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## **ATTITUDES TOWARD BILINGUALISM: EVIDENCE FROM DIFFERENT IRANIAN ETHNO-LINGUISTIC COHORTS**

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**Summary.** In multilingual settings where several heritage languages co-exist, the gradual process of assimilation may lead to loss of minority languages. In other words, in such settings, with no provision made for the individuals of the specific heritage languages to learn to read and write their first language (L1), language shift is accelerated and is almost sure to take place. It is therefore urgent to scrutinize the problem from different perspectives and to propose recommendations to maintain heritage language(s). One such consideration is what speakers of different languages in multilingual settings think about their linguistic status and language maintenance. Accordingly, this study provided quantitative and qualitative data on the attitudes of a random sample ( $N=224$ ) of Iranians from different layers of society (i.e., universities, schools, and families) toward bilingualism. Data was collected through: (a) a tailor-made questionnaire that measured participants' attitudes and (b) further follow up interviews conducted with 20% of the participants. The findings indicated that the representative samples appreciated the opportunity to learn two or more languages and perceived bilingual abilities as being to ones' advantage in his/her future life. However, the positive tendency towards bilingualism varied significantly among cohorts forming different layers of the society. Results are interpreted in relation to the possible reconsideration of language policy in Iran.

**Keywords:** Attitudes, bilingualism, language maintenance, heritage languages.

### **Background**

Iran is one of the multilingual countries where several languages co-exist. Farsi, the lingua franca and the predominant language of popular culture and literature, is spoken by 58% of the population in most cities. It is also spoken as a second language by the majority of the remainder. While Farsi is the dominant language; it is not the only one spoken in all regions. Other languages of ethnic minority groups include Azeri Turkish, Kurdish, Luri, Balochi, and Arabic, all spoken in various bilingual regions. These heritage languages, in spite of the fact that acceptance of bilingualism, multiculturalism and ethnic diversity have evolved dramatically (Dasko 2003), have not been appreciated as facts of Iranian national life. This can be explained in part, by various attempts,

many years ago, to prevent minority populations from appearing to be too significant in the country (Meskoob, 1999).

In such a diglossic educational setting, with no provision made for individuals of the specific heritage languages to learn to read and write their first language (L1), language shift is accelerated and is almost sure to take place (Hoffman, 1991). As to the language situation in the Iranian society, Farsi is in fact swiftly becoming the only language of official use at all levels of government, and in all state and semi-state departments. Ultimately, Farsi remains the truly dominant language in Iran. It is the language of education and economic power; the language of parliament and international popular culture. So, it would appear that although many Iranians are multilingual, a diglossic situation persists in that the regional ( e.g. Turkish) languages are used only in certain contexts, such as the home, the street, religion, sport and local culture; whereas Farsi is used in writing, print, higher education, media, government administration and parliament. Moreover, in terms of status, Farsi is by far the dominant language of the country. It can be thus inferred that diglossia is fundamentally mirrored in education. The impact of diglossia on education can be felt by the fact that for many speech communities, the majority language is learned as a second language through formal education, while for others it may be their first language, acquired naturally (Baugh, 1997). This can be problematic, because "most schools advocate the dominant literate and linguistic norms of a given society and some students will not acquire the most influential linguistic standards" (Baugh, 1997, p. 33). This means that if Farsi, for example, is the dominant language, as it is the case in Iran, then most schools will use it as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT). Those learners from a minority language background will, therefore, be at a serious disadvantage when compared to those who are born into families where the dominant language is the first language. Furthermore, the languages of ethnic minorities will be in serious danger of dying off, as a result of tendency among the speakers to shift from their heritage languages to the dominant language in a given society.

This situation is particularly significant because there is a tendency among parents towards raising their children as monolingual in Farsi. They see it

wise for their children to speak only Farsi as a crucial tool for social, educational, and psychological well-being (Modirkhamene, 2005). Lambert (2008) maintains that if such attitudes (i.e., the preference among the families to use the majority language with their children) occur across successive generations, heritage language(s) will rapidly decline. As Wu (2005) explains, even among bilinguals who believe that they still speak their heritage language, as their children reach school age, they engage more frequently in out-group peer relationships, and maintenance of their heritage language is weakened. As such, these children may lose sight of their culture, as well as their ethnic language, and in this sense, they become victims of language shift. In order to counter this loss and maintain ethno-linguistic identities among younger generations, it is essential not only for minority groups to emphasize the use of their ethnic language within the family unit, but to expand ethnic language-speaking to their group peer relationships and to the wider community (Luo & Wiseman, 2000).

