

Introduction

The language presented in *Modern Persian: Spoken and Written, Volumes I and II*, is that of contemporary Iran, particularly as it is spoken by educated inhabitants of the capital city, Tehran. The text is designed to provide beginning students with a mastery of modern Persian sufficient to meet most everyday needs. Once students have finished these books, they should be able to understand colloquial Persian spoken at normal speed; to speak it fluently and idiomatically, although with a limited vocabulary and grammatical range; to read elementary but unsimplified texts; and to write legibly. They should also be able to continue learning with a minimum of formal guidance, particularly in a Persian-speaking context. In other words, they should have active mastery of modern Persian, and be able to move easily between its spoken and written forms.

Modern Persian is a living language and in this text is taught as such. It may seem unnecessary to assert the vitality of a language spoken by well over 60 million people, but Persian has traditionally been taught in North American and European universities as virtually a dead language. Only its written form is presented, with classical language given preference over the contemporary. Moreover, this approach relies heavily on memorizing the rules of Persian grammar and applying them to the task of translation. In our experience, even the best students emerge from such instruction with an extensive but largely passive knowledge of the written language. They acquire virtually no ability to speak or understand it. While such students—with heavy reliance on dictionaries—can translate difficult passages of Persian into acceptable English, they usually pronounce it badly and are unable to carry on the simplest conversation.

For us, the most persuasive argument against beginning with an emphasis on passive mastery is that it can prove a serious barrier to gaining active mastery later on. Those with advanced reading knowledge are reluctant to start all over again at the elementary level in speaking. They wish, not unreasonably, to express ideas as complicated as those they can read, forming each sentence in English and then laboriously translating it into Persian, with results

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frequently either painful or amusing. Those knowing only the written form of the language also often disdain the colloquial, viewing it as an inferior form. They prefer to speak in a bookish and unidiomatic way, because that is the language that seems "right" to them. In doing so, however, they give an impression of stodgy foreignness far from what they intend. Finally, although it is hard to learn the correct sounds and colloquial forms, it is harder still to unlearn frequently rehearsed errors. To speak the language, one should learn to do so sooner rather than later.

Finally, even if students have no immediate need to speak the language, it has been proven repeatedly that students learn all aspects of a language with greater speed, assurance, and permanence when they obtain active mastery in a meaningful context rather than by learning a series of exercises. In practical terms, this means that students learning to speak and understand easily now will spend less time with the dictionary or grammar book once they begin to read in earnest. Gaining control of the spoken language will not only yield quicker access and keener proficiency but will provide students with the spoken form of a living language and all the practical advantages that come with it.

Spoken and Written Persian

Modern Persian in its spoken form is the basis of this text, so we emphasize learning by ear from the very first lesson. Grammar, phonology, and vocabulary will be introduced and drilled orally and explained in writing only once active mastery is achieved. As a result, students will progress more rapidly in speaking and understanding Persian than in reading and writing. As the course progresses, the written language will receive more emphasis, but the spoken language will remain the basis for instruction.

The spoken and written forms of Persian differ in a number of essential ways, and students will, in effect, be learning two separate but overlapping dialects. Mastery will mean, among other things, facility in moving between these two dialects. Drills are included to promote this facility. Students will find that we place far more emphasis on alternating from

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spoken to written Persian than the reverse, replicating the way Iranians themselves learn the language—first spoken, then written. Our principal reason for stressing the transformation of spoken to written over that of written to spoken is that when learners write they have more time to think ahead to what transformations are needed in writing.

Levels of Usage

A language in its spoken and written forms has a wide range of usage—indeed the whole scope of the language. Neither form is unitary. For example, we do not speak to friends in the same way we do to an employer. Likewise, there are differences among the kinds of written language used for personal letters, formal essays, poetry, and so forth. These varieties of discourse within each category are what we mean by "levels of usage." No single version of either written or spoken language would be appropriate to all these contexts.

Persian is a language that distinguishes many levels of usage in formally marked ways—using different pronouns, deferential word forms, and honorific forms of address. A simple inquiry such as "How are you?" can be expressed at a half-dozen levels of formality in both spoken and written discourse.

It would be self-defeating to attempt to teach comprehension of all possible levels of usage in an elementary language class. The classroom does not provide the appropriate context for using extremes of either informality or formality. Yet students must be prepared to deal with this aspect of modern Persian. Our solution is to choose two levels of usage within the larger categories of spoken/informal and written/formal Persian appropriate both to the classroom and to the socio-economic level of university students. These forms are the basis for most of our instruction and will serve most purposes. Once mastered, they should provide a convenient starting point for acquiring others. More formal and informal levels are also illustrated at appropriate points throughout the text.

