

AN EXPLORATION OF PERSIAN SECOND/FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING
METHODOLOGIES AT THE BEGINNING AND INTERMEDIATE LEVELS

By

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ABSTRACT

Teaching methodologies and materials play a vital role in helping the students (re)learn a new language as a second/foreign language as well as keeping learners interested and motivated throughout their learning journey. Being concerned about preserving the Persian language as my home language, I aim to investigate the teaching methodologies that three Persian teachers apply in their classrooms to teach a new language to different Persian language learners. The other focus of this study is to explore how sociocultural theory and the approach ‘funds of knowledge’ paved their ways into four Persian language classrooms. Triangulating this study focuses on the teaching and learning practices of three teachers and 12 language learners as the participants of this study. The other objective of this study is hearing the voices of the language learners, all of which will be integrated into the eight components of the SIOP model.

Keywords:

Heritage language education, Persian language teaching methodology, sociocultural theory, funds of knowledge, sheltered instruction strategies.

Testimony & Positionality

“Turn great pain to great work” is the sentence that Tooran Mirhadi¹ quoted from her mother. Mirhadi was an Iranian educator, researcher, author and a co-founder of The Children's Book Council of Iran. She had turned every pain that she felt in her life into a great work. This sentence reminded me of my own pain when trying to acquire English as a foreign language. I remember how passionately I loved to learn the English language. However, I did not like the English classes held within Iranian formal schooling, because the system was not devised for sharing everyday life and concerns in the language: rather, it was learning *about the language* instead of learning *the language*.

Totally discouraged with the grammar translation method that I had experienced through my weekly 2-hour English classes and then in my undergraduate studies, I decided to become a language teacher to make English language learning a joyful journey for students, rather than making them frustrated, obsessed with structural points, and disappointed with learning a new language. Luckily, by the time I became a language teacher, other English language teaching methods were used by language teachers such as communicative or task-based methods, to name just two. These approaches seemed much more alluring to me because of their meaningful objectives.

I was desperate to invent a method which could meet students' expectations and needs. To learn more, I worked with my mentor/advisor, Dr. Ghahremani, in Iran, on English language teaching to make learning experience more effective. We developed our own strategies and techniques for teaching English language through using life-based materials and activities including field trips, cooking class, diary writing, and watching movies, all of which needed the

¹ A documentary was made about the personal and professional life of Tooran Mirhadi, directed by Mirtahmasb & Derakhsan (2018).

classroom participants to have discussion and sharing time done in English as the foreign language. Those activities helped the students express themselves either in written form or orally. We focused on communicative aspects of language because we believed that learning a second/foreign language should not start and end with solely linguistic perspectives.

Living in the United States opened my eyes to a new concern hidden in me which was caring about my home language and culture. In some Iranian social or cultural events, I got to know families who strived to preserve their Iranian identity, language, and culture for their children living in the U.S through using Persian language and practicing their cultural traditions. I got more concerned when I discovered that some of their children as the second generation were not able to fully communicate either in written form or orally although they had taken Persian language courses. My passion to take care of my own language and culture burst into an idea to know how Persian language classrooms were run and how those students learned the content covered in class.

Starting my higher education journey and studying about second language teaching, I discovered a different perspective toward education through living with language regardless of degrees or grades. Moreover, in what seemed difficult or impossible at first, I was beginning to search for knowledge in my life that could be connected to what I was learning through language. My pain of learning English as a second language and my passion of taking care of my heritage language and culture grew into an idea to make a journey of exploring how Persian language learners and teachers deal with the Persian language.

INTRODUCTION

When I started to think of the issue of Persian language education, the first thing that I heard about this language was that it is a heritage language. North American scholars began using the term “heritage language” in their educational contexts in the 1990s (Cummins, 2005). Cho, Shin and Krashen (2004) define heritage languages as “languages spoken by the children of immigrants or by those who immigrated to a country when young” (p. 23). Therefore, Persian is the heritage language of Persian language speaking immigrants who had left their country behind due to different political, social, and educational reasons. Although far from their home land, they care about what has been bequeathed to them, which is their language, culture, and identity.

Persian, or Farsi, is one of the Southwestern Iranian languages spoken in Iran, and is related to Afghanistan (Dari) and Tajikistan (Tajiki). In the United States, ‘Persian’ is an umbrella term for these related languages. The term Farsi, on the other hand, typically describes the specialized academic discourse of the variant spoken in Iran. Persian is the 18th most frequently spoken language in the United States (American Community Survey, 2016).²

The phrase “less-commonly-taught language” is another important label. According to the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCLCTL), these languages include all languages other than English, German, French and Spanish.³ Indeed, 91% percent of Americans who are willing to study a foreign language in schools, colleges, and universities choose French, German, Italian, or Spanish, whereas “only nine percent choose languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Yoruba, Russian, Swahili and the other languages spoken by the overwhelming majority of people around the world”.⁴ Therefore, Persian is less commonly taught – certainly at the K-12 level, suggesting that it is not part of a larger language planning or policy framework,

² <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>

³ <http://www.ncolctl.org/about/faqs#2>

⁴ <http://www.ncolctl.org/node/1>

particularly in so-called “world language” programs. As a consequence, first and second-generation Iranian children in the United States would learn Persian as a heritage language, not in public schools but mostly likely at home, on the weekend or in after school programs.

Persian/Farsi has also been categorized in the list of “critical languages” which makes learning and teaching this language important and critical. Critical languages are less commonly taught languages that are crucial for the nation’s foreign policy, national security and economic prosperity. They include Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bangla, Chinese, Farsi/Persian, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Panjabi, Russian, Somali, Swahili, Turkish, and Urdu.⁵ Although, the less commonly taught languages are critically important to the US national interest in the 21st century, “the low level of current enrollments jeopardizes the very existence of the relatively few existing programs, and significantly restricts access to language learning opportunities for the large majority of students in the United States.”⁶

My intention to help second/foreign language learners continued after I came to the U.S. for my doctoral studies. Dr. Combs, my mentor, introduced me to “Immersion Education” which was started in the mid-1960s by a group of parents in Quebec, Canada as a means of to preserve French as the second language. Academically speaking, the immersion program can be mainly identified by the following features: the second language (L2) is the medium of instruction, L2 curriculum is parallel with L1 curriculum, the classroom culture is that of L2 community and culture, exposure to L2 is limited to the inside of the classroom, teachers are bilingual, and students entering the classroom may have similar or limited levels of L2 proficiency and, more importantly, the attitude of teachers and parents toward L2 being taught is positive (Johnson & Swain,1997). There are some variable features that differentiate the immersion programs from each other,

⁵ <https://www.nsep.gov/content/critical-languages>

⁶ <http://www.ncolctl.org/node/1>

though.

“Structured English Immersion” (SEI) was coined by Keith Baker and Adriana de Kanter in 1983 in a report that promoted this approach over bilingual education models (Baker & de Kanter, 1981). SEI is an instructional model designed for students with limited proficiency in English. Within the SEI model, teachers use “sheltered” strategies to develop proficiency in English through the use of graphic organizers, visuals, repetition, simplified language, and gestures, etc. to make instruction comprehensible. Taking an SEI course myself, I learned how its strategies and procedures had been taken from different second language teaching theories, all of which were meant to help second language learners.

In this chapter, I provide a statement of the problem, a research rationale, a brief statement of the theoretical foundations across the three articles, and a brief summary of the literature to be reviewed in each article. Finally, I conclude with a short discussion of the methodology used to address my research questions.

1.1 Statement of Purpose

Living in the United States, I found it important that the linguistic needs of Iranian immigrant families be taken into academic consideration. Educators need to make sure that language teachers teach the Persian language effectively and keep members of the second generation motivated and interested in (re)acquiring their ethnic language. With respect to Persian language education, I came to realize that some Persian teachers had not studied methods of second language teaching. To learn more about this circumstance, I undertook a pilot study in two Persian language classrooms to explore what those teachers did and how they taught the Persian language. What I found ironic, though not surprising, was that their fluency in Persian provided them with an opportunity to teach the language, even though they had not studied methods and theories of second language teaching and learning. From this pilot study, I also learned that some Persian

language textbooks had been developed by educators who had not necessarily had a background in second language teaching. Instead, they had studied linguistics, Persian or Iranian literature or history, to name a few. In their classrooms, those teachers tried to cover the linguistic needs of students rather than developing activities through which the learners could be engaged deeply in learning the Persian language.

As a teacher and learner engaged with English as a foreign/second language for many years, I became concerned about the second generation of Iranians living in the U.S. as well as language learners from other nationalities who strive to (re)learn Persian language. For all three articles that comprise this dissertation, I drew from sociocultural theory of second language learning and teaching, the funds of knowledge approach, and sheltered strategies of second language teaching to find answers to the following questions:

- 1- How can sociocultural theory inform or explain the pedagogical spaces in Persian language classrooms through three types of mediation? That is, how do teachers and learners collectively create a zone of proximal development? What is the quality of interaction between teachers and students, students and students, and students and materials?
- 2- What does a ‘funds of knowledge’ approach look like in a Persian language classroom? What are the pedagogical implications of teaching and learning practices of Persian language teachers and learners in three Persian language classrooms?
- 3- What is the role of learner “voice” in Persian language classrooms, and how are their expectations, challenges, and recommendations integrated through use of the instructional framework known as “SIOP” (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol)?

To explore the complexities and challenges of Persian language teachers and learners who come from diverse backgrounds linguistically and culturally, I will address the issues of Persian language education in a three-article dissertation.

The first article, “*Mediational Signs and Tools: How Sociocultural Theory Paves its Pedagogical Way in Two Persian Language Classrooms*”, is a qualitative study that investigates the pedagogical practices of two teachers and two assistant teachers in elementary and intermediate Persian language classrooms at two universities in the United States. I analyze the teaching

practices of those teachers through a sociocultural lens. Students in these classrooms came from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but they were learning Persian as a heritage, second or foreign language. I considered the pedagogical activities and strategies within the Vygotskian theory of mediation, three types of mediators being material tools, symbolic systems, and human mediation with the metaphorical concept of the zone of proximal development.

For the second article, “*Funds of Knowledge as a scaffolding Pedagogical Strategy: How Teachers and Learners Bring their Funds of Knowledge into the Classrooms,*” my initial idea was to explore how the students learn through their own funds of knowledge. When I started analyzing the data, however, I faced different versions of funds of knowledge that teachers brought to their classroom. Therefore, I had to revise my original research question to include the different sources of funds of knowledge in the teaching practices of teachers. This article explores the presence of the teachers’ funds of knowledge-based methods in their teaching practices besides the learners’ funds of knowledge.

The third article, “*Amplifying the Voices of Persian Language Learners: Integrating their Challenges, Concerns, Expectations, and Suggestions into the Components of the SIOP Model,*” addresses the voices of Persian language learners, whose attitudes and motivations have brought them to the Persian classroom. Class observations, field notes, and in-depth interviewing with language learners in three Persian classrooms comprise the data used to answer my research question. In this article, I have attempted to integrate the challenges, problems, expectations, and recommendations of the language learners with the eight components of the SIOP model. Student voice represented a valuable resource for me.

Table 1.1. An Overview of Three Articles

Proposed Articles	Research Questions	Tentative Title/Journal to publish the articles
Article 1	How can sociocultural theory inform or explain the pedagogical spaces in Persian language classrooms through three types of mediation? That is, how do teachers and learners collectively create a zone of proximal development? What is the quality of interaction between teachers and students, students and students, and students and materials?	Mediational Signs and Tools: How Sociocultural Theory Paves its Pedagogical Way in Two Persian Language Classrooms Journal of National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages
Article 2	What does a ‘funds of knowledge’ approach look like in a Persian language classroom? What are the pedagogical implications of teaching and learning practices of Persian language teachers and learners in three Persian language classrooms?	Fund of Knowledge as a Scaffolding Pedagogical Strategy Teachers and Learners Bring their Funds of Knowledge into the Persian language Classrooms Journal of Teacher Education
Article 3	What is the role of learner “voice” in Persian language classrooms, and how are their expectations, challenges, and recommendations integrated through use of the instructional framework known as “SIOP” (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol)?	Amplifying the Voice of Persian Language Learners: Integrating their Challenges, Concerns, Expectations, and Suggestions into the Components of the SIOP Model Journal of Heritage Language Research

1.2 Research Rationale

The United States is rich in diverse languages and cultures (Cummins, 2005). This richness and diversity are gifted by immigrants who have left their countries behind and who have remained in this country while acculturating to a new language and culture. Persian is considered the primary heritage language of Iranian immigrants who migrated to the US. Dealing with the language and culture of their new nation has in many cases caused them to set aside the language and culture of their homeland, and to confront the reality that English has become the first language of their children.

The 2010 US Census Bureau⁷ reported that the number of Iranians living in the country was between 1 and 1.5 million and that approximately 25 percent were under 25 years of age. If

⁷ <http://www.census.gov/content/census/en/search-results.html?stateGeo=none&q=Iranian%20Demographic%20in%20the%20US&searchtype=web&page=3>

we assume that the first language of the majority these young Iranians is English, we need to think about how their heritage language is being preserved. Considering that many of these young people are growing up in a Persian-speaking home, they could become proficient in their heritage language. Indeed, the U.S. State Department has listed Persian as a critical language. This status suggests a need for other learners to learn Persian because of vocational reasons. My study thus contributes to the scholarly literature on the teaching of Persian in general, and how to help heritage and non-heritage language learners (re)learn the language in particular. As an Iranian-born educator myself, I occasionally come into contact with Iranian second-generation students who have taken Persian courses to learn reading and writing or to improve their oral fluency in the language. However, most of them do not continue to learn the language at more advanced levels.

Although there has been considerable research about the linguistic aspects of Persian language learning and teaching, so little pedagogical attention has been given to Persian teaching methodologies that this lack has been felt by scholars of Persian (Sedighi, 2010). To fill such a void, I have written this three-article dissertation to amplify the voices of three teachers, two teacher assistants, and 12 language learners. This dissertation offers a mixture of what I have explored in four Persian language classrooms through qualitative research and lived reality. This research is mostly based on “story” as a means of narrating the explorations of this study. As Ladson-Billings (2007) has written, story works “as an appropriate methodology for transmitting the richness and complexity of cultural and social phenomena” (p. xvi).

Table 1.2: Persian Language Learners

Research Setting	Total Number of PLLs ⁸	Number of PLLs Participating in the study
Elementary classroom Class 1	12	Neela – Sepand
Elementary classroom Class 2	13	Shekoufeh – Milad – Shadi
Elementary classroom Class 3	13	Emily – Farhad – Iman – Leyla - Katherine
Intermediate classroom Class 4	16	Brian - Armin

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Since the number of immigrants to the US is increasing, the principal community pressure to teach heritage languages comes from immigrant families who use their ethnic language to communicate at home and among community members (Pérez, 2010). I share a view of language offered by linguist Thomas Ricento, who wrote that language is “the essential instrumentality through which and by which ‘thought sharing’ could be accomplished, ensuring that a common understanding about American identity (through English) would be shared by the native born and immigrant, irrespective of their ‘ethnicity’” (Ricento, 2005, p. 353). This belief affects the way immigrants are welcomed, educated, and socialized; as a result, immigrants and their children prefer to speak English because they desire “social acceptance and integration in their adopted country” (Schmid, 2001, p. 375). The sense of national identity, ideology, and politics have a significant influence on policy and planning for the education of any language other than English. In the case of Persian, the only possibilities available to parents for maintaining their mother tongue are to use it at home when their children are still small, or to enroll them in private after school

⁸ Persian Language Learner

programs, weekend classes. Or when these children become young adults, another alternative is for them to enroll in Persian courses at university after they graduate from high school.

According to Wiley (2001), appropriately defining heritage language learners is important in efforts to revitalize ethnic languages. Identifying heritage language learners within a language classroom helps teachers develop appropriate materials and activities. Students will come to the classroom with different linguistic proficiencies in Persian as well as different exposures to Persian cultural practices. Due to budgetary constraints or the small number of students in some classes, it is not always possible to base instruction and curriculum on students' backgrounds. As an example, in most Persian language programs, students with a range of proficiencies share the same classroom and teacher. Consequently, classes are multileveled while learners need differentiated instruction and accommodation (Sedighi, 2010).

Persian language learners with different cultural, linguistic, and vocational needs are eager to learn Persian as either second or foreign language. To better be able to address Persian language learners throughout this study, I have conceptualized three socio-historical categories based on the nationality and language proficiency of the learners' parents. These categories are full heritage, half-heritage, and non-heritage language learners:

- **Full heritage language learners (FHHL)** have grown up in a Persian-speaking environment with two Persian-speaking parents. These learners likely have participated in cultural events and practices and are to some extent bicultural. Their Persian language proficiency varies based on their exposure and use of their heritage language.
- **Half-heritage language learners (HHL)** have only one Persian-speaking parent. The other parent speaks another language, most likely English. These learners might have interacted with their Persian speaking parent's community and relatives. They might be more bicultural than bilingual.
- **Non-heritage language learners (NHLL)** have non-Persian-speaking parents. They have chosen to learn the Persian language as a foreign language due to their personal or vocational motivation.

Having all three types of Persian language learners in one classroom is challenging because of their different linguistic and cultural proficiencies. I also acknowledge that these categories are fluid. For example, even if one is FHLL, he or she nonetheless might be unable to communicate in the Persian language. However, a FHLL has an ethnic Persian background. This feature may also be shared by learners who fall under the HHLL category, and similarly, these learners may or may not speak or understand Persian. Finally, learners who I have categorized as NHLL do not have Persian ethnicity, but in fact might be more knowledgeable about the Persian language and culture than students with Persian heritage. For Persian language learners who understand Persian-medium instruction, instruction is easier for them than for those who have only partial or no familiarity with the language. Thus, the knowledge of Persian and familiarity with Iranian cultural practices that those learners possess gives them an advantage over other students. Therefore, in any Persian language classrooms, they might be learners with different linguistic and cultural diversity. The instruction and methods used for language teaching should be differentiated, though challenging for some teachers.

The idea of connecting second language acquisition (SLA) theory with heritage language teaching (Valdés (2001) is helpful in prompting researchers and educators to think of multiple ways of teaching Persian as a heritage language to a range of learners and speakers. Considering the diversity of Persian language learners in the Persian classrooms, the major theoretical approaches I use to explore and understand heritage language education are sociocultural theory, funds of knowledge, and the sheltered strategies useful for second language learners.

1.4 A Brief Summary of the Literature of Each Article

The theoretical foundation of the first article, *“Mediational Signs and Tools: How Sociocultural Theory Paves its Pedagogical Way in Two Persian Language Classrooms,”* is sociocultural theory which considers the sign and symbol systems, or mediational artifacts of

learning that function within social and cultural contexts. Mediation is the cornerstone of sociocultural theory, which sees mental functioning of humans as mediated through language, activities, interaction, and cultural artifacts and concepts “created by human culture over time” (Lantolf, 2000, p 1). That is, “humans rely on tools and labor activity which allows us to change the world and with it the circumstances under which we live in the world” (ibid, p. 1). Artifacts are socially and culturally constructed and as such play an important role in the learning process of humans.

Second language acquisition researchers like James Lantolf (2011) have argued that teachers mediate new concepts and content through different signs and symbols. The literature in the first article reviews the implication of three types of mediators (Kozulin, 1998), including the zone of proximal development discussed by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978). The Persian language classrooms in which I observed included learners with diverse linguistic and cultural knowledge, so I refer to the social nature of human beings whose learning is mediated through psychological tools like language interaction, and collaborative activities.

The second article, “*Funds of Knowledge as a Scaffolding Pedagogical Strategy: How Teachers and Learners Bring their Funds of Knowledge into the Classrooms*” is grounded by funds of knowledge research (Moll et al, 1992). This construct focused on whether and how students` culture and history are perceived or considered in classroom teaching and learning materials, content, and activities. González & Moll (2002) believe that students can learn if they find some connection between new subject material and the knowledge in their own lives, rather than being forced to memorize isolated facts and rules. A significant aspect of mediational artifacts in heritage language education is that tools and signs as artifacts are transferred to other generations which can be used as a part of the funds of knowledge (Moll et al, 2001) framework for second language education. To apply this framework to the teaching and learning of a new language,

teachers mediate the new concepts and contents through using learners' home and community knowledge in the process of their historical development. Moll and Greenberg (1990) believe that mediation is used in "helping to create more advanced social circumstances for teaching and learning" (p. 320). Bringing history and culture to the classroom can occur through activities (Agar, 1994) to which learners bring their cultural and social knowledge. Students acquire the social function of the new words through renaming those concepts.

Article three, "*Amplifying the Voice of the Persian Language Learners: Integrating their Challenges, Concerns, Expectations, and Suggestions into the Components of the SIOP Model*"⁹ focuses on how Persian language learners respond to their language learning experiences. The language learners will express their challenges, problems, expectations of their language learning. They also provide suggestions about what language teachers can do to make their learning more effective. The principal goal of this article is to prioritize the voices of Persian language learners, and to help heritage language teachers and material developers hear those voices in order to develop more effective language teaching methodologies and materials. Since no single teaching methodology works for all language teachers and learners, Sheltered Instruction (SI) was first proposed by linguist and second language researcher Steven Krashen in the 1980s. This instruction is an approach to teaching English to language learners which served as "a bridge between instruction in the first language and the mainstream" (Krashen, 1996, p. 56).

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) was developed in 1999 following intensive observation of sheltered instruction with English language learners (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2012). The SIOP is a tested model of Sheltered Instruction (SI) that has been widely used across the U.S. for over 15 years¹⁰ and acts as an eclectic method for teaching the second language.

⁹ The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (Echevarria, Vogt, & Graves, 2012)

¹⁰ <http://www.cal.org/siop/>

In fact, the SIOP model is used for assessing the teaching practices of teachers in order to help them to improve or alternate their teaching. The SIOP identifies and organizes 30 important sheltered instruction elements¹¹ under eight broad categories. In this article I explore the challenges, problems, expectations, and recommendations of learners within several of the SIOP's categories.

1.5 Selecting the Research Settings

To set up this study, I asked Persian language teachers to complete an email survey and to suggest potential research sites. The survey targeted members of a professional organization to which I also belong -- the American Association of Teachers of Persian (AATP). My initial thought was to send a mass email to the membership list. However, I opted to send individual email messages to each member in order to personalize my request. In my emails, sent in July - August 2016, I introduced myself, sharing details about my background and what I had been studying at the University of Arizona. I explained the goals and methods of my study, and how each individual could help me. For transparency and the establishment of trust, I also attached the Institutional Review Board (IRB) project approval. I sent this email to 32 teachers; 8 responded by completing the survey. Two of them just wrote their names without completing the survey. Some email recipients provided a number of reasons why they had to decline my request. For example, two teachers indicated they were no longer teaching Persian, two other teachers wrote that they had changed professions, and several replied that they were too busy. Said one, "... I do have to decline participating in the study due to enormous amount of work, Profuse apologies". The remainder of the email recipients did not reply at all.

Because the response number was low, I prepared an additional email to the members of the professional organization (AATP). I asked the president of AATP to send it for me.

¹¹ <https://esol.leeschools.net/SIOP/pdf/SIOP%208.pdf>

Unfortunately, the president's request yielded only two other completed surveys. Consequently, in order to fulfil the timeline of my study, I had to rely on a more traditional method of obtaining participants -- making phone calls. I had known two teachers from the conference on heritage languages that I attended in California, so I decided to start with them. I knew that they were living in an urban area where the number of Persian language speakers was relatively high, so I called them to talk about my research. I asked them about their classrooms, their class schedules, and the number and diversity of their language learners. Considering the budget and time needed for my fieldwork, I selected their classes as my research sites due to their willingness to participate. That was another important criterion for having me in their classrooms for four weeks. One of those teachers recommended me to her friend teaching the Persian language in another university to let me observe her class. This was important because those three sites were located in urban areas with a high number of Iranian immigrants. All four classes that I observed included Persian language learners who were diverse linguistically and culturally.

1.6 Research Design

I have used a qualitative research approach as the main framework for this study. Qualitative methods provide rich narratives and thick description instead of providing an outcome. The first and third articles rely on grounded theory, an approach in which the researcher uses the methods of inquiry for data collection and then data analysis (Charmaz, 2009). This approach describes what will be observed and discovers the meaning of data through detailed narration to answer research questions and to obtain information concerning the theories and methodologies applied in second language teaching. For the second article, I used ethnographic research approach and discussed the process that I as a researcher and the participants have gone through.

While doing observation, I took notes and did "mental" analysis at the same time. These reflections became an important part of my study sources. I audio recorded each classroom session

and interviews. My observations included audio recording, taking notes, partial video recordings, and interviewing. I observed those classrooms to see what Persian teachers do in their classrooms through their textbooks and materials, strategies, activities, and eventually to know what their teaching philosophies are. My on-the-ground observations helped me see the interaction between teachers and learners, learners and teaching materials, and learners and activities. As an example, I found out what strategies the teachers used to make lesson materials comprehensible, and how learners applied new vocabulary, grammar, and structure in general.

I took notes, did recordings, analyzed, and interpreted what I observed in classrooms including all pedagogical activities developed by teachers, any scaffolding and materials used by them to ease learners' understanding and learning of new contents during Persian language learning. Throughout doing this study, I clearly identified the methodologies of second language teaching and traced the footprint of sociocultural theory and funds of knowledge approach as a theoretical framework.

I triangulated the research methods for this study, using as a focus of analysis, teachers, learners, and materials. I opted for a Three-Article Format dissertation through studying four Persian language classrooms offered by U.S. university programs. I was at three different universities. I spent three weeks at each site to observe my research participants. I started my observation at Mountain University in 2016, September 29 – October 19 for three weeks. Then I attended two Persian classes at beginning and intermediate levels at Coastal University in 2016, October 20 – November 9. Lowland University was the last site that I went to, where I spent about three weeks in 2016, November 11- November 30, to observe one Persian language classroom at the elementary level.

At the beginning of my observations, all three teachers introduced me to their students and encouraged their students to help me as much as they could. After I explained about my research,

I distributed a consent form through which they could be more informed about the study, their rights, and what they were required to do to be a participant. In each of those four Persian language classrooms, the number of Persian language learners varied, and several students agreed to participate in my study. If they were interested in taking part in my research, they wrote their name, email address, and signed the form before returning it to me. Among 54 Persian language learners, 21 language learners returned their signed consent forms. These were the individuals I identified as possible interviewees.

Before transcribing the interviews, I took a look at the notes that I had made while interviewing the students. I transcribed the ones that I found more important and useful for my study. I also had to lower the number of my participants to make my data analysis more practical. Therefore, I chose 12 participants who had expressed opinions related to the research questions of my study.

Interviews with study participants were occasionally long, formal and informal, and loosely ordered. I allowed my participants to select an interview location where they felt safe and free to talk. I interviewed three teachers, two teacher assistants, and 12 students, conducted observations, and investigated other opportunities to participate in Iranian cultural practices. To keep the confidentiality of the participants, all names of the participants and research settings are pseudonyms.

