

## Observing Language change: A regional perspective

Language variation and change under the influence of a dominant language as a constantly occurring longitudinal phenomenon is considered to be the beginning of the spread of the powerful language and the gradual death of the powerless one (e.g., Coulmas 2005).

From among linguistic changes, 'syntactic change' is both hardly noticed since its pace is slower than other changes and more crucial because it targets the core of the linguistic system.

The existence of many ethnic and minority languages inside a country, like Iran, and their constant contact with a dominant national language provides a suitable arena to possibly observe and study language variation and change under dominance relationships.

In the present study, therefore, we intend to sociolinguistically explore the likely effect of Persian syntactic structure of prepositional phrases on its postpositional counterpart in Guilacki, a minority language. Hence, data were collected from about 130 Guilacki participants stratified based on their age and residential locations through different naturalistic techniques. The data, a minimum number of 390 elicited sentences including three postpositional elements of Guilacki (mi n, æm r , and j (in, with (someone), and from, respectively)) were examined in terms of the possible variation among the participants in regard to their age and location as well as the syntactic features of the sentences. The findings illustrate an imminent and gradual change from Guilacki postpositional structures to Persian prepositional forms, with the change occurring mostly in urban areas and by youth then spreading to rural regions and older speech. Linguistic factors were found to be less influential in pushing this kind of language change.

**Keywords:** Guilacki, postpositions, Persian, syntactic change, observing language change

### Reference:

Coulmas Florian (2005) *Sociolinguistics: The study of speakers' choices*. New York: Cambridge University Press.