

Persian Conversation(s)

by

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For the exclusive use of Spring and Summer 2013 Persian course students
at Arizona State University, the University of Michigan, and
The University of Texas at Austin

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Table of Contents

Dedication and Acknowledgments	iii
Preliminaries	1
1. Hello, How-are-you, and Good-bye	13
Present Tense Forms of the Verb “To Be” 1	
Personal Pronouns	
2. Hellos, Questions about Things, and Good-byes	17
Present Tense Forms of the Verb “To Know” (sth)	
3. Questions about Classroom Realia	23
Classroom Objects Vocabulary	
<i>Kasré-ye Ezâfé</i>	
Present Tense Forms of the Verb “To Be”	
4. Ownership of Things	27
Personal Possessions Vocabulary	
Indefinite Nouns	
Pronominal Suffixes 1	
5. Borrowing Things	31
Present Tense Forms of the Verb “To Have”	
6. Language	35
Comparison of Adjectives	
Imperative Forms of the Verb “To Be”	
7. Occupations	39
Present Tense Verb Forms	
Occupations Vocabulary 1	
Present Tense Verb Forms of the Verb “To Be” 3	
8. Nationality	43
Present Subjunctive Verb Forms 1	
9. Questions about Words	47
Present Tense Verb Forms 3	
Question Phrases about Language Textbooks	
10. One's Family	51
Family Vocabulary	
11. Classroom Commands and Responses	57
Imperative Verb Form	
12. Introductions	63
Present Tense Verb Forms 4	
<i>Ta'ârof</i> Expressions 1	
13. Daily Activities	67
Daily Activities Vocabulary 1	
14. Plans for the Immediate Future	71
Present Subjunctive Verb Forms 2	
15. A Mutual Acquaintance	79

	Occupations Vocabulary 2	
	Present Tense Verb Forms 5	
	Pronominal Suffixes 2	
	Indefinite Noun Phrases 1	
16.	One's Residence	83
	House/Apartment Vocabulary	
	Pronominal Suffixes 3	
17.	The Weather	87
	Weather/Climate Vocabulary	
	Days, Months, Dates Vocabulary	
18.	People's Whereabouts Today and Yesterday	91
	Past Tense Verb Forms	
19.	Telephone Calls	97
	Telephone Vocabulary	
20.	Back from a Trip	109
	Travel Vocabulary	
21.	Invited to Dinner	113
	<i>Ta'ârof</i> Expressions 2	
22.	Congratulations, Expressions of Sympathy and Condolences	123
23.	Shopping	131
	Persian Numbers Vocasbykar	
	Iranian(-American) Grocery Store Vocabulary	
24.	Likes and Dislikes	139
	Descriptive Adjectives Vocabulary 1	
	Insulting Language Vocabulary	
25.	Higher Education	145
	Simple Past Tense Forms	
	Present Perfect Tense Forms	
	Higher Education Vocabulary	
26.	Indisposition Yesterday	153
	Verb Tenses and Moods Chart	
	Health Vocabulary	
27.	Iran's Most Famous Novel	157
	Book Vocabulary	
	The Verb "To Go"	
28.	A Classic Iranian Movie	163
	Movie Vocabulary	
	Descriptive Adjectives Vocabulary 2	
29.	Automobiles and Traffic Talk	171
	Automobile Vocabulary	
30.	Wishful Thinking	175
	Mi-Past Tense Verb Forms	
	Past Perfect Tense Verb Forms	

	The Verbs “To Be Able” and “To Want”	
31.	Learning Iranian Geography Geography Vocabulary	181
32.	Asking Iranian(-Americans) Personal Questions Sentence Patterns for Asking Questions	201
33.	Participating in Classroom Life and Activities Classroom Activities Vocabulary	207
34.	Negotiating a Language Textbook Questions about Textbooks	213
35.	Describing One's Daily Routine Daily Activities Vocabulary	217
36.	Telling One's Life Story Life Story Vocabulary	221
37.	Describing One's Job Job Vocabulary	227
38.	Eating at Iranian(-American) Restaurants Restaurant Vocabulary	231
39.	Shopping at an Iranian(-American) Persian Carpet Store Oriental Carpets Vocabulary	245
40.	Browsing at an Iranian(-American) Bookstore Book Vocabulary 2	255
41.	Buying a Persian Newspaper or Magazine Newspaper Vocabulary	263
42.	Talking about Persian Poems Poetry Vocabulary	271
42.	Talking about Persian Short Stories Narrative/Story Vocabulary	279
44.	Talking about a Persian Animation Film War Movie Vocabulary	289
45.	Talking about Iranian Politics Politics Vocabulary	311
46.	Talking about American Foreign Policy Foreign Policy Vocabulary	327
47.	Talking about Islam in Iran Religion Vocabulary	333
48.	Talking about Iranian Culture Culture Vocabulary	339
49.	English–Persian Glossary	347
	Index	411

Persian-English Transcription System

The table below presents a list of all 32 letters in the Persian alphabet and other four symbols used in the Perso---Arabic writing system in tandem with the English alphabet letters and other symbol used to represent Persian sounds

Readers will note that *Persian Conversation(s)* relies primarily on Persian alphabet transcription, rather than English transcription as the means of indicating pronunciation. The reason for this is that the Persian writing system accurately reflects pronunciation of words as long as it includes symbols for short vowel sounds and the like. In cases of words and phrases in the book where Persian script may involve ambiguity, pronunciation appears also in English transcription between slash lines.

A reading of all of the words used below as illustrations of how the Persian and English writing system appears on an accompanying CD. Altogether 70+ such audio files appear on that CD, with PC-Track numbers identifying conversation texts and the phrase « متن شماره ... » appears immediately before each recorded Persian text. In the cases of recordings of vocabulary and other lists, such as the following, this icon appears with the recorded material:

