

7 - Persian: some information

Fārsi فارسی

Dari دری

Fārsi-e Dari فارسی دری

Tāġiki تاجیکی

Aim: To provide a brief overview of one of the languages spoken by large number of refugees

Having an insight into how the Persian languages work may be helpful in understanding the challenges speakers of these languages face when learning a new one and what, on the other hand, might be relatively easy for them. Also, refugees may appreciate it if you ask them to help you to pronounce the names of persons and places correctly and if you at least try to use some words or phrases of their languages (see "[Language of Origin](#)").

Where the languages are spoken

About 130 million people around the world speak Persian and around 70 million people speak Persian as first language. The designations Farsi and Dari are historically equivalent but Dari is the variety of Persian used mainly in Afghanistan, alongside Pashto, whereas Tajik is the variety that is spoken mainly in Tajikistan.

Persian is the official language in Iran, in Afghanistan (together with Pashto) and in Tajikistan. As a minority language Persian is spoken in Uzbekistan, in areas of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Russia, Pakistan and China, and by immigrants in all parts of the world, especially in North America, Israel and Bahrain.

A particularity of the Persian language is that it was able to withstand the dominance of the Arabic language and remain one of a few languages of the Middle East and Central Asia.

The Ottoman rulers, and also the Mughals in India chose Persian temporarily as a court and correspondence language while the entire language area was under foreign rule.

The fact that Persian prevailed is often attributed to the poetry and descriptive power of the language.

Borrowings

There are some common words that have their origins in the Persian language, for example:

- bazaar: bāzār.
- caravan: kārewān.
- magician: moġ.
- paradise: pardis.

Some peculiarities of the Persian script

The Persian script consists basically of the Arabic alphabet. Like Arabic it is a cursive script and is read and written from right to left. The Arabic alphabet has 28 letters and was extended in Persian by the letters p, g, ž and č. However, in Tajikistan the Cyrillic alphabet is used.

Some phrases in Persian

Good morning!	صبح بخیر sobh bexejr
Hello!	روز بخیر ruz bexejr
Good bye!	خداحافظ xodā hāfez
How are you?	حالت چطورده؟ چطوری؟ hālet četore? četori?
Yes	بله bale
No	نه na
Thank you	مرسی، سپاس، تشکر، ممنون mersi, sepās, tašakkor, mamnun
Welcome!	خوش آمدید! xoš āmadid!

Numbers

1	jek	۱
2	do	۲
3	se	۳
4	čāhār	۴
5	panğ	۵
6	šeš	۶
7	haft	۷
8	hašt	۸
9	noh	۹
10	dah	۱۰

Syntax

In Persian the verb comes at the end of the sentence. Otherwise word order is determined by the relative importance of the different elements in the sentence. The most important element, usually the subject, always comes first.

If a question does not begin with a question word, you can hear from the intonation or gather from the context that a question is being asked. In the written language question marks, exclamation marks, quotation marks, and occasionally full stops may not be used.

Excerpt from a poem in Persian

If the world were only in my hands
I would bring it to the end of time
And create a world that's better
Where all men get their just desserts

گر بـر فلکـم دسـت بـدی چـون یـزدان
gar bar falakam dast bodi čun jazdān
بـرداـشـتـمـی مـن اـیـن فـلک رـا ز مـیـان
bardāštami man in falak rā tze mijān
و ز نو فلکی دگر چنان ساختمی
waz no falaki degar čonān sāxtami
کـازادـه بـه کـام دـل رـسـیـدی آسـان
kāzāde be kām-e del residi āsān
خـیـآم، قـرن شـشـم خـورـشـیـدی
(xajjām, ġarn-e šešom xoršīdi)

Omar Khayyam, 11th/12th century (Rinner, Horst (2007). *Mystische Rubaiyate – Omar Khayyam / Vierzeiler der Lebensfreude*. Graz: M+N Medienverlag).

Source: "Sprachensteckbrief Persisch", Schule Mehrsprachig, Eine Information des Bundesministeriums für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur – © Nassim Sadaghiani (translated in English and adapted).