

Languages in and around Afghanistan

Resources on Language Policy Group

Notes for 12-13 December 2003

University of Pennsylvania
Pedagogical Materials Project
South Asia Language Resource Center
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Day 1: Friday, 12 December 2003

Sabohat Khalilova, University of South Dakota, “Language Policy in Uzbekistan and Uzbek Language Teaching Materials”

Before independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Russian was used for most education. After 1991, much was attempted to make Uzbek the National language, but not much really happened. Relations were developed with Turkey, and the question arose as to whether Uzbek should abandon the Cyrillic alphabet and change over to Latin or Turkic alphabet? Relations did change in 1994-1995, resulting in conversion to Latin alphabet (tentative completion scheduled for 2004) As for teaching materials for Uzbek, there are problems with existing materials. Materials available in Russian, not Uzbek, and there are in Russian, not Uzbek. As for pedagogy, especially teaching Uzbek to English speakers, Russian materials are grammar based; Uzbek-English dictionaries are not very good, and existing materials are really only good for native speakers.

As for the study of foreign languages in Uzbekistan, Russian is now considered a foreign language, but the demand for learning English is increasing. But there are no good Uzbek manuals, and one must learn Russian to access materials to learn English.

In the Question and Answer discussion, it was revealed that the Peace Corps beginning to teach Uzbek, since only teaching Russian had been problematic. Uzbek and Russian Peace Corps manuals are in fact quite good. Secondly, the motivations for adopting Turkic script were political. The schools are funded by Turkey, students think Turkish teachers know more than Uzbek teachers, and this is all done at boarding schools, which are all very rigorous (corporal punishment is normal), but successful. Some people fear that the training is promoting extremist (Islamist) attitudes. As for the status of Tajik and other minority languages in Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan has two Tajik schools that include Uzbek but also teach Tajik.

**Dr. Lutz Rzehak, Bamberg University (Germany), Dept. for Iranian Studies
“Balochi in Afghanistan and Language Planning for the so-called National
Languages in the 1980’s”**

Dr. Rzehak began with an introduction to multilingualism, linguistic contact and language planning in the 1980’s. There were at that time 100,000 Baloch speakers in Afghanistan, 70% near Iran, this has probably changed. He then discussed the nature of Balochi dialects, noting that approximately 30 languages are spoken in Afghanistan. The genetic classifications were discussed, with an illustration from ‘Abdurrahmān Balōč’ (ca. 1983) which indicates 26 languages spoken. Dr. Rzehak argues all languages in Afghanistan have been in close contact for a long time, and many similar vocabularies exist, especially in politics, philosophy, technical professions and etc.

A common Afghan vocabulary exists for everyday topics: only found to a small extent. Border field—there is commonality in etiquette, religion, but only because there is little outside contact. In the area of communication, modern mass media, education, migrations and non-traditional professions are widely dominated by common vocabulary. Similarities (despite varying genetic origin of languages) exist between Balochi and other languages, copying Persian patterns since Persian has been held in high regard for a long time. However, there is little Pashto influence, but this is changing due to business (drug market).

Balochi as a written language. Pre-1978, there was no written Balochi, Dari was the official language. After the 1978 revolution, the Soviets restructured ethnic identity that had been outlawed from 1973-1978. In the 1980’s Russians influence language education and policy. After 1992, there is a return to the status of an almost unwritten language. As for development of an alphabet for Balochi, this is similar to other Afghan languages—a national alphabet exists, but not other foreign dialects of Balochi. In writing, the alphabet is also different because of limits on availability of symbols available in pre-computer printing facilities. And, the more political a publication, the stronger the Dari influence (examples from Weekly Sōb given).

In the question and answer discussion, the question of bilingualism with Brahui (Dravidian) was raised. Often it is the case with Balochi that Brahui spoken at home, but Balochi is spoken publicly. Alphabet that was developed in the 1970’s is of course based on Arabic alphabet. But no one knows it anymore except the person who created it. Some people think it should not be written at all, and there are problems that exist due to pedagogical difficulties (it was meant to be taught in school).

