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Linguistic Insights from a Historical Bilingual Letter: The Malati Dialect of Zoroastrian Dari (Behdīnī) in Yazd

Part 2. Language Contact

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Abstract

In the first part of this study (Gholami/Pouladi 2023), we provided a detailed linguistic analysis of a rare written text of Zoroastrian Dari (Behdīnī), preserved in a bilingual letter in the Perso-Arabic script. The analysis dealt with phonological, morphological, and syntactic aspects of the bilingual text, with a particular focus on the challenge of representing the phonetic distinctions of Zoroastrian Dari in a script not originally designed for it. We also considered the ways in which the scribe managed orthographic challenges, using creative ways of approaching the representation of Zoroastrian Dari. This second part turns to the broader concern of language contact as visible in written form, and more specifically examines the complexities of bilingualism as they materialised between Persian and Zoroastrian Dari, addressing key areas of focus including borrowing and code-switching.

Keywords

Zoroastrian Dari – Behdini – Malati dialect – linguistic analysis – multilingualism – script adaptation – Zoroastrian community of Iran

1 Literature Review and Research Gaps

There is still limited scholarly engagement with language contact in written texts. One significant exception is *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text* by Adams, Janse and Swain (2002). This book is an important introductory volume to the textual evidence of bilingualism in the ancient Mediterranean world. The authors provide insights into the challenges of bilingualism and show the interactions of multiple languages in written texts from antiquity and how they coexisted in the sources. In careful and well-crafted analyses, the authors expose not only the linguistic evidence of course of such interactions but also importantly, the broader sociocultural aspects of the phenomena. The book is useful for exploring the nature of how ancient societies dealt with multilingualism in written text and our historical linguistic environments. The book and other studies (Knauth 2007; Locher 2017) provide interesting nuances to the topic, but there are also a number of larger, even unexplored, avenues. Following are a few of those gaps:

1.1 *Fragmentary Languages as Opposed to Well-Attested Languages*

Languages such as Greek and Latin have sufficient documentation so as to have rich corpuses of literature and historical texts. That is not the case for many languages which are known only through fragmentary evidence. Some languages lack a sufficient written record. Others have only external evidence (e.g., glosses, inscriptions, etc.) and primarily known only through well-attested language literature. The difficulty consists of reconstructing these languages along with their linguistic characteristics, functions and developments with little textual evidence. Thus, this absence of written evidence fundamentally limits understanding of historical linguistic landscapes.

1.2 *Written Evidence of Modern Languages with No Script Traditions*

The vast majority of modern languages, particularly those that are spoken by smaller, or more minority and indigenous populations, have commonly been oral languages, and usually do not have a formal writing system. While sometimes there have been attempts at developing scripts for some of these languages (i.e. Zazaki) in more recent history, they may have little historical written evidence. The language gaps severely challenge linguists in understanding the historical development of these languages. They can only make tentative and often ungrounded assessments of their original phonetic and grammatical characteristics, as well as the trajectories shaped by social and cultural interactions over time. These gaps also limit the study of such languages in relation to their connections with other linguistic and cultural traditions prior to their documentation.

1.3 *Language Contact of Two Genetically Related Languages*

While extensive research has been conducted on contact between typologically and genetically unrelated languages, comparatively less attention has been given to language contact among genetically related languages within the same language family.

To return to our letter, it serves as valuable evidence for addressing the aforementioned gaps in the study of language contact in written texts. We have a case study of a low-resource language with no script traditions. The text belongs to the epistolary genre and pertains to the domain of commercial activity. It features language contact between two genetically related languages namely Persian and Zoroastrian Dari, that were contemporaneously in use.

Using Mullen's (2013) typology of bilingual texts, which is an expanded and modified version of Adams' (2003) typologies, the letter would be placed in the category of transliterated text with bilingual activity. The primary question becomes how has the bilingualism of the writer impacted the text? Are we able to determine where there are divergences, and overlaps between the languages?

