

Iranian Immigrants on Instagram: Potential Implications for the Maintenance of Farsi

by

Mehdi Abasi Zohan

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the

University of Manitoba

in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

Faculty of Education

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg, Manitoba

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Abstract

In this thesis, I examine how some Iranian immigrants use Instagram to promote Farsi and express their cultural identities. I use cultural identity theory (Hall, 1990/2021) and a passive observational ethnography approach (Costello et al., 2017) to address the following questions: How do Iranian immigrants use Farsi on Instagram? And what role, if any, does Instagram play in maintaining and promoting Farsi among Iranian immigrants? My findings show that while Instagram may, in some cases, enable the presentation of Iranian cultural symbols and Farsi as a heritage language amidst the diaspora, its role in the maintenance of Farsi and the fostering of Iranian immigrant cultural identity based on Iranian heritage culture is not clear, and the use of Farsi is sometimes superficial. Some posts analyzed in this thesis reflect Hall's (1990/2021) argument that identity is constructed through cultural memory rather than solely through physical return. In addition, some other posts describe the changes that Iranian immigrants face in maintaining Farsi or celebrating Iranian traditions abroad, which might align with Hall's (1997/2019c) view that identity adaptation is crucial in shaping identity. However, Instagram's commercial motives may raise concerns about the authenticity of cultural representation. Exposure to Farsi on Instagram suggests some potential for heritage language promotion among Iranian immigrants. However, this exposure is often passive and fragmented, lacking the depth necessary for meaningful linguistic engagement. While the platform may enhance Iranian cultural visibility through Farsi captions and hashtags, its emphasis on brevity, aesthetics, and commercial appeal undermines deeper linguistic engagement.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Francine Morin, Dr. Clea Schmidt, Dr. Sreemali Herath, Dr. Sandra Kouritzin, and Dr. Graham Lee for their invaluable guidance and support throughout the completion of this thesis.

Dedication

To my wife, Morvarid, and my son, Karen

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter, I first elaborate on the background of my study. Then, I discuss the significance of my thesis by providing information about the use of Farsi among Iranian immigrants. After that, I describe what I sought to achieve with my research and the questions I addressed. Finally, I elaborate on my theoretical frameworks using some examples that guided my work.

Background and Significance of the Study

با توام ایرانہ خانم زیبا

دق کہ ندانی کہ چیست گرفتم دق کہ ندانی تو خانم زیبا

حال تمامم از آن تو بادا گر چه ندارم خانہ در این جا خانہ در آن جا

Translation: I am speaking to you, Lady Iran, the beautiful.

I have been consumed by sorrow—you wouldn't understand what it is.

I have been consumed by sorrow—you wouldn't understand, beautiful lady.

May all that I am, belong to you,

Even though I have no home here, nor a home there. (Baraheni, 1997)

As an Iranian immigrant, I think a lot about home. For many immigrants, home is not just a physical location but a deeply emotional anchor. Reza Baraheni, an Iranian immigrant poet who lived in Canada, beautifully explains this sentiment in his poem “با توام ایرانہ خانم زیبا” (translation: I am speaking to you, Lady Iran, the beautiful; all translations are by the author, unless otherwise noted). The speaker in this Farsi poem, which Baraheni wrote in 1997 in Toronto, states that he does not have a home in the country where he was born and grew up (there), nor in the country where he lives (here). However, the speaker shows a strong emotional tie to Iran, addressing it as a beautiful lady to whom the speaker wants to offer his life. Many

Iranian immigrants might share similar concerns and emotional ties regarding Farsi and Iran in the diaspora.

While Farsi is the primary language in Iran, it is considered a heritage language in countries like Canada, where Farsi is ranked among the most widely spoken immigrant languages (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2021). The term *heritage language* refers to languages that are not the primary language spoken in a particular society (Keheller, 2010). In the context of Iranian immigrants, several studies highlight the role of Farsi in preserving identity. For example, Salahshoor (2017) points to the efforts of Iranian immigrant families who use community-level opportunities to promote Farsi and Iranian heritage culture. Karimi (2019) reports that Iranian immigrants in the United States see maintaining Farsi as “a great concern” (p. 67). Conversely, some Iranian immigrants prefer not to be identified as Farsi speakers. Kaveh (2018) notes that some Iranian immigrants feel they face discrimination and stigmatization due to political factors, such as negative media portrayals of Iran and its people. As a result, they may choose not to speak Farsi in the adopted society in which they live. Therefore, while Farsi serves as a symbol of cultural identity that some Iranian immigrants try to preserve, for others, it may represent a potential source of social risk.

In recent years, digital spaces have emerged as important arenas for cultural expression and identity negotiation among immigrants. Longo and Scott (2023) confirm that online social media platforms like Instagram might offer spaces in which individuals can engage with cultural content related to their ethnic identities. Other research further confirms that digital platforms like Instagram may foster resilience, creativity, and community connection (Ginzarly & Srour, 2022). Instagram, as a social media network with over two billion active users (Dixon, 2024), might play a role in promoting heritage language and culture among immigrants. Instagram

offers a visual and text-based medium through which Iranian immigrants could express their cultural identity and language. However, while Instagram might offer a space for the use of heritage languages and promoting an individual's cultural identity, serious concerns about this space exist. Kleemans et al. (2018) highlight how Instagram's aesthetics-driven environment can shape individuals' perceptions in ways that do not always reflect reality. Many Instagram users fail to recognize the extent to which Instagram content is curated, edited, and selectively shared, reinforcing unrealistic representations. This concern is equally relevant in the context of Iranian immigrants using Instagram to express cultural identity. The ways in which Farsi and Iranian culture are displayed on Instagram may not always be representative of lived experiences. Instead, invisible economic motivations may lurk behind many Instagram posts. Instagram's commercial motives could influence how immigration-related content unfolds on the platform. Rosa and Soto-Vásquez (2022) argue that while Instagram provides visibility for migrant-related issues, its focus on appearance often leads to activism that looks good but doesn't lead to real social change.