With the competing priorities of maintaining their ethnic language and assimilation into mainstream culture, Luo and Wiseman (2000) point out that bilinguals face a difficult dilemma; in order to maintain the ethnic culture and in-group cohesiveness, it is necessary learn the mother tongue, while at the same time, they must learn the dominant language (i.e., Farsi) in order to excel in society. To meet both of these needs, a sustainable level of bilingualism is necessary.

It is, therefore, urgent for language practitioners and policy makers to scrutinize the issue from different perspectives and propose recommendations to solve the problem of heritage language loss. One consideration is what speakers of different languages in multilingual settings think about their languages and linguistic status. In other words, it is vital to find out individuals' as well as the society's viewpoints concerning the existing heritage languages and bilingualism, since there is considerable evidence the attitudes and beliefs of bilingual community members play an important role in language maintenance (e.g., Baker, 2011; Hammers & Blanc, 2000; Hyltenstam & Stround, 1996).

## **Review of the literature**

A review of the literature with regard to bilingualism in multilingual contexts reveals that much less attention has been paid to attitudes than to other aspects of bilingualism (Romaine 1995). As an instance of such studies, Cazabon, Lambert and Hall (1993) administered an attitudes survey concerning bilingualism with two different groups of school children: a group enrolled in a dual language program, along with a control group of students who were not receiving language instruction in school. Half of the students in the dual language program were limited English-proficient Hispanics, and half were non-Hispanic English-speaking students. All of the students received half of their instruction in English, and the other half in Spanish, with the goal that all students would have developed bilingual proficiency on completion of their education. Although there were no significant differences between the control group and the primarily English-speaking bilingual group, the English-speaking students enrolled in the dual language program did exhibit a more positive attitude toward being bilingual than those in the control group. On the other hand, the Spanish-speaking students enrolled in the program had the most positive overall attitude toward bilingualism of the three groups.

In a similar vein, Coady (2001) explored the attitudes toward bilingualism in Ireland, administering a survey to three different groups: (1) students in an Irish medium school, (2) students in an all-girls' national school, and (3) students in an all boys' national school; as well as the parents of the students in the respective schools. Follow-up focus group interviews were also applied with a proportion of the respondents. As with Cazabon et al. (1993), Coady found no statistically significant differences among the groups with respect to either the social or personal value placed on bilingualism. However, while the three groups all indicated positive attitudes toward bilingualism, the Irish-medium participants had the highest mean scores for the items pertaining to its societal value(s). Furthermore, a statistically significant difference was found in the participants' habitual language use of Irish, which was not surprising given that one group received Irish-medium instruction. The

researcher attributed the positive views toward the ability to speak more than one language to both the utility of the language itself and to its potential to provide economic benefits and/or an increase in social position.

Dasko (2003) likewise initiated an examination of public attitudes towards multiculturalism and bilingualism in the Canadian context. Through use of a questionnaire, Dasko found that Canadians viewed both bilingualism and multiculturalism as important aspects of Canadian national identity. In addition, she found that significant events beyond the concerns of language and ethnic diversity could impact attitudes and public acceptance, in those issues such as economic decline or threats against larger institutions or the public may undermine support for diversity. Thus, it can be concluded that in addition to placing value on bilingualism and multiculturalism from a social perspective, a strong economy and institutions that promote equality are also necessary.

With respect to family and peer influences on L1 maintenance and dual language use – issues which also reflect attitudes – a number of studies have indicated that parents, and mothers, in particular, play an important role in developing and maintaining the ethnic language in their children. Luo and Wiseman (2000), for instance, investigated familial and peer influences on Chinese-American children's ethnic language maintenance and determined that parental attitudes, mother-child cohesion and the influence of Chinese-speaking peers were significant positive factors on children's proficiency in Chinese. As a result, they concluded that bilingual children's attitudes toward their ethnic culture and language are shaped at a very early age in accordance with their parents' beliefs, and that their attitudes also impact the decisions that children make with respect to the acculturation and assimilation process.