**Dr. Birgit Schlyter, Stockholm, Dept. of Oriental Studies,
“Changing Language Loyalties in Uzbekistan”**

In her introduction, Dr. Schlyter discussed the development of ethnic state languages in former Soviet republics. It is clear now that Islam is gaining presence after the end of

Soviet influence, and a kind of return of speakers to Uzbek (from Russian), which had been used more.

As for Russian in Uzbekistan, the usage of Russian may have been overestimated. Post-Soviet reforms and language status laws were discussed, pointing out that in 1990, Russian held a strong position as a cross cultural language; it was becoming a state language, but not everyone needs to know it now. Since the 1993, 1995 script laws, Russian and Cyrillic are no longer mandated. A transition to Latin alphabet is envisioned by September 2005 (see handout). Some Russian words likely to be retained (examples: magazine/□YPHAJI, and computer/ KOMPIBYOTEP, etc. but English is now also exerting an influence. As for Minority Languages, they are largely ignored in policies. The Koreans are supported by South Korea, the Arabs: (around city of Denau) are to some extent holding onto Arab identity—they speak ‘Arabic’-an Arab/Tajik language (with strong Tajik influence). There is a large Tajik region, with a large amount of bilingualism. Tajik students often learn Uzbek at University level, but it is different from the Uzbek learned at home.

Karakalpakstan (NW Uzbekistan) is a territory that occupies one-third of the geographical area of Uzbekistan. It is essentially independent within Uzbekistan. Karakalpaksts compose 1/3 of population in independent republic and 2% elsewhere. Originally they were herders on east coast of Aral Sea, met tsarist Russia in mid-18th century. Their language is closer to Kazakh than Uzbek, with a possible origin in the Siberian migrations in beginning of last millennium. They benefited from not being assimilated into Kazakhstan (language, culture and etc.) Now they are becoming more dependant on Uzbek central government; the use of a Latin alphabet was discussed (handout)

In the question and answer discussions, there was a question about the status of Russian, and whether the Russian language is available as a school subject. Dr. Schlyter feels that Russian will have a strong influence for a long time. Study of it is no longer obligatory, and an option between English and Russian now exists. But it is still spoken in business, though Uzbek is supposed to be used since 1989. As for the Arab community (which has probably been in the area since 7th century via Afghanistan), there are some enclaves of Arabic, but young people are losing their Arabic identity. According to Ethnologue, there is Uzbek-spoken and Tajik-spoken Arabic.

**Jan Mohammad, University of Arizona,
“Official Policy of Afghan Governments (Past and Present) Regarding the
Languages Spoken by Afghans”**

In his introduction, he indicated that Dari is the *official* language of Afghanistan, but that Pashto was introduced as an official language in the 1600’s. He then gave an account of the history of Dari and Pashto as official languages in the early-mid 20th century. In 1933, under the last king (who was then aged 17-18), his uncle devised language policies, and Pashto was made an official language in 1937.

But there were problems—there were few teachers, little teaching material. In 1945, Dari was restored as the official language, with a new language policy:

- (1) Dari and/or Pashto are taught depending upon percentage of native speakers in area
- (2) In 50/50 areas, equal education provided.

In 1964, a new constitution makes Pashto and Dari *National* languages; but Pashto is made the official language. Then in the late 20th century, there is outside influence and interest, and the study of Dari and Pashto began with the study of Afghanistan. Soviet influence begins in the late 1970's and continues into the early 1990's. Along with other policies, Soviet language policy was adopted, and *all* languages became official languages. Pashto and Dari were official languages of government, a Kabul language academy was created, but there were problems.

Most language policies were ineffectual during civil war, the Government only controlled ~25% of the country. In 1992, the post Soviet period, rebels control the country, and it is realigned linguistically. The national anthem changes from Pashto to Dari. The Taliban uses exclusively Pashto, especially in government. Now with the new Government (post Taliban) and constitution, Dari and Pashto are official languages, other languages are considered major languages, elementary education is to be taught in native languages, and in the government and university, Dari predominates. As for the mass media, previously, the media broadcast in Pashto and Dari equally, and minority languages may have some time allotted. Currently, Dari is allotted 70% of the time, and Pashto 30%, and others are limited in broadcast time. As for television, it is limited to Kabul, most of country depends upon radio.