The significance of this thesis lies in its specific focus on Farsi as a heritage language and a core symbol of cultural identity for some Iranian immigrants, as well as its examination of Farsi use on Instagram. I seek a broader understanding of whether social media platforms like Instagram help preserve heritage languages and cultural practices in the diaspora, or whether they instead act as a barrier. Additionally, I aim to highlight the limitations and challenges of relying on a commercialized platform like Instagram for promoting heritage languages and cultural expression.

Statement of the Problem

In this research, I examine how some Iranian immigrants use Farsi on Instagram. I identify Farsi as a heritage language to distinguish it from the dominant standard languages in the countries where Iranian immigrants reside. The designation of heritage language is assigned to a language primarily based on the social status of its speakers rather than any specific linguistic properties (Babae, 2014). While Farsi holds official-language status in Iran, it is considered a heritage language in English-dominant countries such as the United States and Canada. The cultivation of Farsi is important for some Iranian immigrants, primarily for communicating with their family members in Iran, such as grandparents (Kaveh, 2018), and for maintaining a connection to their heritage (Salahshoor, 2017). In this study, I explore the opportunities for Farsi use among Iranians living in the diaspora, contributing to a deeper understanding of how some Instagram posts may incorporate Farsi and promote Iranian heritage culture among Iranian immigrants.

Purpose of the Research and Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to explore how Iranian immigrants use Farsi on Instagram. Specifically, I identify some of the Farsi-specific cultural and linguistic content posted on Instagram that is potentially relevant to Iranian immigrants. I examine the content of these posts and consider the potential for Instagram users to support Farsi maintenance before analyzing how this might be done. I am interested in understanding more about the potential benefits that Instagram might offer for maintaining and promoting Farsi, as well as the limitations of this platform. I use cultural identity theory (Hall, 1990/2021), along with a passive observational netnography approach (Costello et al., 2017), to address the following questions: How do Iranian

immigrants use Farsi on Instagram? And what role, if any, does Instagram play in the maintenance and promotion of Farsi among Iranian immigrants?

Theoretical Framework

In this thesis, I employed cultural identity theory to examine how Iranian immigrant influencers in the selected Instagram posts may be expressing their cultural identities. Chen and Lin (2016) state that, since individuals often identify with multiple groups, they do not possess only one cultural identity but several simultaneously. How these identities interact and are expressed can change depending on the situation, the topic, and the people involved. Yang et al. (2021) confirm that cultural identity has been studied since at least the 1950s, and has gained more attention with increasing globalization. In the late 20th century, scholars focused on its impact on national identity. Stuart Hall introduced and named the concept of cultural identity in the 1980s and 1990s. In this thesis, I focused particularly on Hall's (1990/2021) theory. Stuart Hall (1932–2014) was born in Jamaica and later immigrated to Britain. He was a renowned cultural theorist, intellectual, and activist who profoundly shaped cultural studies and postcolonial thought. After winning a Rhodes Scholarship in 1951, he left Jamaica for Oxford University, seeking academic opportunity and an escape from his colonial society's racial and class constraints. In England, he became deeply engaged in anti-colonial and socialist movements, co-founding the *New Left Review* and later pioneering cultural studies at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Henry, 2015). I selected Hall's theory to ground this thesis because his ideas are deeply rooted in his own experiences as an immigrant. Additionally, when I reviewed later scholars in the field of cultural identity, I found that most researchers continue to rely on Hall's theories. Finally, among various cultural identity theories, Hall's specifically focus on diaspora and immigrant issues.

Stuart Hall's Theory

In “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” Hall (1990/2021) explains the complex nature of cultural identity based on his personal experience in the context of the Caribbean and African diaspora. He believes identity is not a fixed, pre-existing essence but a dynamic process continuously shaped through history, culture, and representation. He challenges the idea that cultural identity is a singular, unchanging truth that must be uncovered, proposing instead that it is “never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (p. 257).

Culture and Cultural Studies in Hall's Theory

Before discussing Hall's theory in more detail, I will explain how he describes culture and cultural studies. Hall (1980) identifies the foundations of cultural studies as a critical response to dominant traditions in thought in the mid-20th century. He believes cultural studies began to take shape in reaction to these traditions, marked by key works such as Raymond Williams's (1963) *Culture and Society*. Such works, according to Hall (1980), constituted “the caesura out of which—among other things—cultural studies emerged” (p. 58). While texts like Williams's book were not intended to establish a formal academic discipline, they “forced on their readers' attention the proposition that concentrated in the word culture are questions directly raised by the great historical changes” (p. 58). Therefore, Hall reconceptualizes the term *culture* beyond its traditional association with elite artistic achievements and presents cultural studies as a constantly changing and debated field. He highlights the complexity of cultural analysis and emphasizes the need to examine culture's relation to power, history, and social change.

Two Key Perspectives on Cultural Identity

Hall's (1990/2021) definition of cultural identity relies on two main ideas. The first views identity as a shared collective experience rooted in common ancestry and history. Hall argues that this perspective is vital in postcolonial struggles because it helps reclaim histories that colonialism aimed to erase. The second idea sees cultural identity as both a state of being and a process of becoming. It acknowledges the disruptions, changes, and shifts caused by migration, displacement, and colonial rule. Rather than pursuing a pure, unaltered identity, Hall suggests that identity is formed through "the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (p. 260). After elaborating on these two ideas, Hall proposes that cultural identity is "not an essence but a positioning" (p. 261). This dual framework, which considers both similarity and continuity as well as difference and rupture, challenges essentialist views and highlights identity as fluid, contested, and historically situated.

