



Research Paper

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Literature and Linguistics Scholars' Views on Linguistic Diversity

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Abstract

The present study aims to examine and critically represent the perspectives of linguistics and literature experts regarding Persian and other languages of Iran, with a focus on identifying how attitudes and underlying ideologies are constructed and represented in these discourses. The research data consist of a collection of formal meetings, lectures, and roundtable discussions organized by institutions such as the Saadi Foundation, the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, and academic centers between 2021 and 2025. This study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach, and the data were analyzed using an integrative framework based on critical applied linguistics and critical discourse analysis, following Penycook. The analysis investigates how Persian and other Iranian languages are represented, including processes of legitimation, discursive dominance, linguistic hegemony, and the reproduction of linguistic inequalities. The findings reveal that some language experts express views that, from a linguistic perspective, are questionable or even unacceptable; for instance, many statements in the meetings, such as "Persian was not imposed on Iranians" or "Persian is the common language of all Iranians," reflect a standard language ideology and naturalize linguistic hegemony, thereby downplaying the historical and social realities of linguistic diversity. Moreover, claims that restrict or deem education in non-Persian languages as "excessive" reinforce the reproduction of linguistic inequalities and legitimize the discursive dominance of monolingual ideology. These results underscore the importance of critically examining representations in language policy, education, and linguistic research, demonstrating that language, beyond its communicative function, serves as a site for the reproduction of power and ideology.



مقاله پژوهشی

تحلیل گفتمان انتقادی دیدگاه‌های پژوهشگران ادبیات و زبان‌شناسی درباره تنوع زبانی

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چکیده

پژوهش حاضر با هدف بررسی و بازنمایی دیدگاه متخصصان زبان‌شناسی و ادبیات درباره زبان فارسی و سایر زبان‌های ایران انجام شده است تا نحوه بازنمایی نگرش‌ها و ایدئولوژی‌های پنهان در این گفتمان‌ها شناسایی شود. داده‌های پژوهش شامل مجموعه‌ای از نشست‌ها، سخنرانی‌ها و میزگردهای رسمی برگزار شده توسط نهادهایی مانند بنیاد سعدی، فرهنگستان زبان و ادب فارسی و مراکز دانشگاهی در بازه زمانی سال‌های ۱۴۰۰ تا ۱۴۰۴ است. این مقاله از نوع توصیفی-تحلیلی است و تحلیل داده‌ها با بهره‌گیری از رویکردی تلفیقی در چارچوب زبان‌شناسی کاربردی انتقادی و تحلیل گفتمان انتقادی مبتنی بر دیدگاه پنی‌کوک انجام شده است. این تحلیل به بررسی چگونگی بازنمایی زبان فارسی و دیگر زبان‌های ایران، مشروعیت‌بخشی، تسلط گفتمانی، هژمونی زبانی و نحوه بازتولید نابرابری‌های زبانی می‌پردازد. یافته‌ها نشان می‌دهد که برخی از متخصصان زبان نیز دیدگاه‌هایی را مطرح می‌کنند که از منظر زبان‌شناسی محل تردید یا حتی مردود شمرده می‌شوند؛ زیرا بسیاری از گزاره‌ها در نشست‌ها، مانند «فارسی بر ایرانیان تحمیل نشده است» یا «فارسی زبان مشترک همه ایرانیان است»، بازتاب‌دهنده ایدئولوژی زبان معیار و طبیعی‌سازی هژمونی زبانی هستند که واقعیت تاریخی و اجتماعی تنوع زبانی را کمرنگ می‌کنند. همچنین، ادعاهایی که آموزش به زبان‌های غیرفارسی را محدود یا «فراطبی» می‌دانند، بازتولید نابرابری‌های زبانی و مشروعیت‌بخشی به سلطه گفتمانی ایدئولوژی تک‌زبانی را تقویت می‌کنند. این نتایج بر اهمیت توجه به بازنمایی‌های انتقادی در سیاست‌های زبانی، آموزش و پژوهش‌های زبان‌شناختی تأکید دارند و نشان می‌دهند که زبان، فراتر از ابزار ارتباط، عرصه‌ای برای بازتولید قدرت و ایدئولوژی است.

