

A Sociolinguistic Study of Turkish: Sahand Villages in Zanjan

Mostafa Shahidi-Tabar

Lecturer

Dept. of Foreign Language

Imam Sadig University, Tehran, Iran.

Hooshang Yazdani

Assistant Professor

Dept. of English Language and Literature

Arak University, Arak, Iran.

Abstract

The importance of recording and investigating world languages and dialects and accents is one of the most important tasks of linguists. Turkish as one of the members of Oghuz branch of the Turkic languages (Brown and Ogilvie, 2009) which is spoken in Turkey, Germany, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Northern Cyprus, Greece, and other parts of Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Iran, Azerbaijan and Central Asia by the Turks is one of the most widely-spoken languages that is investigated in this study. Youkhari Sahand (upper Sahand) and Ashaghi Sahand (lower Sahand) that are two major villages of Zanjan (one of the oldest and historical regions in Iran) are chosen as the target group of this study. A questionnaire is used for data collection. The results of the questionnaire show that, old generation uses religious titles for all of its members whereas young generation uses a non-religious but polite title for educated people and it does not use any title for its uneducated members. Also Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand informants use different vowels for the same words in some linguistic contexts. As far as the collected data is concerned, Ashaghi Sahand people put an emphasis at the end of utterances which is common mostly on the vowels of the last words of each sentence while this phenomena is not seen Youkhari Sahand Turkish.

Keywords: Turkish; Azeri; Zanjan; Sahand, vowel length, vowel harmony; Lexical differences

Introduction

A review of literature shows that Turkish or Azeri Turkish is investigated at least by Shahidi-Tabar (2012), Shahidi-Tabar & Akbari-Malek (2012), Shafizadeh (2003), Hajiloo (2002), Gorbazadeh (2002), Shabihi (2002), Ganiloo (2000), Jahandideh (1998), Fattahi (1996), Dabir (1995), Hesabgar (1992) and Jafari G. A. (1992). Shahidi-Tabar (2012) acknowledges the requests made by Turkish informants in Iran and Shahidi-Tabar & Akbari-Malek (2012) which is a theoretical work introduces a new scale for measuring politeness and criticizes the scale proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987).

Shafizadeh (2003) compares Tabriz Turkish with Miyane Turkish according to their vocabularies and phonetic features. Hajiloo (2003) investigates the Turkish spoken in Zanzan. He discusses about Zanzan Turkish according to Chafe(1970) Model. Some other comparative works investigate the Azeri Turkish with Turkey Turkish or Istanbul Turkish like Gorbantzadeh (2002) or with Persian like Shabihi (1381).

And some of the works investigate Turkish grammar, phonetics or morphology like Ganiloo (2000), Dabir (1995), Fattahi (1996), Hesabgar (1992) and Jafari G. A. Also Jahandideh (1998) discusses about Ghashghayee Turkish spoken in Iran. Among these works, none of them has investigated Turkish spoken in Mahneshan country and its villages like Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand.

Significance of the study

The significance of the mentioned and other similar works on the one hand, and the importance of recording and investigating world languages and dialects and accents (Crystal, D. 2000) on the other hand inspired the authors to conduct this research. In other words the present study attempts to address the linguistic similarities and differences between two major villages of Zanzan province namely Youkhari Sahand (upper Sahand) and Ashaghi Sahand (lower Sahand). More specifically this study tries to address the following questions:

1. Are there any differences in the forms of address between young generation and old generation in Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand?

1. Are there any vowel length differences between Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand informants?

2. Are there any lexical differences between Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand Turkish?

Method

Subjects

The participants of this study were 15 Youkhari Sahand speakers, 15 Ashaghi Sahand speakers and a group of research assistance whom all were native inhabitants of Sahand. The participants were randomly selected from different strata of the society.

Instrumentation

The data for the present study were collected using a questionnaire. The questions included linguistic factors like; lexical, phonological and syntactic questions. Also there were some cultural factors which were not included in the questionnaire and were asked orally. In some cases the subjects were asked to participate in an interview. To examine the test-retest reliability, 30 Turkish participants completed the questionnaire twice. The answers of the participants then were compared with the proposed answers to construct validity.

Procedure

In the case of illiterates (more than half of the participants), the research assistants read the questions to the participants and record their voices and then register the responses in the questionnaire. In the case of pictures which are used in this study, two of the assistants traveled to Mahneshan country and Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand about three times to take and design the map. And about the HATAM XAN family tree, the author himself traveled to Youkhari Sahand and had some interviews with the oldest member of the village (and some other old inhabitants).

