Persian as a Heritage Language: Attitudes, Practices, and Resources

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Presentation Topics

• Goals and Objectives
• Heritage language and heritage language speaker definition
The Main Purpose

Objective:
To review research, resources, attitudes, and practices for language teaching and learning of heritage learners of Persian in the U.S.

Goal:
To help create enlightened programs for students who bring knowledge of Persian language as their home language into the classroom.
Definition

- **Heritage language**: The family language used and heard in restricted environments; (Rothman, 2007)

- **Heritage Speaker**: A person who grew up hearing (and possibly speaking) a language, who can understand and perhaps speak it to some degree, but who now feels more at home in another, more dominant language (Valdes 2011)
## Language lost

- **Bilinguals of 4th Generation** (Valdes 2000)
- **Aa**-Heritage Language
- **Bb**-English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Ab</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Generation</td>
<td>HL Monolingual</td>
<td>Incipient Bilinguals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd / 3rd Generation</td>
<td>HL Dominant</td>
<td>English Dominant</td>
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<tr>
<td>4th Generation</td>
<td>English Dominant</td>
<td>English Monolingual</td>
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</tbody>
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So What?

Consequences for heritage learners
• loss of ancestral language
• weaker connections with their community and culture and even their immediate family
• loss of self-esteem

Consequences for Society and government
• loss of these heritage language learners
• lack of potential sources of language professionals needed for trade, diplomacy, security and defence (Christian, 2008, p.257)
What is Missing?

- Support from Community, Family, Government
- Empirical research on Persian Heritage Speakers almost nonexistent
Review of Research

- Cagri, Jackson, and Megerdoomian, (2007) Tested the linguistic competence of Persian heritage speakers.
  - Compared Persian native speakers, heritage language speakers, and Persian as a second language speakers.
Review of Research

- Results indicated that heritage speakers:
  - HT
  - Have knowledge of phonetic and sound patterns that L2 speakers might never obtain.
  - Are faster than L2 almost completely across the board.
  - Their response time is very close to Native Speakers in some cases.
  - Have advantages over L2 learners in selective grammatical domains.
- L2
  - L2 have advantages over HS in features explicitly taught in classroom and/or not frequent in conversational discourse e.g., Arabic roots, sub categorization.
Review of Research

• ILHAN M. CAGRI

• Faculty Research Associate, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, University of Maryland, College Park, MD As lead researcher for Persian in Linguistic Correlates of Proficiency Project,

• Publication:
• Language change and language maintenance in Persian
• developed Persian Language Battery, a comprehensive computer-delivered test composed of 50 tasks targeting discreet linguistic features to assess the linguistic competency of learners of Persian. Project included pilot testing and analyzing results
Review of Research

• Dissertation:
• Farah Ramazanzadeh University of Phoenix, Associate Faculty, New Jersey

"Unveiling the veiled and veiling the unveiled: revealing the underlying linguistic ideologies and their impact on Persian Language loss and maintenance among second-generation Iranian-American"
• 2010, using qualitative methodology, this study explored issues and challenges of developing and maintaining Persian/Farsi as a heritage language for second-generation Iranian-Americans.

• Interviewed 22 second-generation Iranian-American college students residing in New York regarding language lost, historical views, language ideologies, identity.
Language Maintenance and the Role of the Family amongst Immigrant Groups in the United States: Persian speaking Baha’is
Review of Research

• Dr. Anousha Sedigi: The first full-time Persian faculty member at PSU (Canada)
Current Iranian Communities

- Anywhere in the U.S.
- Mostly well-integrated into American society
- Little or no language barriers
- Highly value education
- Highly educated: 2nd highest educated group
- Very attached to preserving language and culture
- Close ties within the community
- Some may regularly visit Iran
Current Iranian Students

- Mostly born in the U.S.
- Close to American culture
- Mostly familiar with some aspects of the Iranian culture, such as food, celebrations, etc.
- Many may not know some deeper aspects of the Iranian culture, such as history, literature, etc.
- May or may not have been to Iran
Iranians: Heritage or Second Language Learners?

Very mixed learners:

• Some comprehend and can communicate orally
• Some may comprehend but cannot communicate
• Some neither comprehend nor communicate orally
• Maryam Salahshoor, PhD student, George Mason University
• Interviewed 5 Persian speaking mothers to obtain information regarding their experiences, attitudes, practices, and challenges in teaching verbal and written Farsi to their children.
My Research

- demographic information
- home-language use
- previous language learning experience
- motivation and attitudes toward language learning
- life experiences
- age and the place that they have started Persian language learning
- needs and concerns
- Goal
- proficiency levels
My Research

- Oral Language
  - Literacy
  - Third Language

- Immigrant
  - Culture
  - Resources
  - Future Need
  - Farsi School

- Parent's Role
  - Extended Family
  - Socialization
  - Farsi as a Second Language

- Personal Feelings
  - Visiting Iran
  - Home vs. Public

- Farsi School
  - Parent's Role
  - Extended Family
  - Socialization
  - Farsi as a Second Language

- Individual
- Family
- Society
- Language
Merci

• PERSIAN STARTalk Summer Program at SDSU

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9N-BcI4dUE
References


