User Responses to Linguistic Diversity in Instagram based on the Language Subordination Model Process

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Abstract

The present study aims to investigate users' responses to linguistic diversity on Persian-language social media, particularly Instagram, based on Lippi-Green's theoretical framework of language subordination. The study employs a mixed-methods design. In the qualitative phase, the data were analyzed using the language subordination framework, which comprises seven core components: Mystification, authority, misinformation, trivialization, accommodators and non-accommodators, threat, and promise. In the quantitative phase, the frequency and proportional distribution of these components were calculated across more than 400 user comments posted on widely followed Persian-language Instagram pages between 2023 and 2026. The findings indicate that the components of misinformation and trivialization occurred most frequently and that social media platforms, contrary to common assumptions, serve as significant sites for reproducing the ideology of the standard language and marginalizing non-standard varieties. Furthermore, the results show that users' linguistic judgments are largely influenced by entrenched monolingual standard ideologies that, consciously or unconsciously, construct the so-called Persian standard as superior while other language varieties as inferior.

*Keywords***:** Language Subordination, Language Varieties, Standard Language Ideology (SLI), Instagram

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INTRODUCTION

Language subordination refers to the systematic process through which certain language varieties are evaluated negatively and assigned lower social value. As Piller (2016) argues, when a particular language variety is highlighted or marked as different, this act itself constitutes a form of language subordination, one that can produce feelings of linguistic inferiority and inadequacy among speakers. When such feelings emerge, speakers begin to perceive their own variety as inferior to the standard language, which is treated as the only legitimate or dominant form. This perception may lead to social harms and reduced self-worth within the linguistic community. In other words, when one language variety is elevated as the standard and positively evaluated through attributes such as "correct," "proper," or "authentic," these value judgments and evaluative practices extend beyond spoken or written forms and deeply affect the bodies and minds of speakers.

Individuals whose linguistic practices do not align with the norms of the dominant variety often experience discrimination and language subordination in their social interactions. In educational contexts or other formal settings, for instance, when a speaker is mocked or belittled for "language errors," the reaction is not merely directed at the language itself but reflects a broader mechanism of subordination that shapes the speaker's social identity and sense of self-worth (Curzan et al., 2023; Sinha & Jensen de López, 2001).

In recent decades, digital environments have become crucial sites for the representation and reproduction of language attitudes. In these spaces, language functions not only as a tool for communication but also as an ideological marker. With the expansion of platforms such as Instagram, linguistic diversity has entered digital interactional spaces, yet the hierarchy between standard and non-standard varieties remains visible. Consequently, speakers of non-standard varieties are frequently subjected to ridicule, exclusion, or delegitimization. While this phenomenon has been examined in more formal domains such as education and print media, its dynamics within the digital lifeworld, especially social media, have received limited

systematic attention.

Against this backdrop, the present study focuses on Persian-language Instagram pages and aims to identify and analyze the linguistic and discursive patterns through which non-standard varieties are accepted or rejected. Drawing on Lippi-Green's (2012) theoretical model of language subordination, the present study examines users' comments and textual content from widely followed Persian-language pages. The central research question asks: *What linguistic and discursive patterns contribute to the reproduction of language subordination toward non-standard varieties in Persian-language digital spaces, particularly Instagram?*

By analyzing linguistic data within digital contexts, this research seeks to demonstrate how speakers of non-standard or informal varieties experience linguistic and social inequality in an environment where the standard language is perceived as the sole legitimate and authoritative form. The innovation of this study lies in its examination of language subordination as a social phenomenon within the Persian-speaking digital sphere particularly on Instagram for the first time. Unlike formal institutional contexts such as education and traditional media, the digital sphere blurs the boundaries between formal and informal language, yet language subordination persists in implicit and subtle ways. This study, therefore, offers valuable insights into how linguistic inequality is reproduced in contemporary digital communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the most influential and technically sophisticated studies on language subordination is Lippi-Green's (2012) *English with an Accent*. In this book, she conceptualizes language subordination as a set of ideological mechanisms through which particular language varieties, especially non-standard varieties or migrant accents, are constructed as "deficient," "inefficient," or "illegitimate." For Lippi-Green, language subordination is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a deeply ideological process reproduced through

institutions such as education, the media, and public discourse. She demonstrates how speakers of the standard variety frequently refuse to assume communicative responsibility when interacting with non-standard speakers, thereby placing the entire communicative burden on subordinated groups. This exclusionary linguistic practice constitutes a form of racialized and class-based discrimination that ultimately reinforces the ideological dominance of the standard language.

Piller's (2016) *Linguistic Diversity and Social Justice* adopts a critical approach to linguistic inequality and examines how educational institutions, labor markets, and language policies marginalize certain groups. The study discusses language subordination as a mechanism through which the languages of minority communities are devalued and pushed to the periphery. Tankosić et al. (2021) explore the links between language subordination and linguistic inferiority complexes among English as a second language (ESL) migrants in Australia. Their findings show that language subordination can lead to feelings of inadequacy, social isolation, and diminished self-confidence.

Aiseng (2022), drawing on the analysis of dialogues in a television series, demonstrates how media spaces can position one language as dominant over others and consequently reproduce language subordination. The study further shows that media not only reproduce language ideologies but also provide opportunities for linguistic resistance. Similarly, Curzan et al. (2023) examine language standardization and argue that standardization reduces linguistic diversity and leads to negative judgments against users of non-standard varieties. Their work highlights how language ideologies reproduce social inequalities, particularly in higher education, and offers recommendations for linguistic justice.

Uysal and Sah (2024) show how standard-language ideology in language teaching contributes to the subordination of non-standard varieties. They argue that the belief in a single "correct" language results in educational inequality and linguistic exclusion, thereby underscoring the need for multilingual and critical approaches. Morales-Gálvez (2024) engages with

linguistic domination from the perspective of linguistic justice, defining it as a form of unjust sociopolitical domination rooted in unequal distributions of linguistic power. This aligns with the conceptualization of language subordination as discussed in the above scholarship.

