

The Sikh's Society in Zahedan and Their Multilingualism

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Abstract

The social state of the Sikh's society and their language(s) in Zahedan, located in southeastern Iran, are studied in this paper. The study communicates general information about the Sikhs in this city such as the formation of this society and their population in Zahedan, their social life, and the languages they speak; some of them resulted from the language contacts. The data was gathered by interviewing eight middle-aged Sikh males and from the Documents Center and National Library of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Zahedan. The investigation reveals that almost a large number of Sikhs have migrated from India to Iran, for a better life, during the early years of the 20th century, and that different factors have gradually caused their population to decrease severely. The Sikhs have been prosperous sellers, and their social communication has been highly limited among themselves. Sikhs, who were already multilingual, have added the languages of Persian, Balochi, and the Sistani dialect, all spoken in Zahedan, to their list of multilinguality. Among these varieties, they can speak Persian, the dominant language, more fluently. The phenomenon of language contact has had a lexical influence on the Panjabi spoken by the Sikhs in Zahedan.

Keywords: Language contact, Migration, Multilingualism, Sikh, Social life

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1. Introduction

This article studies the social state of the Sikh's society in Zahedan, located in the southeast of Iran, to provide overall information about the establishment of their community and their social life in this city, and with consideration of no specific social variables such as gender, occupation, or education, it sociolinguistically investigates their multilingualism out of the language contact. The field of sociolinguistics, which is an inter-disciplinary branch of linguistics, deals with the relationship between language and society. It studies the effect of society, including cultural norms and context on the way language is used. It is historically strongly related to Linguistic Anthropology revealed through the study of language and culture (Gumperz & Cook-Gumpers, 2008).

Fasold (2003, 2004) studies the subject of sociolinguistics under the two separate titles of the sociolinguistics of language and the sociolinguistics of society. He (*ibid*) believes that there is a distinction between the small-scale issues of forms and use of language, which stand under the former title, and the large-scale sociopolitical issues, which belong to the latter. Subjects such as address forms, discourse and pragmatics, Pidgin and Creole languages are studied in the sociolinguistics of language while the subjects of diglossia, language planning and standardization, and societal multilingualism, for example, are the concerns of the sociolinguistics of society.

Language contact, which can be one of the factors causing multilingualism, takes place when two or more languages or varieties interact. When speakers of different languages interact closely, it is typical for their languages to affect each other. It seems multilingualism has been frequent in many part of the human history and these days many people throughout the world are multilingual and it seems multilingual speakers are more numerous than the monolinguals (Tucker, 1999: 332).

Language contact, which is a dynamic field of study, is taken as a significant way of explaining language formation and language change. "Languages in contact are shaped not only by the dynamics of internal, evolutive language change, but also by processes of linguistic convergence and language mixing" (Deumert, 2005:114). Inter-cultural contact should be considered as an important cause in second language acquisition too. One of the main purposes

The Sikh's Society in Zahedan and Their Multilingualism

of learning second and foreign languages is to be able to communicate with members of other languages and cultures (Kormos & Csizér, 2007: 242).

This investigation gives a brief description of the Sikh society and their migration, as well as their social state in Zahedan, and reveals that how these immigrants can cope with the languages and dialects surrounding them. Persian and Balochi (mainly Sarhaddi dialect spoken in Zahedan, see Jahani & Korn, 2009) languages as well as the dialect of Sistani, which has the most significant numbers of speakers among the other varieties, are spoken in this city. During the early years of the 20th century, years ago before the independency of Pakistan from India, the Sikhs, who are originally from Panjab of India, started migration from the state of Panjab to this nearly border city in the southeast of Iran. Their population, which was more than 100 families at the end of the Second World War, almost the ending point of their migration, has decreased at the present time to less than 15 families in this city because of different reasons. The only workers of this society are the men and almost all of them are prosperous sellers. Sikhs, who were already multilingual, using Panjabi, Hindi, Urdu, and English while communication among themselves, have added the languages of Persian, Balochi, and the Sistani dialect, all spoken in Zahedan, to their list of multilinguality. Among these varieties, they can speak Persian, the dominant language, more fluently than the other two, but the accent of the little Balochi and Sistani they speak is more native-like than the Persian they speak. The phenomenon of language contact has lexically influenced the Panjabi spoken by the Sikhs in Zahedan.

