



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Iranian Religion/Ceremony **History** Prayer Gathas
Comparative Religion Shahnameh

Age Group (circle one): PreK-k Grades 1-3 Grades 4-5 **Grades 6-8** **Grades 9-12**

Lesson #6

Subject of the Lesson: Origin of Persian Language

Material for the teacher:

Lesson Objective: To learn about the history of Persian language.

Lesson Length: 1 – 1.5 hour

Introduction: Teacher shares:

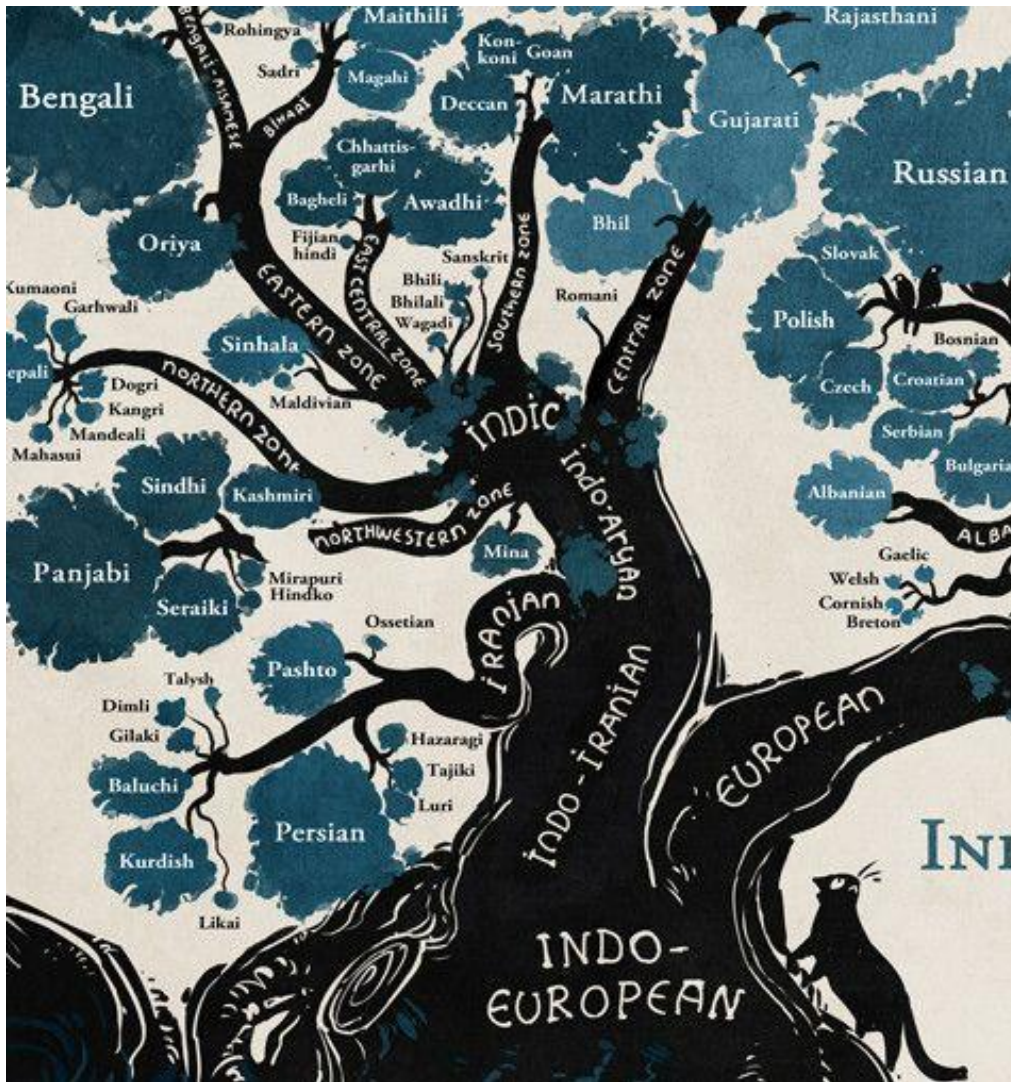
The origin of spoken language goes back to the beginnings of human society. Language has been changing constantly from one generation to another. These changes are mostly very gradual and noticeable only cumulatively over the course of several generations. The Persian language is one of the oldest spoken languages in history.

