

Applicant Information: Narges Nematollahi (nnematollahi@arizona.edu)
Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Assistant Professor of Persian Language
School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies (MENAS)
Phone: 520-626-1632

Proposal Title: Developing an Online Theme-Based Picture Dictionary for Learners of Persian

Requested Amount: \$4335.00

Developing an Online Theme-Based Picture Dictionary for Learners of Persian

Abstract:

This project develops the full infrastructure and a limited content for an online theme-based picture dictionary for learners of Persian at the college level. The online tool is to provide a multimedia environment in which the Persian words are matched with the objects and activities that are illustrated on a theme-based image. The user can see the word in the Persian script and listen to its pronunciation through an accompanying audio file. The project involves three main tasks: developing the software infrastructure, creating theme-based word lists for basic categories, and creating theme-based images reflective of the everyday life in Iran today. Based on a previous study of existing bilingual dictionaries of English and Persian, there is a lack of reliable resources for students of Persian for learning to use the words in correct contexts and with correct pronunciation. This project seeks to fill this gap.

This project develops the full infrastructure and a limited content for an online theme-based picture dictionary for learners of Persian at the college level. The online tool is to provide a multimedia environment in which the Persian words are matched with the objects and activities that are illustrated on a theme-based image.¹ The users can see the word written in the Persian script and listen to its pronunciation through an accompanying audio file. This phase of the project develops the software infrastructure to create the multimedia environment and provides content for such basic categories as everyday language (daily routine, family, etc.), housing (rooms, furniture, etc.), clothing and food. Once the infrastructure is built, later phases of the project add to the content to include words for intermediate and advanced categories such as health, education and recreation.

In a previous research project², I studied some of the major bilingual dictionaries of Persian and English including four paper dictionaries (Aryanpour, Bateni & Azarmehr, Haiim and Kimia) and two online dictionaries ([Farsidic](#) and [Perdic](#)). The findings of the research show that the English-Persian dictionaries in most cases provide a list of Persian equivalent words with few, if any illustrative examples and no keys to pronunciation. The learner is therefore left to himself to randomly choose one of the equivalents which may or may not fit his context, and furthermore, he is not sure how to pronounce the word. The research further shows that the Persian-English dictionaries are more fitting to the needs of a language learner, yet their keys to pronunciation are

¹ A sample theme-based image is given in the Appendix.

² Nematollahi, Narges. 2015. "Towards writing a learner's dictionary for Farsi", presented at the 22nd Annual Central Eurasian Studies Conference, March 7, 2015. Indiana University, Bloomington.

not easy to use. All years of my teaching experience working with elementary, intermediate and advanced level students of Persian confirmed the findings of my earlier research as I noted that all my students struggled with pronunciation of new words. As a side note, the Persian spelling is phonetic for the most part, but the major difficulty is that it does not show the short vowels. A multimedia theme-based Persian dictionary which matches the words with their visual and audio representations can greatly help the users learn the word in the correct context and with correct pronunciation. The word list will include both single word entries (e.g., *kitchen*) and verb phrases (e.g., *go to work*).