The data for this study was gathered by interviewing 8 Sikh males of the middle aged from the different families, and from the Documents Center and National Library of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Zahedan. It should be mentioned that, as the access to the Sikhs' houses to interview the females was almost impossible according to the Sikh's social preferences and customs, the general information about the female's social lives and languages was obtained through the interviewing the males as their husbands or relatives. As the Sikh's society in Zahedan has highly shrunk, there has been nobody from the younger generation to be interviewed. All of the language consultants spoke Persian while interviewing.

1.1. Sikh's Society

Sikhs are the followers of the Indian monotheistic religion of Sikhism. They are the members of a religious group that separated from Hinduism during the 16th century and advocated a monotheistic doctrine, unifying some aspects of Islam¹. Chahal (2010: 11) cites from Bouquet (1954) that “Sikhism is the fruit of hybridization between Islam and Hinduism”. Sikhism, which is known as “the fifth largest organized world religion” (Ano *et.al.* 2009: 143, Barooah 2012), is founded by Guru Nanak in the Panjab region and is known as ‘Sikhi’ in Panjabi (Singh 2000). Chahal (2010: 12) points out that the Panjabi word ‘sikhi’, which means ‘teachings’, “has been anglicized as Sikhism” and not the word ‘Sikh’ which means “disciple in Sanskrit”. The term Sikh means devotee and student of the ‘Guru’ (Khushwant 2006:15), a Sanskrit word that means ‘teacher’ or ‘master’ (Forsthoefer & Humes 2005: 3).

The homeland of the Sikh population in the world is India. Panjab, located in the northwest of this country, is the place where the majority of the Sikhs inhabit, although a considerable diaspora have migrated to other parts of the world with highly retaining their typical culture and religious characters. The second half of the 19th century, when the annexation of the Panjab was accomplished by the British, was the main starting point of Sikh’s migration² (Dutt & Devgun 1977), though they somehow started to migrate from the First World War. Different factors, such as being recruited in the British Indian Army, building railways in different parts of the British Empire, seeking work, and the chaotic situation of the 1947, when India was divided into India and Pakistan, were involved in the Sikh migration³.

The mother tongue of Sikhs is Panjabi. Panjabi, descending from Sanskrit, is “a modern Indo-Aryan language spoken primarily in the Punjab states of both India and Pakistan” (Bhatia 2013: XXV). As India is one of the most multilingual countries in the world, it is not unusual for its people to be multilingual or at least bilingual. Fasold (2004: 20) cites from different sociolinguists that the number of languages in India reaches several hundreds. He (*ibid*) points out that “[t]he VIIIth schedule, a section of India’s constitution, lists 14 languages as ‘the

¹ Bing Dictionary, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Sikh>

²http://www.oxfordsikhs.com/SikhAwareness/Sikh-Population-Around-The-World_159.aspx (retrieved 2014)

³http://www.oxfordsikhs.com/SikhAwareness/Sikh-Population-Around-The-World_159.aspx (retrieved 2014)

The Sikh's Society in Zahedan and Their Multilingualism

languages of India”, which are divided into two major language families of the Indo-Aryan (such as Hindi, Panjabi also Punjabi, Urdu, and Sanskrit) and the Dravidian languages (such as Malayalam and Tamil). Hindi is selected as the national language and English is used as a government language in some states although it is not mentioned in the constitution. As a result, it is not uncommon that the most people of India can speak both Hindi and English (in some levels). Other languages that are spoken by some multilingual speakers in India are Urdu and Panjabi. Since Hindi and Urdu have the same phonological and grammatical systems (but different writing systems), Hindi-Urdu, as a language complex, merge into one as a link language to perform everyday communicative tasks (Fasold 2004: 22). And as for Panjabi, although it is not related closely to Hindi and Urdu, it has been considered part of the same language complex (Kachru & Bhatia 1978: 532 cited in Fasold 2004: 22), so it is not surprising if to see multilingualism among people of Panjab, for example, speaking and/or knowing four languages of Panjabi, Hindi, Urdu, and English.

