

AN ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN PASHTO AND DARI LANGUAGES OF AFGHANISTAN*

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Abstract

Since the establishment of Afghanistan State, Dari (dialect of Persian) has remained its dominant and official language. However, in twentieth century, some measures were taken for the development of Pashto language followed by declaration of Pashto as official language in 1936. For the first time a dialect of Persian spoken in Afghanistan was officially renamed as Dari in the 1964 Constitution of Afghanistan. In this constitution as well as in the current constitution of 2004 both of the languages were declared as official languages. Since the emergence of Pashto as official language, a rivalry and linguistic divergence created between the two languages and their respective ethnic groups. As a result of this rivalry an ethnic and linguistic consciousness emerged which led to discussions about language planning policies.

This research article discovers historical evolution and reasons for this linguistic divergence and its implications on future nation building in Afghanistan. It also explores historical development of status, planning and policies regarding these two languages for better understanding of the linguistic divergence and rivalry. Furthermore, the study proposes options for accommodation of different languages through cultural harmonization and multiculturalism.

Key Words: Afghanistan, Languages, Dari, Pashto, Persian, Ethnicity, National Identity, Linguistic Conflict.

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Introduction

After 2001, the new political order in Afghanistan created optimism in linguistic and ethnic minorities. Usually it is said that language is a tool of communication but it is also used as a symbol of power. It means when someone is in power, his or her language becomes powerful and get the official status. Language has always played a dual role: as an agent of unity as well as division. Afghanistan is a multiethnic country. There are many languages spoken in different parts of Afghanistan. According to ethnologue, there are forty one languages in Afghanistan. Pashto and Dari have been declared as official languages in article sixteen of the current constitution [2004] of Afghanistan. After the independence of Afghanistan in twentieth century, it also changed its language policies for the promotion of national identity, political ideologies, national unity and ethnic aspirations.¹

Two main languages of Afghanistan i.e. Pashto and Dari, are Iranian languages. Pashto belongs to southeastern group of the Iranian branch of Indo-European languages. There are some extinct languages belonging to Eastern Iranian group of languages. They are Avestan, Sogdian and Bactrian. But these are not mutually intelligible. A Pashto speaker wouldn't understand these languages. Similarly Pashto and Dari are Iranian language but they are not mutually intelligible. Both are spoken in same geographical territory and use the same Perso-Arabic script for their writing. Most of the speakers use these languages as their second languages. A short description of the development of status of these languages is given below.

Development of Pashto as National Language

Pashto belongs to southeastern group of the Iranian branch of Indo-European languages. Pashtuns are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan comprising 38 to 44 percent of the population.² Another source has mentioned Pashtuns, being the largest ethnic group comprising around 42 percent of the Afghan population and Tajiks, as the next significant ethnic group are 25 to 30 percent of population.³ Nawid has written that 50 percent of Afghans speak Dari and 35 percent speak Pashto. Although major ethnic group in Afghanistan is Pashtuns but Dari is used by the majority of the people either

¹ Nawid, Senzil. Language Policy in Afghanistan: Linguistic Diversity and National Unity, In, *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors*, edited by Harold F. Schiffman, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2012, p. 31

² Nawid, Senzil. p. 32

³ Saikal, Amin, *Zone of Crisis: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Iraq*, London, New York, I.B. Tauris, 2014, p. 17

as first language or as a second language, that is why number of Dari speakers are higher than that of Pashto speakers.⁴ It is also said that Pashto is second in prestige.⁵ There are three major groups of the dialects of Pashto language. They are: Nangrahar or eastern dialect, the dialect of Kandahar or western dialect and the dialect of Kabul or central dialect. People living in southwest Afghanistan and Baluchistan speak Kandahari dialect. The Khattak dialect, spoken by people living in Kohat etc. also comes under the common name Kandahari dialect. Khattak tribe has effectively established the Pashto literary tradition. Wazirs also have some of the Kandahar features in their dialect. Speakers of the dialect of Kabul or the central dialect mostly live in the provinces of Ghazni, Logar, Kabul and Parawan. Speakers of the Nangrahar dialect or eastern dialect reside in the northeast regions of Afghanistan and in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Kandahari dialect enjoys the highest prestige (at least among the Kandaharis) and serves as the basis for the writing system.⁶ When we look at the development of Pashto language, we see that Amir Sher Ali Khan (1863-1879) introduced military titles in Pashto.⁷ These titles are: *ghūnd* (regiment) *dagarwāl* (Colonel), *tolai* (company), *jagran* (Major) etc. He also ordered that all military commands will be delivered in Pashto. He introduced Pashto title 'Loynab' for Prime Minister. Later on the title *Loynab* was dropped but military titles and commands continued in Pashto language.⁸ In Amir Habibullah's era (1901-1919) the language issue got significance. In 1911 Mahmud Tarzai published an article in *Seraj-alkhbar*, claimed that Pashto is the ancestor of all Aryan (Indo-Iranian) languages. On September 12, 1915, Tarzai published another article stating Persian as official and Pashto as *national language* of Afghanistan. At that time state was using Islam, Afghan history and Pashto language for building one nation and one national identity.⁹ During the reign of King Amanullah Khan (1919-1929), Pashto emerged in news papers. In 1924, the first Afghan constitution was ratified by *Loya Jarga*. At this time, *Loya Jarga* also granted the title of *Tolwak* to King Amanullah Khan. *Loya Jarga* also directed the concerned authorities about the translation of the constitution and all other government regulations into Pashto language. It is also to be noted that there is no mention of languages in this first constitution of Afghanistan. In 1927, some scholars from Kandahar formed *Pashto Maraka*

⁴ Nawid, Senzil. *Language Policy in Afghanistan: Linguistic Diversity and National Unity*, In, *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors*, edited by Harold F. Schiffman, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2012, p. 33

⁵ Nawid, Senzil. p. 34

⁶ Tegey, Habibullah and Barbara Robson. *A Reference Grammar of Pashto*, Washington, Centre for Applied Linguistics, 1996, pp. 6,7