In practice, learning to move easily among these various linguistic levels is not as difficult as it may at first appear, and students will probably acquire the skill naturally as new

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situations present themselves. We mention the issue here principally to prepare you for the efforts of well-meaning friends and relatives to "correct" your Persian by teaching you more or less formal versions of what you have already learned in class. One productive way of dealing with such assistance is to ask what the appropriate context might be for using what they wish to teach you. Is it something that they would say to a teacher, or only to friends? It may turn out that what they want you to know is a textbook version of the language that they would never actually use. In the same way, even educated speakers of American English commonly say "gonna" but would teach a new learner of English to say "going to" because it seems more "correct."

Language and Grammar

Unquestionably, it is impossible to master a foreign language without learning its grammar. To say otherwise would be tantamount to asserting that one could learn it without acquiring vocabulary or phonology. We are as concerned about teaching modern Persian grammar as are the authors of more traditional textbooks. However, our approach to teaching grammar differs from theirs in several ways.

Traditional grammars consist of rules (by which we mean descriptive statements about the language), illustrative examples, and drills. Students memorize the rules, study the examples, and use them to do the drills. The proportion of rules to examples and drills may not be high. Our text contains the same elements, but the proportions differ sharply—there are far more drills and examples than rules, and they are studied in that order. Students first memorize or simply listen to the examples and then do the oral drills based on them, and the study of the grammatical rules is left for study at home when students feel the need for them. This order seems to put the grammar last, but in fact it is first. Our text also contains the same elements and is basically a grammar-based text in underlying organization. A crucial factor in this course, however, is that this organization according to grammatical patterns is "behind the scenes," and the in-class teaching methods do not concentrate on grammar. Since the drills

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have been carefully arranged in a progression that presents the grammar systematically and cumulatively, as they practice them they are already studying and acquiring the grammar in the most active and practical way possible. Our grammar discussions are intended to be a summary of what students have already internalized in the drills or, occasionally, to serve as further clarification of confusing points of grammar. Because the forms and structures of Persian are relatively easy, we feel that students can read and absorb most grammar explanations on their own, leaving valuable class time for learning activities that require assistance.

As they begin a new set of drills, students may find themselves formulating a "rule" to describe the point of the drill. With increased skill mastery, use of that rule, that grammatical pattern, will become automatic and eventually second nature. As for written grammar explanations, however, we have found that even when patterns are completely self-evident from drills, most of our students feel more comfortable when the rule describing these patterns is made explicit. Some students prefer to preview that grammar before beginning the appropriate lesson or section, while others wait and refer to the written explanations only after they have begun to internalize the patterns through drills and conversation in class. They might even use the grammar as a type of review after they have finished the lesson. Different students have different needs and learning styles. However they approach it, the grammar is written out for their convenience to read whenever they like and as many times as they need. Above all, we think that drills and exercises offer the best aids to help students learn grammatical patterns. Using these patterns in conversation, then, leads to their full absorption to the point that they no longer have to think about them.

In preparing these sections, we have found it necessary to use a certain amount of linguistic terminology to describe Persian grammar. Where special grammatical terms are needed—and sometimes there really are no simple equivalents—we have defined them before putting them to use. To clarify our descriptions and analyses of the patterns of Persian grammar, we have included contrastive analyses of parallel phenomena in English.

The grammar sections can be read independently outside of class but may certainly be

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discussed briefly in class once the relevant lesson or lessons have been completed and questions still remain. However, we think that drills and exercises offer the best aids to understanding. Our explanations are not meant to be exhaustive but are tailored to the needs of the text. We have tried to present only what is required to understand the patterns of a lesson, and perhaps a little more. Where there are several stages to a particular grammatical pattern, for example in the usage of definite/indefinite nouns, we have explained each stage as the students' expressive abilities become more sophisticated. We find that students often begin to ask questions about grammar or ways of saying things right before beginning the very lesson that introduces those points. This anticipation of what is to come reinforces the idea that learners need only as much grammar as they are ready to internalize for the purposes of expression and that they will actually learn new grammar points when they are ready to absorb them.

