The Influence of Sociological Factors on Usage of Mazandarani Language among the Youth

Hossein Ghasemi[*][1]
Seyed Ahmad Jafari Kelarijani[1]
Mohsen Jafarzadeh[1]
Ali Ebrahimi[1]

Abstract

In this research, it has been attempted to determine the social role of two languages, Persian and Mazandarani languages in Qaemshahr and their influence on young people on the use of these linguistic species. In societies with more than one language, we see the collision of languages in various forms. In other words, some consequences of this collision of language cause the loss of the importance of local language and dialects. This loosing of the importance is much influenced development of various industrial organizations in recent years. Technology and communication has led to the influx of native speakers into official and authentic languages. This is an important factor in undermining the status of local languages and a threat to their survival. Mazandarani is one of the regional languages in our country, and its application has been reducing in years to come. The purpose of this research is to study the position and situation of Persian language and its application among youth in Qaemshahr, Iran. This town is an industrial city, and with industrial development, youth's employment in various industries, education, and urbanization are the vital factors in use of Persian language in urban areas and in different situations. In general, it must be clarified/noted the education media is emphasizing on Persian in technology and engineering. The grasp of language is more in lower age groups than older people, and among women is more than men and among urban people is more than rural people. In general, the research findings indicate the erosion and gradual deterioration of the Mazandarani dialect in different areas of the region is increasing.

Keywords: Language usage, Language change, Persian language, Mazandarani dialect.

1[*].Department of Sociology, Qaemshahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qaemshahr, Iran, hossein_gh53@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

Since late nineteenth century, the attention of some linguists focused on the social nature of language and the role of social factors in linguistic studies, the basic question was raised whether linguistic studies should be conducted without concerning non-native speakers, or with some relations with them. As the answer given by linguists, we can divide them into two groups. The first group, such as Hermann Pal, Henry Suite, Leonard Bloomfield, Andrea Martine, Nicolae Troubtskoy and Noam Chomsky, has considered language as an independent military and do not pay much attention to non-linguistic factors in linguistic research (Modaresi, 1989, p. 42).

This group of linguists knew little about the role of social factors in linguistic studies and their impact on in-language fabrication. Some of them like Ferdinand de Saussure, Bloomfield and Chomsky, exclude anything other than the abstract construction of language (Pooyandeh, 2000, p. 10). Saussure's emphasis was on describing linguistic construction rather than addressing linguistic history, although linguistics in the twentieth century was distinguished from previous studies, attention to the form and language of language, regardless of social and cultural factors, continued in studying language and yet the dominant trend was in linguistic studies. Saussure believes that "the real issue of linguistics is the language that is considered by itself and for itself" (ibid.).

Linguists such as Chomsky also consider language as a mental force, thus neglecting the influence of social and cultural fabrics in making language. They see the existence of linguistic variations in linguistic action. Hence, these linguistic variations are far from the scope of the description of linguistics.

The growing recognition of the relationship between language and society, especially from the second half of the twentieth century (since the 1960s) and subsequent studies and examinations led to the emergence of a new branch of linguistics called "sociology of language."

2. Research design

Some have found that Persian language learning has become common place among the children of the Qaemshahr families, and this is even the case in middle and lower-middle families and among the tribes living in villages and mountainous regions. As a result, the language of communication among individuals in families has changed from Mazandarani to Persian. Therefore, the Persian language gradually enters into the areas that once considered the absolute territory of the Mazandarani dialect, and, with the continuation of this process, it is fearful that Mazandarani should

always be forgotten. With this description, I decided to identify the position of the Mazandarani dialect, while examining the extent of the use of this dialect in the urban area; we would also give the reader's view on it. The influence of society on the use of language in young people today is one of the issues that linguists consider more than the past to predict the future of languages.

According to the UN, young people are between the ages of 15 and 24, but it should be noted that the age range differs from the point of view of the experts of the executive agencies associated with youth affairs.

For example, according to the Ministry of Education, the age range is between 29 and 15 years with four subgroups of 18 to 15 years old (second adolescence) , 22 to 19 years (on the brink of youth) , 26-23 years (first period of youth), 30 to 25 years old. The interior ministry considers the age of 18 to 35 as a young age range. Finally, it can be said that the age difference between the average age of puberty (i.e., 15 years old) to the average age of employment and marriage (i.e., 29 years old) is basis of the young age range in Iran.

