Loving but not living the vernacular
A glimpse of Mazandarani-Farsi linguistic culture in northern Iran

Seyyed-Abdolhamid Mirhosseini
Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran

Traditional top-down conceptions of language policy and planning have been questioned by recent perspectives that advocate more localized accounts of language policy concerns in real-life social contexts. Schiffman’s (1996) conception of linguistic culture is one of these bottom-up approaches, which focuses on covert language policies. This study investigates some aspects of such covert orientations of speakers of the Mazandarani language towards their local vernacular in the bilingual Mazandarani–Farsi context of northern Iran. It specifically attempts to explore the current linguistic culture atmosphere in terms of assumptions, prejudices, attitudes, and stereotypes with regard to Mazandarani. These aspects of public belief are particularly investigated as referring to language use in ‘social situations’, ‘professional contexts’, ‘education’, and ‘media’. A group of 106 participants responded to a questionnaire that was aimed at eliciting their views on these linguistic culture domains as well as their ‘attitude’ towards Mazandarani. The study indicates that although the participants show very positive emotional attitudes towards their local language, their actual linguistic culture appears to be strongly in favor of the official national language, i.e. Farsi. Some concerns are raised as to the implications of such a loving-but-not-living linguistic culture for a more realistic understanding of language policy and planning.

Keywords: linguistic culture, language attitudes, Mazandarani, Iranian languages

Language policy and planning concerns have conceptually developed into a rich theoretical area in recent years (Kaplan et al., 2013; Ricento, 2006, 2013; Shoba & Chimbutane, 2013; Spolsky, 2004). However, empirical studies dealing with real-life situations and actual language contexts are far from the expected richness and diversity (Johnson, 2009; Ricento, 2000). Scholars of language policy and planning seem to be more inclined towards theoretical and abstract discussions mainly
presupposing a top-down conception of the issue. Nonetheless, there are alternative views which have started to question what Pennycook (2006) calls ‘the grand narratives’ in language policy discussions. Such views, advocating local context considerations of micro issues in language situations, call for more data driven explorations of language in real-life social situations (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008).

Schiffman’s (2006) distinction between overt and covert language policies is among such perspectives that highlight the vitality of a localized bottom-up understanding of language policy concerns. He argues that issues in language policy are not always overtly observable and require a deep consideration of orientations in practice. In Schiffman’s own words, “it is important to view language policy as not only the explicit, written, overt, de jure, official, and “top-down” decision-making about language, but also the implicit, unwritten, covert, de facto, grassroots, and unofficial ideas and assumptions, which influence the outcomes of policy-making just as emphatically and definitively as the more explicit decisions” (2006, p. 112). In light of this, the present study deals with some aspects of covert and bottom up orientations of speakers of a local Iranian variety (Mazandarani) towards their own language. Triggered by my own personal linguistic background of speaking Mazandarani as my mother tongue, the study focuses on the speakers’ localized and covert conceptions with regard to their own language in a bilingual Mazandarani–Farsi context in the northern Iranian province of Mazandaran.

Theoretical background

Linguistic culture

Language policy is mainly a ‘social construct’, and, therefore, primarily rests on the overall complex structure of belief systems, attitudes, and perceptions that might be captured by the umbrella term of linguistic culture (Schiffman, 1996, 2002, 2006). In Schiffman’s view, general orientations of people towards their language-life are at the deepest level rooted in these fundamental beliefs and understandings: “language policy is ultimately grounded in linguistic culture” (Schiffman, 1996, p. 5). As the broadness of the term culture indicates, linguistic culture can be shaped by the totality of all aspects of people’s community life that bear relationships with their language.

More specifically, Schiffman (1996) defines language policy as “the set of behaviours, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language and religio-historical circumstances associated with a particular language” (p. 5). In a later account of the concept, he attempts to show the vast and diverse nature of the concept of linguistic culture
by including in his definition “all the other cultural “baggage” that speakers bring to their dealings with language from their culture” (Schiffman, 2006, p. 112). This conception of linguistic culture deals with covert and implicit aspects of language policy and planning rather than overt and explicit ones.