Diaspora Identity

In Hall's (1990/2021) theory, the idea of "imaginative geography and history" (p. 265) suggests that memory and the symbolic meanings attached to places can shape an immigrant's identity. Hall offers examples from his experience and states that although Africa remains central to the Caribbean imagination, it is not seen as a literal homeland for immigrants like himself, who moved from the Caribbean to Britain. Instead, Africa is a symbolic space formed by political, historical, and cultural forces. Hall argues that diaspora identity is not about a pure, unchanging origin or a return to an original homeland; it is defined by hybridity and ongoing transformation. Hall (2000/2019d) further argues that hybridity does not describe individuals who are either "traditional" or "modern" (p. 113). Instead, it is an ongoing process of cultural translation. This process is challenging and never fully complete, always remaining open to

change and interpretation. Hall (1990/2021) confirms that immigrants continuously redefine their identities through processes of cultural reinterpretation—whether in music, language, or cinema—drawing on influences from both their original and host cultures. In this way, identity becomes less a matter of how communities imagine themselves than of how they are represented within broader cultural and social contexts. Furthermore, Hall (1999/2019e) explains that the experiences of Caribbean immigrants in Britain, Canada, and the U.S. are deeply intertwined with Caribbean history. This connection challenges traditional ideas of home, as diasporic identities are multiple, shifting, and shaped by local, regional, and transnational relationships.

Transculturation

Hall (1999/2019e) notes that immigrants retain strong attachments to their home countries through family networks and cultural practices. However, returning immigrants often experience dislocation, as their homeland has changed and diaspora experiences have shaped their own sense of self. Using the concept of transculturation, Hall highlights how immigrants' culture can develop through interactions between the influences of the original country they are coming from and the host country they now live in within asymmetrical power relations.

Diaspora as Both a Source of Freedom and a Loss

Hall (2008/2019f) presents diaspora as a source of freedom and loss. His identity, formed in exile, leaves him feeling “out of place” (p. 276) despite his deep familiarity with British society and culture. Although Britain is his home in many ways, he remains aware of a persistent sense of displacement. Reflecting on his personal experience of exile, Hall considers the alternative life he might have led if he had stayed in Jamaica. While he once thought about returning, he realized that doing so would have resulted in “psychic death—it would have enclosed itself around me; I could feel it waiting for me” (p. 275). Ultimately, he concludes that

while the diaspora offers opportunities to bridge the gap, that gap remains a constant reminder of life that was never realized.

Summary of Hall's Theory

Stuart Hall's cultural identity theory suggests that identity is fluid and constantly evolving. He distinguishes between two ideas: one that sees identity as a shared history, and another that views it as an ongoing process influenced by migration, colonialism, and power. Hall states that culture is not just about elite traditions, but that everyday experiences and struggles can also shape it. He sees cultural identity as a positioning rather than an essence, emphasizing hybridity and transformation, especially in diasporic communities. For immigrants, identity is not about returning to a pure origin but adapting and redefining themselves within new cultural contexts. Diaspora identity, according to Hall, involves both loss and freedom. Immigrants maintain ties to their homelands while also experiencing dislocation and adaptation to their new homes in the diaspora. Through transculturation, they navigate influences from their original home and host countries under unequal power relations. Hall's experience as a Jamaican immigrant in Britain reflects this sense of never being entirely at home and highlights the continuous negotiation of identity in exile.

Farsi and Iranian Heritage Culture Terms

In this section, I define some Farsi and Iranian heritage culture terms in alphabetical order. These terms are included in this thesis's data and analysis, and are defined here to help provide a deeper understanding of Iranian heritage culture.

Farsi Calligraphy

Farsi calligraphy (خوشنویسی ایرانی) is an artistic tradition of writing in Farsi that is highly respected in the context of Iran's cultural heritage (Meidani, 2019). Farsi calligraphy uses Arabic

writing systems and alphabets; however, in some cases it goes further, and adapts letter shapes and writing styles from ancient Iranian scripts like Pahlavi and Avestan (Yūsofī, 1990).

Although showcasing Farsi calligraphy in Iranian immigrants' Instagram posts can be seen as an act of cultural exposure and a way of promoting Iranian heritage art, it might not directly align with Hall's theory, which focuses on the redefinition of identity after immigration.

Haft Sin

Many Iranian people prepare a symbolic table during Nowruz, the festival of the new year, called the Haft Sin table. This table is carefully arranged with seven (Haft هفت) items. Each item begins with the letter S (س) in Farsi:

1. Sabzeh (sprouted grains) is a symbol of rebirth and renewal.
2. Samanu (sweet pudding) represents affluence and fertility.
3. Senjed (dried fruit) is a symbol of love.
4. Seer (garlic) represents medicine and health.
5. Seeb (apple) is a sign of beauty and good health.
6. Somāq (sumac berries) symbolizes the triumph of good over evil.
7. Serkeh (vinegar) represents age and wisdom (United Nations, 2025).

Nowruz

Nowruz (نوروز), also spelled in other ways like Nooruz or Novruz, means “new day” in Farsi and marks the beginning of the new year. However, it is more than just a calendar event—it is an ancient festival that celebrates renewal, life, and the victory of light over darkness (United Nations, 2025). Nowruz celebrations usually bring together friends and family for large gatherings, street festivals, bonfires, fireworks, poetry, and traditional music (Zeynalova, 2025). With origins dating back over 3,000 years to Zoroastrian traditions, Nowruz takes place on the

vernal equinox, usually on March 20 or 21, signaling the start of spring. Today, it is observed by many cultures across Iran, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and other regions, reflecting a rich blend of customs and shared heritage (United Nations, 2025).

Yalda Night

Yalda Night (شب یلدا), celebrated on December 21, is an ancient Iranian festival marking the winter solstice (Bakhtiari, 2024). On this night, Iranian families gather to honor traditions that bring light and warmth to the longest and darkest night of the year (Deravian, 2021). This celebration is valued not only in Iran but also in areas influenced by Persian culture, such as Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, the Kurdistan Region, and Tajikistan. It is also cherished by Iranian immigrant communities in Canada, the United States, and other parts of the world (Bakhtiari, 2024).