3. Fundamental Concepts
3.1. Bilingual person

A bilingual person is usually a person who speaks two languages and uses the two languages in communication. Some linguists as Hagen and Taylor believe that only knowing two languages or conversations in two languages, dialects or even two styles of speech are enough for bilingual and others like Bloomfield consider dominance and native-like in two languages as the standard of bilingualism (Modaresi, 1989: 28 and 33).

3.2. First language and second language

The first language is the language that the child first learns it and is also called native language or mother tongue (Crystal, 1992: 138). It goes without saying that in some language communities, first language may not be the mother tongue. The second language is a language that is not a mother tongue and is only used to meet the communication need, such as the language of the host country for immigrants or the official language of a country for speakers of minority languages (344).

3.3. Changing and preserving language

A change of language means a situation in which a community drops its language in favor of another language and sometimes refers to as the death of a language. The

term language death is especially used when the members of that linguistic community are the only speakers of that language in the world (Fosuld, 1948: 213). The opposite of language death is a phenomenon of language preservation, and it is a time when members of a linguistic community decide to continue to use their native language.

3.4. Linguistic Attitude

The attitude is a systematic and codified way of thinking, feeling and reacting to individuals, groups, social issues or any other event in a person's environment (Lambert & Lambert, 1964: 50). Therefore, the basic components of attitude are thinking, belief, feeling and willingness to react. Fosuld (1986: 148). Thus, linguistic attitudes are the feelings of individuals in relation to their mother tongue or other languages, which can be positive or negative (Kristal, 1992, 214).

The accent mainly refers to the pronounced differences of the linguistic types (Chambers and Tradgill, 1994: 5). Foramkin and Radman (1988) indicate Accent is sometimes referred to as a language whose distinction is in some phonological or phonological features ... Accent may be social or geographical ... Klebsi (1991) also defines the dialect as the accent which is a transformed face of a language and can be understood by other spokesmen of that language.

3.5. Species

Among the discussed terms, the species has a more neutral and general concept and is generally used for "every language" (Tradgil, 1974, 17 and Modersi, 1989, 132). This term may refer to an accent or specific dialect such as English American, religious, literary, formal, interlacing, scientific (Crystal, 1992, 409).

3.6. Situations

Situations are list of limited events that occur in a culture. Situations can match the type of speech. Argyl and Fournemann called the situation as a kind of social encounter with which members of a cultural community are familiar (Jahangiri, 1999, 188).

3.7. Usage

The use of language is investigated according to factors such as location, situation, audience and subject matter. Family, school, street and avenue, offices, religion, arts and entertainments are considered the autonomous areas.

4. Research methodology

This research is a descriptive and analytical field study in which, in addition to analyzing the data and describing the existing facts, studies the effect of some social factors as independent variables on the application of Mazandarani dialects in different areas of Qaemshahr city as an associated variable.

The selected research groups were male and female students of the 3rd grade of Secondary School, high school and Pre-university (age group of 15-18 years old) and age groups of 30-40 and over 50 years old in Qaemshahr city and 20 rural areas in this city. Selection of age groups between 30 and 40 years and over 50 years old as control groups along with the age group of 15 to 18 years, should be used to determine the validity of the results of the study.

In urban and rural communities in each age group, on average of 42 people (totally 504 people) were selected to complete an equal questionnaire of both sexes. However, due to the lack of questionnaires, the sample group was reduced to 445 of which 231 people were from urban and 214 people were from villages.

Out of three tools namely questionnaire, interview and observation, two tools; the questionnaire and observation were used for collecting information in field research in this study.

In this research, the Fisherman's proposed field analysis method has been used and the questionnaire has been modelled on the basis of Gul's research (1979). Meanwhile, Zolfaghari (1997), Bashirinezhad (2000) and Mashayekh's questionnaires (2002) have also been used.

This method investigates the use of language with respect to their location, situation, audience, and the subject of conversation which form a domain. Families, schools, streets and avenues, offices, religions, arts and crafts can be considered as independent areas which are thought to be differently in choosing and using the language in each of them.

It seems that language usage categories, as mother tongue and the level of fluency in one language must be distinct and independent, since the language used by individuals in different situations may not necessarily be his or her mother tongue or the language that he has more control over it.