My own experiences and expertise in second language teaching and learning inform part of my analysis. Much insight came from the sociocultural framework I used to make sense of my data and the literature about second language acquisition theory and second language teaching and learning. Reflective accounts of this research also constitute an important part of my analysis. These accounts included my perceptions about the best teaching practices and activities, materials, and participants' ideas. The findings from this research study will be helpful for second language

teachers and specifically Persian language teachers. For those who are concerned about teaching Persian language to diverse language learners, this research will give them some idea what the learners` concern or problems are and how Persian as a second/foreign language can be taught more effectively.

I will share the results of this research with the research participants through mailing a synopsis of the study. I will also share my published articles through different sites/communities where I am a member, such as Academia and Research Gate. As long as I provide the keywords of that research in those sites, second language teachers and educators will find out about my research results.

1.7 Data Collection and Analysis

In the first article, “*Mediational Signs and Tools: How Sociocultural Theory Paves its Pedagogical Way in Two Persian Language Classrooms,*” I conducted a literature review on sociocultural theory and its implication for second/foreign language teaching and learning. From this review, I attempt to locate a connection between three types of psychological tools (Kozulin, 1998), which are material tools, symbolic systems, and human mediation. The participants of this study are two teachers, two teacher assistants, and six Persian language learners whose ages range from 19-22 years old. In my analysis of this study, I will show how these tools and the zone of proximal development and interaction are intertwined in teachers` practices in two classrooms. The data sources of this study are from field notes of my observation, teacher and student interviews, and student artifacts. This article is grounded within second language teaching methods, so the study will provide insight for researchers, teachers, and scholars about teaching a second/foreign language, language teaching methodologies, and philosophical approaches that teachers can apply in their own language classrooms.

The second article, “*Funds of Knowledge as a Scaffolding Pedagogical Strategy: How*

Teachers and Learners Bring their Funds of Knowledge into the Classrooms” is a qualitative ethnographic case study of three elementary level Persian language classrooms. The Participants of this study are three teachers and five language learners whose ages range from 19-22 years old. I have used a ‘funds of knowledge approach in this article. I analyze the teaching and learning practices of teachers and learners to find different versions of funds of knowledge in the practices of teaching and learning. Observing the second language teaching methodologies of the three teacher-participants, I explore how the teachers’ methods have manifested this approach. Therefore, the materials, activities, and strategies of each teacher provide another source of analysis of the collected data. I also explore whether -- and what kind of scaffolding strategies -- teachers use to make the materials understandable and comprehensive for language learners.

The third article, *“Amplifying the Voice of the Persian Language Learners: Integrating their Challenge, Concern, Expectation, and Suggestion into the Components of the SIOP Model,”* uses qualitative method through which a theory will be emerged. Since this article highlights the voices of Persian language learners, the main source of the data is the interviews conducted with four students and the field notes of my observations. After collecting data, I situate the challenges, problems, expectations, and recommendations of learners within the components of the SIOP model. I analyze the Persian language teaching methods in three classrooms based on sheltered strategies of second language teaching.

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Article ONE: Mediational Signs and Tools: How Sociocultural Theory Paves its Pedagogical Way in Two Persian Language Classrooms

2.1 Abstract

What can Persian language teachers do to pursue more effective teaching? Using sociocultural theory, this study examined different types of mediational signs and tools of Persian language teaching in two Persian language classrooms. The participants of this study are two teachers, two teaching assistants, and six language learners. As an observer, I strived to find the implications of mediational artifacts in Persian language teaching. Data analyses shed a light on the simplest things that second language teachers may take for granted. The findings showed the importance of some material tools such as the blackboard, handouts, and technology in a second language classroom. Symbolic systems can also include translanguaging and transliteration practices. The role of human mediation in the metaphorical zone of proximal development created by teachers and the students indicates that students learn better through cooperation among themselves and through instructional conversations between one teacher and students.

Keywords: sociocultural theory, heritage language learners, zone of proximal development, mediational tools and signs, interaction, multilevel classroom, pedagogical artifacts.

2.2 Introduction

Immigration into the United States can provide educational, social, or economic opportunities; however, it also creates challenges or conflicts for immigrants who have to adjust to a different language, culture, values, and traditions. Not only have immigrant families felt pressure to put aside some of the cultural practices from their homelands in order to obtain the new language and culture of the host country, many also struggle to retain their home language and culture.

The immigration of Iranians to the U.S. has occurred through different times and because of religious, political, and educational reasons, to name a few. Modarresi (2001) has divided the waves of Iranians' immigration into two main periods, the "prerevolutionary period (from the mid-nineteenth century to 1978) and post-revolutionary period (from 1979 to the present time)" (p. 93). There is no accurate source of data for the number of immigrants who arrived from Iran between 1842-1903; one estimate put the number at about 130 people (Yeganegi, 2002). This number increased to 32,125 people in 1960-1977 (Modarresi, 2001). Another major wave of Iranian immigration to the U.S. was after the revolution in 1979. From 1978-1986, approximately 103,712 people immigrated to the U.S.

When Iranians first immigrated to the United States they may have been surprised to discover that one day Persian would become a "heritage language" and that the first language of their children would be English.

Persian¹² as a heritage language also may be referred to as an immigrant language, based on Fishman's categorization (2001), because it is a minority language in the United States, it is treated differently by the family and their children regarding the positive and negative attitude toward their home language. Meybodi (2014) investigated the status of Persian among second-

generation Iranian-Americans in the Northeastern States. Her research focused on attitudes and behaviors of that generation and their parents, especially among Muslim families who had a positive attitude toward learning and maintaining their heritage language. On the other hand, Ramezanzadeh (2010) argued how the socio-psychological and sociopolitical environment around Persian language and culture in the U.S. could lead to heritage language loss:

Negative representation of minority groups in the media and arts feed these fears, from skewed news reports to attempts at comedy by making fun of people`s accents. Attempts to restrict languages other than English and coercive measures toward assimilative conformity of immigrants predominate, even as different programs and models of language maintenance and development (English plus, immersion programs, transition program, etc.) are used to cope with language barriers (2010, p. 41).

The families` concerns about preserving their home language have prompted educators to think of teaching heritage languages to the descendants of immigrants whose first language is English. Educators hope that by providing good language programs and resources, heritage language will be preserved by immigrant children as their second language.

Due to budgetary constraints or a small number of Persian language students, it is not always possible to establish multiple classrooms based on students` backgrounds and proficiency. Therefore, in most Persian education settings, students with a range of proficiencies share the same classroom and teacher. These classes are multileveled, as a result, and learners might not receive differentiated instruction or accommodation (Sedighi, 2010). Rather than viewing this circumstance as a deficit, however, I argue that these Persian language learners contribute in useful way to multilevel and multicultural classrooms. Indeed, Persian language learners can act as pedagogical and cultural resources for teachers as they develop instructional strategies and activities.

Much of the contemporary research literature on Persian language focuses on the linguistic aspects of the language, while little attention has been given to Persian teaching

methodologies, a point that Sedighi (2010) has referred to in her work. To fill such a void, this paper portrays the pedagogical practices and activities of two Persian language teachers, two teaching assistants, and six language learners. I provide an explanation of sociocultural theory as it applies to second language teaching and learning. I then describe the mediational tools and signs used by the language teachers and how students responded to their teachers` pedagogy.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Language learning is intertwined with interaction on a social plane (Vygotsky, 1978). That is, through collaboration or cooperative activity more competent learners and teachers assist the students who need additional help for learning. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) state that Vygotsky and his colleagues are the main founders of sociocultural theory, an approach to learning and development in which “human activities take place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbol systems, and can be best understood when investigated in their historical development” (p. 191). The theoretical cornerstone of the present study is sociocultural theory and its principal research focus on the social and cultural contexts of learning through sign and symbol systems.

Lev Vygotsky (1978) proposed that learning and development are socially and culturally-mediated. That is, learning occurs when human mental functioning is mediated through language, activities, interaction, and cultural artifacts and concepts created “by human culture over time” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 1). To locate the application of mediation in a second language classroom, it is helpful to clarify the types of mediation that facilitate human development and learning.

Vygotsky (1978) made a distinction between ‘tool’ and ‘sign’ in terms of the object of an action. Signs or “psychological tools” constitute the primary meaning-making tool among humans, and it is this process that leads to learning and development. Vygotsky (1981) listed a number of examples of semiotic means/psychological tools such as "language; various systems

of counting; mnemonic techniques; algebraic symbol systems; works of art; writing; schemes, diagrams, maps and mechanical drawings; all sorts of conventional signs and so on" (ibid, p. 137). For example, tools such as a knife or a spade mediate material activity; metaphorically, they function similarly as "a tool in labor" (ibid, 1978, p. 52). Both types of mediational signs and tools have overlapping implications for classroom instruction. However, language teachers should not take them for granted. Vygotsky (1978) argued that signs and symbols or "artifacts" mediated the mental processes of learning.

Kozulin (1998) states that Vygotsky identified three kinds of mediators: material tools, symbolic systems as psychological tools, and human mediation. Regarding the material tools, Kozulin argues that "they presuppose collective use, interpersonal communication, and symbolic representation" (p. 62). The material tools that teachers can use in the classroom include things such as textbooks, blackboards or other technological tools available in classrooms which transform the learning of students.

Symbolic systems or psychological tools mediate between the mind and the abstract world, for example, when primitive humans tied a string on their fingers to remember things (Kozulin, 1998). These tools have evolved to other tools such as numbers, arithmetic systems, music, art, and language (Lantolf, 2000). In second language classrooms, the symbolic system used by teachers and students is either the first language of one or both, or the target language. In both instances, the languages mediate students' learning of new vocabulary, grammar rules, and cultural concepts.

The third type of mediation which finds its application in the second language classrooms is human mediation. This mediational factor is more easily understood as activity undertaken by a child with assistance from an adult or "more competent other" (Vygotsky, 1978). What will be considered in the Persian language classroom is the role of teacher and students in collectively

creating the zone of proximal development to help make learning happen for students. I argue that the community of practice concept matches this type of mediation when a group of individuals help each other to achieve some kind of outcome. According to Wenger (2006), a community of practice is formed by individuals who engage in the process of learning while they share the same interests and challenges. In Persian language classrooms, students learning a new language may have the same scholastic goals and interests, even while manifesting different language proficiencies because of their background. One of the goals of a community of practice is that people help each other through engagement in shared activities like problem solving, asking for experience, using the others' funds of knowledge, and requesting information. Students studying in the same classroom are similar in some respects and different in others. That is, human mediation is necessary to make the community of practice effective and processual.

Another of Vygotsky's principles, mentioned above, is the zone of proximal development (ZPD), also useful in identifying mediational artifacts in multilevel Persian language classrooms. Vygotsky (1978) theorized the ZPD as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Within the zone, participants both interpret and co-create knowledge. According to Vygotsky:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level and, later on, on the individual level; first, between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child (intra-psychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals (1978, 57).

He argued that learners first construct their knowledge at the intermental level through interaction with more competent persons on the social plane. The intermental level includes the

processes of interaction between the child and others, who could be teachers, adults, or peers. The knowledge co-created by participants then becomes internalized by learners at the individual or intramental level. That is, after students learn how to accomplish an activity with the assistance of a teacher or an adult, they can then accomplish the same activity independently.

In Persian language classes where learners have different proficiencies, Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development may resolve a pedagogical challenge as well as the probable lack of a differentiated curriculum. For example, teachers can group students with different proficiencies in paired or small group activities. Learners are engaged in cognitive mediation in second language settings when the pedagogical focus is on the social nature of students whose learning will be developed through mediation, interaction, and collaborative activities. Teachers provide the context for teacher-learner interaction as well as for learner-learner cooperation.

Guk and Kellogg (2007) believe that student-student or teacher-student interactions can build a vigorous ZPD, that is, students will learn better if they are able to engage in dialogue about what they are doing in the classroom. Learners can also be given the opportunity to collaborate in learning projects through what Tharp and Gallimore (1991) have called "instructional conversations," or what Swain (2010) has defined as "collaborative dialogue". These interactions act as a dialogue tailored to the emerging understanding of the learners. "Instructional conversations" provide the dialogue between teacher and learners in which the "teacher listens carefully to grasp the students' communicative intent" (Tharp and Gallimore, 1991, p. 1).

Moll (1995) argues that Vygotsky never talked about the forms of social assistance to learners within the ZPD. Instead, Moll wrote about cooperation and direction, and about supporting children "through demonstration, leading questions, and by introducing the initial

elements of the task's solution" (Vygotsky, quoted in Moll, 1995, p. 209). Any assistance that learners receive inside or outside of class lead to student learning. This assistance includes the support teachers may provide in their office hours, as they guide students about how to undertake an activity, project, or question.

By and large, the above-mentioned tenets, i.e., the three forms of mediation, the ZPD, and social interaction led me to explore their applications in two Persian language classroom settings. In what follows, I will present a compilation of several studies whose main core is mediation as an umbrella term under which the zone of proximal development and interaction exist.

2.4 Literature Review

Less-commonly taught language was the term I first heard to describe the Persian language. If Persian is less commonly taught – certainly at the K-12 level, it likely would not be included as part of a larger language planning or policy framework, in so-called “world language” programs. As a consequence, first and second-generation Iranian children in the United States must seek other opportunities to acquire Persian as a heritage language, not in public schools but at home, on the weekend, or after school. Yet the role of Persian as a “critical” language is paradoxical. On the one hand, some people in the U.S. “feel threatened by non-English speaking countries, however, foreign languages (e.g., Pashto, Arabic, and Persian) are valued as critical languages in a strategic sense” (Wiley, 2007, p. 253). On the other hand, Persian is one among 14 other critical languages taught primarily in universities in the country¹³. Currently in 2019, there are 31 university programs which offer the Persian language to students with beginning,

¹³ Critical Language Scholarship - <https://clscholarship.org/about#languages>

intermediate, and advanced levels in Middle Eastern Studies, Iranian Studies, Foreign Language departments, or Critical Language Programs.

The students who enroll in university language programs are different based on their parents' nationality and their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. As a means of conceptualizing the differences in exposure to Iranian cultural practices, I have grouped learners in three categories. To address Persian language learners throughout this article, I have conceptualized three socio-historical categories based on the nationality and language proficiency of the learners' parents. These categories are full heritage, half-heritage, and non-heritage language learners:

- **Full heritage language learners (FHHL)** have grown up in a Persian-speaking environment with two Persian-speaking parents. These learners likely have participated in cultural events and practices and are to some extent bicultural. Their Persian language proficiency varies based on their exposure and use of their heritage language.
- **Half-heritage language learners (HHLL)** have only one Persian-speaking parent. The other parent speaks another language, most likely English. These learners might have interacted with their Persian speaking parent's community and relatives. They might be more bicultural than bilingual.
- **Non-heritage language learners (NHLL)** have non-Persian-speaking parents. They have chosen to learn the Persian language as a foreign language due to their personal or vocational motivation.

Having all three types of Persian language learners in one classroom is challenging because of their different linguistic and cultural proficiencies. I also acknowledge that these categories are fluid. For example, even if one is FHLL, he or she nonetheless might be unable to communicate in the Persian language. However, a FHLL has an ethnic Persian background. This feature may also be shared by learners who fall under the HHLL category, and similarly, these learners may or may not speak or understand Persian. Finally, learners who I have categorized as NHLL do not have Persian ethnicity, but in fact might be more knowledgeable about the Persian language and culture than students with Persian heritage. For Persian language learners who understand

Persian-medium instruction, instruction is easier for them than for those who have only partial or no familiarity with the language. Thus, the knowledge of Persian and familiarity with Iranian cultural practices that those learners possess gives them an advantage over other students. Therefore, in any Persian language classrooms, they might be learners with different linguistic and cultural diversity. The instruction and methods used for language teaching should be differentiated, though this may be challenging for some teachers.

Polinsky & Kagan (2007) refer to heritage language speakers with two conceptions, both broad and narrow. The broad conception of proficiency includes anyone who uses his/her heritage language. These speakers have been raised with a strong cultural connection to a particular language, usually through family interaction. The narrow definition applies to those who have been exposed to a particular language in childhood but did not learn it to full capacity because another language became dominant. Not all of language learners in the above categories are biliterate in Persian and English. Some students opt to study Persian in language programs at a university, or in weekend or after school classes to learn reading and writing.

Throughout the past century, scholars, educators, linguists, psychologists or teachers have studied second or foreign language learning to explore the most effective pedagogies to help learners develop a degree of bilingualism. The idea of connecting theories of second language acquisition with the area of heritage language teaching (Valdés, 2001) is helpful in prompting researchers and educators to think of improving the instruction of Persian as a heritage language.

Related to sociocultural theory, the theory that is applicable in Persian language classrooms is social constructivism because learning is considered an ongoing and dynamic process in which “learners construct” their own knowledge in its social context through action and reflection (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky as a social constructivist emphasizes the collaborative nature of learning and the importance of cultural and social contexts. Social collaborations can

occur between the teacher and learner, the learner and another learner, and also between learners and textbooks. These collaborations all lead to learning. Knowledge is socially and actively constructed from experiences and not from the mere transmission of information from instructor to student (Correa, 2011). That is, the teacher as all-knowing in class cannot make learning and development happen in students if she/he overlooks the importance of interactive activities and strategies.

One of the metaphorical spaces within which students and teachers can interact over their learning and teaching process is the zone of proximal development. Brown et al (1992) suggested that “active agents” in a classroom, within the zone of proximal development, can include teacher and learners with various degrees of knowledge. Creating the zone of proximal development in or out of class helps teachers cover new content and materials through using interactive activities in a social plane as cognitive processes. This zone also makes students internalize the new content in an individual plane after they are able to apply the content without help. Using collaborative activities with words, games, pictures, video, and play make second language learners engage with new content so as to internalize words, concepts, meaning, or cultural points of the new language.

What is practical in the zone of proximal development is using scaffolding strategies to help learners process the “comprehensible input” necessary for their understanding and learning (Krashen, 1985). According to Wertsch (1979), scaffolding is a “dialogically produced inter-psychological process through which learners internalize knowledge they co-construct with more capable peers” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2008, 282). Scaffolding is an interpretation of the ZPD in which the adult or teacher controls pedagogical elements beyond the learner’s mental capacity (Wood, Bruner, Ross, 1976). At the same time scaffolding allows language learners to engage in the activity that is within her range of abilities and actually beyond them. Undertaking activities,

pictures and, games are examples of “scaffolding tools” (Mercer, 1995). Other scaffolding tools and techniques include introducing the learning activities to learners, simplifying the steps that learners must take to complete the task, and providing a model for learners.

In a second/foreign language classroom, the use of translanguaging (Garcia & Wei, 2014) is one of the scaffolding strategies that can be used by teachers to make the content understandable for students. In *Thinking and Speech* (1987), Vygotsky argued about using the first language as a symbolic tool that mediates for language development. He thinks that learning a second language has its foundation in the knowledge of one’s first language. I argue that using translanguaging in a second language classroom mediates the acquisition of the semantic aspects of a word, concept or rule if teachers take advantage of students’ first language to help them master those elements in their second language. It is believed that students studying a second language already have an intuitive knowledge of the linguistic system of their first language. As a result, knowledge of the second language can be transformed by the mediational tool of translanguaging to help students internalize concepts and content of the second language.

2.5 Methodology

I discovered qualitative methods in my academic and research life as the most challenging approach to conduct research. Qualitative methods helped me see ‘Me’ as a researcher, to observe the participants of this study in natural settings, and to answer questions related to how the participants made sense of their language teaching and learning practices. I seek a deeper truth and study things in their natural settings to interpret events through the meanings that people make of their learning.

Qualitative researchers may observe the participants and conduct formal and informal interviews to further an understanding of what is going on in the setting from the point of view of those involved in the study. Thus, I started my research with the concern I was feeling towards

Persian, my language and culture, which I wanted learners to learn and teachers to teach as deeply and meaningfully as they could.

The main goal of this qualitative research is to develop grounded theory through data interpretation and the process taken in thematic analysis of data, such as coding, sorting, and organizing. Grounded theory is simply the discovery of emerging patterns in data. Flick (2006) argues that “theories should not be applied to the subject being studied but are ‘discovered’ and formulated in working with the field and the empirical data to be found in it” (p: 98).

This study is rich in narrative and description, and instead of providing a result, it discusses the process that I as a researcher and an observer have gone through. This approach describes what I observed and discovered from the data through detailed narration to provide answers to my research question. I explored how pedagogical theories and teaching methods were applied in two university level Persian language classrooms provided at different US universities; the classes included learners whose Persian language and cultural proficiency varied widely.

2.5.1 Research Settings and Participants

Class A, the first research setting, was an intermediate-level class offered by the Middle Eastern Studies department of a university located in the American Southwest. This Persian course was offered for 6 hours a week over 15 weeks. This class served a mix of students from various Persian language and cultural backgrounds related to Persian as a heritage language. Students took this course in continuation of their beginning level course during which they had learned the alphabet and consequently some reading and writing. Teachers had worked on grammar, story reading, as well as listening and speaking skills.

The second setting, Class B, was a Persian language classroom at the beginning level offered by a Near Eastern Languages and Cultures department in the Western part of the United

States. This Persian language classroom was scheduled for 5 hours a week over 15 weeks. In this classroom, there were different types of Persian language learners who had enrolled in the course to become literate as well as learn to speak and understand the language. These typically are the goals of the language learners.

A major segment of data in this study comes from classroom observations of the learning and teaching practices of the participants in these settings. Selected passages from field notes and interviews with teachers and students were used to analyze the implications of three types of mediators, and whether a zone of proximal development was created in these classrooms and if so, what its effect on learning looked like. The two teachers and their teaching assistants in the study taught learners with various linguistic and cultural backgrounds and consequently different language proficiencies. They used different approaches designed to suit the proficiency levels of their students. It is possible that the pedagogical strategies of the one might not be appropriate or effective for the other. But this research aims to study what mediational tools and signs were developed for making the learning opportunities of language learners more effective and meaningful.

The participants of this research mainly are two teachers and two teaching assistants whose teaching practices were what I wanted to study. Sima and Afsaneh had 28 and 25 years of teaching experience, respectively. They both obtained Ph.Ds. in Middle Eastern Studies; their teaching expertise has come from teaching Persian for a long time rather than knowing or studying theories of second language learning and teaching. In fact, what they have gained through teaching over the years has helped them improve their teaching of Persian as a second or foreign language. The first language of Sima and Afsaneh is Persian; however, the language instruction of Sima in Class A is Persian and the language the Afsaneh in Class B uses is English due to the beginning level of the students. Sima had a teaching assistant, Rayan, who was

responsible for teaching the students one day each week. Zohreh was teaching assistant for Afsaneh. She was to take over Afsaneh`s teaching two days a week. In both classes, there are different students from other nationalities or from regions such as the United States, Mexico, Turkey, and Egypt.

These particular students did not understand Persian fully except for one student, Brian, who was proficient in Persian language and culture. Among those students who have had some connection with the Persian language, there were some Full Heritage Language Learners (FHLL) or Half Heritage Language Learner (HHLL) based on their parents` language and culture. Those students made the Persian classes multilevel and multicultural. Before I began my data collection, I wanted to explore what these two teachers were doing in a multilevel classroom with a diverse group of Persian language learners. The theoretical foundation for my analysis is mediation, sign and tools, and the metaphorical zone of proximal development that each teacher used in her own classroom. While trying to find the presence of signs and tools in those two classrooms, I included six students, Katherine, Farhad, Iman, Leyla, Emily, and Brian, as the other participants of this study. The main focus of this study is teaching methods of two teachers and their teaching assistants; however, six students helped me pay attention to the points that teachers may take for granted.

Table 2.1: Teachers` Profile

Name	Years of teaching	Second Language Teaching Training	First language	Instruction language	Number of language learners	Number of nationalities
Sima	28	Yes	Persian	Persian	16	4
Rayan	2	No	Persian	Persian		
Afsaneh	25	No	Persian	English	13	4
Zohreh	6	No	Persian	English		

2.5.2. Data Collection and Data Analysis

A central feature of any research design is the formulation of the choice of methods to collect data, which is not just a particular method of collection but a style of research that is distinguished by its objectives, such as understanding the educational practices of teachers and learners in each classroom and participating in each site.

The methods of collecting data could not be written in shorthand by reference to someone else's research techniques. These methods are lengthy and discursive since they also tell “my” story. In other words, my story and my interpretation of the data are key to understanding my findings and conclusions. Tracing my challenges back to the starting point of doing this study, there were no hard and fast rules about exactly what details should be included in this section of the research paper. I should simply ask, "have I collected enough information about the methods used?" or "are these methods a sensible and adequate way of addressing the research questions?"

I attended the classes where teachers and learners were doing their usual activities of their teaching and learning. During my observations, I took field notes or “conceptual memos” (Heath & Street, 2008) to record what I was thinking. One of the methods used for collecting data in qualitative research is interviewing, defined by Flick (2006) as being different based on different

contexts and uses. As the researcher, I had to build a good rapport with the participants first so they could trust me as a person who was not going to judge them but who might allow other teachers and educators to “hear” their voices. I have tried to make sure that their ideas contributed to the development of effective Persian language teaching methods and materials which in turn would lead to more learning, bilingualism and interest among heritage language communities and non-heritage language learners alike.

Videotaping provides materials to the researcher for coding students’ expressive behaviors such as emotions, facial expressions, and gestures besides recording what they were saying (Charmaz, 2014). Collecting data, voice recording of all class time, and partial video recording was a great help in realizing what each teacher and student does. This helped me to observe and think about one person at a time. At the same time, returning to the same video clips over and over helped me focus on all the students. In this way, I noticed student and teacher interactions that I might have missed had I not videotaped. Doing this research, I had completed a few video recordings because I used my mobile phone for recording so I needed to record what I was thinking at the time of data collection. So, I had to have my field notes, as well. In hindsight, I should have put a camera on a tripod first to be hands free for writing the field notes and second, not to distract the students and teacher. In that case, the camera on a tripod could act as another participant in class.

In sum, I base my descriptions and interpretations on evidence from numerous sources, including my own observation as an observer for four weeks in two Persian language classrooms, interviewing with two teachers, two teaching assistants, and six language learners, my field notes, audio/video recording, students’ artifacts, and materials.

If I was like most qualitative researchers, I probably felt that I intuitively had many answers to my questions. My task, however, was to take a step back from my data and analyze it

as subjectively as possible for which I should have cut up the data by coding text and breaking it down into more manageable chunks.

My own ideas about and experiences with second language teaching and learning are included in my analysis. I do believe in some activities and strategies in teaching a new language because of the knowledge I have gained through reading different articles and books about second language teaching methodologies, and also my own practices in second language teaching. Reflective accounts of this research study will constitute an important part of my analysis. These accounts will include my perceptions about best teaching practices and activities, materials related to the learners' expectation and needs and how they have learned the Persian language.

Based on the ideas from my own language learning experiences and other studies on second language learning and teaching, I have created a framework for analyzing the data collected from different settings and sources based on three tenets of sociocultural theory which are mediations, the zone of proximal development, and interaction.

To accomplish the data analyses, I listened to audio files of the students, studied the interview transcriptions, and reread all my field notes and conceptual memos. Then, I searched for categories connected to the research question for which I assigned the codes such as "mediational artifacts", "psychological signs", "tools", "the zone of proximal development", "interaction" -- all of which could lead to better and more effective teaching and learning. As a result of the initial coding process, I created a secondary coding out of the tenet "mediation" into three types of mediators that I labeled "material tools", "symbolic systems" and "human mediation", "teacher created zone of proximal development", "students created zone of collaboration", and "collaborative interaction" which I found in the subcategories that I made out of my data.