Although explicit engagement with language subordination is limited in Iranian scholarship, several studies have addressed related issues such as standard-language ideology, monolingualism, and the marginalization of non-standard languages within critical discourse analysis and sociolinguistics. Pishghadam and Zabihi (2012), for instance, criticize English language education in Iran and highlight how linguistic imperialism and globalization contribute to the marginalization of local linguistic and cultural resources, a process that can be understood as a form of language subordination at the global level.

Mirakhorloo et al. (2024) investigate the impacts of globalization and English language education on linguistic identity in Iran, demonstrating that global language instruction without attention to local cultural contexts can subordinate linguistic diversity. They argue that educational localization is essential for preserving this diversity. Kalan's (2016) "*Who's Afraid of Multilingual Education?*" similarly examines ideological resistance to multilingual education and shows how the suppression of minority languages functions as language subordination, working against children's cognitive development despite existing research evidence. The book advocates multilingual education as a pathway to linguistic justice.

In two separate studies, Mohammadi (2025; 2025a) investigates discourses of language subordination in Iranian press texts. The first study analyzes prevailing metaphors in newspapers from the late Pahlavi era to the present and finds that the metaphor of "language as nation" is dominant. This metaphor frames non-standard languages as threats to national unity and thus provides discursive grounds for their subordination. Mohammadi (2025a) shows that official media discourse in Iran frames the standard language as the sole legitimate and cohesive national language, while non-standard languages are marginalized through non-linguistic ideological justifications.
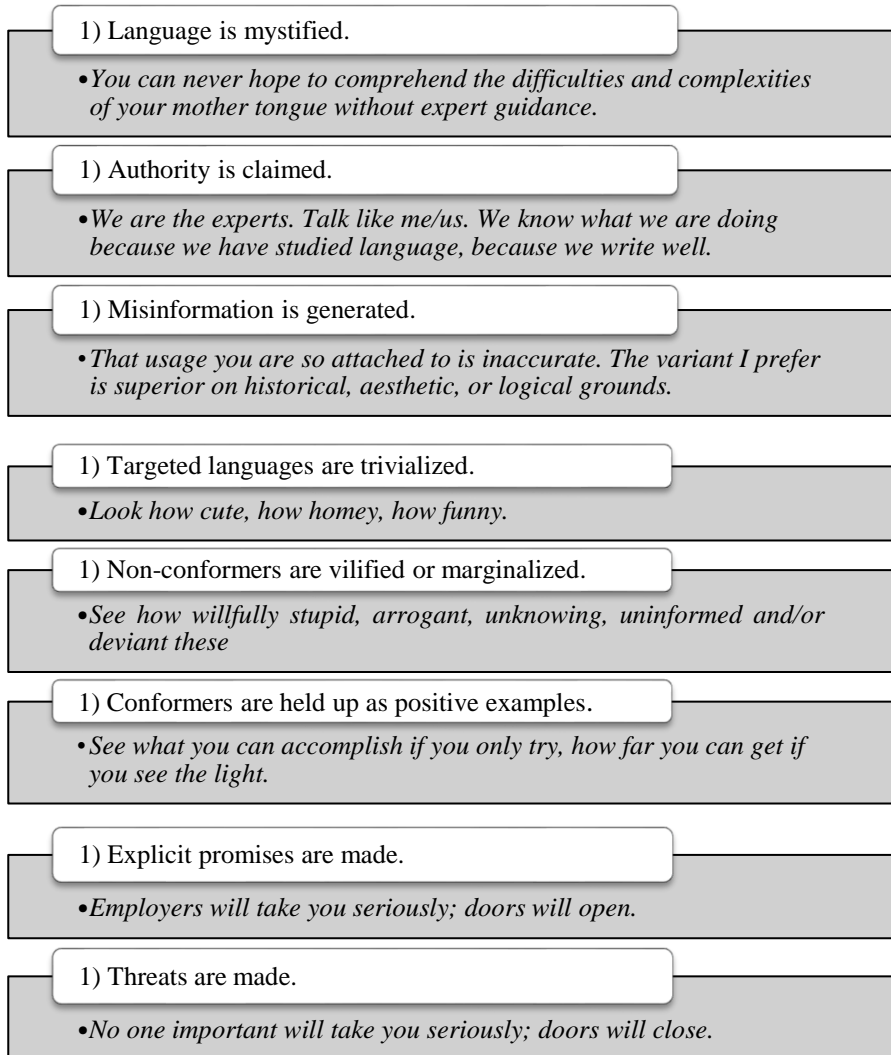
Mohammadi (2025a), focusing on accent discrimination and racialized language ideologies, highlights how media representations reinforce linguistic inequalities. The present study differs from these works in its focus on social media users' reactions and the ideological mechanisms underlying acceptance and rejection of linguistic diversity. However, both strands of research clearly illustrate how metaphors and language ideologies reproduce mechanisms of language subordination in Iran's official and media discourses.

This approach represents a clear violation of the linguistic rights of non-Persian-speaking communities. From the perspective of Linguistic Human Rights (LHRs), these rights can be defined as: "Only those language rights … which are so basic for a dignified life that everybody has them because of being human; therefore, in principle no state (or individual) is allowed to violate them" (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012, p. 2). This definition underscores that all individuals, regardless of their linguistic background, possess inherent fundamental language rights, which no state or official authority is legitimately permitted to deny.

Theoretical Background

The stages presented in the model of the language subordination process (Figure 1) are derived from an analysis of the reactions and actions of dominant institutions, that is, those aligned with the upper social strata toward promoting so-called standard versus non-standard language varieties. These stages were extracted through a careful examination of public discourses and societal judgments concerning different languages and dialects. The model illustrates how dominant institutions systematically devalue particular languages or dialects over time, while simultaneously encouraging people to adopt the so-called "standard" language. The elements in this model grew out of analysis of many kinds of public commentary on language use and language communities, but they are similar to other models of ideological processes (Lippi-Green, 2012). The elements of the language subordination

process are summarized as follows:

1) Language is mystified.