In this session questions were asked throughout, and molded the discussion itself. However, the exclusive use of Pashto in certain areas (especially in the southern villages) was discussed.

Day 2: Saturday, 13 December 2003

Dr. William Beeman, Brown University,

“Varieties in Flux: The State of Language policy in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.”

Introduction: Modern Persian appeared in the 9th-10th centuries in Samarkand, and the Samonid empire was seen as the pinnacle of the Persian language. They were patrons of great artworks, and the capital was not in current Tajikistan. The spread of the Persian language diversified as it spread, but is remarkably recognizable by current speakers, i.e. it has not changed radically. Persian classical poetry is commonly memorized throughout its sphere of influence. The basic language has been standardized. In Afghanistan, it is called Dari (from Dar, the language of the court). In Tajikistan it is called Tajik (people who are settled, not nomads)

Comments on Persian languages: Tajik, Dari, and etc. are a complex of similar languages- easy to learn; Aesthetics made it a root for poetry; vocabulary is huge,

with Arabic origins in many cases. Standard Persian, despite local constructions, most speakers understand standard Persian (not unlike Koranic Arabic, but much more commonly spoken) Formal speech, for example, as used at weddings, for many is often standard Persian.

In Tajikistan, Tajik and others, 80% Tajik speaking. Yagnogni speakers are concentrated in NW panhandle; region north of capital has a concentration of ~2000 (largest concentration) Yagnogni and other minority (low 1000's speakers) languages' names refer to geographical regions (Wakhi, Shuchni, and Yazgui Yam)

Tajik is spoken in areas of influence by minority language speakers. The Tajik alphabet has both old and new alphabets; Cyrillic is also used (ex: ДУСТ)

In Afghanistan: Tajikistan was a point of entry for foreigners in all recent conflicts As far as its language policy, Tajiks are not threatened by minority languages and do not dissuade their teaching. An English-Tajik-Russian dictionary available, but is hard to find. It is recommended that one buy Tajik language books where available. Books not being printed, but paper is too expensive. There would be an explosion of material if resources were available. There are many well-trained scholars, but they are aging.

Uzbekistan and Uzbek-Tajik relations were fractured under Stalinist regime. It is impossible to count the number of Tajik speakers in Uzbekistan (5% according to Uzbek government), possibly up to 50% but no one knows, or wants to do a census Uzbek-Tajik relations are 'nervous relations'. There are no international flights, busses; rail and automobile travel is limited, and the most practical access near Dushanbe is a long and arduous journey. Smuggling of people is possible. There has been a change in relations since the Soviet-era; travel was once frequent. Uzbeks fear that the presence of Tajiks will prompt an Islamic revolution. There is also the issue of Uzbek claiming ownership of Tajik words, which are bi-cultural in origin (Turkic/Persian).

Uzbek policies such as the closing of Tajik schools, is criticized on this basis. A knowledge of Tajik is still desired by many. Elimination of formal Tajik is creating problems of bridging gaps between people who speak 'street' Tajik and those who are formally educated.

The Uzbek alphabet: they are now switching from the Cyrillic to a Romanized alphabet because the Cyrillic script is out of favor due to distancing from Russia. The Arab influence is being avoided. So the question remains, whether to adopt Latin or Cyrillic: Tajik culture wanted, but not Islamic influences. Cyrillic was chosen though Russian is no longer in favor. The problem now is that little material is available in Tajik (Ministry of Education is bankrupt). Avoiding Arabized script (due to fear of Islamic influences) bars access to printing and to Persian texts printed in Iran.

In the question and answer period, the variations in Tajik discussed; dialects vary a lot, and younger native speakers complain about level of understanding.

**Dr. William Fierman, Indiana University,
“Language Policy in Kazakhstan: Challenges of Formulation and Implementation.”**

Introduction: The demographics of Kazakhstan are such that Kazakhs numbered 20% of population in 1962, 40% in 1982 and 50-60% in 2003. There has been a tremendous loss of Kazakh language—the cities are heavily Russian-speaking, both in ethnicity and language, except Qyzylorda. A Kazakh language law was passed in 1989. Kazakh was made the national language (the law did not anticipate end of USSR). This is an example of a confused policy: Russian: law of languages (pl.), while Kazakh is the law of language (sing.). After Independence, there was a 1995 constitution, and in 1997 a new language law, where Kazakh is the only state language. The question now is, what to do with Russian? Answer: it can be officially used, but Kazakh is official.