I assigned these codes as I engaged in axial coding in which I explored different events that they were categorized under the label of “mediational artifacts” and examined the nature of those practices that I had coded to examine how the teachers use mediational tools and signs in their teaching practices. In addition, I considered how the teachers could mediate the student learning through applying various methods, strategies, and materials. At first, I had little clear idea about how I identify the three kinds of mediation in these classrooms. However, after interviewing the students and observing the teaching and learning practices of teachers and those students, I came to explore how some teachers might take the simple things for granted in their teaching. At the final stage, I began to reconnect the various codes to one another to see what theories emerged.

My analysis of teaching practices of each classroom began with a literature review, students` ideas, class observation, and included my own expectations and language pedagogy. Admittedly, the latter is certainly not free from bias.

2.6 Findings

Regarding the material tools, Kozulin (1998) argues that tools “presuppose collective use, interpersonal communication, and symbolic representation” (p. 62). To make some examples of material kind of tools, we can refer to Vygotsky’s (1978) theory that people make tools from any teaching toolkit, including computers, laptops, a blackboard, handouts, and hardcopies of the materials to transform the thinking of each individual.

2.6.1 Material Tools

Blackboard/whiteboard as a zone for mediating students’ understanding

In Class A, there was a large two-sectioned blackboard in front of the students and teacher’s table on which there was a computer connected to the projector for screening. There was also a screen installed in front of blackboard that could be rolled up when nobody used it.

The blackboard as a material tool for the teacher was used to teach the new contents. Most of the time, Sima had to erase everything that she had written beforehand to start writing the new content that she wanted to teach. For her, the blackboard was a place for transferring the contents of the lesson into written words that students could see and read. Looking at the blackboard, everyone could determine what the subject was about. The advantage was that the students followed what Sima was teaching, saw the Persian scripts of the new words/expressions, or even grammar rules. Another usage of blackboard for this class was writing the homework that the students were responsible for doing.

In Class B, there were three two-section blackboards on three different walls of the classroom so there was a huge amount of space to write about different subjects. However, the chairs and table configuration made access to two of those blackboards relatively difficult for teacher. Some of the students were close enough to write something on those boards. Zohreh wrote the homework instructions for the students on the blackboard, such as Persian letters that students then had to write in their notebooks. She wrote four letters and asked them to write 4 or 5 lines of each. They were also required to show their homework to the teacher during the following class session. Afsaneh usually used the board while teaching the lesson. Her teaching method relied on students repeating words or sentences after her. Once a week, Afsaneh presented new content and then wanted the students to come to the board to write an example related to the grammar rules that they had learned. I had written as the field note that “Afsaneh asked Salman to come on the board to write the words she was reading to him. He could write two of the four words she dictated. Salman’s first language was Arabic, so he knew the Persian alphabet well enough because of similarity between these languages” (September 2016). I took note of his reaction when he could not write what his teacher asked. He appeared a little bit shy and sad. On the other hand, Katherine, a half heritage learner on her mother’s side was struggling

to learn Persian in order to be able to communicate with her mother`s relatives when they traveled to Iran. Katherine always compared her own progress with Arabic-speaking students, believing that her classmates whose first language was Arabic were the most competent in the class. As a result, she felt less confident and more worried about her learning. The following exchange occurred after Salman had faltered at the blackboard:

Katherine: I feel like everybody in class knows so much more than I do. You know what I mean?

Zahra: A few of them, yes, not all.

Katherine: Like, they always speak Arabic, so they can all write and read it.

Zahra: But you saw that Salman couldn't write whatever the teacher asked him.

Calling the students to the blackboard prompted some students to negatively compare themselves with others. Although Katherine thought of herself as a less knowledgeable person and questioned her self-confidence about the Persian alphabet, she could nonetheless observe that her assumption about her Arabic speaking classmates was not always accurate. The helpful use of the blackboard by Afsaneh gave the students a chance to evaluate their own knowledge rather than solely thinking of the other learners as more knowledgeable students. If students compare themselves to others, this might interrupt a focus on their own learning and development.

Observing the two classes, blackboard played an important role for teachers while teaching new lessons. They wrote the new lessons in Persian scripts and more importantly addressed the students` assignments and due dates; the latter created some confusion among the students.

Handout acts as a mediating artifact

Providing handouts or hard copies of assignments is one of the scaffolding strategies that teachers can take advantage of to help students stay on the right track. Teachers can thus mediate their students' understanding and prevent confusion. The third benefit of this material tool is that

students are guided through their learning process through step-by-step instruction. Students then have a better chance of understanding the assignment and how they can successfully do it and also not missing a due date for a particular assignment, for example.

Once I went to Class B, I realized the students were talking about their homework. Leyla said, “*what was the homework today? I don’t think I remember doing it... I get confused because I get two separate things... they are not connected.*” While Farhad was answering Leyla, he added, “*we don’t have unified homework ...*” It is a reality that students are so busy with their school schedule, so they might miss some due dates or their assignment if teachers do not provide them a unified homework through giving a hard copy. This was because Class B had one teacher and one teaching assistant who taught on different days of week. They did their best to help the students learn the new materials and do their homework. However, the students had problems tracking what each teacher wanted them to do. Since the students did not have a hardcopy of the assignments; they had an excuse to forget to do their homework or activity.

Conducting an interview with Katherine (HHLL) opened my eyes to something that teachers perhaps take for granted, that is, she thought students would have less difficulty if teachers provided a hard copy of the assignment that students were required to complete. Hard copies of the assignment instructions, supplemental handouts, or printed homework examples could have more effectively helped the students. Katherine struggled to learn Persian and she appreciated handouts. She indicated that she often got confused about the homework requirements and when they were due, as well. Showing me a paper, she said: “If they give us a package with the words and then they want us to trace them, that is much more helpful, I mean if we have more packets like this with like kind of test, that’s a good idea...”

In Class A, Sima gave her students typed or handwritten handouts related to the content she planned to cover in each class session or the assignments that she wanted students to

complete. Although she was not proficient in using Microsoft Office to word process, she made the handouts of information she had hand-written on a piece of paper. In addition, she brought supplemental materials like newspapers to give her students. Sima said “I give them some handouts, for example, a conversation from the newspaper and then we talk about them.” Most of the time, Sima brought some handouts to the class and gave them to her students. She also gave copies to me. The handouts that she prepared for the students were the materials such as a list of the Persian letters, grammar rules, and the stories that students had to read and respond to. Arman, FHLL, who was proficient in Persian, was in charge of helping Sima prepare the handout that she needed for her classes.

Sima used Arman`s computer knowledge to give the students a hard copy of the materials. Once, all class members participated in a Persian event created by Sima so she provided the text of conversation that students had to learn and practice in the class first and perform eventually in the event. These materials functioned as a scaffolding strategy because they provided students with both step-by-step instructions and comprehensible input. The latter is particularly important as students are learning a new language whose script, words, grammar, phonetics, and structure are new to them.

Technology as a mediational artifact for language learning

- Visual aids

Students raised in an age of technology have been deeply and regularly involved with different technological tools, such as entertainment, social network platforms, and general socializing with others for fun or educational reasons. Many schools and classrooms have been equipped with audio and visual equipment which teachers can use to help students understand new concepts and content. Technology can be used successfully in language classes and heritage

language classes are no exception. Indeed, connecting heritage language learners to technology they are already familiar with may increase their motivation to (re)learn a new language.

In Class A, Sima was not proficient in working with technology and preferred a more conventional approach. She explained: “I have kept the traditional style of my teaching.” There were a computer and projector in her class, but she never used them in her teaching practices. Because Sima wanted to integrate technology into her teaching practices, she typically assigned this task to Rayan, her assistant teacher. Rayan thus engaged students with technology, but only for one hour on Fridays. Sima divided the class into two groups she called *Razm* and *Bazm* -- based on their language proficiency. These terms translate respectively as “Combat and Banquet.” The learners who were not proficient in the Persian language were in the Bazm/Banquet group. More proficient learners were placed into the Razm/Combat group.

Rayan worked with both groups for one hour each. Because the Razm students were more advanced in Persian, they occasionally watched documentary films, movies or television series in the language. Then, they discussed what they had watched and wrote one or two paragraphs about what they had discussed. Upon completion of this hour, Razm students returned to their regular class with Sima. Then, the Bazm students followed for their hour in the technology room. Rayan led these students through a similar process, although the Persian language material she used was not as advanced. Nevertheless, the technological material helped to mediate their learning in a more meaningful way even though the use of technology was for one hour a week.

In Class B, there was one computer, a projector, and one Overhead Projector (OHP). Zohreh, Afsaneh’s teacher assistant, used the OHP to enlarge pages of a book that she wanted to teach so students could follow what she meant when she was reading the words or sentences. My field notes from the day I observed her classroom reported the following: “... the teacher started

talking about the nationality of a person. She put the students in four groups in order to work on the four sections of the book shown by OHP. They were to make some sentences about their friends, parents, or classmates through group work...”

Another use of technology was when Zohreh wanted particular content by using PowerPoint slides. She used the projector installed for that reason. I observed the full attention of the students when they were shown images, pictures, and movies. I followed their reaction and realized that students were more attentive when they had visual images. For example, Zohreh projected images of animals onto the screen as a way for students to learn their names in Persian. While she was talking about those animals, I observed that all of the students paid very close attention to what she was saying. In contrast, during a subsequent observation, I noticed Salman put his head on his backpack, and three students looking at their books rather than listening to Zohreh present a convention lesson without visual support. It was clear that in these classrooms, the teachers could mediate students` learning more effectively if they integrated more technology into their teaching practices.

Visual and audio aids

In Class A, Brian, a NHLL, exceptionally fluent in Persian, was in charge of helping Sima audio-record all of the class lectures. He also took pictures of the teacher`s notes/comments on the blackboard, as well as his own notes in his class notebook. Similar to the handouts and classroom equipment, Brian`s mobile camera and audio-recording application acted as mediational artifacts to assist the students who needed help. He uploaded his images and audio files into the class “drop box” so students who had missed the class could listen to the audio files and review the notes. This strategy of teacher is also helpful for students who have to review the contents. These visual and audio artifacts were helpful when the students wanted Sima to explain what she had covered in her class.

There was a policy, though, that the students who missed a class had to listen to the audio file and read the notes. Then, they had to make an appointment with teacher in order to ask any questions they had. The point here is that the teacher would have been far less effective if she had only relied on text-based material. The additional technological innovations helped her scaffold her students' learning with more contextualized and comprehensible materials.

Zohreh, Class B, played an audio file to which the students had to listen and then repeat what they had heard. Afterward, they had to translate the phrases they had heard and repeated when called on. The audio file thus acted as a meditating tool to provide input for the students to listen to the Persian conversation. Repeating the sentences was also a scaffolding strategy that Afsaneh and Zohreh in Class B had applied in their teaching practice. For many Persian language learners, repetition is highly valued because it provides them the chance of pronouncing sounds more easily. Then, teachers can work on the meaning and usage of those newly learned materials.

2.6.2 Symbolic Systems

Psychological tools are used to mediate between the human mind and the human world. Kozulin (1998) provides the example of people tying strings around a finger as way to remember important details. The string thus mediates between the human mind and the abstract world. Throughout history these mediational tools have changed. The result of the upgrade of some of these tools is known as "symbolic tools" and among them there are numbers, arithmetic systems, music, art, and language (Lantolf, 2000).

Language, whether first or second, represents a symbolic system of mediation. Teachers use language when transferring new content and lessons in classrooms. What a teacher needs to do is to make input comprehensible for the language learners through applying various scaffolding strategies. One of those strategies is to use the first language in teaching or to allow

the use of “translanguaging” which is the communicative use of two languages at once. Both strategies help make the content understandable and easier to learn.

Translanguaging is a term originally attributed to Cen Williams (cited in Baker, 2001) who used it to name a pedagogical practice in which the teacher switches the language mode in a bilingual classroom. For example, explaining a grammar rule or a new vocabulary is done in one language and then is clarified in another language. Students also use translanguaging when they speak in one language but access a second to make themselves understood. In the case of students observed in this study, they spoke half in Persian and half in English with the teacher while writing in the Persian language.

Translanguaging

In Class A and Class B alike, there were various language learners with different language proficiencies, depending on their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In Class A, there were language learners with varying proficiency in Persian. Nonetheless, Sima conducted her instruction in Persian. When she felt that her students had not gotten an important point that she had explained in Persian, she started talking in English to make it comprehensible for students. English was the first language of the majority of the learners, and thus functioned as important support for their acquisition of Persian. One of the activities in which translanguaging emerged was when the teacher called on one student to ask other questions they had practiced at home. When the teacher noticed that students seemed to have difficulty producing the questions, she expressed them in English and then asked students to provide answers in Persian.

In Class A, observing the students who were not proficient in Persian made me wonder how they were able to learn new content explained in Persian because they could barely speak in Persian and their listening skills were not as advanced as the native speakers of the Persian

language. Sima spoke Persian most of the time but she used translanguaging to explain her pedagogical goal a second time. This strategy helped the learners understand the content better.

In Class B, there were three students fluent in the Persian language and who had taken the Persian course to improve both their literacy and grade point average. One student understood his teacher`s Persian while the other eight students could not. As a consequence, Afsaneh spoke in English most of the time and used Persian to familiarize the learners` ears to sounds of the language. There was a huge amount of translation in this class. Afsaneh translated all words and sentences for her students and asked them to do this as well. I observed that she asked questions in Persian, but if students could not respond, she translated the questions into English in order to clarify. One of the practices that this teacher used was asking a question in Persian and if the student did not know the answer, she then translated that question into English. This practice provided effective scaffolding for the students and helped to clarify concepts.

Transliteration

The other symbolic system used in teaching a second or foreign language was using transliteration, a form of translanguaging in written form. Transliteration is the transcribing of one word or letter from one alphabetic system of writing into another, which in the case of Persian language is called Pinglish (Persian and English) or Finglish (Farsi and English). This language practice should normally be done at the beginning of language teaching when learners are just beginning to get a sense of how words are pronounced. Typically, transliteration is used to make reading or the pronunciation of a word or sentence more understandable. However, it might make students not learn to write and read in a language if they are provided with transliteration because they had got used to look at the transliteration when they were to read a sentence or word. That is, they relied on the signs besides the Persian sentences.

In Class A, throughout my 3-week observation, I rarely saw Sima include transliteration in her teaching except when she used English letters to describe Persian sounds. One of the reasons was that the students were in intermediate level, so they knew the Persian alphabets, to some extent. The other reason was Sima's technique that she preferred to implicate in her own classrooms. She said, "in all my beginner classes, I work on diacritics first so they (students) can read words without having transliteration for the words..."

In Class B, since not all students had knowledge on Persian alphabets and scripts, most of written assignments, practices, and even quizzes were provided in transliteration formats. I observed that since students were literate in the English alphabet, they had fewer problems with reading and pronouncing the transliteration. In their textbooks, there were two sentences in each line, one of which was a sentence/word in Persian script and the other in transliteration. When students were called on to read the sentence or word, they looked at the transliteration to get more help to read the Persian script. The other activities in which transliteration was used in Class B, were in quizzes where different statements like the following appeared:

- 1- Translate the sentences into Persian (use transliteration)
 - 2- Write the past tense of these sentences (use transliteration)
 - 3- Count the number from 50-60 and write them in transliteration
- (Teacher's artifact, October 2016)

Transliteration as a symbolic system of language can be considered a scaffolding technique, designed for beginners to make the early stages of second language learning understandable and manageable. But a question remains about whether teachers should put it to use when they have limited time in their classrooms. Do they know what students would like to experience when they come to learn a new language? What if after a long time, students feel they are not able to recognize the letters well and to read a word and sentence without problems? I

think listening to students` ideas might shed a light on this issue or whether students should read and write in transliteration rather than in script of the language they are learning.

I had a friendly talk with Iman, one of the students in Class B, who criticized the transliteration approach:

“These students have come to this class to learn a new script and language. So, it should be fun for them writing Persian script instead of writing again with English letters... you know learning to write in a new script is so interesting to them, though, difficult at the beginning...”

What he said about the fun aspect of writing in a different script made me recall when I wanted to learn the English language for the first time. I still remember how I enjoyed struggling to write the English letters. I needed to write the letters or words similar to the model provided for me. So, why should not we consider the fun aspect of second language learning and decrease the amount of transliteration in our teaching practice?

2.6.3 Human Mediation in the Zone of Proximal Development

In a language classroom, there are different participants such as teachers and language learners with different proficiency levels due to their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. So, the third type of mediation which helps language learners develop their language learning is done through dealing with human beings either as a teacher or as a more competent other. Hausfather (1996) argues that we can consider a “sociohistorical place” for students in school. A challenge for teachers has always been creating a social environment for language learners to “foster cognitive development for all students” (p. 1). A classroom is an environment in which the students and teachers interact about what is common between them -- (re)learning a language. Therefore, the main goal of teachers is creating an environment in which everyone has the

motivation to say something, write a text, and participate in a group working activity. Analyzing the data collected in two Persian classrooms, I found three areas of human-mediation:

Teacher`s created out of class zone: Interaction-based instruction

Either in class or out of class time, “instructional conversations” (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991) provide the chance of working over the question, problem, and activity that students are engaged in. The instructional conversation is a type of “implicit mediation” (Wertch, 2007). It thus can be a helpful strategy to help language learners interact with their teachers. Observing both teachers in this study, I found a big difference between the ways they interacted with their learners in different times of their teaching processes. Sima believes in working with students in class and also out of class time during her office hours. For example, as noted earlier, she created two groups called “Razm & Bazm.” One of the assignments that students in the Bazm group needed to do was to read a story she had assigned. The story selected for them was based on their language knowledge. After one week, Sima asked them to make an appointment to go to her office to talk about the story; students asked questions about what they had read.

Another example of an instructional conversation was working on students’ final project. They had chosen a topic about a historical place which had a value in Iran and had to do research about it first; then they had to give the class a 15-minute presentation of their findings. In the process of completing the project, they had to make an appointment with the teacher to show them their sources, what they had found, and what they had written as the first draft. Sima offered the advice to her students that “I should see what you have found, that you don’t know how to say in Persian, how to use proper words, what to use to express something. So, I urge you to make an appointment with me this week to go over your subjects and your findings”.

This created a zone when the teacher helped students learn about unknown words or grammar in a one-on-one meeting. Office hours or appointment times were critical for this

teacher because she could track student progress, low grades, question about the lesson, their final projects, and also about their weekly homework.

Atoofi (2013) argues that students learning a first or second language “react favorably to a stimulus such as a language learning opportunity when a positive emotional reaction is simultaneously offered to them by learning the new language” (p. 22). These extra hours that the teacher allocates for less competent students compensate if students do not internalize new content in class. So, they are being more assisted to learn the lessons. This kind of interaction helps the teacher build rapport between with her students. Atoofi (2013) discusses that the teacher plays an important role in student learning if she decreases their anxiety. “A concerned teacher is viewed more positively by students than a more knowledgeable one” (p. 23) when they receive support, care, and assistance from their teacher while struggling with writing a short paragraph or conjugating the verbs or some sentences using those new words. Sima believed that she and her students needed to see each other outside of the classroom, because in class, they could not feel as close to one another. She believed they could have a friendlier chat which could help students learn better. It might not be practical for many second language teachers, but they might get some an idea of how they can create a context for instructional conversations with their students.

Teacher`s written corrective feedback

Corrective Feedback on students’ writing provides a pedagogical benefit for language learners to become aware of writing challenges, to revise their errors, and to learn new points about vocabulary, grammar, and language structure. Sima took lots of time to give written feedback on her students’ work. She reported that she spent two days each week making comments and feedback:

If the students have lots of errors in their works, I correct all of them and then I mark with a “blue cross” which means they have to rewrite their paper, considering all my feedback and correction which I write by red pen. [Then they] give it back to me to get the grade for it... the students know well what each sign, like red color or blue cross, means because I have included those rules in their syllabus.

In Class B, because the students were at the intermediate level, they had more written activities and assignments so Sima found it more important to provide her feedback on every single homework assignment. She believed that her feedback helped students recognize their problems and correct them before handing in a revision.

In Class B, the language learners were in the beginning level of their Persian language learning, therefore, they had fewer written assignments. At the beginner level, Afsaneh believed in working on the oral skills of her students. She thought that her students should first learn the Persian sounds and some Persian structures by rote while they learned the alphabet at the same time. I wrote in my field note that Afsaneh came to class, opened the textbook to the page that students had worked on during the previous class, and asked them to repeat after her. Afsaneh was reviewing the contents that Zohreh had taught before. So, no written feedback on the students' assignments was required.

However, Zohreh could have provided more feedback on the students' homework. She check-marked their assignment and gave them back to the students. For example, Katherine was concerned about her grades. She appreciated what Zohreh was doing for her learning, but she stated, “Sometimes, it is hard for me to know if my homework is wrong. I learned better if she would fix it for me...”

The other concern of the students is the grade that they receive for each assignment. Farhad said, “my concern is how are they (teachers) supposed to give us a grade or letter grade

if all they do is sign our homework ... sometimes I feel that they don't accumulate the points so that's I feel like I'm not getting graded you know... students get more motivated when they get graded.” Therefore, teachers might need to take into consideration the importance of their feedback on the students` assignment, while keeping in mind that providing the students a number of letter grade plays a motivational role for them as well.

Teacher- created in class zones for collaborative learning

Sima assigned a final project for students to work on in pairs. Students either chose a Persian language poet or contemporary author to research and write about. She paired students by proficiency, for example, one was stronger in the language than the other. She explained:

When they are supposed to work on one subject, I group one weak and one strong student to work together. If they are to read a text, one of them does translating into English and the other one works with translation based on the skill they have... they also need to work on synonyms as well as to speak in Persian about one issue, however, they need to learn translating a text into English professionally... so they help each other in these a lot.

(Teacher interview, October 2016 - translated from Persian)

Zohreh also used interactive an activity in her classroom. She gave each group 10 minutes to share their names, ages, academic majors and the places where they lived, as an example. Students had to have a conversation about that prompt. Although they talked partly in English, it was a good interactive practice because the teacher went to each group to assess in Persian what they had used as their questions and answers. Although, none of the teachers knew anything about the zone of proximal development, they created that zone between their students who could have interaction with each other.

Zohreh asked the students to talk to a person sitting near them. Sometimes it happened that students were both in a similar proficiency level, so they concluded their discussion early.

Practicing the language in a group is a good way to learn; however, in the classes where there are students with different Persian language proficiency, it might be more effective teachers develop the activity for groups based on student proficiency. Then, the more competent students could help the others with less proficiency.

Grouping different students gives more competent students the opportunity to practice their Persian. Second, it creates feelings of satisfaction when they see that they are able to teach the other students with less knowledge about Persian. Third, they are more capable of assessing their own learning.

Student-created zone of proximal development/ student-student interaction

In Class A, a zone of proximal development arose between students of different levels. For instance, Leyla and Iman were more competent speakers than other students. Since the class was linguistically heterogeneous, there were some less proficient students who interacted with Leyla and Iman. This interaction created a ZPD in which the proficient students modeled for the less proficient. When the teacher asked Emily, a non-heritage language learner, to answer the question, "احمد انگلیسی حرف می زنه یا رضا؟" (does Ahmad speak English or Reza?), she was confused and struggled to answer, but Leyla whispered the answer to help Emily.

Another example of the creation of a ZPD by students was when Afsaneh was checking the students' homework. I observed Iman explaining to Farhad how to conjugate some verbs and complete an exercise to hand in. On the other side of the class, Leyla was explaining to Emily in English about their assignment. During these observations, because I was a native speaker myself, some students approached me as well. In this case, I functioned as a more competent person. Farhad, Katherine, Iman asked me their questions in different days when I was in their class. In effect, we co-created a kind of hierarchy of knowledge that students relied on to participate in academic tasks in the classroom.

In Class A, I rarely observed any cooperative activity created by students themselves except once when the teacher put them into groups or pairs. Instead, the teacher asked students to do their assignment at home, bring it to the class, and first check their answer with teacher while she was giving the right answers, and then hand it in to their teacher. The teacher did not make the students to check their answer with each other. She did not provide an opportunity for students to create a ZPD or the students did not find it helpful to ask each other about their class work because their teacher was always available for any questions that they might have both during the class time and out of class.

2.7 Discussion/Conclusion

The increasing linguistic and socio-political needs of the United States have made heritage language teaching one of the hottest trends in recent decades. Educators have put extensive effort into developing appropriate curricula to meet the needs of heritage language learners. Why should heritage languages be taught? Who cares about heritage language teaching and learning? What should be done to help English speaking individuals (re)learn their heritage language or even learn the language as a foreign one? These are the questions that heritage language educators and teachers often pose.

A great concern of Iranian immigrants has been how to maintain their ethnic language, Persian, which is also a heritage language, less-commonly taught language, or critical language. There are a variety of language learners of Persian, but their desire to learn the language can bring them together into Persian language programs. Due to diversity in the Persian language classrooms and lack of budget, most Persian language classrooms are multilevel because of the different linguistic and cultural proficiency levels of the language learners.

Heritage languages are taught most often as a second or foreign language whose learners have their own motivations. Persian is one of the critical languages being learned by non-heritage

language learners who have politically-based, occupational, and other reasons for leaning this language.

Therefore, doing this study was a response to the need for research on Persian language methodologies to explore how Persian language teachers deal with different learners and how they are able to make use of strategies and techniques to meet the needs of all language learners. The importance of this study lies in this fact that most Persian language classrooms are multilevel, the multiplicity in these settings could be considered more of a resource for learning than a deficit. Suggestions offered will be helpful for educators and teachers who are interested in improving their teaching practices.

Depending on the teaching methodologies of teachers, material tools can be anything that mediates the learning and development of the students, such as textbooks, story books, newspapers, charts, tables, pens, pencils, markers, chalk, blackboard/whiteboard, computers, projectors, voice recorders, pictures, movies and anything that can provide more guidance, and instruction for the students. While analyzing the students` interviews and my field notes, I found three kinds of ‘materials tools’ such as blackboard, handout/hardcopy, and technological aids more effective than the others.

Although taken for granted, in classrooms, teachers use blackboard to create a zone/space in order to teach the new content and lesson. Teacher can write the new letters, words, grammar rules, expression, and even the cultural points on blackboard so students have the chance of reading them out and asking questions if they do not understand them. The other benefit is that the new information and contents are visualized from teacher`s thought to the written form on the blackboard so the students do not miss the new points, as well. At the early stage of second language learning, seeing the actual words and scripts helps the language learners understand the new things better. The third point of the blackboard use is that teachers create an opportunity to

review the content which they have taught before because they can point to the new words, grammar or anything written on the board through asking the students. Another advantage of using the blackboard is grabbing the students` attention. Teachers can use the blackboard to work on an activity/assignment and direct the students` attention to that specific spot. Last but not least, the blackboard is an assessment tool. Calling the students to the board to write a word or a sentence has several outcomes. The blackboard alerts students that they need to be attentive to the activity. Second, the public display of knowledge by some classmates makes others pay more attention because they themselves might be called upon to do the same thing. Therefore, the blackboard is a place which students can present their knowledge or work out a problem.