Similar accounts have also been presented under other titles. Conceptions similar to Schiffman’s ‘cultural baggage’ have alternatively been defined as ‘language ideology’ (Mikahara & Schieffelin, 2007; Siegel, 2006). Also with similar concerns for more contextualized micro aspects of language policy and planning, Spolsky (2004, 2009) presented a three dimensional conception of language policy comprising ‘language practices’, ‘language beliefs’, and ‘language management’. Partly overlapping with the concept of linguistic culture defined above, his language beliefs concerns “what people think should be done”, and language practices refers to “what people actually do” in their language lives (Spolsky, 2004, p. 14).

Linguistic culture issues are partially addressed by language attitude studies. However, linguistic culture seems to be much more complex than attitudinal considerations which predominantly tend to deal with affective and emotional orientations. While there is a scarcity of studies on linguistic culture as a comprehensive overarching concept, there appears to be abundant research on different aspects of language attitude (Bresnahan et al., 2002; Garrett, 2010; Giles & Billings, 2004). The use of the term linguistic culture is rare and Schiffman seems to be the only major scholar using the term, but language attitude studies are relatively widespread with studies conducted in a variety of contexts and through a variety of approaches (e.g., Adegbija, 1994, 2000; Al-Zidjaly, 2008; Dailey et al., 2005; Saah, 1986; Sellner, 2003).

The exploration of linguistic culture may contribute to different areas of inquiry in language studies. It may not be easily possible to reverse shifts in linguistic culture (Fishman, 1991, 2013) but an understanding of linguistic culture can be potentially illuminating for issues in language shift as well as language diversity studies (Bernard, 1992; Fishman, 2013). Understanding linguistic culture may also crucially contribute to language endangerment studies and to issues of language maintenance and revitalization (Grenoble, 2013; Hale, 1998; Tsunoda, 2005). Understanding local context language situations, micro issues in language policies, and subtle bottom-up power relations in real contexts of language life of bilingual communities (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008; Pennycook, 2006) may be more far reaching implications of understanding linguistic culture in local settings.

Mazandarani
Mazandarani is a Caspian variety of the northwestern branch of the Iranian languages. Spoken in the northern Iranian province of Mazandaran from the central
south towards southeastern coasts of Caspian Sea, it is mutually unintelligible to speakers of the adjacent languages of Farsi, Gilkai, and Turkmen. Although closely related to Western Persian, the language is not strongly influenced by Arabic and Turkish that have crucially affected the languages of the region.

According to the official 2011 census in Iran, the population of Mazandaran is 3,074,000 (Markaz-e Amar-e Iran, 2011). Considering the fact that residents of the western areas of the province speak either Farsi or a mixed dialect of Gilaki and Mazandarani, and the fact that scattered populations of speakers of Turkish, Kurdish, and Farsi also live in the province, as well as with the consideration of the Mazandarani speaking population in the neighboring Golestan province, speakers of Mazandarani can be estimated around 2.5–3 million.

There are a few old Mazandarani texts in Arabic script (Borjian, 2006) but the language is currently an exclusively oral language and all written communication in the Mazandarani-speaking areas take place in the official national language of Farsi. Formal education and religious ceremonies are mainly performed in Farsi, and, therefore, Mazandarani is almost confined to spoken communication mostly in rural agricultural communities.

A number of studies have been conducted on formal and functional aspects of Mazandarani: Aghagolzadeh (1993) investigated the properties of verb phrase in the language; Amouzadeh (2003) explored the diglossic situation of Mazandarani; Maryam Borjian (2005) discussed the socio-political context of Mazandarani in a dominantly Farsi-speaking national context; and Fakhr-Rouhani studied pragmatic aspects of possession in Mazandarani (Fakhr-Rouhani, 2005). Habib Borjian has (co-)authored relatively extensive accounts of different aspects of Mazandarani language and its old scripts in several venues (e.g., Borjian, 2004, 2006, 2008; Borjian & Borjian, 2007). Moreover, other studies on Mazandarani were carried out by several researchers including Nawata (1984), Shokri, (1995, 2006), and Yoshie (1998).