consonants-2		consonants-1 	
گاز، پارکینگ	گگ	/g/	بوتیک،
لیست، فیلم، شال	لل	/l/	پاستا، سوپ
ماشین، ریتم	مم	/m/	تیم، لیست
نام، شانس، ویتامین	نن	/n/	سالاد، ماسک، کوکس
ویزا، آوانگارد، دیو	و... و... و...	/v/	جین، حاجی
یوگا، چای [tea]	ی،،، ی	/y/	چیپس، اینچ
	vowels		هال، شاه، نوح [Noah]
اُتُم، حَح، نَه [no]	اَ...، ع...، ...	/a/	خاکِ [khaki]
اِسکی، جِت، موزه	...	/e/	دینامیت، ساردین
اُپرا، کُد	...	/o/	زیپ، ویزا، جاز
آسیا،	آ...، ...، ..	/â/	رادیو، گاراژ، گیتار
ایتالیا، شیک،	ای...،	/i/	ژورنال، سوژه، روژ
اورژانس		/u/	شیک،
	diphthongs		اُ، ..وُ،،، ا...، آیی...،
	آی...، ...ای...، ..ای	/ây/	شیعه، شیعی
آی.سی.یو، چای [tea]			قانون [law]، آفریقا
اوضاع [situation]	اُو...، ...وُ...، ..وُ	/ow/, /o:/	باغ [garden]
ایدز، کیک	ای...، ...پی...، ..ی	ey	فارسی، بوفه
			کارت، پارک
			بب
			بب /b/
			پپ /p/
			تت، ط /t/
			ثث، سس، صص /s/
			جج /j/
			چچ /ch/
			حح، هه /h/
			خخ /kh/
			د /d/
			ذ، ز، ضض، ظ /z/
			ر /r/
			ژ /zh/
			شش /sh/
			عع ع
			قق، غغغ غ /q/
			غغغ غ /gh/
			فف /f/
			کک /k/

Preliminaries

Persian Conversation(s), which exclusively treats the (Tehran dialect of the) Farsi Persian language (as opposed to Dari Persian and Tajiki Persian), presents 48 self-contained conversation lessons, featuring 70+ dialogues and monologues ranging in length from three exchanges to five-minute conversations and ranging in difficulty from beginning to advanced conversation skill levels. Role model exercises of Persian language settings and conversation opportunities in America, described below, initially identified the situations which dialogues and other conversation texts in *Persian Conversation(s)* treat.

Persian Conversation(s) is one in a series of four textbooks designed for use in America by adult learners of Persian planning to use the language primarily in America. The other three books are *Persian Listening* (2008), *Persian Reading and Writing* (2010), and *Persian Grammar and Verbs* (2012). *Persian Listening*, *Persian Reading and Writing*, and *Persian Grammar and Verbs* contain 200+ elementary, intermediate, and advanced listening and reading texts in lessons that highlight and practice Persian listening, reading, and even speaking skills. The vast majority of texts in *Persian Listening*, *Persian Reading and Writing*, and *Persian Grammar and Verbs* are authentic, whereas the telephone conversations and some of the monologues in *Persian Listening* are prompted, as opposed to authentic. The same holds for most of the conversation texts in *Persian Conversations*, although some of them are artificial.

Foreign language methodologists naturally prefer authentic target language speech in texts rather than prompted or artificial speech. An "authentic" Persian text is discourse which native speakers produce in the natural course of things. A native speaker of Persian produces a "prompted" text in response to a request for oral comments or a written statement on a subject without that native speaker knowing that the result will serve in a specific language learning setting. In the case of prompted Persian conversations, two native speakers may have a scenario or other directions about the subject and aims of a conversation-to-be, but no guidance as to vocabulary, phraseology, or sentence patterns, and they can produce the desired conversation through role playing. An "artificial" text is one which a textbook writer or teacher creates for use in instructional materials and/or a language learning setting.

In the case of intermediate and advanced conversations in *Persian Conversation(s)*, prompted conversations seemed the only practicable approach, the possibility that artificial and unnatural forms and models would appear in the prompted and subsequently scripted speech of the conversations slight, primarily because of the lengthy fieldtesting, review, and editing process the conversation materials have undergone. At the same time, teachers using *Persian Conversation(s)* should feel free to alter texts to suit their own preferences in cases where textbook phraseology and patterns do not match what they naturally produce.

As for the fifteen or so elementary conversations in *Persian Conversation(s)*, they are artificial and consist of short dialogues suitable for use in Basic Persian courses, although students have to learn the rudiments of Persian reading before they can use the Perso-Arabic transcriptions of those conversations. Intermediate and advanced students can use elementary dialogues as review activities and for ready reference in anticipation of participating in interaction situations in which relevant subjects appear.

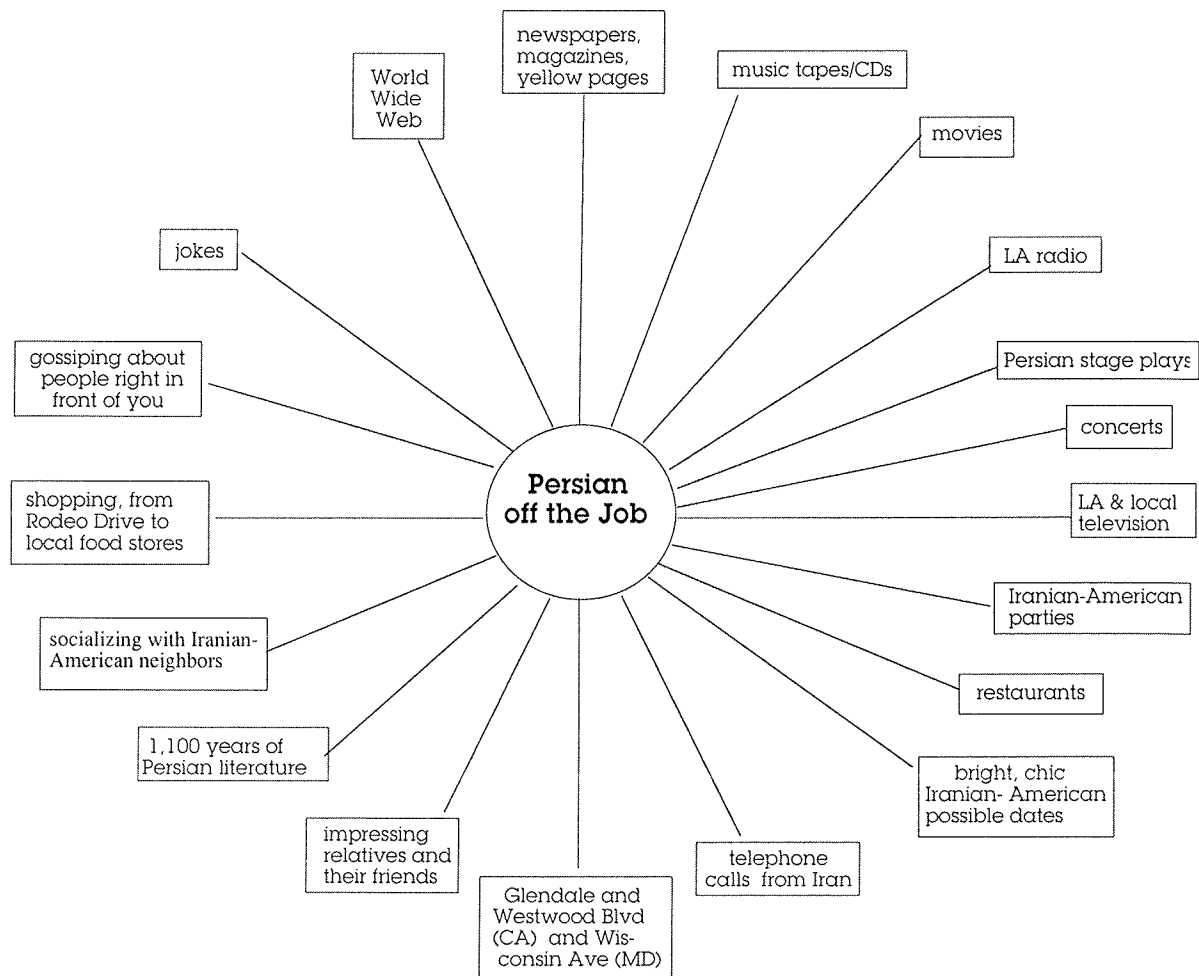
Intermediate students use the fifteen or so conversations in the middle units of *Persian Conversation(s)* as a means of developing performance skills in handling predictable Persian conversation situations in America. Advanced students can use the same conversations as review and for ready reference in anticipation of participating in interaction situations on subjects treated in the last third of the book.