The present problem is whether to have a unified civic country or a national Kazakh state. Nationalistic attitudes may alienate Russian populations in the north; rural Kazakhs want Russian speaking ‘asphalt’ Kazakhs out of political power. In 1989, 80-90% of the population spoke Russian, and ca. 30% spoke Kazakh.

The resulting problems of implementation of a national language was discussed in the following terms: In education, in 1987, perhaps 1/3 of Kazakh children (more in cities) study Russian, but by 1992-93, only 20% do. There has been an increase in teaching of Kazakh, but quality is poor. There is poor allocation of teachers and texts. Vocabulary changes are not in older texts. University level changes in vocabulary are not standardized, prompting professionals to use other languages than Kazakh. Because of migrations, poorly educated, rural Kazakhs are moving into the cities. The Russians and Germans (formerly 6% of population) are leaving the country.

Media: Now, at least 50% of media broadcasts must now be in Kazakh. The commercialization with respect to Russian programming is increasing, so the solution is that much Kazakh broadcasting is done at night. In the government and among the intelligencia, the use of mandatory Kazakh often used only for introduction of presentations, after which the body of the presentation reverts to Russian as a ‘courtesy’ to Russian speakers. As far as getting rid of the Russian influences on the Kazakh language, proposals have been made to change Russian place and personal names. Some examples of dropping of the Russian influence are that the former capital, which was Alma-a-ata (from Latin), is now Almaty. The current capital is Akmola (Kazakh: white grave) changed to Tselinograd, then to Akmola and finally to Astana (Kazakh: capital).

**Dr. Robert Nichols, Richard Stockton College,
“Pashto: education policy and practice in the NWFP.”**

Introduction: Pashto has been language of government and schools in the NWFP since 1984. Formal language is used in classes grades 1-5; Urdu and Panjabi were formerly

used in this capacity; Pashto has always been the 3rd language. In education, the 1998 Census shows that 74% of NWFP population study in Pashto, grades 1-8. High school education chosen between language and sciences, but is all in Urdu. Some 10% of private education is in English language instruction, especially in technical schools. In Peshawar, there are a large number of religious schools. The largest are run by Taliban leadership. Most Madrasas are charity schools (80-90%).

Problems with Pashto in the 19th-20th century. In 1849, the British enter with Punjab administration, and push for Urdu to separate Pakistan from Afghanistan. Problems begin with translation in 1848. The British promote learning of Pashto. After World War I, Dari is the language of administration, but Pashto is the language of the royal house. Pashto is associated with subversive cultural ideas to the British who fear sections will break off to Afghanistan. Pashto is the official language from 1920's to 1969 in the independent state of Swat in northern Pakistan. From 1950's to recently, the state is suspicious of Pashtuns, but now this has changed as Pashtuns are more integrated. In the 1970's, Pashtuns push for Urdu as national language. Pashtunistan issue pops up recently in headlines, but considered to be of little threat.

Dr. Jeffery Diamond, Cornell University
“Historical perspectives about Urdu in colonial Punjab and the NWFP.”

The main administrative language of NWFP was Persian during Sikh rule; the Muhktub was attended to learn Persian by all seeking government jobs. Panjabi was spoken also, but not standardized (except in the east). Many Muslim poets wrote in Panjabi, which was spoken around Islamabad (Kashmir as well). In Panjabi, folklore was discussed as a way of understanding Panjabi; but Panjabi was never seen positively by the British, it was not for administration because it was seen as rude, crude and not standardized.

The first published dictionaries were for missionary efforts. The standardization of Panjabi was based on Sikh usage and dictionary (area with missionaries). Otherwise, it was seen as a dialect of Urdu, and its textual tradition was not seen as important. Moreover, Sikh rule was considered on the decline and therefore Panjabi was not important. As for Urdu (a.k.a. Hindustani) in 1881, 3% of population speaks Urdu. Urdu was seen as more appropriate than Panjabi, but it was of course heavily Persianized. Urdu was again seen as important with the decline of Sikh rule.