Structure of the Thesis

In Chapter 1, I have offered background information, outlined the problem statement, identified the theoretical framework, and stated the purpose of the study and the research questions. In Chapter 2, I review the relevant literature, exploring the advantages and disadvantages of Instagram for immigrants, presenting Farsi as a heritage language, and examining its intersection with motivation and identity. In Chapter 3, I elaborate on the research methodology. In Chapter 4, I discuss the four main themes identified in the research and revisit the research questions by addressing them in my discussion. Finally, in Chapter 5, I present the conclusions and their limitations, implications, and insights for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I first review studies on immigrants' use of Instagram, sketching both the advantages and the disadvantages of such use. I explore immigrants' presence on other social media platforms in the following section. Next, I review the literature on Farsi as a heritage language, summarizing key studies on Farsi and Iranian culture and examining how Iranian immigrants work to preserve these traditions. I also analyze research on heritage language maintenance and loss, focusing on factors influencing language retention or decline after immigration. In the final section, I discuss the role of heritage languages in shaping identity and promoting cultural diversity, and the importance of motivation in their preservation.

Immigrants on Instagram

In a pilot study that I did it as a course assignment, I surveyed the public accounts of several Iranian influencers on Instagram, I checked the autobiographies of Iranian Instagram users and observed that many Iranian immigrants spend time on Farsi Instagram. I will discuss this pilot study in detail later. For now, I elaborate on my review of the literature focusing on immigrants on Instagram.

In a study that focuses on Instagram as a space of marginalization and resistance, Lee and Azzarito (2021) confirm that immigrant minority girls in the United States use Instagram to share their emotions and anxieties. Lee and Azzarito conclude that the visual content on Instagram created by minority girls opened spaces where they could explore the gap between the so-called ideal female body, shaped by neoliberal and colonial ideas, and their own marginalized, at-risk bodies. When no other space existed for recent immigrant girls to understand and connect with their physical identities, Instagram became a learning tool that showed how they moved and expressed their bodies. For example, one of these girls chose not to participate in activities like

basketball or volleyball during PE class. Still, she shared many videos of herself playing soccer alone in an empty gym. She stated,

I love playing soccer and doing tricks. I saw videos of girls doing freestyling soccer and thought I could do and share that on YouTube and Instagram. Not many Muslim girls do freestyle soccer, but I like doing it and sharing it. (p. 523)

In her videos, the girl showed she was passionate and talented at freestyle soccer, even though it is not a common sport for Muslim girls. Instagram offered her a place to share her skills and be recognized for them.

Other research confirms that many immigrants share their migration experiences on Instagram. Smoliarova and Bodrunova (2021) highlight the case of Russian-speaking female Instagram users with migration backgrounds who share their immigration experiences and discuss daily life issues beyond the confines of their immediate host countries. Smoliarova and Bodrunova use the term “blogger” for these Instagram users who have many followers. Many of these bloggers and their followers are separated by distances greater than 4,000 kilometers. Posting under the hashtag #international_girl, these bloggers recognize their global audience and tailor their content, such as personal migration stories or reflections on daily life, to reach this diverse, international community. The hashtag #international_girl also serves as an umbrella for more specific thematic hashtags. These more specific posts typically focus on private matters like immigration experiences, family care, and financial management rather than public or political issues. Smoliarova and Bodrunova find that while it remains unclear why followers engage with posts on similar topics from different countries, the posts attract wide readership and active engagement. The bloggers’ followers may trust these private accounts more than the official sources, as they provide firsthand portrayals that can significantly influence prospective

immigrants. Smoliarova and Bodrunova's study suggests that the public is often overlooked in discussions of the global public sphere because the bloggers focus on everyday life rather than traditional political topics.

Immigrants may also use Instagram to disclose their identity and heritage trends. Ginting et al. (2023), in a study related to Instagram use for articulating Islamic identity among Muslim millennials, state that "Instagram provides features that facilitate the expression of their identity through writing a profile bio, using hashtags and captions related to hijrah [migration] and Islamic identity, and sharing videos or photos that reflect Islamic values" (p. 269). However, they confirmed that expressing religious identity on Instagram was linked to collective issues. Their findings showed that both fears of missing out and problematic Instagram use influenced the expression of Islamic identity. In another study, Koutrouba and Georgalou (2025) analyze how two Greek immigrants, Patrik in New York and Artemis in Seoul, reflect their ethnocultural identities on Instagram and TikTok. Both share aspects of Greek culture, but in different ways. In his Instagram posts and stories, Patrik promotes Greek culinary traditions and highlights the contributions of Greek immigrants to American society. On the other hand, Artemis's stories on Instagram present a nostalgic view of Greek identity. She focuses on the isolation of Greeks in Korea. At the same time, she also acknowledges the increased acceptance of immigrant spouses like herself. She blends cultural pride with humor, navigating between Greek and Korean cultures. Koutrouba and Georgalou's study shows that Patrik builds a strong, active Greek identity within the American context, while Artemis negotiates a more adaptable, transcultural identity in Korea, leaning towards assimilation. Both cases blend local and global influences, using English and digital platforms like Instagram to bridge cultural boundaries.

While the examples above show how Instagram can provide an online space for immigrants to express or reconstruct their identities, it should be noted that immigrants, as a minority, may also experience disrespectful language or behavior directed at them on the platform. For example, Nuthihar et al. (2024) find that the language used by Instagram users to reject posts about Rohingya immigrants in Indonesia reflects the sentiments of the Acehnese people. Their findings indicate that while the people of Aceh show compassion and empathy towards humanity, they believe accepting Rohingya immigrants is inappropriate due to economic, social, and cultural differences. Therefore, in some cases, Instagram can reflect the emotions of most of the host society towards immigrant minorities, even though these immigrants may not necessarily be the cause of the problems that the majority claim in their comments.