Advanced students use the fifteen or so prompted conversations and other materials in the last third of the textbook as pre-conversation practice for participating in the situations those conversations treat. Although students might use situational conversations earlier in the book as models for participation in specific conversation situations, the conversations in the latter parts of the book serve more to provide students with possible conversation direction,

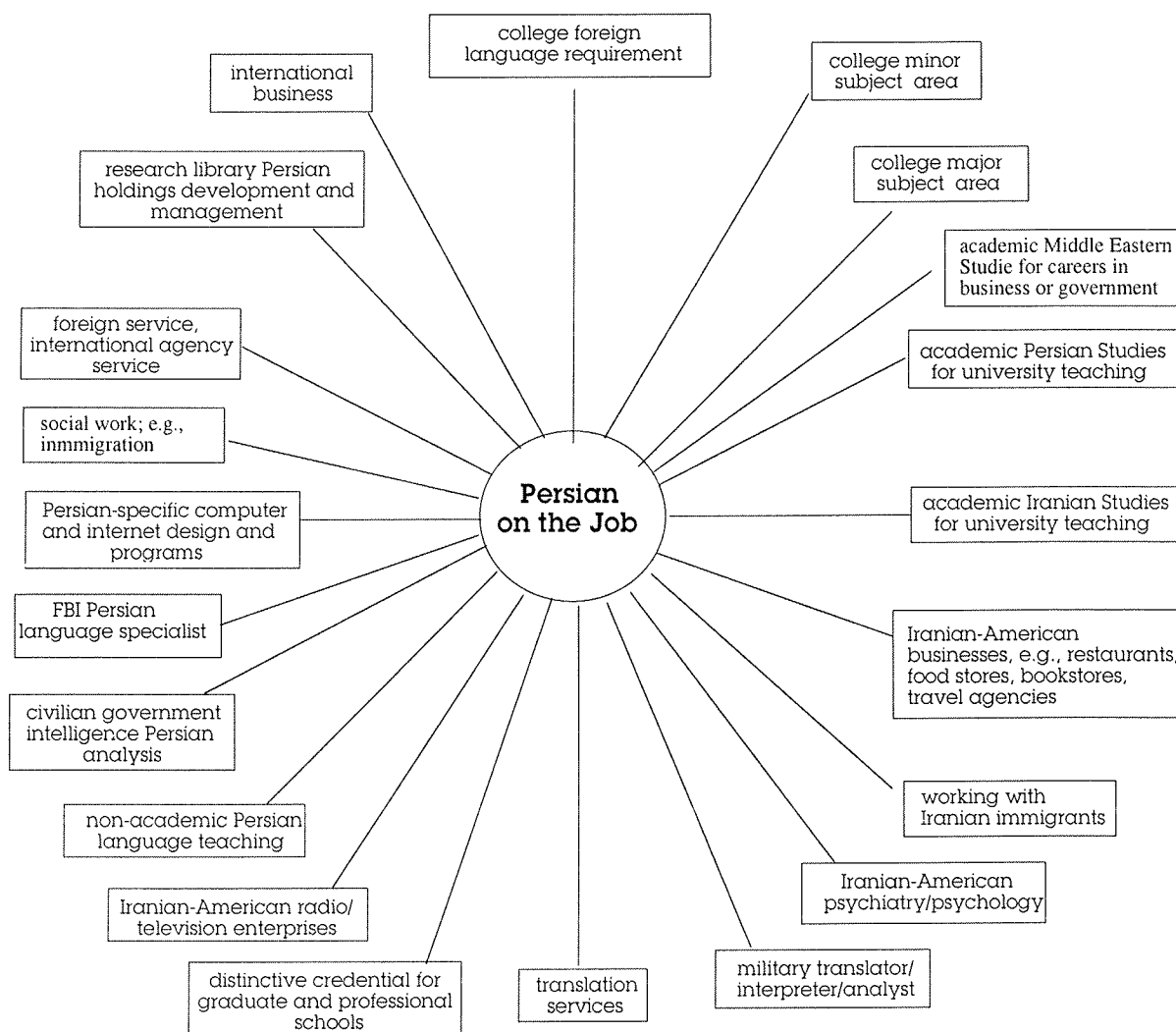
patterns, and vocabulary in anticipation of specific situations. In those situations, advanced students who have worked with textbook conversations and use them as inspiration will participate in the give-and-take of conversation without any attempt to use specific sentence patterns and content in the transcribed and recorded conversations.

Any Persian language skills that native speakers of English acquire through participation in any sort of Persian course or through contact with native speakers of Persian would naturally come into everyday play in travel to Iran, Afghanistan, or Tajikistan. But even without travel to those places, Persian language skills can serve as life-long, on-the-job, and off-the-job resources in America. Americans who learn Persian can have rich and rewarding Persian experiences in almost as much of their daily lives as they wish. In almost every medium-sized or large American city, they can do much of their shopping at establishments owned and operated by native speakers of Persian. In almost any larger American city, they can attend Persian-language music and theatre events. Persian-language feature films find their way into art cinemas and some regular movie theaters around America, for example the Academy Award winning film called *The Separation* in 2012. Iranian movies in video cassette and DVD format are readily available for rental or purchase in stores and online. Persian-language newspapers, magazines, and books published in America are everywhere. Via satellite relay, Persian television and radio programs are available twenty-four hours a day throughout America. Scores of Persian-language sites are just clicks away on the Internet, including radio, television, and print media from Iran and U-Tube videos, as well as social networking in Persian.

