

“The Representation of Some Phonetic and Lexical Differences between Persian Common in Iran and Persian Common in Afghanistan” (A Comparative Sociolinguistic Research)

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Abstract. The Iranian languages are a branch of Indo-Iranian, which is one of the main divisions of the Indo-European family of languages. The Iranian languages are divisible on a chronological basis into three periods: Old Iranian, Middle Iranian and Modern Iranian. Modern Iranian includes hundreds of dialects and accents among which Persian is the most important and is mainly spoken in Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

In a field work and with a sociolinguistic and comparative approach, this writing attempts to compare Persian of Iran and Persian of Afghanistan and represent some of their important differences from a phonetic and lexical standpoint.

For this aim the present paper begins with a short introduction to Iranian languages and their historical evolutionary periods, then Modern Iranian languages, and especially Persian and its variants will be introduced, then some of important phonetic and lexical differences between Persian common in Iran (standard variant) and Persian common in Afghanistan will be presented by tables.

It should be noted that the language data used in this study are mainly gathered through field work: recording Afghan speakers' talks and observation of situations, in addition to getting benefit of the linguistic perception of the writer who is an Iranian and speaks Persian.

The findings in this research indicate that in Persian of Afghanistan the pronunciations are more original and nearer to Middle Persian: mother of Persian. Also the existing phonetic differences are approximately always vowel differences. Additionally the differences between these two variants are mainly lexical than phonetic and finally the speakers of two variants use Arabic, Turkish and European loan words but the frequency of Arabic words is high.

Keywords: Iranian languages, Persian, Iran, Afghanistan, phonetic and lexical differences, sociolinguistics

1. Introduction

The Iranian languages are a branch of Indo-Iranian (Aryan), which is one of the main divisions of the Indo-European family of languages. The Iranian languages are divisible on a chronological basis into three periods: Old Iranian, Middle Iranian and Modern Iranian.

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.

Middle Iranian (from about 300 B.C. to about 900 A.D.) includes two branches: Western Middle Iranian: Arsacid Pahlavi and Sasanian Pahlavi that its other name is Middle Persian; and Eastern Middle Iranian: Sogdian, Scythian, Chorasmian and Bactrian.

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Modern Iranian (from about 900 A.D. onward) includes hundreds of dialects and accents and is divisible into two main groups: Eastern Modern Iranian and Western Modern Iranian.

The languages of first group among which Ossetic, Pushtu,Ormuri, Parachi, Yagnobi and Pamir languages are considerable, are all common out of geographic and political Iran borders.

Western Modern Iranian languages which are common in Iran and also out of political Iran borders are divisible into eight main groups:

- Central Iranian dialects
- The dialects of the Caspian Sea-shore
- North-western dialects
- South-western dialects
- South-eastern dialects
- Kurdish dialects
- Zaza and gurani dialects
- Baluchi dialects.

Persian - a Western Modern Iranian language from the south-western branch- is the most important Iranian language and is mainly spoken in Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. In Iran and Tajikistan it is the formal language. Formerly, It was the formal language of Afghanistan, but now it is in the second place after Pushtu and is called “Dari” too. In Iran and Afghanistan, Persian is written in Persian-Arabic alphabet but in Tajikistan in Cyrillic Alphabet.

It should be mentioned that Persian language with all of its varieties have originated of Sasanian Pahlavi (Middle Persian) which is the changed form of Old Persian.

Since the major part of history and cultural identity of people is hidden in their language and dialect and as Oliver Vandel Holmes says each dialect is a temple containing the soul of its speakers and guards them, the study of phonetic and lexical differences between two varieties of Persian was chosen as the main subject of this paper.

It should be noted that the language data used in this study are mainly gathered through field work: recording Afghan speakers’ talks, and observation of situations in addition to getting benefit of the linguistic perception of the writer who is an Iranian and speaks Persian.

Phone English (or Persian) equivalent	Phonetic sign
“p”	/p/
“b”	/b/
“t”	/t/
“d”	/d/
“k”	/k/
“g” in “gate”	/g/
in «ق» ، «غ» (voiced, uvular stop) Persian: (voiceless, glottal stop) In Persian is used before the vowels in the beginning of the word	/q/ /’/
“ch”	/č/
“j”	/j/
“f”	/f/
“v”	/v/
“w” in “week”	/w/
“s”	/s/
“z”	/z/
“sh”	/š/
(voiced, alveopalatal fricative) in Persian: «ژ»	/ž/
in «خ» (voiceless, uvular fricative)	/x/

Persian:	
“h”	/h/
“m”	/m/
“n”	/n/
“l”	/l/
“r”	/r/
“y” in “yard”	/y/
“i” in “in”(ī = long i)	/i/, /ī/
“e” in “metal”(ē = long e)	/e/, /ē/
“a” in “back”	/a/
“ā” in “tall”	/ā/
“o” in “oh”	/o/
“oo” in “good”(ū = long u)	/u/, /ū/

2. Some phonetic and lexical differences

2.1. Some examples of phonetic differences:

Meaning	Iran	Afghanistan
1- (maternal) Aunt	/xāle/	/xāla/
2- Beggar	/gedā/	/gadā/
3- (my) Dear	/jānam/	/jānem/
4- Five-hundred	/pānsad/	/panjsad/
5- General (in army)	/ženerāl/	/jenerāl/
6- Government	/do(w)lat/	/dawlat/
7- Hard-line, radical	/tondro/	/tondraw/
8- He, she	/vey/	/vay/
9- Homeland	/mīhan/	/mayhan/
10- House	/xāne/	/xāna/
11- Middle	/miyāne/	/miyāna/
12- More	/bištar/	/bēštar/
13- One	/yek/	/yak/
14- Six	/šeš/	/šaš/
15- Three hundred	/sīsad/	/sēsad/
16- Two-hundred	/devīst/	/dosad/
17- Zero	/sefr/	/sefer/

As we see above, in Persian of Iran, the vowel /e/ existing in the middle and at the end of the words is substituted in “Dari” with the vowel /a/ (see examples 1, 2, 8, 10, 11, 13 and 14); also the vowel /i/ changes to /ē/ or sometimes to the diphthong /ay/ in Persian of Afghanistan (see examples 9, 12 and 15). In final example (/sefr/, /sefer/) a vowel is added to word in “Dari”. In approximately all said examples these are the vowels that change; only in one example we see a consonant mutation: /ženerāl/, /jenerāl/.