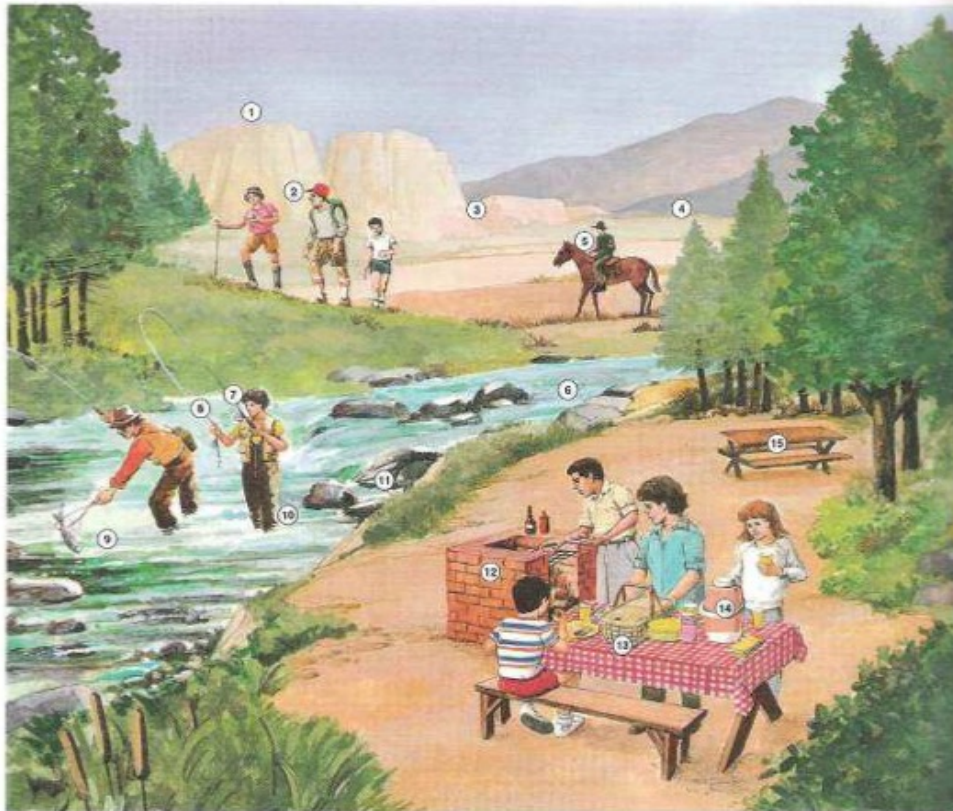
This phase of the project includes three main tasks: 1) Developing a software infrastructure which allows user-friendly matching between words written in the Persian script, audio files which pronounce the words and the items on a theme-based image. This will be done by a software developer in the School of Information at the University of Arizona. 2) Identifying some 3-4 basic categories and their subcategories and coming up with word lists for each subcategory. This task will be done by an Intermediate or Advanced level student of Persian at the University of Arizona. 3) Creating images reflective of the everyday life in Iran today. It will be done by a graphic designer. At the end of this phase of the project, I expect to have a fully developed infrastructure together with about 12 images and around 250 words in 3-4 categories. For later phases of the project, I am planning to apply for funding to a variety of institutes including the [Roshan Cultural Heritage Institute](#) and [Iran Heritage Foundation](#).

Like other less commonly taught languages in the United States, Persian suffers from lack of resources both for language learners and for instructors. Recently, we have seen some fruitful efforts in creating online course materials (e.g., [Persian Language Online](#) with qualitative video clips and listening tasks and [Chai & Conversation](#) with interesting cultural notes for language learners). As I mentioned above, there are also a number of online two way dictionaries of Persian and English, but they fail to provide reliable and useful resources for language learners due to their numerous shortcomings. This project seeks to provide a reliable and user-friendly online dictionary for learners of Persian, and being a picture dictionary, it can be used by all learners regardless of their first language. Furthermore, the infrastructure that will be developed for this project can be easily adopted for similar projects in other languages which in turn, may lead to a more comprehensive set of picture dictionaries to help students of several less commonly taught languages at the University of Arizona and elsewhere.

The budget items for this project includes student work for one student, consultant fees for two consultants, a software developer and a graphic designer, and web-hosting costs for 6 months. I provide more details on the budget justification form, but my estimation for the student work is about \$750, for software developing task is \$2500 and for graphic design is \$1000. The web-hosting costs is around \$100, adding up to about \$4300.

Appendix

88 Outdoor Activities



- 1. plateau
- 2. hikers
- 3. canyon
- 4. hill
- 5. park ranger

- Fishing**
- 6. stream
 - 7. fishing rod
 - 8. fishing line
 - 9. fishing net
 - 10. waders
 - 11. rocks

- Picnic Area**
- 12. grill
 - 13. picnic basket
 - 14. thermos
 - 15. picnic table

Adopted from Shapiro, N. & J. Adelson-Goldstein. 1998. *The Oxford Picture Dictionary*, Oxford University Press

CERCLL FACULTY RESEARCH GRANT
BUDGET FORM with BUDGET JUSTIFICATION
 (Application guidelines: <http://cercll.arizona.edu/cercll-research-grant/>)