⁷ Nawid, Senzil. p. 34

⁸ Nawid, Senzil. p. 34

⁹ Nawid, Senzil. p. 34

or Pashto Society with the support and encouragement of the government. Pashto status planning started in the third decade of 20th century. Since 1933 it was required for all civil servants and officials to learn Pashto with Persian language. Salary bonuses had also been paid to the officials who were learning Pashto. Those who spoke Pashto were also being encouraged and favoured for various posts in various departments of the government.¹⁰ King Nadir Shah (1930-1933) took measures for the promotion of Pashto and Dari languages and literature. Nadir Shah, when he was in France, had been inspired by the Academy of France, and on his return, he formed ‘*Anjuman-e-adabi*’, under the supervision of the royal secretariat in 1931.¹¹ *Majalla-e-Kabul* and *Saalnama-e-Kabul* were being published under this *anjuman*. There were four aims of this *Anjuman-e-Adabi*. First, study and clarification of Afghan history and heritage, second, development of Afghan literature and folklore, third, promotion of Pashto language and the fourth and last one was expansion of the culture and knowledge of Afghanistan.¹² Among the pioneers of modern Afghan Intelligentsia and press are: Sarwar Guya, Fikri Saljuqi, Muhammad Ali Kohzad, Ghulam Muhammad Ghubaar, Sayyid Qasim Rishtiya, Ahmad Ali Durrani, and Qari Abdullah.¹³ Pashto got its state patronage and it was declared as official language of Afghanistan in 1936. Later on the Advisory Board of Education, formed rules and laws for making Pashto as medium of instruction in elementary schools in all parts of the country. *Anjuman-e-Adabi* which had been formed by Nadir Shah was renamed as *Pashto Tolana* (Pashto Society) and it was brought under the ministry of education. It was expanded and several other divisions were also included in it. Three main tasks were assigned to *Pashto Tolana*. They were developing Pashto dictionary, writing Pashto standard grammar and standardization of Pashto spelling and pronunciation. In these developments the titles of the magazine *Majallah-e-Kabul* and the year book *Saalnaama-e-Kabul* were replaced by *da Kabul Majallah* and *da Kabul Kalanai* respectively. Later on in 1941, the year book of the Kabul was renamed as *da Afghanistan Kalanai*. It is also to be noted that despite of having Pashto titles, the contents were predominantly in Persian language.¹⁴ After declaration of Pashto as official language and as medium of instruction it faced some problems and issues. Major of these problems and issues were that other ethnic groups like Uzbek were conversant in Persian (Dari) and

¹⁰ Rzehak, Lutz (Dr.), *Howto name Universities? Or: Is there any Linguistic Problem in Afghanistan?*, Orient II/2012 (German Journal for Politics, Economics and Culture of the Middle East), p. 84

¹¹ Nawid, Senzil. *Language Policy in Afghanistan: Linguistic Diversity and National Unity*, In, *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors*, edited by Harold F. Schiffman, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2012, p. 35

¹² Nawid, Senzil. p. 35

¹³ Nawid, Senzil. p. 35

¹⁴ Nawid, Senzil. p. 36

resented to learn Pashto, shortage of trained Pashto teachers in non-Pashtun areas. Besides, this policy also affected the administrative, economic and educational aspects of the development. Due to these reasons the policy makers were forced to revisit the policy. In 1946, during the reign of Shah Mahmud Khan as Prime Minister, Persian was restored as an official language. At that time, minister of education, Najibullah Torwayana, who himself was a Durrani Pashtun, was of the opinion that making Pashto as medium of instruction was a mistake and he recommended educational institutions as bilingual. In 1940s and 1950s, the government took measures for the promotion of Pashto language. Ministry of information and culture was given this task. In this connection, Pashto Academy also took some measures. They are: expansion of vocabulary, creation of official orthography, promotion of research about Pashto language and literature. At this time Pashto academy also faced the challenges of the creation of courtesy titles and honorifics in Pashto language.¹⁵ Pashto academy coined *Xāḡalay*, *Mermān* and *Peḡla* respectively for Mr. Mrs. And Miss. Pashto academy created equivalents of Arabic and Persian terms used in public and academic institutions. Academy also created some academic titles in Pashto as *Pohānd*, *Pohanwāl* and *Pohanyār* respectively for professor, associate professor and assistant professor. Similarly *Pohantun* and *Pohanzai* were created respectively for university and college.¹⁶ During the rise of the issue of Pashtunistan, Pashto was exclusively used for propaganda in press and radio in Afghanistan. In March 1963, when Shah of Iran mediated between Pakistan and Afghanistan on the issue of Pashtunistan at that time Pashtun nationalists felt a fear that these diplomatic relations would weaken the interest of the government in the issue of Pashtunistan and similarly commitment of the government for propaganda against Pakistan would be reduced and thus the commitment of the government for the promotion and development of Pashto language would also be decreased.¹⁷

That is why during the drafting of the constitution of 1964 the issue of language policy rose again. Pashtun nationalists were trying to declare Pashto as national and official language because they were claiming that this state of Afghanistan has been founded by a Pashtun, Ahmad Shah Abdali. On the other hand, the Dari speaking people claimed Dari to be the official and national language on account of its rich and old literary tradition and history. In article three of the constitution of 1964, Pashto and Dari languages were declared as official languages of Afghanistan. Persian was renamed as Dari for the first time in this constitution.¹⁸ In article 35 Pashto was declared as national language of Afghanistan. Article 35 states that state

¹⁵ Nawid, Senzil. p. 37

¹⁶ Nawid, Senzil. p. 38

¹⁷ Nawid, Senzil. p. 39

¹⁸ Nawid, Senzil. p.40

will take necessary measures for the promotion of national language. To implement this article of the constitution, Dari-speakers were bound to attend Pashto classes after duty otherwise their monthly pay would be reduced.¹⁹ At that time a non-Pashtun Prime Minister, Dr. Muhammad Yusuf, in a press conference, said that Pashto had imbedded in the culture and political history of Afghanistan and the large number of people speak it. Therefore, it had always been the national language.