2 *Borrowing Typology*

Analysing the language of the rare written forms of regional vernacular Iranian languages that traditionally lack a written form, such as Fahlavīyāt that traditionally have no written form reveals a pronounced borrowing of Persian lexis. Fahlavīyāt are a kind of poetry in regional languages of western and central Iran, in regions historically identified as Fahlah or Pahlav (Tafāzzolī 2012). Similar to Fahlavīyāt, we see a strong influence from Persian in our letter. Borrowing was a necessary consequence of Persian's dominance, due both to its multifunctionality and its prestige as the primary source of loanwords. Most spoken Iranian languages have little to no specificity to describe modernity, technologies, and cultural practices; whereas, related to modernity, Persian has abundant lexicon, which fills the lacunae of the other Iranian languages. As is evident, the letter we are analysing embodies two types of lexical borrowing from Persian: borrowings through direct borrowings or adaptations.

2.1 *Direct Lexical Borrowings*

Direct lexical borrowings are Persian or Arabic loanwords borrowed with little or no modification: *eẓn* 'permission', *goftēgū* 'conversation', *dīdan* 'to see', *ānǧā* 'there', *mohem* 'important', *az ʔaraf-e* 'on behalf of', *aḥvāl-porsī* 'greetings', *ra'y* 'command', *mo'aṭal* 'disable', *ra'īs* 'boss', *maḥkame-ye ǧazā* 'Criminal Court',

eğāze ‘permission’, *moltafet* ‘attentive’, *sar o band* ‘these ins and outs’, *kār o bār* ‘business affairs’, *albāqī* ‘others’, *montazer šodan* ‘to wait’.

Direct lexical borrowings show Persian’s preeminence in a variety of domains including administration (*maḥkame-ye ġazā, ra’īs*); daily life (*dīdan, montazer šodan, kār o bār, sar o band*); or formal communication (*eẓn, goftegū, moltafet*).

2.2 *Formulaic Borrowing/Imported Idiom*

Some lexical items which occur in this letter are likely to have entered lexicon oblivion in modern Persian and have no contemporary record in the speech or written discourse of more recent generations. The compound *sar o band* has little currency in modern-day usage and is not reflected in current Persian lexicon.

A particularly interesting compound that appears in the letter is *yār-o qār*, literally, friend of the cave—a metaphor used to describe a faithful and steadfast friend. Its use in the discourse of a Zoroastrian merchant is especially remarkable because the expression originated as an Islamic epithet to Abū Bakr, who accompanied when Prophet Muḥammad undertook the hijra (migration) from Mecca to Medina. To use this term illustrates a certain level of cultural and linguistic convergence, as people from a non-Islamic tradition involving themselves with lexicon embedded in Islam

2.3 *Indirect Borrowing via Persian*

There are also some original Arabic loanwords from this letter have come into Zoroastrian Dari from Persian. The word *خدومی* (*xodomī*) is from *xedmat*, which has come from Arabic to Persian and means performing a task for the benefit and well-being of others. Thus, *xodomī* could mean someone who is able and willing to participate in service and help others. Here, however, it has a more general meaning that means “someone”.

Another example of borrowing non-Persian words via Persian in this letter is *adlī*, a metathesis of *aldī*, meaning ‘money’ in Zoroastrian Dari. This word is a loanword from Turkish languages. In the Ottoman Turkish and Old Turkish languages, “الدى” meant money, coin, or cash. This is also related to the term “التين” (*Altın*) as in ‘gold’. During the Qajar era and previously, many Turkish words entered Persian due to cultural and political interactions between Iran and the Ottoman Empire. “الدى” is one of these words, used to mean money or cash in colloquial Persian, the term entered Zoroastrian Dari through this avenue.

Another example of direct borrowing is the use of Persian demonstratives instead of genuine forms in ZD. In the text, we note the direct use of the Persian

demonstratives *in* ‘this’ and *ün* ‘that’ where the native ZD demonstratives *mo* and *o* would be expected. Five out of six examples of the use of demonstratives are from Persian, with only one instance of *mo*, the native Dari demonstrative, further showing the overwhelming predominance of Persian forms. This substitution occurs uninterrupted by any adaptation to the phonological or morphological structure of ZD and demonstrates the unmediated nature of the borrowing.