Developing an Online Theme-Based Picture Dictionary for Learners of Persian

A. Project Budget

Item	Requested Amount
Personnel: Wages and ERE	765.00
Travel	0.00
Participant Payments	0.00
Consultants	3500.00
Other	90.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	4355.00

B. Budget Justification

<p>Wages and ERE: (UA personnel) 1 student at 10 hours/week for 5 weeks @ \$15/hour = \$750 + \$15 (2% ERE) = \$765.00. This student will create theme-based word lists for basic categories.</p>
<p>Travel: (NB. this is travel for UA personnel only; any consultants' travel would be in the consultant line)</p>
<p>Participant payments:</p>
<p>Consultants: \$2500 for Hamidreza Bahramian, adjunct faculty at the School of Information at the University of Arizona to develop the software infrastructure for the project. Mr. Bahramian was selected because he is the instructor of Advanced Web Design and Development at iSchool and has extensive experience with developing similar web applications. It is expected for him to take upwards of 120 hours to develop and deploy the software. \$1000 for a graphic designer to design 10-15 theme-based images which reflect the everyday life in Iran today.</p>
<p>Other: Web-hosting fee to host the project @\$15/month for 6 months = \$90</p>

CONTACT INFORMATION	School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies Marshall Building 455 845 N. Park Avenue Tucson, AZ 85719 USA	Email: nnematollahi@arizona.edu
RESEARCH INTERESTS	Persian language pedagogy, Old and Middle Iranian languages and literature, Stylistics, Historical Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Semantics	
CURRENT POSITION	Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Assistant Professor of Persian Language, School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies, University of Arizona (8/2019 _)	
PREVIOUS POSITIONS HELD	Instructor of Persian, School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies, University of Arizona (8/2018 - 8/2019)	
EDUCATION	<p>Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA</p> <p>Ph.D., Applied Linguistics and Central Eurasian Studies (dual major), August 2019</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissertation Topic: “The Iranian Epistolary Tradition: Origins and Developments (6th century BCE to 7th century CE)” • Committee: Jamsheed Choksy, Clancy Clements, Christopher Beckwith, Kevin Rottet <p>School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, London, UK</p> <p>M.A., Religion Studies, September 2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis Topic: “Pahlavi Yasna 56: critical edition, translation, commentary” • Advisor: Almut Hintze <p>University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran</p> <p>M.A., Ancient Languages and Cultures, June 2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis Topic: “Re-categorization of Middle verbs in the Young Avestan” • Advisor: Azhide Moqaddam <p>Isfahan University of Technology, Isfahan, Iran</p> <p>B.Sc., Electrical Engineering, June 2007</p>	
PUBLICATIONS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Choksy, J. K. & N. Nematollahi, 2018. “The Middle Persian inscription from a shipwreck in Thailand: merchants, containers, and commodities”, <i>Dabir Journal 6 (Hanns-Peter Schmidt Gedenkschrift)</i> available online at https://sites.uci.edu/dabirjournal/issues/issue-06/ 2) Nematollahi, N. 2018. “Have-progressives in Persian: a case of pattern replication?” <i>Diachronica: International Journal for Historical Linguistics</i> 35:1, pp.144-156. 3) Nematollahi, N., & J. K. Choksy. 2017. “Ahura Mazda” in Jeffrey M. Shaw & Timothy J. Demy (eds.) <i>War and Religion: An Encyclopedia of Faith and Conflict</i>, Vol. 1. p.12. Santa Barbara, Denver: ABC-CLIO. 	

- 4) Choksy, J. K. & N. Nematollahi. 2017. "Zoroastrianism and War" in J. M. Shaw & T. J. Demy (eds.) *War and Religion: An Encyclopedia of Faith and Conflict*, Vol. 3. pp.882-884. Santa Barbara, Denver: ABC-CLIO.
- 5) Nematollahi, N. 2014. "Development of the Progressive Construction in Modern Persian," in Ö. Özçelik and A.K. Kent (eds.) *Proceedings of the 1st Conference on Central Eurasian Languages and Linguistics*, pp.102-114. Bloomington: Center for the languages of Central Asian Region.
- 6) Moqaddam, A. & N. Nematollahi. 2013. "fe'l-hā-ye miyāne va barresi-ye ānhā dar avestā-ye jadeed (Middle verbs in the Younger Avesta)" in *Pazhuhesh-hā-ye Zabāni (Journal of Linguistics, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University of Tehran)*, 3 (2), pp. 111-129 (part I) & 4 (1), pp.95-110 (part II).