In an article, published in *Siraj-al-Akhbar*, on 12th September 1915, written by Mahmud Tarzi, Persian (Dari) was termed as official language while Pashto as national language.²⁰ In a book, written in Russian language by Aslanove and later translated from Russian into Pashto in 1968 by Muatamed Shinwari by the name *Da Afghanistan Milli Jaba aw Adab*, Pashto has been named as *milli jaba* or national language.²¹ Brian Spooner has also termed Pashto as national language.²² In article twenty of the 2004 constitution of Afghanistan, it has been stated that national anthem of Afghanistan will be in Pashto language. Although it has also been translated into Dari but still there are reservations available against this article of the constitution. It is said that it is not an appropriate representation of all Afghans. Before the Soviet Occupation many attempts were made to equalize Pashto with Dari. For this purpose Dari-speaking children were required to study Pashto in the public schools, and Dari-speaking government officials, were required to take Pashto classes.²³ Ethno-linguistic factor played a role in the emergence of political organizations like *Afghan Millat* (Afghan Nation), PDDA, *Sho'la-i-Javid* (Eternal Flame), and an anti Pashtun organization *Setam-i-Milli* (National Oppression). When PDDA was divided into two factions in 1967, ethnic division was also a factor of this factionalism. The PDDA language policy was based on Lenin's egalitarian view about the equality of nation and languages. A bulletin of the Communist Party of Great Britain, *The Weekly Worker*, published in 2003 writes about the language policy in these words.

Oppressed language groups heard their mother tongue on Kabul radio for the first time. Pushtan (sic) [Pashtun] domination officially ended. Constitutionally, the country became a multilingual state. A

¹⁹ Nawid, Senzil. p.41

²⁰ Nawid, Senzil. p. 34

²¹ Shinwari, Muhammad Muatamid, (Translator from Russia) *Da Afghanistan Milli Jaba aw Adab*, Pashto Tolana, 1968.

²² Spooner, Brian. *Persian, Farsi, Dari, Tajiki: Language Names and Language Policies*. In H. Schiffman (Ed.), *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors: The Changing Politics of Language Choice*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012, p. 89

²³ Tegey, Habibullah and Barbara Robson. *A Reference Grammar of Pashto*, Washington, Centre for Applied Linguistics, 1996, pp. 6

secular state too. Islam was not subjected to any attack, but the state promised neither to nor interfere with any religion.²⁴

Jami'at-i-Islami-i-Afghanistan formed in 1960s was also divided into two factions on ethnic and linguistic grounds. On 15th May 1978, PDPA revolutionary council, vide its decree number four, declared seven languages as national languages of Afghanistan. They are: Pashto, Dari, Uzbeki, Turkmani, Nuristani, Pashai and Baluchi.²⁵ In 1978-79 PDPA declared Uzbeki, Turkamani, Baluchi and Nuristani as national languages to divide the strong status of Dari into many fractions and thus pave way for Pashto to emerge as sole national and official language.²⁶ Another reason of PDPA commitment for declaring minority languages as national languages, was getting political support of other ethnic groups.

During Najib's reign, in 1987, a new constitution was introduced. In article thirteen of that constitution Afghanistan was declared as a multinational state. Article fourteen states that languages, literature and culture of all of the nations will be promoted. When government of Najib collapsed and Kabul was taken over by Mujahedin in 1992, Burhanuddin Rabbani was elected by the council of religious leaders in May 1992. He got support of Dari and Turkic-speaking people and the influence of Pashto decreased in his time. In this regard Ahady has written in 1995:

The Pashto language has also lost status in the government controlled media, radio, television and newspapers. Since the 1920s and before the downfall of the Najibullah regime, the development and popularization of Pashto received preferential treatment in the government's cultural policy, or at least equality with Dari, and 50% or more of radio-tv programs were in Pashto. Since April 1992 Pashto-language programs have decreased drastically, and the official print media allocates even less space to Pashto.²⁷

In this period national anthem was also changed from Pashto into Dari. During Taliban regime, in 1996, there was no language policy but majority of Taliban were Pashtuns and majority of them didn't know Dari. So Pashto was the sole official language during Taliban era. In post-Taliban era, in the constitution of 2004, there is no mention of national language but according to the article twenty of the constitution the national anthem would be in

²⁴ Nawid, Senzil. Language Policy in Afghanistan: Linguistic Diversity and National Unity, In, *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors*, edited by Harold F. Schiffman, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2012, p.44

²⁵ Nawid, Senzil. p.43

²⁶ Nawid, Senzil. p.44

²⁷ Ahady, Anwar-ul-Haq. *The Decline of Pashtuns in Afghanistan*, in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 35, No. 7 (July, 1995), p. 624

Pashto language. Article sixteen of the constitution has mentioned languages like Pamiri, Nuristani, Baluchi, Turkmani, Pachaie, Uzbeki, Dari and Pashto. Further it has been added that among these mentioned and other prevailing languages of the country Dari and Pashto languages will be used as official languages of the country. But there is also a space for the third official language in those regions where majority of the people speak, except Pashto and Dari, any other language from the list of languages aforementioned. In this case it will be called a third official language and its usage will be regulated by law. According to the above mentioned above article of the constitution, state will launch effective strategy for the development of the languages of Afghanistan. All languages of Afghanistan are freely allowed in mass media, press and publications. Particular terminology related to Academic, national and administrative departments will be preserved.²⁸

A few things are less clear in this article of the constitution. Speakers of five different languages have consolidated under one common name Nuristani, while the speakers of Pamiri languages have not been mentioned in the constitution.