1.2. How Sikhs came to Iran⁴

Since the early 1900s, there has been a connection between Sikhs and Iran, particularly during the First World War (1914-1918), when the British Indian Army saw the necessities for the extension of the railway from India to Dozdab, which at that time was a small town on the southeast border of Iran, to hold more easily accessible connection between the two countries. The history of Dozdab, the today modern Zahedan, backs to the ruling time of ‘Fat’h-Ali Shah’ (1797-1834), the second Qajar Emperor of Persia⁵. The town was formed during this period by settling people around a well, where the bandits used to rest there. Riyahi (1390: 18), citing from Jahanbani⁶, mentions that at first, the name was ‘Dozdan-e ab’ (the thieves of water) and then gradually reduced to ‘Dozdab’. Riyahi (*ibid*), citing from Yaghmaei 1355, continues that later, the formation of this settlement, where was close to the border of Iran and India of that time, attracted the attention of the Iran’s government and England to establish the Customs (around 1900) in this small town for the more and better relationships and trading. And this was one of the main reasons for Dozdab to be populated not only by the Iranian people themselves (such as

⁴ Some parts of this section is adapted from:

<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2001/20010422/spectrum/main1.htm>, retrieved 2014.

⁵<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/fath-ali-shah-qajar-2>,

<http://www.qajarpages.org/fathalishahchildren.html>

⁶ General Amanollah Mirza Jahanbani’s memories in the early years of 1900.

Sistani, Yazdi, Baloch, and Birjandi), but also by many Indians who were mainly the Sikhs. A large number of Sikhs, either being members of the British Indian Army or of the other people, who were seeking a better life before and especially after the partition of India into Pakistan and India, outflow into Iran and initially settled in Dozdab. After 1919, when the railway was connected to Iran border, almost 3000 out of about 5000 inhabitants in Dozdab were the foreigners (Maberly 1369, Jahanbani⁷, cited in Riyahi 1390: 19).

The Second World War (1939-1945) was another point in the history when more Sikh people were brought to Iran as soldiers and drivers by the British Army. The soldiers were also used as the workers to build and expand the railway connecting India to Iran, and the drivers were to transport food for the Army and the equipment and materials necessary for building the railway. As the war was over, the process of the railway was stopped while it had just been reached Zahedan. After the war, the British army left Iran but not with all the Sikh soldiers and drivers, for, some of them had chosen to stay in this country. The partition of India into India and Pakistan in 1947 increased the migration of the Indians to other countries including Iran. Ahmed (2012: VIII) points out that in the migration of 1947, “10 million Punjabis had been driven away from their ancestral abodes: it is the greatest forced migration in modern history”.

After a while, many of the Sikhs gradually moved from Zahedan to the capital, Tehran. Almost all of the migrants have had good job opportunities and have been prosperous businessmen. They have traditionally been traders in Tehran and Zahedan and ‘most of the rich families in India have their links and relatives in Iran’. The Iran revolution of 1979 and following that the Iraq-Iran War were of the main reasons for decreasing the Sikh population in Iran especially in Zahedan. During the early years of this period, their businesses were not any more flourishing as before. Disliking compulsory military services in Iran and preferring to go abroad for higher education by the Sikhs have been of the other factors shrinking the Sikh’s society in Iran. In 2001, the leaders of the Sikh communities indicated that the once large and wealthy Sikh Indian community in Iran has been ‘declining with just about 100-odd families left’ in Tehran,

⁷ Jahanbani, Amanollah (Bita), *Amaliyat-e Ghoshoon dar Baluchestan*. Tehran: Chapkhane-ye Majles (This reference is as it is in the main source, Riyahi 1390, without the year of publishing).

and that 'there are barely 20 families still remaining in Zahedan' (see fn. 5 for the direct quotations in this part).