Cumulative Development

By cumulative development, we mean that each lesson grows out of the preceding ones, moving from simple to complex. Drills and exercises are repeated periodically throughout the books to enable students to keep earlier lessons current and active. Of course, the heavy reliance on conversation, both structured and informal, in class is the best way to keep vocabulary and patterns from previous lessons fresh in one's mind. We have endeavored not to oblige students to learn patterns out of the established sequence or to learn vocabulary useful only for the lesson in which it appears.

Lesson Structure

The textbook consists of two volumes and 16 lessons. The first volume includes lessons 1-8 and the second volume includes lessons 9-16. We have grouped the contents of lessons under a number of self-explanatory headings and spread them among sixteen numbered sections. Rarely will any one lesson contain a full complement of sixteen sections. The

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contents of particular sections may also alter as the lessons progress. Sections 1 and 15 contain phonology drills, but from Lesson 9 on, section 15 is devoted to various writing drills and conversation tasks.

Particularly in Volume I, section 4 in each lesson will emphasize memorization of a brief conversation or dialogue, introducing elements of phonology and grammar that will provide the starting point for drills in sections 6 and 10. The presented phonology is keyed to vocabulary in the dialogue. The grammar presented in section 11 will expand on and explain what has been taught in the dialogue and drills. Sections 3 (classroom expressions), 5 (word building), 8 (situational and practical drills), and 12 (cultural materials) are supplementary and provide a richer and more varied linguistic, cultural, and social context in which to comprehend the language. Section 9 (reading Persian) constitutes a separate set of lessons until the writing system has been fully taught (Lessons 1 through 5). Beginning with Lesson 6, section 9 presents the rules for converting colloquial speech to Formal Written Persian (Lessons 6 through 12), and section 14 presents reading material.

Workbook material accompanying section 9 reading lessons are for learning to handwrite Persian. Our goal in these lessons is to teach adult handwriting. Through years of teaching the script, we have found that adult learners do not go through the same stages as children do when learning to read and write. In our experience, the first rules learners acquire and the first letter shapes they practice form the basis of their future handwriting. We have therefore chosen to skip the formative stages through which children develop mature handwriting and use an already developed handwriting as our model. We often encounter people who learned Persian as a foreign language and have been speaking, reading, and writing it for years, but who feel that their Persian handwriting is still like that of an Iranian second-grader. When seeing our students' handwriting, however, they often say they wish they had been taught a correct adult handwriting from the beginning.

Other sections not previously mentioned include the following: section 2 (vocabulary lists for each lesson), section 7 (review material), section 13 (longer narratives, dialogues, and

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listening comprehension exercises), and section 16 (compositions). Keys are provided at the end of the text for the drills of section 9.

An ideal lesson consists of the sections listed below. The sections marked by bold letters are those we recommend doing in class. Other sections are more effectively covered at home or in the language lab:

Section	1	Phonology drills
Section	2	Vocabulary lists for each lesson
Section	3	Classroom expressions
Section	4	Dialogue
Section	5	Word building
Section	6	Drills
Section	7	Review material
Section	8	Situational and practical drills
Section	9	Reading Persian—The alphabet (Lessons 1 through 6) Rules for converting colloquial speech to formal written Persian (Lessons 6 through 12)
Section	10	Drills
Section	11	Grammar
Section	12	Cultural materials
Section	13	Longer narratives and dialogues
Section	14	Readings (both at home and in class)
Section	15	Phonology drills (Lesson 1 through 8) Various writing drills and conversational tasks (after Lesson 8)
Section	16	Compositions, Translation

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Although we have numbered the sections within each lesson and arranged them in sequence, there is no set order in which they must be presented to be effective. We think that the lessons work better when dialogue comes before drills, and when drills are interspersed with work on other sections. Grammar need not be covered in class. Students may feel they want to read it before performing the drills, but it can also be effectively studied after the drills. The only inescapable requirement is that each lesson be studied thoroughly before the next is begun.

Language and Expression

Persian is the easiest major language of the Near East for English speakers to learn. Like English, it belongs to the Indo-European family of languages, while Arabic and Hebrew belong to the Semitic and Turkish to the Turkic. This family connection means that Persian, English, and other Western European languages have similarities in matters of grammar, syntax, and word formation. The sound system of Persian also makes few unreasonable demands on American palates, and Persian, like English, is unencumbered with case or gender.

