RUDIMENTARY Farsi PHONETICS AND SYNTAX
FOR ESL INSTRUCTORS

THESIS

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North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

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This study is a very basic handbook of Farsi phonetics and syntax for use by English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors who have had little or no contact with the structure of the Persian language. Emphasis is placed on presenting an inventory of selected phonological and syntactic items which are problems for native Farsi speakers who want to learn English.
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   Anaptyctic [ɪ] inserted
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   Prothetic [e] attached
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who teaches English to speakers of other languages ought to know as much as possible about each student's mother tongue. Such information enables a teacher to develop insights into the problems that his students are likely to encounter as the result of differences between English and their native language. This study is an attempt to provide a broad outline of critical phonological and syntactic differences between General American English as spoken in the continental United States and Farsi as spoken in the capital city of Iran. A review of the literature reveals that such a study is currently lacking.

The second chapter of this work addresses itself to a somewhat rough inventory of systematic phones directly and a pragmatic system of transliteration indirectly. Some attention is given to major areas of phonological interference between the two languages.

The third and largest chapter attempts to outline some of the major syntactic features of Farsi toward the end of providing target areas that an ESL instructor might want to focus on for the purpose of insuring a basic analytic grasp of idiomatic English syntax.

Considerable indebtedness is owed and acknowledged to Rastorgueva's 1964 reference grammar of Tajik Farsi, a closely related language spoken in the U. S. S. R. Many of his tables and much of his organization and general plan have been freely adapted, along with some primary data.

Farsi is an Indo-European language with a surface order of Subject + Object + Verb. It is conventionally written in Arabic script, with the addition of four signs for consonants lacking in Arabic. Therefore, the Farsi alphabet numbers thirty-two signs, and the direction of the line of writing is from right to left. Individual Farsi graphs or characters have varying shapes depending on whether they occur initially, medially, finally, or in isolation. However, despite the fact that Farsi is written in Arabic characters, it retains its basic Indo-Iranian morphology and syntactic structure.
CHAPTER II

RUDIMENTARY FARSİ PHONETICS

2.0--Introduction

A transformational-generative phonology of Farsi comprising systematic phonemics and systematic phonetics is still unformulated, and such, of course, is beyond the scope of this work, which addresses itself to some simple and selected needs of ESL teachers, for whose benefit an emphasis is placed on a more or less raw inventory of Farsi systematic phones organized around the natural class basis of Vowels, Consonants, Liquids, and Glides, the distinctive feature classification of which is set out in Table I. The inventorid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vowels</th>
<th>Consonants</th>
<th>Liquids</th>
<th>Glides</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syllabic</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consonantal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

analysis set out in this chapter compares favorably with that suggested for Farsi by Merritt Ruhlen (1975:256).
2.1--Vowels ( +syllabic, —consonantal)

Conventionally, six Farsi monophthongs are recognized. These are traditionally transliterated as i, e, æ, u, o, a. These graphs serve well as phonetic characters except for a, which linguistically is used for a vowel segment which is unlabialized (spread/non-round). The Farsi segment which it represents is labialized phonetically, so for transcription purposes an open o ([ɔ]) is used instead. Historically, the Farsi vowel system derives from systematic phonemic /ī, i, ū, u, ə, a/, where the macron represents either the feature + tense or + long, or both perhaps. The contemporary system of monophthongs is set out in terms of distinctive features in Table II below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>i</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>æ</th>
<th>u</th>
<th>o</th>
<th>ɔ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>−</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the jargon of conventional articulatory phonetics, [i, e, æ] are palatal or front, and [u, o, ɔ] are velar or
back. Further, [i, u] are high, [e, o] are mid, and [æ, ə] are low. Additionally, [u, o, ə] are labialized (rounded) and [i, e, æ] are unlabialized (spread).

Duration (length) is of some significance in classifying the vowels, and the two types are distinguished by Farsi phoneticians; that is [i, u, ə] are phonetically +long whereas [e, æ, o] are -long (short). However, quantitative distinction is clearly revealed only in an unstressed open syllable where [e, æ, o] are greatly reduced in length; whereas [i, u, ə] retain longer duration. Thus, for example, in pedar 'father', safid 'white', and sotar 'camel', the first unstressed vowel has minimal duration; whereas in divar 'wall' and tāze 'clean/fresh' the first unstressed vowel is drawn out in slow speech. In rapid conversational speech, however, vowel length is neutralized.

Illustrative tokens of the monophthongs are assembled in Table III, where primary stress, which generally falls on the vowel of the ultimate syllable, is marked.

**TABLE III**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional Romanization</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Phonetic Transcription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kabir</td>
<td>'great'</td>
<td>[kæbɪr]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bidar</td>
<td>'awake'</td>
<td>[bɪdɔr]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xane</td>
<td>'house'</td>
<td>[xonɛ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An observation concerning the raising of [e] to [i] before
[y] is in order here. The conventional transliteration of
'foot/pedestrian' is peyade and 'come' is beya. Phonetically,
these are [piyade] and [biyə] respectively.

There are six diphthongs in modern Farsi, [ey, æy, əy,
uy, øy, ōw]. Two of these [ey, ōw] require comment. In
general [ey] and [ōw] occur preconsonantally and in word final
position as in ney 'flute', meymun 'monkey', now 'new' and
towr 'form/manner'. The glide [w] occurs only after [o].