2. Sikh's society in Zahedan

Zahedan is the centre of the Sistan and Baluchestan province located in the southeast of Iran. It is a border city close to the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan, where war and hunger have forced many uninvited guests migrating to Zahedan during the recent decades. People living in this city are mostly Sistani. The second most populations are Baloch and the other people coming from the other parts of Iran. Afghan and Sikh migrants are at the bottom of the population hierarchy. The language varieties spoken in Zahedan are Persian, the standard language of Iran, Balochi, and the Sistani dialect, as well as the Birjandi, Yazdi, and Kermani accents of Persian. Sikhs are not the new migrants to Zahedan. As mentioned previously, they started to come to this city as drivers (many of whom had worked in the British Army) and merchants, many years before the partition of India in 1947, when Iran was a neighbor of India having a shared border in Zahedan area (in Mirjaveh very close to Zahedan). Drivers and traders, who carried or merchandised goods, spice, and other products such as pistachio between Iran and India in the early years of 20th century, gradually decided to reside in Iran and carry out their jobs in this country. This was coincided with the foundation of the Customs in Dozdab, the old name of Zahedan (Riyahi 1390: 20). As some of the language consultants mentioned, their families came to Iran around 1909 and 1913, and they themselves were born in Zahedan. At the moment, almost all of them are prosperous sellers possessing different types of shops.

The railway connecting Quetta (in Pakistan) to Zahedan (in Iran) has been one of the main reasons for the development of the settlement Dozdab (Zahedan). The Indians, particularly the Sikh workers, building the railway, were somehow involved in the establishing and developing of this city by building their houses there and starting new businesses. Their houses were built from the materials, such as timbers⁸, bricks, and iron brought from India, and their jobs were selling, for example, medicinal plants, spare pieces of cars, and housewares (Soltani 1377: 22-24). Most of them, although, never formally changed their nationality, remained in their new

⁸Soltani (1377: 25) mentions that in Zahedan, she visited a Sikh's house whose ceiling was made of the timbers brought from India with the name of 'Dozdab' imprinted on them.

hometown, Zahedan, and lived there for the rest of their lives. The religious place, 'gurdwara', the Sikhs have made in Zahedan has been 'the first gurdwara not only in Iran but in the entire Arab world'.

Soltani (1377: 25) referring to the interview she had with Gurbakhsh Shahpuri, one of the Sikh residents who arrived in Zahedan in 1932 (1310), points out some of the reasons caused Sikh migration to Zahedan as: working in the railway building, employed as the reliable people in charge for the English army's food supplies coming from India to Dozdab, and the golden economic opportunities they had in this town; Gurbakhsh, the interviewee, stated that, before his migration to Iran, his brother sent him a letter to India remarking that 'money is pouring from the sky here in Dozdab'. The Sikh Bazar occupied the central parts of the town (Afrakhteh 2006: 431). In addition to the foundation of the Customs around 1900 in Dozdab, and the railway, as the language consultants declared, other factors such as being accepted as the new comers to the town by the natives and the safety they felt at their new hometown were also engaged in the migration to and the remaining of the Sikhs in Zahedan.

For renaming of Dozdab to Zahedan, there is a story that says the name Zahedan was given to this city by Reza Shah Pahlavi after facing the Sikhs in the city. When the Shah visited the city, the presence of many Sikhs with their traditional appearance among the residents misled the Shah to take them as pious Muslims, so renamed Dozdab to Zahedan, which means noble and devout people in Persian⁹ (Claremont 1962: 68). This story was also mentioned by some of the consultants while being interviewed. However, renaming of Dozdab to Zahedan is said to be taken from the great old city of 'Zaidan', at a time existed some twenty miles off Sistan with the uninterrupted length of "some eighty or ninety miles", a city whose probable long stretch of ruins spread from the north "to the east and south-east of Rustam's city" (Landor 1902: XX, XXVI).

Pakistan independency from India can be accounted as another reason which persuaded many other Sikh traders and drivers not to back to the new India that at that time had become far from and was not anymore a neighbor of Iran. To enter India, they would have to cross Pakistan,

⁹Keyhan International, June 26, 1976, *Fathers of the Indian Community Look Back*, <http://www.kobi.ca/history.html>, retrieved 2014.

