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A Study of Idiomatic Expressions in Persian and Lurish

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Introduction

Phraseology and idiomatic expressions are branches of linguistics that are closely related and deal with proverbs and idioms respectively. Seale's advice that we "speak idiomatically unless there is some special reason not to" (Seale, 1979, 50). However, in Spain, a group of linguists claims that the use of proverbs and idioms is not advisable. The reason for this counsel is that they are generalizations of both knowledge and linguistic expression, which may be contradictory. In relation to other languages, Čermák (1998) says that proverbs have a high index of use and that 80% of them are prototypical, since they are used as general statements expressing accepted truth and shared experience.

Phraseology represents a field of lexicology dealing with grammaticalized lexis which has only recently been recognized as a branch of study in its own right. The problems in establishing the limits of phraseology are related, on the one hand, to its synchronic and diachronic variations (Moon R.1998; Giegerich. 2004), and, on the other hand, to the most opaque and fixed ones and, also, to the most transparent and variable ones (Cowie 1998:4-7; Howarth 1998: 168-171; Gross 1996:78) in relation to teaching, and especially to second language learning.

Idioms form a large part of each language and sometimes are created according to individual's world view and express their perception of the society and the world. However, there are many other reasons for the formation of items like, idioms, simile, metaphor, etc. So, in view of the seriousness of the case, because the nations may not be able to perceive each other's speech, understanding of the idioms is necessary. It is evident that without understanding idioms, perception of speech may become difficult.

Persian Language and Its Subgroups

Persian language and its sub-groups are filled with idioms and proverbs, and it is better for the learners of this language to understand them. Research in Iranian languages, as an important branch of Indo-European languages, is very necessary. Till now, a lot of work has been done on Iranian languages, their lexicography, phonetics, and grammatical and structural systems.

The first investigation in this field is from the middle ages. Many of the western, eastern and also Iranian researchers studied historic works in Persian such as Avesta and Old Iranian Inscriptions (Oranskij, 1959). By the spread of historical and comparative linguistics, in the 19th century, the importance of Iranian languages became manifest more than in the past.

Iran is a multilingual and diverse cultural society, and the majority of the population is extremely young. Nearly one-half of the people speak Farsi (Persian), and another one-fourth speaks some other Indo-European languages or dialects, like: Azæri, Kordi, Gilæki, Mazændærani, Bæluchi, Læki, and Luri. There are also several sub-dialects and many accents throughout this country. These are descendants of the Aryan tribes, whose origins are lost in antiquity. With due attention to the works and researches in this background, we introduce a part of the Lurish dialect in this article. Lurish is as an important Iranian dialect which has more than 4,000,000 speakers. However, this work is not exhaustive.

The Lurish Studies

The linguistic and cultural studies prove that Lurish has a very profound relationship with other Aryan language. Examination of its structure, phonology, morphology, and also selection of the words reveals this. This dialect is not only a sub-dialect of Persian language, but also is a dialect of the Old Persian Language, which can be placed on the same plane with the new Persian Language. On the other hand, according to Kalbasi's opinion, the Iranian dialects are not branches of Persian language, but both of Iranian dialects and Persian language have separated from a whole language that she called it "First (Old) Iranian Language" (Kalbasi, 2007). This language is the same that is classed under Indo-European and Indo-Iranian languages. So all of Iranian languages have some similarities because they have separated from a single mother and have some differences because they have parted with each other over the time.

In contrast to this, in the last part of this article you can see some similarities and differences existing between Persian and Lurish idioms.

In the current study, we focus on the following hypothesis:

Idioms are expressed similarly by Persian and Lurish speakers.

What is an Idiom?

An idiom is a term or phrase whose meaning cannot be deduced from the literal definitions and the arrangement of its parts. An idiom refers to a figurative meaning that is known only through common use. In linguistics, idioms are widely assumed to be figures of speech that contradict the principle of compositionality; however, this has been shown to be a subject of debate. It may be better to refer to idioms as John Saeed has said: words collocated together happen to become fossilized, becoming fixed over time. This collocation, words commonly used in a group, changes the definition of each of the words that form the collocation. As an expression, the word-group becomes a team, so to speak. That is, the collocated words develop a specialized meaning as a whole and thus an idiom is born.

In other words an idiom is a combination of words that has a meaning that is different from the meanings of the individual words themselves. It can have a literal meaning in one situation and a different idiomatic meaning in another situation. It is a phrase which does not always follow the normal rules of meaning and grammar.