Activities:

1. Take a line from one of our prayers. How many words can you recognize?
2. Which prayers are easier to understand if you speak Farsi?
3. What words are the same in Avestan/Pahlavi as in Farsi/Gujarati?
4. What new insights do you have about your prayers?
5. Please see the “Activities Menu” in the google documents shared with teachers for more activity ideas.

See Handouts:

1. Proto-Indo European Languages (pages 2-7)



OLD WORLD LANGUAGE FAMILIES:

The size of the branches represents the recorded native speakers before year 0.

Proto-Indo-European Languages

Many of the most commonly spoken western languages as far ranging from French to Farsi, come to us from this source. The common ancestor of the historical Aryan or Indo-Iranian languages, called the Aryan parent language or Proto-Aryan, can be reconstructed by comparison of the (Old) Indo-Aryan with the (Old) Iranian languages.

The Indian group or Indo-Aryan (especially Vedic, the language of the Vedas), Avestan, and Old Persian show some remarkable similarities, especially with religious terms. (One could translate whole Avestan sentences word by word according to the phonetic laws into correct Vedic).



Proto-Indo-European Languages (also known as PIE)

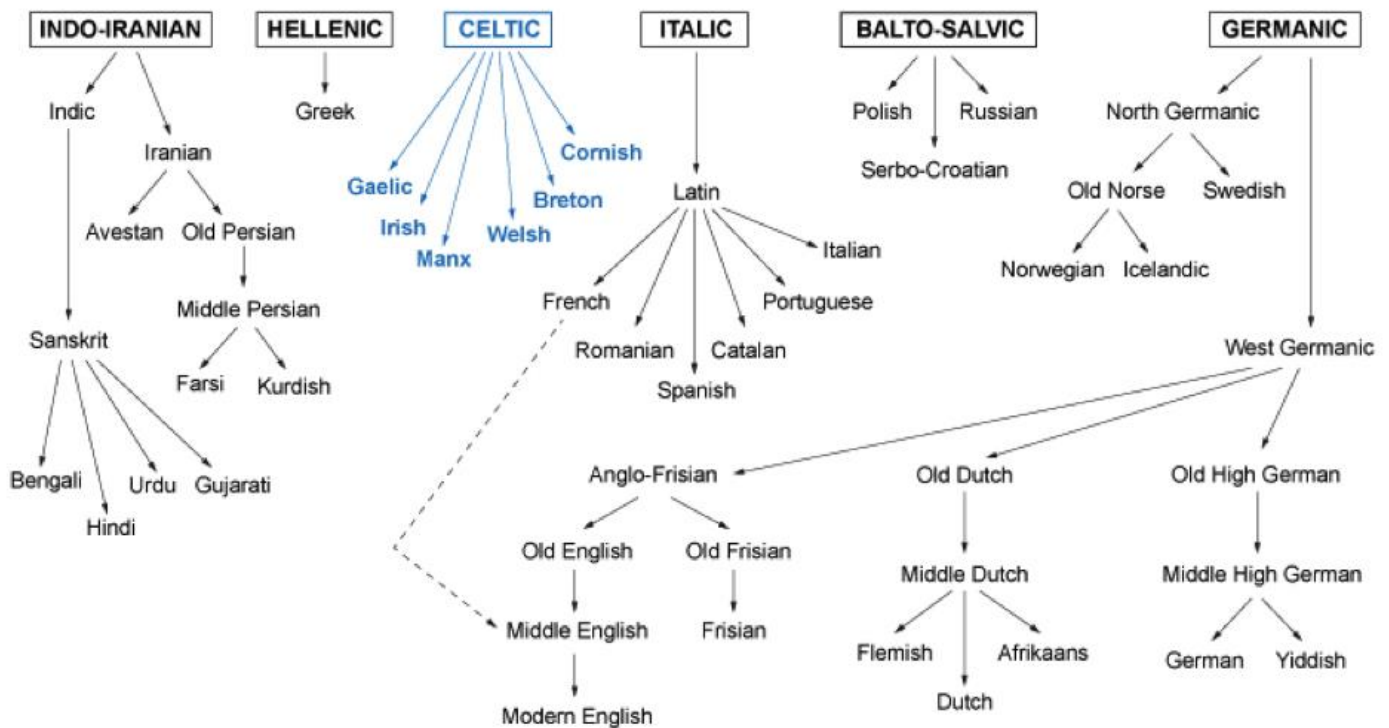
Population movements of people in prehistoric times played a large part in carrying the Indo-European Languages from a relatively restricted area, somewhere around the Black Sea, into **Northern India, Iran, and Armenia and most of Europe.**