Instagram has also been used by some organizations working in the field of migration. Jhoti and Allen (2024) examine how five refugee-serving organizations visually represent refugees on Instagram. They found that Instagram's design and its focus on engagement through emotional content shape how these organizations present refugees. Their findings show how symbolic bordering happens on social media, primarily through visual content. While some practices mirror traditional humanitarian communication, like prioritizing professional voices over refugee voices, the visual nature of Instagram allows for more diverse representations. For example, "takeover" posts give refugees more direct representation, though these come with risks and limitations. Jhoti and Allen's study also highlights how Instagram's features influence whose voices are heard and how refugees are portrayed. While Instagram enables more direct refugee engagement, factors like digital literacy and organizational control still shape which refugees are visible.

Other individuals and organizations may also create migration-related content on Instagram in various ways. For example, Rosa and Soto-Vásquez (2022), in their research on the hashtags #caravanamigrante and #migrantcaravan on Instagram, reveal that the representation of migrant caravans is largely controlled by professionals and organizations focused on promoting their own work rather than by the immigrants themselves:

Those photojournalists, organizations, and other professionals who do use the hashtags construct the representation of the migrant caravan on Instagram mostly positively, but with a predominant aesthetics of otherness resulting from the interaction between users' intentions and the platform's affordances and economics of corporate social media.

(p. 10)

Therefore, at least some aspect of migration-related content on Instagram does not reflect the real and immediate experience of immigrants; it may be created by other individuals for commercial or other kinds of advantages. Rosa and Soto-Vásquez (2022) found that on Instagram, hashtags like #caravanamigrant and #migrantcaravan create spaces to represent groups of immigrants traveling together, but activism beyond community-led efforts has limited their ability to bring about real social change. Instagram's focus on commercialization promotes activism that turns the migrant caravan into something more like an artistic product for consumption. Businesses and individuals may exploit these hashtags, while academics and organizations use them to raise awareness for their goals. While these actions may support a movement's values or success, they do not always lead to real progress for the social cause itself.

Instagram as a Window to Language and Culture

Nowadays, online communities like Instagram can be used as learning platforms. Gomes (2020) studies an online community on Instagram where people connect by sharing stories,

memories, and experiences about learning foreign languages. Gomes's (2020) findings indicate that some activities on Instagram give us enough evidence to confirm that Instagram is a learning network that is expanding as the number of Instagram users grows. Gomes also mentions that "the expressive likes, impressions, and reach rates indicate that the network is evolving, which suggests a strong possibility to constitute more nodes and stronger connections" (p. 16).

Other research also confirms the potential learning opportunities on Instagram. For example, Lee (2022), in a study on how Instagram and TikTok support language learning, suggests that digital platforms offer more than just language-based opportunities. They also provide nonlinguistic tools that learners can notice and use to help them learn. On social media, these tools—like media-sharing features—create learning opportunities that users recognize through specific functions. Therefore, platforms like Instagram may provide a good virtual atmosphere for language learning, directly or indirectly. Lee argues that the language-learning affordance of Instagram is related to "technological features" (p. 7) of the platform and the people who use it. This scholar states that "learning on Instagram is delivered in a linear fashion from creator to viewer" (p. 11) due to the platform's technological design. In my own study, for example, when a creator (influencer) writes something in their heritage language, their followers view it. Followers may then share it, leading to many more viewers. These viewers in turn can gain exposure to the heritage language and culture. However, the extent of this exposure depends on the quantity and quality of the content the creator produces. Lee continues by highlighting other features of Instagram that people may use for language-learning purposes: "Instagram's affordance, which enables hosting of external image files, encouraged the user to repurpose resources beyond the application, not designed for language learning, for sharing of language-related content within the application" (p. 8).

Research also considers the way people may use minority languages on Instagram. However, it may not have the impacts of other platforms like Facebook. For example, in Jongbloed-Faber's (2024) study on the ways that Frisian-Dutch bilingual teenagers use the minority language Frisian on social media, she concludes that Frisian is used primarily on private platforms like WhatsApp and Snapchat, with fewer posts and reactions in Frisian on Instagram. Jongbloed-Faber writes that, on Instagram, 26% of those teenagers will only post in Frisian sometimes, and just 17% do so regularly. Moreover, using Frisian on WhatsApp and Snapchat mirrors face-to-face interactions, focusing on the immediate audience rather than a broader one. On Instagram, however, teenagers are likelier to use Dutch or English to present a polished image, and factors like interest in Frisian culture play a more significant role. Therefore, Jongbloed-Faber identified Instagram as a social media app that helps immigrants use minority languages. However, he also pointed out that Instagram is different from other platforms because it offers more opportunities for interaction. In a similar way, Gomes (2020) suggests that Instagram's informal environment offers benefits that positively impact learners. Instagram allows for connections among global learners and provides a free space for researchers to study individual language-learning histories from various contexts and perspectives. Gomes elaborates on this statement and illustrates it with several examples like the following:

The direct message sent by the follower expresses her interest to learn more about the project. She said, "Hi, I found this initiative very cool! How does it work?" The administrator responded: "Hi S. The idea is that this space gathers LLHs [language-learning histories]. Brief stories of what was most remarkable in people's learning journeys. We hope our followers identify themselves and get inspired. Send us your story!! Send your short story (with the translation in English) and a picture to us. Take a

look at examples that are already posted!” She replied by saying: “I liked a lot!

Tomorrow after work I will write a text, my story is cool, I think kk”. Some days after that message, she sent her story. (p. 5)

The narrator in the above example uses the Instagram platform to socialize with others. At the same time, it represents an opportunity for her to improve her language learning by translating her story into English. However, there is some criticism of this approach because it does not help to improve listening or speaking skills. Moreover, the storytellers may use translation apps instead of translating by themselves. The use of translation support can impact the learning process. Although participants are still exposed to the language while using translation apps, the effects of this exposure do not necessarily constitute language learning.