Beyond the scope of this analysis are the alternation of
[ɪ] with [y] and [ʊ] with [v] and [w], as well as the alter-
nation of [o] and [æ], as in ræftæn 'go, set out', mirævæd
'he is becoming' from isolated forms row and sōw.
2.2--True Consonants (–syllabic, +consonantal)

In terms of raw inventory, the consonantal differences between English and Farsi are not very great, generally. An overview of the true consonant system (nasals, stops, and fricatives) is set out in Table IV, attended by articulatory descriptions denoting manner and place. A slash mark separates voiceless from voiced segments respectively.

### TABLE IV

Farsi True Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonetic Character</th>
<th>Articulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[p/b]</td>
<td>bilabial stops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[t/d]</td>
<td>apico-dental stops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[k/g]</td>
<td>dorso-velar stops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɕ/ɣ]</td>
<td>lamino-palatal affricated stops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[q]</td>
<td>dorso-uvular voiced stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[f/v]</td>
<td>labio-dental fricatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[s/z]</td>
<td>apico-dental fricatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʃ/ɻ]</td>
<td>apico-palatal fricatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>dorso-uvular voiceless fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>laryngeal voiceless fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[m]</td>
<td>bilabial nasal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[n]</td>
<td>apico-dental nasal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Farsi voiceless stops, \([p^h, t^h, k^h]\), tend to be phonetically aspirated, much as they are in English in initial position. Noticeably dental are Farsi \([t, d, n]\), whereas their English counterparts are alveolar in point of articulation. The dorso-velar stops, \([k/g]\), have palatal allphones before \([i, e, æ]\), just as they do in English. Thus, for example, \(ægær\) 'if' and \(gol\) 'flower' are phonetically \([ægær]\) and \([gol]\).

The uvular fricative, \([x]\), is produced by pressing the dorsum against the extreme posterior of the velum so that the uvula vibrates. It is very much like the \([x]\) in the standard German pronunciation of the name Bach.

The uvular stop, \([q]\), appears prevocally as in qesm 'part'. Intervocally, it is a fricative as in aqaz 'beginning'. In a voiceless context as in vaqt 'time', there is regressive assimilation, \([væxt]\).

Formed in the larynx, \([h]\) is a voiceless fricative very much as it is in English.

As can be seen in Table V, there is asymmetry in the Farsi system of stops and fricatives.

3.0--Liquids ( +syllabic, +consonantal)

Farsi has two liquids, \(/l/\) and \(/ɾ/\), a lateral and a trill, respectively. Neither of these poses any particular problem for the Farsi speaker attempting English.
TABLE V
FARSI NON-NASAL CONSONANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Labial</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Uvular</th>
<th>Laryngeal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stops:</td>
<td>p/b</td>
<td>t/d</td>
<td>ŋ/ŋ</td>
<td>k/g</td>
<td>q</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricatives:</td>
<td>f/v</td>
<td>s/z</td>
<td>s/z</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>h</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.0--Glides (- syllabic, - consonantal)

Phonetically, Farsi contains [y], a front glide, and [w], a back glide. The former occurs initially, medially, and finally as in yattæn 'find', iraniyan 'Iranian', and ney 'flute'. The glide [w] occurs only after [o]. Morphologically [w] alternates with [v] as in now 'new' and lebas-e nov-e maen (dress-new-my) 'my new dress'.

5.0--Consonant Clusters

The syllable system of Farsi and English is of the peak type so that there are as many syllables as there are peaks. The syllable structure of Farsi can be represented as CV(C)(C). This means that Farsi permits clusters of two consonants only syllable-finally, and that there is no consonant clustering syllable-initially. By contrast, English syllable structure may be represented as (C)(C)(C)V(C)(C)(C)(C)(C). This English permits three consonants initially, as in street and four finally, as in worlds. The interpretation of certain English clusters by Farsi speakers is set out below.
5.1 -- Anaptyctic [ᵻ] inserted
For example, English queen is rendered [kuwɪyn] rather than [kwɪyn]. Clusters involved are [pw, bw, tw, dw, kw, gw, θw, s(k)w].

5.2 -- Anaptyctic [ɪ] inserted
For example, English cute is rendered [kɪyʊwt] rather than [kyʊwt].

5.3 -- Anaptyctic [e] inserted
For example, English shred is rendered [ʃerəd] rather than [ʃred] or [sred]. Other fricative clusters are [fl, fr, θr].

5.4 -- Prothetic [e] attached
For example, English school is rendered [eskʊwl] rather than [skʊwl]. Clusters involved are [sp, st, sk, sm, sn, s1] and [spl, spr, str, skr].

5.5 -- Anaptyctic [e] inserted
For example, English clap is rendered [kelæp] rather than [klæp]. Clusters involved are [pr, pl, br, bl, tr, dr, kl, kr, gl, gr].