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1. Introduction

Critical applied linguistics (CAL) emerged in the early 1990s, a period when the label “critical” was widely employed across diverse fields, from critical discourse analysis to critical literacy and critical pedagogy (Pennycook, 2017). According to Pennycook, “critical” commonly carries two meanings: one in literary criticism, which pertains to the evaluation and interpretation of literary or other aesthetic texts such as books or films, and the other in critical thinking, which emphasizes logic, reasoning, and the impartial assessment of evidence and is taught to students as a set of cognitive skills. However, in critical applied linguistics, the notion of “critical” extends beyond these conventional interpretations. Here, it signifies social critique, addressing issues such as injustice, inequality, and discrimination, rather than merely engaging in logical analysis or aesthetic evaluation (Pennycook, 2021, p. 23).

One area that intersects with critical applied linguistics is critical discourse analysis (CDA), as both focus on social issues and concerns. The label “critical” in discourse analysis signals the exposure of hidden ideological assumptions in language use and power relations (Yarmohammadi & Rashidi, 2013). Overall, Critical scholarship is “restless” (Pennycook, 2004), as it challenges the assumptions embedded in parent disciplines. Ultimately, being critical involves engaging with power and social inequality (Maconi, 2012).

Despite extensive efforts in language studies, the representation and critical examination of experts’ perspectives on the role of criticality in linguistic research, particularly regarding linguistic diversity in Iran, has not been sufficiently addressed. The main issue of this study is to identify and analyze how languages and power-driven ideological assumptions are represented in experts’ views and how these representations reinforce or reproduce linguistic and social inequalities. The study aims to clarify the role and function of criticality in Iranian language studies and to examine its potentials and limitations. Accordingly, the main research question is: How are the perspectives of linguistics and literature specialists regarding Persian and other languages of Iran

represented, and what ideological and power-related assumptions do these representations reveal? The study also explores the capacity of critical applied linguistics to analyze these representations.

The present study employs a qualitative-analytical method and is situated within a theoretical framework that integrates critical applied linguistics and critical discourse analysis based on Peniukok's (2021) approach. The novelty of this research lies in adopting a socially and justice-oriented perspective rather than merely describing language. For the first time, it critically examines the views of linguistics and literature specialists presented in professional language conferences regarding Persian and linguistic diversity, revealing the hidden ideological layers and power relations in these representations. In this way, the study not only opens new horizons in Iranian linguistic research but also provides the means for constructive critique of experts' perspectives and an analysis of their social and ideological implications on language representation.

2. Literature Review

In recent years, there has been growing attention to language ideologies and their role in shaping policies and socio-cultural attitudes, both in international studies and research conducted within Iran. For instance, Blackledge (2000) examined monolingual ideologies in multilingual societies in the United Kingdom, showing how such ideologies erase linguistic diversity from public discourse and create linguistic inequalities. The study's data include media discourse, educational settings, and official documents, with a focus on identifying discrimination and linguistic hegemony. This study was primarily descriptive-analytical, adopting a socio-ideological framework, which differs from the theoretical framework of the present research.

Fuller (2018) analyzed language ideologies, emphasizing conceptual distinctions between bilingualism and monolingualism. He demonstrated that monolingual ideologies are dominant, marginalizing other languages and potentially leading to linguistic and social discrimination, influencing language policy decisions. Alisaari et al. (2019) explored Finnish teachers' beliefs about

multilingualism, finding that although teachers' attitudes were generally positive, many reflected monolingual ideologies and did not always treat students' home languages as learning resources. Their study focused on teachers' beliefs, experience with migrant students, and the influence of professional training on accepting multilingualism, whereas the present research focuses on representing the perspectives of linguistics and literature experts regarding Persian and other languages of Iran in formal meetings and lectures, analyzed through a critical discourse and applied linguistics lens. Therefore, the main differences lie in the type of data, research context, and analytical focus representation of ideology in formal discourse versus teachers' individual beliefs.

Groff et al. (2023) employed a qualitative approach and linguistic ethnography to study language policy in educational discourse and how teachers represent linguistic diversity and dominant ideologies in the Netherlands. The key difference with the present study is in the type of data and methodological approach. Kircher and Kutlu (2023), using corpus-assisted discourse analysis, examined multilingual realities and monolingual ideologies on social media, focusing on Spanish as a heritage language in the United States. Finally, Gu and Kim (2025) applied critical discourse analysis to examine the terminology and definitions of multilingual learners in U.S. educational policies and WIDA standards, showing that English monolingual ideology restricts equitable access to education for multilingual learners.