Persian grammatical structure is relatively easy to master. There are essentially three aspects of the language that Americans find difficult to learn: the two sounds represented herein as /q/ and /kh/ (sometimes transcribed as gh and x), which have no equivalents in English; the writing system, a modified form of the Arabic alphabet; and the unfamiliar vocabulary. A substantial portion of modern Persian vocabulary is borrowed from Arabic and is altogether unfamiliar to Americans and Europeans. Arabic loan words in Persian play a role very like that of Latin and French loan words in English. The few cognates existing between Persian and the languages of Europe delight only the hearts of philologists—*madæx* = "mother," *pedæx* = "father," *bænd* = "bind," and so on. There is nothing like the free gift of hundreds of bonus words received by English speakers studying French or Spanish. As partial consolation, in recent years Persian has borrowed the terms for many objects and concepts from European languages along with the objects and concepts themselves (see Lesson 4, Section 4.5).

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Beyond that, Persian belongs to a very different world. It is a truism among language teachers that teaching a language is teaching a culture. In this case, that culture has little shared history or experience with American and European cultures. Its central religion is neither Christianity nor Judaism, and never has been. The historical categories Medieval, Renaissance, and Modern have no meaning in Persian history, and Iran had no European neighbors until Russia invaded the Caucasus and Central Asia in the nineteenth century. The absence of cognates between English and Persian is surface witness to deeper distinctions between the two cultures using these languages. Although Persian is in simple, mechanical terms an "easy" language, it expresses itself in ways that do not translate readily into English. One is often at a loss to find even a rough equivalent in one language for terms and expressions absolutely characteristic of the other.

Another truism of language learning is that the more familiar you sound to the person whose language you are learning, the stranger you may sound to yourself. This truism works for the language's cultural levels, as well. In order to become really comfortable with Persian, you must accept concepts and modes of expression that will initially seem strange to you but that are normal and familiar to Iranians.

Vocabulary

We have sought to provide a useful vocabulary for the context in which students are learning Persian. It would be pointless to emphasize cultural situations encountered only when living in Iran and impossible to recreate in the classroom. For example, this text avoids instructing students on matters of daily life in Iran, such as how to hail a taxi or what to say to the greengrocer. We have chosen vocabulary suitable for the average student studying Persian in North America, in the context of an American university campus, interacting with classmates or Iranians resident in the United States. In some cases, we have asked students to imagine a dialogue taking place in Iran, but we have done so without requiring a stretch of the imagination or reliance on unfamiliar cultural material.

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We have organized the progression of the materials in each lesson, especially the vocabulary, to enable students to talk first about the most basic topics of learning a new language in a new classroom situation. Gradually we have them fan out from these first, most immediate needs to topics of ever-widening circles of interest. We begin by introducing basic greetings and politeness issues, and we give the students the tools to talk first about the classroom and immediate language learning needs, family background and simple personal information, daily activities, and the languages they have studied. From there students will progress to more complex information about personal issues, likes and dislikes, daily activities, family and friends, skills and fields of study, occupations, the wider university environment, places and nationalities, and they eventually will learn to start expressing opinions. They soon begin to talk about qualities, emotions, and physical states, express more complex opinions and learn how to agree/disagree in conversation, use humor, give advice, and work on problem solving. Throughout the course as a whole, we also teach students increasingly more sophisticated ways to ask and talk about their own language learning needs and problems, and we give them ways to explain and define words in Persian, gradually providing tools to help them advance their own learning skills. In this manner, we feel students can learn comfortably and confidently to begin to "own" their own language learning and identify with the language they are learning.

Students in Persian classes in the United States cover a wide range. Some students wish only to read medieval historical texts, for example, and possibly do no more than translate them to extricate information needed for their research. Others are Americans married to Iranians who desire to speak only the most colloquial Persian at home with their spouses or in-laws as well as American-born Iranians who have a vested personal interest in Persian and Iranian culture and wish to speak with older relatives or recent arrivals, but have no further academic aspirations with the language. The vocabulary, dialogues and readings herein are designed for learners somewhere in the middle of these two categories--that is, for students of the humanities and social sciences, such as history, literature, sociology, ethnomusicology,

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political science, and the like, who will eventually need to speak Persian with colleagues, as well as to read relevant textual material in their own disciplines. Most students study Persian out of a genuine interest in modern Iran and may in addition have Iranian friends or acquaintances either on campus or beyond the academic environment. Because no two language classes will have the same mix of students, individual teachers must tailor certain aspects of this text to the needs of their classes.