5.6 -- Anaptyctic [ɪy] and Prothetic [e] added
For example, English student is rendered [estɪywɪdant] rather than [st(y)wɪdant]. Clusters involved are [spy] and [sty].
6.0--Major Phonological Errors

It is common for the Farsi speaker attempting English to substitute Farsi /s/ or /t/ for /θ/, /z/ or /d/ for /ð/, and /ng/ for /γ/. Another tendency is the use of Farsi [t, d, s, z, l, n], which are dental-alveolar, for English [t, d, s, z, l, n], which are alveolar. Other substitutions include generalizing [ph, th, kh] to all positions in English where these stops are phonetically unaspirated finally, internally after [s], and before unstressed vowels. Also, the Farsi speaker tends to use his strongly palatalized dorso-velar stops before front vowels, whereas native English speakers do not strongly palatalize them. Additionally, there is a tendency for the Farsi speaker to insert an anaptyctic vowel before [m, n, l, r] when they are syllabic, as in English bottom, button, bottle, butter; as well, he will tend to substitute his native trill, [ɾ], for the English retroflex, [r].

As a final matter in this chapter, we suggest a brief approach for teaching the Farsi speaker who wishes to learn the orthoepy of the English vowel system. The target dialect is an r-ful one, termed General American English by Chomsky and Halle (1968) in *The Sound Pattern of English*.

The raw inventory consists of the monophthongs [i, e, æ, u, ʌ, ə], the diphthongs [ïy, ɛy, ɯw, ɔw, ɔn, ɑn, ɑy, ɔw, ɔy], and the triphthong [yũw]. The Farsi inventory includes the
monophthongs [ɪ, ɛ, æ, ū, ɔ, ʊ] and the diphthongs [ɛy, æy, āy, ūy, ɔy, əw]. The aspiring Farsi speaker of American English might proceed to acquire that system in the following manner.

6.1.1--Add a triphthong [yw] to the inventory, as in English fuel [fyuwl].

6.1.2--Learn to lax Farsi [i, e, æ, u] to English [i, e, æ, u] as in pit, pet, pat, put, [pit, pet, pæt, put].

6.1.3--Add a centering glide, [A], to Farsi [ɔ] to produce [ɔa], as in English caught, [kɔæt] or fall, [fɔæl]. Of course, the ESL instructor will want to be aware that there is a tendency in contemporary American English to have an [ɔA] diphthong in these words, [kɔæt, fɔæl]. However, [ɔA] should be easier for the Farsi speaker to produce than [ɔA].

6.1.4--Learn to produce [A] in primary stress position and [Ə] in weak stress position as in English above, [æbæv]. Secondly, the r-coloring in mirth, berth, burden, and work should be acquired, [mɪɹθ, bɜɹθ, bɜɹdən, wɜɹk].

6.1.5--Add a front glide to Farsi [ɨ] and a back glide to Farsi [ʊ] to produce [ɨy] and [uw] as in English feet and fool, [fiyt] and [fuwl].

6.1.6--Learn to unround Farsi [ɔ] to [a] and then add a centering glide, [A], to produce [aA] as in English cot, [kɔæt].

6.1.7--Learn to unround Farsi [ɔ] to [ɑ] and then add a back glide, [w], to produce [aw] as in English cow, [kɔw].
Optionally, this diphthong may be fronted to [æw] and then laxed to [æw].

6.1.8--Learn to substitute Farsi [oy] for [ɔy], as in English boy, and note that some English speakers use [ɔy] as well, [bɔy] or [bɔy].

As the Farsi vowel system has [œy, ɐy, ɔw], there should be little difficulty transferring them to English, as in bait, bite, boat, [bœyt, bɐyt, bɔwt].

After the vowel system has been mastered, attention should be given to the stress differences of such pairs, as subject (noun) and subject (verb) and compound stressing as in black-bird versus black bird, an adjective phrase.

This concludes our brief phonological overview of Farsi. The next chapter deals with syntactic considerations.
CHAPTER III

SYNTAX

3.0--Selected Syntactic Problems

3.1--Verb Complement Forms

Many concepts which are expressed in English by simple verbs require the use of verb plus complement combinations in Farsi and certain aspectual distinctions essential to English are not part of the Farsi system. Since Farsi is an SOV language, these complement constructions are of the order Noun plus Verb; they thus parallel the Object + Verb structure. Thus, for example, the English verbs attempt, agree, and love are expressed in Farsi as below where N is Noun, V is Verb, and C is complement.

(1) \[C_N [\text{\textipa{s\textipa{e}y}}] V_{k\textipa{e}rd\textipa{e}n}]_C \ 'attempt do'

(2) \[C_N [\text{\textipa{m\textipa{owafeq}}} V_{\text{\textipa{uwd\textipa{e}n}}}]_C \ 'agree(ment) be'

(3) \[C_N [\text{\textipa{duwst}} V_{\text{\textipa{d\textipa{a}st\textipa{e}n}}} ]_C \ 'love have'

In the verb forms above, the infinitive suffix is /\textipa{e}n/; hence, glosses for (1), (2), and (3) are something more like 'to do attempt; to be agree', and 'to have love'.

A structure related to the one above is one in which two verbs are paired with a noun, thus forming a double
complement as in (4) and (5).

