



A Comparative Study of the Modern Standard Persian and the Colloquial Persian Spoken in the City of Shiraz a Pseudo-Diglossic Situation

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Abstract

Some languages use two different varieties through the speech community. Each of the varieties has a different range of social functions. The standard variety is used only on formal occasions, while a colloquial variety of the same language is used only under informal circumstances. This relationship is termed "diglossia". There is a diglossic situation held between the Modern Standard Persian, on the one hand, and a good number of local dialects of Persian, on the other. One main local dialect of Persian is the dialect spoken in Shiraz, a southern Iranian city and the center of Fars Province, to which Farsi (Persian) is pertaining. Shirazi dialect is one of the closest varieties to the Standard Persian. This has resulted in the fact that despite a great number of differences between the two varieties, these two varieties are not thoroughly mutually unintelligible, owing to a number of reasons. In other words, they make a pseudo-diglossic situation. This article aims to compare the two varieties at different linguistic levels of phonology, lexicon, morphology and syntax.

Keywords: Diglossia; Modern standard Persian; Colloquial Persian; Pseudo-diglossia.

1. Introduction

In sociolinguistics, the situation in which two distinct varieties of one language are used side by side is referred to as "Diglossia". Under a diglossic circumstance one variety, referred to as "High" is used only on formal public occasions, while the other variety, referred to as "Low" (L), is used only in informal situations. The Persian language has a good number of dialects spoken in different parts of Iran. There is a diglossic situation between the Modern Standard Persian, on the one hand, and these local dialects, on the other. One main local variety of Persian is the local dialect spoken in Shiraz, a southern Iranian city Shiraz in the center of Fars Province. Despite a great number of differences between the two varieties, these two varieties are not thoroughly mutually unintelligible, owing to a number of reasons. This article aims to compare the two varieties at different linguistic levels of phonology, lexicon, morphology and syntax.

2. Literature Review

Diglossia is a situation of two functionally different language varieties in a speech community.. One is usually a standard variety used in government, the media, education and for religious services. The other one is a variety used in family, with friends, when shopping, etc. The term "diglossia" was first coined by [Ferguson \(1959\)](#):

Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly coded (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation (p.336).

Ferguson's definition of 'diglossia' is quite specific in that the two varieties should belong to the same language. Some other scholars, however, have extended the term to cover situations which do not count as diglossic according to Ferguson's definition. For [Meyerhoff \(2006\)](#) diglossia is a situation in which "One language may be used for some social functions or in a specific social context, while another language is served for other". [Hudson \(1996\)](#), refers to Paraguay as an example of a diglossic community, in which the two varieties do not belong to one language, but are Spanish and Guarani.

Diglossic is "a particular kind of language standardization where two distinct varieties of a language exist side by side throughout the speech community]....[and where each of the two varieties is assigned a definite social function" ([Trudgill, 1983b](#)).

[Warduaugh \(2005\)](#), argues that "the phenomenon of diglossia is not ephemeral in nature: in fact, the opposite is true: it appears to be a persistent social and linguistic phenomenon."

In a diglossic situation, the standard variety is regarded as high (H), and the colloquial one as Low (L). The two varieties serve different functions and cannot be interchangeably used. "You do not use an H variety in circumstances calling for an L variety, e.g. for addressing a servant; nor does one use an L variety when an H variety is called for, e.g., for writing a serious work of literature" [Warduaugh \(2005\)](#).

In a diglossic society, the L variety is acquired by all at home, while the H variety, taught at school, is not necessarily learned by all. Therefore, the two varieties are not regarded as having the same degree of prestige. Wardaugh (2005), puts the matter this way:

"The H variety is the prestige variety; the L variety lacks prestige. In fact, there can be so little prestige attached to the L variety that people may even deny that they know it although they may be observed to use it far more frequently than the H variety]..... [This feeling about the superiority of the H variety is reinforced by the fact that a body of literature exists in that variety and almost none in the L variety. That literature may reflect essential values about the culture. Speakers of Arabic in particular gain prestige from being able to allude to classical sources. The folk literature associated with the L variety will have none of the same prestige" (p. 90).

