

All Graduates

Emerging languages: the languages of Afghanistan

There are many Afghans in Australia, and they largely speak one of the three main languages:

- Dari, with 20,180 speakers
- Hazaraghi, 7,605 speakers
- Pashto, 4,801 speakers*

The languages are Indo-European of the Iranic branch and are written in an Arabic script. Dari is concentrated around the Centre and North of the country, Hazaraghi in the Central region and West, and Pashto in the South and East.

Dari is sometimes called Eastern Farsi or Afghan Persian; Farsi is the modern name for the national language of Iran, also known by its older name Persian. Dari and Farsi are largely mutually intelligible. Dari is widely spoken in Kabul and in educational institutions and national administration; all educated Afghans will speak Dari.

Hazaraghi (Azargi, Haragi) is the language of the more central regions of Afghanistan which have seen a lot of the war; it is close to Dari, and largely mutually intelligible but does not have a developed literary heritage.

Pashto (Pushto) is also identified along with Dari as a national language, has a strong literary tradition, and is spoken both in Afghanistan and in neighbouring Pakistan. The Taliban is a largely (not exclusively) Pashto organisation, and as conflicts in their region intensified hundreds of thousands of Pashto have sought refuge elsewhere. Pashto is not easily mutually intelligible with Dari, but educated Pashto will speak Dari.

Professional translators and interpreters are generally readily available in Dari, but much less readily available in Hazaraghi or Pashto.

Fun Fact: Afghanistan was relatively unknown to most Australians until after 2001 and the consequent war. Yet historically links go back a long way, to when 'Afghan' camel drivers in the late 19th century sustained much of the distant outback, a past celebrated in the name of the 'Ghan' train that runs to Darwin today.

*Source: 2011 Australian Census

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