *astarən // ustoran* “to buy”, *danəsdən // dunusdan* “to know”, *dirən // dirən* “to see” (transitive), *raftan // rəfdən* “to go” *amarən // umaran* “to come”, *xısirən // xusirən* “to sleep” (intransitive).

2) Nominal characteristics of the infinitive are as follows:

In Turkic languages, including Azerbaijani, infinitive forms with the suffixes *-maq/-mək* not only carry grammatical meaning but also retain lexical features. The study of the grammatical and semantic development of *-maq // -mək*, a non-productive suffix that forms nouns from verbs, provides insight into the earliest historical layers of the language.

a) In both Azerbaijani and Tat, the infinitive is declined as a noun.

For example: In the Azerbaijani language:

Nominative case.	baxmaq	bilmək
Genitive case	baxmağın	bilməyin
Dative case.	baxmağa	bilməyə
Accusative case.	baxmağı	bilməyi
Locative case.	baxmaqda	bilməkdə
Ablative case.	baxmaqdan	bilməkdən

In Tat language:

Nominative case. *dənişiran* (Lah.), *deyşirən* (Ab.) “baxmaq”

Objective case. *dənişirana, bə dəyişiran, ə deyşiran* “baxmağın, baxmağa, vaxmaqdan”.

b) Category of possessiveness, etc.

Verbs of *baxmaq* (to look at) and *bilmək* (to know):

In Azerbaijani:

I. baxmağın baxmağımız

II. baxmağın baxmağınız

III. baxmağı baxmağı, baxmaqları

In Azerbaijani:

Singular Plural

I. bilməyim bilməyimiz

II. bilməyin bilməyiniz

III. bilməyi bilməyi, bilməkləri

In the Tat language: Lahij dialect

Singular

I. dənişiranman “baxmağım”

II. dənişirantı “baxmağın”

III. dənişirani “baxmağı”

Plural

I. dənişiranmu “baxmağımız”

II. dənişiranişmun “baxmağınız”

III. dənişiranrışun. “baxmaqları”

Verb of *dunuştan* “to know”

Singular

I. dunustanman “bilməyim”

II. dunustantı “bilməyin”

III. dunustani “bilməyi”

Plural

I. dunustanmun “bilməyimiz”

II. dunustanişun “bilməyiniz”

II. dunustanuşun “bilməkləri”

c) In both Azerbaijani and Tat languages, infinitives can function as the subject and object of a sentence like a noun, and in this case, they answer the noun’s question “what?”. *Azərbaycan dilində: oxumaq (nə?) böyük səadətdir*. “Studying (what?) is great happiness”. *İşləmək (nə?) insanı yenilməz edir*. “Working (what?) makes a person unstoppable”. *Öyrənmək (nə?) heç zaman gec deyil*. “Learning (what?) is never too late”. *Onlar çalışmağı (nəyi?) həyatın tələbi kimi başa düşürlər*. “They understand working (what?) as a requirement of life”. *Oxumağı (nəyi?) da, işləməyi (nəyi?) də bilirik [12]*. “We know both reading (what?) and working (what?)”.

In the Tat language:

Zistan (çi?) gözəli. “Yaşamaq gözəldir”. *Kor soxtan ödominə sağlam bısoxtan*. “Living (what?) is beautiful”. *İşləmək (nə?) insanı sağlam saxlayır*. “Working (what?) keeps a person healthy”. *Na dunustan eb nisti*. “Bilməmək (nə?) eyib deyil”. “Not knowing (what?) is not a fault”. *Xundana*

(*cıra?*) *foydeyi qeyi*. "Oxumağın (nəyin?) faydası çoxdur". "The benefit of reading (what?) is great". The infinitive is a grammatical category that combines both verbal and nominal characteristics [13].

The infinitive, when functioning as a verbal noun, has a highly complex semantic structure. This complexity depends on its polyfunctionality, the weight of its functional load, and its hierarchical subordination to the verb in the sentence [14].

In both the Azerbaijani and the Tat language, which belong to the Iranian language group, the infinitive has specific verbal characteristics.

The nominal functions of the infinitive are more independent, extensive, and diverse. The description and analysis of its nominal functions also command interest. Initially, in the early stages of development of both languages, the infinitive formed as a name of action; however, verbal characteristics gradually became predominant, and the infinitive secured a firm position within the verbal system. This fact, in turn, led to a decline in its nominal functions. On the other hand, the verb is such a category that all parts of speech (e.g., noun, adjective, numeral, etc.) play an auxiliary role in its realisation within the language system, and even the noun remains hierarchically dependent on the verb.

On the other hand, the verb is such a category that all parts of speech in the language system (e.g., nouns, adjectives, numerals, etc.) play a supporting role in its realisation, and even nouns are hierarchically dependent on the verb.