Development of Dari as Official Language

Actually Dari is a dialect of Persian language. But Dari has its own distinctions too. Dari signifies the language of court while *Farsi* signifies the language of Fars, a province of Iran.²⁹ When Ahmad Shah Abdali formed modern state of Afghanistan in 1747, Dari retained its official position. It was necessary to have a competence in Dari for getting a job. That was the reason that Pashtun, Uzbek and other minorities groups learned Dari.³⁰ Persian (Dari) has remained the second most important language in the Middle East after the Arabic language.³¹ As discussed earlier that Dari is a dialect of Persian language. Persian is very rich and vast language. Dari is the linguafrance of Afghanistan.³² There are some phonological differences between Persian and Dari languages. Among them a few are:

- Long vowels like ē, ī, ō and ū are separate in Dari language while in Persian language these vowels are merged into "ī" and "ū".

²⁸ <https://www.mfa.gov.af/constitution/chapter-one-state.html> retrieved 11-11-2018

²⁹ Spooner, Brian. *Persian, Farsi, Dari, Tajiki: Language Names and Language Policies*. In H. Schiffman (Ed.), *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors: The Changing Politics of Language Choice*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012, p.99

³⁰ Nawid, Senzil. *Language Policy in Afghanistan: Linguistic Diversity and National Unity*, In, *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors*, edited by Harold F. Schiffman, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2012, p. 33

³¹ Nawid, Senzil. p. 35

³² Nawid, Senzil. p. 32

- Two vowels /i/ and /u/ used in Dari language become /e/ and /o/ in Persian language of Iran.
- Short non-final “a” in Dari language of Afghanistan becomes /æ/ in Persian language of Iran.
- Labial consonant (و) which is pronounced as /w/ in Dari language is realized as [v] in Persian language of Iran.
- Voiced velar fricative (ځ) and the voiced uvular stop [g] - (گ) are separate in Dari but converged in Persian language of Iran.
- English language and its terminology has influenced Dari language more than the Persian language of Iran.

Various sub-dialects of Dari are spoken in Herat, Hazarajat, Balkh, Ghor, Ghazni, Badakhshan, Panjsher, and in Kabul.³³ The dialect of Kabul (Kabuli) is considered as standard for broadcasting on Radio and TV. Kabuli dialect of Persian/Dari was declared as official in 1930.³⁴ Persian/Dari was used as official language i.e. in administration and in court etc. from the time of Mahmud Ghaznavi in the eleventh century.³⁵ Farsi or Persian is the name which speakers of Dari language call to their language. When BBC changed the name of the Facebook page used for Persian language of Afghanistan from Persian to BBC Dari, many Persian speakers in Afghanistan despised this official change of a page from Persian to Dari.³⁶ Speakers of Persian language living in Afghanistan are of the opinion that they were not willing to accept the term of Dari but the dominant Pashtun ethnic group has forced this term on them for the purpose of creating distance of Persian speaking Afghans from their linguistic, cultural, and historical roots in the other parts of the Persian-speaking world.³⁷ As mentioned earlier, Dari is a dialect of Persian language. Tajiki spoken in Tajikistan is also a dialect of Persian language. In 1928, In the Soviet Republic of Tajikistan, Persian was renamed as Tojiki. Soviet authorities also changed the alphabet of Persian/Tajiki. First of all they started using Roman alphabet and later on in 1940 they started Cyrillic alphabet.³⁸ With a slight variations of dialects, Persian language is officially used in three different countries i.e. Iran,

³³ Nawid, Senzil. p. 31

³⁴ <https://thediplomat.com/2016/05/afghanistan-war-of-words/retrieved> on 8/9/2018

³⁵ Nawid, Senzil. Language Policy in Afghanistan: Linguistic Diversity and National Unity, In, *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors*, edited by Harold F. Schiffman, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2012, p. 31

³⁶ <https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/afghanistans-persian-linguistic-identity/> retrieved 19/7/2018

³⁷ <https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/afghanistans-persian-linguistic-identity/> retrieved 19/7/2018

³⁸ Spooner, Brian. *Persian, Farsi, Dari, Tajiki: Language Names and Language Policies*. In H. Schiffman (Ed.), *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors: The Changing Politics of Language Choice*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012, p. 97

Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Although all of these languages have the same literary tradition but known by three different names in three different countries i.e. Farsi, Dari, and Tajiki. Discussing Persian language in Afghanistan, quoted by Lutz Rzehak, Bert G. Fagner (1999) has stated that Persian has remained a language of culture, education and court in Afghanistan for centuries. It was spoken by all people of Afghanistan and it was not limited to one specified ethnic group but all the ethnic groups of Afghanistan were speaking this language. In the words of Fagner it was an Islamized language and it was not primarily identified with an ethnic group but identified as a language of a specific culture.³⁹ Here we have concern only with Dari and not with others. Dari is not limited only to a particular ethnic group but people belonging to various ethnic groups speak Dari either their first language or their second language. That is why Asia Foundation, in one of its reports, has mentioned that nearly 80 percent of population speak Dari.⁴⁰ Any educated Pashtun in Afghanistan speaks Dari but very few Dari speakers speak Pashto.⁴¹ As mentioned earlier that Dari speakers belong to various ethnic groups but after the introducing of new electronic *tazkiras* (ID Card) every Afghan (Tajik, Uzbek, Baloch etc.) will include his/her ethnicity. Similarly after the completion of this process, exact number of different ethnic groups will come to front. In October 2018 an appointment notification for a high position⁴² was issued only in Dari language and on my inquiry it was told that when a Pashtun is being appointed the notification is issued in Dari language and when a non Pashtun is being appointed then the notification is being issued in Pashto language but it does not seem to be right answer because many of the official notifications are issued written only in Dari language. The cabinet of Afghanistan decided on 19/12/1397 (1st March 2019) that onward minutes of the meetings of cabinet will be written in both Pashto and Dari languages.⁴³

Language a Divisive Issue in Afghanistan

In multi-ethnic communities, the most significant component which plays an instrumental role in identity formation and nation-building is broadly shared

³⁹Rzehak, Lutz (Dr.), *How to name Universities? Or: Is there any Linguistic Problem in Afghanistan?*, Orient II/2012 (German Journal for Politics, Economics and Culture of the Middle East), p. 84

⁴⁰ Rahi, Arwin, *Afghanistan's Growing Ethnic and linguistic Divides: Time to Address Them*, Bishkek, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, #22 Central Asia Security Policy Briefs, February 2015, p.9

⁴¹ Tegey, Habibullah and Barbara Robson. *A Reference Grammar of Pashto*, Washington, Centre for Applied Linguistics, 1996, pp. 6

⁴² Notification of the Director of Academy of Sciences Kabul, Afghanistan issued on 2nd October 2018 written in Dari Language.