Many students in our classes come to Persian with knowledge of a second or even third language, such as French, Arabic, or another Islamic language. Therefore, we have made a special effort to "overstuff" lessons with Persian vocabulary coming from Arabic, English, and French. This extra material is presented on an optional basis with the hope that students with prior knowledge of these words will find this vocabulary useful and easy to master. These words may then be added to drills or omitted according to the needs and composition of the class.

Culture

In the context of language learning, culture refers to how people interact when they are speaking to each other, what the givens and assumptions common to most speakers of that language are within that society, and how people use their language. A conversation between two people is a microcosm of their society. In this sense, culture might involve the following among a multitude of other possibilities:

- developing friendships and interacting socially with a group of people you do not know very well
- asking questions of, and talking about yourself with, new acquaintances
- interacting with various types of people in different social situations
- dealing with the unique situational needs for respect, equality, age difference, same-gender/cross-gender interactions, friendliness, intimacy, gratitude, and so on

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Culture is the context in which the language is spoken. Iranian culture in the context of this course involves how to use Persian for interpersonal exchanges with Iranians, based on the expectations and norms of Iranian society.

In this vein, we introduce students to certain important Iranian cultural areas at some length, for example, politeness and respect in greetings, addressing people, asking permission, and other contexts; food and accompanying behaviors and expectations; the use and importance of gestures; formal, informal, and intimate ways of speaking to people; attitudes about family relations; making and responding to compliments, requests, favors, and so forth. In addition to this material, we also provide students with background information on Shiite Islam, Iranian calendars and festivals, Iranian educational systems, Iranian names, the geography of Iran, money, poetry and proverbs, humor, sarcasm and irony with friends, and many other cultural topics.

While we try to have students communicate in the terms of their own realities quickly, and relate to the language as something they can actually speak, we also expose them to Iranian culture from day one. We start out with what is familiar to the students, by enabling them to talk first about their own backgrounds; next they ask and talk about the same issues with other students, and eventually with Iranian friends and Iranians on campus, and for some students, in the community at large. There is a large Iranian presence in the United States, including many recent arrivals and visitors from Iran. Most university environments have attracted Iranian students and professors and usually their families as well. Urban centers have an additional asset in having even larger, more varied Iranian communities, bringing with them a wide variety of personal and general cultural styles of interaction. In addition, more and more American-born Iranians are attending Persian-language courses on the university level, some to learn the script and increase their vocabulary and others to learn Persian from the very beginning. Classroom interaction allows for students with more contact with, and insights into, Iranian culture and to share their own experiences, further enriching the students' understanding and learning of Iranian culture. We do not mean to imply here, however, that students will learn to speak Persian only if

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they meet Iranians outside of class. This course is set up to provide the maximum number of opportunities for them to use the language patterns learned in class. This is accomplished through classroom interaction and peer teaching, valuable tools in the learning process. Thus the relationships students form in class will play an important role in their language learning process throughout this course. Since structured and open-ended conversation time with classmates is built into this course, students will begin to use Persian for real communication and at the same time have fun as they learn.

Transcription

In Lesson 1 through Lesson 5, we have used English-based transcription to represent Persian, for several reasons. First and most important, the use of transcription allows us to teach complete sentences from the first lesson, thereby emphasizing the spoken language from the start. Commencing with the Persian writing system would inevitably place the written language and the individual word at the center of the course. Second, transcription represents the sounds of spoken Persian more accurately and unambiguously than does the Persian alphabet. Finally, using the transcription system for colloquial Persian and the writing system for written language in the initial lessons allows us to clearly distinguish between these two language forms until students have gained some familiarity with them. One side benefit of this approach is that Arabic-speaking students are less tempted to pronounce Persian as Arabic when they see it in transcription.

Most of the transcription system used in this text should be fairly obvious to English speakers, except for Persian sounds not existing in English. The main exception to an English-based spelling is the vowel /æ/. Since it is the most common vowel in Persian and even though it is almost identical to the English "a" vowel in "cat," Americans tend to pronounce it like "ah" in "Kahn." We have used a special vowel symbol here to remind students constantly that it must be clearly distinguished from Persian /a/.