Another case of direct borrowing is with the Persian Ezafe. Instead of the Ezafe particle *-ī* or *-o*, which are native to Malati dialect, we see the Persian Ezafe particle *-e*, e.g., *mastar-e ōne* ‘the higher-up there’, *pīš-e ta* ‘with you’.

2.4 *Morphologically Adapted Borrowings*

There are also various examples of adapted borrowings in this letter. A considerable number of these borrowings are complex verbs, in which the first part, mainly a substantive, is in Persian; however, the verb is in Dari form and has been morphologically adjusted to fit Dari:

Tahqīq va-ker-en [investigation SBJV-do-3PL] ‘they would research’, *xīyāl šē=karta* [thought PC=do.PTCP] ‘he had imagined’, *ǧevāb šī=dāda* [reply CP.3SG=do.PTCP] ‘he has replied’, *payām om=dād* [message CP.1SG=give.PST] ‘I sent a message’, *mohtāǧ e-būt* [needy DP=be.PST.3SG] ‘was in need’, *yek-dastī be-kūd-en* [one-handed SBJV-hit-3PL] ‘fish for information’.

2.5 *Syntactic/Functional Borrowings*

The Persian object marker *rā* has been interpreted in various ways by different scholars: as a marker of specificity (Karimi 1990), definiteness (Mahootian 1997), secondary topics (Dabir-Moghaddam 1992), and presuppositions (Ghomeshi 1996). Jasbi (2020) indicates that *rā* is not solely a marker for specific or definite referents, nor exclusively for secondary topics. Instead, the core function of *rā* is to mark old or presupposed information.

As mentioned, the object marker *rā* is not normally found in Zoroastrian Dari, however, in this letter, *rā* appears with the same syntactic and discourse-marking function that is the function of *rā* in Persian, and this raises the possibility that this is a case of morphosyntactic borrowing or structural convergence:

- (1) *oš=vāt ke peyām e-t-a ke šē me rā*
 PC=say.PST.3SG that message DP-give. PRS.1SG that CP.3PL I OM
ve-br-en
 SBJVP-take.PRS-3PL
 ‘He said that I give the message that they would take me’.

There is also an example of confusion in using *rā*. If the verb were *nīst* ‘was not’, the use of *rā* after *me* would be correct. However, due to the presence of the verb *nādāre*, it does not seem correct, and *rā* should be deleted to form a correct sentence:

- (2) *dobāra payām om=dād ke me-rā bā īn kār-ī*
 again message PC.1SG=give.PST that I-OM with this work-INDF
na-dār-e
 NEG-have.PRS-1SG
 “I sent another message saying that I have nothing to do with him”.

We observe also confusion in the use of the Persian subjunctive marker *be-* instead of ZD *ve-* (Compare the use of *ve-* in sentence 3 with *be-* in sentence 4):

- (3) *agar xodomī az ta šū=farsād¹ yā ōmōy-en kē*
 If someone from you PC-3PL=ask.PST or come.PST-3PL that
taḥqīq va-ker-en ke adlī čeqadr pīš-e ta dār-a
 research SBJVP-PRS-3PL that money how much on-EZ you PRS-3SG
ve-va ke heččī
 IMP-say.PRS that nothing
 “If someone asked you or would come to investigate how much money (I have) with you, say “nothing!”
- (4) *adlī še koyū he bī-y-āy-en*
 money CP.3SG where be.3SG SBJVP-EP-come.PRS-3PL
 “... where is his money, they would come ...”

2.6 Phonologically Adapted Borrowing

A particularly noteworthy case of phonologically adapted borrowing is the transformation of the Persian word *ma'lūm* ‘clear, obvious’ originally from Arabic into *ma'līm* in the letter, with the vowel *ū* systematically shifting to *ī*. This phonological development reflects a well-attested sound change found in many Iranian languages, whereby high back rounded vowels *ū* tend to front and unround to high front vowels *ī*, often as part of broader dialectal or areal phonetic tendencies.