In the English expression *to kick the bucket*, for example, a listener knowing only the meaning of *kick* and *bucket* would be unable to deduce the expression's actual meaning, which is *to die*. Although it can refer literally to the act of striking a specific bucket with a foot, native speakers rarely use it that way. It can not be directly translated into other languages. The same expression in Persian is "*Ghæzæl-e xoda hafezi ra xand-æn*" (to recite the goodbye lyric poem), which is entirely different from the English expression.

Idiom is defined as a set and a multi-elemental group of words. It can also be defined as a lexical entity with the following characteristics: The complete meaning cannot be derived from the meaning of the individual element, e.g., *to have a crush on someone* that means to be 'in love with someone'. And the substitution of any one of the elements does not often bring about a systematic change of its meaning e.g. *to have a smash on someone*.

Many idioms have similar to expressions in other languages and can be easily understood by a learner. But frequently, there is a diachronic connection between the literal readings and the idiomatic readings, and idioms come from older phrases which have changed over time. For example, *to hold one's horses* means 'to stop and wait patiently for someone or something'. It comes from a time when people rode horses and would have to hold their horses while waiting for someone or something. In such cases, the treatment of the idiom whose meaning can not derived from the meanings of individual elements can be untenable.

The Different Forms of Idiom

Depending upon the theoretical preconception, various kinds of sayings, figures of speech, nominal constructions, and twin formulas are all subsumed under idioms.

Sometimes, the meaning of an idiom is similar to the meaning of a simple word, e.g., *kick the bucket*, means 'die'. See here how the idiomatic phrase gives its meaning in one word.

There are also some expressions that are named partial idiom. In such idioms, one of the words has its common and formal meaning but the other has a figurative sense as a result of special sequence. E.g. *white wine* that is in fact yellow. Comedians use such idioms as a joke. For example, when asked them to *speak frankly* (openly) they immediately remove the room curtains.

Metaphors are another kind of idiom, i.e., the word that has one or several figurative meanings in addition to its literal meaning. "*He knew he was cooked when he saw his boss standing at the desk*". *Cooked* means either caught or responsible for the wrong doings prior to being caught, one is finished or unfinished.

One of the common idioms is verbal phrase that includes a verb and an adverb, like: put down, give in, make up and there are often simple words that are synonymous with such verbs like: quell, yield, invent. As an example, in the present dialect take *bær ?amædæn* means *tolu?* (*Rising*), *foru- nešandæn* means *sær- kubi* or *tæskin dadæn* (*quell*).

Proverbs are the most common idioms, with some difference in form, structure and function. The short speech or sentences that are generally known by many people, usually contains words of wisdom, truth or morals that are based on common sense or practical

experience. They are often the description of a basic rule of conduct that all people generally follow or should follow. Proverbs are found in all languages.

What is the Difference between Idiom and Proverb?

If you say: "The cat is out of the bag" instead of "The secret is given away," you're using an idiom. But "An apple a day keeps the doctor away" is a proverb. Proverbs are old but familiar sayings that usually give advice unlike idioms.

Friedrich Seiler (1939) presented an important definition for proverb. He defined proverb as follows: "The prominent, articulated, advisory, and free speeches that are current in people's language."

The proverb is a complete sentence with a firm structure that is based on an unchangeable foundation, like "xast-æn tævanest-æn?æst", 'where there's a will there's a way', or "juy-ændeh yab-ændeh bovæd", 'one who seeks will find'. Proverbs represent a complete piece of information because they can occur as a sentence. They are meaningful by themselves. In contrast, idioms are not syntactically independent because they can not always occur as full sentences, but as a part of a sentence.

As it was said, the difference between proverb and idiom pertains to their form, structure, and function. Contrary to the proverbs, idioms are the general and current phrases that must be substituted in sentences so as to obtain a complete sense. These phrases can change according to time adverb, subject, and object. Explanation of an idiom is possible in the sentence with some additions like: "dæst-e kæs-i ra kutah kærd-æn", to curtail a person's hand (to curtail a person's power) or "gelim-e xod ra ?æz ?ab kešid-æn", to bring out from water one's own coarse carpet (to [be able to] manage one's own affairs; the concept and communication of these idioms don't have any physical relation with hand and coarse carpet. In other words the meaning of sentence is not perceived from its component words. The idioms carry the substance of speech. They must be used in a complete sentence to indicate their concept.