⁴³ Cabinet, Notification No. 22 dated 14/11/1398 (1st March 2019)

language.⁴⁴ Language can play a dual role, a separatist and a unifying role. A common, shared or national language is being sought by the policy planners in multilingual societies for the integration of the diverse population. However, it is very sensitive matter. Therefore it should be tackled very carefully. Sometimes it causes ethnic conflicts.⁴⁵ As Kelman says;

Language is a uniquely powerful instrument in unifying a diverse population and in involving individuals and subgroups in the national system. However, some of the very features of language that give it this power under some circumstances may, under other circumstances, become major sources of disintegration and internal conflict within a national system. These considerations should have some definite implications for language policy not only in developing nations but also in long-established nations marked by diglossia....while the development of a national language may be highly conducive to the creation and strengthening of national identity, the *deliberate* use of language for purpose of national identity may__ at least in a multiethnic state __have more disruptive than unifying consequences.⁴⁶

Although language historians and language activists, have termed Pashto, as national language but the situation on ground is on the contrary. Dari, being a dialect of Persian, has its rich, cultural and literary tradition. In past, it has also enjoyed the status of not only official but the sole official language of Afghanistan. In the beginning of the twentieth century, emerging Pashtun nationalism, succeeded in giving the official status to Pashto. Now both of the languages enjoy the same constitutional and official status. At present, emergence of one National Language in Afghanistan seems to be difficult. Sometimes linguistic divergence creates problems for the integrity of Afghanistan.

Pashto-Dari Conflict

When military titles and terms in education and administration introduced in Pashto language, it overshadowed the Dari language. When Pashto was given equal official status with Dari language, the rivalry became stricter. Similarly it grew up with the passage of time. Thus with the politicization of the linguistic issue, a gap was created between the ethnic communities of

⁴⁴ Gill, Saran Kaur; *Language Policy Challenges in Multi-Ethnic Malaysia*, New York, London, Springer, 2014, p. 17

⁴⁵ Gill, Saran Kaur; p.20

⁴⁶ Kelman, Herbert C., *Language as an Aid and Barrier to Involvement in the National System*, In: J.Rubin & B.H. Jernudd (Eds.), *Can language be planned? Sociolinguistic Theory and Practice for Developing Nations*, Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii; 1971. P. 21

respective languages. The article of the constitution about the preservation of certain educational terms, also created conflicts. In this regard the issue of writing *Dānišgāh* or *Pohantun* on universities sign board raised in Balkh University and Herat University.⁴⁷ The Supreme Court of Afghanistan has issued a verdict for using the terms as *Pohantun*, *Pohanzai*, *Pohanmal*, *Pohānd*, *Pohanyār* etc as official. The Supreme Court said that these are legal properties of official languages and should be used in all languages to avoid confusion. Supreme Court issued this decree in the light of the article sixteen of the constitution which states that “administrative, academic, and national terminology in the country will be preserved.” The higher education laws could not pass from the parliament and delayed for nine years due to the linguistic issue of the term *Dānišgāh* or *Pohantun*.⁴⁸ *Pohantun* is a Pashto word but it is commonly used in Dari language.⁴⁹ In Dari texts we can also see this word.⁵⁰

Language Conflict and Attitude of Afghan Leaders

When we look into the history of Afghan leaders, almost they were speaking two languages i.e. Pashto and Dari. Current President (Dr. Ashraf Ghani) is also using both languages. However some leaders have preferred one language over the other. For example Nur Muhammad Tarakai and Hafizullah Amin preferred Pashto. On the contrary Babrak Karmal preferred Dari. For getting the support of different linguistic communities for the political purpose, some leaders have used native languages of the communities whose support were required. During his election campaign, the present president of Afghanistan, Dr. Ashraf Ghani, in one of his TV statements, used a few Uzbeki words.⁵¹ In December 2018, in an international Conference on Pashto prominent poet Khushal Khan Khattak, the organizers started inaugural ceremony of this conference in Dari language. And in the formal academic sessions two moderators were parallel managing the stage in Dari and Pashto language, although all of the papers presented in this conference were in Pashto language. In the concluding session of this conference, in the president house (Arg0 the current president, Dr. Ashraf Ghani spoke in Pashto as well as in Dari language.

⁴⁷ Rahi, Arwin, Afghanistan’s Growing Ethnic and linguistic Divides: Time to Address Them, Bishkek, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, #22 Central Asia Security Policy Briefs, February 2015, p.10

⁴⁸ <https://thediplomat.com/2016/05/afghanistan-war-of-words/retrieved> on 8/9/2018

⁴⁹ Bulkin, Carleton, Dari Practical Dictionary. 2nd edn., New York, Hippocrene Books, 2012.

⁵⁰ Arman, Rahman, Dari, An Elementary Textbook. Bloomington, CelCAR, 2012.

⁵¹ <https://thediplomat.com/2016/05/afghanistans-war-of-words/> retrieved on 8/9/2018

Language Conflict and Attitude of People

In the context of language conflict, looking into the attitude of the common people towards each other languages, the following points have been noted.