Zanjan Province

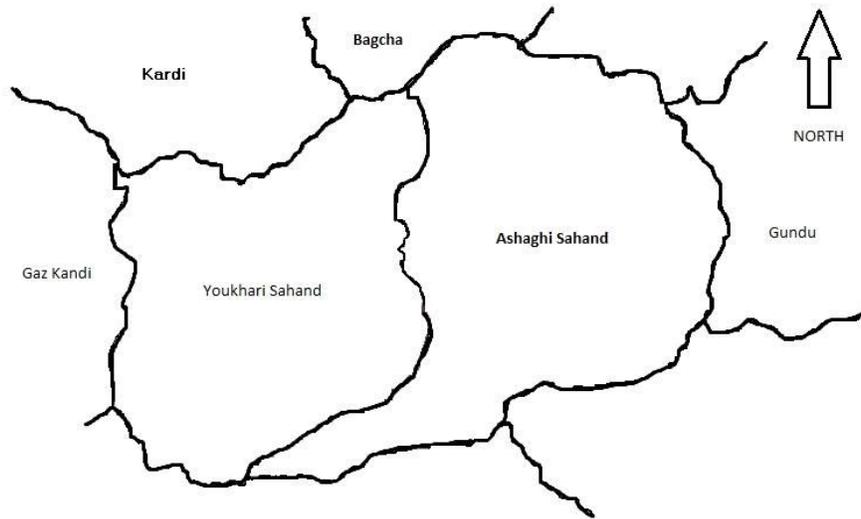
Zanjan is one of the 31 provinces of Iran located in the North West of Iran as it can be seen in map 1.

Map 1: Zanjan Province and its neighbors



Mahneshan country is one of the seventh countries of Zanjan province which is located in northwestern part of Zanjan. Mahneshan is divided into central part and Anguran part. The country's population was 51223 according to 2006 census. Its neighbors are Zanjan city in its western part, Western Azerbaijan in eastern part, Kurdistan in southern part and Eastern Azerbaijan in Northern part of Mahneshan as it can be seen in map 1. Youkhari Sahand as one of the most important villages of Mahneshan is known for its effective figures in the political and social issues of the country and even the province. Ashaghi Sahand on the other hand, is known for its specific cultural and linguistic features. They both are located in Mahneshan country as it is seen in map 2.

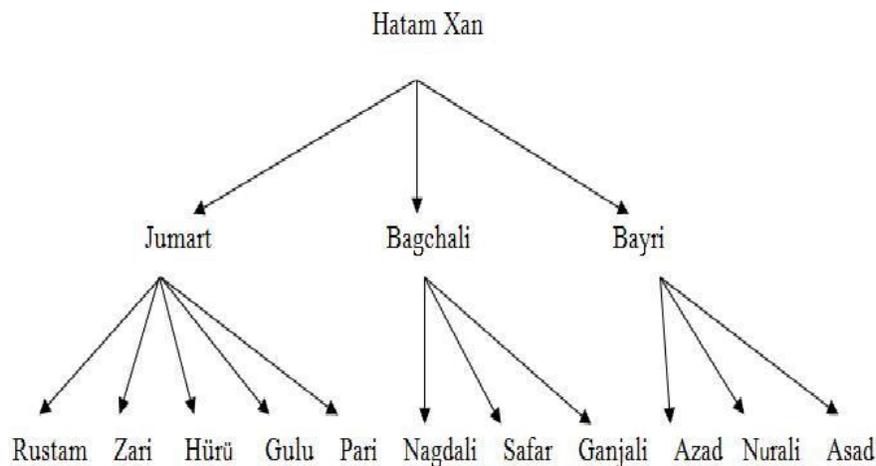
Map 2: YoukhariSahand and AshaghiSahand and their neighbors



Youkhari Sahand versus Ashaghi Sahand

Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand seem to be one village as it can be seen from their names, since they both have a common name called Sahand. Even though some ancestors are common in these villages and the inhabitants are relatives (in some cases two brothers are living in two different villages, one in Youkhari Sahand and the other in Ashaghi Sahand), language differences are obvious among the informants. For instance HATAM XAN as one of the major ancestors in these villages who has about 800 upbringings by now (2013), to whom some of his children are living in Youkhari Sahand and some others are living in Ashaghi Sahand, has many children and upbringings with two different accents namely Youkhari Sahand accent and Ashaghi Sahand accent. HATAM XAN family tree is shown in the following as an example:

