SOCIOPOLITICAL CHANGE AS A CAUSAL FACTOR OF LANGUAGE CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

Sociopolitical change can be considered as one of the causes of language change. The sociopolitical upheaval in Iran as a result of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 brought about, amongst other things, changes in the speech behavior of individuals. In general, after the revolution plain speech and linguistic forms marking solidarity gained popularity. This article studies the impact of revolution, as a causal factor of language change, on a micro aspect of Persian grammar, namely the pronominal system. The rationale for the choice of this topic is the widely-held view that the best place in the grammar of a language to find a correspondence between social structure and language is the pronominal system and forms of address.

A review of literature shows that sociolinguistic studies on Persian have generally been concerned with the linguistic and social situation in Iran before the Islamic Revolution of 1979. These studies have not accounted for changes in Persian as a result of the political upheaval in Iran. Only Jahangiri (1980) acknowledges the effect of revolution on the forms of address but without elaborating on the subject. The present study, however, attempts to describe the changes in the pronominal system of Persian as a result of the sociopolitical changes in this country. These changes will be presented along three deictic dimensions, namely (a) the speaker, (b) the addressee, and (c) other referrent(s). (For a detailed discussion of deixis, see Levinson 1989, Chapter 2).

It is worth mentioning that in many languages pronouns have traditionally been considered as substitutes for nouns. In Persian, however, it makes sense to consider some nouns as substitutes for pronouns. When persons designate themselves and others in terms of their roles in the speech event, the situation is deictic par exellence and pronouns are the primary modes of reference. However, such deictic designation may draw upon forms from other grammatical categories as well. Thus, the set of terms with which speakers may designate themselves

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includes not only personal pronouns, but also honorific terms such as/bānde/ 'slave'. Therefore, the expression **pronominal system** is employed here with this frame of reference and is meant to encompass both what are ordinarily understood as pronouns as well as their noun phrase substitutes.

Forms of Address for Self - Reference

An interesting feature of the Persian pronominal system is the polite forms of address. The politeness system consists of two sets of terms: (a) self-lowering and (b) other-raising. In other words, individuals in the Iranian society are expected, under normal circumstances, to show a certain degree of humbleness and modesty when they refer to themselves and to show respect for others when addressing them. This modesty and respect is expressed by means of different honorific terms of address available to individual speakers. One's choice of such terms is dependent upon factors such as age, social status, sex, setting, and the degree of intimacy or distance between participants in the speech event. (For more information on the politeness system in Persian, see Jahangiri 1980 Hillman 1981; and Beeman 1986).

As mentioned above, in a deictic situation in Iran, a speaker may refer to himself either by the pronoun /mān/ 'I' or by some pronoun substitutes which will be illustrated below. Before the revolution, there were specific terms of address which the speaker was expected to use in reference to self when talking to the former Shah of Iran and the members of the Royal family, aristocrats, and high-ranking officials. These included / γolam / 'slave', / γolam-e xanezad / home-born slave', / ǰan nesar / 'devoted' and / γolam-e ǰan nesar / 'devoted servant'. (For a complete list of such terms see the references above.) Obviously, after the revolution these forms lost their sociosemantic context and disappeared from the pronominal system of Persian.

However, although the Islamic Revolution has emphasized and promoted equality among members of the society, people still use self-lowering forms in their speech in order to show their modesty and humility. This is because self-abasement has traditionally been considered as a good and admirable virtue. Thus, when people talk to a superior in terms of age, status, and religion, they may use one of the following self-lowering forms of address when referring to themselves. Interestingly enough, even superiors sometimes refer to themselves by the polite forms in order to show their modesty. Thus, in the politeness system of Persian, power and status can be overruled by humility. The most common honorific terms used for self-reference are:

/ bānde / 'slave, servant'
/ hāqir / 'humble'
/ moxles / 'sincere'
/ čaker / 'devoted servant'

These terms are not used by females; however, /bānde/ has a feminine counterpart / kāniz / 'female slave' which is used by elderly women in rural and working - class communities. The use of these terms by children usually evokes ridicule. Thus, there are sex and age restrictions in the use of such terms.