Referring to Ferguson's definition of diglossia, Jeremiás (1984) writes:

If we accept his (Ferguson's) definition, the Persian language should be regarded as having a diglossic situation. The data which the language history provides is indicative of the fact that this situation dates back to historical times, the epoch of the formation of a uniform. What is unique to Persian is that the old (classic) per se, or the old language as a norm, has "survived" and has not been isolated as something pleasant, fancied by only few people. On the other hand, the differences between the two varieties are indicative that Persian is also unique in that the Spoken Persian cannot be regarded as a form of official style "transferred" to speech. The differences found between the two varieties tend to be distinct as grammatical differences existing between two independent languages" (1984: 91).

3. Data of the Study

Modern Standard Persian data are collected from Persian media news announcements. Shirazi Colloquial Persian data are selected from among a number of interviews made on everyday affairs, by Fars Province TV channel.

4. Methodology

To illustrate the linguistic differences between Modern Standard Persian (MSP), and Colloquial Persian (CP), the Surface Strategy Taxonomy has been utilized. This perspective, "highlights the ways surface structures are altered" (Dulay et al., 1982). Categorizing linguistic items according to the surface strategy taxonomy helps researchers analyze linguistic alterations, in more details. To achieve this, (1) the collected data are transcribed phonemically¹, (2) the meanings are given in English, (3) when needed, a rough literal (morpheme-based) translation of the (Persian) examples into English is given, to help the non-Persian reader follow the discussions, and (4) necessary explanations are provided.

4.1. Pronunciation Key

Persian Vowels					
Vowel		Persian Example		Meaning	English Example
Short	/æ/	/zæn/	زن	woman	Cat
	/e/	/sefid/	سفید	white	Set
	/o/	/gol/	گل	rose	For
	/ɑ/	/dʒɑn/	جان	life	Mother
	/u/	/ʃun/	چون	because	Book
	/i/	/ʃin/	چین	China	Sit
Long	/ɑ:/	/ka:r/	کار	work	Father
	/u:/	/nu:r/	نور	light	pour
	/i:/	/ʃi:r/	شیر	lion	seat

Persian Diphthongs				
Diphthong	Persian Example		Meaning	English Example
/eI/	/keIk/	کیک	cake	cake
/ou/	/nou/	نو	new	home

¹ - The transcription is read from left to right although Persian is written from right to left in the script.

Persian Consonants

Consonant	Persian	Example	Meaning	English Example
/b/	/baba/	بابا	father	Bob
/p/	/pær/	پر	feather	Pope
/d/	/dust/	دوست	friend	day
/t/	/tær/	تر	throun	tree
/g/	/gol/	گل	rose	goal
/k/	/kar/	کار	work	key
/v/	/væqt/	وقت	time	vase
/f/	/fær/	فر	glory	fast
/z/	/zohre/	زهرة	venus	zoo
/s/	/sæbz/	سبز	green	say
ژ	/ʒale/	ژاله	dew	vision
ش	/ʃæb/	شب	night	shape
دژ	/dʒæʃn/	جشن	festival	John
تف	/tʃæng/	چنگ	harp	chair
m	/mæn/	من	I	man
n	/nærges//	نرگس	lili	narsis
l	/læb/	لب	lip	love
r	/rah/	راه	road	ray

Persian Consonants non-existent in English

Consonant	Persian	Example	Meaning	Phonetic Features
ʔ	ا پ ر	/ʔæbr/	cloud	Voiceless glottal stop
q	قلب	/qælb/	heart	Voiced uvular stop
x	خوب	/xub/	good	Voiceless uvular fricative

5. Data Analysis

In a diglossic situation "most linguistic items belong to one of the two non-overlapping sets" (Hudson, 1996). The differences between H and L are manifested in (1) grammar, (2) lexicon and (3) phonology. According to Dittmar (2000):

"1-L has fewer grammatical (morphological) categories and a reduced system of inflection; H has a greater grammatical (morphological) complexity.

2- H and L have, in the main, a complementary lexicon. It is a particular characteristic of the diglossic situation that pairs are used situation-specifically with the same meaning in the H variety and the L variety.

3- H and L share one single phonological system, in which the L phonology represents the basic system and the deviant characteristics of the H phonology from a subsystem or parasystem" (p. 120)

In the forthcoming sections, phonological, lexical and morpho-syntactic differences between MSP and CP will be introduced and analyzed.

5.1. Phonological Differences

The phonemic inventory of the two varieties is identical, however, some words may undergo certain alterations from one variety to the other one.