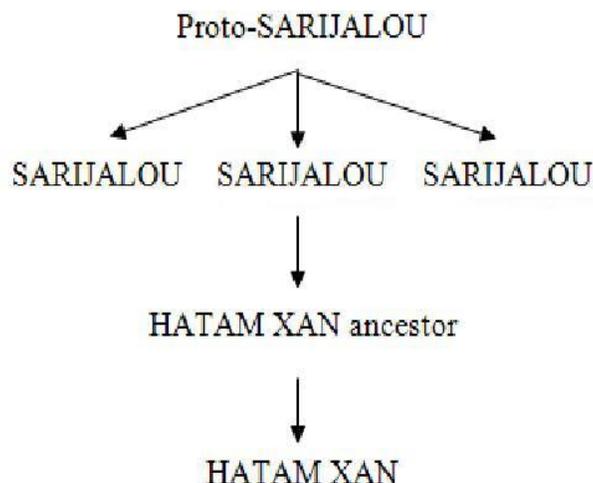
Picture 1: HATAM XAN family tree



As it is shown in picture 1, one father has three children that some of them are living in AshaghiSahand and some other are living in Youkhari Sahand and some, in other places.

It is worth mentioning that HATAM XAN family tree members' surnames are SARIJALOU. Of course some other dictations are common like, SARIJLOU, SARJALOU and etc. It is believed that this family name is also common in Pari (a very famous and old and important city in Mahneshan), Miyaneh (located in Azerbaijan) and also in Russia. In other words, HATAM XAN could be related to a larger family (we call it SARIJALOU family) and that family is derived from a Porto-father like the following:

Picture 2: Proto-HATAM XAN



Of course more investigation is needed about HATAM XAN ancestors and SARIJALOU family tree. To sum up, language difference are seen among the members of families in this area. In this part of the study the sociolinguistic features of these two villages are going to be elaborated.

Sociolinguistic Contributions

Sociolinguistic is defined as the study of language in relation to society (Hudson, 1996&Modarres, 2008). Sociolinguistics is concerned with many terminologies like standard language, dialect, lexicon, pronunciation, culture and etc.

Standard Language and Social dialect

Standard language is the variety of language that has social prestige and that is used in official contexts in different societies. Standard language is defined by Lyons as 'the standardization of particular dialect' (Lyons, 1981: 276) and Yule believes that standard language is used in mass media (Yule, 2003: 227).

As far as the collected date and the interviews are concerned, standard Turkish is not used by this study informants. They use their own accents in both Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand.

Social dialect

On the other hand, social dialect differs from standard language in these villages. Hudson (Hudson, 1996) defines social dialect as follows:

'... A speaker may be more similar in language to people from the same social group in a different area than to people from social group in the same area ...'
(Hudson, 1996: 42)

As the definition suggests, in some areas people use a similar language despite they belong to different dialects and in some other areas people use a different language in the same dialect.

Some informants of this study have different social dialects that bring about some differences in their speech in comparison with their friends and relatives in the same area. The main reason for this may be some factors like education since all the participants who have different social dialects in this study are educated people. One of the impacts of social prestige is seen in the forms of address for the reference to the addressee. Table 1 shows different forms of address for the reference to the addressee in Sahand (both Yokhari and Ashaghi).

The mentioned forms are compared among two different generations. In other words, the first group of forms of address belongs to the young generation and the second group belongs to the old generation (the first group candidates' fathers' names). This information is gathered by recording the participants' answers that are taken part in a public pre-programmed interview in a form of friendly meeting.

Table1: Two different forms of address for the reference to the addressee in Sahand among two generations

Group	
Group 1: Young Generation	Group 2: Old Generation
AgayeMoosavi	<i>SeyidGafoor</i>
AgayeJarchi	<i>Kalbayee Abbas</i>
Mahi	<i>MeshadiFarzi</i>
Mami	<i>Kalbayee Farman</i>
Hasan	<i>Haji Mammad</i>
Naghi (or MahammadNaghi)	<i>Malla Salman</i>

As it is shown in Table 1, old generation uses titles before people's first names which is a polite form of calling people which are written in Italics in the table like *Seyid*, *Kalbayee*, *Haji* and etc. It needs to be pointed out that, all of these titles are religious titles. In other words, old generation uses religious forms of address for the reference to the addressee. On the other hand young generation chooses Agaye before the addressee's names as Agaye Jarchi. Forms of address for the reference to the addressee among young generation is twofold: a: they use the title before the addressee's surnames as AgayeMoosavi, b: they do not use any title, and just call people with their first names or nickname as Maharram or its nickname Mahi without any title.