Regarding the role of handouts and hard copies of the homework /assignment, teachers can mediate their students` understanding and prevent confusion. The students have a better chance of understanding the assignment and not missing the due date because teachers write the instructions in both the handout and on the blackboard. The third benefit of this material tool, the handout, is that students are guided through their learning process through step-by-step instruction. One of the strategies of scaffolding instruction is providing students with simplified materials, understandable instruction, and a sequential step-by-step manner of doing an activity and assignment in which the use of tools leads to learning of the students.

For the students who are at the beginning level of learning new letters of a new script, I argue the handouts act as a map by which students are guided through new Persian language exercises. Figure “I” indicates the new letters to be learned (in grayscale or another color). The letters are in a different color so that students know where to start and what to trace. The arrows indicate which letter comes first and in which direction (from right to left).

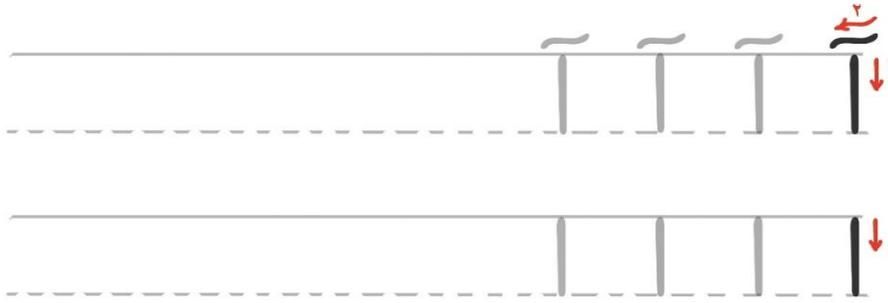


Figure I: Persian Language Writing Tool

The teacher goes through the handout with the students and her instruction, together with the writing tool, provides a kind of zone of proximal development to help students practice Persian letters at this point with assistance. With practice, students will be able to produce the letter independently.

The third element of material tools is the use of technology which plays an important role in today`s classrooms in schools or universities. Students are born in the age of technology; technological tools can increase students` learning, development, and acquisition. Snow (2001) points to the use of visual materials which go from gestures, body language, and pantomimes to pictures, slides, and videos. She argues that visual aids make the activities motivating and meaningful for the students.

In second language classrooms throughout the world at all different levels, technology is also a very much part of language learning. Technological tools such as word processor, presentation program, and graphics editing program, picture, video, web programs and platforms, voice recorder, digital video camera are some applications of technology which can help teachers create a more understandable presentation for lesson delivery, materials, and activities as well as deepen students` learning by supporting instructional objectives. In Class A, Sima received some help from her teaching assistant, Rayan, to include the technological section to her teaching

method. The point was that she had created a zone within which a more competent person, Rayan, helped her deal with the technological need of her students through using documentary movies, as an example. Therefore, using authentic videos provides linguistic and also cultural input for the language learners. There was another use of technology in Class A. Sima also had another student of hers, Brian, to voice record the class sessions, take pictures of the notes, and upload them on their class page so everyone had access to those files. Audio files of the teacher`s talk acted as the source of the input for the learners who are not generally in exposure of this language in their real life. I argue that Sima could have assigned an activity for the students related to the saved audio files or pictorial notes because when they had to listen to or see the files; they became involved with the Persian language.

Creating pair-work between Sima and Rayan, Arman, and also with Brian was a great example of having a cooperative teaching method for which she used other students` expertise to provide technology-based input for the class. In Class B, the teaching methodology of Zohreh included more technological aids into her teaching. She used audio texts, PowerPoint, projector and computer to present a new subject which was useful in making the new content more interesting, contextualized, and comprehensible. Visual aids increase the students` attention on the subject being taught, as well. The teachers can freeze and replay a section of an audio text, a scene of a video or an image to explain and review the subject matter and also to ask the students for increasing their understanding and learning.

Vygotsky (1978) believed that psychological tools helped humans to extend their mental abilities. In a second language classroom, these tools are the symbolic system that teachers and students use to make learning and development happen. Symbolic system in a second language classroom includes signs, models, pictures, and above all language. In these two classrooms that I observed, symbolic system takes the shape of translanguaging and transliteration to help the

teachers communicate with their students and clarify the new points that students need to internalize. Both Persian language teachers and students use the symbolic tool of translanguaging to make their ideas comprehensible even when their output is presented in a different language. Sima's instruction language was in Persian; however, she explained the new content in English to make sure that her students understood. The students in her class could ask questions in English but the preferred language of Sima was Persian.

The instructional language of Afsaneh was English. Sometimes, she translated what she had taught her students into Persian, a strategy which was helpful for those language learners not understanding the Persian language; however, a problem might emerge which is not providing enough input in Persian for the students who need to hear more of that language. Although we could interpret translanguaging as a scaffolding strategy, it is not always an effective pedagogy in a second/foreign language classroom because students tend to tune out the weaker language while waiting for the stronger one. This is concurrent translation and in bilingual classrooms is discouraged. Vygotsky argued about using the first language as symbolic tool while learning a second language because he thought that learning a second language has its foundation in the knowledge of first language. I argue that using translanguaging in a second language classroom mediates learners to acquire the semantic aspects of a word, concept or rule if teachers take advantage of students' first language to master them in their second language. However, the amount of their first language which was English in the Persian language classrooms should be limited to the times when students have problems understanding the points or new concepts.

One of the features of the Persian script is three short vowels and diacritics which are not written and not visible in a word, but they have to be pronounced. At the early stage of schooling in Persian textbooks, authors often include the short vowels and diacritics which act as a mediating tool for them to read easily. However, after students become familiar with the sound

and shape of the words, they learn how to read/pronounce the words even if there is no short vowel or diacritics. In the Persian classes where there is considerable use of transliteration, students learn first how to read the Persian word using English letters. Teachers can use transliteration to mediate students' learning of the relationship between sounds and letters. It is useful to apply transliteration for a short time until students learn the sound of letters. There is also another scaffolding strategy for teaching the Persian language at the beginning level which is including short vowel and diacritics on the Persian words.

The use of transliteration for a long time makes the students rely on this technique more than it is needed. That is, they do not learn the letters, scripts, and alphabets in a specific amount of time. The other point of using transliteration for a longer time is that students miss the newness and the fun part of learning a new language -- trying out the new scripts. I believe that teachers can make use of the Persian script to motivate students to learn reading and writing instead of writing the Persian sounds using English letters.

The term zone of proximal development (ZPD), is widely used in Vygotsky's writing. Nicolai Veraksa (1999) defines the ZPD as "the place where the child and adult meet." In any classroom, teachers play an important role in developing students' abilities through guiding students how to perform a task, activity, or action which is beyond their capacity. The distance between what the students can do with assistance and what they can do individually without any helps is defined the zone of proximal development. What is important in the zone of proximal development is the role of a more knowledgeable person who can be both teacher and student in a second language classroom. I argue that this type of mediation is intertwined with two tenets of the ZPD and interaction.

The most helpful strategy to teach in a multilevel classroom is the creation of a zone which helps students interact and collaborate in groups. In the metaphorical zone, teachers can

assign 'above-level' more capable students to help others in need. Roberts (2007) called this strategy "crossed-ability." Student grouping can take a variety of different forms, for example, pair-work, group-work, teamwork, and whole class work, each configuration has its advantages.

To have more efficient teaching, different strategies should be developed for students with different proficiency levels. What Roberts (2007) has mentioned about ESL teachers could be applicable for Persian language teachers who teach the language as a second/foreign language. She believes that second language teachers are responsible for delivering instruction as well as organizing the activities that students should do in groups, pairs, and in larger teams. "In the multilevel classroom, this process is especially critical for the below-level and above-level students" (p. 4).

Teachers in a multilevel classroom should start with an activity designed for the whole class at different proficiency levels in pedagogical activities. Since most second/foreign language lessons incorporate vocabulary and alphabet practice, it is better to start with pictures, animations, or movies to help the students follow the lesson. Roberts (2007) believes that "the natural process of previewing, presenting, and practicing the vocabulary lends itself perfectly to whole-class, multilevel instruction" (p. 6).

Language development can occur when learners with different linguistic and cultural knowledge make significant contributions to the learning of others through meaning-making of concepts and content in the new language both for themselves and their peers. In expanding strategies done in a multilevel Persian classroom, creating the zone of proximal development is helpful. This mediational space can make a significant contribution to learning. This linguistic and cultural collaboration creates motivation among Persian language learners to repeat what they are in the process of learning and to help other learners to pursue a common goal in classroom activities.

Teachers can create the metaphorical zones of proximal development to have “instructional conversations” (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991) which motivate the learners to work on their project, question, and activity, and mediated their learning. The other benefit of this strategy is keeping the students engaged outside the classroom hours. It is also useful teachers put students in the groups based on their language proficiency instead of asking them to work with anyone sitting beside them. Both students could be in the same level, which does not lead to any corrective cooperation, that is, they are not given an opportunity to learn from each other because they are at the same level. I believe that if teachers put heterogenous students in a group, they create the required zone for their interaction and cooperation. Even if the second language teachers do not know about the concept of zone of proximal development, developing an interactive activity among students will lead them to create the zone in which learning occurs. Developing interaction-based instruction is the application of the concept of ZPD by Vygotsky for the language development of learners.

Another type of human mediation done by teachers is the developing the materials with which students can have interaction. Students expect to have more handouts and hard copies of the assignment and activities to learn better. When the students work on their paper assignment or handouts, they have the chance of interacting with the materials more effectively. Although, in the age of technology, most students have got used to working on digital form of the materials, in a second language classroom, they should practice writing on a piece of paper.

Teachers might take the office hours for granted; however, that time has a very important place in teachers` teaching method. I found the applications of mediational tools and signs through my observations of interaction, in particular, and through the assistance of a more capable person within a zone of proximal development who uses material tools (Kozulin, 1990, 2003).

According to Vygotsky, language learning occurs first on a social plane in the zone of proximal development (ZPD) which is “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). That is, having interaction between students and teachers, as the more competent persons, provides assistance for students for doing an activity in order to become proficient to do the task on their own independently. Teachers can benefit from this theory to help the learners learn the new contents and concepts.

The students’ cooperation in Class B in a zone that they created was an example of a community of practice. Wenger (2006) writes that communities of practice “are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (p. 1). Related to what Wenger argues, the students of Class B engaged in activities together, helping each other and sharing information. In second language classroom, the language learners can practice a variety of activities such as problem-solving and seeking experience from others according to Wenger (2006).

In Persian language classrooms, the language learners with high Persian language proficiency may become legitimate and more competent members of their classrooms and help the students who need their help. The more knowledgeable students act as mediators in their classroom for less knowledgeable but developing students. This peer interaction leads to their better learning and less stress and confusion among the students who are learning a new language.

To apply “funds of knowledge” (Moll et al, 1992) for learning a new language, language teachers can mediate the new concepts through using learners’ background knowledge in the process of their learning. Agar (1994) believes that bringing history and culture to the classroom can be done by doing activities through which learners bring their cultural and social knowledge

so teachers can use them as a part of materials and activities for making the contents of second language comprehensible. In other words, they make sense of new words and concepts by understanding them in context.

Atoofi (2013) did research in the field of applied linguistics through which he demonstrated how affection has a great role in creating a good teaching-learning environment as well as emotion has effect on socialization of the heritage language learners. Teachers need to integrate the cognitive and affective domains of the individual; while educating them that is possible through making connection between education and personal experience.

Using culturally mediated activities in the classroom might be bothersome for teachers so they prefer to follow an assigned textbook which has little room to maneuver in trying out new methods of instruction such as using funds of knowledge in their methodology. However, teachers who do not take outside and community resources for granted “give more meaning to the learning experiences of the students” (Moll & Greenberg, 1990: 336). In a heritage language classroom where there are different types of students, connecting students` home with classroom scaffolds students to learn more and be motivated in their learning journey because they are able to internalize the materials, which is the focus of the next article.

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Article TWO: Funds of Knowledge as a Scaffolding Pedagogical Strategy: How Teachers and Learners Bring their Funds of Knowledge into the Classroom

3.1 Abstract

Despite frequent references to the field of Persian language education, it is only in the past decade that scholars have conducted empirical research on Persian language teaching. Like teachers of other foreign language, Persian language teachers base their teaching methodologies on their own expertise, practical experiences, and students` needs. They not only teach about the language, they also portray the social, cultural, and educational contexts in which they were born, grew up, and were educated. This article describes the teaching of Persian as a heritage language by three Persian language teachers. First, I portray the particular language teaching methodologies each teacher applies in her classroom. Second, I discuss the ways that teachers bring various forms of funds of knowledge (Moll et.al. 1992) into their teaching journey. I also define if and how the funds of knowledge of Persian language teachers are integrated into their teaching activities and materials in their classrooms at beginning level. Lastly, I narrate how learners are assisted through their cultural backgrounds/funds of knowledge while learning Persian.

Keywords: sociocultural theory, funds of knowledge, second language teaching methodologies, heritage language teachers, heritage language learners, scaffolding strategies, contextualization.

3.2 Introduction

A heritage language refers to any language which is spoken at home by the family and community members and with which individuals have a personal and historical connection (Valdés, 2001). Fishman categorizes heritage languages specifically into Indigenous, colonial, and immigrant groups. For example, Indigenous languages were or are still spoken by the people native to the Americas, colonial languages represent the languages of some European groups that first colonized parts of the United States, and immigrant languages were and are spoken by immigrants arriving in the United States (Fishman, 2001). In short, in the United States, heritage languages refer to all languages other than English.

Educators, teachers, and speakers of heritage languages have long made reference to language and culture as important for language education. Heritage language teaching programs typically are based on the number of potential language learners with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and their various motivations and needs. Some heritage language learners are able to communicate verbally in their home language but wish to improve their oral proficiency or to become literate in their ethnic language. Heritage language learners have been defined as students who are “raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speak or merely understand the heritage language, and who are to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language” (Valdés, 2000, 1 in Polinsky & Kagan, 2007).

Persian, also known as Farsi, is the heritage language of Iranians who immigrated to the U.S. It is 18th most frequently language spoken in the United States (American Community Survey, 2016)¹⁴. Persian, or Farsi, is one of the Southwestern Iranian languages spoken in Iran, Afghanistan (Dari) and Tajikistan (Tajiki). The name ‘Persian’ is used as an umbrella term for these related languages, used in everyday interaction in an English context. Farsi, on the other

¹⁴ <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>

hand, typically describes the specialized academic discourse of the variant spoken in Iran. Persian is also called a less commonly taught language. That, it is not included in “world language” programs in either public or private schools. As a consequence, first and second-generation Iranian children in the United States (re)learn Persian as a heritage language/second language, not in school settings, but most likely through their family, on the weekends, after school, or at universities.

The learners of Persian vary linguistically, culturally and ethnically. They may begin their acquisition of Persian with differing amounts of exposure to the language because of their parents, mother or father, or opportunities to participate in the language, culture, and traditions of their families and communities. This study considers three categories of heritage learners based on their parents’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The first two categories are “full-heritage” language learners (FHLL) and “half-heritage” Language Learners (HHLL). The third group of learners are what I have characterized as “non-heritage” language learners. While these labels do not describe the complete spectrum of possible learners of Persian in every classroom, they demographically, culturally and linguistically describe the students in the language classrooms I observed for this study.

FHLLs are the children of Iranian parents who either immigrated or currently work in the United States. These learners tend to be bilingual in English and Persian, though not always. These students have some cultural knowledge about Iran but may be motivated to improve their spoken or written abilities in the language.” Half-heritage” language learners (HHLL) are children from ethnically or linguistically mixed families in which only one parent speaks Persian. This type of learner typically possesses some cultural or linguistic knowledge of Iran and Persian. Finally, “non-heritage” language learners (NHLL) have non-English language parents but they have their motivation to start learning this language as a foreign language. In the classrooms I

observed, Persian was taught both as a heritage or second language, or as a foreign language. As a result, teachers of Persian to diverse language learners must design their pedagogical methods to serve the needs of each student.

Valdés (2005) explored plausible methods for heritage language instruction through second language acquisition theories. She argues for a “reconceptualization of the field of second language acquisition” in which language teachers in different language education contexts structured their methods for beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of language proficiency (p, 411). Connecting theories of SLA with heritage language learning, teachers develop effective methodologies which I will take up later.

The real challenge in designing instruction is to plan for a way to meet the needs, levels, and challenges of all students in heritage classrooms. Although the developed instruction for heritage language does not follow a “one size fits all” rule, “the stronger language instruction becomes, the better teachers meet HL learners’ needs” (Pérez, 2010, p, 76).

The foundation of this study is the “funds of knowledge” approach to teaching and learning which Moll and his colleagues describe as “the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (1992, p. 133). Moll et al proposed the approach of “funds of knowledge” in which teachers focus on the knowledge that children learn at home and in their community. Funds of knowledge of students is a rich resource for teachers. Teachers can use the knowledge of what language learners draw on to scaffold home knowledge and the new content introduced in their classrooms.

Megerdooian (2002) writes about an approach she has developed with positive effects for the linguistic instruction of Persian heritage language speakers. She proposed a novel approach to heritage language instruction that “takes advantage of the existing knowledge and

linguistic intuition of learners to recognize language patterns and analytically discover the underlying principles” (p. 1). Similar to funds of knowledge, Mergerdoomian’s approach encourages teachers to acknowledge and use the background knowledge of the students in their classes.

This article explores whether Persian language teachers incorporated a funds of knowledge approach in three language classrooms. Then I narrate my observation of different faces of funds of knowledge that the teachers and language learners bring to the classrooms to illustrate its applicability to Persian language education. I demonstrate how funds of knowledge stretch beyond the Persian language classroom and structural aspects of language. I maintain that heritage language learners develop their language learning through their funds of knowledge and being engaged in culturally and socially based activities.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

With regard to globalization across the world, with increasing numbers of immigrants moving between borders and countries, and the importance of bilingualism among families, people are more interested in learning a new language either as a second or foreign language. The necessity of learning a new language has led to the development of new methods by integrating already existing methods of second/foreign language teaching. This development has come to utilizing various approaches, each of which is underlined by a language learning theory and also based on the learner’s needs. According to Richards & Rodgers (1986), approach, design, and procedure are included within the overall concept of method, “an umbrella term for the specification and interrelation of theory and practice” (p. 16). Language teaching methods can be defined as a combination of a teacher’s instructional practices and the learner’s learning activities deployed within the language acquisition setting. Particular teaching methods used by language instructors, then, are the general principles, pedagogies and management strategies used

for classroom instruction. The methods selected by language teachers depend on their educational philosophies, classroom demographics, subject area, and school mission statements (Thamarana, 2015).

The grammar translation method (GTM), predominant from 1840-1940, was the first foreign language teaching method (Wright, 2010). It was used for teaching the structural aspects of language such as grammar, writing, reading, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Often the goal was to train students to translate texts into English, particularly from classical languages like Latin and Greek. This language teaching methodology was mainly “structure drill-based” (Lin, 2010). In the GTM, teachers used some invented sentences instead of real sentences. Classes were usually conducted in the first language and students learned grammar rules through rote memorization and mechanical drills, such as substituting, writing and answering sentences, or filling in a word gap. These classrooms were overwhelmingly teacher-centered, in which teachers positioned themselves as sole-speaker and all-knower.

While this method helped language learners recognize correct grammar, vocabulary, and comprehend written texts, learners rarely became competent in using the language in a real context. They sat passively and waited for teachers to tell them what to do and what to say. Students also learned about assignments and due dates. When used to teach contemporary languages, the grammar translation method failed to provide students with verbal opportunities to apply their newly learned knowledge about the language outside of the classroom.

The audio-lingual method (ALM) was used well into the 1980s to teach language learners about the linguistic structure of their second language (Wright, 2010). Language instruction was in the target language. The goal of this method is providing fluency in everyday conversation and was also characterized by a “drill and kill” approach, with students repeating after the teacher while they did not have “systematic practice to fulfill specific functions in the learning process”

(DeKeyser, 2010, p:159). Nevertheless, learners were unable to independently produce fluent conversation in the second or foreign language after years of study. The language learning theory underlying this method was behaviorism. In the audiolingual language classroom, teachers prioritized the acquisition of native-like pronunciation and intonation through memorization and repetition of structural drills. In contrast to the grammar translation method, audiolingual methods placed less emphasis on grammar rules. Learners practiced language skills through rote learning, rather than expressing their ideas. Indeed, students had difficulty transferring acquired patterns to real communication. Many language learners and teachers found themselves unable to move from their memorized structures and sentences to create their own discourse based on real-life needs.

Audiolingual language teaching methods, as well as the behaviorist view supporting it, was challenged in the 1970s by linguist Noam Chomsky (Wright, 2010). In his book, *Syntactic Structures* (1957), Chomsky argued that language learning involves creative processes and that all languages were biological and rule-governed. Chomsky believed that language acquisition was innate, and that, “given exposure to a specific language, children will naturally create the specific rules of that language for themselves. Learning is thus seen as a process of discovery determined by internal processes rather than external influences” (Willis 2004, pp. 4–5). Tracy Terrell (1977) in collaboration with Stephen Krashen developed the “natural approach,” which emphasized the need for teachers to use comprehensible input in the classroom so that students could acquire a second language and its structures naturally.

The communicative language teaching (CLT) method is a newer approach in second language teaching compared to either grammar translation or audiolingual methods. CLT focuses on the interaction between learners and teachers, and learners and their peers (Richards, 2006). Learners benefit more from communicating with second language speakers than from

recognizing grammar rules and having a passive knowledge of vocabulary. The communicative method encourages students to practice the second or foreign language using authentic subjects through interactive activities. Students learn in ways that are meaningful to them rather than based on when instructors decide what students should learn (Correa, 2011). Language learners are prompted to talk or write about their lives using the words and structures they have learned. Therefore, they have more room to present their own voices, identities, interests, concerns, and challenges in their written or spoken language.

The other common language methodology inspired by the communicative approach is the task-based method in which learners are assigned a meaningful task or activity. To engage in the task, learners need to interact with their teacher, other people, or with their classmates. Nunan (2004) gives an example of a task-based activity:

A piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, middle and an end (p. 4).

The task-based method asks learners to undertake an activity from the very first day to the last so that they consciously or unconsciously engage with language in similar projects throughout the class. The advantage of the task-based method is that students have the opportunity to develop their cognitive language skills such as presenting, discussing, convincing, or writing (Nunan, 2004). Another strength of this method is the context that teachers create by doing a task. Learning in a real context is more meaningful than working with words, sentences, and grammar isolated from real situations in which they are used.

The communicative approach has some common ground with sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which sees learning as a social and dynamic process. According to sociocultural theory, “learners construct” their own knowledge through action and reflection (Correa, 2011, p, 311). Thus, knowledge is socially and actively constructed from experiences and not from the mere transmission of information from instructor to student. As noted earlier, because Moll and his colleagues were inspired by the theoretical work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, they conceptualized the approach called “funds of knowledge.”

3.4 Funds of Knowledge

The concept of “funds of knowledge” is defined by Luis Moll, Cathy Amanti, Deborah Neff, and Norma González (1992) as the knowledge, skills, and experiences that individuals have acquired through social, cultural, and historical interactions in their communities, families, and lives. Based on this approach, students’ funds of knowledge help them understand and internalize the words and concepts covered in the classroom. Teaching discrete aspects of a new language will not help learners learn content in such a way that they can apply them in their lives unless those aspects are meditated through various strategies.

González & Moll (2002) believe in helping students learn meaningfully through making a connection between the new taught subjects with their own life, rather than learning isolated ones. Students’ assets that they bring to the classroom should be recognized and nurtured. Coltran (2003) states that teachers should help students become aware of their cultural backgrounds. Mokhtari (2007) conducted a research in three U.S. universities about the individual learning styles and strategies of Persian language learners; this contrasts with the funds of knowledge framework that language learning is based on social relationships and interactive activities. If students have interactive activities while learning new content, the structures of the language are more likely to stick. To facilitate this outcome, the teacher needs to make her

teaching as understandable and comprehensible as possible through activity, dialogue and interaction.

Therefore, learners internalize the content that is comprehensible to them. One of the ways to make content comprehensible is contextualizing lessons taught in each class. Contextualizing the content and new information assists and also motivates the students toward learning the class material (Perin, 2011).

Taylor & Mulhall (1997) define contextualization as using the materials and content which are related to the knowledge, culture, and the environments of the learners. The funds of knowledge approach is a tool through which teachers create the context for teaching. When students find the materials, lessons, and their projects related to their background and culture, they have a better understanding of the subjects. Agar (1994) maintains that bringing students' history and culture into the classroom can be achieved by doing activities that incorporate student knowledge. In this way, teachers can use these activities as a part of materials and activities for making the content comprehensible.

Atoofi (2013) demonstrated in the field of applied linguistics how affection has a useful role in creating a good teaching-learning environment. Similarly, emotion has an effect on the interaction of heritage language learners. Teachers need to integrate individuals' cognitive and affective domains while educating them, possible by making a connection between education and personal experience.

Using 'culturally mediated activities' in a classroom might be bothersome for some teachers so they prefer to follow an assigned textbook which has little room to maneuver in trying out new methods of instruction such as using funds of knowledge in their methodology. However, teachers who do not take outside and community resources for granted "give more meaning to the learning experiences of the students" (Moll & Greenberg, 1990, 336). In a heritage language

classroom where there are different students, connecting students' homes with classroom subjects scaffolds students to learn more and be motivated in their learning journey because they are able to deeply understand the materials.

So far, we have discussed different language teaching methodologies. The increase in the number and diversity of second language learners suggests that there is no single and effective method of teaching and learning a second language. Instead, teachers have relied on developing an eclectic approach which was born out of the idea that each method has strengths and weaknesses and the expectation and needs of the language learners have changed. Brown (2002) believes that an eclectic approach provides the solution to the problems that language teachers may face during their teaching. This approach allows second language teachers to select the strategy, activity, and material which work within their educational context. That is, teachers feel more freedom to rely on different methodologies rather than being limited by a single one.

3.5 Methodology

I started my research recalling my own pain about the future and status of my heritage language. I did not want the people and settings to be reduced to variables, but instead viewed as a whole (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Qualitative research methods involved me to a much closer degree with my participants in natural settings and enabled me to explore how the participants made sense of their lives (Maxwell, 2005). As a researcher who used qualitative methods, I strived to seek a deeper truth and to study things in their natural setting to make sense of, or interpret, events in terms of the meanings people brought to me.

I draw on ethnographic methods that are close to the ways of my life in the classrooms. Hymes (1996) supports the ethnographic eye by stating that ethnography is a qualitative research method in which the researcher has to take a cultural lens to study people within their communities (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). My first inspiration to achieve a thorough

understanding of ethnography was Heath (1983), whose research in two American cities had taken 10 years during which she lived with the residents for a long time while she was observing their language and learning practices.

This study constitutes a mini-ethnography which involved the exploration of three Persian language classroom communities. My role in this study is an observer who observed, tracked, understood, and interviewed the Persian language teachers and learners.