The choice and application of a language from two or more languages is primarily influenced by the linguistic attitudes of individuals, and the introduction of any linguistic change is the formation of a negative attitude toward the native language among speakers. Studying the linguistic attitudes of speakers versus their mother tongue can provide information that can be judged about the probable situation of the

language in the future. In this study, a questionnaire and direct observation method were used (Razmjoo & Sahragard, 2006). Linguistic studies and, consequently, social studies of language, are not well-known in our country in the past, and few studies relating to social-language studies mainly focus on issues such as linguistic borrowing, linguistic types, spoken differences among age groups and sex, the changing of style, the clash of languages, the relationship between language and nationality, and so on.

On the other hand, dialect studies are often limited to describing the vocabulary, structure, or vocabulary of Iranian dialects, and in general, much attention has not been paid to the social status of dialects and local languages and the issue of maintaining or changing them.

There is no comprehensive and complete research on the social status of the dialects and local languages of Iran, and only recent cases of scattered research have been done on some of these languages and dialects which we will look at here in a glance.

5. Findings

According to the situation in Qaemshahr schools as well as the answers of the questioners, language of communication between teachers and students in the school environment, both in the classroom and in the school yard, is only Persian language. In order to understand the language of communication between a teacher and a student outside the school district, subjects were asked which language on the street of the city they used with their teachers. 82.4% of the people speak Persian with their teachers on the street. 51.6% of the respondents speak Persian to their neighbors.

The same people use more Farsi in a more formal position and with a different especially anonymous audience. For example, 72.9% of these people speak Persian with unidentified shopkeeper in the center of city, and 91.7% of them said they would do it in Persian if they wanted to ask an address in the city to a young person. The same people, if they want to ask to an unidentified elderly person, use less Persian (45.1%). Meanwhile, 72.7% of them indicate they speak Persian with a taxi driver or bus. The rate of Persian usage in dealing with anonymous young people and adolescents (91.7% and 93.6% respectively) in comparison with the rate of Persian application in dealing with an anonymous (45.1%) indicates that also pay attention to their age. Meanwhile, this indicates that Persian speakers are mostly young and low age people, and, with the fact that their young audience would prefer using Persian for the Persian credo and they consider to speak to him with this language.

In sum, the least use of Persian application relates to the elderly and neighbors (respectively 45.1% and 51.6%) and the highest rate of Persian application dealings with young people (91.7% and 93.6%).

Table 1. The extent of Persian and Mazandarani use in the urban area in the sample as a whole

x^2	Total	Mazandarani		Persian		Language / Audience
	Abundance	Percentage	Abundance	Percentage	Abundance	
184.14	438	17.6	77	82.4	361	Teacher of school
0.45	436	48.4	211	51.6	225	Neighbors and Neighbor hoods
91.74	436	27.1	118	72.9	318	Shop in downtown
300.97	433	8.3	36	91.7	397	Asking an address from an anonymous young person
4.12	428	54.9	235	45.1	193	Taxi driver or bus
89.62	433	27.3	118	72.7	315	Asking an address from a child or teenager
317.95	419	6.4	27	93.6	392	Asking an address from a child or teenager

As the age of the respondent is effective in Persian usage, the age of the users can also determine the extent to which Persian language is being used in this area. The data show that younger groups are more likely to use Persian language in urban areas. In order to determine the role and effect of the age factor in Persian usage, the extent of Persian usage in this area was studied in three age groups in relation to school teachers, the result of which is shown in Table 3 and Chart 1:
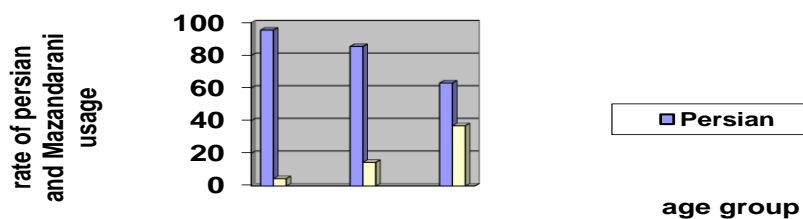
Figure 1. The extent of Persian usage in the urban area in the total population sampling in terms of age group in dealing with teachers

Table 2. The distribution table according to the level of significance and degree of freedom (derived from: Delavar, 2004: 347)

Degrees of freedom	Meaningful level	
1	0.05	0.01
2	3.84	6.63
3	5.99	9.21
4	7.81	11.34
	9.49	13.28
5	11.07	15.09
6	12.59	16.81
7	14.07	18.48
8	15.51	20.09
9	16.92	671
10	18.31	23.21

Table 3. The rate of Persian usage in the urban area

total	Mazandarani		Persian		Language
	Percentage	Abundance	Percentage	Abundance	Age
156	4.5	7	95.5	149	14-18
152	14.5	22	85.5	130	30-40
130	36.9	48	63.1	82	50 up

In order to verify the language used by travelers when traveling to other cities in the province of Mazandaran who experience different situations and contacts, the data in Table 4 shows this case.