With regard to the importance of parental attitude towards bilingualism, Wu (2005) likewise contends that parents who express strong views concerning the preservation of the heritage language have children who are more likely to maintain their proficiency. On the other hand, in agreement with Dasko (2003), Wu purports that no single variable can guarantee a child's L1 language proficiency level. In this sense, we cannot conclude that the native language can

be maintained strictly on the basis of adequate parental support; with environmental factors, school and community also contributing to L1 language development.

On the contrary, not all studies have reported positive attitudes toward bilingualism, language maintenance, and dual language use. One such study was conducted in a South African English-medium school where the most students were learners of English as a second language. Sutton (2006) examined the understanding and attitudes of two classroom teachers toward bilingualism and multiculturalism, as well as the classroom culture. The results of the case study indicated that the teachers had two fundamental assumptions that underpinned their actions and classroom behaviors; these comprised a negative view toward promoting bilingualism among ethnic minorities. The first assumption was that language problems in L2 learners are primarily due to lack of exposure to English, and the second was that the L1 is sufficiently maintained in the home, and therefore, it is not necessary to support its use in the school environment.

In a similar context, Guerini (2007) applied a survey to investigate the attitudes of university students toward the use of Akan, the most important and highly developed language of the African country, as a teaching medium in the local education system. In addition, he examined their attitudes toward its use in discussing specialized and technical subjects (as opposed to English). His results revealed that not only those students who spoke Akan as a second or third language, but even the majority of those who were native speakers, opposed its use as unfit for formal, technical and specialized domains; furthermore, they valued English as an important skill that should be acquired in the formal education process. On the other hand, 60% of the respondents rated their L1 as suitable for more informal, face-to-face interactions and regarded it as the most effective means for expressing feelings and emotions. Guerini concluded that attitudes towards a single language can be both positive and negative in consideration of the domain of language use.

As regards the multilingual context of Iran, there is a paucity of research dealing with the various aspects of bilingualism. More specifically, there have been virtually no studies with respect to ethnic minorities that closely examine

their beliefs and behaviors toward their languages. Studies on such issues in the bi/multilingual regions of Iran, where language shift is obviously penetrating the heritage lives of people, would yield interesting insights to the issue. Given the existing situation in Iran, the present study was, therefore, motivated to explore the attitudes of a random sample of Iranians toward bilingualism and the use of two languages. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to the understanding of the multilingual context of Iran and provide a picture of the existing patterns of attitudes in this context. This may, in turn, yield insights into the issues of language planning and language policy in Iran. Accordingly, the following questions were investigated:

1. What is the general pattern of attitudes toward bilingualism in Iran?
2. Do people from different layers of the society (universities, schools, families) yield the same patterns of attitudes toward bilingualism?

It was assumed that the patterns of attitudes may vary among people with differing backgrounds.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

This investigation encompassed a descriptive mode of inquiry, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods to develop descriptive profiles of the participants. Five cities (Ardebil, Kermansh, Ahvaz, Arak, and Kerman, where Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, in addition to Farsi, as the national language are spoken, respectively) were randomly selected from five main regions: namely, the north, east, west, south, and central parts of Iran. From each city, a random sample of state university professors ( $N=25$ ) and students ( $N=50$ ) were selected from each university. Furthermore, 100 high school students and 25 high school teachers were selected at random from a pool of 50 high schools in every city. The educational sector was selected due to its role in shaping attitudes toward language and in influencing the outcomes of language maintenance and language shift (Baker, 1992). With respect to parents, only mothers ( $N=24$ )

were surveyed and interviewed, since, in Luo and Wise's (2000) view, they are more influential than fathers in terms of the language behaviors of their children.

By choosing a heterogeneous sample, that is, people from different layers of the society, it was hoped that a better understand of the dynamics of attitudes could be developed in this case. These procedures lead to a random sample of 224 participants (see Table 1).