The following chart suggests the variety of Persian-language settings and resources in America.



As the next chart suggests, proficiency in the Persian language in America, home to hundreds of thousands of educated native speakers of the language, can open career doors and lead to career advancement.



In the process of working with specific conversation units in the first half of the book students master such vocabulary subjects as: cardinal and ordinal numbers, telling time, days of the week, dates, arithmetic operations, and colors. They also learn to use present indicative tense verbs, verb command forms, present subjunctive verbs, simple past verbs, repeated past action verbs, continuous past action verbs, (present) perfect verb forms, perfect subjunctive verb forms, past perfect (pluperfect) verb forms, the direct object postposition marker /...râ/, noun plural suffixes, comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs, pure and applied prepositions, pronouns, and coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. And they deal with such predictable situations as introductions, daily activities, plans, travel, , one's family, the weather, accepting invitations, talking about health issues, and expressing likes and dislikes.

The middle parts of the book present modules for these common, potentially on-the-job Persian conversation situations: Iranian geography, personal questions, classroom or office life and activities, one's Persian language

textbook, one's daily routine, one's life story, one's job, Iranian-American television, computers and websites, and telephone calls.

The last third of the book presents a series of full-blown, prompted dialogues on common, off-the-job Persian interaction situations in America. Students listen to and study these conversations and complete the lessons in which the conversations appear. Subsequently, they practice participating in such conversations, using the printed conversation text as partial inspiration, but creating their own conversation exchanges, for example, when browsing at an Iranian/Persian bookstore or talking about books, an Iranian movie, Iranian culture, Iranian politics, Islam in Iran, American foreign policy, and Persian stories and poems. Although these advanced conversation modules treat Iranian-American interaction situations and aim to help students develop facility in making use of Persian speaking environments and opportunities as a means of maintaining and improving Persian language skills, the modules do not presume that students either have Iranian(–American) acquaintances or friends or have any special interest in making friends with Iranian(–American)s. Of course, in terms of potential language skill maintenance and improvement, American Persian specialists who socialize with Persian-speaking Iranians naturally have an advantage over those who do not. But, in any case, owing to the presence of Persian-speaking communities in most metropolitan areas in America, American Persianists can easily work on their Persian language skills by seeking out Persian-speaking purveyors of goods and services. Conversation modules identify some of those environments. Needless to say, the skills with which these modules deal will serve Persian specialists in good stead also in Persian-speaking environments in Europe and Asia, including Iran.

All lessons in *Persian Conversation(s)* are self-contained. Each lesson presents one or more Persian dialogues or other texts in the context of activities and exercises that introduce and practice conversation skills relating to the conversation text's subject, situation, and language task. Each Persian conversation lesson begins with a stated rationale for its conversation text. In general, the modules share the twin goals of developing and then demonstrating student ability to accomplish specific tasks which each module illustrates. In a classroom setting, carrying out that task can take the form of classroom simulation of the conversation activity. Students read and review explanatory materials in textbook modules in self-study. Of course, implicit in the textbook modules lies the expectation that students will undertake the activities in question in the community beyond the classroom setting and report back to the class afterwards. Further classroom or self-study work then deals with problems which arise in either the classroom simulation or in real-world experimentation.

Conversation lesson modules also encourage learners to engage in oral practice of highlighted phrase and sentence patterns. Learners might consider memorizing the simplest statements useful in eliciting specific information or a service and in responding to questions. In later lesson modules students will find multiple ways of asking and answering questions and making statements, ways often communicating differing levels of formality, politeness, respect, or deference.

The chief objective in all lesson modules in *Persian Conversation(s)* is to help learners of Persian accomplish specific tasks. Students test their proficiency by participating in specific simulated or real-life situations calling for carrying out that situation's task. Accomplishment of the task means success, issues with pronunciation, phraseology, and vocabulary notwithstanding. Of course, repeated real-world attempts to accomplish speaking tasks offer by definition more realistic settings and more influential reinforcement.

As for the methodology behind the design of lesson units in *Persian Conversation(s)*, the annotations and commentary after the citation of representative conversation manuals (published after 1999) on the following list imply the eclectic approach herein.

