



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

M.Ed. In TESL Program Language Group Specific Informational Reports

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Pashto Informational Report

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Where is Pashto Spoken?

- Pashto is one of the East Iranian group of languages.
- There are two subgroups of the Indo – European Language family: Western Iranian and Eastern Iranian.
- Pashto is one of the national languages of Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is also spoken in India, Iran, Tajikistan, United Arab Emirates and the U.K. (Pimsleur Method 2010)



Where is Pashto Spoken? Cont.

- About 9 million people speak Pashto in Afghanistan, and about 8 million people in Pakistan. (UCLA Language Materials)
- There are only 7,700 Pashto speakers that live in the United States according to the 2000 Census. (Associated Press 2009)

The Dialects of Pashto

Dialects

- There are two major dialects in Pashto:
 - Eastern Pashto which is spoken in northeastern Pakistan.
 - Western Pashto which is spoken in Afghanistan in the city of Kabul.
- There are also two other dialects:
 - Southern Pashto which is spoken in Baluchistan (western Pakistan and eastern Iran) and in Kandahar, Afghanistan.
 - Central Pashto which is spoken in northern Pakistan (Waziristan).

A Map of Afghanistan and Pakistan



(Magellan Geographix,
www.ticklethewire.com/tag/afghanistan/, 1997)

The Writing System of Pashto

- The Pashto language is a variant of the Arabic Script. It is written in the Arabic Script. (Afghans, 2002)

Example of the Pashto Alphabet

<http://www.omniglot.com/writing/pashto.htm>

- There are seven vowel sounds in the Pashto Language
- The Pashto Alphabet has a similar set of consonants like English.
- Has a series of retroflex consonants: *t*, *d*, *r*, *n*. Retroflex consonants sounds are made by curling the tongue backwards. The retroflex in English is *r*. (Afghans, 2002)

Pashto Speakers Often Make Common Errors in: *Phonology*

Stress and Rhythm

- The English and Pashto language are similar as they both stress the last syllable in the word.
- As in English, Pashto also has short and long vowel sounds.
- Pashto speakers should have no trouble with the pronunciation of English. they will speak with an "accent," their pronunciation of English will be quite easy to understand and will require no special pronunciation work. (Afghans, 2002)
- Pashto allows consonant clusters of two or three sounds at the beginning of a syllable. (UCLA Language Materials)

Common Mistakes Made in: **Phonology**

- Pashto speakers often have trouble with the /th/ sound.
 - Example: Words as in *thank* and *this*
- They will also have trouble with the distinction between /w/ and /v/.
 - Example: Words as in *wine* and *vine*
- Speakers of Pashto may also have difficulty with the difference between /f/ and /p/.
- Pashtuns will have trouble distinguishing /oy/ and /ay/ so that *lawyer* and *liar* come out the same.

Common Mistakes Made in: **Syntax**

- In comparison to English, Pashto's word order is very rigid, subject-object-verb.
- Verbs agree with their subjects in person, number, and grammatical gender as well as being marked for tense/aspect. (UCLA Language Materials)
- There are some fundamental differences in structure between English and Pashto.
 - Pashto puts the direct objects before the verb
 - Example: *John Mary saw*
 - In English we put direct objects after the verb
 - Example: *John saw Mary*

Common Mistakes Made in: Syntax

Continued

- Past tense transitive sentences are formed as ergatives: in these, the object rather than the subject agrees with the verb, and weak pronoun objects rather than subjects are omitted if they are not emphatic. (UCLA Language Materials)
- Pashto has some grammatical elements that relate to English such as the verb systems that make a distinction between
 - Past tenses
 - Example: I went to the store
 - Perfect tenses
 - Example: I have gone to the store

Common Mistakes Made in: **Syntax**

Continued

- Pashto has prepositions before, after, and both before and after the noun.
 - Examples: *in the house, the house in, in the house in*
- Where as English has prepositions before the noun only.
 - Example: *in the house*

(Afghans, 2002)

Reading Skills

- Afghan refugees will have trouble developing English reading skills.
 - They will have trouble with the new alphabet and irregular spelling system.
 - Lack of vocabulary and the complexity of written English structures as compared with spoken structures will pose further problems.
 - They will also have to learn how to decode words.
 - The necessity for reading skills will vary widely from person to person and depend on reading level in Pashto.

(Afghans, 2002)

Communication Style

- It more acceptable that you keep a proper distance, meaning just be as close to the person as he/she can hear you and you can hear them.
- Men often hug each other and will shake hands with both males and females.
- Shaking hands is common, if you offer a hand shake, they will not hesitate to respond with a handshake.
- When speaking be sure to use a clear, but not very loud voice. The loudness of you voice should be determined by how close you are to the person.

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