Nonetheless, Mazandarani is not a widely studied language. Toft (2002), in a review of Garry and Rubino (2001), finds it justifiable not to include languages like Mazandarani in a description of world’s languages because of ‘the sheer lack of information available on them’. In the more specific area of language policy and planning concerns, there has been no important account of Mazandarani. Therefore, investigations of any aspect of the status of the language, including the linguistic culture situation, would be a needed initial attempt at illuminating different aspects of the use of the vernacular in the bilingual context of Mazandaran.
The study

In this research I have attempted to explore aspects of the current linguistic culture situation in the bilingual context of the bilingual Mazandarani–Farsi speaking community. The study is founded on Schiffman’s (1996) perspective of linguistic culture and examines some pivotal aspects of his proposed conception in this particular context of research. As already noted, Schiffman specifies “behaviours, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes” (1996, p. 5), as well as ideas about language and religious and historical aspects of any language as the main elements of linguistic culture. Taking this conception as a point of departure, the present research specifically explores ‘the current linguistic culture atmosphere in terms of assumptions, prejudices, attitudes, and stereotypes with regard to Mazandarani in the bilingual Mazandarani-Farsi context of northern Iran’. These aspects of public beliefs are particularly investigated focusing on language use in ‘social situations’, ‘professional contexts’, ‘education’, and ‘media’. Public ‘attitude’ towards Mazandarani is also tackled by the investigation.

Participants

A total number of 106 participants living in Babol (a major town in central Mazandaran) and its surrounding rural areas were the informants in this research. An important consideration in distributing the questionnaires was the maximum diversity of respondents that were practically accessible. Therefore, the 106 participants who finally returned the questionnaires were a relatively diverse group including fairly balanced numbers of people in terms of gender, age, education, and place of residence (town or village). The following is the number of different groups of participants who responded to the questionnaire:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>Age ≤ 35, N = 66</th>
<th>Age &gt; 35, N = 40 (Age ≤ 25, N = 26</th>
<th>Age ≥ 40, N = 31 25 &lt; Age &gt; 40, N = 49)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td>Male, N = 60</td>
<td>Female, N = 46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence:</td>
<td>Urban, N = 64</td>
<td>Rural, N = 42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education:</td>
<td>Edu. ≤ Associate Degree, N = 55</td>
<td>Edu. ≥ Bachelor’s Degree, N = 51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data collection

Based on Schiffman’s definition referred to above, five areas were selected as the ones that were expected to depict cultural belief systems with regard to the overall use of the Mazanadaranai language in the life of its speakers: social situations (including religious ceremonies and everyday conversations), professional settings, educational contexts, media, and public attitude (mainly reflecting
affective tendencies). A questionnaire was developed to elicit participants’ views on Mazandarani regarding these five linguistic culture domains.

The introductory section of the questionnaire asked about participants’ personal information including their age, gender, place of residence, education, and their dominant home language. Following the introductory section, there were five sections each containing five questionnaire items. The first five items in the section on perspectives about the use of Mazandarani in social situations asked participants about the language which they found more suitably used in religious ceremonies, festivals and mourning, everyday conversations in urban areas, everyday conversations in rural areas, and interactions for educational and economic progress and prosperity.

In the second set of items, participants were asked about their preferred language of use in the professional settings related to farmers, workers, government employees, engineers, and medical doctors. The third set of questions, focusing on the language in educational settings, asked about participants’ preferred language for text books, instruction, exams, teacher–student interactions, and student–student interactions in schools. The fourth set of questions, concerning the media, asked about the preferred language in different types of local television and radio programs: news, science and education programs, comic programs, talk shows, and programs related to rural life.

Finally, the questionnaire included a set of questions aimed at eliciting participants’ attitudes towards the Mazandarani language. The items in this section were not related to any particular context of language use but generally targeted participants’ affective and emotional orientations. The five items in this section of the questionnaire asked the respondents to express their agreement or disagreement with the following statements: new generations should learn Mazandarani; Mazandarani poems and songs are beautiful and lovely; Mazandarani should be respected as the language of traditions; Mazandarani protects the local identity of the people of Mazandaran; the use of Mazandarani in appropriate situations is sweet and beautiful.

The questionnaire was not developed as a standardized data collection instrument but rather as a general instrument of collecting qualitative data that would depict broad trends of tendencies of the participants with regard to the issue under investigation. Accordingly, the set of data collected by the application of this instrument was not to be analyzed as quantifiable data through statistical procedures. The general orientations of the research participants illustrated by the questionnaire results are elaborated upon and discussed in the next section.
Findings and discussion

The questionnaires returned from the respondents were examined one by one in search of each individual participant’s perspectives with regard to the five areas of social situations, professional contexts, educational settings, media, and attitude. Participants’ responses to the five items in each of the five sections were collectively considered to judge their overall perspective as favoring either Farsi or Mazandarani or, alternatively, as not showing any clear orientation. The decisions in each section, however, could not be always logically based on a mere majority criterion out of the five items.