- Abrahams, Simin. *Modern Persian: A Course-Book*. New York, NY: Routledge Curzon, 2005.
Accompanied by an audio cassette and CD.
- Adelson-Goldstein, and Norma Shapiro. Translation reviewed by Ramin Eshtiaghi. *English/Farsi Oxford Picture Dictionary: Second Edition*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009. xi, 305p.
Despite many errors in the translation of English terms into Persian, a useful ancillary resource with its everyday topics sections and illustrations of 4,000+ words and expressions.
- Amuzegar, Hooshang, and Farideh Amuzeger. *How to Speak, Read and Write Persian*. Bethesda, MD: IbeX Publishers, 2003. Accompanied by 3 twin-track audio cassettes.
- Ashraf-al-Kuttabi, H. and M. *Farsi dar Safar* [Persian for Travel]. Tehran: Estândârd Publications, 1999.
- Baizoyev, Azim, and John Hayward. *Beginner's Guide to Tajiki*. New York, NY: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004.
First published as *The Official Beginners' Guide to Tajiki*. (Dushanbe: Star Publications, 2001).
- Banaie, Sedigheh. *Âmuzesh-e Zabân-e Fârsi* [Learning Farsi: for students with limited knowledge of English language]. Los Angeles, CA: Ketab Corporation, 2005.
- Behzad, Faramarz, and Soraya Divshahi. *Persian Language Course: An Introduction to the Persian Language of Today*. Translated from the German *Sprachkurs Persisch*, 4th edition, (2003) by J. P. Luft. Bamberg, Germany: LOGIS, 2003.
Accompanied by 4 audio CD-recordings of all reading sections and exercises).
- Entezar, Ehsan M. *Dari Grammar and Phrasebook*. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2010.
A linguist's introduction to the grammar of the colloquial register of Dari Persian.
- Farzad, Narguess. *Teach Yourself Modern Persian*. Blacklick, OH: McGraw-Hill, 2004. Republished (caveat emptor) in 2010 under the title *Complete Persian (Modern Persian/Farsi)*.
Lives up to neither title. Privileges bookish/written Persian with the colloquial/spoken register relegated to a 4-page appendix. Does not lead students to develop specific skills to accomplish specific tasks in specific situations. Presents no cultural information.
- Hillmann, Michael Craig. *Persian Listening*. Hyattsville, MA: Dunwoody Press, 2008.
Chapter 2–Persian Jokes, Joke/Humor Vocabulary and 31 jokes; Chapter 3–Persian Monologues: Listening and Speaking Vocabulary, (3.1) An Iranian- American from Tehran Talks about His Hometown, (3.2) A Typical Weekday in the Life of an Iranian- American Man; (3.3) A Tajik Woman's Life Story, (3.4) Political Groups Opposed to the Islamic Republic of Iran, (3.5) Technology and Iran's Future, (3.6) A Writer's Artist Friend, (3.7) A Soldier Reminisces about an Incident in the Iran-Iraq War, (3.8) A Story by Khosrow Shahani, and (3.9) Shirin Ebadi's Nobel Prize Speech; Chapter 4–Persian Telephone Calls: Telephone Vocabulary and 11 prompted telephone conversations on social and political topics; Chapter 6–Persian Songs: Music Vocabulary, (6.1) The Persian “Happy Birthday” Song, (6.2) “A Flower without a Flowerpot” by Gougoush, (6.3) “Kiss Me” by Ahmad Gol Narâqi and Vigen, (6.4) “Friday” by Farhâd and Gougoush, (6.5) An Iranian National Anthem Called “O Iran”, (6.6) “(The/That) Lane” by Bizhan Bizhani, (6.7), “Winter” by Mohammad Rezâ Shajariân, (6.8) A Medley from *Qârun's Treasure* by The Boyz, (6.9) “Once upon a Time” by Mansur, and (6.10) “A Romantic Hello” by Andy; Chapter 7–Persian Poems: Poetry Vocabulary, (7.1) A Lyric by Rudaki, (7.2) from “The Exordium” to Ferdowsi's *Story of Sohrâb*, (7.3) Quatrain #1 Attributed to Omar Khayyâm (7.4), Quatrain #2 Attributed to Omar Khayyâm, (7.5) from “The Exordium” to *Spiritual Couplets* by Jalâloddin Rumi, (7.6) A Ghazal by Sa'di, (7.7) A Ghazal by Hâfez, (7.8) “Along the Riverbank” by Nimâ Yushij, (7.9) “Qom” by Nâder Nâderpur, (7.10, “(The/That) Lane” by Feraydun Moshiri, (7.11 “Kârûn” by Feraydun Tavallali, (7.12), “Friday” by Forugh Farrokhzâd, (7.13) “Winter” by Mehdi Akhavân-e Sâles, (7.14 “Another Birth” by Forugh Farrokhzâd, and (7.15) “False Dawn” by Nâder Nâderpur; Chapter 8– Persian Films: Movie Vocabulary, (8.1) *House of Sand and Fog*, (8.2) *Qârun's Treasure*, (8.3) *Qaysar*, (8.4) *Prince Ehtejâb*, (8.5) *Green Cold: A Documentary Film on the Life of Forugh Farrokhzâd* (8.6) *Tehran Nights*, (8.7) *(The) Lizard*, and (8.8) *Marriage Iranian Style*. Accompanied by an audio CD with readings of all 130+ texts.

_____. *Persian Reading and Writing*. Hyattsville, MD: Dunwoody Press, 2009.

Includes a word-method introduction to the Persian alphabet writing system, models and texts for *naskh*, *tahriri*, *nasta'liq*, and *shekasteh* handwriting styles, and 120+ authentic reading texts with audio recordings of the texts on an accompanying CD. Many texts are adaptable for use in conversation classes.

Khojayeri, Nasrullo. *Tajiki: An Elementary Textbook*. 2 volumes. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009. Volume 1: xvi, 341p. Volume 2: xvi, 333p.

The best available elementary guide, accompanied by two DVDs.

Khorrami, M. M. *Beginner's Persian Iranian Persian (Farsi) with 2 Audio CDs*. New York, NY: Hippocrene Books, 2012. ix, 237p.

Devotes 31 pages to alphabet instruction, 41 pages to vocabulary lists and glossaries, and 31 pages to answer keys. Presents 22 conversations in colloquial/spoken Perso-Arabic transcription and a handful of reading texts. Can serve as an instructional manual for most of a semester of non-intensive university study.

_____. *Elementary Persian; Self-Taught I & II*. New York, NY: Bisotun, 2003.

Lonely Planet Phrasebooks and Yavar Dehghani. *Farsi (Persian)*, 2nd edition. Footscray (Victoria), Australia: Lonely Planet, 2008. 258 p.

Designed for travel to and living in Iran. Good coverage of predictable situations in which English-speaking foreigners can or need to use Persian. [add commentary]

Modarresi, Yahya, Mehdi Zarghamian, and Khosrow Sina'i. *Fârsi dar Goftâr*. Tehran: Daftar-e Pazhuheshhâ-ye Farhangi, [add commentary]

Moghaddam, A. Saffar. *A General Course in Persian 1: Basic Structures*. Tehran: Council for Promotion of Persian Language and Literature, 2003/4. 348p.

Twenty-four lessons and comprehensive Persian-English and English-Persian glossaries. Each lesson features a text, one or more grammar topics, a description of differences between colloquial and literary registers, and exercises that practice reading, listening, and speaking skills.

Mohajer, Simin, Mahvash Shahegh, and Farima Mostowfi. *Learning Persian Book One. Learning Persian Book Two and Three*. Bethesda, MD: Ibex Books, 2007, 240p and 2010, 284p.

Learning Persian Book One contains fifteen lessons, each consisting of a list of lesson aims (e.g., Lesson 1: subject: the first day of class, grammar, sentence structure, the *ezâfê* construction, and the connecting verb "to be," letters–look at the alphabet), a situational dialogue, questions, and exercises (e.g., comprehension and completion, but without answer keys). The table of contents identifies the fifteen conversation situations as: (1) first day of class, (2) two students meet, (3) at the college coffee shop, (4) at the college bookstore, (5) preparing for Sima's birthday, (6) Sima's birthday party, (7) summer trip to Canada 1, (8) summer trip to Canada 2, (9) travel agency, (10) doctor's appointment, (11) at the doctor's office, (12) Linda's trip to England, (13) the historical city of Isfahan, (14) New Year's ceremonies, and (15) my mother is like a flower.