*Table 1*

### **Participant Profile**

	<b>Universities</b>		<b>Schools</b>		
	<b>Professors</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Parents</b>
<b>Male</b>	19	16	12	50	-
<b>Female</b>	6	34	13	50	24
<b>Total</b>	25	50	25	100	24

### **Instruments and procedures**

The main resources for data collection consisted of a questionnaire and follow-up interviews conducted by local fieldworkers. The questionnaire was developed based on the studies by Cazabon et al. (1993), Coady (2001), and Gibbons and Ramirez (2004). The questionnaire (with a reliability coefficient of .87), which depicted different social, personal, and usage aspects of attitude, was adapted for relevance to the Iranian context and contained 20 attitude statements that were rated on a three-item scale by the respondents: 1- yes; 2- no; 3- not sure. The higher scores on this scale indicated a more favorable attitude toward bilingualism. The questionnaire was used as an initial tool that was later refined and improved following a preliminary pilot study.

Due to the wide scope of the study and some practical limitations, only 20% of the population in each cluster formed the respondents in the follow up semi-structured interviews that were carried out to triangulate the outcomes of the first phase of data collection. The interviews included 7 questions that depicted different aspects of attitudes toward bilingualism and dual language use in line with the statements in the questionnaire.



The interviews were recorded and transcribed immediately on completion. The data were reviewed and then re-examined, and codes were assigned to emerging patterns; then the assigned codes were analyzed to reduce the data into categories or clusters. These were further analyzed to generate the main categories that were found to be relevant to the research questions. Once all of the data were examined, different sources of data were cross-checked for recurring themes to enhance the validity across data. The participants' quotations that seemed most representative of the categories were selected as a means to further enhance validity. In addition, the results and interpretations were verified through member checks and by two other applied linguists.

## **Results**

### **Quantitative findings**

The first question sought the general pattern of attitudes toward bilingualism among the three groups. Responses to each of the statements in the 20-item questionnaire yielded interesting results, as summarized in Table 2. As the table indicates, a main belief cluster that clearly provides positive views regarding the potential effects of the use of first language emerges from the respondents' ideas. The status of L1 emerged in two ways – one in terms of its positive effects (items 2, 9), where the majority of the participants, that is, 78% to 90%, believed that it has positive effects on learning other languages, and the other in terms of its utility (item 1) with 84% of the participants favoring L1 use. There were similar comments concerning the importance of L1 (items 7, 10) that signify maintenance of heritage culture (92-97%).

Further analysis of the written responses indicated that beliefs toward bilingualism enjoy a positive and favorable pattern. Otherwise stated, although a few participants expressed tentative views regarding bilingualism issues (items 5, 6, 8, 13, 14, 16), more particularly the practice of bilingual policy in Iran, a pro-bilingualism emerged from the analysis of the responses (items 3, 4, 15, 17,

18, 20). The respondents seemed to be very aware of the long term effects of knowing more than two languages.

Table 2

### Distribution of Responses

Items I think:	Yes	No	Not sure
1. Mother-tongue use in every context (e.g. school, university, home, etc.) is useful.	84%	14%	2%
2. Mother-tongue of the individuals (e.g. Turkish, Kurdish, etc.) has a positive influence on their acquisition of other languages.	90%	4%	6%
3. To have the chance to be able to communicate in more than one language is a marvelous gift that opens doors to another world (cultures, customs, traditions).	85%	5%	10%
4. Bilingualism can result in higher development of knowledge and mental skills.	88%	8%	4%
5. Bilingualism can lead to practical, career related advantages in Iran.	41%	22%	37%
6. Bilingualism leads to greater understanding between different groups in Iran.	51%	12%	37%
7. It is important not to lose touch with your background culture because it is part of who you are as a person.	97%	-	3%
8. If a student is in a Farsi (as the national language) only class, s/he will learn better.	40%	30%	30%
9. If individuals develop literacy in their first language, it will facilitate the development of reading and writing in other languages like Farsi and English.	78%	12%	10%
10. All the children should have the best facilities (e.g., schooling in L1) to learn how to speak in their L1, since we should not lose our mother tongue.	45%	20%	35%
11. If a student is proficient in both his L1 and Farsi, s/he will do better in certain tasks compared to the one who knows only one language.	68%	12%	20%
12. It is good for people to maintain their native culture, as well as other culture/s.	92%	3%	5%
13. I think use of different L1s in the community, especially in education would lead to greater conflicts between ethnic groups in Iran.	41%	22%	37%
14. Bilingual policy should be covered in our national curriculum development.	40%	24%	36%
15. Bilingual policy leads to greater equality of opportunity for all groups in Iran.	80%	9%	13%
16. Bilingualism and the relevant policy lead to greater national unity.	51%	17%	32%