In the section on the preferred language in social situations, the choice of any of the two languages as the preferred language of use in religious ceremonies, festivals and mornings, daily interactions in urban areas, and interactions for economic and educational progress were counted as being in favor of that language. Nonetheless, the choice of any language as the favored one for daily interactions in rural areas was counted as in favor of the other language since association with rural life is generally considered as an indication of lack of prestige in the cultural context of concern. The respondents’ preference for either Farsi or Mazandarani was determined on this basis but, a few cases were considered as showing no clear preference with regard to the preferred language in social situations; for example, the one that selected Farsi for religious ceremonies, festivals, and urban daily communication but Mazandarani for rural daily communication as well as for economic and educational progress.

In the section on professional settings, engineering and medicine were considered prestigious professions, farming and manual working as non-prestigious ones and government office jobs as midway between the two. On this basis, the two positions of favoring Farsi or Mazandarani were determined along with showing no clear preference. The items in the section on education were judged based on the majority of choices out of five. In this section, the few cases showing three to two ratios of choices were considered as showing no clear preference; and four to one majority was interpreted to be in favor of one of the two sides.

In the section on the preferred language of media, comedies and programs dealing with rural life were considered as showing the less prestigious choices and news and science programs were associated with higher level of prestige. The preferences were determined on this basis and the few choices that, for instance, selected Mazandarani for science programs and news as well as for comedies and rural programs were coded as showing no clear preference. The final section targeting attitudinal preferences were based on majority criterion and the small number of respondents who selected a three to two majority out of the five items were coded as showing no clear preference.
Overall preferences

An overview of the overall results of the questionnaires illustrates a clear preference for Farsi in all of the five domains of social situations, professional contexts, education, media, and affective attitude. Out of these five, however, the two areas of language use in educational settings and attitudes towards the Mazandarani language are particularly prominent. As shown in Table 1, the participants’ responses to the five questionnaire items related to their preferred language for education elucidates an almost unanimous belief in Farsi as the preferred language of different school activities. A further area of undisputed preferred choice of language, as depicted in Table 1, is the participants’ attitude towards Mazandarani. Indicating their agreement with the ideas of beauty, sweetness, and respectability of Mazandarani; expressing their belief in the need of new generations for acquaintance with it; and viewing it as shaping the identity of its speakers, almost all of the participants showed their positive affective attitude towards Mazandarani as their local language.

Table 1. Overall preferences (N = 106)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Society</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>75 (71%)</td>
<td>65 (61%)</td>
<td>103 (97%)</td>
<td>64 (60%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mazandarani</td>
<td>16 (15%)</td>
<td>23 (22%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>23 (22%)</td>
<td>99 (93%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NCP*</td>
<td>15 (14%)</td>
<td>18 (17%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>19 (18%)</td>
<td>7 (7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* NCP in this table and the following graph and tables stands for No Clear Preference

Therefore, the two domains of language use in education and research participants’ attitudes do not appear to need any further analysis as to the differences in orientations of different groups of participants. Participants of all age groups, both genders, all educational levels, and different places of residence seem to unanimously agree that at schools the major educational activities should be in Farsi. Moreover, although it may sound ironic and paradoxical, all these different participant groups seem to have the same positive feelings and emotional attitudes towards Mazandarani.

As illustrated in Figure 1, language use in the three remaining domains of social situations, professional settings, and media programs are not as undisputed. Although Table 1 shows a clear preference for Farsi in these domains, the percentage of preferences, that is, 71, 61, and 60, respectively, shows that there might be differences in the preferences of different groups in terms of age, gender, education, and place of residence as to the degree of inclination towards one language of use over another in these particular domains. Therefore, in the following sections
the differences in preferences in these domains are subjected to further scrutiny based on the participants’ age, gender, education, and place of residence.

Figure 1. Overall preferences

**Age**

To gain an idea of possible differences among different age groups as to the preferred language of use in the three domains of social situations, professional contexts, and media, two age groups were considered. The first group comprised participants aged 35 and below and the second group included participants aged above 35. As Table 2 shows, both groups preferred Farsi as the language of use in all the three domains. In the younger group 67, 65 and 62 percent of the participants preferred Farsi in the domains of social situations, professional settings, and media respectively. In the older group the respective percentages appeared to be 80, 52, and 55.