Following the fifteen lessons are units on: "The Persian Alphabet," Persian sections on the "grammar for" each lesson ("for the instructors not for the students"), "Sample Conjugation of Verbs," "Irregular Verbs," "Glossary of Grammar Terms," and "English Introduction." The English Introduction states that the "method" in *Learning Persian* is "direct (i.e., presented solely in Persian)." Consequently, the content of the book's dialogues appears in Perso-Arabic script only, without English translations or comprehensive Persian-English glossaries or accompanying explanatory language or cultural notes in English. Moreover, the dialogues do not feature any Perso-Arabic guidance to pronunciation in words and phrases (e.g., short vowel marks) or any phonetic transcriptions of Persian words or phrases to serve as a guide to Persian stress patterns in words and phrases. On the matter of dialogue content in *Learning Persian Book One*, all fifteen dialogues are artificial and appear transcribed in a bookish/written register which Persian speakers do not use in the conversation situations in question, rather than a colloquial/spoken register which they do use. On the latter score, coauthor Simin Mohajer offers this rationale: "The reason for using *neveshtari* [written] versus *goftari* [spoken] is because it is easier for elementary students to look in the dictionary and find the meaning of the word that they might not know, and it would be easier for them to read other Persian

books as well, when they know the neveshtari. We introduced a sentence in goftari form at the end of each lesson and instructors should practice those in class and explain differences logically. It would be much more difficult to explain the entire dialogue instead of one sentence at the time...I am certain all of changes from neveshtari to goftari need thorough explanation and clarification. [In addition], the “language of radio and television is formal neveshtari and students listen to news frequently in my classes.”

As for *Learning Persian Book Two and Three*, it contains 26 lessons entitled: (1) breakfast at Simin’s house, (2) Iranian days and months, (3) predicting Tehran’s weather, (4) Linda and Bizhan at Pardis restaurant, (5) graduate celebration for Tom, Bizhan, and his sister Zhaleh, (6) calendars, (7) jokes and satire, (8) recipe for cooking rice, (9) the province of Fars, (10) the province of Khuzestan, (11) Persian class students at an Iranian grocery store, (12) Toronto, (13) Los Angeles, (14) Linda and Tom at an Iranian bookstore, (15) Omar Khayyam, an Iranian poet, astronomer and mathematician, (16) opening a bank account, (17) Bizhan’s conversation/interview with an Iranian merchant, (18) Bizhan and Linda at a concert of traditional Iranian music, (19) getting acquainted with Sadeq Hedayat, a/the famous Iranian writer of fiction, (20) an Iranian family in America, (21) important Iranian celebrations/festivals, (22) several Iranian proverbs (e.g., har ân kas ke dandân dahad nân dahad, translated as “There is always bread to an open mouth”), (23) Sima and Kaveh’s wedding, (24) Iraj Mirza’s poem called “Mother,” (25) Cyrus the Great, (26) Iran and the Islamic Revolution.

In reaction to an e-posting of the foregoing solicited commentary about *Learning Persian* (2007, 2010), coauthor Mahvash Shahegh wrote: “One should keep in mind that these books were written by three native instructors, of whom each has nearly 30 years of experience in teaching Persian and working with the language....Yes, we composed... ‘artificial’ texts because what we NATIVE INSTRUCTORS write should be considered ‘AUTHENTIC’. Usage of authentic materials is for THE NON-NATIVES whose PERSIAN MAY NOT MEASURE UP and must cut and paste. This is the reasoning behind individuals using authentic materials...Yes, we have not used the ENGLISH LANGUAGE as a CRUTCH for our students. Using English was not a problem for any of us...the purpose of this book was to address gaps in the direct method.”

Readers of *Persian Conversation(s)* should bear Shahegh’s assertions in mind and check with educated native speakers of Persian to get their views on how natural the conversation texts in the book are. Readers might also check with an applied linguist on the validity of the advocacy of nativespeakerism that Shahegh advocates.

Monterey Institute of International Studies. *Basic Persian in Context*. Written by Azita Mokhtari, Ramin Sarraf, et al. Monterey, CA: MIIS, 2004.

A multi-media, proficiency-based textbook designed for intensive, communicative learning settings.

[add commentary]

Pimsleur Language Program. *Conversational Farsi (Persian): Learn to Speak and Understand Farsi (Persian)*. Pimsleur, 2005.

Rafiee, Abdi. *Colloquial Persian: The Complete Course for Beginners*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2001.

With cassettes, colloquial series, and multimedia.

Shabani Jadidi, Pouneh, and Dominic Parviz Brookshaw. *The Routledge Introductory Persian Course*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2010. xvii, 264p. Companion Web Site materials.

Persian-English and English-Persian glossaries lacking pronunciation guides and not based on any lists of the most common Persian words take up a third of the book, which privileges the bookish/written register of Tehran Persian, but offers a handful of dialogues printed in a colloquial/spoken register. [add to commentary]

Shahsavari, Anousha, and Blake Atwood. *Persian of Iran Today Book One* (final draft). www.laits.utexas.edu/persian_teaching_resources, 2011, 2012. 300+ pages.

The *Persian of Iran Today* online textbook series focuses exclusively on learning Farsi Persian for use in Iran and may thus fill a gap in Persian instructional manuals in comparison with such textbooks as *Basic Farsi in Context* and the Persian for America(ns)® series that teach and practice Persian listening, reading, and speaking skills relating to Persian environments in America for adult students in America (not likely to travel to Iran in the foreseeable future).

Upwards of 160 photographic images of Iranians throughout *Persian of Iran Today*, approximately 100 of women (almost all young and photogenic and almost all with head coverings) and 65 of men (almost all young

and none wearing neckties), offer readers a graphic contrast to the impression many Americans may have of Iran as a land of middle-aged and older men, many with beard stubble and some in turbans. In addition, its online audio and video materials make *Persian of Iran Today* perfectly suited for the language learning it intends.

The most popular conversation manual for Persian in Iran, Lonely Planet's *Farsi (Persian) Phrasebook* (2008, 2nd edition) does not have audio and video components as does *The Persian of Iran Today*. At the same time, Lonely Planet's *Farsi (Persian)* presents itself as a self-study and carry-with manual, while *The Persian of Iran Today* and its audio and video components seem designed exclusively for use by teachers and students in classroom settings and in prescribed self-study prior to and after specific class sessions. Effective use of *The Persian of Iran Today* also calls into play specific instructional methods. For example, the authors advise instructors at the outset that "in preparing your lesson plans, you aim to have at least some interactive work in each and every class period, and that time set aside for this increases as students learn more vocabulary so that, by the end of the book, you are spending 75% of class time with students working together speaking directly with each other. Small group and pair work is essential for students to build skills" (page 7).