My on-the-ground observations helped me observe teachers' materials, strategies, activities, and eventually to become acquainted with their teaching philosophies, the funds of knowledge the three focal teachers brought into their classrooms, and how they integrated these funds, and finally, how the students used their funds of knowledge in their learning journey. It is not the intention of this study to criticize or judge these language teachers for their activities and actions or to assert that their particular teaching methods should be modified.

3.5.1 Research Participants

The data collection of this qualitative mini ethnographic research is a part of an inquiry around three classrooms located in three universities in the U.S. "Class A" was beginning Persian offered by the Middle Eastern Studies department of Coastal University in the US. Sima (a pseudonym), Class A's teacher, held a Ph.D. in Middle Eastern Studies and had been teaching the Persian language for 28 years. She had cooperated with other Persian teachers in developing textbooks for Persian language learners. She worked mainly on reading and writing, but occasionally tried to teach her students how to listen and speak Persian. In this class, there were 12 students with Persian linguistic and cultural backgrounds; these students were learning Persian as a heritage language. Six language learners (FHLL) demonstrated some level of proficiency in Persian because they had been raised by two Persian-speaking parents. Four Half Heritage language learners had gained a low level of cultural and linguistic knowledge through limited

exposure to Persian because one of their parents was a Persian language speaker. The other two students (NHLL) had no prior connection with the Persian language and culture.

Class B was a beginning Persian language classroom offered by Near Eastern Languages and Cultures department in Mountain University in the U.S. Class B's teacher, Afsaneh, had received her Ph.D. in Middle Eastern Studies. Her expertise was in comparative literature and she had some experiences in developing textbooks for Persian language teaching. She has taught the Persian language for over 25 years. Afsaneh had a teaching assistant, Zohreh, who assisted in the class for two days a week. There were 13 students in this classroom. Four of those students had been raised in a household where Persian was spoken, and three of them were competent in communicating in the Persian language. The fourth understood the language but was unable to speak in Persian. Two additional students had one Persian-speaking parent. Of these two, the one whose mother was Persian was more familiar with his heritage culture, whereas the other student was not. The other seven students in the classroom were Egyptian, American, and Mexican who had taken the course to learn to communicate both in written form and orally.

The third setting, Class C, was a second beginning Persian language classroom offered in Lowlands University in the U.S. Class C's teacher, Sepideh, was a Ph.D. candidate in comparative literature in Persian and Italian language. She had been teaching the Persian language for more than 6 years. In her classroom, there were 12 students with various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. One of them had Iranian heritage but was unable to communicate in Persian. Four students had one Iranian parent but were unable to use their heritage language, though they were to some extent culturally competent. The remaining seven students, from Korea and the United States, had no linguistic or cultural knowledge about Iran or the Persian language.

A major source of data in this study comes from observing the teaching practices of these three teachers, who applied different strategies, activities, and materials in their classes. Another

data source is the field notes I took about what I observed five language learners did during their learning and also what they mentioned in their interviews. At the beginning of my data collection, I observed each teacher and how the students' funds of knowledge helped them learn Persian. However, I came to realize the importance of teacher's funds of knowledge as a significant factor in their teaching methodology.

3.5.2 Data Collection and Data Analysis

In each university, I spent around three weeks. Primary data sources included field notes, audio and video-recorded files, and teachers' and learners' artifacts. Formal and informal interviews with teachers were conducted outside of classroom time. In addition, I met with my focal teachers to debrief and clarify questions after each class. I interviewed five language learners in three classrooms in a location we had jointly selected. Students arranged their best time and date through a doodle poll which I had sent them via email. I audio/video recorded the open-ended responses of students and then transcribed them with the software program called Transcribe Me. Then, I read all the transcriptions carefully and analyzed qualitatively.

Data collection focused on teachers, learners, and their teaching and learning practices, materials, and activities. I used grounded theory to which I applied constant comparison (Strauss, 1987) of the pedagogical practices of teachers and learners. Grounded theory is the generation of theory from data; I used Maxwell's definition (2005) of that as not referring to any particular level of theory, but to theory that is inductively developed during a study and is in constant interaction with the data. Flick (2006) argues that "theories should not be applied to the subject being studied but are 'discovered' and formulated in working with the field and the empirical data to be found in it" (p. 98).

The main aim of this ethnographic research is developing grounded theory through the connection of data *interpretation* and the process taken in data analysis such as coding, sorting,

and organizing the data to reach to the thematic analysis. To accomplish the data analysis, I searched for categories connected to the research questions. I assigned codes such as “teaching materials”, “teaching strategies”, “classroom activities”, “teachers` educational background”, “teachers` interest”, “students` linguistic and cultural backgrounds”, “students` parents”, and “students` engagement”. As a result of the initial coding process, I conducted a secondary coding of the data that I labeled “second language teaching methods”, “teachers` funds of knowledge” and “learners` funds of knowledge” which were found in some subcategories that I made out of my data.

I was trying to assign these codes as I engaged in coding in which I explored different teaching and learning practices. They had been placed with the label of “funds of knowledge.” I examined the nature of those practices that I had coded to examine how teachers` funds of knowledge would be related to their pedagogical practices. For example, how their background affected or contributed to the materials they developed for the students, and how students received support from their families in their learning process. At this stage, based on the field notes, my conceptual memos, and interviews, I came up with a tentative list of findings in which the research questions could be answered. I then characterized the types of teaching and learning practices in which I could recognize “teaching methods” and the funds of knowledge. At the final stage, I reconnect the various codes to one another to develop a grounded theory.

Research Questions:

1. What is the second language teaching methodology of each Persian language teacher?
2. What are the sources/faces of teachers` funds of knowledge in their teaching practices?
3. How do teachers` funds of knowledge affect the way they teach a lesson?
4. How do teachers` funds of knowledge help them to contextualize new content for their students? How does learners` fund of knowledge help them through their learning process?

3.6 Findings

By way of introduction, what follows is a narration of each teacher's teaching method, the faces of their funds of knowledge, how their funds of knowledge affect their teaching methodology, activities, and materials, and lastly how learners' funds of knowledge help them through their learning journeys. This narration is drawn from my interpretation of the teachers' actions and words during class observations and participant interviews. This account provides more details about the teachers as agents of funds of knowledge.

3.6.1 Teachers' Teaching Methodology

Sima's instructional language was Persian even though a few students in her class did not fully understand the language. She explained the new content in English when she thought that her students needed more clarification. She worked on the alphabet, grammar, vocabulary, translation, and reading. She had assigned two books to her students. The students had to complete some of the drills in the first textbook, find and write the translation and mainly synonyms of new vocabulary, and write sentences using the new words and grammar rules. The other textbook contained seven short stories that she had simplified their words and structures. She had her own method to work on the new content, such as introducing new words and grammar rules. Most of the time, she narrated the "stories" behind the words, connected them to the lives of the students and her own life, and created the context for new content.

After conducting a warm-up activity, she spends 10 minutes of her class for reviewing the lesson that she had taught the last session. She asks the students the meaning of words and their synonyms to assess their learning (Field notes, November 2016).

To teach grammar or vocabulary, first she explained the grammatical rule, then she wrote the rule and an example on the whiteboard.

She then asked students to find the synonyms of the new words for next session. As a part of their homework, students had to write some new sentences in which the new vocabulary and grammar rule was used (Field note, November 2016).

One of the activities through which she created a real context for students was a warm-up activity, or a way to present the new material to students. After the class started, the students had to come up to the whiteboard and write something interesting about themselves and read it aloud to the class.

Shadi, a full heritage language learner, who was thinking of her sentence, asked about the meaning of “water polo” in Persian. The teacher opened discussion on this word by saying that there was a game that used to be played by Iranian kings and princes long time ago. She continued that the new version of that old Persian game is now called water polo and in Persian it is “چوگان آبی” – “water polo” (Field notes, November 2016).

In another session, Sima wanted to teach the grammar rule of a sentence that people use in informal language. She wrote on the whiteboard "خوردمش" (I ate it) and explained how students needed to connect the verb with the pronoun in the informal form of the verb. To make the new grammar rule understandable, she shared a memory of her mother who had come home and wanted to eat something: “My mom asked: “غذا کوش؟” which means “where is the food”? I said: خوردمش meaning “I ate it” whose formal form is آن را خوردم.”

Her example made a student, sitting behind me laugh as if she had experienced that moment. Sima linked this memory and experiences of the students through the stories that she narrated in her class.

Sima used mainly project-based learning in her classes. For instance, the students were assigned a final project on which they had to work from the beginning of the semester. The task was an interview-based project in which the students had to select a Persian-speaking family member or friend to interview. When the students had their questions ready, they scheduled an appointment with the person they were to interview. The interview had to be video-recorded because they needed to watch it to take notes about the information collected. Then they made a presentation using all information, photos, and a part of the video to present it for the whole class at the end of the semester on “Presentation Day.”

Afsaneh’s instruction was mostly in English. She explained everything in English and sometimes in Persian. She incorporated translanguaging from English to Persian to translate some parts for the students. The focus of her teaching was vocabulary, grammar rules, reading, translation exercises, writing new letters and sentences using the words and collocations, and subjugating the verbs. The students had one main textbook assigned for that semester. They had to learn vocabulary and grammatical rules by rote memorization and then practice drills on substituting, making sentences, answering questions, or filling in word gaps.

One of the activities that Afsaneh did in her class was to require her students to repeat some words and sentences either after she spoke to them, or after listening to an audio file. This activity helped students improve their listening comprehension and enabled them to answer some of Afsaneh’s questions. Then, they had to repeat each sentence after they listened to the audio files for a second time.

Afsaneh played the role of all-knower who acted like a talking dictionary, that is, she explained the meaning of the words. “In each session, the language learners are being bombarded by lots of words and sentences through reading and repeating them. If the teacher could provide more chances of language use for the students, she could help her students better” (Field notes,

November 2016). Sometimes, Afsaneh taught the students a collocation by reading from the book, translating, and asking the students to conjugate verbs. A few minutes before the class was over, she called on some students to make a sentence about them using the collocation. That activity seemed more challenging to the students because they were forced to come up with sentences about themselves and their real lives.

Zohreh, Afsaneh's teaching assistant, provided more opportunity for students to write and speak about their daily subjects, such as their name, age, family, job, and university major. Students had also been asked to do a role play by practicing a model from their textbook or audio file. There was an activity for the students in which they had to ask their classmates questions about themselves after they read some sample sentences in their textbooks. They had to do a short question-answer activity with each other. Zohreh assigned the students a paired-work conversation through which they used their real-life examples for their questions and sentences. In their textbook, there was an example of life and birthplace. Students first talked about their own lives and then asked the person sitting nearby those questions. They had a type of short role-play for transferring their information about themselves. I noted in my field notes that students seemed much more comfortable if they retold something they had experienced directly.

Afsaneh was interested in teaching her students some basic sentences used for simple conversation which made her students motivated and more interested in learning the language. She believed that "by the end of the semester, they should know how to introduce themselves, say their age, job, and university major. They should also be able to talk about their family members such as how many brothers and sisters they have, what they are, as two examples."

Zohreh was in charge of teaching the letters. She taught some, but not all, letters of the Persian script through which the students could read and write. I could not track any consistency in the teaching of Persian alphabets because the students were able to read and write the sentences

and words through transliteration that was provided beside or below each Persian word or sentence in the textbook. That is, students got familiar with the sound of letters and words and sentences through transliteration first, before being able to read and write the Persian script independently.

Another of Zohreh's teaching practices was 'teaching for testing.' She explained to the students what they would probably have on their midterm or final exam. This promoted students for memorization or rote-learning. Although rote-learning seemed to motivate students to pass an assessment, it might have decreased the students' higher-order language and thinking skills, as Baker and Wright (2017) have pointed out. When the teacher talked about particular questions on their tests, students got more interested in seeking answers to those questions, though it was likely that they would forget them after the test was completed.

Sepideh, in Class C, used both languages to teach, but preferred to use mostly English. To provide Persian input, she switched between English and Persian to teach the new content. She taught the Persian alphabet, grammar rules, vocabulary, reading, writing, translating the words and sentences, and pronunciation. She began each session with a "warm-up" activity through which the students had to say and write something in Persian related to daily events. If students did not know how to write their sentences, they asked the teacher to help them. The students had the challenge of finding something that they could write on the board.

After each student came up to the board and wrote a word or sentence, Sepideh corrected them by writing above their words. Then, she started teaching two new letters along with the features of each letter such as script, pronunciation, connecting status of the Persian letters, and different shapes of the letters. At the board, each student created a word out of the individual letters that teachers had written. After that, each student had to read one sentence of the text in which the new letter was used. The teacher then translated the sentences into English and asked

the students to practice them in a paired work activity. Once a week, there was a role-play activity that included students' ideas and interests in particular sentences in the textbook. On Fridays, students watched a movie in Persian and then discussed its cultural, social, and linguistic aspects. The assignment and project of the students consisted of sentence making, filling in the gaps, writing a short paragraph, and completing the pre-printed exercises of their textbooks.

3.6.2 The Faces of Teachers' Funds of Knowledge

Funds of knowledge portray the knowledge, skills, experiences, expertise, and interests of an individual who has acquired them through their cultural, social, educational, and historical interactions with other members in their community, family life and even everyday living. In the study that Moll et al (1992) conducted, there was an example of how a teacher used the summer experience of one student in Mexico while teaching about candy making. Teachers can connect students' funds of knowledge with the materials in the classroom and consider it as an opportunity rather than a deficit.

Teachers also bring their funds of knowledge into their classroom because of the context in which they have grown up and studied. Moll (2003) believes that "the teacher's funds of knowledge become part and parcel of that, of that element needed to assimilate the pedagogical knowledge and become an outstanding teacher". This section aims to show both teachers and students' funds of knowledge in an educational context where both groups interact with the Persian language as a common point of this community of practice.

- **Educational Background**

Sima has a Ph.D. in Middle Eastern Studies, Persian literature and history and her master's degree in Iranian studies. She has been teaching the Persian language for 28 years. She has not studied specifically the theories and methodologies of second language teaching. However, having experiences of teaching the Persian language, dealing with the issues of Persian

language learners, participating in heritage language conferences, and having cooperation with other educators to develop textbooks have impacted her teaching practices. In the interview with her, she mentioned that:

My background is in the history of Iran because of which I take lots of historical text to the class. Sometimes my students start nagging and ask me if this is the class of history and geography to the extent that my students ask me ‘if this is a history class or if it is a Persian language class?.

Sima assigns the materials which are about classic and modern literature including tale, story, and poem, as a few examples for students to work on. They read the story, find the synonyms of important words, discuss it as well as write some sentences or paragraphs using those words:

For Mother`s day or Norouz, I ask my students to do a project which is reading a poem named “mother.” They have to learn its meaning, and practice to memorize and recite some verses of it depending on their language competency. We then go to a small green area at the university to have breakfast and each of them recites the poem. One of my students told me that she had gone home and read that poem for her mother and grandmother which brought them to tears. I assign a more difficult poem to read if my students` Persian language is more proficient.

Sima tried to keep a very deep connection between the language she was teaching and the culture of the language. That is, for everything she was teaching, she had a story, and a tale to narrate so as to contextualize the new concept as a scaffolding strategy for making the input comprehensible for students.

Afsaneh has a Ph.D. in Middle Eastern Studies. Her expertise is comparative literature in Persian and English. She has taught the Persian language for over 25 years and has some experiences in developing Persian textbooks. In the texts that she is using as the teaching materials, there are a few authentic texts about classic and modern literature. That is, there is little sign of her educational background, Persian literature, among the material and activity when she delivers the lessons to the students (Field note, September 2016). One of the main activities the students do in this class is repeating the words and sentences and making their own sentences through substituting exercises. Repeating the content is one of the good scaffolding strategies to help students learn them, however, nothing could be found related to her funds of knowledge like contextualizing the vocabulary and grammar with literature, stories and tales from her own life.

Sepideh is a Ph.D. candidate in a comparative literature in Italian and Persian language. She has been teaching the Persian language for more than 10 years. “Her background is not related to the Persian language, because of which she has not brought a lot from her educational background in her teaching method” (Field note, November 2016). She has not been educated for teaching a language as a second or foreign one, so all her teaching practices come from having cooperation with another Persian teacher whose expertise is on Persian literature and partly from her previous teaching experience. As one of the activities assigned for her students, there was a project in which her students needed to choose a poem by an Iranian poet. Then, they were to read and memorize the poem. At the end of the semester, they held their class in a green space at universality literally translated as a back garden “باغ پشت” where there is very refreshing with flower and tree” as Sepideh describes. On that day, each student recites the poem by heart or reads it as well as they can. The only connection between this project and funds of knowledge is that Sepideh had assigned this project based on the funds of knowledge of her colleague teaching Persian which Moll calls "a cognitive resource for the class" (see Moll et al, 1990). That is, the

funds of knowledge of her colleague became hers which helped her develop an activity for her class.

- **Teachers` Interests**

Sima used to live in Iran. She had to immigrate to the US after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The interest of Sima was storytelling and narration of her past memories while she and her parents lived in Iran. Her interest was being transferred to her teaching practices by developing materials for her class and creating the context using her favorite subjects. She was teaching new words/expressions through the stories. For example, once she wanted to teach the verb “to recognize” which is in Persian "شناختن". When she wanted to define that word, she used a familiar and understandable example “last year, when I had gone to Seattle, I abruptly saw my old teacher in the conference and I didn’t recognize him at all” all in Persian. She also connected her example to the story of “چوپان دروغگو” “liar shepherd” with the word that the students had learned by teaching the word “از قضا” meaning “abruptly”. She contextualized that new word through integrating her own memory and a word of a story they had read before to make two words comprehensible for her students.

The other time, when Sima was teaching a sentence “من می خواهم/ من نمی خواهم” meaning “I want/ I don’t want), she referred to a story/memory from her grandfather, mother, and aunts. She was telling the story of a long time ago when they were in Iran. She narrated her story all in Persian “we had gone to the bazaar to buy shoes. My grandfather had wanted his daughters (my mom and aunts) to say “من اینو نمی خواهم” meaning (I don’t want these) if they really liked the shoes; unless the shopkeeper might not give them any discount”. She added, “my grandpa did his best to buy something at the lowest price”. She also added one cultural point about Iran that “when people realize that you have bought something, they ask you about the price and might say that you have been fooled, I would buy it for you with a much cheaper price”. Teaching one

expression, proverb, or word in her class was not limited to abstract translation but students were guided into a new world hidden behind the new contents.

The interest of Afsaneh in Class B was in politics and daily news about Iran and the US. She talked about the political issues and daily news in English. I wonder if she could provide part of her lesson delivery about politics in Persian, and whether that would be more useful for the language learners. Afsaneh could use the political subjects to teach new words or sentences. For example, in one of the sessions, she initiated a political discussion about the presidential election. As Farhad, one full heritage language student, who was not proficient in the Persian language and struggled to (re)learn his parents' language, thought "that is good that our teacher brings up some subjects about politics and daily news, but I wish we had those discussion partly at least in Persian... you know, then I feel that that I am learning some words or rules... sort of what we need ...". This type of discussion might not suit all students' expectation and needs, especially if it did not help the students to learn new content in Persian.

The interest, expertise, and priority of Sepideh was "art" and "politics". She shares her interests in different kinds of art such as cinema, music, play, movie, and photography as well as the current political news which was the presidential election at that time in her teaching. For example, once, she came to class and started talking about the presidential election. She used both English and Persian while talking about the subject. A few students also asked her how to say a word in Persian and then used those words, as well. The other day, she was teaching a new word "delicate" meaning "ظریف". Besides explaining the meaning of it, she told students about a political character (Prime Minister) of Iran named "Zarif" and what he has done for Iran to give context to the new words that the students were to learn.

Related to her interests, when I asked her about the activities that she was doing in her class or planned to do, she named a few of them such as using clips from a famous avenue in Iran

named “Lolagar Avenue” and showing some pictures that she had taken in Iran. She went to Iran almost every year and did photography during the time she was in Iran. She contextualized the contents of her lesson by bringing her photos to the class and talking about them in Persian. It was a good chance for her to provide context for the words as well as speak about the culture and society in Iran through the real pictures that she was showing them.

3.6.3 How Does the Approach Funds of Knowledge Affect Teachers’ Lesson Delivery?

- **Teachers’ Funds of Knowledge and Class Materials**

In Class A, the main teaching material of Sima was mostly a grammar book and words-based book through which the students learned alphabets, grammar, and vocabulary of the Persian language. As the other teaching material, she had developed a collection of seven Persian short stories for her class. She had simplified the stories for the level of the students. As a part of the class activity, they read those stories and talked about the new words and grammar rules as well as their contents.

Based on the level of the class, Sima had developed a project in which the students had to interview a family member. She tried to connect the classroom with students’ home/family/cultures. She believes “yes, the project about family has been very successful because of which they learn a lot. They should know where for example their grandmother is from, where she has been raised if she has gone to school, why she came to the US (if she has) or why not?” For this project, they should also have to provide a video and pictures included in their oral presentation.

Afsaneh in Class B had assigned a book which was based on grammar and vocabulary of the language. The students learned Persian alphabets, grammatical rules, daily conversations and expression through reading some texts and a large number of words, most of which had transliteration and meanings in front of them. At the beginning of the semester, transliteration

helped the students get familiar to pronounce the Persian letters and words. In class, Zohreh wrote on the whiteboard what letters they had to write in their notebook as their homework. Thus, they did handwriting practice of the new letters that they had learned and made some sentences with those new words. A student`s funds -of-knowledge-based homework was assigned for the students which was a question-answer task in the classroom that the students had to do about their own life. They asked their classmates those questions while Zohreh checked their conversation. She corrected their questions and answers if they had any mistakes.

In Class C, Sepideh assigned the book which contained the Persian alphabet, new vocabulary, short texts for students to read, writing practice, translating activity, and grammar rules. There was also a section as “extended reading” for students to practice their reading skills. In each lesson, one new Persian letter is taught by introducing the script of the letter, with some sentences in which there are the words which contain that new letter. There is a section that students could write the letters and words. So, based on the general format of the book, students learned the letters. The book had been equipped with transliteration and also the translation for words and sentences. Transliteration came to disappear gradually when students learned some letters by the middle of the book, but the translation of sentences and words was kept until the end of the book. This is the only textbook used for this class with no extra material provided by the teacher.

In Class C, Sepideh developed a warm-up activity at the beginning of each class that students had to come up to the whiteboard and write something related to their personal life and about what they had found interesting to share. That was a good practice for students who wanted to express themselves. When they didn`t know the words, they asked their teacher to help them. After I did my observation in Class C, I found out one missing point about students` main work for that course. I had to set up a telephone interview to explore if there was any connection

between what she had developed as the homework, midterm or final project for the student with her and students' funds of knowledge. She mentioned that:

First the students listen to a song for example by Palette, Vagabond, a contemporary singer and then they have some time to work on so as to memorize it. They then have to sing that song together, at the end of the semester. Otherwise, I rely more on their textbook for all their assignments.

So, there was not any necessary connection between students' funds of knowledge but she had chosen that activity based on her own interest which was art and music.

3.6.4 How Language Learners' Funds of Knowledge Help Them Learn Meaningfully

- Being Involved with the Subjects Related to Their Life

In Class A, when I asked Sima about the approach "funds of knowledge", she did not know anything about it. However, what she had developed as the final project had the sign of the approach "funds of knowledge." Sima connected her own funds of knowledge with her students'. With the project that the teacher had assigned the students to do, they could make a connection culturally and socially. Depending on the students' level, they did an interview-based project through which they interviewed one of their family members/Persian speaking person all/as much as they could in Persian about their name, age, study, birthplace, living place, favorite color, book, and activity. They had to video record their interview to be able to write a report of their findings. In the middle of the semester, the teacher asked them to make an appointment with her to talk about what they had done all of which made students be more involved with the words, sentences, expressions, and cultural points and generally with language. Through their meeting, they were able to ask any question that made their interview easier and understandable both for the learners and for the persons they wanted to interview. At the end of the semester, they had

to present their project to the class. The good point of this work was making the students engaged with this project from the very beginning of the semester.

In Class B, the students' funds of knowledge were acknowledged through developing a role-play activity and the examples through which students could find a connection between their home with classroom materials. For example, there was a sentence in the textbook that was "are you living in the US or Mexico?" the answer could be neither of them because Salman was from Egypt. Salman answered, "من در مصر زندگی می کنم" (I live in Egypt). When the teacher asked him in Persian "are you living in the US?" Salman smiled and said in English, "MY home is in Egypt". He wanted to emphasize in his home place.

The other activity for which students used their background was a pair work activity in which they had to talk about themselves first and then they asked their partners those questions. Once, Emily, NHLL, who was learning Persian because of her major, was thinking to find an answer to the question "what do you do in the mornings?" which is in Persian "صبحا چکار می کنی؟". When Afsaneh saw her delay in answer, told her in English "you can tell a lie". I observed how Emily was struggling to find a right thing to say. She needed more time to say a sentence about herself and she did but "it is interesting that they are much more comfortable if they tell the truth and talk about something that they have experienced in reality" (Field note, October 2016). My observation was another proof of when the students are better at the sentences that come from their mind, heart, and experience.

In Class C, there was a warm-up activity every day in which students had to say and write one interesting sentence about themselves and about what they had experienced recently in their real life. The students came up to the whiteboard to write their sentences. When they had a problem finding the words in Persian, they asked the teacher in order to write or say their stories. In one of the sessions, the teacher started writing on the whiteboard how she felt that day which

was that من، امروز صبح با امید از خواب بیدار شدم (this morning, I woke up with hope). In fact, most of the subjects of warm-up activity were related to what she was to teach. So, she asked them to come on the whiteboard and write how they felt that day. They wrote different things about their feelings such as “faith, happy, hope, tired, strong, calm, late, and bad-tempered” all in Persian. They were at the beginning of their learning process, but they did their best to write all they could in Persian script. When they had problem, they asked Sepideh for help to write the words that expressed their feelings. The other students-funds-of-knowledge-based learning activity was doing role play. Related to the topic of each day, the students had to ask each other in Persian about, for example, their personal belongings, such as “what color is your towel/toothbrush/hat?”. The subject of their role play depended on the lesson they were to study. Sepideh tried to assign a home-related prompt for the students to work on so they could make a connection between what they were learning and what they experienced in their real life.

She used field trip or bringing up her own stories into the classroom to contextualize the lesson contents. For instance, she organized some field trips to the most available places where students found the chance of learning about the book, handicrafts, food, ceremony, and Persian art. She also kept an eye on upcoming events in which a Persian speaking event or movie was held at university, so she had her class there to provide Persian input for her students. Once, she wanted to teach the content "سفر" meaning “travel”. She talked about her story of her trip to Iran that she had gone with her husband and child, as an example. Every time that she goes to Iran, she brings some pictures and videos to show her students on the screen. This activity made the students get curious about her and her family. Milad and Shadi asked her in Persian that “your family Iran?” which in Persian meant "خانواده شما در ایران؟". The sentence was not correct grammatically, but the students were interested in using their Persian knowledge to ask a question that they liked to know its answer. When the teacher saw the students` interest in that subject,

she wanted them to ask her more questions. Shekoufeh, a half heritage language learner, knew some Persian words. She was also familiar with a few cultural practices of her Persian speaking father also asked a question half in Persian half in English that "در ایران شما خانواده؟" "do you have family in Iran"? Sepideh said the whole sentence in Persian and asked the students to repeat and practice that question. She made a pair activity in which the students had to ask that question and answer all in Persian. They also continued to ask her about her daughter if she takes her to Iran, and how old she is? When she found her students interested, she helped them ask their question in Persian and made them repeat after her.