5.1.1. Vowel Change

	MSP	CP	Meaning
	/æ/	/e/	
1	/kærdæn/	/kerdæn/	Do, make
2	/gælaviz/	/gelaviz/	Grappling
3	/gæz/	/gez/	A sweet fppd
4	/næmaz/	/nemaz/	Prayer
5	/færar/	/ferar/	Esca[e
	/e/	/æ/	
6	/gerje/	/gærje/	Do make
7	/jek/	/jæk/	One
8	/hedije/	/hædije/	Gift
	/æ/	/o/	
9	/ketab-æm/	/ketab-om/	My book
	/æ/	/e/	

10	/ ketab-æt /	/ ketab-et /	Your (sing.) book
11	/ ketab-æf /	/ ketab-ef /	His/ her book

	MSP	CP	Meaning
	/an/	/un/	
12	/ ketab-eman /	/ ketab-omun /	our book
13	/ ketab-etan /	/ ketab-etun /	Your (PI) book
14	/ ketab-efan /	/ ketab-efun /	Their book
15	/dʒan/	/dʒun/	Soul, life
16	/soltan/	/soltun/	Monare
17	/dændan/	/dændun/	Tooth
18	/zendan/	/zendun/	Jail
19	/baran/	/barun/	rain
	/a:m/	/um/	
20	/hæmma:m/	/hæmum/	Bath
21	/tæma:m/	/tæmum/	all

5.1.2. Vowel Harmony

	MSP	CP	Meaning
22	/be-xor/	/bo-xor/	Eat
23	/be-kon/	/bo-kon/	Do
24	/be-riz/	/bi-riz/	Pour
25	/be-bin/	/bi-bin/	look

5.1.3. Vowel Deletion

	MSP	CP	Meaning
26	/dærædʒe/	/dærdʒe/	Degree
27	/mælafe/	/mælaf/	sheet

5.1.4. Consonant Deletion and Vowel Change (Syllable Reduction)

	MSP	CP	Meaning
28	/mi-xah-æm/	/mi-xam/	I want...
29	/mi-xah-i/	/mi-xoj/	You(sing) want....
30	/mi-xah-æd/	/mi-xad/	She/he wants
31	/mi-xah-im/	/mi-xoym/	we want
32	/mi-xah-ænd/	/mi-xan/	They want

5.1.5. Consonant Change

	/-d/	/-n/	
33	/mi-xah-id/	/mi-xoyn/	You (PI.) want....
34	/mi-xor-id/	/mi-xor-in/	You(PI.) eat.....

5.1.6. Cononant Deletion

	/-ha/	/-a/	
35	/gol-ha/	/gol-a/	Flowers
36	/zæn-ha/	/zæn-ha/	Women
	MSP	CP	Meaning
	/ah/	/a/	
37	/ʃah/	/ʃa/	b
38	/daneʃgah/	/daneʃga/	university
	/z/	/Ø/	
39	/ʔemruz/	/ʔemru/	Today
40	/diruz/	/diru/	yeasterday
	/t/	/Ø/	
41	/nist/	/ni(s)/	Not
42	/bist/	/bis/	Twenty
43	/ʃæst/	/mæs/	Sixty, thumb

44	/mæs/	/mæs/	Drunk
45	/dust/	/dus/	Friend
46	/pust/	/pus/	Skin
47	/mast/	/mas/	Yoghourt
48	/rast/	/ras/	Right
	/ʔ/	/Ø/	
49	/morræbbæʔ/	/morræbbæ/	Square
50	/defaʔ/	/defaʔ/	Defense
51	/jamʔ/	/jamʔ/	Addition
	/d/	/Ø/	
52	/mi-xor-æd	/mi-xor-e/	She/He eats....
53	/mi-xor-ænd/	/mi-xor-æn/	They eat.....