With regard to the title Agaye, it needs to be mentioned that Agaye is a very new borrowed word in Turkish and it is used to call educated people in Sahand. Also young generation does not use any title for its uneducated members as Mahi, Hassan, Mami and etc. In summary, old generation uses religious titles for all of its members while young generation uses a non-religious but polite title for educated people and it does not use any title for its uneducated members.

Vowel

Pronunciation is defined as the ability to use the correct stress, rhythm and intonation of a word in any spoken language by the speakers. It is also defined as a word that can be pronounced in different ways by individuals or groups, depending on many factors, such as: the area in which they grew up, the area in which they now live and many other factors (Crystal, 2008, Lade Foged, 2005, Ladefoged, 1982, Haghshenas, 1978.). One of these pronunciation differences which are seen among Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand speakers is vowel differences.

Vowel is defined by phoneticians as a sound at the center for a syllable in which there is no obstruction of vocal tract (Ladefoged, 201 & Johnson ,1997) or they are sounds articulated without a complete closure in the mouth or a degree of narrowing which would produce audible friction (Crystal, 2008). Some words are pronounced differently in these villages. One of these differences is the use of /a/ versus /o/. Ashaghi Sahand uses /o/ in many words like hen /towux/, home /ow/, balloon /gowux/, cold /sowux/ and etc, while Youkhari Sahand uses /a/ for the same vowel as hen /tawux/, home /aw/, balloon /gawux/, cold /sawux/with the same meaning but different pronunciations.

In other words Ashaghi Sahand uses low rounded vowel (*o*) in a group of words while YoukhariSahand uses low unrounded vowel (*a*) for the same group of words as it is shown in the following table which Y. S. stands for Youkhari Sahand and A. S. stands for Ashaghi Sahand.

Table 2: Turkish vowels

Turkish vowels				
	Front		Back	
	Unrounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded
High	I	Ü	ɪ	u
Low	E	Ö	a **	o*

* The vowel which Ashaghi Sahand uses. ** The vowel which Youkhari sahand uses.

Vowel harmony

Vowel harmony is a modification (assimilation) of vowels in a word that one agrees or harmonizes with another one (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). It is when vowels within a word are required to resemble one other in terms of some property (Dearborn, 2005: 1159). Böksel, Ash &Kerslake, Celia (2006) define vowel harmony as the following:

Vowel harmony is a phonological process which determines what vowel will appear in all but the first syllable of a word.

It is worth noting, however, that vowel harmony is seen in the speech of the informants of the two villages in spite of the fact that the signs that are located in these areas in Zanjan province and especially in Mahneshan country have some problems as it can be seen in the following picture situated in the entrance of a village called Gundu (گوندو) which is located in eastern part of Ashaghi Sahand.

Picture 2 A sign in the entrance of a village in Mahneshan country.



As it can be seen in the picture, the pronunciation of the illustrated word (which is a Turkish writing with Arabic Alphabet that is used in Iran among Iranian Turks) is /gundi/. But in Turkish, when suffix is added to the word /gun/, the vowel of the suffix must be a front rounded vowel because of the vowel /u/ thanks to the vowel harmony in Turkish, and the pronunciation should be /gundu/ not /gundi/. Also the Arabic alphabet which is used in Persian (the official language of Iran) has some problems and shortcomings which cause some problems in pronunciation (Haghshenas, 1987).

The same mistake is seen in the mentioned word, since in this picture a Turkish word is written with the Arabic but Persian-colored alphabet. It can be pronounced as /gandi/, /gondi/ or /gendi/ while it should be written as /گوندو/ which is pronounced as /gundu/. Of course the same mistake is seen in Google earth map dictation which is written as gundi.

Vowel length

Vowel length is the duration of a vowel sound (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). It is one of the other pronunciation differences which are conceivable in Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand. As far as the collected data is concerned, Ashaghi Sahand accent has duration at the end of sentences that is not seen in Youkhari Sahand accent. In other words Ashaghi Sahand people put an emphasis at the end of sentences. This emphasizing is common mostly on the vowels of the last words of each sentence. The following example shows this phenomenon:

Example1: çaynik-i ver. (Give the kettle)

Youkhari Sahand pronunciation: çaynikiver

Ashaghi Sahand pronunciation: çaynikiveeer (vowel length)

An interesting point that is seen in this research is that, whenever an extra morpheme is added to the end of a sentence in Turkish, in AshaghiSahand accent, the mentioned stress moves to the added morpheme as follows:

Example2: çaynik-i ver-da. (Give the kettle, so.)