- Students Connected the Class Examples with Their Home

Studying a language as a second language, students are willing to connect the examples that the teacher uses while teaching a word, rule, or structure with their own real life. Once, in Class A, Sima wanted to teach the words "بُردن و باختن" meaning "to win and to fail" through the example of "my grandfather lost to my cousin". When the teacher was making that example, I realized that Neela, a half-heritage language learner, started feeling bad and said in Persian "این خوب نیست" meaning "this isn't good to say so". I was thinking about how interestingly she felt bad about that example which could be her own grandfather. That is, the interest of home-classroom connection should be considered more in using example, activities, and text.

In Class B, Farhad made an example of "دوست دارم" meaning "to like" which he had heard at home. He wanted to find a connection between the grammar rule of "سکون" meaning "silent" which makes a letter not be pronounced and the other similar word "دوست" which means "friend" with a silent (◌ْ) sign on the third letter. He told me that the word his parents say to him doesn't have the silent sign. He meant a word with meaning "to like" or "I like you". He had found a connection between what he was learning and what he had heard at home.

In Class C, Milad, a full heritage language learner with low Persian language competency, tried to connect the expression "دلم بر اش کبابه" literally (delam barash Kabāb eh) which means (I feel so sorry for him/her) with the Persian food, Kabāb, that he had had with his family. He was laughing and repeating the phrase. He was happy to repeat the word that he had heard at home. Sepideh then tried to contextualize the meaning of this expression through visualizing when Kabāb is being cooked and is sizzling. That expression is used when people feel sorry and sympathy for someone. But this comparison could be understandable for the students who have had the experience of having that food, Kabāb (کباب) and seeing how that food is cooked. Otherwise, the teacher had to show a picture of making Kabāb to the students having no cultural connection to make that point comprehensible to them.

- Relying on Parents as Their Teachers

In Class A, Neela, a half-heritage language learner, relied on the help of her grandmother. Neela was interested in learning Persian to be able to communicate with her grandparents from her mother`s side. She called her grandmother whenever she had a question and a problem. She said, “my mom doesn`t agree with me studying Persian, so I call my grandma if I want to know more about the Persian language.”

In Class B, there was a half-heritage language learner whose mother was Iranian. Katherine was one of the learners who was passionate about learning the Persian language because she and her mother had plans to visit Iran and her Persian-language speaking relatives. Katherine struggled with the language, but her challenges may have been due to that she did not have enough time to practice at home or because she had thought she could learn Persian faster than she thought. She had a deep desire to learn her heritage language and tried to improve her language either through asking her classmates or asking her mother by phone. When she did not

know how to do the class exercises, she sent a phone picture of her assignment and received the answer in the same way. Katherine said:

I just can't read the sentences. I just don't know what it says so I have to ask my mom... see, I sent it to my mom and I said, 'I need you to tell me what this is. I don't know what it is'. I can't answer the questions if I don't know what I'm talking about and so she sent this [showing me a picture].

Up until the last day I observed her and the class, I did not see any progress in her learning. Instead, I observed how she was struggling to learn her heritage language.

In Class C, Milad was raised in a full Persian context but wasn't able to communicate. He reported that his parents had stopped talking to him "in Persian due to insecurity they were feeling in the white community they lived in" Milad had some cultural background because of growing up in a Persian-speaking home but he had problems understanding and speaking in Persian. He knew a few Persian words that he had heard from his grandparents. He was interested in learning more so as he could talk to his grandmother with whom he had never had any communication except some words that he understood. In his interview, he mentioned that his parents provided language assistance to him: "I call my parents when I have difficulties with homework and pronouncing stuff I would call them, and I talk to them and made sure I am pronouncing things correctly and yeah...I make them do the pronunciation right. I have them quiz me and I say if there's a conversation that we need to memorize by the next class I have the conversation with them and they tell me when I can drop certain words." His parents supported him when he could not do his homework independently. The result of this interaction was that he was so active in class, he was the first student who came up to the whiteboard to write his word/sentence, and always showed his interest in doing role-play in class. The funds of

knowledge that the students carry with them help them feel that they are having progress in their learning journey.

3.7 Discussion and Analysis

Language learners begin life in classrooms as motivated learners, not as passive beings. They learn by interacting, by experimenting, and by using plays to internalize the meaning of words and experiences (Heath, 1992). They bring to the classroom a beautiful language; strong family ties, minds, hearts, and bodies full of hope with an intense desire to learn and to share who they really are. Learners are ‘cultural members’ for anthropologists who strive to understand how individuals become culture carriers, transmitting and transforming ways of behaving, believing, and valuing within their social group (Heath, 1991).

Persian language learners bring linguistic and cultural attributes to the language classroom based on which teachers teach them and help them internalize the new concepts and contents. Teachers of the Persian language also bring their cultural, social, and educational resources into their classrooms that are often overlooked and ignored in a typical Persian classroom setting, whereas, it can be a rich source while developing a lesson plan, activities, and materials. The resource of funds of knowledge (Moll et al, 1992) foster heritage language teachers to make a real context for the student to grow in their learning and their abilities to use their language.

From a pedagogical standpoint, integrating teachers’ funds of knowledge with their teaching methodologies offers real-life and real-language experience, the opportunity for learners to extend the reach of language application beyond the classroom setting, and the chance to provide meaningful engagement in language. Teachers’ funds of knowledge used in delivering the new lessons also oblige students to see the new vocabulary or grammar rules outside the classroom setting and apply them in their assignments or activities that they are asked to do.

Teachers integrate their teaching methodologies with the approach “fund of knowledge”. They bridge the gap between the language of the textbook and the authenticity of the language being taught in the classroom. They help language learners to internalize the new concepts as well as to apply their newly learned knowledge in the activities. That integration also helps teachers meet the linguistic and cultural needs of language learners and mediate the development of their structural skills of the language.

Teachers must understand that student experience arises from multiple contexts some of which must be questioned more critically than others. It is crucial, therefore, that educators address the question of how the social world is experienced, mediated, and produced by students. Failure in this will not only prevent teachers from tapping into the emotions and interests that give students their own unique voice but will also make it difficult to provide the momentum for learning itself (Freire & Macedo, 1998). Routman (2000) suggests that “it is far more important that we demonstrate ourselves as model learners than as model knower. Being able to listen, question, explore, and discover are more important than having all the right answers” (p: 2). She continues that a teacher is an observer and learner. The teacher always looks for what happens in the classroom in order to make the decision.

Teacher as a major participant of the language classroom plays an important role in providing an appropriate environment for having the instructional conversation and the interactional opportunities between teacher and learners, learners and learners, and between learners and the materials. Teachers need to make sure that they create the space for all their students` strength to work for them (Espinosa & Moori, 1999). The teachers who teach based on pre-planned materials and textbooks to deliver the grammar and vocabulary do not keep their teaching dynamic, which welcomes no changes and newness in their teaching.

Considering the activities and strategies of Sima, second language teaching methodology of this teacher was an eclectic teaching method which consists of grammar translation method and task-based method. I argue that storytelling to contextualize the new contents portray worlds behind the new words added to her eclectic methodology. She focused mainly on grammar, translation, reading, and vocabulary and a big project that engaged the students in doing it. Her instruction language, Persian rather than English, caused her method to step away from the grammar-translation method.

The task-based method was another element of Sima`s eclectic method. The important point about doing a project was keeping the students engaged with the Persian language through their individual work on their project, teacher-student meeting, recording and listening to the audio file, preparing a presentation, and giving a lecture about their findings which make them involved throughout the semester. For Sima, each word has a world that she wanted to show her students through narrating a story. That is, she contextualized the new word or grammar rule through an example, a story, or a real memory of hers that she brought from her real life, interest, and education. She was proficient in portraying the world behind each word by telling stories, tales, and examples. In fact, she used the method of storytelling to contextualize while teaching new concepts which opened the students` eyes to a new world. The portrayed worlds behind the words can be different for people because of their various background knowledge and experiences. She used her funds -of-knowledge-based examples for contextualizing the new things or making her students tell their real stories using those words and grammar rules.

The language teaching methodology of Afsaneh was mainly the grammar translation method. She worked on vocabulary, translations, reading, and doing some drill-based activities such as filling in the blank, substituting the sentences, making new sentences based on the given samples. The students repeat some sentences and then make a sentence of theirs using the clue

and pattern they had. Afsaneh included a small portion of audiolingual and communicative method in her language teaching methodology; however, the grammar-translation method was stronger than the other ones.

The teaching method of Sepideh relied on grammar translation method more than the other methods because she focused on grammar, translation, vocabulary, and reading; however, including authentic subjects in warm up and role play activity that she made students do were some signs of the communicative method in her class. The students had the chance to practice speaking and listening in the Persian language through the materials that Sepideh provided for her class, such as films and short clips that they watched and talked about.

Being a native speaker of a heritage language is not enough for teaching it. Heritage language teachers should be educated for second language teaching so as to know how to deal with their language learners and to help them learn successfully. In addition to improving the language skills of their students, heritage language teachers must address the social and cultural background of their students in a classroom setting.

Teachers' funds of knowledge is a rich source of the activities, strategies, and materials that heritage language teachers bring into their classroom. According to Moll (2012) "It is very important to understand how teacher's experiences, life experiences, interact with the academic knowledge and pedagogical knowledge and concepts they are supposed to master as professional educators". Analyzing the teaching practices of three teachers, I categorized their funds of knowledge which came from their educational background and their personal interests. For Sima, her educational background, Persian literature and history, was the same as her interest while storytelling can be added to it, as well. She included Persian poems, stories, and history in the materials of her classes. She simplified and contextualized the new contents such as story, poem, or even song of a singer. She kept the connection between the language she was teaching

and the culture of the language through using Persian literature. That is, for everything she was teaching, she had a story, tale, and example to narrate so as to contextualize the new concept.

Afsaneh had studied Persian language and literature. However, she had not included her own funds of knowledge into the materials that she had developed for her students. That is, her teaching materials and activities did not originate from her educational background. However, her interest in the politics of Iran and the US had an effect on the issues that she brought into her classrooms. Politics as the interest area of Afsaneh had a specific place in the materials and activities of the class if she spoke more in Persian while delivering those issues. She could provide more input in Persian for the students.

If she had contextualized the contents of each session through her funds of knowledge, she could have made the new points understandable for students. The teacher's funds of knowledge-based-materials should be simplified and doable for language learners, it becomes demotivational if the materials are not integrated to the pedagogical plans of each classroom.

Teaching practices and materials of Sepideh were not related to her educational background which was Persian literature. Instead, she had brought her interest-based funds of knowledge into her teaching. Connecting her experiences of real Iran with the context of her class and learners could portray some of the cultural and societal issues of Iran as real for the learners. Showing the real pictures and videos of Iran provided the students learning the Persian language a better sense of where Iran is, how people dress, what they do, what they eat for breakfast as a few examples, and the other things students might be interested in knowing about. She was also telling them about the geography of Tehran, what that place has, or what that city is famous for. The good point of her lesson delivery/ presentation was contextualizing the words, concepts, and contents through presenting a part of the culture, food, street, people, and dress to the Persian language learners. Moll believes that "the teacher's funds of knowledge become part and parcel

of that, of that element needed to assimilate the pedagogical knowledge and become an outstanding teacher”

Assigning a task-based final project is helpful for the students because it engages students about the topics of interest to them and also the teacher. Typically, the features of what is often called the task-based method include a) questions that contain meaningful content related to real-life, b) research on topics that allow students to learn about the culture of the language they are learning, applying the concepts in their presentation, and giving feedback, c) collaboration between students and teacher and d) use of technological tools for presenting their findings. These projects create the required contexts for students to engage with learning new concepts, contents, and culture. This also affords opportunities to investigate, interact, read, and write about what they are to present to the teacher and the whole class, as well.

Educators can build upon what children already know. In doing so, educators can draw on students' lived experiences in their sociocultural-historical contexts; they can observe what students take up from instruction, and teachers can use that knowledge of what students draw on to scaffold home/community knowledge and academic knowledge. Ideally, teachers learn from their students – either through in-class observations or home ethnographies (Moll & González, 1997) – then reformulate instruction to fall within students' “zone of proximal development” (the level they have the potential to attain with the help of a more experienced other's mediation; Vygotsky; 1978, 1986). The scaffold that drawing on children's actual funds of knowledge creates (by teaching within students' zone of proximal development) enables them to internalize and reformulate new information; make new knowledge comprehensible and their own, and meet their potential (Engen, 2009).

3.8 Conclusion

Persian language teaching is a marginalized program whose teachers and students are in the minority of language teachers. Their voice, identity, and concern about teaching or learning the Persian language might not be heard. To consider what educators need for teaching a language as second language, we should notice that teaching is not transforming some information about the discrete parts of the language, but it is an act of transferring a message in an interactive context among learners of a language, a skill, a profession, and an art. Therefore, teachers' personal and cultural background affects their teaching methods. When second language teachers and learners bring their funds of knowledge into the classrooms, funds of knowledge acts as a scaffolding pedagogical strategy.

The purpose of this paper is to take a new look at the relationship between the teachers' and learners' funds of knowledge and language teaching and learning practices. The general way to approach this is to discuss some research results first, talk about existing methods next, and then their implications. A part of this paper is, in fact, devoted to summarizing the second language teaching methodologies of the Persian language teachers. Another significant part of this study explored the sources of the funds of knowledge of three Persian language teachers and how they applied that approach in their lesson delivery, materials, and developed assignment for the language learners. As I perceive it, I would like to draw some conclusions from methods and applications that the teachers implicated in their classrooms. I also explored how the Persian language learners tended to bring their funds of knowledge into their learning journey. Most of the heritage and half heritage learners of Persian had a better understanding of grammar rules, sentence patterns, vocabulary, and word phrases by connecting them to their home experiences and what they had heard from their parents. The proper method of learning new materials is to contextualize the language and bring them into the present time use of language. It needless to

say that many second language teachers who are teaching a new language might be aware of the importance of their students' background. Therefore, the cultural side of a second language is a very important aspect that teachers need to consider in order to contextualize the new contents and also make them understandable. Most often, it is not just language that is to be spoken but culture, thoughts, emotions, interpersonal bonds have to be focused.

Table 3.1. Meaning and Transcriptions of Persian Words

Persian Script	“Literal” Translation	Meaning in Context
چوگان آبی	Chogān-e-ābi	Water polo
غذا کوش؟	Ghazā koosh	Where's the food?
خوردمش/ آن را خوردم	Khordamesh/ ān rā khordam	I ate it
باغ پشت	Bāgh e posht	back garden
چوپان دروغگو	Choopān e Dorooghgoo	liar shepherd
من می خواهم/ من نمی خواهم	Man mikhām, man nemikhām	“I want/ I don't want
من اینو نمی خواهم	Man ino nemikhām	I don't want these (shoes)
ظریف	Zarif	Delicate / foreign minister of Iran
من در مصر زندگی می کنم	Man, dar Mesr zendegi mikonam	I live in Egypt
صبحا چکار می کنه؟	Sob ha, chekār mikoneh?	what do you do in the mornings?
من، امروز صبح با امید از خواب بیدار شدم	Man, emruz sobh, bā omid az khāb boland shodam.	<i>this morning, I woke up with hope</i>
سفر	Safar	Travel/trip
خانواده شما در ایران؟	Khānevādeh Shomā dar Irān (ast)?	Is your family in Iran?
بُردَن و باختَن	Bordan o Bākhtan	To win and to fail
این خوب نیست	In khoob nist	this isn't good to say so
دوست دارم	Dooset dāram	I like you/I love you
دوست	Doost	Friend
سکون	Sokoon	Silent (◌)
دلَم بر اش کبابه	delam barāsh Kabāb eh	I feel so sorry for him/her
کباب	Kabāb	Kebāb (food)

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Article THREE: Amplifying the Voices of the Persian Language Learners: Integrating their Challenges, Concerns, Expectations, and Suggestions into the Components of the SIOP Model

4.1 Abstract

The struggle to deal with issues of second/foreign language teaching has led to different methods and approaches, each of which is underlined by a language learning theory and the learners' needs. This article examines the language learning experiences, challenges, expectations, and curriculum preferences of four university-level language learners. Interviewing them, I integrate the voice of the language learners within the eight components of the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) model (Echevarria, Vogt, & Graves, 2012) which has been used for English language education. I aim to compare some of components of the SIOP model with what learners have mentioned as their problems or suggestions in order to better help teachers meet their needs. By gathering information from four Persian language learners and three teachers, this study aims to contribute to a better perspective of what should be done to improve the effectiveness of Persian language teaching and how teachers and materials developers promote Persian language teaching and learning.

Keywords: Heritage language learners, Motivations, Students' Voices, Second Language Learning Challenges, Problems, and Expectations, SIOP model.

4.2 Introduction

Living in the United States opened my eyes to a new concern hidden in me which was caring about my home language and culture. In some Iranian social or cultural events, I got to know families who strived to preserve their Iranian identity, language, and culture for their children living in the U.S through using Persian language and practicing their cultural traditions. I got more concerned when I discovered that some of their children as the second generation were not able to fully communicate either in written form or orally although they had taken Persian language courses. My passion to take care of my own language and culture burst into an idea to know how Persian language classrooms were run and how those students learned the content covered in class.

I tackled different theories and approaches of second and foreign languages teaching and learning to explore what teachers can do to implement more effective second language program. Besides some practical and effective language teaching methods and approaches, I learned about the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) model (Echevarria et al, 2012), used for teaching English language as a second language but clearly applicable for any other second language. SIOP provides a lesson planning and delivery approach and contains 30 items categorized in eight components for making content area instruction comprehensible for language learners. Echevarria et al (2012) argue that students who have learned a second language based on this model made greater gains in English language learning compared to the students who had learned through other methods (Howard et al, 2007). Although Crawford and Reyes (2015) have criticized the SIOP model for not being theoretically sound, I argue that it actually functions as an eclectic approach which draws from different theoretical frameworks, each of which may cover what teachers and learners need in their teaching and learning process.

To integrate the components of SIOP into the teaching methodologies of three classrooms that I observed, first, I needed to hear the voices of the Persian language learners. A connection of their voice, my observation and field notes, and the components of SIOP model might shed a better light on the practical principles useful for teaching Persian as a heritage language in the dominant English-speaking society of the US. For any language programs, improving academic outcomes of language learners is a test for whether teachers are meeting the needs of language learners. That is, the effectiveness of language teaching programs parallels the satisfaction of language learners whose needs are met, and voices heard. Their challenges, concerns, expectations, problems, and critiques are heard by teachers, program coordinators, and materials developers. Besides looking for an effective heritage language methodology, scholars of heritage language learning and teaching are concerned about the lack of motivation by language learners to (re)learn their heritage language (Salahshoor, 2017). They need to know what strategies of language teaching work better than others, which do not, and what educators and teachers can do to keep language learners interested and motivated in learning their heritage languages.

The ultimate goal of this study is to create the opportunity for Persian language learners to help teachers, educators, and even parents hear their voices. Although there has been a gap in the literature on Persian language classrooms, I believe the more teachers know about their students' needs, the better and more effectively they help their students learn the Persian language.

4.3 Theoretical Framework

The term “heritage language” was initially used in the 1990s when North American scholars began using this term in educational contexts (Cummins, 2005). The concept of “heritage language” is significant today because of its importance in shaping the identity of people speaking it within a “community of practice” (Wenger & Lave, 1991). According to

Valdés (2001), heritage language refers to any language which is spoken at home by the family and community members with which individuals have a personal and historical connection.

Less-commonly taught language was the term I first heard to describe the Persian language. If Persian was less commonly taught – certainly at the K-12 level – this suggested that it was not part of a larger language planning or policy framework, particularly in so-called “world language” programs. As a consequence, first and second-generation Iranian children in the United States would learn Persian as a heritage language, not in public schools but mostly likely at home, on the weekend or after school. Heritage language classes are different in the levels “they teach and the materials they use. Some do not teach literacy and only concentrate on speaking Persian and learning cultural norms” (Meybodi, 2014, p. 22). Besides those programs which are welcomed more by Iranian families and communities throughout the recent decades, there are 31 programs which offer Persian language study to different students at U.S. universities in undergraduate and graduate classes in Middle Eastern Studies or Foreign Language departments (Sedighi, 2010).

Persian as a heritage language has been listed as the 18th most frequently language spoken in the U.S. (American Community Survey, 2016).¹⁵ Statistically speaking, the number of Iranians or persons with Iranian ancestry reported living in the U.S. was 289,465 and 407,586 in 2000 and in 2011, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau). In 2004, a group of Iranian-American Ph.D. candidates at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology conducted a study to estimate the number of people who identified themselves as Iranian. Based on their findings, the number of Iranians was 691,000. With the help of Iranian organizations like the Farhang Foundation and Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA) obtained a better estimate of Iranians in the U.S.,

¹⁵ <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>

in fact, a number between 1 or 1.5 million, which they argue is nonetheless a potentially inaccurate estimate of the Iranian-American minority community.¹⁶

Not having an accurate number of Iranians is due to different reasons. Ramezanzadeh (2010) believes that “since the U.S. census categories are based on either a geographical location such as Asian, or a race construction such as Caucasian, Iranian-Americans check various categories relevant to them ranging from Asian to Caucasian to Other” (p. 22). The inability to find the right Census option for this minority group might be one reason for the inexact number of Iranian/Persian-language speaking people in the U.S.

Blake and Kramsch (2007) suggest that no more than 9% of Americans are willing to report that they speak a language other than English. This poor showing may be due “in part to a national language ideology that considers speaking and using other languages as a slightly un-American activity” (p .248). Also, Persian heritage language speakers might be unwilling to identify themselves as Iranian, which may lead to hiding their heritage language.

Ramezanzadeh (2010) in her research surfaces a number of socio-historical reasons that the Persian language may be hidden. Among them are the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran and the subsequent holding of 52 American diplomats as hostage for 444 days. In addition, Ramezanzadeh points to the war between Iraq and Iran, the attack on the World Trade Center on 9/11, in which Iranians were mistakenly suspected as terrorists. We can add nuclear issues and tensions with the contemporary Iranian government, and international sanctions imposed on the nation which potentially motivated some Iranians to stay silent about their identity, language, and culture.

Due to past and current political issues, Iranians chose to create “an invisible image and took refuge not in America, but in silence” (Ramezanzadeh, 2010, p. 22). Hiding their real

¹⁶ <http://features.kodoom.com/en/iranian-diaspora/iranians-in-america-290000-464000-or-1-million-mystery-remains/v/4272/>

identity and not speaking in their heritage language outside home prevents their children from practicing their heritage language and/or becoming fluent in it. Ramezanzadeh (2010) studied how the socio-psychological and sociopolitical environment around the Persian language and culture in the U.S. could lead to heritage language loss in the context of the U.S. society:

Negative representation of minority groups in the media and arts feed these fears, from skewed news reports to attempts at comedy by making fun of people`s accents. Attempts to restrict languages other than English and coercive measures toward assimilative conformity of immigrants predominate, even as different programs and models of language maintenance and development (English plus, immersion programs, transition program, etc.) are used to cope with language barriers (2010, p. 41).

As a consequence of this reality, Persian educators, teachers, and community members should ask what can be done to make Iranians and their children feel proud of their language. The solution first will be an educational program developed for parents, children, and community members to raise their consciousness about their language and culture, promote the re/learning of their heritage language, and help them become bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate.

Motivations of Heritage Language Learners

Preserving or rejecting a heritage language is often due to the attitude that some children have towards their home language. Positive attitudes motivate individuals to learn and keep their heritage language and identity. Although some adults` immigrants may have a negative attitude toward their home language, their children might actually develop positive attitudes about the

family language through interaction with members of their extended family, such as grandparents, other relatives, and friends.

The heritage language students who think of their home language as an advantage rather than a barrier may attempt to keep relearning it. Their consciousness about the importance of their heritage language and its benefits can be aided by their teachers. One of the tenets of constructivist teaching is finding out if the students are aware of or have positive attitudes about their heritage language, which makes them more open to language learning. These attitudes can be supported by their families, communities, and all activities practiced at home or even in their classroom.

Motivation to learn a heritage language as an aspect of identity is an important factor in language acquisition. “From the perspective of language revitalization efforts, ethnolinguistic identity and a sense of affiliation are particularly important. Some people with hereditary ties and a desire to reconnect with an ancestral language may lack proficiency in the language. Thus, identity must be considered apart from language proficiency” (Wiley, 2005, p. 595). Students need to improve their heritage language to explore their identity, culture, and language affiliated with their parents and relatives. “In the context of L2 learning, motivation was seen as the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so” (Kissau, 2006, p. 76). According to Lokie (2011), motivation is the desire to engage in an activity out of curiosity, interest, or enjoyment. Due to different reasons, language learners long to learn a language either as their heritage or foreign language.

For language learners, motivation is categorized as two different types. The first is “instrumental motivation.” Students who are instrumentally motivated hope to obtain benefits, such as finding jobs, fulfilling their university major requirement, and increasing their GPA, to name a few. Gardner and LKatherinet (1972) emphasized the functional reasons of second

language learners such as getting a high-ranking job with a good salary. Therefore, language learners do not necessarily aim to use their language for interactive purposes with community members.

Instrumental motivation refers to the perceived pragmatic benefits of L2 proficiency and reflects the recognition that for many language learners it is the usefulness of L2 proficiency that provides the greatest driving force to learn language. It subsumes such utilitarian goals as receiving a better job or a higher salary as a consequence of mastering L2 (Dörnyei, et al., 2006, p.12).

The other type of motivation that second language learners might bring with them to the classroom is “integrative motivation.” They are inspired to learn/ relearn a language to be able to use it in their communication with their family and community. Having a positive attitude towards that language and their learning process, these learners have intrinsic motivation for learning a language in order to feel that they are a part of the community. Tileston (2010) defines integrative motivation as a pure and inner pleasure of doing something rather than thinking of its external and outer rewards.

Whatever the motivation of learning a heritage language is, heritage language learners who have motivation to learn a new language must be provided enough input to learn it meaningfully. “Language acquisition theory tells us that we acquire language when we understand it. If this is true, “comprehensible input” messages we understand will be the way to improve HL's as well” (Cho et al, 2004, p. 25).

A recent study done by Abasi (2014) at the University of Maryland introduced “Content-based Instruction” (CBI) in a Persian language course. According to the American Council on

the Teaching of Foreign Languages ACTFL's,¹⁷ CBI acts as a transition course for the students with Intermediate High level of Persian proficiency. The significant strategy applied by the teachers in this course was that they tried to make the written and spoken input for learners comprehensible through repetition and simplification of content and texts or lectures through “various strategies such as using a more deliberate style of speech, avoiding the use of marked linguistic forms in favor of unmarked ones, and providing a lot of paraphrasing or rephrasing to convey his meanings” (Abasi, 2014, p. 86).