### Table 2. Preferences of different age groups (Age ≤ 35, N = 66 * Age > 35, N = 40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Society</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age ≤ 35</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>43 (65%)</td>
<td>44 (67%)</td>
<td>41 (62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mazandarani</td>
<td>10 (15%)</td>
<td>12 (18%)</td>
<td>12 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>13 (20%)</td>
<td>10 (15%)</td>
<td>13 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age &gt; 35</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>32 (80%)</td>
<td>21 (52%)</td>
<td>22 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mazandarani</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
<td>11 (28%)</td>
<td>11 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>8 (20%)</td>
<td>7 (17%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the group of older participants appeared to be slightly more inclined towards Mazandarani as their preferred language in professional settings and media programs, they expressed an unexpectedly high preference for Farsi in social situations. Overall, the differences among the two age groups do not appear very
considerable. The participants of all ages seem to be generally in favor of Farsi as the more prestigious and preferred language in social situations, professional contexts, and local media.

To check for a possibility of differences among more distant age groups, the participants were divided into three age groups of 25 and younger, between 25 and 40, and 40 and older. These three groups comprised 26, 49, and 31 participants respectively. The views of the participants aged 25 and younger were compared with the participants aged 40 and older. The rather surprising outcome was that even the beliefs of these two distant age groups were not much different. These two age groups showed almost the same distance in their ways of thinking about Mazandarani as the two groups of below and above 35 years of age. The gap between these two groups, that are otherwise different in many characteristics, appeared not to be very important.

**Gender**

The questionnaires were responded to by 60 male and 46 female participants. As indicated by Table 3, the preference of male participants for Farsi in social situations, professional contexts, and media was 67, 65, and 65 percent respectively. The female participants showed an expectedly higher level of preference for Farsi as the language of use in social situations. As for the professional settings and media programs, although the female respondents appeared to be in favor of Mazandarani more than the male participants, the overall inclination towards Farsi was too important to be overshadowed by the small difference between male and female participants of the research. Therefore, despite the slight differences, people of both genders seemed to be equally showing a linguistic culture that obviously favored Farsi over the local language in all the three types of settings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>40 (67%)</td>
<td>39 (65%)</td>
<td>39 (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mazandarani</td>
<td>9 (15%)</td>
<td>11 (18%)</td>
<td>11 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>11 (18%)</td>
<td>10 (17%)</td>
<td>10 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>35 (76%)</td>
<td>26 (57%)</td>
<td>25 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mazandarani</td>
<td>7 (15%)</td>
<td>12 (26%)</td>
<td>12 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
<td>8 (17%)</td>
<td>9 (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Residence**

Possible differences among the participants residing in urban and rural areas were also considered. Out of the 106 respondents to the questionnaires, 64 people stated that their place of residence was a town and 42 of them lived in villages. As Table 4 shows, 66, 66, and 62 percent of the participants from urban areas favored Farsi as the language of social situations, professional activities, and media programs, respectively. Like the case of the slight differences between different age and gender groups, in their views on language use in social situations, participants living in villages had a special perspective with regard to language use in social situations. Strangely, 79 percent of them favored Farsi in such situations.

As for the issue of language use in professional settings and in media, 55 percent of the participants preferred Farsi. Therefore, comparing these two groups of participants, more villagers preferred Farsi in social situations and more people living in towns preferred the use of Farsi in professional contexts and media. However, like almost all the other categories presented above, the overall tendency for Farsi as the preferred language in all the three settings clearly overshadows the small differences between the perspectives of people living in towns and those living in villages.

**Table 4. Preferences of different residential groups (Town, N = 64 * Village, N = 42)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>42 (66%)</td>
<td>42 (66%)</td>
<td>40 (62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mazandarani</td>
<td>10 (15%)</td>
<td>12 (19%)</td>
<td>12 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>12 (19%)</td>
<td>10 (15%)</td>
<td>12 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>33 (79%)</td>
<td>23 (55%)</td>
<td>23 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mazandarani</td>
<td>6 (14%)</td>
<td>11 (26%)</td>
<td>11 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
<td>8 (19%)</td>
<td>8 (19%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Education**