Table 4. The rate of two languages usage when traveling to other cities of Mazandaran province in total population sampling

X^2	Total	Mazandarani	Persian	Language
167.11	433	82	351	Abundance
	100	18.9	81.1	Percent

The results show that 81.1% of the subjects speak anonymously with other provincial towns in Persian. Also, the squared score is greater than the square of Table 2 with the degree of freedom 1 and the significance level of 0.05. It shows that there is a significant difference between the rates of application of the two languages when traveling to other cities of Mazandaran province in the population sampling.

As mentioned in the previous sections, multiple factors such as location, location, audience, or even the subject matter can play the effective role in choosing and using a language in a bilingual community. In addition to these, some personal characteristics and social factors such as age, education, gender and urbanization can also be effective in choosing and using the language.

In the following sections, each of the factors and their effects on the selection and application of Persian and Mazandarani in different fields and the linguistic attitudes of the speakers are examined.

5.1. Age

In the urban domain, it can be seen that Persian usage in the first age group is more than two other groups. Others have a decisive role in the choice and use of language in a bilingual society. Studies have shown that, in a bilingual society, young people use more authentic language than adults in different domains.

The study of Persian application in the administrative field has shown that in almost all age groups of 14-18 years old, more than two other groups, use Persian language. The data show that there is an inverse relationship between the age of the people and the level of Persian application in the official and administrative areas such as the school. In other areas, the influence of age as an effective factor on the use of language is evident. For example, the use of Persian language in two age groups of 18 to 14 and 40 to 30 years old in the field of school is shown in Figure 2.
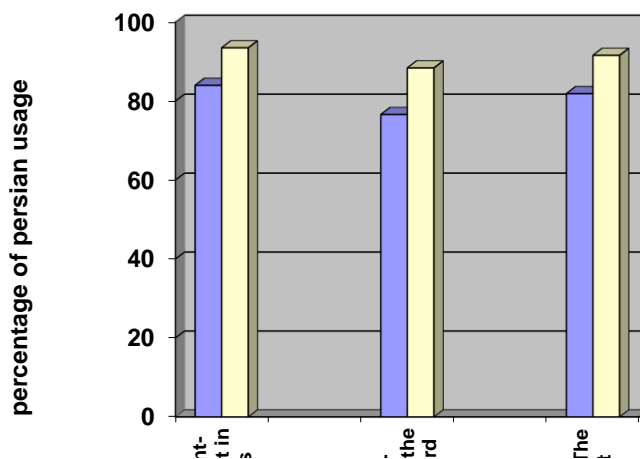
Figure 2. Comparison of Persian application in high school in the age group of 15-18 and 30-40 years

Data analysis shows that the age of individuals, in addition to language use, affects their attitudes towards two languages as well. For example, 66.6% of people over 50 years of age are considered necessary using Mazandarani by their children

5.2. Sex

To ensure this, we will examine the Persian application of 30-40 year old women and men in the administrative area. The results of this study are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Percentage and extent of Persian application in the administrative area based on gender and job audience in the age group of 30-40 years old

Total		Female		Male		Gender
Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	Audience
80.8	122	93.2	69	68.8	53	Office staff
92	138	95.5	70	88.3	68	Doctor
93.3	139	100	73	86.8	66	The secretary of the doctor

Farsi application between women and men in this group is very different in dealing with physician and secretary staff, but in dealing with a doctor, almost all men and women act in the same way.