1. Native Pashto speakers have a tendency towards Dari language. That is why they learn and speak Dari as their second language but on the other hand, only few people who speak Dari as their first language learn or speak Pashto as their second language.
2. In past there were many obstacles in the learning of Pashto. The one among them was the contents of Pashto courses which were not according to the requirements of getting language skills. There were also cultural and psychological problems.
3. In some important offices like foreign office about ninety five percent letters are written in Dari even in Pashtun majority province like Nangrahar the case is also the same.⁵²
4. Dari as a dialect of Persian, has standardized official style while Pashto still lacks unified orthography.⁵³ Before Russian invasion in 1979, major attempts had been made for standardization of Pashto. Although to some extent these efforts have succeeded but still problems exist. In this connection, Pashto academy was established in Kabul. One of the reasons of this lack of standardization is the varieties in spelling. These varieties in spelling not only occurred from one writer to another but often exist by the same writer in the same document.⁵⁴
5. Pashto is prolific in dialects and there is no standard variety in written and spoken Pashto.
6. In rural areas when a person speaks colloquial standard Dari, it is considered as speaking in a modern way but no spoken variety of Pashto has such attribute.⁵⁵
7. Dari has influenced Pashto. Many lexical items used in Pashto have their roots in Dari but the case of impact of Pashto on Dari is quite different. Only a few words have been incorporated in Dari having their roots in Pashto e.g. *kezhdi* (nomad tent)*gadwad* ('mixed'), or *powanda* ('nomadic tradesmen') etc.

⁵² Rzehak, Lutz (Dr.), *How to name Universities? Or: Is there any Linguistic Problem in Afghanistan?*, Orient II/2012 (German Journal for Politics, Economics and Culture of the Middle East), p. 87

⁵³ Rzehak, Lutz (Dr.), p. 87

⁵⁴ Tegey, Habibullah and Barbara Robson. *A Reference Grammar of Pashto*, Washington, Centre for Applied Linguistics, 1996, pp.7,8

⁵⁵ Rzehak, Lutz (Dr.), *How to name Universities? Or: Is there any Linguistic Problem in Afghanistan?*, Orient II/2012 (German Journal for Politics, Economics and Culture of the Middle East), p. 87

8. When we are looking into the partners of these two languages outside of Afghanistan, Pashto is spoken in Pakistan but there is no official status of Pashto in Pakistan. But there are more publishing houses in Pakistan. In the past more Pashto books were being published in Peshawar⁵⁶ than in Afghanistan.⁵⁷ On the other hand, we see Iran, where Persian is an official language and those Dari-speakers who sought refuge in Iran got influence of Persian.⁵⁸ There is an inflow of various Persian books to Afghanistan that have assisted Persian as popular language among students and authors.⁵⁹

Linguistic Divergence: Creating Distance Between Pashto and Dari

As discussed earlier that Dari is a dialect of Persian language and Persian has been a language of culture of Afghanistan for centuries. That is why Dari or Persian has influenced Pashto language. There are lexical, phonological and morphological influences of Dari language on Pashto language. Being two rival languages in Afghanistan, the speakers and writers of Pashto are trying to distinguish Pashto from Dari and they are trying to make phonological changes in those words which have been borrowed from Dari. Dari has no retroflex sounds and Pashto has retroflex sounds. Pashto writers try to modify Dari words phonologically by converting non retroflex sounds into retroflex sounds to let them appear as original Pashto words. In this regard Pashtun writers are trying to bring changes in retroflex /d/ and /r/. For example they write *pand* with retroflex /d/ as *pand* and similarly they write *Pārsi* with retroflex /r/ as *Pār̄si*.

Growing linguistic divergence and conflict creates distance between Pashto and Dari languages.

Linguistic Behavior towards Pashto and Dari

Language is not the main identity marker for being a Pashtun. But tribal belonging and following the codes of *Pashtunwali* are most important. There

⁵⁶ Presently the exact number of publishing houses in Peshawar and Afghanistan not known.

⁵⁷ Tegey, Habibullah and Barbara Robson. *A Reference Grammar of Pashto*, Washington, Centre for Applied Linguistics, 1996, p.6

⁵⁸ Rzehak, Lutz (Dr.), *How to name Universities? Or: Is there any Linguistic Problem in Afghanistan?*, Orient II/2012 (German Journal for Politics, Economics and Culture of the Middle East), p. 89.

⁵⁹ <https://thedi diplomat.com/2016/05/afghanistans-war-of-words/> retrieved on 8/9/2018

are many Pashtun sub-ethnic groups who have forgot their language but they are considered Pashtuns not only by themselves but as well by other ethnic groups. On contrary, there is a different situation among Dari speaking groups. Dari speaking people are not considered as a single group. They have different criteria of their identity. Among them one is their place of settlement for example they are called Kāboli, Herāti, Mazāri etc. it means that those who are living in Kabul are called Kabuli and similarly those who are living in Herāt and Mazār Shari are called respectively Herāti and Mazāri etc. Dari people are also identified through their way of life. For example Tajik are Dari/Persian speaking people who are Sunni peasants and living in cities, Aimāq are considered semi-nomadic tribesmen. Likewise they are also identified though their ethnic origin like Hazara, Arab, Jugi etc. No generic name is existed for the different groups of Dari language. A few years ago the word Pārsiwān was used as a group term but actually never this term has been applied to the speakers of Dari language. These days the term Tajik is used for almost all Dari speakers except the Hazara. Many government agencies also officially apply this term to Dari speakers.⁶⁰

Culture as a Factor of Linguistic Convergence

There are three traditional models of integration in multicultural societies. The first one is segregation. In this model geographical distance is kept for staying apart. Sometimes they live in same area but having few relations. The second model is assimilation which aims that people belong to minority groups and cultures follow and adopt the culture of the majority group. When the minority adopts the culture of majority group, in turn, the majority group also adopts some components from the culture of the minority. These features can be in the form of certain beliefs, values, vocabulary and dishes. Following this way they become a unified whole. The third model is integration model which we can apply to Afghanistan. This model is also called multiculturalism. According to this model, to some extent cultural diversity are encouraged and expected to keep their distinctive cultural traits in form of their values, worldviews, and habits etc. Critics have also criticized this model by stating that it very easily may create a sort of spontaneous segregation. As we know that Afghanistan is an abode of various ethnic groups. That is why there is no inclusive Afghan culture to represent every Afghan properly.⁶¹ Language issue has always been used by people who have power. It is not an issue of ordinary people. If it is assumed

⁶⁰ Rzehak, Lutz (Dr.), *How to name Universities? Or: Is there any Linguistic Problem in Afghanistan?*, Orient II/2012 (German Journal for Politics, Economics and Culture of the Middle East), p. 86.