- *You can never hope to comprehend the difficulties and complexities of your mother tongue without expert guidance.*

1) Authority is claimed.

- *We are the experts. Talk like me/us. We know what we are doing because we have studied language, because we write well.*

1) Misinformation is generated.

- *That usage you are so attached to is inaccurate. The variant I prefer is superior on historical, aesthetic, or logical grounds.*

1) Targeted languages are trivialized.

- *Look how cute, how homey, how funny.*

1) Non-conformers are vilified or marginalized.

- *See how willfully stupid, arrogant, unknowing, uninformed and/or deviant these*

1) Conformers are held up as positive examples.

- *See what you can accomplish if you only try, how far you can get if you see the light.*

1) Explicit promises are made.

- *Employers will take you seriously; doors will open.*

1) Threats are made.

- *No one important will take you seriously; doors will close.*

Figure 1. The language subordination model (Lippi-Green, 2012).

These stages constitute the discursive and ideological mechanisms through which institutions of power such as the media, the educational system, and language policy authorities work to consolidate the dominance of the so-called standard language and to marginalize varieties labeled as non-standard

(Lippi-Green, 2012).

Ideology as a Bridge or Filter in the Language Subordination Process: Ideology functions as a bridge or a filter between language variation and change and social structures, and constitutes not merely one component of language subordination but its theoretical foundation. Language changes (such as language varieties and accents) are linked to social structures (including class, race, power, and reference groups) through language ideology. Here, ideology is understood as "the beliefs and assumptions people hold about language" (Lippi-Green, 2012). This perspective is rooted in the work of Silverstein (1979), who argues that three conceptual nodes social structures, linguistic variation, and ideology are mutually interconnected (Figure 2). Ideology cannot be analytically separated from language because no speaker can fully suspend their language-related beliefs when interpreting linguistic forms.
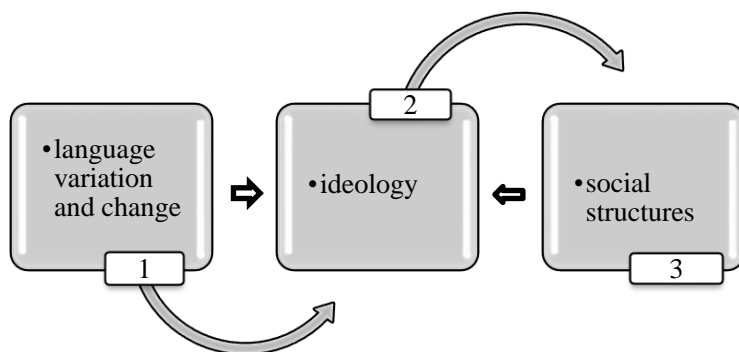
Figure 2. Ideology as the bridge or filter between language change and social structures

Figure 2 illustrates that ideology functions as a mediating link between social structures and linguistic variation. In other words, what people believe about language determines which language varieties become recognized as legitimate and valued, and which ones are marginalized, trivialized, or rendered invisible. Consequently, language cannot be analyzed independently of the dominant ideological formations because it is precisely these belief systems that make the connection between language and social power
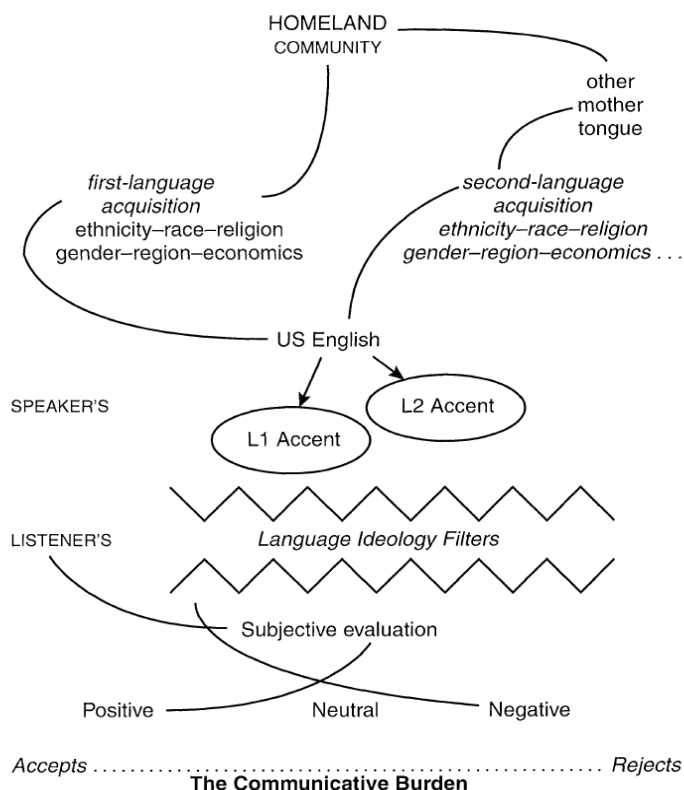
possible (Lippi-Green, 2012).

Sharing the Communicative Burden: Acceptance or Rejection:
The communicative burden is one of the key mechanisms through which language subordination is produced and reproduced. In this process, the responsibility for achieving mutual intelligibility between interlocutors is distributed across participants; however, this distribution is neither equal nor fair. In interactions between speakers of the standard variety and speakers of non-standard or marginalized varieties, the communicative burden is often unjustly placed on the non-standard speaker. In other words, members of the linguistically dominant, standard-speaking group typically assume that they are not responsible for ensuring comprehension. Instead, they expect the non-standard speaker to adjust their speech to the communicative expectations of the dominant group. This behavior does not stem from an actual inability to understand the other variety; rather, it is rooted in ideological judgments and linguistic discrimination. Put differently, when a communicative disruption occurs, speakers of the standard variety tend to attribute the problem to the *accent*, *dialect*, or *language* of the "other." As a result, speakers of non-standard varieties are compelled to modify their speech and approximate the standard to gain acceptance; otherwise, they risk linguistic and social exclusion. This process not only questions the individual's communicative competence but also devalues and delegitimizes their variety (Lippi-Green 2012).