The most common of all these terms is / bānde /. Its use as a polite and humble form is widespread in the speech of adult male members of the society regardless of their social status. It can also be observed in informal correspondence. (In formal correspondence, /inǰaneb/, which literally means 'this side' , is used).

Less widely used, / hāqir / and / moxles / have a stronger connotation of politeness and humility. There is no class distinction in the use of these two terms.

The least common of the above terms is /čaker/. It is usually associated with the speech of the working-class and uneducated people.

The use of the honorific terms illustrated above normally requires honorific verb phrases. Thus, as an example, when a power relationship exists, the polite form / bānde xedmāt ārz kārdām / 'slave [=I] made a request to you' is used instead of the neutral / mān goftām / 'I said'.

It needs to be pointed out that the use of the above self-lowering forms is optional and simply shows politeness and humility on the part of the speaker.

It must be added that in normal familiar situations where the participants have an intimate relationship and / or are equal in social status and age, the pronoun /mān/ 'I' is used. In other words, / mān / is neutral with respect to power relationship and is used in the

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free speech and informal writing of different social groups.

The plural counterpart of / mān / is / ma /, which is used in daily speech and informal writing. There is no age, sex, or social class distinction in the use of / ma /.

Unlike / mān /, / ma / does not have noun phrase substitutes under the present circumstances in Iran. However, before the revolution the polite form /bānde/ was pluralized (/bāndegan / - 'slaves') in collective oral or written requests and reports to the Royalty and high-ranking officials. In this case, the plural pronoun /ma/ 'we' was used before /bāndegan/.

Forms of Address for Reference to the Addressee

As was the case with the forms of address referring to the speaker, there was also a set of specific terms used exclusively when addressing members of the royal family and high-ranking officials (for a comprehensive account on these forms see Beeman 1986). With the overthrow of the monarchy, these forms of address also died away.

On the other hand, two new solidary forms of address emerged soon after the revolution. These were /bāradār/ 'brother' and /xahār/ 'sister'. Of course, these words were already in the Persian lexicon as kin terms; however, for a few years after the revolution they became widespread as new reciprocal forms of address in the society at large, and not only in the familial context. Other kin terms such as /pedār/ 'fathar' /madār/, 'mother" and /,āmu/, 'uncle' have traditionally been used to address strangers and no postrevolutionary innovation has been observed in this respect. However, the emergence of /bāradār/ and /xahār/ as solidary forms in the pronominal system of Persian was inspired by the egalitarian motive of the revolution and the Islamic ideology which maintains that all members of the society are equal, regardless of their race, color, sex, or socioeconomic status. These new forms of address owe their origin to young revolutionaries who first used them within their own groups as a sign of solidarity and then in their interaction with other people. It must be acknowledged that these two terms had a slow and gradual entrance into the pronominal system of Persian, but soon found their way into the system and spread well beyond group membership boundaries. However, nowadays there seems to be a decline in their use.

In the first years of the revolution, /bāradār/ and /xahār/ were also employed in official correspondence, in which case the formula was: /bāradār/ or /xahār/ + (professional title) + last name + official title," for example, /bāradār (doktor) Zare ryasāt-e mohtārām-e daneŝgah/ 'Brother (Doctor) Zare, honorable chancellor of the university'. However, nowadays there is a tendency to use titles, instead.

The popular use of /bāradār/ and /xahār/ in post-revolutionary Iran is similar to that of **comrade** in Russia and China after the sociopolitical changes in those countries. However, there is a major difference between the two, namely /bāradār/ and /xahār/ have both religious and revolutionary overtones, whereas **comrade** lacks any religious meaning whatsoever, owing to the communist ideology. For an account of the sociolinguistic change in China, see Fincher (1973); Fang and Heng (1983); and Scotton and Zhu Wanjin (1983); and for a comprehensive study of the linguistic aftermath of revolution in Russia, see Comrie and Stone (1978).

The terms /bāradār/ and /xahār/ are taken as neutral forms of address, particularly when they are used to address strangers, where the name of the addressee is not known to the speaker. Thus, the semantics of /bāradār/ and /xahār/ emphasizes solidarity and not necessarily intimacy. These two forms can be used in both formal and informal situations. It must be noted that of the two terms, /bāradār/ has greater frequency of occurrence.