(4) \([C\ [N\ h\text{\^a}d\text{\v{a}}\text{f}]]_N\ [V\ h\text{\^e}r\text{\v{a}}r]_V\ [V\ d\text{\v{a}}\text{\d{a}}\text{\v{a}}\text{\v{e}}\text{\n{a}}]_V]_C\)

'aim point give'

(5) \([C\ [N\ e\text{\v{e}}l\text{\v{a}}f]]_N\ [V\ p\text{\v{e}}yd\text{\v{a}}]_V\ [V\ k\text{\v{a}}\text{\r{e}}\text{\v{d}}\text{\v{a}}\text{\v{e}}\text{\n{a}}]_V]_C\)

'difference find do'

Thus (4) and (5) may be glossed as 'to point the aim' and 'to find the difference'.

In Farsi, there are a limited number of simple verbs which combine with single or double complements to produce a rather large number of complex verbs. This is true even of loan verbs such as serv 'serve' as in serv k\text{\v{a}}\text{\r{e}}\text{\v{d}}\text{\v{a}}\text{\v{e}}\text{\n{a}}n 'serve do' (to do serving), or servis 'service' as in servis d\text{\v{a}}\text{\d{a}}\text{\v{e}}\text{\n{a}}n 'service give' (to give service). The Farsi transferring such structures into English produces what seem to be pleonasms of the type to do attempt and I am agree instead of to attempt and I agree.

Other repeatedly misused verbs by Farsi speakers of English are the pairs learn/teach and lend/borrow. The structure of these in Farsi is set out below.

(6) \([C\ [N\ y\text{\d{a}}\text{\v{a}}]]_N\ [V\ g\text{\v{e}}\text{\r{e}}\text{\v{f}}\text{\v{a}}\text{\v{t}}\text{\v{e}}\text{\n{a}}]_V]_C\)

'learning take' (learn)

(7) \([C\ [N\ y\text{\d{a}}\text{\v{a}}]]_N\ [V\ d\text{\v{a}}\text{\d{a}}\text{\v{e}}\text{\n{a}}]_V]_C\)

'learning give' (teach)

(8) \([C\ [N\ v\text{\v{a}}\text{\m{a}}]]_N\ [V\ g\text{\v{e}}\text{\r{e}}\text{\v{f}}\text{\v{a}}\text{\v{t}}\text{\v{e}}\text{\n{a}}]_V]_C\)

'borrowing take' (borrow)
A related structure which causes problems for the Farsi speaker aspiring to learn English is that in (10) which glosses as 'attacked the enemies', where P is preposition.

\[(10) \quad [\text{bær}] \quad [\text{došmænæn}] \quad [\text{hojyun}] \quad [\text{bordaend}] \]
\[
\text{P} \quad \text{P} \quad \text{N} \quad \text{N} \quad \text{N} \quad \text{V} \quad \text{V}
\]

'to enemies attack took/did'

Such a structure is responsible for the pleonasm in the three starred (ill-formed) sentences below.

(11)* They attacked to the enemies.

(12)* We enjoyed from the nice weather.

(13)* I hate from sitting and doing nothing.

Another problem with complements occurs for Iranians when in English they want to express something like 'he wants to show . . .' where the Farsi counterpart for the English infinitive complement is always a subjunctive as in (14).

\[(14) \quad [\text{\textit{mixahæd}}] \quad [\text{\textit{ne\text{sæn}}} \quad [\text{\textit{dæhæd}}] \quad \text{V} \quad \text{V} \quad \text{V} \quad \text{V}
\]

'wants show give'

What the Iranian tends to produce in English is a redundant factive complementizer (that) rather than an infinitive complementizer.

(15)* I want that I go. (I want to go.)

(16)* He wants that he be the president. (He wants to be the president.)
Detailed description of Farsi complement verbs may be found in Sharifi (1975) and Sharifi and Sheih (1975).

3.2--Other Common Syntactic Problems

3.2.1--Used to. Frequently, Iranians confuse used to and be used to on the recognition level. To express it used to be supposed, for example, the corresponding Farsi construction which reads something like in the past . . . became a supposition as in (17).

(17) [dær] [gozæʃte] . . . [miʃod]
P P N N V V

'in past . . . supposed'

Further, Iranians tend to avoid used to in preference for I played tennis in the past, but not now (I used to play tennis).

3.2.2--Deletion. Another problem arises for the Iranian who wishes to express (18) in its truncated form in (19).

(18) The cat loves the kitten, but the cat does not love the mouse.

(19) The cat loves the kitten but not the mouse.

Unnecessary repetition occurs because the student overlooks the possibility of deleting the repeated verb. The Farsi structure is an equation of the sort the cat has love . . . does not have love as in (20).

(20) Gorbe . . . duwst daræd . . . naædaræd

'cat . . . like/love have . . . not have'
3.2.3--Modals. English modals are separate clauses in Farsi. The result is that it may differ is rendered it may differs. The Farsi structure appears below.

(21) [momken æst] [færg konæd]
'may/possible is 'different does'

3.2.4--Emphatic do. Emphasis, expressed in English by do, occurs in Farsi as raised pitch in some cases or an intensifier such as vageæn 'really'.

(22) væli vageæn færg dast
'but really differ did' ('but it did differ!')
(23) be to goftæm
'to you I said' (I did tell you!)

In producing interrogative English structures, Iranians tend to ignore do; since they consider the equivalents of how? and why? as sufficient question markers.