In order to further analyze, we surveyed this issue among over 50-year-olds which their results are shown in Table 6:

Table 6. Percentage and extent of Persian usage in the administrative area in the age group of over 50 years by sex and occupation

Total		Women		Men		Gender Audience
Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	
63.1	82	61.3	38	64.7	44	Office staff
79.1	102	72.6	45	85.1	57	Doctor
72.1	93	59.7	37	83.6	56	The secretary of the doctor

It can be seen that, in all situations, Persian usage in men older than 50 is more than women in this group and this kind of relationship between Persian usage and gender is a meaningful relationship observed in the 14-18 years old group. What explanation can such a situation have? It seems that the level of literacy or education among men and women can help to justify this situation. In our society, in older age groups, literacy rate among women is lower than that of men, and education is one of the factors affecting Persian usage.

On the other hand, in older age groups, men are more socially involved in social communication than women. Gender can play an important role in their feelings and attitudes towards the two languages as well. Comparison of the attitude of two sex groups regarding the necessity of knowing the Mazandarani dialect is shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Attitude of respondents of Mazandarani language education based on gender

Total		None		Low		High		The need for learning
Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	
100	218	5.5	12	28.4	62	66.1	144	Man
100	220	11.8	26	39.1	86	49.1	108	Female
100	438	8.7	38	33.8	148	57.5	252	Total sample population

According to this table, the percentage of men who consider Mazandarani to be essential is more than the percentage of women who have such beliefs. In contrast, the percentage of women who consider little need to know Mazandarani or consider it unnecessary is far more than the percentage of men who think this way.

This data is in fact a reflection of the fact that there is a negative attitude towards Mazandarani language among women than men. To ensure this, we compare the attitudes of men and women in other areas. This time, we consider the views of the two sex groups about having a Mazandarani dialect during the Persian speaking. Table 8 shows that a few percent of men or women believe that having a Mazandarani dialect during a Persian speaking period will reduce their credibility.

Table 8. Attitudes of respondents to have Mazandarani dialect while speaking in Persian according to gender

Total		None		Low		High		Reducing Mazandarani accent of individual credentials Gender
Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	
100	219	51.1	112	33.3	73	15.3	33	Man
100	216	53.2	115	31.5	68	15.3	33	Female
100	435	52.2	227	32.4	141	15.4	67	Total sample population

In the school district, the rate of Persian use among women is higher than men and shows that women in the official setting like school use the official language (Persian language). In order to corroborate the claim that women use official language more than men, the extent of Persian and Mazandarani use in the urban area was also examined. Table 10 shows this case.

Table 10. Comparison of Persian and Mazandarani usage in the city domain in terms of gender

Total	Mazandarani		Persian		Language gender
	Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	
217	56.7	123	43.3	94	Mal
219	40.2	88	59.8	131	Female

Contrary to the authors' opinion, the percentage of women who believe that having Mazandarani dialect while speaking Persian reduces their worth is approximately equal to the percentage of men who think this. Studies show that there is no significant difference between men and women in having Mazandarani dialect during speaking Persian. In the following, the extent of Persian and Mazandarani use in an official field such as school was studied in the sample population as a whole, which is shown in Table 9.

**Table 9. Comparison of Persian and Mazandarani usage in school
in terms of gender**

Total	Female		Male		Language
	Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	gender
281	80.5	157	57.7	124	Persian
129	19.5	38	42.3	91	Mazandarani

It can be seen that in the urban area where people are faced with anonymous and obscure audiences, women use official language more than men. Studies done by language sociologists have shown that there are differences between the linguistic behavior of women and men, and as a result, part of the variations in the language goes back to the gender of its speakers. These studies have shown that, in general, women tend to use more authoritative and more authentic forms of language. For example, Wolfram's research in Detroit, USA, showed that the percentage of women in speech recognition is more than men (Modaresi, 1989, p. 164).

In this research, it was assumed that the difference between the two sexes is in the application of two languages, and women tend to use the official language (Persian language) in different situations and areas.

5.3. Education

Since in a given language community, higher education groups are more likely to use formal language, it is natural that in a bilingual community, people who are educated use an authentic language and likely more than the rest try to teach that language to their children. The above tables prove the validity of this claim.

5.4. Urbanization

Some linguists consider urbanization as one of the factors influencing the process of language change. This means that people living in urban areas tend to use a more authentic language in a bilingual community than those living in rural areas. With this description, we study the first language that children have learned in the two urban and rural communities in population sampling in Table 11.