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17. Use of the L1 should be limited only to family. It should not be extended to places beyond school and education.	8%	85%	7%
18. Preserving different native languages in the communities (e.g. bilinguals regions of Iran) leads to the erosion of Iranian identity.	10%	81%	9%
19. The language policy in Iran should mainly focus on one-language only.	41%	22%	37%
20. All in all, knowledge of languages is a pathway to further success.	98%	-	2%

The second research question probed whether there was a significant difference among samples from universities, schools, and families in terms of their attitudes toward bilingualism. Comparison of the mean scores (Table 3) reveals differences among the groups in terms of their attitude scores; the higher mean scores belonged to those coming from the university ( $M=46$ ) and schools ( $M=39$ ) compared to families ( $M=34$ ). Further, ANOVA, presented in Table 4, was carried out, since the researcher was interested in finding out whether any significant difference existed among the three groups. The outcome, that is, ( $F 2, 221= 56.678, p= 0.00$ ) indicated that attitudes toward bilingualism do vary among groups belonging to different sections of society. Nevertheless, ANOVA did not show where exactly the differences among groups occurred. Therefore, further post-hoc tests (Table 5) were followed up for multiple comparison purposes.

*Table 3*

**Descriptive Statistics: Attitudes Scores of the Three Groups**

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
University	75	46.4667	4.47918	.51721	45.4361	47.4972	37.00	57.00
School	125	39.3200	6.11001	.54650	38.2383	40.4017	28.00	56.00
Family	24	34.3333	6.62450	1.35222	31.5361	37.1306	26.00	46.00
Total	224	41.1786	6.95174	.46448	40.2632	42.0939	26.00	57.00

Note: the total attitude score is 60.

Table 4

**One-Way ANOVA: All Groups Compared**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3653.657	2	1826.829	56.678	.000
Within Groups	7123.200	221	32.232		
Total	10776.857	223			

Table 5

**Multiple Comparisons: Each Pair Compared Using Tukey HSD**

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Universities	Schools	7.14667*	.82922	.000	5.1900	9.1033
	Families	12.13333*	1.33144	.000	8.9916	15.2750
Schools	Universities	-7.14667*	.82922	.000	-9.1033	-5.1900
	Families	4.98667*	1.26524	.000	2.0012	7.9722
Families	Universities	-12.13333*	1.33144	.000	-15.2750	-8.9916
	Schools	-4.98667*	1.26524	.000	-7.9722	-2.0012

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Considering the means for each group, one can come to the conclusion that the highest positive attitude scores belonged to those participants coming from universities and schools compared to those explored within family contexts. Further support is provided through the effect size (eta squared value= .339), which would be considered a large effect size.

## Qualitative findings

Patterns of attitudes were scrutinized at a deeper level through follow up interviews with 20% of the population out of each cluster. The interview questions overtly asked about the participants' feelings about the use of two languages, and toward language vitality. Some of the most outstanding views (one example for each question) are summarized below.

