Overview of the Course
Persian in Context is an online multimedia textbook of Persian language consisting of:

- Overview of the course, including reference materials about the Persian language
- Introductory grammar summary
- Glossary of vocabulary encountered
- Audio structural drills
- Macromedia Flash Writing Tutorial
- Eight Units of instruction, each Unit consisting of three Modules, each on a different semantic domain.
- Review, Homework, Glossary and Grammar sections for each Unit.
- Flash Handwriting Tutorial

Each Unit is fully supported by authentic video, audio, text, pictures, and photographs, all utilized in learning activities. (Additional materials are available for instructors, including notes on method, answers to questions, transcripts and translations of audio, video, and text, and various supplementary materials, such as photographs, graphics, and charts, for classroom activities and tasks. For information about these materials, contact dstephens@ncsu.edu.)

Using Persian in Context

System requirements: the online multimedia text requires a fast internet connection (100Mbs) for experiencing audio, video, and graphic materials. We recommend Mozilla Firefox as browser (http://www.mozilla.com/firefox/). RealPlayer (http://www.realnetworks.com/products/media_players.html) must be used for the streaming video and audio files. Adobe Reader (http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html) is required for viewing the pdf files which house the text content. Note that the page controls at the bottom of the Adobe Reader window provide convenient page turning within the documents. The student will want to print certain pages for writing practice and quizzes. This is easily done by right-clicking within the page in question, choosing Print from the menu, and then choosing Current Page from the window options. Finally, the Adobe Reader and the internet browser windows should be set at full-screen for comfortable viewing and navigation.
Persian in Context was originally designed as a fifteen-week, five day per week, five hour per day, intensive course. There are approximately 300-375 hours of instruction here, including reviews and homework, equivalent to four to six semesters of university coursework, depending on class frequency and intensity. We have chosen to present Persian in Context as an online multimedia textbook and method in order to give Persian students around the world the huge benefit of the ‘live’ presence of real people delivering authentic cultural and linguistic materials from Iran. The course is presented here in a format which should be adaptable to various syllabi and various curricula leading roughly to, or through, advanced level. Persian in Context can, in principle, be used for:

- five hour per week regular semester courses lasting 4-6 semesters
- three hour per week regular semester courses lasting 6 semesters
- summer intensive courses
- independent study distance education courses
- supplementary multimedia materials for existing courses

We anticipate that a typical three hour per week class will finish a Unit to a Unit and a half in a semester.

In its original design, Persian in Context treated the three Modules of each Unit (Culture, Writing, and Oral Proficiency) as three separate courses, each of them requiring an hour or two of classtime daily. Successful adaptation of the present materials to a university semester system will require that some of each of the three Modules be incorporated into each week’s work at the least, if not into the work of each class period. This can be accomplished by treating each of the three Modules as a separate text from which a certain quantity of material should be undertaken in each class. A single class session could have a third of its time devoted to each Module’s activities. Such an approach would give more variety and interest to class sessions, all the more since the materials of the three Modules are pedagogically aligned and dovetailed to complement and reinforce each other. In any case, it is highly recommended from a linguistic and pedagogical point of view that students practice each of the three Module’s skill sets daily.

At the beginning of each unit, you will see the Unit Objectives, or all the things you should be able to do with the language after you have studied that unit. These objectives are also separately listed at the beginning of each module in the unit. When you begin a module, you will normally complete a task that introduces you to the theme of the module. The task may involve discussing a picture, watching a video, or working with a new set of vocabulary. Then you will complete several learning tasks that lead up to a communicative task of some kind, often one which asks you to use the language you have previously learned in group or pair work or in a presentation to the class.
Within the modules, you will see language boxes that highlight important language features:

- **Language Note** - highlights language and grammar points;
- **Persian Version** - highlights cultural information about Iran or the Persian language;
- **About ...** - highlights issues in the Persian alphabet (only in Unit 1, Module 2);
- **Spoken vs. Written** - highlights information about the differences between the spoken and written language.

The language boxes help you notice what appears in the texts. You can find more detail about grammar points in the Grammar Book, accessible from each Unit’s cover page. New material is introduced continuously throughout a Module, but at its end you will find that all the tasks and language from the Unit are combined in the Review. The combination will enable you to practice and integrate all you have learned in preparation for the Unit test or final examination. (Unit Reviews usually occur three times within a Unit and can effectively be used prior to two or three more comprehensive midterm-like exams.) As you work with this multimedia textbook, you will find that the language in the tasks and in the instructions themselves will transition from English to Persian and soon you will be working completely in the Persian language.

Icons and symbols are used throughout the text to designate activities which the student is to undertake.