AshaghiSahand pronunciation: çaynikiverdaaa(vowel length)

Some other examples of vowel length in Ashaghi Sahand accent are as the following:

Example 3: Durayağüst-ə (Stand up)

YoukhariSahand pronunciation: Durayağüstə

AshaghiSahand pronunciation: Durayağüstəəə(vowel length)

Example 4: Ali harda? (Where is Ali?)

YoukhariSahand pronunciation: Ali harda?

AshaghiSahand pronunciation: Ali hardaaa? (vowel length)

Example 5: Həmiş-dənxəbəral. (Ask Hamish?)

YoukhariSahand pronunciation: Həmişdənxəbər al

AshaghiSahand pronunciation: Həmişdənxəbəraaal(vowel length)

Example 6: Na xəbər? (What's new?)

YoukhariSahand pronunciation: Na xəbər

AshaghiSahand pronunciation: Na xəbəəə(vowel length)

Example 7: Mənged-ir-əm. (I want to go.)

YoukhariSahand pronunciation: Məngedirəm

AshaghiSahand pronunciation: Məngedirəəəm(vowel length)

It is worth mentioning that YoukhariSahand has the same duration when it adds an extra morpheme to the end of the sentence but with different pronunciation as it is shown below:

Example8: Kitab-i ver da. (Give the book, so)

YoukhariSahand pronunciation: Kitabiverdaaa

Of course, it should be mentioned that this kind of duration in Youkhari Sahand accent is just for emphasis or showing anger that is totally different from the duration in Ashaghi Sahand. It can be concluded that both villages use Turkish vowels but they use different vowels for the same words in some linguistic contexts and vowel harmony is seen in the informants' speech. Also Youkhari Sahand and AshaghiSahand informants have differences in vowel length. This finding confirms Hudson's belief that pronunciation seems to be more sensitive to regional and social difference than grammar and vocabulary as Hudson believes (Hudson, 1996).

Lexicon

The lexicon or word stock of any language is defined as its vocabulary (Crystal, 2008). It is the set of all words and idioms of any language (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). In spite of many common features, sometime different words make these two villages languages seem different. One of these words is KHILLIG /marble/. Marble is one the old things that the inhabitants of these villages used to play with. Despite of this fact that they play with marble together sometimes, they use different names for the same thing. Youkhari Sahand uses KHILLIG while Ashaghi Sahand uses HANAGALA for marble. Of course the number of different vocabularies in Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand is no more than one according to the questionnaire whose summary is shown in table 3.

Table 3: Lexical difference between Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand

Total number of words	Same words in both villages	Different words both villages
50	49	1

As it is shown in table 3, all participants of the study have chosen same words for 49 out of 50 words of the questionnaire and just one word is marked as a lexical difference in Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand that is *marble*. Despite a difference in these villages in vocabulary, one can not conclude that there is a vocabulary difference in Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand.

Conclusion

The languages which are spoken in Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand (which is Turkish) have some differences despite the inhabitants are living near each other and the distance between them is just a 15 minute walk, and also the fact that some of them are relatives. According to the findings of this study, in answer to the first research question ‘Are there any differences in the forms of address between young generation and old generation in Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand?’ it can be concluded that old generation uses religious titles like /Kalbayee/ or /Haji/ for all of its members while young generation uses a non-religious but polite title like /Agaye/ for educated people and it does not use any title for its uneducated members.

In answer to the second research question, ‘Are there any vowel length differences between Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand informants?’ it can be pointed out that Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand informants use Turkish vowels but they use different vowels for the same words in some linguistic contexts. As far as the collected data is concerned, Ashaghi Sahand people have duration at the end of utterances that is not seen in Youkhari Sahand accent that means Ashaghi Sahand people put an emphasis at the end of utterances which is common mostly on the vowels of the last words of each utterance.

In answer to the third research question ‘Are there any lexical differences between Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand Turkish?’ the analysis of the questionnaire shows that there is not a significant difference in lexicon between Youkhari Sahand and Ashaghi Sahand Turkish.