Finally the bulk of data was examined in search of possible differences in preferences of people with different levels of education. The 106 participants were divided into two groups. The first group included respondents with an educational background up to (and including) an Associate Degree and the second group comprised respondents with a Bachelor’s Degree or upper levels of education. As shown in Table 5, language use in social situation is distinct from the other two domains. However, the differences are again too small to allow for any interpretation that observes a difference between the two education-based categories as to their preferences in any of the three domains of linguistic culture.
Table 5. Preferences of different educational groups (Edu. ≤ AD, N = 55 * Edu. ≥ BA, N = 51)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edu. ≤ AD*</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>37 (67%)</td>
<td>35 (64%)</td>
<td>35 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mazandarani</td>
<td>8 (15%)</td>
<td>10 (18%)</td>
<td>11 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>10 (18%)</td>
<td>10 (18%)</td>
<td>9 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edu. ≥ BA**</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>38 (74%)</td>
<td>30 (59%)</td>
<td>29 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mazandarani</td>
<td>8 (16%)</td>
<td>13 (25%)</td>
<td>12 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>5 (10%)</td>
<td>8 (16%)</td>
<td>10 (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Associate Degree; ** Bachelor’s Degree

Conclusion

Back to the general research problem that triggered the study, the results presented above may be viewed in light of the notion of linguistic culture. To relate the analytical discussions presented above to this notion, I repeat Schiffman’s conception of linguistic culture quoted earlier in this article: “the set of behaviours, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language and religio-historical circumstances associated with a particular language” (1996, p. 5).

The participants in this study seem to show emotionally very positive orientations towards their local language in terms of viewing it as loveable and relating it to their identity. However, that is as far as their positive attitude goes. Their assumptions, prejudices, beliefs, and ways of thinking about language as readable from their responses to the questionnaire seem to be all but in favor of a full embrace of Farsi as the dominant language of use in almost all areas of social life. This is particularly noticeable with regard to the participants’ perspectives about language use in the domain of education.

Scholars affiliated with different theoretical standpoints including postmodernism and critical theory tend to question traditional top-down views of language policy which mainly configured as primitive perspectives of language planning (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008; Pennycook, 2006; Tollefson, 2006). The main argument in such alternative assumptions is that language policy concerns are to be viewed from a bottom-up perspective that considers real-life language situations as part of the society. Based on such an orientation that seems to be reflected in Schiffman’s conception of linguistic culture, the real policy of language is what the speakers of the language believe, practice, and live in their everyday life. Such a conception of language policy is further explicated by Spolsky’s (2004, 2009) triple subcategories of language policy, that is, language beliefs, language practices, and language management.
In the absence of coherently stated national language policies in Iran it would not be easy to test official top-down policies against the linguistic culture depicted in this study. However, one may generally raise doubts about the success of the broadly stated policy orientations of preserving the cultural and linguistic diversity of the country, as one of the concerns of institutions like The Academy of Persian Language and Literature (Sadeghi, 2001; Davari Ardakani & Ahmadipour, 2009).

Moreover, considering the paradox of apparent positive affective and emotional attitudes towards Mazandarani put next to the strong belief in Farsi as the functional language in almost all domains of social life, the local language seems to be in real danger of quick erosion within the life span of a couple of generations. Mainstream understandings of language endangerment are predominantly influenced by the issue of the number of the speakers of a particular language and languages like Mazandarani with millions of speakers are not normally perceived of as endangered varieties. However, as the study shows even such a language may be in danger because of the covert linguistic cultural atmosphere that dominates the bilingual communities where the language exists.

The outcome of the study seems to be alarming enough. However, probing the deep rooted assumptions, perspectives, prejudices, and covert language beliefs (Schiffman, 2006; Spolsky, 2004) and understanding the underlying language life of Mazandarani needs more in-depth and qualitative studies of aspects of linguistic culture (Canagarajah, 2006). In-depth interviews and ethnographic participation, for instance, should be used to tackle the real concerns of people in bilingual settings like Mazandaran, as to the true perspectives, perceptions, and perhaps pains that they live with in their language lives.