In answer to the first open question (i.e., what do you think about bilingualism?), 38 interviewees expressed general positive affect toward bilingualism: *It's important to know more than one language.*

Furthermore, there were a number of comments expressing general positive affect toward the first languages some participants possessed. These views may be an indication of tendency toward L1 maintenance, which contributes to positive affect toward use of two languages as well. Similar comments were also expressed by monolingual speakers of Farsi: *I like to speak Turkish/ Kurdish/ Farsi.*

The status of attitudes toward bilingualism emerged in terms of its importance and utility. The interviewees seemed to be aware of the possible benefits of speaking more than one language. Except for some parents, a total of 34 interviewees commented with positive opinions on this: *One of the benefits of knowing more than one language is that you get to know more people from different cities and countries and their culture.*

In answer to another question about literacy in more than one language, most of the interviewees believed: *It is necessary for communicating with the majority of people, especially those who represent your heritage culture.*

Positive affect toward bilingualism manifested itself through the respondents' comments about both international and local arenas. For example, some interviewees mentioned the necessity of using one's native language in daily life, including their schooling: *We are living in the borderlines of such neighboring countries as Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Iraq, where similar languages to ours are spoken. Therefore, languages can play great roles in our*

*relations (in every aspect) with these countries. People in these regions, therefore, must know (both oral and literacy) skills of these important languages.*

Similarly, with regard to L1 maintenance, in answer to the question "How would you feel if you were the last speaker of Turkish/Kurdish?" some said: *I think it is important not to lose touch with your culture and language, because it is part of your identity.*

The parents in this study expressed overall positive attitudes concerning heritage language maintenance, but expressed some degree of hopelessness. Although they preferred that their children become bilingual, they did not report doing much to help children in learning both languages. The responses of the parents to the relevant items indicated that weak support for raising their children bilingually. Some parents agreed that: *Decisions of parents to preserve their heritage languages depend mostly on the attitudes of people.*

## **Discussion and conclusion**

This study set out with the assumption that attitudes and beliefs of community members towards language(s) and bilingualism contributes to the maintenance of heritage languages. The study found that, in general, the representative sample held positive views towards the issue of knowing and using two languages. However, the positive tendency towards bilingualism varied significantly among cohorts forming different layers of the society. The findings are consistent with past research examining attitudes among people in bilingual contexts (e.g., Coady 2001; Cazaben, et al., 1997; Dasko, 2003) who found positive attitudes towards bilingualism and ethnic language preservation in Western contexts.

The outcomes implied that a pro-bilingualism orientation while maintaining Farsi as the national language emerged in comments from respondents. This finding contributes to the suggestion made by Gibbons and Ramirez (2004), who examined attitudes towards bilingualism and L1 maintenance in a group of Hispanic teenagers. Similar to the results of the

present study, their research reported beliefs that favored bilingualism and maintenance of the minority language, as well as support for resisting domination by the majority language. In line with this finding, it is possible to conclude that, because proficiency in the dominant language is essential for success in such societies, it is important that beliefs support not just the survival of the minority language, but bilingualism in both the dominant and the minority language. Such a proposal, which of course warrants further investigation, addresses those authorities involved in language planning and policy-making issues.

However, one should bear in mind that, under these circumstances, institutionalizing an inclusive model of language planning and policy necessitates a careful analysis of the needs of the whole community, and, as Hayati and Mashhadi (2010) commend, a systematic investigation of factors involved in the decision-making process about the language. This demands a logical and commonsensical consideration of the language rights of ethnic groups in multilingual contexts. This, in turn, will bridge the widened gap between the needs and preferences of ethnic groups who are imposed on by a language of wider communication in their surroundings. Such considerations, to use Hale's (1992) words, may pave the way to problems of sociolinguistic dislocation and psychological damage, and problems associated with language shift and maintenance.

Within a family environment, in line with Luo and Wiseman (2000) and Wu (2005), the findings may lead us to the conclusion that one of the vital responsibilities of the parents, especially mothers, is to infuse positive attitudes towards the ethnic culture and language of the younger generation. The resulting decisions that younger generation make, will consequently have an impact on the danger of acculturation and assimilation processes existing in the multilingual contexts. To sum up, the thing to notice is that serious attempt is demanded from every sector of the society including language planners, policy makers, member of the community, especially parents to maintain the heritage language/s and culture/s. One of the ways to do this would involve raising

awareness among parents, friends, social workers, and teachers' regarding the values inherent in bilingualism and knowing languages, which, in turn, would play a great role in promoting attitudes. Families should be notified that a lack of family language reproduction is a principal and direct cause of language shift. In addition, a good number of participants agreed that developing literacy in L1 facilitates the development of reading and writing in other languages.