1 The expected Malati form of the verb ‘to ask’ is *parsadvun* (see Mazdāpūr 1995: 493) or *par-sudvun* (Fīrūzbaxš 1998: 51). However, our letter shows the consonant *f* instead of *p*. Since the expected inherited form should be *p*, the occurrence of *f* is likely an innovation resulting from contact with Persian.

3 Borrowability Analysis

When examining examples of borrowing, one major question arises: which features are more frequently adopted from Persian into Dari, and which elements remain stable despite prolonged contact with Persian? To address this, it is essential to thoroughly review the existing literature on the subject.

Thomason and Kaufman (1988:14) assert that any language feature might be transferred from one language to another. However, the impact of contact-induced transfer varies among different linguistic features. For this reason, some borrowability scales, also known as hierarchies, have been developed to understand the varying impact of contact-induced transfer across different linguistic categories. These scales consider factors such as the intensity of contact, the degree of bilingualism (Thomason/Kaufman 1988; Thomason 2001), the structural compatibility of the languages (Myers-Scotton 2002; Field 2002), and the semantic-pragmatic features of the borrowed categories (Matras 2007; idem 2010).

Borrowability scales suggest that certain linguistic features are more likely to be borrowed between languages than others. For instance, unbound forms are more borrowable than bound ones, lexical items are more borrowable than grammatical items, and semantically transparent forms are more borrowable than semantically opaque ones.

In Whitney's (1881) account of grammatical borrowing, function items such as prepositions are more frequently borrowed whenever possible than conjunctions, which are seen more frequently borrowed than pronouns. Derivational affixes are also more readily borrowed than inflectional affixes.

In his study of Norwegian and Swedish immigrant speech in the United States, Haugen (1950) observed the patterns of lexical borrowing among different parts of speech, establishing a hierarchy: nouns > verbs > adjectives > adverbs, prepositions, interjections.

Muysken (1981) also studied patterns of lexical borrowing and established a hierarchy: nouns > adjectives > verbs > prepositions > coordinating conjunctions > quantifiers > determiners > free pronouns > clitic pronouns > subordinating conjunctions.

Matras' (2007) hierarchy is more detailed, including a broader range of grammatical categories: nouns, conjunctions > verbs > discourse markers > adjectives > interjections > adverbs > other particles, adpositions > numerals > pronouns > derivational affixes > inflectional affixes.

Melissaropoulou and Ralli (2020) focus on the borrowability of free grammatical elements, often argued to transition between the lexicon and the grammar or between content words and affixes.

This perspective on the transitional nature of free grammatical elements is particularly relevant to the present study, which seeks to assess the extent to which such elements, alongside lexical items, are susceptible to borrowing in a contact setting. Before proceeding, it is important to note a limitation of this study: the source text, specifically the letter, is short. The brevity of the text affects the statistical representativeness of the data and may skew overall interpretations of language contact, and structural coupling. The availability of a larger and/or more varied corpus may have permitted a greater empirical base for identifying borrowability hierarchies across language categories. Moreover, the opening section of the letter (lines 1–16), completely in Persian, contains only one instance of a Dari word *xošta* (line 6), limiting the available data for making conclusions about Persian-Dari interaction in that segment.

Nevertheless, the proposed methodology can still be applied to larger corpora and provide a model for future research. This methodology, if applied to larger data sets, would allow for more rigorous statistical testing and would permit textual comparison for borrowings, phonological and grammatical convergence.

To investigate the distinctive characteristics (borrowability) of various language characteristics borrowed from Persian into Zoroastrian Dari (ZD), a quantitative study based specifically on the distinctive forms occurring across this letter is employed. This analysis avoids any forms that both languages share, as they can offer no insight into the sociolinguistic behavior of borrowing. This is particularly problematic when comparing two genetically related languages which share traits and vocabulary. For example, the preposition *az* (meaning “from”) and the conjunction *ke* are common in the whole letter. Nonetheless, as both of these forms are identical in both Persian and ZD, they were omitted from the calculation of borrowability.