What is the Difference between Dialect and Accent?

The linguists have different definitions for language and propounded them necessarily before describing the difference between dialect and accent.

From a dialectological view, language may have two features: firstly, it would be the official language of a country, like the Persian language in Iran.

Secondly, as compared with other languages and dialects around its own, it would have been derived from another original tongue. The Modern Persian Language is a continuation of Middle and Ancient Persian. If you say that the first Persian language separated from Indo-Iranian language long time back, so all of Iranian languages, whether ancient or modern, have some similarities because they have separated from one mother, and have some differences because they have parted with each other in a long time. But, in order to express the difference between dialects and accent one must say that they are not only to be cognate, derived, but elicited as standard from a single language with a common origin.

The most essential reason for the appearance of dialects is geographical distance. Among the effective factors which contribute to dialect and accent are cultural and regional customs, social and economic class, the scale of literacy, etc. In addition to these, factors like the number of speakers, availability of written literature and lingual relationship interfere in the trio, language-dialect-accent. In fact, accent is a subset of dialect and a language will have some dialects. In the same way a dialect can have different accents. Sometime, the same dialects are different not only in accent but also in some words and terms, and they have sometime a little grammatical difference too.

If we accept that accent is contained in all the phonetic characteristics or accent is a manner of pronunciation in both at the individual and collective levels, so we have numerous differences and change of pronunciations, equal to the number of individuals. But, sometimes the differences are beyond pronunciations. Then it means that the differences are pertaining to lexical and grammatical expression of the language, this phenomenon is called dialect.

Research Method

Studying six months several books and articles about idioms, proverbs and their structure and function, paved the way for the present researchers to present this paper to shed some light on the blurred issue of idiomatic expressions. Meanwhile, to proceed with Lurish dialect, proposed definitions of dialect and accent were necessary. So as a component of this paper, accent and dialect are compared. The research is based on this approach.

1-Fieldwork: In this phase thirty Lurs informants have been interviewed and studied carefully.

2- Library reference: Theoretical discussions about idiom, proverb, dialect and related topics have been covered.

3- Surfing the Internet to find out what is going on in the world in this regard.

Participants

Thirty numbers of Lurs, male and female, were used as informants in this research. Fifteen out of thirty were young, between thirteen and twenty and the other fifteen of were middle aged, between thirty and forty five. The informants all were educated from the high school degree to master degree.

Procedure

Inviting 30 Lurs, in this study, the process has been done as follows: At first some Persian idioms were presented to them and they were asked to write their Lurish equivalents. There was a probability that the younger ones do not know all of Lurish equivalents of the idioms because they had more contacts with Persian language via television and other communication means. And moreover, they act intentionally to speak Persian and keep off from their dialect. The probability was right; the younger informants did not know more than 50% of Lurish equivalent of the idioms. They only expressed Persian idioms in a different accent or asked their equivalents from their parents.

The other phase of this research was examination and comparison of thirty five of Persian and Lurish idioms for understanding what percentage of Persian idioms have equivalents in Lurish dialect. It was concluded that most of Persian idioms are used in Lurish with the same form and meaning but with a different accent.

Results and Conclusion

In this research we tried to show that Lurish as a main dialect of Indo-Iranian language must be taken into consideration in linguistic research, since this dialect with more than four million speakers in a multilingual country can have a big influence on linguistics

studies. This dialect is filled up with idioms and proverbs. These will disappear in course of time if we do not pay attention to them. Development of communication means and their influence on accents and dialects is ever-increasing and especially on native idioms and proverbs which have been in decreased use; they may be ignored in future completely just as many of them are not used now by young speakers.

During the work on this article we discovered that in comparison with elders, younger people usually cannot find the same idiom or proverb in their dialect when they hear a Persian's one. In addition, it is clear that Lurs, because of their so similarity with other Iranian tribes in their world view, religion, and a common language origin, etc., have many similar idioms and proverbs that are different only in pronunciation, and sometimes in optional words. The result of the comparison of Persian and Lurish idioms showed that 71% of Persian idioms are used in Lurish dialect without any significant difference. In fact Lurs used such Persian idioms in their accent so that they are comprehensible for every person speaking Persian.