This belief implies that Iranian bilinguals should learn literacy skills in their first language(s) alongside Farsi as the national language of the society. This leads to an important and possibly contentious implication of the findings, that is, the necessity for bilingual education, which is directed towards existing language policy in the Iranian educational system. It is suggested that educators and intercultural trainers should understand the dialectical influences and tensions affecting bilinguals' decisions regarding duality of language use, assimilation and ethnic language maintenance. With this heightened sensitivity, educators and trainers can, in turn, facilitate bilinguals' multicultural competencies and multilingual proficiencies. This is more than a wake-up call for educators. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the findings provide no guidance on how bilingual education might work in the existing situation. In the meantime, introducing such an important procedure calls for profound scrutiny and caution with every step taken with due regard to the realities and constraints of this particular context.

It is thought wise to conclude that in multilingual contexts, especially the particular context of Iran, gradual shift to the lingua franca seems to lead to the loss of heritage language(s) in the long run. Although most people, especially members of the younger generation, believe that they use their heritage language, processes like assimilation may in fact gradually lead to loss of knowledge of their ethnic language, which implies loss of the culture and heritage, as well. In such circumstances, that is, at the crossroads of maintaining ethnic language and being assimilated into the mainstream culture, bilinguals face a substantial dilemma. In studies of multilingualism, such tough conditions should be examined from various perspectives, and recommendations



need to be proposed to solve the problem of the younger generation losing their heritage language.

As the current study represents only a preliminary step, it is not possible to reach any all-encompassing conclusions; and therefore, a more detailed and systematic investigation of the complex and challenging language scenario in Iran is needed to bring to light the efforts of diverse ethnic groups to preserve their heritage languages and cultures. In this sense, a logical next step may be an examination of whether the beliefs and attitudes of individuals expressed in this and future studies are actually manifested in terms of overt behaviors, both from a societal and an individual perspective. The understanding afforded by these efforts may be used to inform language policy and planning both on an institutional and an official level.

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## **POŽIŪRIAI Į DVIKALBYSTĘ: ĮVAIRIŲ IRANO ETNOLINGVISTINIŲ KOHORTŲ SITUACIJŲ ANALIZĖ**

**Santrauka.** Daugiakalbėse aplinkose, kur vartojamos kelios paveldo kalbos, besitęsiantis asimiliacijos procesas gali sąlygoti tautinių mažumų kalbų nykimą. Kitaip tariant, tokiose aplinkose, jei tautinėms mažumoms nebus sudarytos sąlygos išmokti rašyti ir skaityti savo pirmąją kalbą (L1), bus pagreitinta ir realizuota kalbos kaita. Dėl šių priežasčių ypač svarbu dvikalbystės problemas išnagrinėti iš įvairių perspektyvų ir pateikti rekomendacijas, kaip paveldo kalba (-os) galėtų būti išsaugota (-os). Vienas iš klausimų – ką įvairių kalbų vartotojai, gyvenantys daugiakalbėje aplinkoje, mano apie jų kalbų statusą bei kalbų išsaugojimą. Šis tyrimas pateikia atsitiktinės imties (N = 224) įvairių visuomenės sluoksnių (pvz., universitetų, mokyklų, šeimų) iranėčių požiūrio į dvikalbystę kokybinius ir kiekybinius duomenis. Duomenims rinkti parengtas klausimynas (a), skirtas respondentų požiūriui vertinti, bei, apklausiant 20 % respondentų, naudoti papildantys interviu (b). Rezultatai atskleidė, kad apklaustieji respondentai teigiamai vertino galimybę mokytis dviejų ar daugiau kalbų. Respondentai taip pat nurodė, kad dvikalbystė suteikia pranašumo, siekiant karjeros. Kita vertus, teigiamo požiūrio į dvikalbystę tikimybė ženkliai išsiskyrė tarp kohortų, atstovaujančių skirtingiems socialiniams sluoksniams. Tyrimo rezultatai analizuoti Irano kalbų politikos kontekste.

**Pagrindinės sąvokos:** požiūriai, dvikalbystė, kalbos išsaugojimas, paveldo kalba.