It should be pointed out that in contexts where a superior-inferior relationship of some kind exists or when the speaker wishes to show more respect to the addressee out of politeness, an honorific term is used. The most common of such words is /ǰenab-e 'ali/ 'your excellency'. This is widely used by and to adult male members of the society regardless of their social status. The feminine equivalent of /ǰenab-e 'ali/ is /sārkar/, which is used in conjunction with the title /xanom/ 'Mrs'. However, there has been a decline in the use of /sārkar/ after the Islamic Revolution. Even before the revolution, it was mainly used by the educated upper and middle-class people.

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Another honorific term with reference to the addressee is /hāzrāt-e 'ali/ ' your excellency'. This word expresses greater respect than 'Jenab-e 'ali/ and is used when there is a higher degree of superiority in terms of age, rank, and reverence. Like /ǰenab-e, ali/, the use of /hāzrāt-e 'ali/ is restricted to the adult male members of the society and it is less common in the speech of the working - class people.

Finally, this section would not be complete without reference to the two existing pronouns for the second person singular, namely /to/ and /šoma/. In this respect Persian is similar to many other Indo-European languages (see Brown & Gilman 1960).

Generally speaking, /to/ is considered a rude form of address to non-intimates. Parents and teachers usually warn children and pupils against the use of this pronoun, particularly when talking to older people, and recommend the polite pronoun /šoma/. However, /to/ is used in the following settings:

1. In a very intimate relationship between close friends and colleagues, peers, classmates, and spouses. This use of /to/ is one of solidarity and intimacy.

2. In a familial situation, it is a common practice for parents to address their children by /to/ until they are about fifteen years of age. This downward use of /to/, however, varies according to parents' attitudes and educational background. Some educated middle-class parents have been observed to address their children by the polite pronoun /šoma/ right from the beginning, a practice which is generally found anomalous and sometimes ridiculous by lower social groups. It should be noted, however, that in the presence of people outside the immediate family there is a general tendency to address children, particularly after the age of puberty, by the polite form /šoma/.

Elder siblings also make use of the nonreciprocal /to/ when talking to their younger brothers and sisters.

3. One of the interesting uses of /to/ is in one's soliloquizing address to oneself, and also in one's prayers to God in solitude.

4. And finally, when one wishes to show disrespect to another person, /to/ is deliberately used in an insultive manner.

In situations other than these, the polite singular pronoun /šoma/ is used instead of the familiar /to/.

The pronoun /šoma/ can be used reciprocally, but it expresses more respect and distance than /to/. In other words, the reciprocal use of /to/ is normally associated with relative intimacy, whereas the reciprocal use of /šoma/ is associated with relative distance and formality. /šoma/ is frequently heard in the free speech of different social groups in their daily interactions. It is used between acquaintances, colleagues of equal rank, spouses in the presence of others, and strangers.

The upward use of /šoma/ is heard in the speech of children to their parents and elder brothers and sisters.

It should be noted that the new terms /bāradār/ and /xahār/ can cooccur with /šoma/ in a reciprocal way.

To illustrate the above range of terms of address in Persian with reference to the addressee, different ways of expressing the English sentence 'Are you coming?' are listed below with examples of situations in which they may occur.

Are you coming? (you = second person singular)

1. to - miai - ∅
   you [familiar] - coming
   (intimate friends)
2. šoma - mia-id
   you [polite] - coming - you
   (between acquaintances of equal rank)
3. bāradār - šoma - mia - id
   Brother - you [polite] - come - you
   (between colleagues in a reciprocal situation)
4. šoma - tāšrif miavār - id
   you [polite] - coming - you
   (between colleagues in presence of others to show more respect)
5. Jenab-e, ali/ sārkar - tāšrif - miavār - id
   your excellency - honourably bring - you
   (student to instructor)
6. haj - aqa
   Jenab - e ostad - tāšrif - miavār - ānd[4]
   aqa - ye rā,is
   etc.
   Mr. Pilgrim
   Excellency Professor honourably bring - they
   Mr. boss
   etc.
   (to someone of a high degree of superiority in terms of age, rank, education, and the like)

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FORMS OF ADDRESS WITH REFERENCE TO OTHERS

The impact of the Islamic Revolution on the forms of address with reference to others includes the eradication of the terms used to refer to the former Shah of Iran and members of the royal family and the introduction of new functions of the previously existing terms /emam/ 'spiritual leader', /aqa/ 'Sir', /bāradār/ 'brother', and /xahār/ 'sister'.