In Iranian studies, Falah (2007) shows that Persian has historically played a crucial role in preserving national identity and strengthening Iranian unity, being examined as a factor of national cohesion and cultural integrity. Sedighi (2014) demonstrates that Ferdowsi, particularly through the *Shahnameh*, contributed significantly to preserving the Persian language and reinforcing national unity, highlighting Persian as a key factor in safeguarding Iran's cultural and national identity. Similarly, Ghorbi (2017) in an analytical-descriptive study shows that Persian shapes national identity, enhances social interaction, and mediates among different dialects, playing a central role in consolidating social cohesion and national unity in Iran. However, unlike these studies, the present

research does not treat language solely as a unifying factor and critically challenges this perspective.

Ghanbari and Rahimian (2020) examine the dominance of Persian in a historical-social context, linking it to elite policies and national identity formation, whereas the current study investigates the perspectives of linguistic specialists on Persian dominance using a critical approach. Mohammadi (2024–2025) has conducted extensive studies on the representation of linguistic diversity and language ideologies. His first study examines the prevalent metaphors surrounding linguistic diversity in the minds of social actors and shows that the metaphor "language as the nation" occurs most frequently, linking monolingualism to national cohesion. The second article addresses the representation of language ideologies in press texts and emphasizes that the media, by legitimizing monolingualism, marginalize the value of linguistic diversity. The third study investigates dialectal discrimination in media based on racio-linguistic ideologies, demonstrating that media reinforce linguistic and social inequalities.

The present research differs from these studies in that, rather than analyzing texts and media, it focuses on the representation of the views of linguistics and literature specialists regarding Persian and other languages of Iran, analyzing the ideological structures of these views through a critical applied linguistics perspective. Overall, this study, both domestically and internationally, critically examines for the first time the views of language and literature specialists presented in academic seminar on Persian and linguistic diversity, marking a distinct contribution in the field.

3.Theoretical Background

3-1 Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Applied Linguistics

Critical Applied Linguistics examines how issues of power and inequality intersect with applied linguistic concerns. These inequalities include domination (which restricts opportunities), unequal access, ideological discrimination, cultural differences, and social preferences. Critical Applied Linguistics can also be regarded as a meeting point where several critical approaches converge, such as critical pedagogy, critical literacy, critical discourse analysis, and critical perspectives on language policies,

language testing, and language awareness. This applied field does not merely describe inequality but seeks to transform and reduce it through research, education, and social engagement (Pennycook, 2021).

Critical Applied Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis overlap in their concern with examining power, inequality, and the social effects of language. In this regard, CDA has emerged as a method for analyzing texts and power, or more precisely, instead of focusing solely on the micro-structure (how the internal structures and functions of language use make it coherent), it emphasizes social relations (how we can understand the social composition of texts) (Pennycook, 2021: 104). As Roderick (2017: 4) states, CDA has, from its very inception, sought to demonstrate how relations of domination are enacted at the macro-social level through the production of texts while simultaneously concealing them. At a simple level, this appears to mean that social order is reflected in discourse. However, this argument requires a rather complex chain of relations; that is, ideological positions can be revealed in texts, in which case ideologies constitute the (naturalized) representations of powerful social groups, and texts, in turn, stabilize or reproduce these ideologies (Pennycook, 2021: 104). From Pennycook's perspective (2021: 104), analyzing the role of discourse in power relations and interrogating ideology, truth, and meaning within texts is of central importance.

Discourse (D) and discourse (d)

As an abstract noun, *discourse* refers to the "use of language in the context of social practice," in the sense that, like syntax, it represents a general and overarching dimension of language or of its communicative function. As a count noun, in the plural form *discourses*, it signifies "ways of making sense of experience from a particular perspective" (Fairclough, 1995: 135). In this sense, *discourses* are not merely instances of language use; rather, they function like lenses through which we perceive and interpret the world and our experiences. For example, a monolingual discourse reproduces a worldview in which the standard language is regarded as the only legitimate form of communication, while other languages are marginalized. By contrast, a discourse of linguistic

diversity frames multilingualism as a social and cultural resource and highlights its value. In fact, discourses provide the frameworks that enable us to perceive the same phenomenon in different ways.

Gee (2018: 110) distinguishes this contrast by referring to two levels: “small d discourse” and “big D Discourse.”

1. little d discourse (d): Refers to the use of language in social interaction, that is, everyday communicative practices. This type of discourse must be understood in relation to broader structures of social organization and, in particular, ideology.
2. big D Discourse (D): Refers to worldviews and the ways in which socially meaningful identities are constructed and recognized. This type of discourse reflects ideological perspectives and may encompass colonial, medical, managerial, neoliberal, and other discourses.

If we accept that language is inherently political, then discourse cannot be separated from ideology, and big D Discourse, likewise, cannot be fully examined without attention to language in its broadest sense (Pennycook, 2021: 106).