In certain situations, speakers of subordinated varieties may, for social or identity-related reasons, resist aligning their speech with the standard language and instead distance themselves from it. Why does this occur? Within their own social group, conforming to the standard may lead to social rejection, loss of identity, or a sense of betrayal toward their linguistic community. Here, acceptance and rejection continue to play a central role, but from a different perspective. Thus, the process of language subordination operates not only through the imposition of the communicative burden by the dominant, standard-speaking group but also under dual pressures: On the one

hand, the pressure to adopt the standard language, and on the other, the risk of rejection by one's own community. This tension between assimilation and linguistic loyalty represents one of the most complex manifestations of linguistic domination within socio-ideological structures (Lippi-Green 2012).

Figure 3 illustrates the relationship among speaker, listener, the standard variety, and language ideology within the communicative process. In this framework, speakers' accents whether standard or non-standard are evaluated through the listener's mental filters, that is, their language ideologies. This mental evaluation can be either positive or negative and directly affects the level of acceptance or rejection of the speaker, as well as the distribution of the communicative burden. The figure further demonstrates how language, gender, race, religion, region, and socioeconomic status shape these evaluations and how the system of linguistic dominance is continually reproduced (Lippi-Green 2012).

HOMELAND
COMMUNITY

other
mother
tongue

*first-language
acquisition*
ethnicity–race–religion
gender–region–economics

*second-language
acquisition*
ethnicity–race–religion
gender–region–economics . . .

US English

SPEAKER'S

L2 Accent

L1 Accent

LISTENER'S   *Language Ideology Filters*

Subjective evaluation

Positive   Neutral   Negative

Accepts . . . . *Rejects*
The Communicative Burden

Figure 3. Accepting or rejecting the communicative burden

Figure 3 illustrates that the communicative burden between speaker and listener is not merely a linguistic process; it is profoundly shaped by language ideologies. As a message passes through the listener's mental filter, social factors such as the speaker's accent, ethnicity, gender, or first language are evaluated. If this evaluation is positive, the listener assumes the communicative burden; if negative, both the message and potentially the speaker may be rejected. This mechanism constitutes a key component of the language subordination process and the entrenchment of standard language dominance (Lippi-Green, 2012).

Standard language ideology (SLI):

Monolingual ideology fuels SLI). The belief in one language's superiority creates the concept of a "standard" language. (Mohammadi, 2023). As Lippi-Green (2012) states, ideology is defined as the promotion of the needs and interests of a dominant group or class at the expense of marginalized groups, by means of disinformation and misrepresentation of those non-dominant groups. More specifically, SLI is defined as a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions.

Non-Standard Variety:

When a language variety is designated as "non-standard," this labeling significantly diminishes its perceived value and credibility. This often fosters negative attitudes and prejudice toward speakers of that variety. The very designation of a "standard" variety inherently confers prestige upon it (Lippi-Green, 1994).

METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods design, and its data analysis is grounded in Lippi-Green's (2012) theoretical model of language subordination, which identifies seven discursive mechanisms through which the dominance of the standard variety is reproduced and non-standard varieties are delegitimized.

The dataset consists of user comments and textual content posted on high-traffic Persian-language Instagram pages, purposefully sampled between 2023 and 2026. This period represents a discursively turbulent phase in the Iranian digital sphere, marked by intensified debates and conflicts surrounding language, identity, education, and linguistic culture.

Instagram accounts were selected initially based on metrics follower count, likes, comments, and post views followed by a content assessment to ensure relevance to the study's topic and the inclusion of diverse perspectives. These accounts, due to their broad reach and content quality, represent a

valuable resource for a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

The data were first examined qualitatively through content analysis, informed by the conceptual categories derived from Lippi-Green's framework. Subsequently, a quantitative phase was conducted in which the frequency and percentage distribution of each of the seven mechanisms of language subordination were calculated. Among these mechanisms, *claims of authority*, *trivialization*, and *non-accommodation* appeared with the highest frequency. To enhance the credibility of the findings, conceptual triangulation and peer debriefing were employed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Text (1)
Page name: *Payan-e Takzabani (meaning "The End of Monolingualism")*
Topic: Who fears mother-tongue education?
Date of publication: 20 February 2024
Number of views: 15,000 users

1) "Mother-tongue education is a pretext for separatism. This is not created by the so-called standard language; this is created by you."
This statement exemplifies several layers of the *language subordination process*:

- Threat: The implicit warning suggests that "mother-tongue education" could lead to national fragmentation a position reflecting the *slippery slope* fallacy (Van Vleet, 2021, p. 102). The statement presumes that mother-tongue education inevitably results in separatism, without providing credible evidence for such a causal chain. However, global experience demonstrates that mother-tongue education is not a threat to territorial integrity; rather, it can enhance social cohesion. Nearly all societies are multilingual, and *monolingualism* is less a linguistic reality than an outdated political ideology. Countries such as India, Switzerland, Canada, South Africa, Spain, and many others have implemented multilingual education policies as instruments for educational equity and national cohesion (Mohammadi, 2023). From

Barrera's (2016) perspective, these countries have been highly successful in this regard, exhibiting no signs of fragmentation or disintegration, and they do not propagate such misleading claims.

- Claims such as "Iran is different and cannot adopt these policies" are linguistically unfounded since multilingualism is a universal condition across nations. Thus, the right to mother-tongue education is a global principle rooted in linguistic justice.
- Misinformation: Linking mother-tongue education to separatism lacks linguistic or scientific grounding and functions as the intentional circulation of inaccurate information to justify marginalizing and delegitimizing non-standard languages.
- Claiming authority: The phrase "you created this" shifts responsibility away from dominant language policy and disguises the structural role of the hegemonic language regime.

2) *"You cannot study using a tribe's or clan's language."*
- Trivialization: The expression *"tribe or clan"* carries a derogatory connotation and is employed to belittle and devalue non-standard language varieties.
- Misinformation: The statement assumes that minoritized languages lack the scientific or educational capacity for instruction an assumption disproven historically and empirically.
- Mystification: The claim implicitly suggests that only the official language possesses the complexity or structure necessary for academic use, implying that other languages lack adequate linguistic sophistication.