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**Spoken Form** refers to the difference in pronunciation between normal conversational Persian and the pronunciation of written Persian. **Listen** and **Watch Video** icons will be live links to audio and video segments associated with the activity. **Speak** is for oral interaction, discussion, and task-oriented problem solving in a social or group setting such as a formal class.
Introduction

Homework

Homework in the original intensive course conception is assigned by day, e.g., Day 1, Day 2, ..., Day 8. In a semester-based system, with three 50-minute classes per week over 13 weeks, these “Days” will correspond roughly to weeks. The homework for each day may include exercises from each of the modules, or it may combine the exercises into activities that ask you to integrate materials from each module. Sometimes you are asked to do a written “drill” of a grammar form; other times you listen and write; and in other activities, you prepare an original text to present to the class the next period. The instructor or student using a semester-based syllabus will take care to increase the amount of homework, review, and revision of audio and video, as well as review of “class” material, in assigned homework, and to keep homework assignments synchronized to the progression of the Module. “Homework” should always include reviews of all texts and documents seen in class, and multiple replays of video and audio segments, ideally transitioning into more learner-based, “real,” transactions and applications.

The specific Glossary for each Unit is linked to that Unit’s cover page. Glossaries have linked click-on audio, so that students can practice self-dictation and check spelling. The complete Glossary for the entire Persian in Context course is linked at the home page.

Unit One also contains a Macromedia Flash Writing Tutorial which shows an action script of all the Persian letters in words in initial, medial, final, and detached positions. Students should use this resource regularly to acquire a good handwriting. This application also contains click-on audio.

A note on method

Persian in Context is a learner-centered, immersion-format, task-based, proficiency-oriented system. Instructors and students will notice the relatively minor role that explicit grammar instruction plays here. Students who are highly self-motivated will fare best in this crucible. Instructors who know how to step back and facilitate a student’s personal process of synthesis will have more success with this method than those who lecture on grammar. The inductive process of this method is entirely unlike the ‘transmission’ method with which most traditional instructors are familiar. In the current course, students are presented with “chunks” of authentic “context” (text in context) and are invited to grapple with them, to tune themselves gradually to them, to adopt lines and structures from them, and to synthesize, through this grappling interaction, their own grammars and behaviors modeled after the original. The instructor facilitates this process. This is the essence of task-based learning. Instructors will also notice the front-loading of comprehension and authenticity and the delayed gratification of explicit grammar and metalanguage. Analogously, those familiar with a more traditional approach may be dissatisfied with the lack of ‘grammar’ in Unit 1, which in this method is devoted to acquisition of the graphic and sound system and consolidation of the music, rhythm, and intonation of Persian, which--once acquired--will not disappear.
The formation of linguistic pathways leading to automatisms requires many, many repetitions and we cannot over-emphasize how important it is that students experience both text and multimedia materials hundreds of times. The success of the method requires patience, encouragement, consistency, and faithfulness to the process. In this context, we recommend some acquaintance with the concepts of constructivism. See, for example, http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/constructivism.htm, and anything by Ernst von Glasersfeld, http://www.vonglasersfeld.com. Methods will always be debated and improved, and the present materials are, in the end, resources which can be adapted to many techniques.

Plans for the project

The first seven units of Persian in Context are online now and we anticipate that Unit 8 will be available by November, 2010. In parallel we will be designing and filming video guides for the use of the method and publishing online proficiency assessment tools to accompany the text. These will be linked to the Units in numerical order as they are finished. Additional supplementary resources are available to instructors on demand.

We are grateful to the Monterey Institute of International Studies, in particular to Dr. Ruth Larimer, Dean of its Graduate School of Language and Educational Linguistics, and to the Defense Language Institute, for making the resources of their joint project available to Persian students worldwide. Special thanks to Fattaneh Vali, Omid Rezvanian, Pantea Alambeigi, Maryam Arabshahi, and Omid Aliasgari for their help in proofreading, testing, and shaping the final product. Special thanks as well go to the CHASS Computing team of North Carolina State University, in particular to Justin Daves, Vijay Tailor, and the NCSU CHASS IT team, for much valuable technical assistance and cheerful cooperation. Supplementary funding for various phases of the project was provided by NC State’s DELTA (Distance Education and Learning Technology Applications) and the North Carolina Center for South Asia Studies, a Title VI National Resource Center of the U.S. Department of Education.

Since this material is as yet untested in some learning environments, we will be eager to learn the results of your experience in using Persian in Context with all types of syllabi and all curricula, and we cordially invite your feedback and suggestions. Please address them to: dstephens@ncsu.edu.

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