3-1-2. Critical Language Awareness (CLA)

Critical Language Awareness is an analytical approach that emphasizes understanding the structure, role, and function of language in social life and human communication. It emerges particularly within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis. CLA enables individuals not only to attend to language use in social practice but also to recognize the ways in which meaning, power, and identity are reproduced at broader social and ideological levels (Pennycook, 2021: 119–120; Fairclough, 1992).

3-1-3. Standard Language Ideology (SLI)

To reduce linguistic inequality and discrimination, it is not sufficient to merely change policies and regulations; dominant linguistic frameworks and paradigms especially the ideology of the standard language must also be challenged in order to ensure more equitable language practices.

3-1-4. Language and Power

One of the central concerns of Critical Applied Linguistics is posing fundamental questions about the relationship between language and power. Whether in the early work on language and

gender, such as Robyn Lakoff's (1990) *Talking Power: The Politics of Language*, or critical discourse analysis, such as Norman Fairclough's (1989) *Language and Power*, or much more recent work such as Claire Kramsch's (2021) *Language as Symbolic Power*, or van Splunder's (2020) *Language is Politics*, power is central to the analysis, as it is in many of the background texts they draw on, from Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*, to Michel Foucault's (1980b) *Power/Knowledge*. These scholars start from the assumption, as Joseph (2006: 17) puts it, that "language is inherently political." Languages are themselves social and ideological constructs; our use of language in interaction is shaped by social relations; our interpretation of others' speech is profoundly influenced by social, cultural, gendered, and racial identities; and ultimately, relations of power between individuals are expressed and reproduced through language (Pennycook, 2021: 44).

3-1-5. Language Rights

Pennycook (2021: 69), quoting Tollefson (1991: 211), emphasizes the need to go beyond respect for linguistic diversity and to recognize access to education and other domains of mother-tongue use as a fundamental human right: "*A commitment to democracy means that the use of the mother tongue in the workplace and in schools is a basic human right.*"

3-1-6. Linguistic Hegemony

When a language is "hegemonic," individuals are compelled to use it in order to gain access to educational resources, job opportunities, social networks, or even simply to be seen and heard. Other languages, in contrast, occupy weaker positions relative to the dominant one. For instance, English functions as a hegemonic language in many countries across the globe: much education, publishing, the internet, and employment opportunities revolve around English, while other languages enjoy far fewer official or social roles (Pennycook, 2021: 74).

As shown in Diagram (1), the model illustrates the main components of Critical Applied Linguistics as outlined by Pennycook (2021):



Diagram (1): Key Dimensions of CAL(Pennycook, 2021)

4. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative–analytical approach within an integrated framework of critical applied linguistics and critical discourse analysis, following Pennycook (2021). This framework enables not only descriptive linguistic analysis but also critical

examination of power relations and underlying ideologies in the representation of languages in specialized linguistic forums.

4-1. Sampling and Data Collection

Data were selected through theoretical sampling, a strategy in which cases are chosen based on their potential to develop and refine emerging theoretical concepts. The selection process focused on formal meetings, lectures, and panel discussions on language and language policy in Iran during 2021–2025 (1400–1404), primarily organized by the Saadi Foundation, the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, and various university centers. Approximately 20–30 sessions were included based on three criteria:

1. Direct relevance to linguistic diversity and the status of mother tongues in Iran.
2. Participation of prominent experts in linguistics and literature.
3. Availability of full recordings and associated published materials.

Sampling continued until theoretical saturation was reached, meaning that additional data no longer contributed new insights or themes. A descriptive table summarizing the number of sessions, speakers, and frequency of main themes is provided to enhance transparency and methodological rigor.

4-2. Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research

To ensure trustworthiness and credibility, the study incorporated the following measures:

- Data triangulation: combining video recordings, full transcriptions, and related published documents.
- Peer review: coding and categorization of emerging themes were independently verified by a second researcher.
- Iterative review: repeated examination of transcripts to confirm accurate extraction of categories and themes.

These procedures follow standard practices in qualitative research, ensuring that findings are robust and methodologically sound.

4-3. Coding and Analysis Procedures

A three-stage coding process was employed:

1. Open coding: initial identification of statements containing presuppositions, ideological arguments, or value judgments about language.
2. Axial coding: grouping open codes into preliminary categories and examining relationships among them.
3. Selective coding: integration of preliminary categories into core themes and final analytical patterns.

A detailed coding table illustrates the progression from raw data to thematic categories, providing transparency in the analytical process.