3) *"Everyone's mother tongue is their own business. The only official and national language must be Persian if Iran is to survive."*
- Threat construction: National survival is framed as dependent on monolingualism, while multilingualism is represented as a threat to territorial integrity.

- Accommodation: The statement implicitly suggests that those who have accepted the *so-called standard language* (Persian) have contributed to national unity.
- Misrepresentation: Opposition to mother-tongue education is framed through a false equivalence, as if linguistic diversity necessarily undermines social cohesion.

4) "You'd better stay quiet. Everyone's language in Iran is Persian; dialects and varieties do not need to be taught."
- Intolerance and rejection of non-accommodators: The use of verbally aggressive and insulting language ("stay quiet") signals explicit rejection of speakers of non-Persian languages.
- Authority claim: The assertion that "everyone's language is Persian" erases the linguistic reality of the society and imposes the discourse of the *so-called standard language.*
- Trivialization: Other languages and varieties are dismissed in the most reductive way possible.

5) "Our greatest writers and intellectuals wrote only in Persian and became renowned. Illiterate people deprive themselves of this privilege."
- Conditional rewards for compliance with the standard language: The statement attempts to persuade speakers of other languages that fame and recognition are contingent upon writing in Persian; otherwise, they will remain invisible. This functions as a reward granted only upon adherence to the so-called *standard language.*
- Mystification of language: The remark "How do you expect this language to be taught?" implicitly suggests that teaching or learning these languages is difficult or even impossible, as if there were no tools or qualifications for doing so. This is precisely the mechanism of *mystifying language* artificially portraying these languages as overly complex to justify their exclusion from education.

The examples presented above clearly illustrate the operation of language ideology as a filter between social structures and linguistic variation, through which the *so-called standard language* is systematically elevated while other non-standard varieties are subordinated. In statements such as "Mother-tongue education is a pretext for separatism" or "You cannot study in the language of a tribe or clan," an ideological threat and deliberate misinformation are constructed to make education in non-Persian languages appear either impossible or dangerous. These claims not only attempt to establish a false link between language and national threat but also, through fabricated authority, absolve the dominant language policy from accusations of linguistic marginalization and denigration. What Lippi-Green (2012) terms *mystification of language* and *inequity in linguistic evaluation* is clearly reflected here; non-standard varieties are portrayed as lacking scientific or educational potential, whereas this is purely an ideological pre-judgment rather than a linguistic reality.

On the other hand, in statements such as "Everyone's mother tongue is their own business" and "The language of all is Persian," language ideology functions to reproduce structures of dominance, placing the communicative burden unilaterally on non-Persian speakers. This linguistic exclusion is not merely opposition to a language; it constitutes a denial of the cultural and social legitimacy of its speakers, as discussed in Lippi-Green's (2012) theory of *acceptance or rejection of the communicative burden*. The symbolic violence of rejecting speakers and the trivialization of their languages result from an ideological judgment that positions the standard language not only as a medium of communication but also as a measure of national loyalty, civilization, and progress. Therefore, these statements constitute concrete examples of the mechanisms of language subordination through which social and cultural dominance is reproduced via language. According to Woolard (2020), when another language is marginalized or devalued, this constitutes erasure, while at the same time the dominant standard language is iconized as a marker of national loyalty, civilization, or positive identity. Consequently, this process represents a clear example of social and cultural domination

through language, whereby language functions as a vehicle for the reproduction of power and social hierarchies.

Text *(2)*
Page name: *BBC*
Topic: *Mother tongue*
Publication date: *20 February 2024*
Number of viewers: *22 million users*

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1. *Children must learn Persian at school; these local languages have nothing to teach.*
   - Misinformation: This statement falsely implies that non-Persian languages "cannot be taught," as if their vocabulary or writing systems are insufficient for instruction. In reality, many of these languages possess linguistic resources, literature, and the potential for formal education or could do so from a linguistic perspective.
   - Trivialization: Non-Persian languages are portrayed as worthless and ineffective through phrases such as "have nothing to teach," thereby reducing their linguistic prestige and diminishing the social status of both the languages and their speakers.
2. *Collect these rural dialects; our official language is Persian.*
   - Authority and legitimation: The reference to "our official language is Persian" is not merely a description of a legal fact; it attempts to consolidate the privileged status of Persian and legitimize the exclusion or marginalization of other languages. Such statements are often deployed to silence any linguistic or cultural claims.
   - Rejection of non-conformers: The phrase "collect" functions as a suppressive command, signaling that the public use of non-standard varieties is undesirable or intolerable, compelling speakers to silence their own voices.

3. *Kurdish is also a dialect of Persian. You won't get anywhere with a 'zargar' language.*
   - Misinformation or falsity: Linguistically, this claim is incorrect, as Kurdish is an independent language, not a dialect of Persian. This deliberate or inadvertent distortion is a common tactic in language subordination, aiming to diminish and marginalize non-standard languages.
   - Trivialization: The term "zargar language" is used pejoratively, implying that Kurdish is so worthless or useless that it can be dismissed as a trivial or meaningless language.
   - Rejection of non-conformers: The statement "you won't get anywhere" directly threatens or disparages non-Persian speakers, conveying that their language is inefficient, undesirable, and socially invalid, and that its use will prevent success or advancement.

4. *Persian is not like an official Western language. Before Europe, this language had been shared among all Iranians for thousands of years.*
   - Misinformation: This claim is linguistically inaccurate. Prior to the Pahlavi era, many regions of Iran, including Kurdistan, Baluchistan, Khuzestan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmen Sahra maintained their own languages at home, in markets, in traditional education, and even in literary production. For example, the Gorani dialect of Koine in Kurdistan functioned as a court language in the west. Persian was primarily a courtly and literary language, not a vernacular of daily life.