The Sikh's Society in Zahedan and Their Multilingualism

where would cause them lots of difficulties relating their travelling and transporting. From this time onwards, the population of Sikhs in Zahedan reached around 100 families, which included about 500 people. But this is not the whole story. After a while, a group of these families, who were not satisfied by their jobs in Zahedan, migrated to Tehran for obtaining better trading and other job opportunities. This migration started about 40 years ago before the Islamic Revolution and continued after that especially during the first decade after the revolution. This phenomenon, at first, decreased the number of the families from 100 to about 50 in Zahedan. Leaving Zahedan for Tehran was not the only factor of decreasing the population of Sikhs in this city. Some of the Sikhs left this city and also the country just after the revolution because they were afraid of losing their jobs or that the new situations and conditions of the country might affect their ways of living.

The Sikh's society has still been shrinking, for, the young generation prefer to go abroad, especially back to India, for different reasons such as higher education. Some of the boys, not to attend the military service, which is compulsory in Iran, have provided their birth certificates from Indian cities though they were born in Iran¹⁰, and those, who have birth certificate, leave Iran before reaching 18 not to serve in the rank. The Sikhs, who do not have any official documents to prove them as being Iranian, will not receive any permission to stay for a long time in the country, therefore, they can come back to Iran as the tourists or the visitors of their parents. We should bear in mind, of course, the factor of death that gradually decreases the population, and that is because the new born generation have not remained in this city to new marriages happen and keep the population balance.

At the moment, which is the year 2014, the population of Sikhs in Zahedan is less than 15 families which include almost 35 to 40 people, most of them from the older generation. When the consultants were questioned why they had preferred to stay in Iran and had not gone back to India, they said: "we were born here and used to live in this city; we are respected by the people and have not any social problems with the natives". They also mentioned that they were satisfied with their jobs as they had more incomes in this city than in India.

¹⁰ <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2001/20010422/spectrum/main1.htm>

2.1. The specifics of Sikh's Society in Zahedan

All the Sikhs in Zahedan have their own shops and are the sellers of different materials, i.e. none of them are employed by the government. Although they have lots of Iranian friends, they neither visit them at their homes nor let them to come to their houses to visit them. They just meet their Iranian friends at their shops and markets. They have visitations and receptions either in their houses or in the temples but it just happens among the Sikhs families and no one else. The only non-Sikh people, who can enter their territories, are the servants if they have any. The women are just housekeepers and the only members of the family who work outside are the men. The Sikh children in Zahedan used to have their own school, where the period of teaching was only 6 to 8 years.

The Sikhs have been very keen to retain and preserve their language, customs and culture, and this made them to found their own cultural and educational centers. Riyahi (1390: 23) mentions that in a report, an officer from the Makoran Ma'aref va Owqaf state office, who visited Zahedan in the year 1314, pointed out that '...there was a school of 6 grades with 3 classrooms, where the students sat on the ground and English language was studied in this school...the school was extremely dirty and the arches were very dark... this was against the law and the disciplines...and the children did not speak Persian...'. When the Sikhs were asked to explain for such a school, they illustrated that their children would go back to India for higher education and did not need to learn Persian. They accepted to improve the school condition and asked the government for giving them an official permission to have their own school.

At the present time, as almost all the younger have moved to India or other countries either to accomplish their studies or for any other reasons, and have never come back to Zahedan as residents, there have not been any new marriages and so, no more children in Sikh society to need this school anymore. The Sikhs do not travel much to the other parts of Iran and in the case of having a journey they mostly go to Tehran, and once to India every 2 or 3 years. The Sikhs never marry a non-Sikh person.

3. Language contact and multilingualism of Sikhs in Zahedan

Language contact can be viewed as one of the important subjects to be used for explanation of many linguistic changes. New language contact conditions come out as soon as people start to be resettled, and this resettling might be forced by different factors such as the short or long-term education and/or migration to look for a better life by finding work and improving the standard of living. Out of this contact, many people turn into bilingual or multilingual in their societies and communities in a way that, for example, a “child has one lexical system comprising words from both languages” (Wei 2013: 39).