4-4. Justification for Excluding Pro-Mother Tongue Perspectives

It should be noted that the present study adopts a critical analytical perspective, focusing on the representation of power, ideology, and linguistic subordination in specialized forums. Accordingly, pro-mother tongue positions are not the focus of this analysis, as the primary aim is to critically examine the discursive construction of language hierarchies and the ideological framing of linguistic diversity. While supportive perspectives may exist in the data, they were intentionally excluded from the analytical scope to maintain a consistent critical orientation.

5. Data Analysis

In this section, the main themes of the symposia and specialized language gatherings, organized by experts and focused on Persian and other Iranian languages, are analyzed.

National Symposium on "Persian Language and National Identity," Allameh Tabataba'i University (May 19, 2022).
Symposium on the Preservation of Persian Language and Commemoration of Hakim Abu'l-Qasim Ferdowsi, (May 16, 2021).
Symposium on the Preservation of Persian Language: Challenges and Consequences of Mother Tongue Education, (October 23, 2023).
Symposium on the Preservation of Persian Language with the Participation of Foreign Diplomats' Spouses, Saadi Foundation (May 16, 2025).
Specialized Symposium on "Mother Tongue Education and Education in Mother Tongue," Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan (May 21, 2025).

Table 1. Key Themes of Specialized Language Symposia

To facilitate a comprehensive and critical analysis, the reader's attention is directed to the examples below."

1. "Persian was not imposed on the Iranian people" (Symposium, 2025, Bu-Ali Sina University).
2. Persian has been the common language of various Iranian ethnic groups for over twelve centuries" (Symposium, 2025, Saadi Foundation).
3. People today live and study using this language and employ it in daily communication" (Symposium, 2025, Saadi Foundation).

In this symposium, a linguist referred to Max Weinreich, whose work is frequently cited in sociolinguistics, stating: "*The claim*

that 'A language is a dialect with an army and a navy' does not apply to Persian. For instance, in Darius' inscriptions, the sentence 'then you will know that the Persian spear has gone far' indicates that Persian spears reached as far as Asia and even Egypt. While this may seem to confirm Weinreich's metaphor, historical evidence shows that the populations of conquered territories were never forced to speak Persian; the rulers' main concern was conquest rather than imposing a language or religion. During the Sassanid era, both religion and state were intertwined with language, but after the Arab conquest, this support collapsed, and Persian could have been eradicated. Nevertheless, Persian survived, even without a strong central government until the Safavid period, whose rulers themselves were not Persian speakers and had no particular interest in Persian. This indicates that the persistence of Persian owes more to its cultural and literary status than to military or political imposition."

Critically, the term "Persian spear" refers to Persian soldiers, not the language itself; the Bisitun inscriptions and other Achaemenid texts primarily served political and military purposes rather than linguistic ones. The statement that "Persian was not imposed on Iranians" neglects the role of standard language ideology, because even without direct coercion, the language became hegemonic through its institutional resources, for example, formal education, media, laws, and official bodies (Mohammadi, 2025). In this sense, no language is imposed through physical force; rather, it dominates through discourse and hegemony (Fairclough, 1995; Pennycook, 2021).

Moreover, the claim of "no imposition" represents a form of naturalization, whereby the discourse of the dominant language presents its dominance as self-evident and natural. This is precisely what critical discourse analysis investigates: language dominance is never neutral but always emerges within power relations. Therefore, the assertion that Persian was "not imposed" effectively ignores the institutional power structures that historically reinforced the hegemony and dominant role of the language.

As discussed in the theoretical background section, such claims lack critical linguistic awareness; that is, they do not question how the dominant language can ideologically reproduce meaning, power, and identity. This discourse, by naturalizing the status of Persian, conceals relations of dominance and linguistic inequality (Pennycook, 2021; Fairclough, 1992). Ultimately, language is not merely a tool of communication but a tool of power. The statement that Persian was “not imposed” effectively ignores the structural power of the language in shaping social opportunities and access to resources.

Example (2) is also historically linguistically inaccurate, as past societies were not monolingual. Large regions of the West maintained their own languages in daily life and even in literary and cultural domains. Therefore, narratives that portray Persian as the historical common language of all Iranians actually reflect centralizing and monolingual ideologies. Edward Granville Browne, a prominent Iranologist and author of the three-volume *Literary History of Persia*, notes that during the Qajar era, outside Tehran, very few people spoke Persian.