In the question and answer discussion, the work of David Lelyveld (William Patterson University) was recommended for further background. Between the conflict of Persian and Panjabi, Urdu emerged as the Lingua Franca of Northern India. John Platts, editor of the Urdu Dictionary (considered best available), which was designed for colonial officials specifically. Panjabi was seen as the language of passion and the gutter.

**Dr. Alice Davidson, University of Iowa,
“UNESCO Pakistan program on Library Resources in Kabul University.”**

Introduction: Because of the destruction of the Kabul University Library, it is now an issue to restock, and book donations are being sought. The University of Texas and others have sent books. Sending books via UNECO has proven successful (so much so that librarians are having problems cataloguing). The alternatives, and the subject itself were discussed (as well as shipping costs: use slow US Post Office bulk mail). There is also the issue of Schools/Libraries/Books for a civil society, and whether trying to balance food or books is a viable alternative. Problems between the real vs. ideal situation.

Dr. Davidson recommends sending all books for the university to:

Mr. Sadiq Waddid
Chief Librarian
c/o Mr. Martin Hadlow
UNESCO Islamabad
PO Box 2034
44000 Islamabad
PAKISTAN

Boxes should be well sealed with a packing list and letter explaining specifically the purpose of the contents, that they are not for resale and the final destination: Muhammad Sadiq Waddid, Librarian, Kabul University, Kabul, Afghanistan. These letters should be packed in an envelope attached to the outside of the box.

Requested Books: Literature, History, Technology, Science, Medicine, Languages, Media/Journalism, and Reference.

**Dr. Pardis Minuchehr, University of Pennsylvania,
“Globalizing Persian: Iranian Media and language policy.”**

Introduction: Iranian language policy is state policy. The first Farhangestan (mid 1970's), to 'purify' the Persian language had the problem of finding Persian names to supplant 1000 year old Arabic names. In the 1960's there was an attempt to replace more foreign words, though not very effective. At the Third Supreme Council of the Iranian Revolution, 1991, it was emphasized that a cultural revolution standardizes curriculum of all fields of study. A third Farhangestan was supported by the Council. They studied Persian grammar and orthography, studied other languages and dialects, media, manuscripts, and so forth. Two Tajiks were included in this.

Iranians' four television channels and radio programming were mentioned. Programming is also broadcast in Dari (from ½ hour before 11 September 2001, to 11 hours recently). The problem with new words is that 70% of Iranians are under 30 years old, so

neologisms and creation of new words is frequent. Outside influences: the Voice of America (American radio broadcast) exists in Persian and English; Iranian expatriates have satellite stations in Los Angeles, and programming is not supported by national government. The effect on language was mentioned, and there is not much help from expatriates except in Los Angeles. Also in Persian there are broadcasts by BBC, the Deutsche Welle, Radio France, and Radio Liberty. Iqbal, the Academy of Persian in Lahore, Pakistan is also an influence, and there are internet influences. There are no statistics, but internet cafes are popular, many Iranians have web pages (including government officials), and this is an anonymous, popular place for dissent, and dating.

Conclusion of the Resources on Language Policy Group

Facilitated by Dr. Harold Schiffman, University of Pennsylvania

In the final wrap-up session, the major question was what to do next.

The following points were enumerated:

1. Recommend that a more inclusive program be organized that included Russian scholars and other ex-Soviet researchers.
 - (1) Include organizations of significance to this topic
 - (2) Treatment of minority languages to be discussed
2. Themes discussed under this point:
 - (a) Creating technical lexicons to prevent switches to English
 - (b) Executive summary of what is going on in these linguistic areas
 - (c) Publication compiled from conference and place in a comprehensive form on the internet
 - (d) Argument for several smaller papers, rather than longer ones because of the tenuous nature of many facts discussed (since the statement of fact can be a statement of position)
3. Presenters and others asked to contribute summaries of 1-3 pages each. This will be linked by Dr. Harold Schiffman.
 - 3 page summaries are requested of all presenters
 - Will be put on the SALRC website
 - Possible future publication of some or all papers