Fundamentally, this study is concerned with the frequency of genuine Dari forms of each linguistic type according to its linguistic category. When engaging with the full occurrence as the denominator and with the native Dari forms as the numerator of each category, I created a rate of percentage to quantify the degree of borrowability for each category. That is the simplest illustration of the strength of the probability of borrowing Persian forms into ZD particularly in these linguistic categories.

For example, in working with prepositions, there are eight prepositions (none of which are shared between Dari and Persian); in total, there were only three were genuine Dari forms and all other forms (five) were from Persian. Thus, the borrowing rate or borrowability for prepositions was 62.5 % showing that ZD draws on Persian prepositions at a greater rate than utilising its own forms. This methodical process allows me to assess the influence of Persian on

TABLE 1 Borrowability rate

Category	Total number	Number of Dari forms	Number of Persian forms	Borrowability rate
Verb	66	66	0	0%
Independent Personal Pronouns (first- and second- person singular)	7	7	0	0%
Prepositions	8	3	5	62.5%
Adverbs	15	3	12	80%
Substantives	46	8	38	82.61%
Demonstratives	6	1	5	83.33%
Ezafe particle	17	1	16	94.12%

zD in this letter in a systematic manner and to quantify the extent of borrowing linguistically throughout the various grammatical categories. For this reason, I excluded certain categories with low occurrence. For example, the category of reflexive pronouns was excluded because there was only a single instance of its use in the letter, in which the genuine Dari word *xa* was employed. This lone occurrence is insufficient to support a reliable analysis.

In the case of independent personal pronouns, I focused only on the first- and second-person singular forms (again as set apart from the object marker form, *rā*). The pronoun *ūn*, which relates to the third-person singular pronoun, is common to both Persian and zD. Therefore, *ūn* is neutral to this analysis.

Based on the frequency of native Dari forms used in each category and the calculation of the proportion of these forms to derive a borrowability rate, the following key points can be deduced from the analysis.

First, the analysis indicates that the borrowability rate of the ezafe particle is 94.12%. This means that all uses except one, are Persian forms. The categories of substantives (82.61%) and demonstratives (83.33%) also have high borrowability rates indicating a heavy dependence on Persian forms.

The category of prepositions shows a borrowability rate of 62.5%, which, while lower than some other categories, still indicates a considerable adoption of Persian forms over native Dari equivalents. This indicates that prepositions are also susceptible to borrowability, but perhaps not as much as other grammatical categories.

The borrowability rates of the verbs and independent personal pronouns are 0%. Therefore, all forms of verbs and independent personal pronouns in

TABLE 2 Borrowability scale in the letter

Highest borrowability	Lowest borrowability
Ezafe particle > Demonstratives > Substantives > Adverbs > Prepositions > Independent Personal Pronouns > Verbs	

the letter are genuine Dari forms with no borrowing from Persian. This could indicate a strong retention of native forms in these essential grammatical functions, possibly reflecting a core area of linguistic resistance to borrowing.

In putting together, a borrowability scale based on this information, the ranks of the parts of speech from highest to lowest borrowability are as follows:

Our letter illustrates that essential grammatical structures, such as verb morphology and basic morphosyntactic elements including verbs and Independent Personal Pronouns, always remain stable and resistant. This stability primarily stems from these elements forming the backbone of a language's grammar and being deeply embedded in the linguistic competence of native speakers. Their high frequency and central role in sentence construction make them less prone to borrowing and alteration.

These results diverge from known borrowability scales in some important ways. In our study, verbs and independent person pronouns are resistant to borrowing with a 0% rate or level of borrowability from Persian. This differs to the borrowability scales developed by Haugen (1950), Muysken (1981), and Matras (2007), which indicate verbs and pronouns as some of the most borrowable of grammatical constructs but tend to be less borrowable than nouns. The stability of these categories in ZD, as reflected in our data, suggests that they form a core part of the language's grammar and are resistant to borrowing, likely due to their essential role in sentence structure and communication.

Our results show that the Ezafe particle has a 94.12% borrowability rate, indicating it is highly borrowed from Persian. This high rate differs from earlier borrowability scales, which typically place more emphasis on the borrowing of content words like nouns and less on functional elements like particles. This finding underscores the unique dynamics of Persian-ZD contact, where even functional grammatical elements are highly susceptible to borrowing.