At that time, there was no formal monolingual educational structure, and universal proficiency in Persian was not feasible. Furthermore, earlier generations in many multilingual regions of Iran lived without Persian knowledge, and even today, many people in these regions have not learned Persian at home and experience difficulties in interacting with it. Prior to the emergence of modern nation-states, a single language was not a necessary element of political cohesion. Empires generally operated in multilingual contexts, with official communications mediated through court elites (Grillo, 1998; Ucarlar, 2009). Today, many countries with linguistic diversity recognize more than one official language; in fact, multilingualism is officially acknowledged in over 55 countries worldwide. Therefore, conceiving Persian as the common language of all Iranians largely reflects standard language ideology rather than historical and linguistic reality.

Regarding Example (4), generalizes fallacy in the statement that “all people today live and study in this language” (Persian). However, linguistic realities worldwide are highly diverse, and in

this regard, the evolution of languages should not be overlooked. The speaker directly projects the current status of Persian as the language of education, formal communication, and daily life onto the past, as if the continuity and functions of the language have remained unchanged throughout history. This constitutes a form of chronological fallacy (anachronism).

It should be noted that literary language is, in fact, a marked and rhetorical variety that differs from the everyday language of the people and is shaped by artistic devices, stylistic conventions, and linguistic deviations. Therefore, it cannot be regarded as the common language of all social strata and communicative contexts (Mohammadi, 1403). Consequently, the claim that the language of poetry and literature was identical to the language of ordinary people distorts reality and ignores the fundamental differences between everyday standard language and literary-artistic language.

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4. "What is not a right should not be considered a right, and vice versa. In Iran, no one has ever been arrested for speaking their mother tongue" (Conference, 1404, Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan).
 5. Article 15 of the Constitution: Misinterpretation of this article could undermine the identity dimensions of the country's future (Conference, 1403, Celebration of Persian Language).
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In statement (5), one of the legal scholars emphasized that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), as part of the first generation of human rights, guarantees the right to use one's mother tongue, and governments do not have the authority to intervene or prohibit speakers from using their primary language. For example, an individual who wishes to publish a written work in their language should be free to do so. However, the scholar claimed that in many countries, these rights are violated, and in some cases, individuals have been arrested for speaking their own language. He further added that in Iran's history, such instances reflecting linguistic prejudice have not been observed.

Contrary to this claim, evidence from the Pahlavi period shows that the use of non-Persian languages was explicitly restricted, and

in official settings, teachers who did not speak Persian were threatened with dismissal (Rasouli et al,2016).

Regarding statement (6), Article 15 of the Constitution is interpreted in such a way that the speaker accuses supporters of linguistic diversity of misunderstanding the article, framing it around the “protection of national identity.” From a linguistic rights perspective and according to Pennycook’s (2021) approach, the primary focus should be on the rights of individuals and language communities to use, teach, and reproduce their languages, rather than conflating this with the concept of a unified national identity. These rights, known as linguistic human rights (LHRs) , are emphasized in numerous legal instruments, some of which create binding obligations for states (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2023: 25). Therefore, Article 15, rather than ensuring the right to education and use of linguistic diversity, effectively becomes a tool for controlling and legitimizing institutional monolingualism, and its legal ambiguity itself constitutes a form of discursive power.

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6. Persian was spread by people who were not themselves native speakers, and therefore this language does not belong to a specific ethnic group.
7. Persian does not stand in opposition to other ethnic and local languages, nor is it the language of a single group; rather, it is the language of Iranians (Conference, 1403, Celebration of Persian Language).
8. The late Dr. Hassan Anvari Givi Ardabili, whose mother tongue was Turkish, was among the leading figures in Persian language and literature. The late Dr. Jafar Shaar and Dr. Manouchehri, both Turkish speakers, were prominent Persian scholars. Dr. Hassan Anvari, author of *Farhang-e Sokhan*, was also a Turkish speaker. These examples demonstrate that outstanding Turkish-speaking researchers have conducted some of the most significant studies in Persian. In poetry, figures such as Shahriar, Nezami Ganjavi, and Saeb Tabrizi provide additional examples (Conference, 1401, Allameh Tabataba’i University).

In critiquing the aforementioned statements, an important point is that when non-Persian speakers used Persian, part of this was due to access to linguistic, educational, courtly, and administrative resources that were available to a specific language. The concept of “access,” within the framework of critical discourse analysis, pertains to who has access to particular types of discourse or roles, and who can control others’ access. Therefore, access is closely linked to power (Baker & Ellece, 2011: 1).

This demonstrates that Persian gained more opportunities for growth and development than other languages not because of its intrinsic linguistic features, but due to the control of resources by powerful institutions (decisions of elites, the court, etc.). From this perspective, critical linguistic awareness shows that languages, under ideologies such as “standard,” “national,” or “shared,” can reproduce hierarchies of power.