In a pilot study I conducted in 2022 as part of my graduate studies coursework, I surveyed the public accounts of five prominent Iranian influencers on Instagram who used Farsi hashtags related to promoting and maintaining the Farsi language, and to correcting common spelling mistakes made by users when writing in Farsi. After an initial search, I identified 250 posts from approximately 150 Instagram users that comprised the top results. In the second selection round, I deleted those without enough followers and focused on influencers. Finally, I selected five posts representative of various Iranian influencers with different careers, genders, and social positions. The chosen posts showed different ways in which the Iranian influencers motivated and persuaded their followers to write Farsi correctly, such as explaining the correct spelling of words, using Farsi equivalents for some English words, avoiding the use of English, and being cautious about writing online in Farsi. My results showed that, for example, Behnaz Bargozideh, an Iranian Instagram influencer who describes her page as “narratives of a ‘radically stylish’ lifestyle,” influences followers who respect her ideas about travel, enjoyment, pleasure,

dining, clothing, and cultural and environmental concerns, as well as her promotion of correct Farsi writing.

Many female Iranian influencers in Iran (including those who produced posts used in my pilot study) do not indicate much concern about the Islamic religious covering (hijab). Nowadays, many female Iranian influencers are photographed not wearing the hijab, while some other influencers (not necessarily Iranian ones) on Instagram prefer to wear their hijab based on their personal religious beliefs. Ardilla and Agustin (2024) look at the issues that hijab-wearing influencers may face on Instagram when producing content as influencers. The hijab-wearing influencers in Ardilla and Agustin's study disclosed that they must manage their online presence carefully and reflect a form of body discipline. The influencers take on semi-authoritative roles through this disciplined self-presentation, monitoring others digitally. The discourse around the hijab includes discussions on personal boundaries and religious behavior, which are shared in various media formats on social platforms. Ardilla and Agustin conclude that these monitoring practices and the disciplined behaviors they produce contribute to a growing body of knowledge about the issues of control faced by Muslim women on Instagram.

On the other hand, Kargar and Rauchfleisch (2019) explain how harassment is weaponized against vulnerable communities, particularly by actors potentially aligned with the Iranian state. They explain how Instagram, which remained unfiltered in Iran during their research, becomes a key platform for coordinated harassment campaigns. Perpetrators, sometimes linked to religious or political groups, target diaspora individuals through organized efforts like hateful comments and private forums. While it is difficult to definitively attribute these attacks to state actors, evidence suggests involvement from patriotic fanatics, volunteers, or even state-backed media, the latter of which incites violence through manipulated news

coverage. However, it should be noted that Instagram has been filtered in Iran since 2022, so easy access to this platform from inside Iran can no longer be a reason given for Kargar and Rauchfleisch's findings. However, other facts around their assertions remain. Kargar and Rauchfleisch also explore how the Islamic Republic adapts its suppression tactics to new media platforms like Instagram. Some of the diaspora individuals on Instagram receive false reports of abuse and are forced to remove their content—content that primarily relates to neglected human rights in Iran or similar issues. These individuals (many of them activists and journalists) believe that Iran's state actors may make many reports on this kind of content to prevent its existence on Instagram. Kargar and Rauchfleisch connect this idea about Instagram to a broader debate about the internet's role in authoritarian regimes. They argue that while social media can empower dissidents, it becomes a battleground for propaganda and harassment. Kargar and Rauchfleisch's research also disclose other information about the risk of harassment for Iranian immigrants. They state that many Iranian journalists in the diaspora exercise caution in their work to protect themselves and their families. Gendered harassment is particularly severe, with women facing both emotional and physical threats. Kargar and Rauchfleisch conclude that while social media offers a space for dissent, it also provides repressive regimes with tools to silence opposition.

While Kargar and Rauchfleisch's study focuses on the ways that the Instagram platform can pose threats to some vulnerable communities, other scholars look at the opportunities that this platform can provide to connect people from similar cultural backgrounds and for people to share information with those outside their ethnicity. For example, Longo and Scott (2023), in their study on the use of #italianamerican on Instagram, demonstrate how ethnic identity is carried into the digital world. They believe hashtags like #italianamerican help form online communities by collecting posts from users with shared cultural experiences. Longo and Scott

use cultural identity theory as part of their theoretical framework. Their findings illustrate that some Instagram users used the #italianamerican hashtag for reasons other than talking about their culture, while some employed it to educate people about their heritage. Accepting the limits of the generalizability of the results, Longo and Scott's study still highlights that people can appreciate and positively engage with cultural content on Instagram, and some Italian Americans with strong cultural ties express this through their posts on this platform.

In another study, Ginzarly and Srour (2022) examine the Instagram hashtags #ShareOurHeritage and #ShareCulture to understand how people shared cultural content during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study shows how digital platforms like Instagram became places for expressing resilience, creativity, and unity. They found that sharing heritage online went beyond traditional ideas of physical (e.g., monuments) and cultural (e.g., traditions) heritage. Ginzarly and Srour confirm that people on Instagram do not just share virtual tours of heritage sites but also personal cultural activities like dancing, cooking, and playing, which create new, digital forms of heritage.

In some cases, Instagram allows people to form connections and express themselves freely, even when such opportunities are limited in real life. For example, Güzel (2022), in their study about the Khalaj people—who lived in isolation for centuries and have been greatly influenced by Iran's political and cultural shifts over the past hundred years—confirms that online space has become especially valuable for these people, offering them a chance to connect with others who speak their language. In addition to sharing traditional folk literature, these virtual communities have sparked a renewed interest in the Khalaj language and poetry. Güzel also confirms that Khalaj people use Instagram pages to express feelings of disconnect from

village life, discomfort with urbanization, and the challenges of cultural shifts. Therefore, Instagram may allow city-dwelling Khalaj to reconnect with their roots.