The term /emam/ has traditionally been used as a sacred title for the twelve imams in the Shi'ite sect of Islam; however, with reference to contemporary religious figures in Iran it is used exclusively for referring to the founder of the revolution. This term can be used either in isolation or with the title /hāzrāt/ 'excellency' preceding it.

/bāradār/ and /xahār/, as terms of address with reference to others, were initially used either alone or with the last name of the person referred to, and the use of official or professional titles such as / doktor/ 'doctor' and /mohāndes/ 'engineer' was avoided. However, after some high-ranking officials and religious figures emphasized the importance of advanced education and expertise in the society, these once discarded titles came into use again.

In recent years, there has been a growing tendency to use the previously widely used titles /aqa/ 'Mr.' and /xanom/ 'Mrs.' instead of /bāradār/ and /xahār/ when talking to or about such important figures as cabinet ministers, members of the parliament, and the like. This is quite evident from radio and television news broadcasts. In such cases, the T and LN of the person referred to are used after /aqa/ and /xanom/, which change to /aqa-ye/ and /xanom-e/ according to "ezafe-construction" in Persian, for example /aqa-ye doktor fazel/ 'Mr. Doctor Fazel'.[5]

The use of FN and TLN corresponds respectively to the use of /to/ and /šoma/ illustrated above. That is the reciprocal use of FN implies intimacy, the reciprocal use of TLN implies mutual respect and distance, and the non-reciprocal use of FN and TLN implies a difference in the social rank of the participants in the speech event.

The revolution has had no influence on the two so-called third person pronouns /u/ and /išan/ (familiar and polite reference, respectively). In a speech event, when speakers are equal in age and social status to the person referred to or with whom they have an intimate relationship, they use the familiar pronoun /u/. When referring to a superior they are expected to use the polite pronoun /išan/. Unlike /to/, /u/ is not considered rude, but at the same time its semantic load cannot express the kind of respect required when talking about a superior.

The use of /išan/ instead of /u/ is a feature of adult language and children are not expected or encouraged to make use of it.

CONCLUSION

In this article, the impact of the Islamic Revolution as a sociopolitical change in Iran on the forms of address in Persian was examined along three deictic dimensions: (a) the speaker, (b) the addressee, and (c) other referent(s). The immediate effect of the revolution on all three levels was the eradication of the terms of address associated with the royalty and aristocrats, and the introduction of some innovations in dimensions (b) and (c).

In general, it can be concluded that the revolution has promoted the use of reciprocal and solidary forms of address. However, honorific forms which are deep-rooted in the Iranian culture and have traditionally been an integrated part of the polite system of Persian have not been affected by the revolution. Thus, it seems that self-lowering and other-raising continue to be considered as good virtues in the daily interaction of the Iranian people.

With respect to social factors affecting the choice of pronouns and forms of address, the main influence of revolution seems to have been on status and authority so much so that an ordinary person could refer to high-ranking officials by the solidary form /bāradār/. On the other hand, the revolution has had a positive and promoting effect on factors such as age and religion. As far as the sex factor is concerned, the less frequent use of the solidary form of address /xahār/ as opposed to /bāradār/ seems to reflect the time - honored distance in interaction with females in the Iranian culture.

The linguistic aftermath of the Islamic Revolution of Iran will undoubtedly need further investigation.

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NOTES

1. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Dell Hymes for his invaluable comments on an earlier version of this article.
2. The English translation of the Persian terms given in this article obviously reflect the literal and not the actual meaning of the terms.
3. The infinitive /tašrif avordān/ 'honorably bring' is a polite form used intead of the neutral verb /amādān/ 'come'.
4. In this sentence, although the speaker is directly addressing the hearer, the third person plural verb endings are used as if the speaker were talking about a group of people. This is a feature of the politeness system of Persian (see note 3).
5. /ezafe/ is a morpheme used in Persian noun phrases: its meaning and grammatical function are similar to the English preposition **of**. For a detailed discussion of "ezafe - construction," see Windfuhr (1979).

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