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Additional Signs

Intonation contours will not be indicated everywhere, but they will be marked precisely in the dialogues and in the sections on pronunciation. A number of additional signs are used to indicate word stress, sentence stress, and intonation. These include the following:

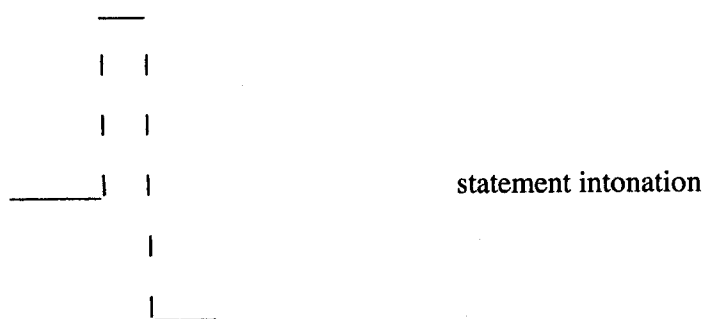
Word Stress

- (´) acute accent: primary word stress
- (˘) grave accent: secondary word stress (generally reserved for compound verbs)

Note: Because word stress falls on the final syllable of most words (except verbs and certain adverbs), final stress is not marked and is considered the norm. Stress marks are employed for all cases where stress falls on any syllable but the last.

Intonation and Sentence Stress

In the first two lessons, the contours of sentence intonation are marked by lines that run below, through and above the sentence:



(_) Occasionally, this symbol is illustrated by using **bold** letters. However, after the first two lessons, we have used the *italic*, **bold**, or underline to mark the one syllable receiving the principal stress in a sentence. (mæn inja farsɪ mɪkʰunæm.)

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? The barred question mark is used as a reminder that questions formed with question words normally take statement intonation instead of question intonation. (See below, Lesson 1, Sections 1.3.1 "Notes," and 1.5 "Question Intonation.")

To demonstrate the way these signs work, here follows an English sentence marked as we would mark a Persian sentence.

My friend téachès màthémátics in Shiráz.

The difference between sentence stress and intonation can be confusing at first. To see how it works, move the stress to different words in the sentence. As you do, the meaning of the sentence will change slightly, but the sentence as a whole will continue to receive statement intonation, which in English is a level contour that drops off at the end.

My friend téachès màthémátics in Shiráz. (Not someone else's friend.)


My friend téachès màthémátics in Shiráz. (Not my sister, for example.)

My friend téachès màthémátics in Shiráz. (And does not study it.)

My friend téachès màthémátics in Shiráz. (Not some other subject.)

My friend téachès màthémátics in Shiráz. (Not some other city.)

Audio CD

Certain sections in Volume 1 and Volume 2 are accompanied by audio components, the beginning of which will be marked with this symbol: . This symbol also appears in the Contents preceding the sections that contain audio components. The following sections have an audio component: Lesson 1--1.4 Dialogue 1, 1.10 Numerals; Lesson 2--2.4 Dialogue 2, 2.15 Phonology Review; Lesson 3--3.4 Dialogue 3, 3.11.3 Past Roots of Verbs; Lesson 4--4.4 Dialogue 4, 4.11.5 The Ending Pronoun; Lesson 5--5.4 Dialogue 5, 5.16 Translation Practice; Lesson 6--6.4 Dialogue 6, 6.13 Long Dialogue, last Reading Text in the lesson (end of 6.15); Lesson 7--7.4 Dialogue 7, 7.13 Long Dialogue, 7.13.1 Reading and Writing (text about Suzan); Lesson 8--8.4 Dialogue 8, Optional Reading: Islam (end of 8.12); Lesson 9--9.4 Dialogue 9, 9.13.1 Longer Narrative in Colloquial; Lesson 10--10.4 Dialogue 10, 10.14.1 Fereydu

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Mohammadi; Lesson 11--11.4 Dialogue 11, 11.13 Long Dialogue, 11.14 (11.14.1) Reading and Writing; Lesson 12--12.4 Dialogue 12, 12.13 Long Dialogue, 12.14.1 Geography of Iran Lesson 1, 12.16 Composition; Lesson 13--13.4 Dialogue 13, 13.14.1 Geography of Iran, Lesson Two; Lesson 14--14.4 Dialogue 14: Formal Speech, 14.14.1 Geography of Iran, Lesson Three; Lesson 15--15.4 Dialogue 15, 15.14.1 Geography of Iran, Lesson Four; Lesson 16--16.4 Dialogue 16, 16.13 (16.13.1, 16.13.2, 16.13.3) Reading and Writing, 16.14.1 Reading.

Important Note

Italic type is used to indicate formal written Persian terms when they first appear in vocabulary lists. **Bold** (and in some cases **bold** and *italic*) type is used in the drills to indicate which words or phrases need to be substituted.