In a language contact, different foreign materials are transferred from one language to another. Changes can be phonological, morphological, or structural in the cases when the languages are in intense enough contact and are typologically distant from each other. The more profound the contact, the more features can be defused from one language to another. The direction of the transfer depends on the prominence of the languages in contact. It is seen, for example, in the Andean Mountain Range, where numerous languages are spoken and are in contact with each other and exchanging linguistic features to one another. When Spanish, as a new language, arrived in the Andes, it not only highly influenced these languages, but was also “in its turn, modified by them, giving birth to a Spanish variety currently known as Andean Spanish” (Coronel-Molina &Rodri’guez-Mondonedo 2012: 448). Coronel-Molina and Rodri’guez-Mondonedo (*ibid*: 449, 457) point out that Spanish has generally had more lexical effects on Quechua¹¹, one of these Andean languages, than the other way round, e.g. “days of the week, months of the year, and greetings have all been adapted wholesale into Quechua from Spanish, with the only change being in pronunciation.” They (*ibid*) also refer to limited phonological exchanges between the two sides of the contact, and believe that the extent of the reciprocal effect is ruled by the “(a)symmetry in power and prestige between their speakers”.

Many occurrences of contact-induced changes have been approved by historical linguists. Thomason (2006: 340) points out that one of the causes of “any linguistic change that would have been less likely to occur outside a particular contact situation” is contact between languages. He (*ibid*: 340, 345) continues that the great majority of these changes are of kind of morpheme-

¹¹Language of the South American Indian people spoken in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile, and Argentina.

transfer, i.e. lexical or grammatical borrowings, but based on the borrowing scales, “basic vocabulary will not be borrowed before non-basic vocabulary”¹². The borrowing words in the target language, for a fitting and proper use, would first bear a change towards a normal pronunciation and then is adapted to the normal morphology with a likely expansion of meaning (Mollanazar 2007: 24-25). Prcic (2014: 152) outlines a protocol for building contact linguistic competence which is “a type of linguistic knowledge related to the appropriate use” of loan words.

Coming from the same language family, Persian and Balochi spoken in Iran seem to have been in enough constant contact for centuries (Mahmoodzahi 2003) to account for the transfer of many Persian vocabulary items and phonological changes into Balochi, e.g., “the lowered forms of *buz* (*boz*) and *duz* (*doz*) ...can be attributed to a lexical code-copying from Persian, the dominant language in contact” (Okati 2012: 171). Rzehak (2009: 115-117), who believes that “code-copying affects most readily the lexicon”, also points out that Persian have had influences on Balochi to copy and adapt new elements into its lexicon and phonology.

The contact of nearly a century between Panjabi, the Sikh’s language, and Persian in Zahedan has caused the entering of some Persian vocabulary items into Panjabi. Panjabi is the main language of Sikhs. As Sikhs are originally from India, one of the most multilingual countries in the world, they can also speak the national language of this country, Hindi. Although English is not among the language of India’s constitution, it is spoken by many of the Indian among whom Sikhs are not an exception. The similarity of the phonological and the grammar system of Urdu to Hindi has caused this language to be spoken by many Indian, such as Sikhs, while daily communication. The investigation revealed that the Sikh residents of Zahedan have already been multilingual and are definitely able to use all the four languages of Panjabi, Hindi, Urdu, and English in their conversations. The languages used in their own schools in Zahedan were Panjabi, Hindi, and English.

¹²Basic vocabulary is the basic word stock or common core, such as all national characters (e.g., fire, water, eat, hear, you, man,...), polysemy or productive elements,..., and non-basic vocabulary includes terminology (e.g., photo scanning), jargon (e.g., shop talk), slang (e.g., sub-standard), dialectal words, archaisms, and neologisms; retrieved (2014) from: <http://www.hznu.cn/jpkc/yychx/uploadfiles/ppt/1-word-vocabulary.ppt>.