Table 11. The rate of Persian and Mazandarani learning as the first language in the city and village

Total	Mazandarani		Persian		Language Address
	Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	
231	31.6	73	68.4	158	City
213	58.7	125	41.3	88	Village
444	44.6	198	55.4	246	Whole population

It is noteworthy that urbanists have more than doubled the number of villagers use Persian as the first language. Urbanization, like other social factors, can also be effective in shaping or changing the linguistic attitudes of individuals. A cross-sectional study of the answers of the questioners in the linguistic aspect indicates that there is a difference between the linguistic attitudes of urbanists and villagers. For example, these surveys show that 72.8 percent of urban students' parents encourage them to learn Persian. While 56.9% of the rural students' parents do the same. In the context of the need for Mazandarani learning, there is a significant difference between the attitudes of rural and urban people. For example, 53.7 percent of urban subjects consider Mazandarani to be very important and 61.6 percent of rural subjects have such a belief. The total sample population's attitude about the necessity of Mazandarani learning by location is shown in Table 12:

Table 12. Attitudes of respondents to the necessity of Mazandarani learning by place of urban and rural

Total		None		Low		High		Necessity of learning Mazandarani Address
Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	Percent	Abundance	
100	227	10.6	24	35.7	81	53.7	122	City
100	211	6.6	14	31.8	67	61.6	130	Village
100	438	8.7	38	33.8	148	57.5	252	Total sample of population

The percentage of urbanists who consider Mazandarani as essential is less than the percentage of villagers who have such a belief, and in contrast the percentage of urbanists who consider Mazandarani as a necessary or unnecessary issue is more than the same percentage among villagers. These percentages show that the negative attitude toward native language in urban areas is more than rural.

6. Conclusion

Studies show that Persian language is used in addition to Mazandarani language in most families of Qaemshahr and it is becoming more and more time consuming and its usage is increasing day by day. The continuation of this process means the retreat of the Mazandarani dialect from the family and Persian domination in this field. In a research conducted by Bashirnezhad (2000), among 14-18 year-olds children, in Amol city, 35% of people have learned Mazandarani as their first language, which in Qaemshahr is almost decreasing to less than one third.

Existing attitudes affect usage of language, in contrast to the use of a language in society which forms the attitudes of individuals towards language. Studies show that many Qaemshahri speakers do not believe in the capacity and importance of this language, and these are the negative attitudes that may exist in relation to a language.

Age, gender, urbanization and education are effective in the application of both languages in the administrative domain and linguistic attitudes of individuals. Data show that, in general, lower age groups tend to use Persian in different administrative areas and have the negative attitude towards Mazandarani accent. Women are more interested in Persian using and learning than men as well as urbanists more than rural people.

Based on the various classifications that have been presented by linguists about the risky phrases of languages, Grimes (2000) categorizes the Mazandarani accent into a dimming language group. According to Grimes, the speakers of this group of languages are adults and some of the children of the community and other children speak in another language. Ostler (2000) refers to one of the cross-sectional divisions among the available languages. Accordingly, Mazandarani accent can be considered as a high-risk language. In this categorization, a language is considered to be at risk, but its survival depends on the availability of condition and social support.

References

1. Alaei, B. (2004). *Socio-cultural buildings: Application of Persian language as a language of instruction in Turkish language areas*. Master thesis, Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages. Tehran: Allameh Tabatabari University.
2. Bashirnezhad, H. (2000). The study of the position and application of Persian in Amol city. Master thesis. Tehran: Allameh Tabatabaei University.
3. Ebrahimi, L. (2004). *The effect of dominant language on coding in two Kurdish/Farsi Languages*. Master thesis. Tehran: Allameh Tabatabaei University.
4. Modaresi, Y. (1989). *Income of language sociology*. Tehran: Institute of Cultural Studies and Research.

5. Pooyandeh, M. (2000). *An Introduction to social linguistics*. The task of Jean-Louis Kallow. Tehran: Naghsh Jahan.
6. Rezapour, A. (2000). *Verbalization and verbal aspects of cognitive application*. Master thesis, Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages. Tehran: Allameh Tabatabaei University.
7. Saffaei, E. (2004). *A study on the attitudes of bilingual students in Marand City*. Master thesis, Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages. Tehran: Allameh Tabatabaei University.
8. Vosough, K. (2006). *A study on the difference between generations in the application of Mazandarani word*s. Master thesis, Faculty of Literature, Languages and History. Tehran: Al-Zahra University.
9. Zolfaghari, S. (1997). *Survival or decline of Bakhtiari dialect*? Master thesis, Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages. Tehran: Allameh Tabatabaei University.