Most of the subgroups spread out during the fourth and third millennia BC. This geographic distribution is what gave this family of languages its name, with “Indo” coming from “Indos” the Greek word for India.

Indo-Iranian Languages

Iranian languages belong to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European Language family. Iranian languages are spoken in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and parts of Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, and scattered areas of the Caucasus Mountains.

PROTO-INDO-EUROPEAN





Linguists typically approach the Iranian languages in historical terms because they fall into three distinct categories—**Ancient, Middle, and Modern Iranian.**

Ancient (Old) Iranian Languages

The two subgroups in Old Iranian Languages are: Avestan and Old Persian.

- **Avestan language**

Avestan is an extinct East Iranian language, which was probably spoken in Northeastern Iran. **It is the language of the Avesta, the sacred book of Zoroastrianism.**

Avestan was language known only to priests. It probably ceased to be used as an everyday spoken tongue about 400 BCE, but the sacred word was passed down from generation to generation through oral recitation.

- **Old Persian Language**

Old Persian was the language of the Achaemenid dynasty court. It was first seen in the inscriptions of Darius I (ruled 522–486 BCE), of which the longest, earliest, and most important example is that of Bisotun.

Middle Iranian Languages

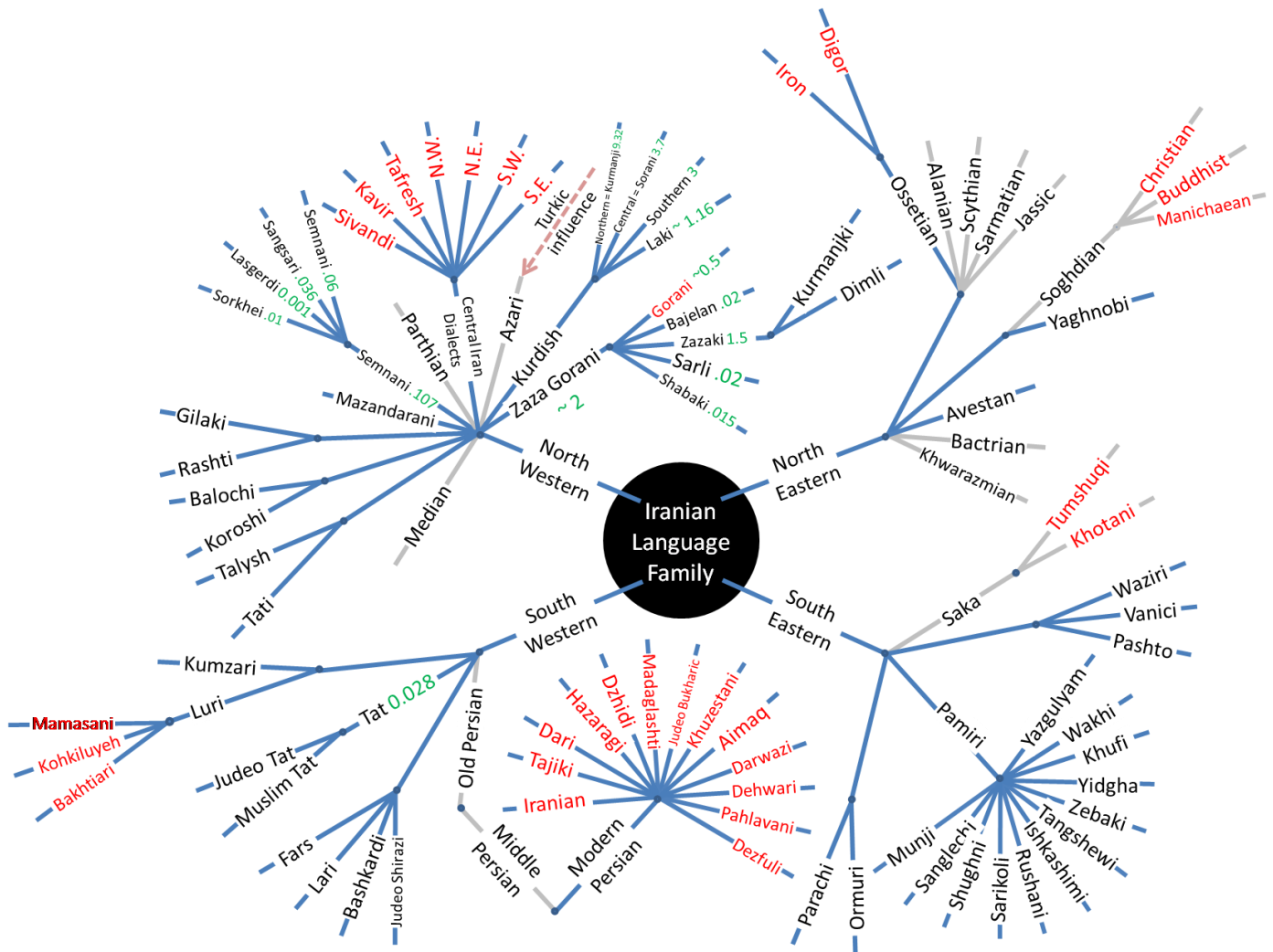
Middle Persian was known in three forms: **inscriptional Middle Persian, Pahlavi (often more precisely called Book Pahlavi), and Manichaean Middle Persian.**