Persian Language Education

Persian language learners (PLL) are a population of students with cultural, linguistic, and vocational needs. These needs have pushed them to (re)learn a heritage language. In most Persian language classrooms, different types of students are placed in one classroom due to the lack of budget (Sedighi, 2010) because of which students learn Persian as either a second or foreign language. To better address the Persian language learners throughout this article, I have conceptualized three socio-historical categories based on the nationality and language proficiency of the learners' parents. These categories are full heritage, half-heritage, and non-heritage language learners:

- **Full heritage language learners (FHHL)** have grown up in a Persian-speaking environment with two Persian-speaking parents. These learners likely have participated in cultural events and practices and are to some extent bicultural. Their Persian language proficiency varies based on their exposure and use of their heritage language.
- **Half-heritage language learners (HHLL)** have only one Persian-speaking parent. The other parent speaks another language, most likely English. These learners might have interacted with their Persian speaking parent's community and relatives. They might be more bicultural than bilingual.

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<https://www.google.com/search?q=ACTFL&oq=ACTFL&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l5.1101j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

- **Non-heritage language learners** (NHLL) have non-Persian-speaking parents. They have chosen to learn the Persian language as a foreign language due to their personal or vocational motivation

The primary objective of Persian instruction for students who have a home background in the language and are to some degree bilingual is the maintenance and/or retrieval of their written skills. Most Persian programs offer students instruction to develop their literacy so those language learners who have higher Persian language proficiency will be able to read and write in their home language. The other Persian language learners who are not competent in the Persian language seek to improve both oral and written skills. For these students, the teacher might need to develop the lessons and activities through which language learners get a better sense of new content. As an example, second language learners become professional in reading through interaction with the whole text rather than through working on isolated features of language (Goodman, 1986).

Johnson & Swain (1997) believe that teachers, regardless of what level they teach and how they deal with students' learning needs, should develop their teaching effectiveness using specific strategies, activities, and materials to enhance students' learning in the classroom. Self-evaluation and other kinds of evaluation help teachers become more effective and helpful. Ideally, assessment of this kind results in more learning and more motivation for students to attend class regularly. "The evaluation of different methodologies requires measurable outcomes, such outcomes can only be meaningful if the goals of heritage language instruction have been developed and accepted by heritage language professionals and learners alike" (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007, p. 36).

One feature of a heritage language classroom is that teachers are fluent in the language they are teaching so they are a rich source of written and oral input for students learning a new language. Still, we might question whether Persian language proficiency alone makes a language

teacher qualified to teach a second language. Wang (2009) learned through her observational data in 2008 STARTALK¹⁸ that language teachers are mostly immigrants who have undergraduate degrees; these credentials are not necessarily related to language education. Her finding is similar to what I have come to know about some Persian language teachers with different educational backgrounds such as linguistics, literature, non-education majors.

Second language teachers need to pay attention to psychological and sociocultural aspects of language and the aspects of second/foreign language learning, such as any activities that make students learn another language. Teachers who do not have a language education background can attend workshops to get a license/certificate. The aim of the STARTALK¹⁹ project is to improve the expertise of teachers and create opportunities for them to share their experiences with other teachers. This project provides a “teacher effectiveness checklist, a teacher knowledge and skills matrix, and a tool for assessing teacher development” (Wang, 2009, p. 287). The objectives of STARTALK related to language teachers²⁰:

1. To increase the number of students enrolled in the study of critical-need languages
2. To increase the number of highly effective critical-language teachers in the U.S.
3. To increase the number of highly effective materials and curricula available to teachers and students of these critical-need languages

However, a few day-long workshops might not be enough to educate teachers to approach heritage/half-heritage/non-heritage learners in the best way. Wang believes “even “traditional” teacher candidates for commonly taught languages have become too diverse to be treated with one-size-fits-all certification/licensure requirement” (ibid, 2009, p. 284). What do teachers need to know while taking care of diverse students? How is their teaching evaluated in program? Are

¹⁸ STARTALK is a federal grant program funded by the National Security Agency and administered by the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland.

¹⁹ <https://startalk.umd.edu/public/>

²⁰ <https://startalk.umd.edu/public/about>

there any assessment criteria for evaluating heritage language teachers? There should be an assessment section for programs, teachers, and methods being applied in classroom based on Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers evaluated by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).²¹ Although ACTFL evaluates students and their language proficiency, the organization's rubric can be used to assess whether teachers' methods and instruction have been effective.

Teachers must ask themselves a series of questions whose answers affect their teaching methods and materials. They should know if their students are enjoying the class time, if they are bored, how much their language learning can be used outside of class, and the amount of course content they can apply in their daily lives. Teachers should also consider how students learn new content meaningfully; that is, what strategies, materials, and activities teachers apply in their classroom that helps students learn.

Currently, a typical Persian language classroom might include grammar, vocabulary, and sentences for improving reading and writing skills. The material developers should also consider the content appropriate for diverse language learners who may have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Any teaching method in which does not consider students' concerns will not effectively promote learning for them.

McLaughlin (1994) argued that students are historically different from each other because of the language, family perspective, and values that they bring to their classrooms. Therefore, teachers need to consider these conditions while developing materials and activities so as to address new challenges (Smylie & Conyers, 1991). Diversity in the classroom requires teachers to consider how they ensure that all students taught with the same materials and methods understand the new content. Making content comprehensible is not difficult but it does require

²¹ <http://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/public/ACTFLNCATEStandardsRevised713.pdf>

that teachers spend more time including scaffolding strategies in their lesson plan. Teachers who normally depend on textbooks and pre-planned materials to teach in the classrooms may need to integrate more visual aids in their teaching methodology. Including different media and hands-on activities into the new material within a particular context will make the new material more comprehensible (Cummins, 1981). The funds of knowledge framework (Moll et al, 1992) supports the idea that students understand content better if they can connect it to their real life. This relevance activates their background knowledge and make the new point tangible to learn.

SIOP Model

The second language teaching method known as sheltered instruction (SI) was first conceptualized by Steve Krashen in the 1980s. This instruction is an approach for teaching English to language learners which integrates language and content instruction. Sheltered Instruction is viewed as “a bridge between instruction in the first language and the mainstream” (Krashen, 1996, p. 56). Teachers using SI can help students meet both the students’ and the teachers’ goals. Sheltered instruction has also been described as “a culturally responsive approach to teaching English language learners” because instruction is adjusted and adapted to meet the needs of the students (Abadiano & Turner, 2002). Sheltered Instruction is a teaching style based on the concept of providing meaningful instruction in the content areas (social studies, math, science, language arts) for transitioning second language learners towards higher academic achievement while they reach English fluency. The strong aspect of sheltered instruction is that it contains concepts from sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), the input hypothesis (Krashen, 1977), and effective and scaffolding strategies for teaching a new language. Therefore, this instruction is applicable for teaching any language as second or foreign language.

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) was developed in 1999 following observation of teachers using sheltered instruction with their English learners (Echevarria, Vogt,

& Short, 2012). SIOP is a framework for sheltered instruction that has been widely used across the U.S. for over 15 years. The SIOP identifies 30 important elements²² of sheltered instruction under eight broad categories:

- Component 1: Lesson Preparation
- Component 2: Building Background
- Component 3: Comprehensible Input
- Component 4: Strategies
- Component 5: Interaction
- Component 6: Practice and Application
- Component 7: Lesson Delivery
- Component 8: Review and Assessment

4.4 Research Design

I started my research because of my concern about Persian language education. I was interested in what learners expect to learn and how teachers transfer new knowledge. Qualitative researchers observe participants and conduct formal and informal interviews to further an understanding of what is going on in the setting from the point of view of those involved in the study. This study is an investigation of the voice of four students learning the Persian language in three Persian language classrooms and the teaching practices of three teachers.

The framework for this study draws from the SIOP model. My on-the-ground observation helped me observe teachers` strategies, activities, materials, and eventually to know what learners think of their learning. My observation and the voices of these four learners will be integrated in the SIOP model which works as an eclectic method whose components have been taken from different theories and approaches in second language teaching.

In particular, I rely more on the interviews which I had with Persian language learners and also on my observation field notes to analyze the Persian language teaching methods

²² <https://esol.leeschools.net/SIOP/pdf/SIOP%208.pdf>

practiced by each of their teachers. The other source of data analysis is the literature on successful teaching practices, some of which are done in classes where the SIOP model is applied.

It is not the intention of this study to criticize or judge these language teachers for their activities and actions, or to claim that their particular teaching methods should be modified. Indeed, the purpose of this study is not to determine why these teachers applied those teaching methods. Instead, I profile the voices of language learners sharing their challenges, expectations, and recommendations that can affect their learning of Persian language.

Research Question

1. How are the expectations, challenges, preferences, and suggestions of three Persian language learners integrated into the eight components of the SIOP model?

4.4.1 Setting

This study was carried out in three Persian language classrooms in U.S. universities. They provide the opportunity for students to learn Persian either as a second or foreign language. The first class, which I call “Class A,” a Persian language classroom at elementary level offered in the Middle Eastern Studies Department. There were twelve students in that class who had some experiences in Persian. Class A’s teacher, Sima, had a PhD in Middle Eastern Studies and has taught the Persian language for 28 years. She had experience co-developing and co-authoring Persian textbooks for students. Sima focused her instruction primarily on grammar, reading, writing, as well as listening and speaking skills.

The second classroom, “Class B,” was another elementary level Persian language course offered by the Middle Eastern Studies department in a second university in the United States. In this classroom, there were 15 students from different backgrounds. They had taken this course to become literate as well to learn speaking and listening, typically the goal of half the Persian language learners. The instructor, Afsaneh, received her PhD in Middle Eastern Studies, with a

concentration in comparative literature. Like Sima, she also had experience developing Persian textbooks. Afsaneh has taught the Persian language for over 25 years.

The third setting, “Class C,” was also an elementary level Persian language classroom at a Middle Eastern Studies department in in the United States. In this classroom, there were 13 students with various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. One of them had a full heritage background but was unable to communicate in Persian; four students had one Iranian parent and were not able to use their heritage language, although they were to some extent culturally competent. Finally, the remaining eight students were born in the U.S. and had no linguistic and cultural knowledge. Their teacher was Sepideh, a PhD candidate in comparative literature and Italian. She has been teaching the Persian language for more than 10 years.

4.4.2 Participants

Throughout this section, I will draw on ethnographic research methods which have been used in education by many researchers to help them make sense of life and ideas in the classroom (Hymes, 1996). My first inspiration to achieve a thorough understanding of ethnography was Heath (1983) whose research in two American cities took 10 years during which she lived with the residents for a long time while she was observing their living practices and language learning processes.

The use of ethnographic data helped me generate knowledge that was interesting in its own right and for me as an observer. This ethnographic case study took place from October - November 2016. The participants of this study were three Persian language teachers and four language learners (Table 4.1). I selected those students based on their background, parents and willingness to be interviewed. I first participated in these three Persian classrooms for four weeks each. Then I asked the selected participants to set up a time to interview based on their availability.

Table 4.1: Language Learners Profile

Participant Profile						
Class	Students	Family Structure	Type of Learner	Major	Any language other than English	Birth place
Class A	Neela	American Father Iranian mother	HHLL	Biology	Spanish, French, Persian	USA
Class B	Farhad	Iranian parents	FHLL	Public management and policy Working for Army	Spanish, Italian, French Japanese	USA
	Katherine	Iranian Mother American Father	HHLL	Public Health	Spanish	USA
Class C	Milad	Iranian parents	FHLL	Second year of Politics and mathematics economics	Spanish	USA

Language Learners Profiles

Neela was a second-year biology student. She was born in the US to an Iranian mother and an American father. Her mother practices the cultural traditions such as Norouz²³, Yalda²⁴, and makes Persian foods. Neela had a Persian speaking babysitter until she was 3 years old. She also attended a Persian language weekend class for 4 hours to learn Persian language until she was 7 years old. Since she wasn't enrolled in the Persian language class after that, she has not had any Persian learning for 13 years. After her mother divorced her father, she had a Persian-speaking partner. Because of this new relationship, Neela was more in Persian-speaking environment. At her university, she had taken the Persian course to improve her Persian language. She said "I am half Iranian, half American ... I took this class to improve my Farsi to speak with

²³ Persian New Year

²⁴ An Iranian festival celebrated on the "longest and darkest night of the year," Yalda is a winter solstice celebration, that is, in the night of the Northern Hemisphere's winter solstice.

my grandparents in Iran...” Neela had been pushed toward French language rather than Persian because her mother`s family immigrated to France after the revolution:

I`ve always very much valued languages, I think, growing up after the Iranian Revolution my family split in half; one to France and then my mom came to the US so growing up, I went to French bilingual school and I am fluent in French now and France is like my second home because a lot of my cousins live there and my aunt, uncles, and all my Persian family”... I say that I am usually half Persian half American, but I think I identify with more Persian culture.

Neela was interested in learning/relearning the Persian language because she her proficiency was incomplete. She indicated that her mother had not spoken much Persian to her as a child and that she had initially opted to study French. In fact, Neela`s mother did not want her to take a Persian language class. Her grandmother on the other hand insists that Neela use Persian in their conversations. Neela said:

... when I was little, the reason why I learned Farsi was because my baby sitter was Persian, but my mom and dad spoke English to me because my mom wanted my dad to understand ...So it was my baby sitter... that is how I learned Farsi since I was three... and then I started growing up without that baby sitter. Then I kind of lost my Farsi and then I went to Farsi class, when I was... before middle school. I stopped going to Persian class.

2- Farhad was studying public policy and management and had been employed by the U.S. army. He was born in the United States to two Persian language speaking parents who had immigrated in 1980 after the Islamic revolution and are now teaching the Persian language. He spoke his heritage language until the age of six but lost his Persian language abilities at the age of 7 when the family immigrated to Australia. Because he spoke Persian, the school placed him in ESL program to improve his English; however, Farhad thought he was fluent in English. To prove to the school staff that he knew English, he stopped using Persian:

I just kind of forced myself to stop speaking Persian and it was stupid, but I wanted to prove them that I can speak English. I just continued to speak English even to my parents and when my parents spoke to me in Persian I spoke back in English.

Farhad and his family lived in Australia for 11 years. Now, after about 14 years, he has started relearning the Persian language. He was not able to speak fluently at the time of our interview. He understood some of the words and sentences but was not able to reply in Persian. To earn a promotion in his new job, he needed to relearn the Persian language as soon as possible. He said in our interview:

The reason that I'm taking this course [is that] I have to learn how to speak very fluently and read and write because of the job that I'm going to get into, which is a very sensitive part of the Navy. That's requested from my command to take this... cuz [what] I want to do is something that people don't really know and so what I'm learning is giving me more fluency. I'll be able to use it for my advantage.

Farhad frequently compared the Persian language instruction he received to learning and teaching with his parents and what they did in their classes and what materials they used for their teaching. The interesting point about Farhad was that he communicated to me what he had learned from his parents. He liked the way that his parents had taught the alphabet to him and wanted me to try it in my own classroom. As an example, he had learned the letters through categorizing them based on their similar features. He sent me some images of those grouped letters which he had taken from one of his parents' books. He had learned the letters in a 6-7 letter groups. He also talked how his mother taught him Persian letters on Skype, the phone and when she was in town. He thought that the current textbook in his university Persian course was confusing because there was no categorization for the letters.

3- **Katherine** was a student of public health. She was born in the US to an Iranian mother and an American father. Because she was not exposed to much Persian as a child, she was not able to speak or even understand the Persian language. She had some cultural knowledge of Iran, though. Katherine was motivated to learn Persian because her mother had made plans to take her to Iran for the first time when turned 20 years old. As a result, she was passionate about learning to speak Persian. Katherine reflected on the time she had gone to Dubai to meet her mother's relatives.

...I need to communicate with my relatives because even if they translate the conversation to me, I want to be a part of it. I mean when they talk together in Persian, they don't have to turn to me and have a separate conversation, so I can be a part of the whole conversation.

When Katherine came in to have our interview, she told me how wonderfully her mom cooks Tahdig²⁵ for her. She liked talking about food so much that I wondering if cooking was her favorite pastime. She knew well how Tahdig was cooked, what was in it, and also how to make Tahchin²⁶. During our interview, she often talked about her mother and grandmother and what she had learned from them.

Katherine believed strongly that she needed to learn oral skills. She shared many thoughts on how a class should be and what teachers should do. She indicated that repetition and review by the teacher would be very helpful. She also needed her teacher to slow her instruction down.

4- Milad

Because of his Persian name in the Persian class, I initially perceived him to be a half-heritage language learner who had been exposed to Persian at home. However, when I asked him about his parents, he said they both were Persian speakers. He was not able to speak and understand in Persian. Milad is a second-year political science and mathematics economics major and is studying Persian language. His parents had immigrated to the U.S. after the Islamic revolution in Iran. He had taken this course because he wanted to be able to communicate with his Persian speaking relatives. Milad found learning Persian difficult at this age, though, and believed that “it's a lot more difficult to learn it right which is why I'm taking the class...and hopefully I'll learn to speak to my family, speak to my grandma, aunts and uncles...”

He told me how his parents had stopped talking in Persian with him at home because of insecurity that they felt in the White-Christian community in which they lived:

²⁵ (Pronounced tah-DEEG). Tahdig is the pan-fried layer of crust at the bottom of the rice pot and, in fact, it literally translates as "the bottom of the pot" in Persian.

²⁶ (Pronounced tah-CHEEN). A crispy baked Persian rice made of yogurt, eggs, and oil mixed with rice which creates the golden color and crispy texture.

[It] was a very, very American White Town. It was a more cultural thing. You know, we grew up in a very American town, so it was very difficult, like prisons in that community, you know that feeling of exclusion, of being some sort of foreigner, right, and so that motivated them to speak English and they regret about it now...

Milad did not feel connected with the cultural things that his parents practiced at home, that is, he did not know about them in depth. He compared the way he had learned Spanish language to the way that he was being taught in Persian. He seemed unhappy about the methods his teacher used:

Basically, ... every day we come in the class and the teacher would give a short lesson straight out of the textbook and then just give us worksheets ...right? And we wouldn't talk about the language, we wouldn't do any speaking, ... just give us worksheets and just have us do them. There was just no motivation to do anything, the worksheets [did not] teach us much and yeah... so and also we didn't really need to work hard, right. It was easy to get an A without knowing it. There was extra credit, so much extra credit.

Milad expected to learn more speaking and oral skills in Persian and was disappointed that his teacher required students to complete worksheets to improve their reading and writing. He admitted that without trying hard in the class, he nevertheless received an A because he earned so much extra credit that he laughed when remembering the experience.

4.5 Data Collection and Data Analysis

This study was designed to obtain specific information regarding the students' language learning successes, challenges, expectations, problems, and suggestions and then find the implication of the voice of those heritage language learners. The first part of this study was done through observation of language learners in natural settings of classrooms to explore what they do and how they deal with language learning. The second part of this study focused specifically on the interviews with language learners who answered the questions asked by the researcher. The questions asked about their linguistic and cultural background (if they had any connection with Persian or with Iran), their motivations, their challenges, expectations, and successes in the language class and their suggestions for teachers to make their learning journey more effective.

Therefore, a major segment of data this study comes from interview with four language learners. The field notes of the classroom observations are also another source of data for doing this paper. Classroom data collection was conducted primarily by me as the observer in three classrooms for four weeks each. Primary data sources included observation that I documented as field notes, audio-recorded files, and video recordings, as well as teachers' and learners' artifacts. Formal and informal interviews with the language learners were conducted outside of classroom time either in English or in Persian based on the student's preference. Language learners in the three classrooms were interviewed in a location outside of class time. Through the software "transcribe me", I transcribed the open-ended responses of students.

Data collection focused on teaching and learning practices of the participants. Although whole class observations were made, particular attention was given to focus teachers and learners on the basis of theoretical foundations for this research. I used grounded theory in which I applied constant comparative method (Strauss, 1987) of the pedagogical practices of teachers and learners to report the findings of this study.

To accomplish my analyses, I listened to audio files of the students, reviewed the interview transcriptions and my field notes. Then, I searched for categories connected to the research questions for which I assigned the codes, for example, “student motivation”, “student expectations”, “student challenges”, “student family”, “student recommendation” all of which could lead to a better and more effective teaching. As a result of initial coding process, I conducted a secondary coding of the data I labeled as “student voice.”.

I assigned these codes as I engaged in axial coding in which I explored different events that signified as students expressed their feelings and interpretations of the learning experience; in other words, their “voice.” I examined the nature of those practices to examine how the language learners analyzed their language classrooms related to their teachers’ pedagogical practices, how their teachers helped them learn and whether the instruction met their expectations. My examination also probed the students’ analysis of class materials. At this stage, based on the field notes, my conceptual memos, and interviews, I created a tentative list of findings in which my research question could be answered. I considered learners’ comments about learning practices, teachers’ activities, teaching and learning materials, and students’ perspectives towards Persian language learning. Ultimately, I reconnected the various codes to one another.

My analysis of teaching practices of each classroom began with the transcription of the student interviews, my field notes of my observations, and teachers’ and language learners’ materials and artifacts. I was interested in gauging student experience and voice, but also whether their Persian language teachers used any of the elements of the SIOP model. This study ultimately aims to help the other teachers and educators of the Persian language hear the voices of Persian language learners whose expectations, challenges, and suggestions shed light on Persian language pedagogy. I focus my analysis here on the sheltered pedagogical activities that

comported with the model, what expectations and challenges the learners have for their teachers and from the textbooks and materials used in these three classes.

4.6 Findings and Discussion

Students` voice is a rich source of inspiration and idea from which second language teachers benefit. Language learners have brought to the class their language learning experiences that they think are helpful for their learning. Therefore, their voice helps teachers develop materials and activities to teach them more effectively. SIOP model used for English language teaching and learning is a collection of what the second language scholars, educators, and teachers might find helpful for language learning. What I have tried to do is connecting some of the components of SIOP model with what these four Persian language learners have expressed as their hopes, challenges, and recommendation from their perspectives and what I have observed in the teaching practices of three teachers.

4.6.1 Voices of Persian Language Learners Woven in the SIOP Model

Component 1: ‘Lesson Preparation’

The component “lesson preparation” of SIOP model includes six items based on which teachers need to define the language objectives of lessons for the students clearly. They should also select appropriate concepts for the students based on the students` age and proficiency. To do so, teachers apply some scaffolding activities to make the contents meaningful for the learners. Besides, teachers use supplementary materials such as visual aids, graphs, and models to accomplish the first component of SIO model.

○ *Lesson’s language objectives/the development of higher order thinking*

Observing Class A, Sima started each session with reviewing what the class had already learned. She then gave an overview of what they were going to learn and practice in that session. Moreover, students had a syllabus based on which they knew what they were to learn.

In Class B, Afsaneh taught some pages from a textbook to the students in each session. There was no specific lesson plan for each session. In fact, the syllabus was not distributed to students until the middle of the semester, and it provided a general view of the course with many details. If the teachers announce the objectives of each session either orally in class or in written form in the syllabus, the students knew what the objectives of each session was and that was more helpful for them. The objectives acted like a map to inform the path they took in their learning journey. For example, Farhad reported that he needed to know what they were going to learn before the class began. He said, “I wish we had a lesson plan that says what we are going to do every session of the class.”

In Class C, Sepideh had developed a syllabus in which there were details of each lesson that the students were to learn. Besides that, at the beginning of the class, she explained the objectives of that session to them; so, the students knew what subject matter they were to cover. However, what was common among all three classes was that no objectives were displayed or shown to the students according to one of the important points suggested in SIOP model.

Based on component #1, the materials for teaching and homework should include the development of higher order thinking skills and be engaging enough for the students. Krashen (1982) argues that the contents of the lesson should be one level higher than students` or as he called ‘i+1’. Farhad, a full heritage language learner, who could be called bicultural rather than bilingual, believed “my teacher wants us to write a letter for 20 times which is helpful for us to learn the alphabet, but I wish we had some more challenging homework to make sure we are having progress in our language learning.”

Component 2: Building Background

Through this component and three items of it, teachers must create a relationship between the new contents and students` background and experiences. Those experiences can be cultural,

personal, and academic. Teachers also can make explicit and implicit connection between new lessons and past learning. Through this component, teachers teach the new vocabulary by presenting, emphasizing and reviewing words for students.

○ *Visuals and audio aids to activate learners` background*

When I asked Milad to analyze the textbook he was studying in his class, he referred to the importance of pictures, indicating that is the textbook was “really helpful [because] that book walks you through the basics and has a lot of pictures and it's just very easy to follow, you know, it's really a big help of the book... yeah, just started out that way so it's not intimidating...”. Step-by-step instruction of the book along with colored pictures makes the learners feel less scared since they could process new content more effectively.

○ *Make links between past learning and new concepts (Lesson Connections)*

Teachers help the language learners by reviewing the new content through different ways such as questioning, charts, visual aids like illustration, photographs, students' journals or lesson connection all of which have been suggested in the second component of the SIOP model.

Making a comment about the importance of reviewing the lessons, Katherine believed that “pictures help a lot, like visuals and hen repeating and reviewing like what they did yesterday. I'm interested in reviewing the new things and repeating what we've talked about ...” The points that she mentioned refer to the importance of the strategy of repeating and visual aids for reviewing past content. Similarly, one of Milad's concerns was retaining the information. He said that keeping it and not forgetting things was not easy. “It comes easily in class when she (the teacher) teaches it but then my biggest problem is that it'll soon go away and isn't with me.”

Echevarria et al (2012) argue that the target language load for language learners is sometimes “overwhelming,” but that teachers can decrease the load through scaffolding and repetition to help learners retain what has been taught to them.

Component 3: Comprehensible Input

This component of the SIOP model has three items which are about the ways that a teacher can provide the input understandable for the learners because learning occurs when students understand the new contents. In a second language classroom, if teachers use the target language as the main language of instruction, their speech space and difficulty level should be appropriate to the learners' language proficiency level. To expose the students to input, teachers should speak slowly, clearly, and repeat frequently the new contents. The teachers should also use scaffolding strategies to make the new contents comprehensible such as using body language, gestures, visual aids, and clear and step-by-step instruction.

o Syllabus/Lesson plan

Farhad was concerned about the syllabus. He felt the teacher should have distributed it much earlier in the semester, rather than in the middle. Syllabi are important because they give students a better sense of what they are going to do in each session and what assignments are required. The syllabus also provides the chance for teachers to give a list of the items that they will teach, the new content that students will learn, the date of the quizzes and assignments. This information helps guide students and keep them on the right track.

o Clear instruction/step-by-step instruction:

Teachers help language learners by providing clear instruction for both the home assignment as well as class activities. I observed Afsaneh asked Farhad to do an exercise from the textbook, but because he was not competent in Persian, he didn't know if he had to read that sentence aloud, translate it, or ask a question of his classmates. In Farhad's case, more clarity about the teacher's expectations for the activity would have lessened his confusion and at the same time potentially heightened his motivation to learn.

Farhad's parents have been teaching Persian for many years. Because he has seen their teaching methodology, he thought that "teachers need to be more on the whiteboard to make the new items be displayed and understandable." Related to the component "comprehensible input", his suggestion could be categorized in the third item of this component, which is use of scaffolding in teaching. Related to "step-by-step teaching", Farhad shared the following:

The teacher can start with the letters that I can write something with. When you start putting the letters together to make a word, it is more fun. Because I know how to write a word, I say I can write now. I feel more confident and motivated to be able to write even one simple word at the beginning.