Reiterating narratives that depict Persian as the historical common language of all Iranians reproduces a centralist, monolingual ideology. Edward Granville Browne (1902), a prominent Iranologist, noted in the early twentieth century that, outside Tehran, few people spoke Persian during the Qajar era. At that time, a centralized, monolingual formal education system did not exist, and universal proficiency in Persian was not achievable. Previous generations in many multilingual regions of Iran lived without

knowledge of Persian and continue to face challenges interacting in it. Before the emergence of modern nation-states, a single language was not a prerequisite for political cohesion. Empires often operated multilingual administrations, with official communication conducted through court elites (Grillo, 1998; Ucarlar, 2009). Even today, many countries with linguistic diversity have more than one official language; multilingualism is officially recognized in over 55 countries worldwide. Therefore, the notion of Persian as the "eternal" and "shared" language of Iranians reflects a centralist ideology more than historical and linguistic reality. In other words, the existence of multiple official languages in many countries is a well-established topic in language policy research and has been addressed by Stojanović in Gazzola et al. (2024).

From Renan's perspective (1882), a nation is constituted on the basis of belonging and collective consciousness, rather than race or linguistic identity. He considers the link between language and race to be illusory and maintains that languages have a "historical" character, with no direct connection to race or to the nation, which is a modern concept. In the Middle Ages, nations were not formed on the basis of a common language or the modern notion of nationality, and mother tongue or the idea of the "nation" as the foundation of the state was unknown; at that time, a nation's political and social identity, or that of a territory, was primarily defined by religion and dynastic lineage. Accordingly, the discourse of "one language = one nation" is entirely modern and belongs to the nineteenth century. A significant portion of the scholarly work on the relationship between race, language, nationality, and collective identity from the 1880s onward was authored by European Jews, as they were concerned with how modern states would classify them: as a race, a separate nation, a linguistic or ethnic group, or merely adherents of a religion. These questions had direct implications for their rights, citizenship, and social status, and thus Jewish intellectuals were compelled to write and analyze these concepts to their advantage (Hutton, 2025).

5. *You can never find a language like Persian in terms of vocabulary, sentence structure, and literature.*
    - Mystification: In this statement, Persian is presented as a unique, exceptional, and incomparable language, as if its vocabulary, syntactic structure, and literary quality are beyond comparison. This narrative frames other languages as deficient, incomplete, or primitive by contrast. Ranking languages with terms such as "pure," "superior," or "inferior" is linguistically unfounded. All languages possess full potential for word formation, meaning, and expression, and can engage in creative lexical processes. Claims of linguistic poverty or incapacity stem not from empirical evidence but from prejudice, ignorance, or subordinating ideologies. According to Hockett (1958), the overall grammatical complexity of any language considering both morphology and syntax is roughly equivalent to that of any other language.

In these statements, non-standard languages are portrayed as "worthless," "useless," "educationally ineffective," or "demeaning," while Persian is depicted not only as the official language but also as the superior, prestigious, and even unparalleled language in terms of literature, structure, and cultural heritage. Such discourse, by distorting historical and linguistic realities, creates an ideological space in which mastery of the standard language is presented as the only path to success, legitimate identity, and "national loyalty." Consequently, speakers of other languages are either compelled into silence and denial or subjected to labels such as "illiterate," "enemy," or "ignorant." These representations function not only as instruments of linguistic domination but also as mechanisms that undermine the cultural capital of non-standard language speakers.

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Text (3)
Page name: *Zir-e Saqf-e Aseman (Under the Sky)*
Topic: *Persian has not been the national language*
Date of publication: *June 18, 2025*
Number of visitors: *51,000*

</div>

1. *"Talk to your children in Persian so that they do not have an accent at school. Don't listen to these illiterate people."*

   - Misinformation: This assumes that having an accent is a sign of weakness, illiteracy, or academic incapacity, which has no scientific basis and represents a fallacy regarding linguistic diversity. Linguistically, all humans have accents, even in their mother tongue; there is no such thing as an "accent-free language." Accent differences are not a sign of incorrect speech but reflect rich linguistic, geographical, and social diversity. Research by Mohanty et al. (2009) shows that deep first-language acquisition provides a strong cognitive and linguistic foundation for second-language learning. Children who develop linguistic skills in their mother tongue can transfer these skills to other languages. Therefore, depriving children of their first language under the pretext of accent correction is not only scientifically unfounded but also harmful to their linguistic, cognitive, and educational development. Effective education begins with the mother tongue, not denial of it. Research in the field of second-language acquisition indicates that first-language knowledge plays a crucial role in learning a second language. Scholars such as Ellis (2015) and Odlin (1989) have demonstrated that transfer from the mother tongue can facilitate the acquisition of a new language by providing a robust cognitive and linguistic foundation from which new structures can be learned. From this perspective, depriving children of their first language under the pretext of accent correction

is not only scientifically unfounded but may also undermine their linguistic, cognitive, and educational development.

- Conformers: Parents who speak standard Persian at home are presented as "knowledgeable and proper" (conformers), while those who maintain their children's mother tongue are portrayed as illiterate or hindering their children's success (non-conformers).

2. *"If my child speaks with an accent, they will be mocked at school; therefore, we only speak Persian at home."*

- Trivialization: The child's dialect, instead of being part of their cultural identity, becomes a source of shame and ridicule. In this way, the mother tongue or dialect is perceived as "worthless" and "invalid."
- Authority claim: Parents implicitly recognize the teacher and school as the primary authority on correct language. The statement "they will be mocked at school" implies that the main criterion for language correctness is determined by the school. Parents adapt the home language accordingly, without questioning institutional authority, thus granting the school a linguistic authority role.

3. *"You are enemies of this land and the Persian language."*

- Non-conformers: Those opposing the exclusive use or education of the standard language are labeled as "enemies" or "anti-Persian." The label "enemy of the land" acts as a symbolic threat with social, identity, and even security implications, causing self-censorship and denial of the mother tongue in many social spaces.

4. *"This language was the language of great poets such as Saadi and Ferdowsi; a thousand years ago Qatran composed in Persian in Azerbaijan, so Persian is not an imposed language."*

- Authority: By emphasizing the historical status of the standard language and classical poets, the speaker legitimizes their linguistic authority through history, suggesting that because Persian was the

language of great figures, it is superior and other languages lack legitimacy.