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Appendices

Some Persian and Lurish Idioms

There are many idioms in Persian. Without understanding these idioms a foreigner cannot understand the figurative meaning of most utterances. Some of these idioms are prevalent in Lurish dialect also. There are also many native idioms borrowed from ancient times. Younger people probably don't understand them easily, like "*sær-e xiš gereftæn*", "*donbal-e kar-e xod ræftæn*" (*to go to someone after his/her work*). Such idioms are found in the texts of Persian like *Golestan-e Sa?di*.

Lurish often has its own idioms, but, nowadays, Persian idioms have penetrated in Lurish with different pronunciations because of its influence on the public communication, especially television, e.g., *xoši zæde zir-e del-eš/ xoši ziya zir-e del-eš*, for someone who don't know the value of happiness. This list presents some Persian idioms whit their Lurish pronunciation and some explanation in Persian and English for them.

_?æz kah kuh saxt-an: make a mountain out of chaff

_ze ka ku saxt-e

Make a mountain out of a molehill: make something seem much more important than it really is.

* * * * *

Dær dæGhiGhe nævæd: in the ninetieth minute

Dæm-e ?axer: in the last breath, in the last moment : "dæm-e ?axær nom-eš ya-m oma." , "I remember his/her name at the last moment."

At the eleventh hour: at the last minute; almost too late

* * * * *

Mesl-e ?ab-e xord-æn-e: it is as like as drinking water

Jur-e ?o-e hærd-æ: "dærs hæm-e jur-e ?o-e hærd-e-næ.", "studding is as like as drinking water."

Be a piece of cake: be very easy

* * * * *

Vær šekæst-e šod-æn: be broken

Ver-eškes-æ : "?u ver-eškes-æ n-on-æ Ghærz-eš-e be-y-æ.", "He/she is broken, he/she can not pay his/her debt."

be broke: be without money.

* * * * *

Kuft-e, mord-e: paralysis, exhausted, dead

Šækæt / šæl-e šækæt: "de sö zi kar kerd-em-æ šæl-e, šækæt-æm.", "I have worked from early morning, I am exhausted."

Beat: exhausted; very tired (adj.)

* * * * *

Zæd be kuče Ali čæp: "He/she hit to Ali Chæp Avenue.", "He/she doesn't attention me"

Zæ kuče Ali čæp:

Beat around the bush: evade an issue; avoid giving a direct answer.

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Bæd dæhan, bæd zæban, dæhan læGh: bad mouth, bad tongue, loose tongue

Bæd dæm, bæd zevo,rowyi: "deš xoš-em ne-me-yæ si yæ ke ?ayem-e rowyi-yæ." "I don't like him/her because he/she is a blabber mouth person."

Blabber mouth: a very talkative person, especially one who says things that should be kept secret.

* * * * *

Xun be juš ?amæd-æn: to boil the blood, become very angry

Xin ve juš ?oma-e: "xin-em ve juš ?oma.", " I became very angry."

Blow one's top: become extremely angry

* * * * *

"Del-æm por-e xun ?æst.": my heart is full of blood (for a very sad person)

"Del-em por de xin-æ.", "I am too sad."

I am sore-hearted

* * * * *

Del-e kæs-i ra šekæst-æn : to break somebody's heart

Del eškes-æ: "tu del-e da?a-t-e ešken-o-ei.", You broke your mother's heart."

Break someone's heart: make someone feel very disappointed/discouraged/sad

* * * * *

Kæneh: tick: *mesl-e kæneh čæsbid-æn* , to stick like a leech, to cause inconvenience

Žoyi: resin, gum: "čo žoyi më-čæsb-i-yæ ve ?ayem.", "He/she glue others like resin."

Bug: annoy, bother, to molest a person

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kælle šæGh / yek dændeh: stiff head, one rib(adj.) pertinacious, dogged

ye:gær, "?ëGhæ ye:gær n-a.", "don't be so bull-headed."

Bull-headed: stubborn; inflexible.

* * * * *

Ta bang-e xorus / ta xorus xan: till the crow of cock, until the early morning

Ta bong-e xorus: "ta bong-e xorus biyar bi-mæ.", "I was awake till the cock's crow."

Burn the midnight oil: study/work all night or until very, very late at night.

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Dæst-e kæs-i næmæk næ-dašt-æn: (always negative), no salt for someone's hand, the value of his/her work is not understood

Dæs-e yæk-i xoa daš-e: "Dæs-em xoa n-ar-æ.", (my hand doesn't have salt); "nobody understands my works value."