2.2. Some examples of lexical differences:

Meaning	Iran	Afghanistan
1- Agronomical year	/ sāle zerā’ī/	/sāle zerā’atī/
2- Ambiguities	/’ebhāmāt/	/ nā rawšanīhā/
3- Army, soldiers	/’arteš/, /sarbāzān/	/’asāker/
4- To become common	/rāyej šodan/	/ravāj šodan/
5- Bijouterie	/zīvar ’ālāt/	/zīvarāt/
6- Central blood bank	/bānke markaziye xun/	/bānke xūne markazi/
7- Cousins	/pesar xālehā/	/pesarāne xāla/
8- To describe	/be tasvir kešīdan/	/be tasvir kešāndan/
9- Foreign gatherings	/majāme’e xāreji/	/majāme’e bīrūni/

10- German	/ʔālmāni/	/jermani/
11- Grandfather	/pedar bozorg/	/kalān pedar/
12- High rent	/ʔejāreye bālā/	/ʔejāreye boland/
13- Hospital	/bīmārestān/	/šafā xāna/
14- Housewives	/zanāne xānedār/	/zanāne xāna/
15- Inhabitants	/sākenān/	/bāšandegān/
16- In the best possible way	/be nahve ʔahsan/	/be sūrate ʔahsan/
17- (It) stops...	/motevaqqef mikonad/	/tavaqqof midahad/
18- To leave, to get out	/xārej šodan/	/bīrun šodan/
19- License, permit	/javāz/	/lisāns/
20- To like	/xoš ʔāmadan/	/dūst ʔāmadan/
21- Manpower	/nīrūye ʔensāni/	/nīrūye bašari/
22- Middle east	/xāvare miyāne/	/šarqe miyāna/
23- To be offered	/ʔerāʔe šodan/	/be piš ʔandāxta šodan/
24- (surgical) Operation	/ʔamal/	/ʔamalliyāt/
25- To organize	/tartīb dādan/	/tartīb nemūdan/
26- To overturn	/naqz kardan/	/nāqez kardan/
27- Participant	/šerkat konande/	/ʔešterāk konanda/
28- Poor country	/kešvare faqīr/	/kešvare nādār/
29- Religious principles	/ʔosūle dīnī/	/ʔasāsāte dīnī/
30- Rightfulness, legitimacy	/haqqāniyyat/	/mesdāqiyyat/
31- To remain caught	/gereftār māndan/	/gīr māndan/
32- Smuggler	/qāčāqči/	/qāčāqbar/
33- To take off (one's clothing)	/kandan/, /dar ʔāvardan/	/kešīdan/
34- To be transferred	/montaqel šodan/	/ʔenteqāl šodan/
35- Unknown sufferers	/zahmat-kešāne nāšenās/	/zahmat-kešāne nāšenāxta/
36- Voting places	/manāteqe raʔy gīrī/	/manāteqe raʔy dehi/

As we have seen in the table above, there are loan words in “Dari” and also in Persian of Iran. Sometimes an Arabic word is used in Persian of Iran but its equivalent in “Dari” is a Persian word (See examples 2,15,18,23 and 24), and sometimes vice versa (see examples 3, 13 and 22); Anyway the frequency of Arabic loan words are high. In two variants there are Turkish and European words too, but their frequency is low (for Turkish see example 32 and for European see example 10). Additionally sometimes in order to explain one only meaning, two different Arabic words are used in these two varieties (see examples 1, 11, 21, 24, 27, 29 and 30). In some situations for explaining one only meaning, two different Persian words are used by the speakers of two varieties (see examples 12, 20, 31, 33, 35 and 36). What is considerable also is the jumbling of words in some compound words in Persian of Iran and “Dari” (see examples 6, 7 and 11).

3. Conclusion

The findings in this research indicate that in “Dari” (Persian of Afghanistan) – in comparison with Persian of Iran- the pronunciations are more original and nearer to Sasanian Pahlavi (Middle Persian): mother of Persian. In Middle Persian there was a suffix /ag/ that by adding to nouns, adjectives and verbal stems made many words; when the language was changed to New Persian, /g/ was omitted but the vowel /a/ rested in “Dari” and we can still see it, but in Persian of Iran it has been substituted by /e/.

Also the existing phonetic differences are approximately always vowel differences; and so the differences between two variants are mainly lexical than phonetic; additionally the speakers of two countries use Arabic, Turkish and European loan words. Sometimes an Arabic word is used in Persian of Iran but its equivalent in “Dari” is a Persian word and sometimes vice versa; anyway the frequency of Arabic loan words is high. In two variants there are Turkish and European words too, but their frequency is lower than Arabic words. Sometimes in order to explain one only meaning, two different Arabic words are used in these two variants. In some situations for explaining one only meaning, two different Persian words are used by the speakers of two varieties. What is considerable also is the jumbling of words in some compound words in Persian of Iran and “Dari”.

In a general view, we can see again the influence of society and geography in changing the languages and diversity of usages.

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