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Extended Abstract

A comparative study of Galeshi and Godari

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Introduction

The narrow bank between the southern shore of the Caspian Sea and the northern slope of the Alborz Mountains hosts various dialects known as Caspian, many of which are increasingly subject to extinction due to globalization, modernization, and Persianization. Among Caspian native speakers, a people called Galesh live in the Caspian rainforests throughout the Talish Mountains in the west, to the heights of Mazandaran, and the rainforests of Golestan in the east. Galesh means cowherd, who are either inhabitants or semi-nomadic groups. A group of dialectologists have considered the Galeshi dialect as a jargon, while others have considered it as a regional or autonomous dialect. Besides the word Galesh, now another term is also used with the same meaning: Godâr or Gudâr, which means the protector of cows and refers to the villagers who are engaged in cattle breeding, in contrast to shepherds. The term's first syllable is composed of *gu/go*, which means cow, and the second part is composed of the affix *dâr*, which is usually used in combination with the names of objects and animals to make names of professions and occupations, such as *serêdâr* (housekeeper), *rahdâr* (road patrol), *maldâr* (rancher), and *baqdâr* (orchardist). The application of the term Godar in this meaning is apparently recent. Some researchers take Godari not as a socioeconomic group but as an ethnic group relative to Gypsies. If this is the case, they should be considered the same as Ghorbatis, Suzmanis, Kavlis, and Lulis.

Materials & Methods

In dialectology literature, the terms Galeshi and Godari are used interchangeably and are often considered to be homogeneous language varieties related to the Mazandarani or Gilaki language groups: Jahangiri (1973) introduced Godari as a different dialect from Mazandarani. Bazin et al. (1982) have recognized the cowherders of the eastern slopes of the Talish Mountain range as Galeshi-speaking. Ranjber and Radmard (2012:6) say "the Gilaki

language variety used by the Galesh, i.e. the cowherders of Gilan and Mazandaran mountains, is called the Galeshi dialect." Shokri (2005) named the dialect of the herdsmen of Gilan and Mazandaran foothills as Galeshi. Borjian and Borjian (2008) use the word Galesh to refer to herdsmen who are cattle herders. Nasri-Ashrafi (2002) and Kia (2010) mentioned the Godari dialect near Behshahr. Shokri et al. (2013) have described Galeshi as a dialect variety of Mazandarani common among the cowherds of the Alborz Mountains. Nejati (2012) and Rostami Rigcheshmeh (2015) introduced dialect varieties respectively in the south of Behshahr and the north of Sari as Godari. The purpose of the current study is to verify the assumption because it has not been touched by previous researchers. It is a field research method. The linguistic materials were collected via direct interviews in twenty sites in the Behshahr district in Mazandaran province, then analyzed by statistical methods. Then the findings were compiled and contrasted. On average, the speakers were aged 36 years old, and their average level of education is primary education. 38% of them were women.

Results & Discussion

For a better comparison, we divided the 73 common basic words between the research databases into six semantic fields, namely kinship relations, body parts, domestic animals, elements of nature, tools and surrounding objects, and adjective category. For kinship relation terms, Galeshi is relatively homogeneous, while in Godari, the phonetic variation causes more variation. More phonetic as well as lexical variations can be found in the semantic field of body parts. Even though Godar groups were known as guards for farms and livestock, the influence of Mazandarani language words in the semantic field of domestic animals is noteworthy. The semantic field of nature elements is relatively homogeneous in both dialect varieties, but there are more variations in the semantic field of tools and surrounding objects as well as in the category of adjectives. The lack of native lexemes in these dialect varieties' linguistic material clearly shows the influence and dominance of Persian and Mazandarani languages. The contrastive analysis of linguistic materials found in Ranjbar and Radmard (2012), Shokri et al. (2013), and Borjian and Borjian (2008) shows that the reported Galeshi variety common in rainforests is very assimilated to the regional varieties of Mazandarani common among the people living in the respective plain area. Galeshi varieties are obviously derived from Mazandarani, which are heterogeneous in different geographical locations. They are slightly different from Mazandarani in terms of vocabulary, while phonetic processes such as assimilation and reduction as well as the abundance of Persian and Arabic loanwords distinguish them from other Mazandarani dialect groups. As a dominant language, Mazandarani itself is subject to increasing Persianization; the acceleration of this shift is higher in Galeshi, especially the eastern varieties. Research findings show that 71% of terms (52 out of 73 index) in Godari of Babol are similar to Mazandarani or have a slightly different pronunciation from Persian. Apart from the basic words list, many Godari vocabulary in Sari and Behshahr are as well adapted from Mazandarani language. The lexical similarity of

Godari with Mazandarani and its distinction from the vernacular of Gypsies is also noteworthy.

Table 1.

Equivalents of Mazandarani, Galeshi and Godari (an example from each semantic domain)

bad	husband	home	water	hen	leg	site	
nexâr	ʃi:	sərə	?u	cərc	ling	Sari	Mazandarani
bad	ʃu	xânə	?âv	cərc	ləng	Gilan	
bad	ʃi	səre / xanə	?u/?o	-	ləng	Mazandaran	Galeshi
bad	ādem	xāne	?o	mery	ling	Golestan	
bad	mənəs	dəccə	miyo	çəmpri	pā	Babol	
bad	mənəs	dəcə	miyo	çemâri	peçenay	Sari	
nâ-peleyi	mənəs	dəcə	Miyo	çemâri	pâani	Behshahr	
	mānes	dəke	miyo	comeri	peceni	Behshahr	

Conclusion

Labeling linguistic varieties is based on place name, ethnicity, or social status. As a result, it does not always match the linguistic evidence. This problem has caused the proliferation of linguistic varieties, and is therefore misleading. While Galeshi in Golestan province has assimilated a great deal to Persian, in Mazandaran and Gilan provinces it is closer to Mazandarani. In fact, Galeshi varieties are not autonomous languages, but rather heteronomous with the regional Mazandarani as the base language. On the other hand, based on the findings of the current research and its comparison with the results of previous reports, it can be seen that the majority of Godari vocabulary is now borrowed from Mazandarani. Godars make changes in the basic language alongside the remaining words of Godari among themselves, which leads to the formation of a kind of Jargon. Godari language varieties are not homogeneous vernaculars; each has been developed based on the subculture and base language of the respective region with different linguistic strategies. Although Galesh and Godar have always been considered independent ethnic groups, the findings of the current research and its comparison with the results of previous reports show that Galeshi and Godari are neither related nor autonomous languages, but rather heteronomous with the regional Mazandarani as the base language. Therefore, both varieties are gradually becoming assimilated with the dominant language of the region, and could eventually become extinct.

Keywords: Galeshi; Godari; Gudari; Mazandarani; Comparative Linguistics; Dialectology; Sociolinguistics

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