- Misinformation: This conveys the incorrect idea that the value of any language variety depends on its written literature, implying that languages without classical works are worthless. In reality, many languages have rich oral traditions that are not documented. As noted earlier, all languages are equally capable in word formation and sentence structure, and no language has inherent superiority. Literary language differs from everyday speech; classical Persian, like other literary languages, follows rhetorical and stylistic rules and does not represent the spoken language of the general population. Therefore, the presence of literary Persian in the past does not imply that standard Persian was the common language of all Iranians. Moreover, the claim that Persian was not imposed ignores that standard language dominance operates ideologically rather than through force. As Fairclough (1992: 92) states, "linguistic hegemony is established through consent, not coercion". The hegemonic language gains prestige, marginalizing non-standard languages until such inequality is perceived as "common sense," accepted even by the population itself.

- Non-conformers: Those insisting on using the mother tongue are positioned as disobedient compared to the "great poets," as if they have nothing to contribute. This type of reasoning excludes them according to literary criteria.

5. *"This language differs from local languages and has been the common language of Iranians since the third century."*
    - Trivialization: By stating that Persian "differs from local languages," local languages are downgraded. They are no longer tools of communication but minor, inefficient, or purely regional and non-serious varieties.

- Misinformation: Similar to previous examples, the claim that Persian has been the sole common language since the third century is false, as Iran has always been multilingual. Such distorted information is used to deny the legitimacy of other languages.

6. *"If Persian were not the common language, how could you communicate with each other?"*
   - Misinformation: The implicit claim is that communication would be impossible without Persian. However, linguistic, historical, and sociological evidence shows that, even before the official recognition of standard Persian, multilingual communication among speakers was widespread. Emphasizing the teaching of linguistic diversity does not deny the role of Persian in facilitating communication.

Text (4)
Page name: Shaer Shafie Kadoakani (The Poet Shafie Kadoakani)
Topic: *Reaction to comedian Zeynab Mousavi's remarks on Ferdowsi*
Date of publication: *August 25, 2025*
Number of visitors: *661,000*

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1. *Our identity is the Persian language, and anyone who attacks us attacks the Persian language.*
2. *Those who insult the Persian language must be punished to the utmost severity.*
   As reflected in the above statements, the user comments were a reaction to a comedian. In Shahrivar 1404 (August 2025), the release of a video by Iranian comedian Zeynab Mousavi, in which she joked about Ferdowsi and the Shahnameh, provoked widespread reactions inside and outside Iran. In response, the Instagram page Shaer Shafie Kadoakani published a poem titled *"Zamaneh bes ke palid o palasht o maskhare shod / Ayarsanji-ye khorshid kar-e shabpare shod"* to address her.

In sentence (1), Persian is equated with the collective identity of its speakers, highlighting the link between language and socio-ideological structures. This statement constitutes misinformation because human identity is not defined by a single language, and, as discussed earlier, truly monolingual societies rarely exist today. Individuals often speak multiple languages, and bilingual or multilingual speakers use *code-switching* to display different identities depending on the context of interaction (Mohammadi, 2025a). From Cummins' (2000) perspective, the identities of societies and ethnic groups have never been static, and it is a naive illusion to believe that they can remain fixed, homogeneous, and monocultural (Cummins, 2000).

Moreover, the sentence contains an implicit message: Those who adhere to the standard language are compliant, aligned, and socially accepted, whereas those who do not are non-conformers and marginalized. There is also an implicit warning about the consequences of "attacking" Persian, namely social exclusion and loss of legitimacy.

Sentence (2) presents a direct threat of punishment for those deviating from the standard language. Linguistic rights, however, should be upheld equally and fairly for all languages. Importantly, these user reactions resulted in the comedian being summoned to court and sentenced to six months in prison and mandatory writing of a dissertation on Ferdowsi, even though her act did not legally constitute an offense; insults to deceased individuals are not criminalized under Iranian law, except when they are equated with sacred figures. This situation prompted sociologist Mohammad Bazafkan to respond on Instagram, emphasizing that such punishments are predominantly directed at non-Persian speakers. He wrote: "For years we have been forced to write dissertations on Persian-speaking figures, hold classes narrating their stories, and even listen to Persian music. Writing, teaching, filmmaking, and performing many tasks in Persian are a compulsory part of our lives." Bazafkan further noted that throughout their lives, they have been subjected to absentee court rulings issued by judges aligned with Persian-speaking elites. Yet, why do insults to non-Persian languages by some Iranian figures

go unpunished? As an example, in an interview with *Mehrnameh*, Seyyed Javad Tabatabai made remarks regarding the Turkish language and its literature that can be interpreted as disregarding the cultural value of the language and denigrating its literary tradition (Tabatabai, 2013). Even Shafi Kadkani similarly considered other languages to be local and of lesser value, yet neither of them faced any admonition or sanction (Mohammadi, 2023).

Overall, both sentences exemplify clear processes of language subordination, including claims to authority, threats, and non-conformers speakers. Across all examples in this study, the five aforementioned statements reflect language subordination processes that are particularly reproduced within education, families, and public spaces in Persian-speaking society. Each of these statements, according to Lippi-Green's model, embodies one or more ideological mechanisms such as misinformation, authority-claiming, trivialization, non-conformers, and legitimization of conformers. Through these strategies, Persian is imposed not only as the official language but also as the sole legitimate form of communication, while non-standard varieties are represented as sources of shame, illiteracy, or political threat. Such discourse, by instilling fear of ridicule, academic failure, or accusations of being an enemy of the homeland, forces speakers into *linguistic self-censorship*. This symbolic system of domination, on one hand, legitimizes the standard language with historical and cultural justifications, and on the other, distorts linguistic realities to deny or devalue existing linguistic diversity.

Text (5)
Page name: Free Media
Topic: *debate*
Date of publication: *January 29, 2026*
Number of visitors: *121,000*

1) Language is not requirement for the residency in any province of the country.
2) The language of the book 'The Lady of the Fish' is understandable to people in Sanandaj, which is why it became one of the bestsellers. Another dialect belongs to a political movement and is not the language of these people.