⁶¹ Rahi, Arwin, *Afghanistan's Growing Ethnic and linguistic Divides: Time to Address Them*, Bishkek, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, #22 Central Asia Security Policy Briefs, February 2015, p.6

that language is not an issue of ordinary people but it is politicized by a particular class of that language community, in such circumstances, culture plays its role in bridging the gap, created by the politicization of language. According to similarities in human nature, various cultures also have many shared features. These shared features can be utilized for bridging the gap among different ethnic groups. For example Pashtun's hospitality is a cultural component which can remove the language issue to some extent. For example, when a Dari speaker visits a Pashtun, Pashtun tries to communicate with his guest in his language. Although multicultural societies have their own challenges but all of these challenges can be addressed through deliberations and discussions. These challenges can be overcome by the joint efforts of both, the state and the society. Multicultural education should be promoted and a public policy should be introduced. Shared roots of common social solidarity should be pointed out. Similarly religion and a shared language can also play its positive role in bridging these gaps. Main indicators of social divergence and conflicts are: linguistic, political, social and economic. State should introduce guiding principles for promoting pluralism and multiculturalism. State should provide all members of each group equal opportunities so that they may realize their full potential. Cultural diversity should be encouraged and promoted. Every person is allowed to maintain his or her culture without prejudice or disadvantage. Multiculturalism laws should be introduced and implemented. Racism and discrimination should be combated. Government should give equal opportunities for the equal representation of diverse cultures. Cross-cultural understanding can also enhance the tolerance and pluralism. For cultural integration and pluralism, intercultural strategies should be adopted. The dominant cultural groups can help in accommodating the other groups in the society. Shared or multicultural ideology can also play its role in social and cultural harmony. Multicultural policy arrangements are needed for the reflection of the extant cultural diversity and a willingness to accept equity. Public good well and welfare activities can also help in this regard. People need education about the benefits of cultural diversity. These benefits for the common people are: enhanced gastronomy, increase in cross cultural competencies, mental flexibility, tolerance, artistic development and blossoming, innovations in social and political dimensions, economic growth, increase in learning, promotion of social peace through mutual respect and love. Efforts for the promotion of the cultural diversity not only bring these benefits for the people but also can overcome to some extent the challenges of cultural conflicts. These challenges are: discrimination, feeling of alienation means they feel themselves as foreigners in their own country. To sum up, promotion of common cultural elements can decrease linguistic divergence. Amir Abdur Rahman, under his rule, at the end of the nineteenth century, consolidated the Uzbek Principalities (*khanates*) and enforced resettlement policy that resulted in Pashtun inroads into traditionally Uzbek

areas. His intention was to promote national unity by intermingling people of different linguistic backgrounds in the north.⁶² In establishment of diplomatic relations between Iran and Afghanistan odes of those poets were used as a tool that had depicted the common cultural heritage of the two countries.⁶³

Findings

Afghanistan is a multiethnic and multicultural country. In the article four of the present (2004) constitution of Afghanistan, these ethnic groups have been mentioned: Pashtun, Hazara, Uzbek, Tajik, Turkaman, Baluch, Qirghiz, Pachaie, Aymaq, Nuristani, Qizilbash, Arab, Gujur and Brahwui. Although there is no ethnic group mentioned in the constitution by the name 'Afghan' and in article four of the constitution, it has been written that this word (i.e. Afghan) will be applied to all of the citizens of Afghanistan but still Pashtun and non-Pashtun are of the opinion and they unanimously believe that this word Afghan is synonymous with Pashtun.⁶⁴ Many other ethnic groups are also living in Afghanistan that have not been mentioned in the constitution. Ethnic groups like Pamiri, Sikhs and Hindus have not been mentioned in the constitution. Speakers of Pamiri languages not only have linguistic distinctions but also follow Ismailism and thus belong to a religious minority. Speakers of five different languages (Ashkun, Bashgali, Prasun, Gambiri, and Waigali) have been consolidated under a common name Nuristani. Besides the description of these ethnic groups, article sixteen of the constitution of Afghanistan describes languages of Afghanistan. In article sixteen these languages have been mentioned: Pashto, Turkamani, Dari, Uzbeki, Baluchi, Nuristani, Pachaie, and Pamiri. The same article also states that Dari and Pashto both are the official languages of Afghanistan. It is also mentioned in the constitution of Afghanistan that in those regions where most of the people speak Uzbeki, Baluchi, Turkamani, Pachaie, Pamiri, and Nuristani, a third language will also be included as official language.

In article sixteen it has also been written that national, academic and administrative terminology will be preserved. This part of the article is

⁶² Nawid, Senzil. Language Policy in Afghanistan: Linguistic Diversity and National Unity, In, *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors*, edited by Harold F. Schiffman, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2012, p. 33.

⁶³ Ashraf Ghani, *The Persian Literature of Afghanistan, 1911-78*, In: Iqbal Afghan and Afghanistan, edited by: M. Ikram Chaghtai, Lahore, Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2004, p. 243

⁶⁴ Rahi, Arwin, *Afghanistan's Growing Ethnic and linguistic Divides: Time to Address Them*, Bishkek, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, #22 Central Asia Security Policy Briefs, February 2015, p.12

disputed because some researchers are of the opinion that national, academic, and administrative terminology does not exist at all.⁶⁵ It is also said that in Afghanistan, neither anyone has codified the terminology nor any agency in Afghanistan, like Academy of Sciences, has defined these terms. After a long debate and disputes, the Supreme Court of Afghanistan, in its *verdict*, retained this national, academic and administrative terminology.