In our data, prepositions have a borrowability rate of 62.5%, indicating significant, though not overwhelming, borrowing from Persian. This finding is somewhat consistent with previous research, where prepositions are often cited as more borrowable than other grammatical elements like pronouns or conjunctions. However, the consistently observed borrowability percentage of

ZD suggests a more moderate tendency of borrowing relevant to Persian and ZD language specific contact and actual situation.

Our results reinforce the idea that borrowability is highly dependent on context. These findings align more closely with the perspective of Melissaropoulou and Ralli (2020), who argue against the existence of a universal borrowability scale with predictive power across all language contact situations. Our analysis suggests that the borrowability of linguistic features in ZD cannot be fully predicted by existing scales, but rather depends on the particular communicative context of Persian-ZD interaction.

4 Code-Switching

Studies of Code-Switching often rely on analytical frameworks built for spoken language, and these taxing frameworks do not typically transfer easily to the analysis of written texts due to the intrinsic differences between spoken and written language. The written texts are typically more permanent and lack the immediate, dynamic interaction found in spoken conversations. Written language does not occur in a series of exchanges between parties like spoken language, and once it is produced written language will likely remain the same, rather than changing or shaping new patterns of language. However, to some extent, written forms of language can more closely approximate interaction and spoken discourse when produced as letters. Although written texts vary in type, typical categories connecting to spoken texts may often not hold. A key, essential way to approach the study of historic texts is to see them as social practices, which need to be studied in their social, historical and linguistic contexts. Also, when it comes to the analysis of mixed language written texts, I would argue it is appropriate to think about who is writing this type of text, for whom they are writing, how they are used, and ultimately, why they are written.

There is a rare but important example of a book focused on the phenomenon of code-switching in written language: *Language Mixing and Code Switching in Writing: Approaches to Mixed-Language Written Discourse*, edited by Sebba et al. (2012). The book provides research on this alternation of languages in written forms, ranging from historical to contemporary periods and covering a wide array of media, from traditional as well as modern forms such as emails, SMS and blogs. The book offers new perspectives on written discourse and it emphasises the study of mixed-language literacy as a social practice and the textual and visual dimensions of written communication.

Two further works that are particularly relevant to this chapter are those of Schendl (2002) and Nurmi and Pahta (2004). Nurmi and Pahta's study exam-

ined code-switching between English and other languages in letters written in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century England. Their research explores code-switching in the context of a variety of social variables but with a primary focus on social stratification. Their analysis showed a clear association between writers' social rank and their code-switching behaviour, both in terms of the frequency with which they used code-switching and the types of switches they employed. They also mention that other factors, such as gender and education, play a significant role in this linguistic phenomenon.

Schendl (2002) argues that the choices of language made by Richard Kingeston in his two mixed-language letters had a heavy correlation to the social positions and relationships of the writer (Kingeston) and the audience (the King). The study finds that Kingeston was likely trying to create a more personal and urgent message by using English in the postscript of his first letter. This interpretation contrasts with earlier views by Hingeston and by Suggett that the switches to English were a result of Kingeston's poor command of French or offered as an impulsive reaction to some form of stress. Schendl thinks the switches are intentional, and that it serves a purpose, especially in the case of wanting the message to be more personal and direct.

From these two works, which focus on the social motivation of code-switching, we will also take the opportunity to examine our letter with an expectation of explaining the writer's decisions to use distinct languages for different purposes.

We must therefore consider not only how the writer of our case study switches between Persian and Zoroastrian Dari, but to contemplate the pragmatic functions behind the writer's language choices, especially when examining the motivation for switching to the Zoroastrian Dari in the middle section of the letter.

The writer uses Persian most of the time but also includes a considerable amount of Zoroastrian Dari. Persian is used in the beginning (lines 1–16), briefly in the middle (lines 31–35), and again at the end (line 35). Zoroastrian Dari appears primarily in the central section (lines 16–31), with brief additional usage at line 35, overlapping the transition between middle and end. In Table 3, the details of the code-switching are presented.