(24) * How they got it? (How did they get it?)
(25) * How much it costs? (How much does it cost?)
(26) * Why you study? (Why do you study?)

3.2.5--Reported Speech. Indirect discourse is a slightly less complicated matter in Farsi than in English, since quoted material may be merely juxtaposed and optionally marked for reporting and requesting verbs such as goftan 'say', porsidan 'ask', and dastur dadan 'order' by the complementizer ke 'that'.
(27) Hushang goft (ke) name-ra zud benevis  
Hushang said (that) letter-object fast write  
(Hushang said (for someone) to write the letter soon.)
In the examples below, the subject pronoun of the embedded sentence are overtly expressed.

(28) Hushang be man goft (ke) (man) halam xub nist  
'Hushang to me said (that) (I) feel well not'  
(Hushang said to me, "I do not feel well.")

(29) Hushang be man goft (ke) (u) halas xub nist  
'Hushang to me said (that) (he) feel well not'  
(Hushang said to me (that) he does not feel well)

(30) Hushang (azu) porsid (ke) (to) čera na-mi-nevisi  
'Hushang (from him) asked (that) (you) why not-ing-write'  
(Hushang asked him, "why aren't you writing?")

(31) Hushang (azu) porsid (ke) (u) čera na-mi-nevisad  
'Hushang (from him) asked (that (he) why not-ing-write'  
(Hushang asked him why he isn't writing)

Production errors that often result from differences between the languages are now a little more understandable.

(32)* Hushang ordered write the letter soon.
In this instance the Iranian has not clearly distinguished between imperative and infinitive write.

(33) Hushang told Hasan last week that I am going to Tehran.
Here the Iranian has used present tense (I am going) instead of past tense (I was going).
(34)* My brother asked what is the problem
Here the Iranian has substituted question word order for
statement word order (My brother asked what the problem is).

(35)* Hasan is asking you that why you didn't go to
the cinema yesterday.
In this sentence the Iranian has extended the complementizer
that to a position calling for if/whether (Hasan is asking
if/whether you didn't go to the cinema yesterday).

3.3--Noun morphology

Singular nouns are unmarked morphologically, ketab
'book' and danesVu 'student'. Plurality is signalled by
either the suffix -ha or -an. In general, the former is
added to animate or inanimate nouns and the latter only to
animate nouns. Additionally, nouns indicating paired parts
of the body and the word for tree are pluralized with -an.

TABLE VI
NOUN PLURALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'table'</td>
<td>miz</td>
<td>mizha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'horse'</td>
<td>æesp</td>
<td>æespha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'woman'</td>
<td>zæn</td>
<td>zænha/zænan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'worker'</td>
<td>kargær</td>
<td>kargæran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'lip'</td>
<td>læb</td>
<td>læban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'eye'</td>
<td>cæsm</td>
<td>cæsman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'free'</td>
<td>daræxt</td>
<td>deræxtan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A phonological bridge, [g], occurs in bænde 'slave, bændegan 'slaves'. A similar bridge, [y], in noun stems terminating in [i] and [j], danešju 'student', danešjuyan 'students' and irani 'Iranian', iranyan "Iranians". Occasionally, the bridge is a [v] as in øbru 'brow', øbruvan 'brows'.

3.3.1--Determiners. An overt formative paralleling English the does not exist in Farsi. Paralleling English a(n) and the numeral one are in Farsi the unaccented prefix -i (ya-ye væhdaet), the 'y of singularity' and yek 'one' as in doxtær-i 'a girl', miz-i 'a table'. Yek precedes the noun it specifies as in (36).

(36) yek doxtær amæd
    'one/a girl came'
Definiteness is incorporated into the proximal demonstrative in 'this' and the remote demonstrative an 'that'.

(37) in mærd goft
    'this man said'
(38) an mærd goft
    'that man said'

Adjectives do not independently take the singular marker -i except in attributive izafet (ezafe 'addition') constructions. (See section 3.4.1).

(39) Kif siyah-i
    'bag black-a'
    (a black bag)
3.4--Functional Relationships

There is subject-verb agreement in Farsi, although the basic order is subject-object-verb (SOV).

(40) yek doxtær amæd
    'one girl-singular came-singular'

(41) doxtær-an amæd-ænd
    girl-plural came-plural

An overt copula exists in Farsi.

(42) pedær-æm kærgær æst
    'father-my worker is'
    (my father is a worker)

Attributive adjectives follow the nouns they modify and the noun is marked with the izafet suffix -e.

(43) gælæm-e xub
    'pen-izafet good'
    (good pen)

(44) gælæm-e bæradær-e mæn
    'pen-izafet brother-izafet my'
    (my brother's pen)

3.4.1--Izafet constructions. In Farsi, modifiers are connected with the modified word by means of the izafet (ezafe 'addition') suffix -e (-ye post vocalically). In the izafet construction, the head noun stands in first position, marked with the suffix, and the modifier occurs last.
Izafet constructions express not only attribution, but also possession, genetic relationships, and so on.

3.5 -- The postposition ra

Farsi is a surface SOV language with subject and object juxtaposed. It is often useful for Iranians to overtly mark objects with the postposition ra, which is obligatory if the object is definite and specific.