- Misinformation: Mutual intelligibility between speakers is not definitive or precise factors.
- Trivialization: This claim diminishes the validity of dialect speakers' linguistic rights. Moreover, the juxtaposition of 'vernacular' language with 'national' language establishes a form of language subordination.

The debate sparked heated online discussions and backlash, prompting the author of this article to dismiss the arguments as unscientific and lacking expertise, citing a comment responding to an Instagram post. For instance, the debate featured terms like "ethnic language" and "civilizational language," which have no basis in established linguistic disciplines.

Furthermore, terms like "vernacular language" also lack scientific validity. Even if Iran is defined "as a civilization," it paradoxically applies the "state-nation" model reminiscent of the French or Greek city-state which inherently relies on linguistic exclusivity, fundamentally clashing with the concept of a "civilization state" that advocates champion. This internal contradiction exposes the flawed logic of this project, especially considering that the state-nation framework often fails to accurately describe the historical and cultural evolution of a nation, as argued by Jacques (2009), who posits that a "civilization state" can more comprehensively encompass cultural and linguistic diversity within a political entity. However, within this "Iran-centric" discourse, the history of language in Iran is presented as uniquely distinct, repeatedly asserting the ancient and pervasive history of the Persian language as the language of all Iranians.

The contradiction arises precisely here. If Iran genuinely possesses a unique historical and civilizational identity, why does this Iran-centric perspective rely on Western discourses and theories like the French "state-nation" or Greek "city-state" – theories that have proven unsuccessful and

even detrimental in the realm of language? Consequently, those promoting such a linguistic project within this contradictory discourse lack the theoretical and conceptual legitimacy to offer credible and reliable perspectives on linguistic issues. Linguistics is a multifaceted science, and language-related matters and policies require a deep understanding of sociolinguistics. Opinions lacking this specialized knowledge are not only scientifically invalid but can also have legal consequences in some countries. "It's crucial to note that Kurdish is a polycentric language, exhibiting standard varieties like Sorani and Kurmanji, each with distinct writing systems, alongside numerous dialects such as Kalhori, Laylakhi, Garosi and etc.

Furthermore, language use shifts geographically, across social strata, between individuals, and even within a single speaker's usage depending on context. The assertion that a work like Lady of fish (a literary children's book) is accessible to speakers in Sanandaj while a "language of a political group" is not, is a linguistically unsound and inaccurate argument. As Wolff observes, "no two speakers of the same language speak alike, nor does the same speaker use his/her language the same way all the time: variation is part of language and language behavior" (Wolff, 2000: 299). This diversity demonstrates that language boundaries are often external to, or at least not directly derived from, inherent linguistic features; they possess a predominantly social nature. While we routinely distinguish between languages, these decisions are far from straightforward and universally clear. This phenomenon is not limited to a specific city or the Kurdish language; it applies to all linguistic communities worldwide.

The subsequent claim that language ranks among the top priorities, or even the top ten, in any province represents a form of linguistic marginalization and devaluation. In essence, this assertion, disregarding the equal value of all languages in terms of cultural and human worth, is not only inaccurate but functions as a discriminatory linguistic ideology. It betrays a lack of belief in linguistic diversity and democracy, covertly delegitimizing non-standard languages while legitimizing the dominance of the standard language.

In Table 1, for the purpose of quantitatively analyzing the research findings, an effort was made to extract and classify the occurrence of the components of Lippi-Green's (2012) language subordination model within user reactions on social media. Table 1 represents the frequency and percentage of each of the seven main components of this model across 400 analyzed comments on Persian-language Instagram pages. This table complements the previous qualitative analysis and illustrates which components are more prominent in user discourse and which ideological and discursive mechanisms play a stronger role in reproducing the dominance of the standard language.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of the components of Lippi-Green's language subordination model

Row	Frequency (number of comments)	language subordination Component	Percentage
1	38	Mystification	9.5%
2	72	Authority	18%
3	81	Misinformation	20.25%
4	65	Trivialization	16.25%
5	41	Conformers	10.25%
6	49	Non-conformers	12.25%
7	54	Threats	13.5%
8	400	Total	100%

Based on the analysis of 400 comments published on Instagram pages related to language and education, Lippi-Green's (2012) model of language subordination is clearly observable in user reactions. The results indicate that the most frequent component is misinformation (20.25%), in which non-Persian languages and dialects are perceived as lacking academic or educational legitimacy. This is followed by claims of authority (18%) and trivialization (16.25%), showing that many users regard the standard language as the only correct form while portraying other language varieties as worthless or invalid. Components such as threats, non-conformers, and mystification also appear with lower frequencies, collectively reflecting a dominant discursive mechanism aimed at reinforcing the superiority of the

standard language and marginalizing non-standard varieties in virtual public spaces.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study examined the acceptance and rejection of linguistic diversity on Persian-language social media, with a particular focus on Instagram. The findings revealed that language subordination remains a powerful mechanism for reproducing language dominance in digital spaces. Analysis of comments and textual content, guided by Lippi-Green's (2012) language subordination model, demonstrated that most users either consciously or unconsciously employ the seven main components of this model, including mystification, authority, misinformation, trivialization, conformers/non-conformers, threats, and promises, when interacting with non-standard language varieties. Among these, the most frequent components were misinformation and trivialization, indicating the structural denigration and devaluation of non-standard varieties through false information, derogatory labels, or humiliating comparisons.

The data analysis further revealed that social media, especially among Persian speakers, do not simply provide a space for expressing linguistic diversity; rather, they often function as a platform for reproducing the ideology of the standard language. In such spaces, standard Persian, supported by a monolingual ideology, continues to be represented as the only "correct," "legitimate," and "effective" language, while speakers of other non-standard varieties are marginalized.

Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of rethinking language policies and promoting public linguistic awareness, as language subordination will persist in both formal institutions and social media unless individuals become conscious of the ideologies embedded in language.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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