CONFERENCE
PRESENTATIONS

- 1) "Politeness strategies of Persian in formulating requests" accepted for presentation in the **2nd International Conference on Teaching Persian Language and Literature**, December 12-13, University of Cambridge, UK. (had to decline due to visa problems)
- 2) "Agentless Modality: Mood selection of Epistemic and Denotic MUST in Persian", **2nd North American Conference on Iranian Linguistics (NACIL-2) April 19-21, 2019**. University of Arizona, Tucson.
- 3) "The true meaning of the Cup of Jamshid: a survey of medieval and pre-modern symbolic readings of the *Shahname*", **Middle East Studies Association (MESA) November 15-18, 2018**. San Antonio, Texas.
- 4) "Mood Selection in Propositional Complements in Persian", **Linguistic Society of America (LSA), January 5-8, 2018**. Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 5) "An Investigation of Mood Selection in Complement Clauses in Persian", **1st North American Conference on Iranian Linguistics (NACIL-1), April 28-30, 2017**. Stony Brook University, New York.
- 6) "The Middle Voice in Avestan", **Indiana University Graduate Linguistics Conference, April 8, 2017**. Indiana University, Bloomington.
- 7) "HAVE-progressives in Persian: a case of pattern replication?", **2nd Conference on Central Asian Languages and Linguistics (ConCALL-2), October 7-9, 2016**. Indiana University, Bloomington.
- 8) "Development of Progressive Constructions in Modern Persian", **6th International Conference on Iranian Linguistics (ICIL), June 23-26, 2015**. Tbilisi, Georgia.
- 9) "Towards writing a learner's dictionary for Farsi", **22nd Annual Central Eurasian Studies Conference, March 7, 2015**. Indiana University, Bloomington.
- 10) "Development of Progressive Constructions in Modern Persian", **1st Conference on Central Asian Languages and Linguistics (ConCALL-1), May 16-17, 2014**, Indiana University, Bloomington.
- 11) "A New Reading of the Zoroastrian Creation Myth", **21st Annual Central Eurasian Studies Conference, March 8, 2014**, Indiana University, Bloomington.

12) “Re-categorization of Avestan Middle Verbs”, **4th International Conference on Iranian Linguistics (ICIL), June 17-19, 2011**, Uppsala University, Sweden

TEACHING

Courses

As assistant professor (University of Arizona)

Fall 2019, Spring 2020: Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced Persian

As instructor (University of Arizona)

Fall 2018, Spring 2019: Elementary Persian, Intermediate Persian

As instructor (Summer Language Workshop, Indiana University)

Summer 2016, 2017, 2018

As Associate Instructor (assisting the instructor of Persian at Indiana University)

Fall 2012-Fall 2017

SERVICES

Organizing public presentations of Persian poetry performed by students of Persian language classes

Summer 2018 at Indiana University, Fall 2018, Spring 2019 and Fall 2019 at the University of Arizona

Serving in the scientific and organizing committee of the 2nd North American Conference on Iranian Linguistics

August 2018-April 2019

HONORS AND AWARDS

Receiving an honorable mention from the Foundation for Iranian Studies (FIS) for my PhD dissertation, November 15, 2019

Best paper runner-up for the Householder Research Paper Award, Department of Linguistics, Indiana University, 2017

Iranian Studies Fellowship offered by the College of Arts and Sciences, Indiana University
Towards doing a PhD in Iranian Studies at the Department of Central Eurasian Studies

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

Towards doing a PhD in Iranian Studies at Freie Universität in Berlin (declined to go to Indiana University)

Soudavar Foundation Scholarship

Towards the payment of tuition fees for the course Avestan at SOAS

LANGUAGES

Persian (native), English (fluent), French (reading skill), German (reading skill), Russian (elementary reading skill)

Old and Middle Iranian languages (Avestan, Old Persian, Middle Persian, Parthian)

Sanskrit (3 years), Aramaic (1 year), Ancient Greek (1 semester), Tocharian (1 semester)