(52) rafig-am ra didam
 'friend-my object saw-I'
 (I saw my friend)

(53) ketab mi-xanam
 'book progressive-read I'
 (I am reading a (non-specific) book)
(54) ketab-ra mi-xanaem
   'book-object progressive-read I'
   (I am reading the (specific) book)

(55) ab bedeh
   'water (me) give'
   (give (me) water)

(56) ab-ra bedeh
   'water-object give'
   (give (me) the water)

(57) ḳaleh-ra didäm
   'ḳaleh-object saw I'
   (I saw ḳaleh)

(58) to-ra didäm
   'you-object saw I'
   (I saw you)

(59) qælæm-e to-ra arærdæm
   'pen-izafet you-object brought I'
   (I brought (you) your pen)

(60) qælæm-aet-ra aværdæm
   'pen-your object brought I'
   (I brought your pen)

3.6--Adjective Characteristics

Adjectives usually do not independently take plural -an and ha: or the indefinite marker -i. They are not usually independently connected with prepositions and pospositions,
and in *izafet* constructions, they appear as the second member as in *divar-e sāfīd* 'wall-izafet white' (white wall).

A characteristic of adjectives is the presence of degrees of comparison. The comparative suffix is *-tār*, the superlative *-tārin* as in *sāfīd* 'white', *sāfīdtār* 'whiter', and *sāfīdtārin* 'whitest'.

The comparative pivot is *æz*, which appears before the thing compared.

(61) mān æz to bozorgtār ām

'I than/from you bigger/older am'

(I am bigger/older than you)

What is superlative in meaning but comparative in form is also expressed with *æz* 'than/from' and the comparative suffix *-tār*.

(62) æz hāmæ bozorgtār ām

'than all bigger/older am'

(I am bigger/older of all)

3.7--Personal Pronouns

The Farsi personal pronouns are unmarked for case; that is, for example, *mān* may be glossed as 'I' or 'me' depending on function, and so on.
TABLE VII
FARSI PERSONAL PRONOUNS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>mæn 'I'</td>
<td>ma 'we'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>to 'thou'</td>
<td>soma 'you'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>u 'he/she/it'</td>
<td>anha~išan 'they'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The form išan is regarded as more polite and formal than anha.

When izafet-e is affixed to a preceding noun, the personal pronouns function as possessive adjectives as in ketab-e to 'book-izafet thou/you' (thy/your book). Appositives are formed by preposing the personal pronouns to nouns as in soma današjân 'you students' (you, (the) students,) and ma kargærân 'we workers' (we, (the) workers,). Similarly, when marked with izafet-e and preposed to nouns or adjectives, such expressions as mæne-e meskin 'I-izafet unhappy' (I, unhappy one,) or to-ye bicare 'thou-izafet jobless' (you, jobless one) are formed. Finally, with adpositions, other expressions such as be to 'to thee', ba mæn 'with me', and u ra 'he of' (of him) are generated.

3.8--Pronominal enclitics

The pronominal enclitics are unaccented and are attached suffixally directly to singular nouns and after the plural suffix on non-singular forms, as in ketab-æm 'book-my' (my
book), ketab-æt 'book-thy' (thy/your book), ketab-ha-yæm 'book-plural-my' (my books). In izafet construction the

TABLE VIII
PRONOMINAL ENCLITICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>-æm</td>
<td>-eman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>-æt</td>
<td>-etan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>-æš</td>
<td>-ešan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(enclitic attaches after the last modifier, as in ketab-ævveal-æm 'book-first-my' (my first book).

3.9--Interrogative Pronouns

There are three interrogative pronouns, ke/ki 'who' (restricted to +human forms) ce 'what' (restricted to -human forms, and kodam 'what' (freely occurring). The plural forms of ki and ce are kiha and eeha, respectively.

3.10--The Reflexive Pronoun

The general reflexive pronoun is xod 'oneself/one's own'. In the classical language xis 'one's own' and xis tæm 'oneself' occur.
3.11--Indefinite Pronouns

In this category one finds hæme 'all/entire', hær 'each/every', and hic 'any' (with a negative 'none').

4.0--Verb Morphology

Farsi verb stems bear syntactic tense, and each stem has a past tense form and a present tense form. In general, there are three classes of Farsi verbs, regular, strong, and suppletive. An example of a regular verb is ræsidaen 'attain/arrive'. The present stem is ræs to which is added id to form ræsid the past stem, to which is added an infinitive suffix -æn, to form ræsidaen. Another regular verb is xandaen 'read' with a present stem, xan and a past stem, xand. An example of a strong verb (one with consonantal alternation) is saxtaen 'build' with a present stem, saz, and a past stem, saxt. Another example is suxtaen 'be burning' with a present stem, suz, and a past stem, suxt. An example of a suppletive verb is didaen 'see' with a present stem, din, and a past stem, did.

TABLE IX
PERSONAL VERB SUFFIXES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>-æm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>-æd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1--Verb Prefixes

Only three prefixes enter into the structure of verb forms. The first is mi- (from historical homi) which indicates progressive aspect, duration, or recurrence. The second is be- which doubles as marking aorist and imperative. The third is the accented particle, næ-, which indicates negation as in nædīdæm 'not see I' (I didn't see). An optional variant is mæ which occurs chiefly with imperative forms, næ-kon/mæ-kon 'not do' (don't do!).