Component 4: Strategies

The component 'Strategies' has three main features: techniques, methods, and mental processes that enhance comprehension for learning and retaining information (Echevarria et al, 2012). Teachers must use the strategies to provide learning opportunities for the language learners. The strategies can be cognitive, meta-cognitive, and social/affective ones. Common strategies for students are thinking aloud, previewing and prediction, analytical questioning, and elaboration. Teachers constantly use scaffolding techniques to increase support for students so as to promote their higher order thinking skills (ibid, 2012). As students become more proficient in the language, teachers can decrease the scaffolding strategies they employ.

Observing three classrooms, I found the activities through which teachers promoted the learners' higher order thinking skills. Sima in Class A did an activity related to "sheltered structure strategy," which was thinking aloud. She asked students to read a story, find some words that they knew and didn't know. She wanted them to guess the meaning of the unknown words based on the context and the known words. Using the new learned words, Sima asked them to

write a paragraph about what they thought of the story. Sima then talked about her ideas explicitly. She talked thoughtfully about the story and how the author addressed discrimination, as an example. She taught the students to think and talk about the story critically.

In classes B and C, both teachers asked their students mainly to repeat after them, do handwriting practice, translating, and making sentences and paragraphs. Both teachers organized activities that asked students to make a sentence or word which was one level (or more) beyond their current competency. Those activities were used for developing the students' higher order thinking.

Component 5: Interaction

Interaction is the fifth component of the SIOP model and has four features to help learners participate actively in interactive activities such as questioning, discussing, making themselves understood, negotiating meaning, and other techniques (Echevarria et al, 2012). That is, teachers need to promote interactional activity which may include grouping configurations such as pair group or whole class and incorporate cooperative learning ideas like jigsaw and interview activities, for example.

o Activities for language practice

In all three classrooms, there were some interactional activities that teachers asked their students to do. Sima in Class A had developed a challenging interactional activity through which students were to interview one of their family members/friends. One of the requirements of this task was that the students needed to make an appointment with their teacher and give a short report of what they planned to do. To get ready for the interview, they had to work on the questions that they wanted to ask their family members/friend. When they were done with the first draft of their questions, they needed to talk to their teacher about what they had done. That

task provided some opportunities for students to have interaction with their teacher and also to a family member/friend.

Afsaneh in Class B asked students to come up with questions and answers about what they had studied in that session. Sepideh in Class C also created a simple questioning and answering activity that required students to use the new words and structures that they had learned. The students in both classes had to create a question through substituting their own words and then ask it to their partners. They also had to answer those questions. The students also practiced a simple conversation based on a model sentence from their textbooks. This activity provided a chance to role-play the newly-learned words and structures.

Student-student interaction

In any second language class, students start learning new alphabet letters, vocabulary, structure, grammar, and how to construct sentences. However, if there is no opportunity for them to practice the learned content, they will not be able to see their language progress. Presenting themselves either in writing or orally is what the learners need to do so as to make sure they are able to repeat what they have learned. Roleplaying is an activity for the learners to practice their language. Recommending a strategy that can be done by a language teacher, Neela believed that “for those who can’t just speak easily I do think that role play is very important, and I think we are getting to that soon in her class. I think role play really helps just having you speak...”The reason that Neela found this activity useful might be because of her multilingual abilities compared to some of her classmates. The more capable students are at conversation in Persian, the better they can do it and the more they probably like it. Neela had problem with using sentences that were not appropriate for her language level. They were too difficult for her. That is another problem that teachers should pay attention to it more. The level of materials should be appropriate for the students, so we can make sure that they are learning.

○ *Student interaction*

The other activity that makes students' learning practical is sentence making. Neela thinks that "the best way is giving us a bunch of words and just say like try to make a coherent sentence from these, so it's kind of like putting the pieces together". Creating a space for the learners to practice what they have learned through interaction with words and texts can be helpful to practice the new language.

Learning any language either as a first or second language is facilitated through interaction. In the field of second/foreign language learning, interaction plays an important role in helping learners acquire a new language. That is, language learners benefit from the opportunities that teachers provide for them to use a new language in different settings.

Component 6: Practice and Application

This component has three features that help teachers develop lessons using hands-on materials. Students need to practice what they have learned and apply language and content objectives in their learning. An ideal learning situation is when students are able to engage in activities that cover all four skills of a new language (listening, speaking, reading, writing).

○ *Provide opportunities to apply new knowledge in class/integrating all four skills*

In a second language classroom, different students have their own reasons for studying a language. Some of them need to be literate and others expect to become fluent in speaking and listening. This component of the SIOP model suggests integrating all four skills, which can be done through providing the opportunity for students to apply their new knowledge in spoken or written form. Katherine was anxious about her learning progress in speaking. She expected her teacher to practice more conversation in class because she needed to speak in her mother's heritage language. Afsaneh incorporated lots of speaking and listening practices in her class because her teaching method for the beginning level was based on teaching some phrases and

sentences useful for daily conversation. There were some activities for students in which they could ask and answer questions and express some feeling. Whereas, Katherine thought that the students did not have enough speaking practice. She expected to learn more speaking and listening to deploy during her trip to Iran, in order to speak with her mother`s family.

The interviewing task that Sima in Class A had developed is an example of applying this component. To do this activity, students had to think, make notes, write their questions, share what they had done with their teacher, revise their questions and practice in order to have an interview with a family member or Persian speaking person, to make a presentation from their findings, and finally present it to the whole class. Sima was thus able to integrate all four language skills in one task.

In Class B, Afsaneh developed an activity in which students had to write a short monologue with 30 sentences. Then, they had to video-record it while they read it out loud. By doing that task, Afsaneh made her students practice all four skills. In Class C, in each session, Sepideh asked her students to do a role play activity. First, she gave the students some time to practice and create sentences to ask their partners. There was a chance of turn taking for each person in the group to ask and answer the questions.

Component 7: Lesson Delivery

This component with four items includes how the content and language objectives are supported during the lesson, if students are engaged in the lesson, and if the pace of the lesson is appropriate to students` abilities. Teachers need to develop a task that is understandable to language learners to provide opportunities to cover the lesson`s concepts and hands-on activities to promote learning.

○ *Pacing*

Echevarria et al (2012) believe that pacing of the lesson should be appropriate to the students` ability along with the difficulty of the lesson. This issue should be taken into account, specifically in multi-level classes where students are diverse in their language proficiency. If there are a few students who have problems understanding new content, teachers should provide more accommodation for the students to learn effectively. Katherine compared herself with other students who she thought knew more than she did. On the other hand, she had heard from another student in a previous course that most of the lessons that they had in their class were so easy that she doubted being able to make any progress. That is, she found that the instruction was not as easy as the student had claimed:

There was a student in this class last year... her name was Donya. She was saying it was super easy because no one knew the alphabet and the teachers did it slowly. But now in this class, the majority of the people speak Arabic or know already alphabets and I feel like they're going fast and faster and faster and faster than normal.

About pacing in teaching, Farhad was concerned why his Persian language teacher “goes very too fast. Whereas, I've taken Spanish, French and Italian and in every one of those classes teachers begin with the alphabet and go too slowly which is so helpful for me to understand the new contents better...” He compared the pace of teaching of his Persian class with other language classes that he had taken to provide the proof for what he had complain about.

Component 8: Review and Assessment

At the end of the class, the question that each teacher might ask is how well students have understood and retained the new content. This assessment lets the teachers know what they

should do in subsequent sessions. It is essential that teachers know if they should provide additional support for the learners. What brings success for the teachers is incorporating review and assessment into each session of their teaching.

○ *Assessment of course objectives*

Grades work as an instrumental motivation for students in a classroom. Grades are what most of the students are concerned about as they would like to know what their grade is, how they have progressed, and what they should do to improve their grades. Farhad believed that “teachers need to follow the students’ understanding of what is written in the book before the end of the day and make sure students have learned the materials.” Some teachers might forget *this* importance, so they finish the class without knowing who has not learned fully the new contents covered in that day. He also believed teachers should “go over every sound they are teaching to make sure students have learned them.”

Neela, a half-heritage language learner, thinks that the learners are motivated by grades. She thinks that “grades are always necessary to motivate students to a certain point. I think not being too harsh on grades helps students realize that they can do it ... you know cuz if you harshly grade students, they’ll keep feeling that ‘Oh, I can’t do it, I can’t do it’ -- which means that being too harsh on grades might make the learners lose their self-confidence on their learning.” even if the students have integrative motivation, grades mediate their interest and motivation in their learning.

○ *Regular feedback*

When students do their homework, they expect to get feedback to improve what they have done wrong. One way to learn is to receive feedback about the assignments that students complete for their classes. However, Katherine complained about getting little feedback on her assignments: “I wish our teacher would just write more feedback and comments on our paper,”

she said. Providing comments on the students` papers help them know what their mistakes or grades are. Teachers should not take the motivational role of grades for granted.

○ *Contextualization of the contents*

Contextualization of the new vocabulary that language learners need to learn is helping them see how and when those words are used. They can see the practicality of the word in its context. Showing the students how and when the words are used in context helps students understand them better. Neela was one of the students who needed context for learning new content. She said, “I like ‘Persian online’ ... it's just nice that they put everything into the context and put everything into a conversation whereas some of them are harder than the book, but it's nice to be able to like hear what they say and then breaking it down is really helpful.”

4.7 Conclusion

Richards and Rodgers (1986) pointed to ‘procedure’ as the activities or strategies applied by teachers in any language classroom. Teachers develop procedures based on their teaching approach and theory. For instance, the grammar translation method, with its main focus on reading and writing skills tend teachers use their first language while teaching vocabulary to the learners in the form of isolated word lists. Using first language is helpful in making the contents comprehensible but teachers should provide more input in the second/foreign language for their learners.

Learners come to a Persian language classroom with different ability levels, varying language and cultural backgrounds, and motivation and interest. Learners need engaging lessons and meaningful tasks which can connect them to the world they have come from. We should also not take for granted the fact that learners are living in the age of technology. From birth, children encounter different technological equipment and tools. For instance, they are involved with more pictures and videos than texts in some situations. Technology is also ubiquitous in contemporary

schooling and teachers create activities that require its use. Learners need challenges, choices, and variety in their learning experiences in a new language. To meet learners' needs, many schools and classrooms have been equipped with audio and visual equipment teachers can use to help learners understand new concepts and phenomena. Persian language classrooms should also include technology to teach this heritage language. As Wiley (2005) has noted, teaching a heritage language does not mean that instruction should be rooted in the past or be more traditional. Instead, heritage language teachers should embrace the tools and interests of the wider youth society, which include technology the danger of associating the heritage language with ancient culture and past traditions might decrease the learners' interests in learning Persian. As a consequence, Persian language teaching should embrace new technologies that learners are likely to be familiar with.

Teachers need to make their content instruction as understandable as possible by using video, animations, pictures, and other fun activities to motivate learners. To be sure, teachers can begin a lesson with excerpts from a textbook, while also creating in-class activities based on sheltered strategies.

In my own teaching, I have been inspired by the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol or SIOP model because of its comprehensive design and innovative features. The SIOP offers an empirically-validated approach to second language teaching and currently is being used to teach English to learners across the United States. I have used the model myself to effectively teach the Persian language.

As the last words of this paper, in regard to the three categories I created to help differentiate the different types of Persian language learners, I acknowledge that there are overlaps between the categories and that linguistic and cultural identities are fluid. For example, Milad could be defined as a Full Heritage Language Learner because he has two Persian-language

speaking parents and was exposed to Persian at home. Nevertheless, he was unable to communicate in the heritage language being spoken by his parents. Nor did he fully understand what a Persian language speaking person was telling him. Using this definition, Milad is not a Half Heritage Language Learner even though he was more familiar with cultural practices rather than linguistic knowledge of Persian. Growing up, Milad heard a lot of Persian from his parents, grandparents and relatives. Still, he was not encouraged to speak the language because of concerns his family had about living among conservative Christians. At the same time, like many HLL students, Milad was exploring his cultural and linguistic identity. But his intense connection to Persian language and cultural practices positioned him more within the FHLL category. Farhad was born into a fully Persian home, which could place him in the same category as Milad. However, his Persian language skills decreased in Australia after he stopped talking in Persian, though he retained a receptive knowledge of the language. The other example is Brian, who was born to non-Persian parents who used English all through his life. After he started his bachelor's degree, he acquired a few friends who were Persian language speakers. He then interacted with the families of these friends and got interested in learning the Persian language. After learning some initial vocabulary and phrases informally, Brian enrolled in the Persian language class to learn more. He was able to understand, speak, and to read and write. He could cook some Persian foods and desserts. If I wanted to consider his family structure to categorize him as a particular kind of Persian language learner, I could place him under the category of NHLL, even though he turned out to be as linguistically and culturally fluent as Iman.

4.8 References

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CONCLUSION

Persian is taught to some learners as a second language and to others as a foreign language. I have made the case in this study that teachers of Persian should develop their instructional methodology based on the diversity of the learners. In order to explore what effective Persian instruction might entail, I undertook a study to find out. I observed teachers and students in four Persian language classrooms. I wanted to explore how teachers taught the language, whether their teaching approaches drew from or reflected research insights from sociocultural theory, whether or how teachers used their own or their students' funds of knowledge as the focus of lessons, and what sheltered instructional strategies they used. Finally, I was interested in hearing the individual voices of the teachers and students alike.

Sociocultural theory considers the social and cultural aspects of human existence (Lantolf, 2000). That is, the artifacts that are socially and culturally constructed play an important role in the human learning process. The principal component of sociocultural theory is that the human mind is mediated through different tools and signs (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Applied to second language acquisition and teaching, teachers mediate new concepts and content through three types of mediation: physical tools, symbolic systems, and human mediation (Kozulin, 1998).

Because learning is a social practice, learners need to be engaged in cognitive mediation in the language classroom. In second language learning, learners use language as a psychological tool to “mediate (i.e., regulate or control) their mental and communicative activity” (Lantolf, 2011, p. 24). Sociocultural theory proposes that language is acquired through participation in social interaction with others, rather than in isolation. Higher mental processes such as language acquisition occur on a social plane at an interpsychological stage. As Lev Vygotsky (1981) noted, “social relations or relations among people genetically [i.e., developmentally] underlie all higher functions and their relationships” (p. 163).

Teachers must consider how to create the kind of socio-cognitive environment in classrooms in order to create what Vygotsky called the zone of proximal development. The ZPD is metaphorical space in which a less experienced learner interacts with a more experienced learner in a social interaction or task. Initially, the less experienced learner needs the assistance of the other, but later will be able to perform the task independently. Vygotsky (1978) theorized the ZPD as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86).

Learners notice and absorb the language knowledge they need based on the context they live or study. Although second and foreign language instruction typically incorporates the structural components of a language, like grammar and syntax, teachers nonetheless can enrich the students' language development by also focusing on the semantic and contextual aspects of language. I have argued that if teachers ignore or discount these aspects, their teaching will lack creative meaning. More important, the prioritization of structural features does not help students improve the development of the language. The words, concepts, and values of a language and its speakers can be internalized by learners if teachers can connect their "funds of knowledge" into rich discussions about the new words and concepts.

González & Moll (2002) suggest that teachers should "scaffold" the content of teaching to make it comprehensible: "Scaffolding is creating supported situations where children can extend their current skills and knowledge. It involves recruiting a child's interest, simplifying a task so it is manageable, and motivating the child to maintain their pursuit of the goal" (p. 5). Students acquire the social function of the new words through renaming those concepts and then internalizing them. They understand the words based on their lived experience or their funds of knowledge. They make sense of new words and concepts by understanding them in context. Moll

& Greenberg (1990) consider every household as an educational setting in which knowledge is transferred among the home members.

The multilevel classrooms that I observed in this study revealed the need for individualized instructional strategies but deployed within a social context. This study has concluded that teaching to learners with a wide range of proficiency in Persian requires collaborative interaction among students. Organizing students into multi-proficiency groups, for example, with both advanced and developing Persian speakers facilitates the learning of the language. It also appears to improve student motivation to learn Persian. Group configurations can include pairs, small group, collaborative teams, or whole class work (Roberts, 2007).

Teachers in a multilevel classroom should start with an activity for whole class. Depending on the content of each lesson, teachers can introduce new vocabulary, letters, or cultural content by using pictures, animations, or movies to generate interest. Roberts (2007) states that “the natural process of previewing, presenting, and practicing the vocabulary lends itself perfectly to whole-class, multilevel instruction” (p. 6). Subsequently, teachers can diversify their approach through the development of lessons that consider the various proficiency levels of their students, especially in a Persian classroom with heritage learners. Rogoff (1990) argues that a classroom is an environment where students and teachers interact about what is common between them. Teachers create an environment in which everyone is motivated to say and write something and participate in a group working activity that helps cognitive development. This development occurs “in socioculturally organized activities in which children are active in learning and managing social partners, and partners are active in structuring situations with access to observe and participate in culturally-valued skills and perspectives” (Rogoff, 1990, p. 37).

What helps in identifying a good second language program is knowing good teaching practices of teachers. Most of us have experienced learning a second or foreign language and we have had our critiques, questions, and challenges about the ways we learned it. This study has indicated that language teachers can be more successful if they listen to students' expectations from the class, from them, and from the textbooks. While teachers have high expectations for their students, students also have high expectations for their teachers. Learners start looking at their language program critically and considering what they need to get after spending some weeks in their classrooms. For instance, Katherine, a half heritage language learner, was concerned about her inability to read what the teacher asked. The teacher expected more than she was able to do. Unfortunately, the teacher was unable to effectively serve as the more capable other within a zone of proximal development. As a consequence, Katherine struggled. The more competent person in this situation can be teachers, or other students with higher language competency. This zone helps students feel comfortable, confident, and able to accomplish a task with assistance. By involving students in group activities teachers can help students develop in their language learning.

Gardner (1990) explains that students in an unsupportive classroom may ask themselves, "Am I stupid?" when they do not know what to do in an activity and when they receive little or no assistance. These students might compare themselves with others who know more than they do and might feel unable to perform in classroom. Thus, they assume that learning a new language is out of their control and their ability. Creating a supportive and safe classroom where teachers give learners more confidence and guidance in their pedagogical projects is the strategy to help learners.

Living in the age of technology, we are aware of the significant role of technology. We should incorporate technology into our teaching materials and methods to interest learners in the

new language and learn it more meaningfully and enthusiastically. Using movies, music, audio or visual stories and other technological tools such as projectors, PowerPoint presentations are useful tools for the language classroom (Cummins, 2005; Pérez, 2010). Using oral history of the heritage language, for instance elder voices, might help motivate students to keep learning their heritage language. They should feel a connection to the language and culture through technology-based materials since they are living in the age of technology and the instruction should not be too different from their other educational experiences.

Including literature in class materials is very useful to contextualize new content that teachers plan to teach. Literature helps learners know more about the structure of the new language. That is, books with colorful pictures and cultural content have the advantage of connecting students to the language. They also learn how to read stories in a new language. The more cultural aspects of a language are covered in the books, the more heritage language students feel pride. In turn, the more pride they feel, the more motivated they become to acquire the language. Thus, storytelling is a powerful way that parents and educators can use in preserving and teaching a heritage language.

Language is an example of a symbolic system. I believe that at the beginning of language teaching, it is more helpful to translanguage the new lessons. Therefore, learners compare what they are learning to what they already know. This comparison provides meaningful learning. As Cummins (2005) has said, “Typically, within bilingual and L2 immersion programs, strong L1/L2 relationships are observed for literacy-related aspects of language. Students use their L1 conceptual knowledge to make sense of L2 input, and subsequently the L2 interacts with and exerts an influence on the L1” (p. 588). The bilingual teaching material has a main role to fully transfer the contents being taught to the students.

Educationally speaking, if language attrition happens within a community, reacquisition of

the language might be difficult. To solve the problem of language attrition, “Anderson (1982) argued that language attrition researchers must take into account comprehension and production, uses of both oral and written language, traditional linguistic levels (i.e., phonology, morphology, syntax) as well as functions, domains of use, and discourse competencies of the speakers in question” (in Valdés, 2005, P:418).

Besides what Anderson has suggested in revitalizing a heritage language, Persian language teachers must provide extra pedagogical assistance for learners of Persian. This is especially the case for heritage learners, who may not have acquired the language at home and who may face challenges with Persian script and grammatical structures because the English language is so different.

5.1 Limitation and Implications for Further Study

A limitation of this research is that I was not able to be present in the classrooms for more than four weeks. Consequently, the data I collected might not be as rich as a longer observation over an entire semester might be. For this reason, the context-rich, value-laden, narrative-filled report of this research might not convince the educators and other teachers because of lack of hard evidence as there is in a quantitative research.

I have always thought that there are likely biases in any research study. As a researcher I have been be actively involved in my research setting and with my research participants as well. I am also passionate about the Persian language, the learners whom I like to see more motivated in their learning process, and about the theories and methods of a second language teaching. My passion might interfere with the inability to see other things happening in a classroom. As a researcher, I am aware that there are other theoretical frameworks that might provide robust interpretations of my date. For me, the most useful framework has come from the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky and the way that other scholars have used it in second language learning. So,

I aim to see if this theory is being applied in Persian language classrooms, or indeed, what it might look like in the classroom.

Another possible limitation of this study is that the students who did not consent to be interviewed might have said more positive things which is not unusual in qualitative methods. Looking at the number of participants of each classroom, it is possible that the students who participated in the study might be the ones who wanted their teachers and educators to hear their voices.

My long-term goals include more research in other Persian language classrooms that I have not found time to go and observe. I am hopeful to do more research in different settings through which I could also co-instruct in Persian language teaching. I am not sure how ready other teachers will be to let me make some changes of their teaching methods. Many teachers may believe they are applying the effective methods in their classroom. I am open to learning as much from them as I hope they can learn from me.

Learning about English language education through different methods and programs, I plan to conduct more research to explore how teachers teach in their classrooms and how students might learn the Persian language more meaningfully. I hope to begin working on an integrated approach to teach what I call “Structured Persian Instruction,” whose approach, design, and procedure are taken from different methods and approaches of second language teaching and learning. The goal will be to assist language teachers and learners in the development of beginning/intermediate literacy in the Persian Language so as to raise pride and interest in Persian language learners. While in a heritage-speaking family, parents and children are being separated “by the wall of words” (Chow, 2001, p. A01), educators should not let that wall get thicker, which leads to intergenerational conflict and communication breakdowns as well as the loss of language and ethnic identity.

5.2 References

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Appendix # 1

SIOP model in promoting English development in English language learners

Lesson preparation

- Defining Lesson / content objectives
- Level-appropriate materials /difficultly level of the materials to be read
- Use of first language
- Use pf supplementary material effectively/scaffolding strategies
 - o Hands – on manipulatives
 - o Realia
 - o Pictures / videos/ demonstration /modeling/

Building background

- Linking the new lesson to Ss experiences or previously taught lessons
- Lesson the load of materials through scaffolding and or repetition
- Warm up activity
- Activating the background
 - o Visual aids
 - o Lesson connection

Comprehensible Input

- Understanding the language
- Teaching a level slightly beyond the Ss` level so they are required to “stretch” cognitively
- Doing scaffolding or “sheltering” instruction
- Speech pace, simplified sentences for beginners
- Step-by-step explanation of the academic tasks Ss need to do
- Using various strategies: modeling, visuals, hands-on activities, demonstration, gestures, body language.

Strategies

- Sufficient time for students to practice language and content
- Scaffolding techniques
- Various question to develop Students` higher order thinking time

Interaction:

- Providing opportunities for students to use new language in different settings
- Organizing various grouping configurations (Groups can be homogenous or heterogeneous)
 - o Individual
 - o Pair work
 - o Small groups
- Wait time

- Clarifying concepts and terms in L1,

Practice and application

- Providing students with new language and content
- Hands on materials to practice
- Providing opportunities to apply new knowledge
- Using activating to integrate all language skills

Lesson delivery

- Content supported by the lesson
- Objectives supported by the lesson
- Students engagement %90 of the period
 - o Not to bored students
 - o Not ill-prepared student
 - o Poor management
 - o Pass out or collect paper
- Pace-appropriate to students' level
 - o To deliver the lesson
 - o To practice by the student

Review and assessment

- Review of vocabulary
- Regular feedback to students
- Assessment of lesson objectives
- Different kinds of assessment
 - o Informal
 - o Authentic

Appendix # 2

Interview Questions (Teachers)

1. What teaching methodologies do you use in your class?
2. What is your preferred teaching methodology?
3. How do you make your teaching materials comprehensible for learners?
4. What do you do to make learners interested in continuing to learn the Persian language?
5. Do you feel that learners are interested enough to continue their Persian language learning?
6. How do you teach discrete structures of language including grammar and vocabulary?
7. What activities do you use in the classroom while teaching?
8. What scaffolding strategies do you provide to different types learner? (FHHL, HHLL, NHLL)
9. Do you use sheltered strategies in your teaching? Can you give me some examples?
10. Do you have any challenges in your teaching and classroom such as different types of learners or lack of budget for purchasing teaching materials? If yes, elaborate them.
11. What problems/challenges might learners face while learning Persian?
12. Can you tell me about the successes that you have had during your teaching of Persian?
13. What are you hopeful to do in the near future to promote the Persian language among second generation Iranians living in the U.S.?
14. What materials do you prefer to use in your classroom?
15. What do you think about including technology in your teaching?
16. How do you feel “loud and proud” while teaching Persian language? Give an example of being “loud and proud” as a Persian language teacher.
17. How might you help your students be “loud and proud” about learning Persian and participating in Persian cultural events?

Appendix #3

Interview Questions (Students)

1. Why are you learning Persian? [What do you hope to do with the language]
2. How would you describe your progress or abilities, if any, in each of the four language skills, speaking, listening, writing, and/or reading? Explain.
3. In which domains (spaces) do you use Persian outside of the classroom?
4. Are you studying any other languages? Which ones (and why?)
5. Do you plan to use your Persian in academic studies?
6. Do you expect to use Persian in your future career?
7. How important do you think it is to learn and become fluent in two languages?
8. What would your preferred class times look like? (An hour every day, three times a week, or once a week, etc.) Please explain.
9. Do you feel your current Persian language program is effective in advancing your understanding and use of Persian?
10. Do you have any positive attitudes about Persian language? Explain.
11. Do you have negative attitudes about Persian? Explain.
12. Do you have any suggestions about how heritage learners of Persian can develop a more meaningful cultural and linguistic relationship with Iran and Persian language?
13. Have you been exposed to books and materials in Persian at home or while growing up? Give an example.
14. What kind of materials, books, and content would you prefer to help you develop your reading skills in Persian?
15. Do you read Persian books or materials for pleasure? What about films in Persian?
16. Do you believe being bilingual will make you smarter and broaden your intellectual development?
17. How do you self-identify (heritage language learners, non-heritage language learners, Persian American, American, etc.)?
18. Do you plan to continue to study Persian at your university or in your community?
19. Do you plan to use Persian in your personal life?
20. Will your learning of Persian affect your relationship with family, relatives, and community members?
21. Do you think you would enjoy speaking Persian and engaging in cultural practices as a biliterate, bilingual, and bicultural person?
22. Do you feel proud about being a Persian speaker? A Heritage language speaker?
23. To what degree do you credit your acquisition of Persian to the language program? To your family connections? To the media?