In the Tat language, all infinitives beginning with the syllables "va", "və", "vo", or "ve" lose their initial syllable when a present tense preposition is added, and the preposition merges with the consonant of the second syllable. For example: *vədarən (Q.) // vədoran (M.)* – "to push", *vəguftən (Q.) // vəgiftən (Mel.) // vuguftən (M.)* – "to take", *vamuxtən (Q.) // vomuxdan (Lah.)*, *vamuxtən (Mel.)* – "to learn, to teach", *vaxuştan (Lah., Mel.) // vaxuştən (Q.)* – "to stand, to wake up", *vəcəystan (Q.) // vori varaftən (Lah., Mel.)* – "to play (dance)" etc. infinitives of this type in Tat language follow this pattern [15].

Thus, the analysis of the Tat language shows that the infinitive occupies an intermediate position between the verb and the noun. Its ability to express actions while simultaneously functioning as a nominal element significantly expands its

grammatical and syntactic potential. The combination of these features makes the infinitive one of the most multifunctional categories in the grammatical system of the Tat language.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the infinitive in the Tat language demonstrates that it occupies an important place in the grammatical system of the language and combines both verbal and nominal features. In Azerbaijani, the infinitive primarily denotes an action while preserving certain verbal characteristics and grammatical properties that link it to the verbal system.

The study shows that the infinitive in the Tat language functions as a polyfunctional grammatical category that has evolved from a simple "name of action" into a complex component of the verbal system. While its nominal functions, such as declension and possession, remain relatively independent and diverse, its verbal characteristics, including negation and voice, have become firmly integrated into the language's grammatical structure. Because of this dual nature, the infinitive can participate in different syntactic constructions and may function as a subject, object, or modifier within the sentence.

Another important aspect revealed by the analysis is dialectal variation in the use and structure of infinitive forms. Differences observed between the Shamakhi, Lahij, and Absheron dialects illustrate the dynamic and evolving nature of the Tat language within the Azerbaijani linguistic environment. These variations demonstrate that the grammatical system of Tat is influenced by both internal development and interaction with neighbouring languages.

Thus, the infinitive represents a multifunctional grammatical category that plays a significant role in the expression of actions and the formation of syntactic structures in the Tat language. The sociolinguistic interaction between the Tat and Azerbaijani languages provides an important perspective for understanding how Iranian and Turkic linguistic systems have influenced each other through long-term language contact. The study of infinitives, therefore, contributes not only to the description of the Tat language but also to broader theoretical discussions in Iranian linguistics and contact linguistics.

REFERENCES

1. Miller, V. (1907). *Tat Studies. Part II: An Outline of Tat Grammar*. Retrieved from <https://libarch.nmu.org.ua/handle/GenofondUA/20697> (in Russian).
2. Grunberg, A. L. (1963). *The language of the North Azerbaijani Tat people*. Retrieved from <https://libarch.nmu.org.ua/handle/GenofondUA/77442?show=full> (in Russian).
3. Moshkalo, V. V., & Rastorgueva, V. S. (1991). *Fundamentals of Iranian Linguistics: New Iranian Languages. The North-Western Group*. Moscow: Nauka (in Russian).
4. Hacıyev, M. (1971). *The Qonaqkənd Dialect of Tat*. Baku: Elm (in Azerbaijani).
5. Hacıyev, M. (2009). *The Language of Azerbaijani Tat. A Historical-Ethnographic Sketch of the Tat*. Baku: Mütərcim (in Azerbaijani).
6. Hüseynova, G. (2013). *A Genealogical Analysis of the Lexical Fund of the Tat Language*. Baku: Elm və təhsil (in Azerbaijani).
7. Jafarov, S. (1960). Word formation in the Azerbaijani language. Retrieved from https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwih0Iqk6t6TAxUuUFUIHceICAAQFnoECBgQAQ&url=http%3A%2F%2Fweb2.anl.az%3A81%2Fread%2Fpage.php%3Fbibid%3Dvtls000006149&usg=AOvVaw3SdjQ1UO9NEpS85oOl_Xcf&opi=89978449 (in Azerbaijani).
8. Seyidov, M. Y. (2014). *Grammar of the Azerbaijani Language: Word Combinations, Subordinate Complex Sentences, Phraseology*. Prestige çap evi (in Azerbaijani)
9. Rastorguyeva, V. S., & Kerimova, A. A. (1964). *The system of the Tajik verb*. Moscow: Nauka (in Russian).
10. Hüseynova, G. (2025). Infinitive in the language of the Azeri Tats: sociolinguistic aspect. *Linguistic Researches*, 01, 37. doi: 10.59849/2664-5432.2025.1.37
11. Sadykhzade, S. A. (n. d.). Grammar of the Talysh language. Retrieved from <https://elvinibrahimov.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/kitab-tal-dili.pdf> (in Azerbaijani).
12. Mammadova, Ş. (2024). Expressions of modality in modern English and Azerbaijani. *Scientific Work*, 18(11), 94–96. doi: 10.36719/2663-4619/108/94-96 (in Azerbaijani).
13. Kubryakova, E. S. (1978). *Parts of speech from an onomasiological perspective*. Moscow: Nauka (in Russian).
14. Hüseynova, G. (2014). *A Lexical-Semantic Analysis of the Vocabulary of the Tatar Language*. Baku: Elm və təhsil (in Azerbaijani).
15. Rastorgueva, V. S. (1964). *A Comparative Study of Tajik Dialects*. Moscow: Nauka (in Russian).