According to ‘Ethnologue’, world’s languages database, Dari and southern Pashto are principal languages of Afghanistan.⁶⁶ Ethnologue has listed forty one languages in Afghanistan. In these forty one languages two varieties of Pashto and sign language have also been included.⁶⁷

Before the declaration of Pashto as official language, Persian was official language of Afghanistan. At that time Persian was not considered a language of a particular ethnic group rather it was considered a language of culture and esteem. Even the Pashtun aristocracy considered Persian as a language of culture. For the first time Zahir Shah declared Pashto as official language in 1936. Later on it was confirmed in the constitution of 1964. Official status of Pashto and Dari has been once again confirmed in the 2004 constitution of Afghanistan. For the first time officially, the word ‘Dari’ was used for the Persian language (dialect) of Afghanistan in the constitution of 1964. It is also said that main concern in Afghanistan in renaming Persian with Dari in the constitution of 1964 was reducing cultural impact of Iran on Afghanistan.⁶⁸

Although Pashto and Dari both are official languages of Afghanistan but they are unequal partners in many regards. Firstly, Pashto is a language of the identity of a particular ethnic group i.e. Pashtuns⁶⁹ but Dari is not the language of a particular ethnic group but many ethnic groups speak Dari as their first language. Secondly, majority of those people whose mother tongue is Pashto can fluently speak Dari as second language while many of those who speak Dari as their first language don’t have full command on Pashto language. Thirdly, both the languages are different with regard to their degree of standardization. There is a standardized and sophisticated

⁶⁵ Rahi, p. 3

⁶⁶ <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/AF> retrieved on 5/9/2018

⁶⁷ <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/AF/languages> retrieved on 5/9/2018.

⁶⁸ Spooner, Brian. *Persian, Farsi, Dari, Tajiki: Language Names and Language Policies*. In H. Schiffman (Ed.), *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors: The Changing Politics of Language Choice*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012, p.99

⁶⁹ Although language is main factor in preserving one’s ethnic identity but it is not the sole factor of ethnic identity. Because in Afghanistan a few Pashtun tribes have lost their language. They are speaking other languages from the time of their ancestors but still not only they call themselves but the others also recognize them as Pashtuns.

official style of Dari while Pashto is still lacking a unified orthography. Fourthly, in rural places when someone speaks colloquial standard of Dari, it is said that he or she speaks the modern way but Pashto doesn't have such an attribute.⁷⁰ Fifthly, Pashto has only lexical influence on Dari while Dari has influenced Pashto not only lexically but also phonologically. Last but not the least both the languages have unequal partners that are out of Afghanistan. On the one side Pashto is a regional language in Pakistan but it has no official status. On the one side Dari has a partner like Iran, where Persian is an official language which has influenced and is influencing Dari to its maximum level. Iran is providing, at large scale, backdoor support to Dari language to expand its cultural influence to Afghanistan.⁷¹

All these mentioned and other factors show an ethnic and linguistic consciousness in Afghanistan. This article particularly discovers the implications and prospects of the conflict between Pashto and Dari languages of Afghanistan. This article will also describe status, planning and policies regarding Dari and Pashto languages in Afghanistan. Furthermore, it has also been tried to find out the ways of integration of different ethnic and linguistic groups through cultural harmonization, multiculturalism and pluralism.

Conclusion

Language and ethnicity are correlated in Afghanistan. Persian/Dari, as a language of culture has united all the people of Afghanistan for centuries. The emergence of Pashtun nationalism in twentieth century resulted the declaration of Pashto as official language of Afghanistan in 1936. A competition and rivalry started between these two languages which increased linguistic and ethnic consciousness subsequently led to discussions about language planning policies. Dialect of Persian language spoken in Afghanistan was officially renamed for the first time in the constitution of 1964 of Afghanistan. As a result of these linguistic consciousness and discussions both of the languages were given official status in the 1964 and current 2004 constitution of Afghanistan. Both of these languages have played their role in the twentieth century developments in the politics of Afghanistan and both of them have influenced different movements in Afghanistan. Language issue has become rather politicized in Afghanistan and this politically intended linguistic divergence has created many ethnic

⁷⁰ Rzehak, Lutz (Dr.), *Howto name Universities? Or: Is there any Linguistic Problem in Afghanistan?*, Orient II/2012 (German Journal for Politics, Economics and Culture of the Middle East), p. 87

⁷¹ Rahi, Arwin, *Afghanistan's Growing Ethnic and linguistic Divides: Time to Address Them*, Bishkek, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, #22 Central Asia Security Policy Briefs, February 2015, p.11

and other problems in Afghan state and society. Competition or conflict between these two languages is still going on and each linguistic group is trying to get more space for their language. On official level government provides equal status and opportunities for the development of these languages.

Both Pashto and Dari languages have the capability for the unification of Afghan society but need impartial and unprejudiced attention of the state. Political, social and economic factors have added more to the linguistic divergence in Afghan society. At this time Afghan state and society should be very careful about ethnicization and language politics. Both of the languages have a maximum amount of positive language transfer. There are a lot of common linguistic, literary, cultural, religious and historical elements in Dari and Pashto which can be used as a source of unity for further developing nation building. Shared history and common cultural elements can help in converging the linguistically divided groups. Cultural diversity has its benefits as well as its challenges. Its challenges can be overcome through honest efforts of the state and society. In the present time internal linguistic, cultural, and ethnic differences can be resolved to some extent through shared history, religion, shared linguistic and cultural features. Efforts should be made to bring the people of various linguistic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds closer to one another so that they may see each other cultures.

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