4.2--A Phrase Structure Rule

At this point, it is instructive to exemplify the concatenation of various formatives in illustrative sentences. As an example, consider the rule in (63) which conflates a rich amount of information and collocates the personal pronouns in subject position optionally, ketab 'book' as an object, optionally marked as such by the past-position, ra, the optional progressive aspect marker, mi, the verb stem xan 'read', the optional past tense marker d, and the personal verb suffixes which pair with the personal pronouns as indicated by the numbered brackets.

\[
(63) \text{Farsi Sentence} \rightarrow \text{man to u ma Šoma išan} \quad -\text{ketab-(ra)-(mi)xan(d)}
\]
Thus, minimal and maximal strings, for example, are those indicated below.

(64) ketab xan-æm
    'book read-present-I'
    (I read (the/a) book).

(65) ketab xan-d-æm
    'book read-past I'
    (I read (the/a) book).

(66) man ketab-ra mi-xan-æm
    'I book-obj ing-read- am'
    (I am reading the book).

(67) man ketab-ra mi- xan -d -æm'
    'I book-object ing-read- past-was'
    (I was reading the book).

Only one morphological adjustment is necessary to the generalization in (63), and that is in the past tense form; that is xand-d-æed 'read-past-third person' is ill-formed. It is necessary to delete the personal affix so that xan-d-æed becomes xan-d. With this adjustment, the forms below are evident.

(68) ketab-ra xan-æm.
    'book-object read-s(he)'
    ((s)he reads the book).

(69) ketab-ra xan-d
    'book-object read (s)he'
    ((s)he read the book).
Proper nouns can be introduced into the structures in (63) by a rule which converts u ((s)he) into human names as in (70).

(70) u
    Hasan
    Zhala
    Hushang

Illustrative sentences are set out below.

(71) u ketab-ra xan-ænd
    's)he book-object read-third-person'
    ((s)he reads the book).

(72) Zhala ketab-ra xan-ænd
    'Zhala book-object read-third-person'
    (Zhala reads the book).

4.4--The Aorist and Imperative Forms

The so-called aorist and imperative forms are set out in Table VIII.

TABLE X
FORMS BUILT ON PRESENT STEM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Aorist</th>
<th>Imperative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>(be-) xan-ænd</td>
<td>(be-)xan-im</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>(be-) xan-i</td>
<td>(be-)xan-id</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>(be-) xan-ænd</td>
<td>(be)xan-ænd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.0--Subject Noun Phrases

At least four types of subject noun phrases can be discerned (simple nouns, pronouns, infinitives, past participles).

(73a) danešyar aemæd  (simple noun)
    'teacher came'

(74a) yek piyade æz rah mi- gozæst  (numeral+simple noun)
    'one pedestrian along road ing-passed'
    (a pedestrian was passing along the road)

(75a) to didi?  (pronoun)
    'you saw'
    (did you see?)

(75b) ki goft?  (pronoun)
    'who said'

(76) sigær kæsid-æn dær otaq- m-æm nu-æst (infinitive)
    'cigarette smoke-to in room prohibited is'
    (cigarette smoking is prohibited in the room)

(77) gofte-ye mæn sæhích bud  (past participle)
    'said-izafet I correct was'
    (my words (what I said) were correct).

6.0--Predicates

Farsi predicates are, in general, verbal or substantival. Examples of the former are included below.

(78) Yek mærd-e sævare æz rah migozæst
    'one man riding along road passing'
    (one (horse)man was passing along the road).
(79) mæn hærf-e to-ra bavær næmikonæm 'I word-izafet you-object believe not' (I don't believe your words).

(80) in deræxt bolænd-æst 'this tree tall - is' (this tree is tall)

(81) mæn danesju bu-d-æm 'I student be-past-first-person' (I was a student)

7.0--Direct Object Noun Phrases

The direct object can be expressed in two ways: 1) by an unmarked substantive, and 2) by a substantive marked with the postposition ra, which marks the object as being definite and specific. In (82) below the copulative conjunction -o occurs:

(82) mæn xub-o bæd-e an-ra næ-mi-dænæm 'I good-or bad-izafet.that-object negative-progressive-know (I don't know if that is good or bad)

8.0--Indirect Object Noun Phrases

An example of an indirect object appears below.

(83) be ræfig-æm goft-æm (ke) name-ra zud benevis 'to friend-my said-I (that) letter-object soon write' (I said to my friend to write the letter soon)
9.0--Co-ordination and Compounding

Co-ordination is accomplished by the conjunctions væ and o 'and', ya 'or', ya ... ya 'either or' and ce ... ce 'as well as'. Thus, for example, ketab-o qælæm means 'book and pen' and ya ensan ya heyvan means either 'human being or animal'. Noun series may be conjoined by o or væ.

(84) ketab-o dæftær-o qælæm xæridæm
'book-and notebook-and pen bought I'
(85) Ketab dæftær væ qælæm xæridæm
'book notebook and pen bought I'

Co-ordination may also be indicated by mere juxtaposition.