The **Middle Persian** form belongs to the period 300 BCE to 950 CE and was, like Old Persian, the language of southwestern Iran. Whereas Parthian was the main language in the northeast and northwest. Examples of Parthian come from inscriptions and Manichaean texts.

سپهر پهلوی و پهلوانان و پهلوانان و پهلوانان
سپهر پهلوی و پهلوانان و پهلوانان و پهلوانان
سپهر پهلوی و پهلوانان و پهلوانان و پهلوانان
سپهر پهلوی و پهلوانان و پهلوانان و پهلوانان

(Middle Persian – Pahlavi Script – omniglot.com)

Look at the tree below: What Languages do you recognize?



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iranian_Language_Tree.png

Modern Iranian languages

Only four of the many modern Iranian languages are the official languages of the state in which they are spoken.

Persian (known also as Farsi) is a West Iranian language and the **national language of Iran**. A dialect of Persian known as Dari is recognized also as a second language in Afghanistan. About 30,000,000 people speak Persian.

Pashto is the **national language of Afghanistan** which is an East Iranian language. The majority of Pashto speakers are in Pakistan. About 35,000,000 people speak Pashto.

Tajik is another West Iranian language **spoken in Tajikistan** and part of Central Asia. It is intelligible to Persian speakers. About 7,000,000 people speak Tajik.

Ossetic is an East Iranian language not mutually intelligible with any other Iranian language and is **spoken in North Ossetia in Russia and South Ossetia in Georgia**. About 500,000 people speak Ossetic.