Critical Reflections on Instagram as a Social Network

This section offers critical reflections on Instagram as a social network. I have already mentioned certain issues related to Instagram's content and nature in the previous sections. To avoid repeating myself, I will not address those points again here. However, there are other critical reflections on Instagram to examine, and it is important to consider them here to ensure a deeper understanding of this online platform.

Most Instagram influencers aim to make money through the content they publish. Many of them serve as marketers and advertisers for various commercial brands. Lee et al. (2022) studied the reasons people follow influencers on Instagram, highlighting how followers seek product recommendations and deal from influencers, making the influencers the key drivers of Instagram's role as a shopping platform. However, Lee et al. believe that other motives, like creative inspiration, can also be detected when following influencers on Instagram. Some followers admire influencers' aesthetic skills and use them as role models for visual content creation; though such influence has no direct impact on trust or purchases, it still can affect followers' perspectives on the products that the influencers are advertising. Research also confirms that brand owners use influencer marketing as an essential way to engage with more customers (Leban et al., 2021). Therefore, one could argue that the content Iranian influencers publish to promote Farsi and heritage culture may be designed to attract more followers among immigrants to sell services such as immigration counseling, making it difficult to see them as agents of heritage culture protection.

There are also critical reflections on the content that Instagram exposes users to. Ryan and Linehan (2022) studied personal psychological agency in Instagram use, and many of their participants reflected on how when they first started using the platform they were unaware that they could control the content they consumed or how it affected them. Ryan and Linehan confirm that the pressure to maintain a perfect online image contributed to self-image anxieties, especially among younger users, who engaged in harmful social comparisons. Further, Kleemans et al. (2018), in their study on the impact of edited Instagram photos on body image, found that viewing manipulated images led to lower body satisfaction, especially among girls, who often compared themselves to others. Kleemans et al. highlight concerns that even brief exposure to seemingly perfect images of unfamiliar peers can harm body image. Many girls in their study believed the photos represented reality and failed to notice the edits. This issue becomes significant when people compare their real-life circumstances to others on Instagram, where portrayals may not be accurate. Even if they are authentic, people with similar circumstances might not share them.

In similar research, Hill and Oz (2024) examine how young women aged 22 to 26 use Instagram and how it affects their body image. They argue that idealized images on Instagram can lead to negative consequences such as body dissatisfaction, anxiety, and even disordered eating. College-aged women, who are heavy Instagram users and often already dissatisfied with their bodies, are especially vulnerable. Participants in Hill and Oz's study reported that comparing themselves to influencers, friends, and celebrities often made them feel worse about their own bodies, although a few found inspiration from these comparisons for fitness or self-improvement. Moreover, many participants in Ryan and Linehan's (2022) study encountered content that was negative, irrelevant, or anxiety-inducing but hesitated to unfollow or mute

accounts due to fear of social judgment or damaging relationships. However, other groups of participants did not experience these issues in their use of Instagram. Ryan and Linehan conclude that Instagram use is a dynamic and evolving process that cannot be fully judged through these kinds of reflections.

Summary of Advantages and Disadvantages of Instagram

In the previous sections, I reviewed the scholarly literature regarding how immigrants use Instagram and how this platform can provide opportunities for using various languages and expressing cultural trends. Based on the reviewed content, I can summarize the main advantages and disadvantages of Instagram as follows:

1. Immigrants on Instagram often are exposed to diverse linguistic and cultural content. Features like media-sharing tools and hashtags might help the influencers and other Instagram users to create online communities centered around shared cultural identities.
2. While Instagram occasionally offers opportunities to learn a language through exposure to its content, its potential as a language-learning tool is very limited.
3. Immigrants on Instagram have opportunities to promote heritage culture and minority languages like Farsi. However, Instagram's nature and features can limit deeper language acquisition or cultural engagement. Moreover, many discussions on Instagram are superficial, and content may not reflect users' true thoughts.
4. Some of influencers on Instagram are commercially driven. They may use heritage language or create heritage cultural content to attract followers and promote products. Suspicion regarding the influencers' aim may undermine the authenticity of cultural promotion.

Immigrants on Other Social Media Platforms

In the previous section, I focused on immigrants on Instagram. To achieve a broader understanding of how immigrants may use online networks, in this section I review some studies that focus on other social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, WeChat, and Twitter.

Elmianvari (2019) highlights how language use in virtual communities like Facebook contributes to a trans-local identity. Elmianvari's findings show that the dominant local language and culture partly replace Iranian immigrants' connection to Iranian culture and Farsi. The concept of homeland becomes more personal, and national identity becomes fluid and adaptable. While Farsi remains in Facebook interactions as a marker of local identity, the increasing use of the host country's language reflects local and global identities within their new social and cultural context. As illustrated in Andrianimanana's (2023) study, the gathering of immigrant mothers in a Facebook group is another example of daily online communication that might empower an immigrant group. Andrianimanana offers a description of this idea:

Malagasy mothers find themselves among people who share their cultural values, their songs, their language and their food habits, among other aspects, within the group. The abundance of in-group interactions on the motherhood practices of their distant "home" are a means by which they stay in touch with Madagascar and belong to a community that shares standard cultural practices and identity elements. (pp. 762–763)

Therefore, a Facebook group can evoke a sense of belonging to an immigrant's original home. However, it is essential to note that Facebook provides a space for people to interact that is somehow different from Instagram, where the content focuses more on exposure. In another study conducted by Babis (2021), when a fellow Filipino immigrant worker passes away, the sorrow is collectively felt and shared in a private Facebook group, where thousands of

condolence messages follow. Before the advent of social media this cultural group might have dealt with grief on their own or received support only from close friends through phone calls or while spending time together in shared apartments. Immigrants often had few close friends, and this could make the situation even more difficult. However, this situation has changed with the arrival of Facebook, which Babis found has provided Filipino immigrants with a new space to navigate their grieving. However, online messages might not have the power of a physical meeting to express condolences.