The Sikh's Society in Zahedan and Their Multilingualism

As their jobs in their new residence have necessitated daily oral communication with the people, they know Persian, the standard language, better than the other language varieties around them, and they speak in Persian while they are out. Balochi and the Sistani dialect are in the second rate of use. They more know these language varieties than to speak them, e.g. if someone, despite of knowing Persian cannot speak that language (such as elderly people of Sistan) and communicate with the Sikhs in Sistani, they sometimes use Sistani to answer them back but mostly prefer to talk to their customers in Persian. Among Sikhs, those who were drivers and travelled many times to Sistan and to some cities of Iranian Baluchestan for transporting goods and other things can/could speak these two language varieties very well as Persian and with nearly a native accent. The study obviously shows that the men of Sikh's society in Zahedan speak and know the languages around them much better than the women, because the only opportunities for the women to be involved in these languages is while they are out for shopping, or of course the radio and TV. The women, apart from very few of them who have/had Baloch or Sistani servants, knew Balochi and Sistani very rarely.

The occurrence of language contact has had its influence on the Sikh's society in Zahedan. When language contact occurs, phenomena such as borrowing or relexification may happen. The most common way that languages influence each other is exchanging of words, e.g. the English words borrowed by other languages, or the importation of words from other languages such as Latin and French into English (Waterman1976: 4). The borrowing of lexical items happening in Sikh's society in Zahedan is not in the form of exchanging but it is in one way direction. Persian, which is the dominant language in this society, has affected Panjabi spoken by the Sikhs. As it was pointed out by the consultants, they use some Persian words while speaking Panjabi with their family at home or with their Sikh friends. The borrowed words are mostly related to food stuff or are the simple lexical items of the daily use and conversation, e.g. *khoreh* 'kind of dish', *yakhchal* 'refrigerator', *barf* 'kind of washing powder', *zang zadan* 'to ring/call'.

It is worth noting that the Persian loan words used by the Sikhs are mostly pronounced not normally as the Standard Persian, but with a Sistani or Balochi accent as the many native people in Zahedan pronounce them. This means that, although the Sikhs have been in contact to the

Standard Persian via the media, they have more easily been affected by the (already influenced) Persian spoken by the Sistani and Baloch natives around them. The Persian spoken by many of the natives in Zahedan is strongly influenced by their mother tongues, Sistani and Balochi. For example, the contrastive vowel length in the Sistani dialect can be one of the main factors affecting the Standard Persian spoken by the Sistani speakers (Okati, forthcoming). Among the consultants, there was a male who had grown up in Tehran and had recently moved to Zahedan. He was asked to make sentences in Panjabi using Persian borrowed words. The Persian loanwords he used in his sentences were pronounced as the Standard Persian (so-called Tehrani), and not yet affected by the native Sistani and Balochi varieties.

In addition, there are some cognate words in both languages which have slightly different pronunciations. Almost, no phonological influences the contact between Persian and Panjabi has brought about in the pronunciation of these cognates among the Sikhs, e.g. the Persian words /tʃɒj/ ‘tea’ and /pijɒz/ ‘onion’ have not influenced the pronunciation of their cognates /tʃɑ/ and /peɑ:z/, respectively, in Panjabi. The Sikhs may try to pronounce the cognate words more Persian-like when they want to speak Persian, but while speaking among themselves, the utterances of the cognates are exactly in Panjabi, with no phonological adaptation.

The following tables show some of the Persian borrowed words used by the Sikh migrants. Table 1 represents the words which are mostly of daily use, such as *cup*, *news*, *television*, and *fridge*.

Table 1. List of some daily use Persian borrowed words used by the Sikh migrants

Persian	English	Persian	English
sim	wire	miz	table
qors	pill	bærf	brand of washing powder
morq	chicken	æxbør	News
jæxtʃɒl	fridge	mædzælle	magazine
estekøn	cup	ruznoɱe	newspaper
kot ʃælvør	suit	dæstfuji	Lavatory
zæng zædæn	to ring	mɒʃin ræxtfuji	washing machine
televezijon	television	dæstmøl kɒqæzi	tissue
sedɒ kærdæn	to call	kontor-e bærq	electricity meter

The Sikh's Society in Zahedan and Their Multilingualism

Table 2 shows the Persian borrowed words which are related to food and drink stuff, and are used by the Sikh migrants while speaking Panjabi among themselves.