5.1.7. Methathesis

54	/kæsr/	/kærs/	Deduction
55	/ʔæks	/ʔæsk/	Photo
56	/kebrit/	/kerbit/	matches

5.2. Morpho-Syntactic Differences

5.2.1. Delition of Preposition /dær/(= in, at)

57	/(mæn) <u>dær</u> kelasæm/	/(mæn) kelasæm/	I am in the classroom
58	/ (ʔu) <u>dær</u> kanada zendegi mikonæd/	/ (ʔu) kanada zendegi mikone/	He in Canada life makes. He Canada life makes He lives in Canada

5.2.2. Definite Article (Zero Morpheme to /-u/)

59	/mærd/	/mærd-u/	The man
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5.2.3. Pro Drop

60	/ <u>mæn</u> daneʃdʒu hæst-æm/	/danesju hæst-æm/	(I) An a student
61	/ <u>to</u> daneʃdʒu hæst-i/	/danesju hæst-i/	(You) are a student.
62	/ <u>ʔu</u> daneʃdʒu hæst- Ø /	/danesju hæst- Ø /	(He/she) is a student.
63	/ <u>ma</u> daneʃdʒu hæst-im/	/danesju hæst-im/	(We) are student.
64	/ <u>foma</u> daneʃdʒu hæst-id/	/danesju hæst-id/	(You) are students.
65	/ <u>?anha</u> daneʃdʒu hæst-ænd/	/danesju hæst-ænd/	(They) are students.

5.2.4. (Flexible) Word Order

66	/ mæn be tehran ræftæm/	/ mæn ræftæm (be) tehran /	I went to Tehran. I to Tehran went I went (to) Tehran
67	/ ketab ra ruj-e miz gozaʃtæm/	/ ketab ra gozaʃtæm ru(j-e) miz /	book on table put-I Book Put-I on table I put the book on the desk
68	/ ki tu ?otaq-e /	/ tu ?otaq ki -je /	Who in room is In toom who is Who is in the room?

5.3. Lexical Differences

5.3.1. Different Words for the Same Concept

	MSP	CP	Meaning
69	kæbutær/	/kæftær/	Dove
70	/pæræstu/	/pirsuk/	Swallow(bird)
70	/ma:rm:ulæk/	/kælpok/	Iizard
72	/badbadæk/	/kaqæzæk/	Kite
73	/ badkonæk/	badbadæk/	Balloon

74	/mejdan/	/felke/	Square
75	/doʃærx/	/ʃærx/	Bike
76	/zobale	/ræʃt/	Garbage
77	/sib-zæmini/	/alu/	Patato
78	/susk/	/xæzuk/	Beetle
79	/dævænde/	/dovist/	Runner
80	/havapejma:/	/tæjjare/	Areoplane
81	/ʃekæm/	/kom/	Belly
82	/nærde-ban/	/sed/	;adder
83	/gusefænd/	/bærre/	sheep
84	/ʃoma:re/	/nomre/	Number
85	/murija:ne/	/riʃmiz/	termite

5.3.2. Borrowed Words

The lexicon of a language is said to be an open ended system. There are different strategies for adding new words to the lexical inventory of a language. Borrowing is the most familiar technique of adding words. No language variety is needless of borrowing. MSP and CP are not exceptions to the rule, though there are some differences. On the one hand, MSP borrows much fewer non-Persian words than CP. On the other hand, whereas CP borrows many words from MSP, the reverse is not the case. In diglossic situations, especially in the Persian Diglossia, the "low" variety borrows many words from the "high" variety, especially formal, official, academic, cultural and socio-political words. Some examples of borrowing are as follows. The borrowed words are underlined with the name of the source language underneath:

86	/dærva:ze-ban/	/goler/	Goalkeeper
87	/værzeʃga:h/	/estadiom/	Stadium
88	/hæmra:h/	/mobajl/	Cell phone
89	/xodrow/	/maʃin/	Car
90	/seda: væ sima:/	/radio televizion/	radio television
91	/karʃena:si/	/lisans/	Bachelor's degree
92	/pa:jan-na:me/	/tez/	thesis
93	/pa:ja:ne/	/terminal/	Terminal
94	/ja:ra:ne/	subside	Subside
95	/ra:ja:ne/	/kampiuter/	Computer

6. Conclusion

The data of the study manifest a good number of differences between Modern Standard Persian and Shirazi Colloquial Persian. They appear at the levels of phonology, morphology, lexicon and syntax. These differences, going hand in hand, make the two varieties totally different, to the extent that they are mutually unintelligible.

7. Suggestion for Further Studies

Diglossic relationship holds between the Standard Persian, on the one hand, and such other varieties of spoken Persian as Tehrani, Esfahani, Kermani, Yazdi, etc, on the other. It is advisable that similar studies on any of the said varieties be conducted. Furthermore, while this article studies the differences between MSP and CP synthetically, narrower analytic studies on the subject are recommended.

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