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علاقه به گویش محلی در عین بی اعتیاد به آن در میان زنده‌گ: نگاهی به فرهنگ زبانی مازندرانی-فارسی در شمال ایران

مقاومت ستی مبنی بر نگاه بالا به یکینتی در زمینه سیاست‌گذاری و برنامه‌ریزی زبانی توسط دیدگاه‌های جدیدتر به

چالش کشیده شده است و وضعیت زبانی خاص و مسائل واقعی زندگی اجتماعی هر منطقه در این زمینه مورد توجه قرار

گرفته است. مفهوم "فرهنگ زبانی" که توسط کیفیتی (1996) محور شبده است، می‌تواند یکی از این دیدگاه‌های بنا به

لنگی با استفاده از سیاست‌های زبانی به‌عنوان متمرکز است. تحقیق حاضر در بخش بررسی برداشت این اجتهاد گرایه‌ای به

در رفتن گویش‌های مازندرانی نسبت به گوشه زبانی محلی خود در محیط دو زبانی مازندرانی-فارسی در شمال ایران می‌پردازد

و قضای فعلی فرهنگ زبانی از نظر ذهنیت‌ها، اولات، گزارش‌ها و قابلیت‌های نگرشی نسبت به مازندرانی از مورد نگاه

می‌دهد. بررسی این مسائل مشخصاً با مزیت بر کاربرد زبان در "موقعيت‌های اجتماعی خاص"، "مَجِّه‌ی‌های اجتماعی"، "آموزش و

پرورش" و "رسانه" انجام می‌شود. 106 شرکت کننده در پژوهش به نقطه‌بندی ای در خصوص این چهار گنجینه فرهنگ زبانی و نیز

در باید با نظر احسان، خوی، زبان زبانی پاسخ داده‌است که نتایج بررسی داده‌های حاصل از این پرسشنامه نشانگر این

است که با وجود احساس مثبت در این علاقه به این زبان محلی، فرهنگ زبانی واقعی موجود به شدت

متمایل به زبان رسمی فارسی است. در بخش پایانی مقاله رفتارهای حاضر در زمینه پام‌داده‌ای این فرهنگ زبانی متشکل از

علاقه به گویش محلی در عین بی اعتیاد به آن در میان زنده‌گ مطرح می‌شود و نشان پذیری در درک واقع‌گرایانه‌تر

سیاست‌گذاری و برنامه‌ریزی زبانی در چنین شرایط‌یک مورد بحث قرار می‌گیرد.

Resumo

Ami sed ne vivi la indigenan: Jeti rigardon al la lingvokulturo Mazendarani-Farsi en norda Irano

Tradiciaj desupraj konceptoj de lingva politiko kaj lingva planado renkontas pridemandoj en lastatempaj perspektivoj, kiuj rekondemas pli surlokoj prezenton de lingvopolitikaj demandoj en la sociaj kuntekstoj de reala vivo. La koncepto de Schiffman (1996) de lingva kulturo kon-

sistigas unu el tiuj desubaj aliroj, fokusante je kașataj lingvaj politikoj. La nuna studio esploras

ĉe parolantoj de la lingvo Mazarandarani kelkajn aspektojn de tiuj kașataj orientigoj rilate ilian

lukan indigenan lingvon en la nord-irana dulingva kunteksto Mazendarani-Farsi. Specife, ĝi

celas esplori la aktualan lingvokulturan etoson surbase de antaŭuspozoj, antaŭajgoj, starpunktoj kaj stereo tipoj koncerno Mazendaraneni. Tiuj aspektoj de publika kredado estas parte esplorat


Grupo de 106 partoprenantoj respondis al enketo kiu celis kapti ilian vidpuntokojn pri tiuj lingvokultura terenoj, kiel ankaŭ ilian ‘starpunkt’ rilate al Mazendarani. La studio montras, ke, kvankam la partoprenantoj montras tre pozitajn emociajn vidpuntokojn pri sia loka lingvo, ilia efektiva lingva kulturo sainas forte favori la oficialan nacian lingvon, nome la farsian. La aŭtora

levas kelkajn demandojn pri la implici de la amas-sed-ne-viva lingvokulturo, cele al pli realisma kompreno de lingvopolitiko kaj –planado.
Author’s address

Seyyed-Abdolhamid Mirhosseini
Assistant Professor
Department of English Language and Literature
Faculty of Literature, Languages and History
Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran
mirhosseini@alzahra.ac.ir, samirhosseini@yahoo.com

About the author

Seyyed-Abdolhamid Mirhosseini is an assistant professor at Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran. His research areas include critical language education, qualitative research methodology, and critical studies of language in society, and his writing has appeared in various venues including Language, Culture and Curriculum; Applied Linguistics; Medical Anthropology Quarterly; Teaching in Higher Education; Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education; and Critical Inquiry in Language Studies.