Another point is that describing Persian as “ethnically neutral” or “detached from any ethnic affiliation” constitutes a conceptual fallacy. In this regard, one can refer to the notion of “sense and reference,” which Frege (1989) used to challenge this claim. In terms of sense and meaning, the term “Persian ethnicity” refers to a group of people with specific cultural traditions and characteristics, i.e., it has a distinct and identifiable reference. Therefore, Persian speakers historically had specific cultural and geographical backgrounds, and denying or ignoring the existence of this group constitutes a conceptual fallacy. Consequently, although Persian was also spread by non-Persian speakers, one cannot ignore the role of access to linguistic resources, power, and the language’s association with a particular ethnic group.

One participant asked, “Can you introduce another language in Iran that has a written tradition of at least a thousand or two thousand years and possesses scientific vocabulary and terminology? The Academy of Persian Language and Literature has so far compiled and published twelve scientific books on terminology and word-formation. Now, can we teach physics in Turkish?” (Conference, 1404, Allameh Tabataba’i University).

. Another discussion point raised was, “Why do some intellectuals oppose the Persian language becoming the language of science?

Because if Persian becomes a language of science, it promotes conceptual density and critical thinking” (Conference, 1401, Allameh Tabataba’i University).

- . It was questioned whether there are 300 languages in London and what a burden this would place on the educational system if a separate school were to be established for each language. A similar issue exists in Iran, where languages such as Luri, Kurdish, and Turkish are taught, yet none of these languages have a standardized variety.
- . The discussion continued: “If education in Persian is possible and permissible, which dialect or variety of Kurdish, Luri, Turkish, etc., should be used as the standard? And if this were implemented, what language would people ultimately use to communicate?” (Conference, 1400, Persian Language Day).
- . It was noted that even within Turkish, mutual intelligibility is not complete; for example, there are significant differences between Tabriz and Zanjan dialects. The question then arises: which variety of Turkish should serve as the basis for education? Choosing one could be considered discriminatory toward other languages.

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The issue of 300 languages in London and the limitations in teaching them indicates that languages are always linked to power relations and limited access to resources. The same situation exists in Iran, reflecting inequalities and restricted access to formal educational resources. According to Ruiz (1984), language should not be treated as a problem or burden; perceiving linguistic diversity as a challenge reflects the ideology of the standard language and linguistic hegemony. The costs associated with multilingual education are similar to those spent on environmental conservation or protecting endangered species, and the cultural value of these languages is equally, if not more, important. In this regard, lessons can be drawn from countries with established multilingual educational systems (Mohammadi, 2023: 123).

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14. In Iran, university programs exist for Kurdish and Turkish language and literature, and if there is demand, no one will prevent it. Currently, discussions about education in the mother
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tongue are considered extreme and differ from teaching the mother tongue itself (Conference, 1404, Bu-Ali Sina University).

This claim treats the mere existence of university programs as a guarantee of linguistic rights, which is a reductive perspective. It ignores the role of linguistic hegemony and power structures in providing actual access to education in other languages. Having a university program does not imply equal access for all speakers to learn their language in schools and formal contexts. In other words, this view reinforces the ideological representation of the standard language, as it legitimizes only formal, limited instruction for interested individuals, neglecting the need for widespread and systematic education for all children who speak non-Persian languages.

An important distinction exists between language acquisition and language learning. The first language is acquired involuntarily, innately, and unconsciously, as Chomsky argues (Hurford, 2014, p. 30), whereas second-language learning is conscious and requires instruction (Groom & Littlemore, 2011: 19). Therefore, a native Kurdish-speaking child needs literacy in their language, not just language learning. Linguistic demands here pertain to education in the mother tongue, not merely teaching the language itself. Otherwise, if a child receives education in a language other than their first language from the outset, negative educational and cognitive consequences may result. Consequently, the argument that the existence of Kurdish or Turkish language and literature programs in universities equates to the implementation of mother-tongue education is a fallacy, as there is a fundamental difference between teaching the mother tongue and education in the mother tongue. From the perspective of Pennycook (2021), framing non-Persian languages as “extreme” marginalizes them, reproduces inequality, and legitimizes linguistic dominance (Pennycook, 2021).

15. Urdu, which is the national language of Pakistan, is derived from Persian, and Persian terminology is prevalent in it (Conference, 1400, Ferdowsi Commemoration Day).