This first volume in the *Persian of Iran Today Book* series "aims to help you learn to pronounce the sounds of Persian and write its letters, and to begin speaking Persian.... You must learn to... write Persian correctly in order to communicate effectively with Persian speakers [Evidence for this assertion?]. ... The material in this textbook can be covered well in approximately forty contact hours" (8). Most of the ten units in *Persian of Today Book One* have these parts: Cultural Note, Short Conversations, Vocabulary, Alphabet, Listening Comprehension, Grammar, Writing Exercise, Speaking Activity, and Language Game.

The Cultural Note sections treat, respectively: Greetings 1 and 2, Introductions, Food, Diverse Iran, Hospitality, *Ta'ârof*, Waking Up Early, *Befarmâyid* [*ta'ârof* expressions for, e.g., "help yourself," "after you," and "please..."], and Educational System in Iran. In The Culture Note sections, inadequate and imprecise or inaccurate observations and conclusions appear such as the following. "*Ifârs/ (Persia)*" (34). About *ta'ârof* [a Persian Iranian system of conventional polite, respectful, deferential verbiage and gestures], *Persian of Iran Today* observes: "*Ta'arof* words and phrases, which carry an exaggerated meaning,... are used with smiling face and humble gestures (38). • "Cultural Note Diverse Iran" (95) mentions neither *Fârs(hâ)* [Persian Iranians] as a discrete Iranian ethnic group nor Ardabil Province as a Turkish region. In response to an invitation, "'na, mamnun nemikhâm be zahmat biyoftin' actually and indirectly means 'yes, please'" (136). Cultural Note: *befarmâyid* (167). "...people are enormously indirect about communicating their thoughts" (136). Hospitality: "Intense social interactions consume a majority of people's time in everyday life" (118); "...women are usually responsible for initiating the shake hand" (63).

Alphabet and handwriting instruction (*tahriri* script) sections begin on page 18 and the last written symbol gets introduced on page 171. Mistakes therein include: "The letter *ye* is the first of two letters that function as both a consonant and a vowel" (27). "The sound *...t/...* is the sound American English speakers make saying gotta as in gotta go" (41). "When the letter *he-ye do cheshm* comes at the end of the word and is immediately preceded by a consonant, it makes an */e/* sound" use *...râ/* (67). "...we never write two of the same consonants in a row" (130).

In the Grammar sections there appear incorrect observations such as the following. "To [you-1] is just used for very close friends" (56). "The stress in Persian words generally falls on the last syllable of a word, with few exceptions (13)... The exceptions are mainly verbs" (35). • "Always use *un* for he or she when you speak. Never use *u*" (56). • "Singular nouns always follow numbers in Persian" (175). "...the subject is the person or thing doing the action" (188). "A direct object is the thing or person upon which the verb's action is performed" (188). "...the direct object is the who or what the subject is doing the action of the verb to" (188). "Whenever a pronoun (or a pronominal ending) is the direct object or describes it, you must use *...râ/*" (190).

Persian of Iran Today brings Persian language instructional materials into the 21st century where instructional materials for Spanish and French, for example, have led the way. In the words of coauthors Shahsavari and Atwood, the textbook is "an open-source, multimedia textbook for beginners" amenable to revision and correction and has "fifteen lessons [that will serve most first-year programs for an entire year. An answer key is available on request. [edit commentary]

_____. *Persian of Iran Today Book Two*. www.laits.utexas.edu/persian_teaching_resources, 2012, 2013. In progress. [add commentary]

Sharif, Jonaid. *Intermediate Dari: Readings and Review of Grammar*. Amazon.com Company–BookSurge,

2009.

Sprachman, Paul. *Language and Culture in Persian*. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2002.

Stilo, Donald, Kamran Talattof, and Jerome Clinton. *Modern Persian: Spoken and Written*. 2 volumes. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005.

A basically audio-lingual guide with not error-free descriptions of culture and features of grammar.
[add commentary]

Yousef, Saeed, and Hayedeh Torabi. *Basic Persian: A Grammar and Workbook*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2013. ix, 282p.

Vocabulary lists, exercises, and answer keys 156 of 282 pages in the book, leaving 120+ pages for discussion of grammar. According to the authors, *Basic Persian* is “a complementary book for practicing grammar while using the texts for reading. A second volume (intermediate Persian) will cover more complicated structures. Formal, written Persian [is] the focus of this book” (p. viii). A second volume will treat “intermediate” grammar. The reading texts are not authentic and many English and Persian exercise examples exhibit unidiomatic phraseology (e.g., “Hafez has been born in Shiraz” and “I don’t think that he comes”). The book features 20 boxed sections called “Idioms–Proverbs–Aphorisms–Poems,” but no poems appear therein. Charts for times of the day and verb tenses fail to mention one significant item in each. Discussion of features of Persian often do not make use of common grammar terms and characterizations (e.g., “Persian hates the passive voice...” and “Mentioning the agent in passive voice constructions is what Persian hates most). Moreover, in many cases evidence exists to contradict such generalizations. [add to commentary]

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When choosing a Persian textbook or writing a Persian lesson or planning a Persian class session, instructors might first ask themselves this two-part question: Do the lessons or class sessions in question have as their goal that students “learn” some Persian, which is to say end up “knowing” some Persian they did not previously “know,” or do the lessons or class sessions have as their goal that students come away from them having the skill(s) to accomplish specific tasks in Persian? An example of a goal of student “learning” or “knowing” some Persian or of learning an amount of Persian would be classic Persian poems. Because Persian poetry is important for many Iranians in everyday life and interaction, elementary and intermediate Persian lessons might well include classic pre-modern and modern poems. One method of “teaching” such texts, not unlike how Latin teachers teach Latin poems, might involve discussion of the **grammar** of everything in the text and teasing out the meaning of the text through paraphrase or **translation**. The goal in teaching such a text might not be that students come away from the lesson or class with the skill to read other texts similar to the text in question, but rather that they “know” that text permanently, which is to say, that they can read it again and again in the future and enjoy it.

As for the majority of authentic reading texts, which are neither classic nor memorable, and listening texts and predictable speaking situations in which variability and creativity play parts, other sorts of lessons and lesson plans naturally come into play. All other things being equal, it would appear to make sense that Persian students get exposed to and learn to deal with Persian in their course materials and classrooms in somewhat the same ways as they encounter Persian in the world outside textbooks and classrooms through **methods** that expose them to Persian **directly**, helping students to develop skill at inducing meaning from unglossed, unexplained language they read and hear. This approach calls for a Persian-only classroom environment and, for example, introducing new vocabulary in context or through demonstration without translation.

