



## Language Distribution in Markazi Province

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### Abstract

Markazi province is located in the center of Iran with 1.8% of the area of Iran and approximately 1% of the Iran population. In this research, based on the instructions of the “Atlas of the Languages of Iran (ALI)”, the language distribution and the approximate percentage of the speakers of Markazi province were obtained. The results show that the local Persian language (Persian with an accent, for example, Araki Persian), standard Persian, Turkish group, Luri, Raji, Khalaji group and South Tati language group (including: Vafsi, Alviri, Kahaki, Vidari), Lakki and Kurdish have the most speakers in the province respectively. Vafsi, Kohki, Amrei, Raji, Alviri, Vidari languages are among the most endangered languages. Laki, Kurdish and Lori languages are local languages whose speakers have migrated to this province from other regions of the country, due to the industrial hub of Markazi Province. Statistical results of the research show that in Markazi province, speakers of the local Persian varieties include around 42.33%, speakers of standard Persian include around 33.11%, speakers of Turkish group around 14.36%, speakers of Lori group around 4.49%, speakers of mixed languages around 3.06%, speakers of Raji around 1.81%, speakers of Khalaji around 0.450%, speakers of South Tati language around 0.287 %, speakers of Laki of Kermanshah around 0.10%, and speakers of Kurdish around 0.003%, of the population of the province.

**Keywords:** Atlas of the Languages of Iran (ALI), Language Documentation, Language Distribution, Markazi Province.

### Extended Abstract:

#### 1. Introduction

Languages and dialects as social phenomena play a significant role in human life, so that the communicative role of language has caused the growth and

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development of human societies. Therefore, today, study, survey and research on culture and national identity is one of the basic needs of the development of every country. In this regard, human societies need linguistic maps, atlases, corpus data prepared on the basis of systematic methodology to documentation and record of existing language varieties. "Linguistic maps can be either display or interpretive". The current research is also based on the methodology of "Atlas of the Languages of Iran (ALI)", in order to identify and record the language varieties in Markazi Province systematically. ALI is a project that is building an atlas of the languages of Iran in collaboration with Carleton University of Canada, Leiden University of Holland, Bamberg University of Germany, Shahrekord University, Persian Gulf University, Razi University and Alexander Von Humboldt- Stiftung/ Foundation of Germany. There has been no such a comprehensive research, with a specific goal and a coherent and continuous activity on languages of Iran. Several researches have been done on the linguistic characteristics of the Markazi province, which can be mentioned as follows: Stillo (1981, 1971) presented a multiple classification of the Tati language based on the criteria of geographical proximity, linguistic and racial characteristics. He considered Tati as a language group and the subgroup that is related to the topic of the present research is the South Tati language, which according to the classification of Yarshater (1962, 1964 cited in Stillo 1981:140-141) includes "dialects in Ramand region of Qazvin (Takestan), common dialects in Eshthard, Alviri and Vidar dialects near Saveh, and Vafsi dialect in Arak. Other researchers such as, Shariat (2010), Safari (2003), Adelkhani (2002), Kia (1957), Moghadam (1950), have also conducted researches in some linguistic groups of the Markazi province, which are often in the form of field collection of words, idioms, proverbs, phonetic, phonemic, morphemic and syntactic characteristics. The importance of this research will be in completing the information of the ALI website in the language distribution section in Markazi Province, being done with this methodology for the first time. Of course, it should be acknowledged that previous studies regarding language distribution has helped researchers in doing this project. For instance, Moghadam's research is important as it is one of the first works done in language distribution in Markazi Province. He named the linguistic varieties of the province as dialects and divided them into the following four categories: "1- the dialects of Vafsi, Ashtian, Tafresh and Amore, 2- the dialect of the nomads of Zand, 3- the dialect of the Gypsies, and 4- the dialects of Khalaj and Turkic". Desme-Gregoire and Fontaine (1991) also point to the spread of Turkish language in Markazi Province and in areas such as Rudbar-Tafresh, some villages in Farahan, Arak, Shazand and Komijan; They mention Raji or Rayeji language used in Dilijan and Mahalat; They also discuss the distribution of Tati language as follows: Vafsi language is common in Komijan, Alwiri in Zarandiyeh, and Kahaki in Tafresh, Chehragani and Vafsi are common in the west and south of Hamedan province.

The purpose of the current research is to investigate the language distribution of Markazi Province, and the results of the collected data are presented as an estimate of the proportion of speakers in every spoken language as a mother tongue. In order to achieve this goal, researchers have tried to answer the following questions: “In each of the settlements of Markazi Province, what languages and their sub-varieties are spoken as mother tongue?” “What percentage of language varieties are spoken in Markazi province?” “What are the local pronunciations for the names of each of the settlements in Markazi Province?” Today, the official names of places are mentioned on road signs, geographical maps, conversations, official newspapers, and letters from official and unofficial institutions. Finding the local pronunciation or toponymy of each village helps to investigate local languages. As the present research was performed in the framework of ALI’s online research program, the questionnaires are derived from ALI’s website, the raw data will be interpreted based on the Nonalite software, Language distribution maps of Markazi province will be available and presented online in the form of interactive maps.

## **2. Methodology**

The current research has proceeded step by step based on the methodology determined in ALI. First, a list of all settlements in Markazi province, including cities and villages as provincial sub-district, were downloaded from the website of Iranian Statistic Centre in the Excel file format; Then, Along with the Persian names of the settlements, their official names in Latin in one column and their local pronunciation in another column were transcribed based on the principles of ALI’s transcription. Finally, based on the list of settlements, the language or varieties of language that are common in each settlement and the approximate number of speakers who speak that language among the entire settlement were determined. It should be mentioned that the pronunciations of the local names of the settlements were asked from the speakers who were fluent in the native language of that region. Then the residents of the area were asked what language they speak and what they call it in the local language. In the case of multilingual settlements, the estimated percentage of native speakers of each language variety was calculated. In addition to the local residents, the ones who were interested in language issues like teachers, or who were familiar with languages of the region like peddlers who were always traveling between settlements or members of village council were asked to estimate the speakers of each language variety.

## **3. Result and Discussion**

Most of the settlements in Markazi province speak local Farsi, standard Farsi and Turkish respectively. The approximate percentage of speakers is provided

based on the population of the settlements, and about 78% is estimated for the Persian language (standard and local), and Arak, Saveh, Shazand, Khomein, and Mahalat respectively have the highest number of Persian speakers; Then there are Turkish speakers with 15%; After them, Lori, Raji, Khalaji and South Tati have the most speakers in the province; and Ashtiani dialect is among the endangered and extinct languages of the province.

#### 4. Conclusions and suggestions

The results showed that the largest number of speakers of languages in Markazi province belong to two language groups: Farsi (standard and local) and Turkish. Speakers of languages of Lori, Raji, Khalaji, Tati and then Kurdish and Laki are in the next phase. It can be said that the distribution of bilinguals in the province is more than monolinguals. Some factors such as: migration, forced displacement and changes caused by the political and geographical borders of the province that have brought together different ethnic groups are the main causes of the distribution of bilinguals. The study of language distribution in the provinces of Isfahan, Lorestan, Qazvin, Qom and Hamedan, which is on the agenda of ALI, will surely help the knowledge of the language in Markazi province.

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