16. Many people assume that the language of Indians is Urdu,

whereas Indians have their own distinct language, although they have a strong interest in Persian (Conference, 1400, Ferdowsi Commemoration Day).

17. For nearly nine centuries, Persian served as the official, governmental, literary, and cultural language in the Indian subcontinent (Conference, 1400, Ferdowsi Commemoration Day).

18. Persian was deeply rooted for centuries in the daily speech of people, literary circles, and governmental institutions in India (Conference, 1403, Allameh Tabataba'i University).

In the mentioned statements, the concept of "language" is not correctly defined. Language is not easily definable, and various branches of linguistics provide multiple definitions. Just as biologists do not have a unified definition of "life," linguists have not offered a single, independent definition of "language" (Danesi, 2004, p. 7). The claim that "Urdu is derived from Persian" conflates linguistic genealogy with lexical borrowing. The historical influence of Persian on Urdu is undeniable, yet Urdu emerged from a distinct language branch, not from Persian itself. If mere loanwords were considered the origin, one would have to claim that Persian, heavily infused with Arabic loanwords, is derived from Arabic a manifestly incorrect argument.

In example (17), India is a multilingual country; therefore, attributing "a single language" to all Indians is linguistically inaccurate. In fact, no human country or society is entirely monolingual. Another point concerns the concept of "official language." As mentioned earlier, this is a relatively modern notion. In the past, there was no "official language" in the contemporary sense that is, a language universally taught through formal education and employed nationally. Therefore, extending such a concept continuously across an entire subcontinent constitutes an exaggeration. According to Pennycook (2021), such views are rooted in standard language ideology.

19. "The only place where we all share our identity is the Persian language. An attack on the Persian language is an attack on our identity. Our identity is even more important than our

geography” (Conference, 1401, Allameh Tabataba'i University).

In statement (19), the approach is unscientific and monolithic, reducing the concept of identity and ignoring linguistic and cultural diversity. The phrase “an attack on the language is an attack on identity” is a metaphorical and ideological expression, portraying language as a “living entity” (Mohammadi, 1403). Furthermore, according to Pennycook’s theories of the subject, language should not be considered as an absolute or fixed marker of identity belonging to a single language; rather, identity is a network constructed through interactions with power and ideology, and it is dynamic and fluid. Linguistic identity emerges and functions through diversity and interaction among language varieties (Pennycook, 2021: 88–89; Mohammadi, 1403; 1404).

It should be noted that if we accept the idea that identity can exist without territory, we fall into a Cartesian assumption i.e., an abstract, detached conception disconnected from the material world. In Heidegger’s view, humans are always Dasein (being-in-the-world); they are never separate or worldless, but always find meaning through connection with the world, and identity is fundamentally intertwined with place, time, and lifeworld. Thus, self-awareness and understanding of the self are impossible without engagement with the world (Heidegger, 1962). Consequently, identity cannot be reduced solely to language, and the role of geography must not be ignored.

Such statements place one language in the position of a “superior” or “unifying identity-giving language” while effectively subordinating other languages. This phenomenon is what Pennycook cites from Phillipson (1992) as linguistic imperialism (Pennycook, 2021: 69).

5. Conclusion

This study, adopting a critical approach, examined the representation of linguists' and literary specialists' views regarding Persian and other languages of Iran. The findings reveal that many statements in professional conferences and gatherings reflect standard language ideology and linguistic centralism. Claims such as "Persian was not imposed on Iranians," "Persian has been the common language of all Iranians," or "Persian is inseparable from national identity" are not only historically and linguistically inaccurate but also overlook the role of hegemony, access to linguistic resources, and institutional power mechanisms. Analysis of the data showed that non-Persian speakers often resorted to using Persian due to limited educational and administrative resources and hegemonic language policies.

Moreover, representations based on monolingual ideology obscure the linguistic diversity of Iran and the historical changes in access to language and education. Claims that limit or label the education of non-Persian languages as "excessive" reinforce linguistic inequalities and legitimize the discursive dominance of Persian. From a critical perspective, linguistic and cultural identity is not fixed or confined to a single language; rather, it is dynamic, networked, and shaped through interaction with power and ideology. Thus, reducing identity to Persian while ignoring linguistic diversity constitutes an incomplete and ideologically driven representation of Iran's historical and social realities.

Ultimately, this study emphasizes that representations by linguistic and literary specialists, if uncritically accepted, can naturalize the dominance of a single language and obscure power relations and linguistic inequalities. Attending to and critically examining these representations is essential to ensure equitable education, preservation of linguistic diversity, and fair reproduction of cultural and educational opportunities for all linguistic communities.

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