In the case of Persian phraseology and sentence patterns that are new to American speakers of English or that involve different forms and structures than exist in English, this direct approach to teaching Persian can lead to textbook and classroom activities treating Persian grammar through oral models that students reproduce, this **audio-lingual** process leading to student appreciation of the morphology and/or syntax of Persian material organized to

lead to such inductive appreciation and to development of incipient good habits with respect of Persian phrase and sentence patterns and comprehensible Persian pronunciation. A Persian-only environment, minimal discussion of grammar (perhaps relegated to printed materials for self-study), classroom or language laboratory or computer-based drills (e.g., repetition, substitution, and transformation drills) are hallmarks of this approach, through habit-forming memorization and drilling, with no discussion of grammar, which would appear useful for students in learning mathematical operations and calculations and set phrases and sentence patterns, for example, those phrases and statements in the system of polite/ respectful/ deferential verbiage called *ta'ârof* that are set, i.e., invariable and often occurring in a set statement-response exchange.

At the same time, American students of Persian presumably participate more enthusiastically and productively in Persian language learning settings when they get absorbed in a particular text, situation, interaction, or task and are focussed on it without primary consciousness of either Persian as foreign or learning Persian as the task at hand. Those same students often seem to appreciate Persian grammar and acquire new vocabulary more quickly when classes deal with subjects that happen to be in Persian rather than presenting possibly insignificant subject matter highlighting Persian. Consequently, one could design a Second-year Persian course as an Iranian geography course and makes use of a junior high school Iranian geography textbook, Iranian maps, and a relevant geographical dictionary. The course description informs students that their Persian course grade depends upon their level of mastery of Iranian geography, with listening, speaking, and reading assessment procedures in Persian. After only a session or two, these American students, who usually have no background in geography, appear to forget that they are listening to or speaking or reading Persian as they try to find a place on a map, to identify the capital city of North Khorasan Province, to describe the multiple sorts of transportation access to Bandar Abbas, or to characterize Qashqa'i migration routes. At the same time, geography as a subject lends itself naturally to a lesson plan in which discrete class activities take no more than ten or so minutes each. Meanwhile, imbedded in the course materials of this **immersion** in geography are authentic examples of the phrase and sentences patterns, vocabulary, and cultural content of a Second-year Persian course, whether achievement or performance in aims. In a sense, mastering Iranian geography in such a course means interaction of students with one another (American competition not the least of the motivating factors) and with oral and written texts. Of course, the context for this interaction is limited basically to the classroom. Not that such a context is a bad thing. If students early on learn how to negotiate a classroom in Persian, perform in Persian all of the possible actions therein, and interact effectively in Persian with everyone in the room, that can serve them as a confidence-building experience in dealing with other settings and interaction situations. *English/Farsi Oxford Picture Dictionary: Second Edition* (2009) shows how rich a Persian interaction setting a language classroom can be, while Colin Turner's *A Thematic Dictionary of Modern Persian* (2011) can serve as a resource in planning for participation in scores of conversations on hundreds of themes. Nevertheless, American learners of Persian need or want to deal with specific untreated Persian contexts and need to have the skills to accomplish specific tasks in those contexts. Moreover, outside of the language classroom, details and specifics of predictable Persian verbal interactions are not predictable. That unpredictability, part of it the great variety of ways in which Persian verbal communication in even the most straightforward settings with the least complicated purposes can take place even, calls for materials and teaching which help students develop **competence** in Persian **communication**. That means helping students use language creatively in communicating meaning. That in turn translates into lessons privileging authentic texts, a Persian-only classroom environment, and classroom activities that both connect the classroom to an outside Persian-speaking world and introduce and practice the sorts of verbal interaction in which students have to or want to participate in that world. Typical of such activities are: role playing, interviewing, games of various sorts, and students working in small groups and pairs.

The **words in bold script** above imply methodological eclecticism in Persian lesson design and implementation. In other words, instructors might opt for specific methods to suit materials and goals rather adjust materials and goals adjusted to suit methodological preferences.

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As stated above, *Persian Conversation(s)* is the fourth and final volume in a series called Persian for America(ns)®. The other volumes are: *Persian Listening* (2008), *Persian Reading and Writing* (2010), and *Persian Grammar and Verbs* (2012). Altogether, the four textbooks total 1,500+ pages with 350+ texts and accompanying audio recordings in 230+ self-contained lesson modules. Altogether, the four textbooks offer materials for upwards of 600 classroom contact hours, in other words, a syllabus sufficient for eight academic semesters of non-intensive American university courses (i.e., 4-to-6 weekly classroom contact hours) or intensive (i.e., 20+ classroom contact hours per week) American university, private language institute or American government courses of upwards of 30 weeks in duration.

The foregoing calculations are based on the use of almost all lesson modules in the four textbooks in courses from 2000 through 2012 at The University of Texas at Austin, Persepolis Institute in Austin, The University of Baltimore, The Georgia School for Language, Arizona State University, and elsewhere. All four textbooks reflect the results of such fieldtesting and offer evidence in support of the implied argument throughout the books that the subjects and contents of their mostly authentic texts and their methodological underpinnings work and have met the needs of participants in cited courses, according to the participants themselves and the instructors who have used the Persian for America(ns)® materials and offered feedback on their use.

As unprecedented as the process of the writing, extensive fieldtesting, and publication of *Persian Listening*, *Persian Reading and Writing*, *Persian Grammar and Verbs*, and *Persian Conversation(s)* has arguably been, the books are equally without precedents in these other regards as well.

- *Persian Listening* is the first textbook devoted exclusively to Persian listening skills, giving those skills the attention that experts in second language teaching have long argued listening skills deserve.
- *Persian Reading and Writing* is the first textbook devoted to Persian reading and writing skills, the former involving an explicit methodology and the latter dozens of authentic examples illustrating various handwriting and prose styles.
- *Persian Conversation(s)* is the first textbook devoted exclusively to Persian speaking skills and to privilege the colloquial/spoken register of contemporary Tehran Farsi Persian and to focus attention on predictable (role model-based) Persian-speaking situations in America.
- *Persian Grammar and Verbs* is the first descriptive grammar for students of Persian that treats and illustrates Persian verb parts, forms, and uses in detail and that derives descriptive observations about Persian morphology and syntax from authentic examples accompanied by translations, bookish/written and colloquial/spoken registers treated in tandem.
- Owing to their representation of the pronunciation and word stress patterns of words and phrases, their translations and audio tracks for texts, and their comprehensive indices, *Persian Listening*, *Persian Reading and Writing*, *Persian Grammar and Verbs*, and *Persian Conversation(s)* intend to meet the needs of students in self-study as well as in classroom settings.
- The Persian for America(ns)® textbook series is the only four-skills guide to Persian from the elementary level to advanced levels.