* * * * *

gereft-æn: 1- to get, to catch: to understand, 2- to kid

geret-e: 1-"næ-geret-æm mænzur-et čen-æ?", "I don't understand, what you mean"

2- "?ema-næ geret-i?", "Are you kidding?"

To get: to understand

* * * * *

1-?æ:sab-e kæs-I ra xærab/daGhan kærd-æn: to ruin or shatter someone's nerves

-?æ:sab-e yæk-i-ne xero/ daGo kerd-e: "?æsab-e-mexero/ daGo kerd.", "He/she made me angry."

2-?æ:sab-e kæs-I ra be ham rixt-æn: to spill somebody's nerves, to incense somebody

?æ:sab-e yæk-i-ne ve yæk rext-e: "?æ:sab-e-me ve yæk rext.", "He/she incensed me."

Get on one's nerves: irritate someone; make someone upset.

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Jonb-id-æn: to move, to shake, to hasten

Jümes-e: "væ-jüm ke dër mu-æ.", "get a move on or it will be late."

Get a move on: to hurry up

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Dæst be dæst-e hæm dad-æn: give the hand to each other: help each other

Dæs ve dæs de-e: "dæs ve dæs-e yæk de-im-o honæ-ne saxt-ëm.", "we gave each other a hand and made the house."

Give someone a hand: help someone

* * * * *

Xam: raw, an inexperience person

Xom: " ?aam-e xom-i-yæ.", "he/she is an inexperienced person."

Green: inexperienced

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del-e kæs-i gereft-æn: somebody's heart is caught ,he/she is feeling sad
del-e kæsi gret-e: "del-em geret-e-sæ si yæ ke bæči-ya-me n-ey-mæ.", "I am filling sad because I have not seen my children for a long time."

Feel blue: feel sad and depressed

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Dæst bænd bud-æn: to have a closed hand, be busy

Dæs bæn bi-e: "dæs-em bæn-æ, dar-em Geza më-pæz-em." , "I am busy, I'm cooking."

have one's hands full: be extremely busy.

* * * * *

?æz zir-o zebær-e čiz-I xæbær dašt-æn / zir-o zebær-e čiz-I ra danest-æn: to know something's under and over, have a complete information of something

Zër-e tæ-e čne der oerd-e: "hær či de baræ computer me-ho-i de Ali bæ-pors, ?o zër-o tæ-še der-oerd-æ." , "Ask Ali whatever you want about computer, He know its backwards and forwards."

know something backwards and forwards: know/understand something completely and thoroughly.

* * * * *

?atæš be-bar-æd/ seyl be-y-a-y-æd: If it rain fire or if it flood. It's not different; a schedule must be done (performed).

Tæš bares-e/ læf ?oma-e: "sü tæš-æm b-oar-æ, læf-æm be-ya mē-rim." , "we will go tomorrow if it rain or shine."

rain or shine: (describing something scheduled) no matter what the weather

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Dæst-e kas-i ra xand-æn: to understand someone's plan

Dæs-e kæs-i-ne hæn-e: "dæs-e ?o-ne hæn-em, don-em mē-ha či bæk-æ." , "I read his/her mind, I know what he/she want to do."

read someone's mind: know what someone is thinking

* * * * *

?aš-i ?æst ke xod-eš poxt-e: he/she has cooked a food himself/herself, he/she is responsible for his/her work

Yæ Gor-i-yæ ke xo-š si xo-š kæn-æ: this is a tomb that he/she delved himself/herself.

someone's made his/her own bed; now let him/her lie in it.: Someone has caused his/her own problems; he/she will have to solve them himself/herself.

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Dir ya zud: late or soon, finally, at last

Dër ya zi: "xo-m dër yt zi mē-fæm-em." , "I will understand sooner or later."

sooner or later: eventually

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1-Sæxt gereft-æn, 2-rahæt bud-æn: 1-to take difficult (usually uses in a negative sentence and means: be lenient), 2- to be at east
sæxt ne-eir: "bël væče rahæt bo-æ, sæxt ne-eir" , "let him/her be at east, take it easy."

take it easy: relax

* * * * *

Sorx šod-æn : to become red

Sör bi-ye:" væxt-I hali-m bi ?ešteba kerd-em-æ sör bi-em" ," when I understood I have mistook, I was embarrassed."

Was my face red: I was very embarrassed

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