(86) šæbha ruzha hæfteha mahha gozæst
'nights, days weeks months passed'

Alternatively, the plural marker (ha), in conjoined nouns may appear following the last conjoint.

(87) ketab-o dæftær ha ry-ye miz æst
'books-and notebooks plural on-izafet table are'

Other conjunctions are listed below with examples.

(88) hæm 'also': šoma anja
'you there'

næbudid, mæn hæm næ-budæm
'not-were, I also not-was'

(you were not there, I also was not there)

(89) ya 'or': rædd ya qæbul
'pass or fail'
35

(90) če ... če 'whether/either ... or': če piyade če säevare
'whether on foot or horseback'

10.0--Subordination

The subordinating particles are listed below with examples.

10.0.1--ke. A subordinating conjunction with a very broad meaning, used in the following types of subordinate clause:

a) objective [that]: mæn midan æm ke u anja næbud 'I know that he there wasn't

b) attributive:
ruzname-i ra ke soma aværde budid xandæm 'I read the paper that you bought read

that you brought for me;' c) of purpose [in order to] inja amæd æm ke soma ra beginæm 'I came here (in order) to

I came to you day see

see you;' d) of cause ['because, since'] bis æz in soal again ask

naekon ke cizi-i næxahæm goft 'don't ask me again, for I don't for anything I won't say

won't say anything,' e) of time: u ke amæd madær-æs goft he came mother (his) said

'when he came, his mother said . . .'

In addition, this same conjunction also introduces direct speech: goft ke sal-e ayænde be Tehran xahæd amæd 'he said:

said that year next to Tehran will come

"Next year he will come to Tehran."'
10.0.2 -- aegær. The general Farsi morpheme or formative corresponding to English 'if' is aegær alternating with gaer and aer. It may combine with the form vae 'but' and the negative morpheme nae with a meaning 'but if not' or 'otherwise' as in aegær be in qeymaet bashaed migiraem vae-gar nae naemigiraem (if-it-at-this-price-I-take-it-but-if-not-I-take-it-not).

10.0.3 -- aegær-ce. Corresponding to English 'although' is Farsi aegær-ce which has the variants gaer-ce or haer-caend as in aegær-ce amaede bashaed maen u ra haenuz naedidaem (although-came-he-him-I-not-saw).

10.0.4 -- ba an ke. Paralleling English 'in spite of/ despite' is Farsi ba an ke which has the morphological variants ba vojud-e in ke or ba vojud-e an ke as in ba an ke u paenj sal daer tajikestan zendegani mikaerd, zaeban-e tajiki ra naemidanaed (in-spite-of-the-fact-he-lives-five-years-in-Tajikistan, he-Tajik-language-not-know).

10.0.5 -- cun. Another subordinating particle is cun which functions much like English 'when' and 'as/like' as in cun be an shaer amaed maerdeman u ra naeshenaxtaend (when-arrived-he-in-town-that-people-him-not-recognize) and as in a comparison phrase (in English much like a simile, and therefore somewhat poetic) aebruvan-aesh cun mah-e now (brows-her-like/as-moon-new), that is to say, 'her brows (were very much like, or shone as) the new moon, or, as the new moon shines, so shine her brows.'
10.0.6--cun key.  cun ke, Zira, Zirake ['because, since']:

*name-ye soma ra be u nædådæm, cun ke (Zira ke) u ra nædídæm*

letter you obj to him didn't give because he obj didn't see

I didn't give him your letter, because I didn't see him.

10.0.7--væqt-i ke.  væqt-i ke, hængam-i ke ['while, when'] are subordinating conjunctions of time: *væqt-i ke u*

when he

*dæxel-e otag sod 'when he entered the room. entered the room*

10.0.8--hæmin-ke.  hæmin-ke is a subordinating conjunction of time ['as soon as']: *hæmin-ke cæsm-æs be u oftad*

as soon as saw him

'as soon as he saw him. . . . . '  

11.0--Types of Subordinate Clauses

11.0.1--Attributive Subordinate Clause.  Farsi has no relative pronoun by means of which other languages bring about the subordination of an attributive clause.  The conjunction ke is used as the subordinating conjunction with an attributive clause: *mær d-i ke inja bud, bærad ær-e mæn-æst* 'the man who was here is my brother.'  An attributive subordinate clause usually follows directly after the substantive to which it is related.  This substantive takes "the i of indication."

11.0.2--Object Subordinate Clause.  This category of subordinate clause is also subordinated with the aid of the conjunction ke and follows directly after its antecedent (usually a verb): *u goft ke miyæd* 'he said that he would come.'
Subordination of conditional clauses is produced by means of the conjunctions ægær 'if,' væ æg ær 'but if' etc., ægar

if
dær s bexani gæbul misavi 'if you study, you will pass.'
study you pass will

Subordinate conditional clauses are usually put at the very beginning of the complex sentence.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

In this work, we have filled a gap in the field of grammar; that is, we have provided a succinct but telling brief account of the phonological and syntactic structures of Modern Farsi, which are likely to present problems for the ESL teacher who wishes to teach a modern Iranian English orthoepy and idiomatic syntax. To that end we hope the work will be useful; but we acknowledge with Edward Sapir that all grammars leak, even ours.