We can easily recognise the five parts² which Haskins (1955) offered on composing letters. This indicates that whatever the time and location of the letter, they seem to have some commonality of structure and content. The letter

2 The salutation [salutatio], the exordium [introduction] or captatio benevolentie [the grasping of goodwill], exposition [narratio]; the petition [petitio], the conclusion [conclusio] (Haskins 1955: 143–144).

TABLE 3 Summary of code-switching in the letter

Language	Letter lines	Topics
Persian	1–16	Loyalty Admiration and Friendship Testing of Friendship and Unity Health and Well-being Inquiry Dispatch and Remittance Issues Execution of Commands Property Deeds Objection Submission Search for Mohammad Visit to a Residence
Zoroastrian Dari	16–31	Instructions on Financial Secrecy Investigation Encounter and Restrictions Communication with a Higher-up Inquiry about Well-being Misunderstanding and Clarification Waiting Period and Delay Provision of Address Seeking Permission to Visit Potential Information Fishing Hidden Business Affairs
Persian	31–35	Colonel's Condition Inquiry Expenditure Report
Zoroastrian Dari	35	only two words: <i>one bo</i> “it was there”
Persian	35	only two words: <i>qorbānet</i> ... (the second word cannot be read)

begins with the “Salutation” section, comprising greetings and expressions of respect toward the recipient: “May I be sacrificed for you. After expressing my devotion and sincerity, which day by day (2) has increased due to the sentiments of familiarity-worship and kindness to friends of that existence”.

It proceeds with attempts at obtaining the goodwill of the recipient, while establishing a positive tone (Exordium portion) of common ground, i.e., previous friendship, unity, and moral distinction. The writer creates a positive, optimistic tone despite acknowledging challenges, and prepares the reader to

be receptive to the writer's values and emotional appeals: "Truly (3) at the time of testing friendship and unity, it has become clear and good has been distinguished from bad. Truly (4) I have been and remain your friend, and I hope that at the time of testing and demonstrating service and servitude, (5) I hope that favor will be shown. It has been a while since I have received any information about your well-being. I hope (6) you are well and happy".

The letter continues, line 6, with the facts or background information (exposition), which constitutes one of the reasons for writing the letter. It seems as though the author is now answering the one question the recipient likely asked previously and provided an explanation in answer to that question.

Nevertheless, it appears the main purpose of the letter lies in the confidential Dari part, where the writer states the purpose of the letter (Petitio), and submits a request to the recipient (lines 16–31). The detailed instructions contained in these lines suggest he is advising the recipient on how he should respond if questioned on their finances, explaining they dealt with a higher-up of a close friend, and discussing whatever attempts he made to inquire about the well-being and finances of the recipient. The writer is suggesting the discomfort of prolonged waiting—both being kept waiting and having to make others wait for hours. The writer cautions against the potential investigations or information fishing endeavors, emphasising the need to keep business affairs hidden.

In closing, the writer also expresses thanks for support, as well as mentions expenses incurred during the process. Thus, the writer summarised the main points, restated his request, and offered a polite closing.

The letter involves inter-sentential code-switching. In this particular case, the language switch occurs at the paragraph level. It means that entire paragraphs are written in one language before switching to another language in the following paragraph. In addition to inter-sentential code-switching we can see a further variety of intra-sentential code-switching, meaning that the code-switch happens within the same sentence as we saw in line 35.

Each discrete part of the letter is written in a distinct language, either Persian or Zoroastrian Dari. The intention of the writer in separating the Persian language from the Zoroastrian Dari language shows that the writer has intended to divide various segments of an audience. The writer writes in Persian when the letter enters the non-confidential parts of the letter, e.g. greeting and general information that can be shared with a broader audience. In contrast, Zoroastrian Dari is used for confidential content intended specifically for the main recipient.