Table 2. List of some food and drink Persian borrowed words used by the Sikh migrants

Persian	English	Persian	English
ʊʃ	soup	ʊb	Water
duq	yogurt drink	torʃi	pickles
xoreʃ	kind of dish	kæʃk	dried whey
pofæk	Kind of snack	kuku	savouryomelette
lubijʊ	bean	qænd	sugar cube
fereni	pudding	qorme	kind of dish
qeime	kind of dish	ʃirberendʒ	kind of pudding
nufʊbe	Non-alcoholic drink	dʒudʒe kæbʊb	chicken kebab
komput	compote	ʊb-e mæ'dæni	mineral water
dʒudʒe berjʊn	roasted chicken	konserv-e mʊhi	conserved fish

Table 3 gives some examples of the cognate words in both Persian and Panjabi. These words are pronounced by the Sikhs without any phonological adaptation while speaking their mother tongue.

Table 3. List of some cognate words with no phonological adaptation to Persian used by the Sikh migrants while speaking Panjabi

Panjabi/Persian	English	Panjabi/Persian	English
ʃʌ/ʃʊʃ	tea	goʃt/guʃt	meat
ʃiʃʌ/ʃiʃe	glass	dærd/dærd	pain
Pea:z/pijʊz	onion	tara/setʊre	star
sæbzi/sæbzi	herb	katlet/kotlet	cutlet
sælʌd/sʌlʌd	salad	gærmʌ/gærmʌ	warmth
kæbʌb/kæbʌb	kebab	dʊkʌn/dʊkkʌn	shop
dærxʌt/deræxt	tree		

4. Summary

This article studies the state of the Sikh's society and their multilingualism in Zahedan, the centre of Sistan and Baluchestan province located in southeast of Iran. Sikhs, who are originally from Panjab of India, migrated to Iran-Zahedan starting from the early years of 20th century and ending their migration almost at the end of the Second World War, when they formed a society of about 100 families in Zahedan. At the time of the arrival, they all were British Army/non-British Army drivers or traders and later became the sellers. It is of the specifics of this society in Zahedan that only men works out and all the women are housekeepers, and that is why the men know/speak Iranian languages, spoken around them, better than the women. The visitations and receptions are exclusively held among their society and no one else. They used to have their own schools in which languages of Panjabi, Hindi, and English were used for teaching, i.e. no Persian was taught in their schools.

At the present time, the Sikh's society has shrunk from 100 families to less than 15. Almost half of the population moved to Tehran starting about 40 years ago till a decade after the Islamic revolution. Some of the families moved back to India after the revolution. The younger generation has left Iran for the higher education or to avoid military service that is obligatory in Iran. The few families, mostly including just the parents, who have remained in Zahedan are prospered in business and have successful lives, as they declare. They visit their country, India, and families once in 2 or 3 years.

As India is one the most multilingual countries in the world, the Sikhs were already multilingual at the time of migration. They can use languages of Panjabi, their mother tongue, Urdu and Hindi the national language of India, and English, which enter India while this country was part of the British Empire. Added to these languages are Persian, the standard language of Iran, Balochi, spoken by the ethnic group of Baloch, and Sistani dialect spoken by the Sistanies, originally from Sistan located in the north of the province. Among these three language varieties, Persian is used by the Sikhs while communication with the people outside their community, and it is spoken more fluently than the other two, but they can well understand Balochi and Sistani if someone communicate with them in these languages. Under the influence of Persian as the

The Sikh's Society in Zahedan and Their Multilingualism

dominant language in the society, the process of borrowing words has occurred and Persian simple words of daily communications and food and drink words have entered Panjabi spoken by the Sikhs. No phonological adaptation has happened in the cognate words shared in the two languages of Persian and Panjabi.

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