Acknowledgements

The authors are greatly indebted to all research assistants and all participants of this study for their invaluable supports and helps. Some of them are Mesha Shami, Abes Jarchi, Saeed Jarchi, Azizollah Assadi, Abolfazl Gasemi, Moharramali Gasemi, Gorbanali Gasemi, Abes Gasemi, Golamali Gasemi, Majid Gasemi, Abolfazl Baharlou, Mohammadali Shahidi Tabar, Vajihollah Assadi, Vajihollah Bahari, Amirali Bahari, Mesha Aliakbar, Shamsollah Fatemi, Mehdi Fatemi, Hosseinali Sarijalou, Faramraz Bahrami, Samad Baharlou, Afzal Tahmasebi, Vali Jarchi, Akbar Shahidi Tabar, Mohammad Hanife Sarijalou, Abbas Jarchi, Ebrahim Bazargani, Golamhassan Sarijalou, late Sakine Jarchi, Sakine Sarijalou, Mesha Jeiran, Mesha Asghar, Mahezar Sarijalou, Mehsalji, late Mesha Rajab and some other friends.

References

- Böksel, A. & Kerslake, C. (2006). *Turkish: A Comprehensive Grammar*. Routledge. Taylor & Francis e-Library.
- Brown, K. & Ogilvie, S. (2009). *Concise Encyclopedia of Languages of the World*. Elsevier Ltd.
- Crystal, D. (2008). *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. 6th ed. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Crystal, D. (2000). *Language Death*. Cambridge. Cambridge University
- Dabir, B. (1995). *The Structure of Noun-Phrases in Azeri Turkish according to X-bar Theory and its difference with Persian*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Shiraz University.
- Dearborn, F. (2005). *Encyclopedia of Linguistics*. Taylor & Francis e-Library
- Edward, J. (2009). *Language and Identity: An Introduction*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Fattahi, A. (1996). *The comparison between Tabriz and Khalkhal*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. AllameTabatabaee University.
- Ganiloo, T. (2000). *The Structure of Noun-Phrases in Azeri Turkish according to X-bar Theory*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Tehran University.
- Gorbazadeh K. I. (2002). *A Contrastive Analysis of Vocabulary in Istanbul and Azeri Turkish*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Islamic Azad University. Tehran Markaz Branch.
- Haghsheenas, A. M. (1987). *Phonetics*. Tehran. Aghah.
- Hesabgar, H. (1992). *The Phonological System of Turkish*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Shiraz University.
- Hudson, R. A. (1996). *Sociolinguistics*. 2nd ed. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Jafari G. A., H. (1992). *Turkish and Mogholi Words in Tarikh Vesaf*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. AllameTabatabaee University.
- Jahandideh, H. (1998). *On the Ghashghayee Turkish*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Shiraz University.
- Johnson, K. (1997). *Acoustic and Auditory Phonetics*. Blackwell Publishing, Ltd.
- Ladefoged, P. (2005). *Vowels and Consonants: An Introduction to the Sounds of Languages*. 2nd ed. Blackwell publishing.
- Ladefoged, P. (1982). *A Course in Phonetics*. 2nd ed. New York. Harcourt Bruce Jovanovich, Inc.
- Ladefoged, P. & Keith. (2010). *A Course in Phonetics*. 6th ed. Boston. Wordsworth Cengage Learning.
- Lyons, J. (1981) *Language and Linguistics: An Introduction*. Cambridge. Cambridge University.
- Modarresi, Y. (2008). *An introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Tehran. Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies.
22. Richards J. & Schmidt R. (2002). *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics*. 3rd ed. Pearson Education.
- Shabihi, A. (2002). *A Contrastive-Symbolic Analysis of Idioms in Persian and Azeri*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Islamic Azad University. Tehran Markaz Branch.
- Shafizadeh, S. (2003) *A Phonological and Morphological comparison between Miyane Turkish and Tabriz Turkish*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Islamic Azad University. Tehran Markaz Branch.
- Shahidi-Tabar, M. (2012). *Cross-cultural speech act realization: the case of requests in the Persian and Turkish speech of Iranian speakers*. *International Journal of Business and Social science*. Vol. 3 No. 13; July 2012.
- Shahidi-Tabar, M. & Akbari-Malek, L. (2012). *Delving into speech act of requests of Iranian Turkish informants*. *Social and Behavioral Sciences* 70 (2013) 1724 – 1731
- Hajiloo, T. (2002). *Describing Zazani Turkish Simple Sentences according to Chafe (1970) Model*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Shiraz University.
- Yule G.. (2003). *The Study of Language*. 2nd ed. Cambridge. Cambridge University.