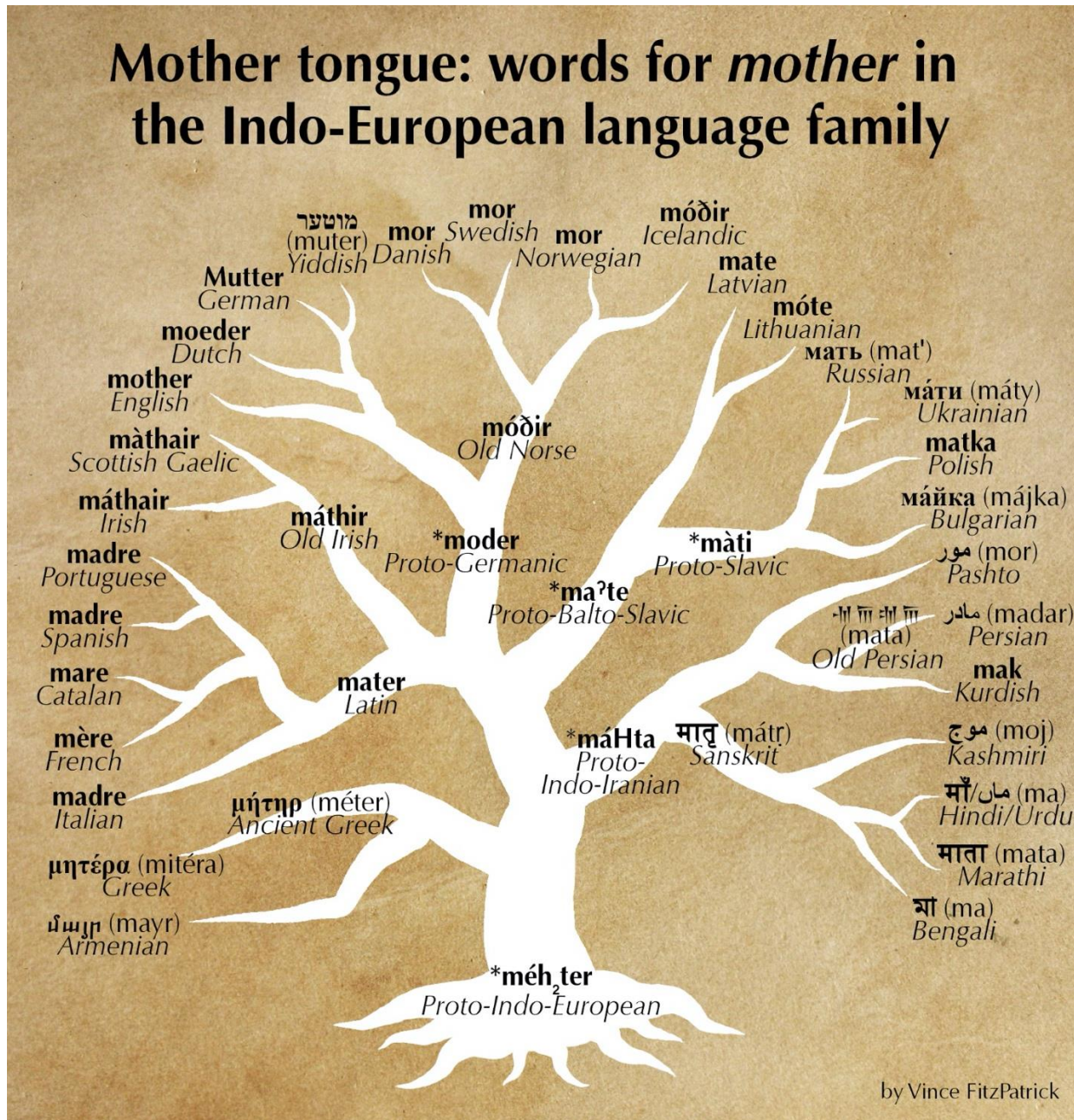


Two other Iranian languages, namely, ***Kurdish and Baluchi*** are spoken over vast areas.

However, they are not officially accepted as the national languages of an established state. More than 6,000,000 speak Baluchi as their main language in Pakistan, Afghanistan, central Asia, and Eastern Iran.

It is incredible to note the similarities between the PIE languages after thousands of years of migration and change. Below, you will see words for "mother" that descend from a common Proto-Indo-European root. Imagine how many other words in English, Farsi and Gujarati share the same roots!

Mother tongue: words for *mother* in the Indo-European language family



Sources: Google, Encyclopedia Iranica, Encyclopedia Britannica

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