In strategic language switching in letter writing such as this, beyond managing the privacy and dissemination of information, it also reflects the writer's intention that only the intended recipient fully understand the sensitive con-

tent. The code-switching in this case is driven by a combination of linguistic and social factors. It reflects the writer's intent to balance openness with confidentiality, engaging different readers appropriately based on the content being conveyed. Furthermore, the switch to Zoroastrian Dari in the middle section of the letter serves specific pragmatic functions. The switch may have indicated solidarity to the recipient associated with perceived shared background and trust in the underlying messaging. It also allows the writer to express nuances such as seriousness or confidentiality that might not be as effectively communicated in Persian. A sophisticated use of switching also shows the attention the writer paid to the audiences and content, and shades of meaning, thereby managing the message that they were trying to convey in a letter.

Schendl's (2002) argument that code-switching can be an intentional and strategic choice rather than simply a result of language competence issues provides a useful framework for interpreting the sophisticated use of inter-sentential code-switching in this letter.

5 Conclusion

This binational letter adds to the body of linguistics literature on Iranian languages and serves as a case assignment to examine issues of language contact and multilingualism in written texts. It provides evidence of a low source language and illustrates complex bilingualism between two genetically related languages.

The letter highlights two types of borrowings from Persian: direct borrowings and adapted borrowings. Direct borrowings include terms for administration, everyday life, and formal communication, highlighting the extensiveness of influence from Persian. Adapted borrowings generally involve complex verbs that have substantives in Persian, combined with morphologically adjusted Dari verbs. Additionally, the use of the Persian object marker *rā* and the presence of both genuine and adapted vocabulary highlight the trend towards Persianisation. Genuine Dari alternatives either omit the object marker or use *e* instead. Moreover, the letter reveals instances of confusion and inconsistency in using *rā*, as well as the Persian subjunctive marker *be-* versus the traditional Zoroastrian Dari *ve-*. A phonological adaptation is also noted where *ma'lum* (clear) becomes *ma'lim* (obvious), displaying typical Zoroastrian Dari vowel shifts.

In the analysis, I examined the stability of grammatical items in Zoroastrian Dari (ZD) and formulated a borrowability scale based on the ratio of genuine Dari forms to borrowed Persian forms. I found that core grammatical items,

such as verbs and independent personal pronouns, show high stability and no borrowing (0% borrowability rate). Items such as the Ezafe particle, demonstratives, and substantives have fairly high borrowability.

Analysis of code-switching in the letter revealed a sophisticated and strategic use of both languages to manage a number of communication requirements and privacy issues. The writer used Persian for the general content of the letter, while Zoroastrian Dari was used in places where highly confidential information is conveyed. The inter-sentential switching allows the writer to communicate across different discourse domains in ways appropriate to the general and intended segments of the audience.

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ای شبه اولی صافی است که بر آبی در رود و چون جویشش داده به که در انشاس دوباره پیام را در آید

FIGURE 1 Letter dated April 11, 1931, Pouladi Collection, Yazd, Page 1
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۴ ساعت به شش مطلق کرت ساعت ۱۰ تا ۲ ساعت به از
 نیمه و او نه یو به به ری کی خط شی نوشته به کی اورم
 به این و اوم نه به کی اگر قاصع اربوت خیرم آت به کی اوت
 نه به اورم داد مردو نبات و شش به شش به شش
 خوا و اعز به برای دید و نشر ~~الکمار~~ به به معلیم اربوت که
 اعز به به تن یا نه محقق استر آنه که رفیق به شش
 که شش می نه شش شو که مردو و امش کف به کوفه به معلیم
 بویوت به به هت معلف بو شاید که رار ای که شو و ووت
 کی و فتن که اوت شش گویو به به بیان و یک به سی به به
 به کورن معلف بو مورو بنده خفا کار و بار
 شش محکم این ۱۰۰ به نظر آن به به سی در اوج معلف
 آن سر کف الام به به سی سرم اربو سراجی ختم اربو
 معلف است محمدا به به سی اور سب را محمف به به سی معلف
 تا اعلام به به سی اربو ف صلیک اربو اربو سی الام
 معلف اربو به به سی ۱۳ اربو ف صلیک اربو بو ز به به سی

FIGURE 2 Letter dated April 11, 1931, Pouladi Collection, Yazd, Page 2

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