Research has also found that in some cases, online social media platforms like Facebook offer more opportunities for immigrants as minorities in the host country to be heard. Mpofu et al. (2022), in research on the use of Facebook groups in the Zimbabwean diaspora, argue that because traditional media in both Zimbabwe and host countries often overlook the perspectives and interests of diasporic communities, Facebook groups have become alternative spaces for Zimbabweans abroad to connect. However, Mpofu et al. mention that Facebook is also vulnerable to cybercrime and cyberbullying. Similarly, Nikunen (2019) examines a social media campaign based on an analysis of Facebook and Twitter posts and interviews with participants. The aim of this campaign was to help refugees challenge stereotypes that depict them as economic burdens, noncitizens, or excess populations. Nikunen's study reveals another way that immigrants may show up on online social media. In another study, Jaramillo-Dent et al. (2022) highlight how Latin American influencers use their experiences as immigrants to connect with followers through language, culture, or political views on the TikTok platform. And in Baran's (2018) study, a group of female Polish refugees used the Facebook platform to connect as a minority group in Italy. Baran's participants reported, "Having been mostly out of touch for nearly two decades, the six of us reconnected through Facebook in 2008, and began exchanging

frequent posts, comments, and messages” (p. 247). Baran reports that through features such as revisiting past conversations and responding to others’ narratives, Facebook may create a dynamic space where immigrants can engage with friends from their ethnic or national identities. She also highlights how these interactions allow immigrants to actively reshape their sense of belonging to their original home while living in a new cultural context.

Even immigrants who might not experience specific challenges within the host community still use social media to stay connected with their heritage communities. For instance, the Iranian community of Manitoba is invited via Facebook to gather at restaurants, exchange business cards, and socialize (Babae, 2014). Similarly, Elmianvari (2019) emphasizes the importance of platforms like Facebook in strengthening the connections among immigrants by showing how Iranian immigrants in Belgium use Farsi on platforms like Facebook to maintain ties to their cultural heritage while adapting to new contexts. This scholar states, “Facebook enables local and translocal connections among immigrants whose transnational network goes beyond territorial attachments, and which expands in alternative spaces” (p. 45). Moreover, Elmianvari believes that social media platforms like Facebook create a space where immigrants can express a mix of local and global identities, blending their Iranian cultural heritage with the dominant language and culture of the host society.

Research also shows that some digital platforms can help immigrants maintain their heritage language. For example, Zhao and Flewitt (2020) studied how immigrant children use WeChat and found that the platform supports heritage language learning by enabling multilingual and multimodal communication. Zhao and Flewitt argue that online social media platforms like WeChat in some cases might challenge the English-only focus of many school

systems in English-speaking countries, where such policies often lead to the decline of heritage languages among immigrant children.

Summary of Advantages and Disadvantages of Other Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, WeChat, and Twitter offer some benefits for immigrants. They can help immigrants connect with their heritage, communicate in their native languages, and foster a sense of belonging. Facebook can provide spaces for community-building, cultural exchange, and emotional support. TikTok, similarly, allows immigrant influencers to share personal experiences, engage with followers, and participate in cultural or political conversations. However, these platforms also present challenges. While they foster community, they can reinforce social boundaries related to race and culture, leading to potential exclusion or discrimination. Platforms like Facebook are vulnerable to cybercrime and cyberbullying, which can negatively impact users. Additionally, different platforms offer varying levels of engagement opportunities.

Farsi as a Heritage Language

While Farsi is the dominant language in Iran, it has been identified as a heritage language in Canada, as it ranked ninth among the non-official languages most often spoken at home by immigrants in 2021 (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2021). Accounting for 1.9% of immigrants, Farsi speakers also ranked ninth among immigrants in Canada's population. Moreover, there are citizens of Canada who have Iranian national backgrounds or possess dual Iranian and Canadian citizenship (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2021). Iranian immigration to Canada began in the 1980s following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, and the main Iranian communities can be found in southern Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec (Rahnema, 2020) but are not limited to these provinces. However, Canada is not the only destination for

Iranian immigrants. In recent decades, they have moved to many countries, including the United States, Germany, Britain, and Australia, all of which now have notable Iranian immigrant communities. Many of these immigrants may also identify Farsi as their heritage language.

Many Farsi speakers in diaspora face difficulties acquiring the dominant language within society, while they maintain their heritage language, Farsi, at home. Karimi (2019) confirms that “a great concern of Iranian immigrants has been how to maintain their ethnic language” (p. 67). To face this, some Iranian immigrant families employed various strategies to preserve their community language. As observed by Abdizadeh (2020), these strategies include speaking only Farsi at home, enrolling their children in Iranian community language schools, maintaining regular contact with extended family members in Iran (such as grandparents, aunts, and uncles), and using Farsi media and literature. However, while their children speak or hear Farsi spoken at home, they nonetheless receive all their education in English. They thus become literate only in the majority language, and their Farsi risks being lost. Research also confirms that parents who reported using more Farsi at home rated their children’s Farsi proficiency as high, while those who frequently used English rated their children’s Farsi proficiency as very low (Kaveh, 2018). Abdizadeh (2020) highlights the efforts of two parents to maintain Farsi with their daughter:

Ramin and Tina would ignore their daughter when she spoke English and ask her to speak Persian. Their daughter would cry but Ramin and Tina would tell her, “We don’t understand you; our English is not good. Tell us what you said in Persian.” At the time, they were unsure if this was a good idea, but they persisted, and their daughter had to speak Persian. She is now more interested in Persian, and Ramin and Tina are more flexible and no longer force her to speak Persian. (p. 319)

This example suggests that while exposure to Farsi can cause resistance among immigrant children, it may lead to greater interest in the long run. Although some Iranian immigrants believe that speaking Farsi might be challenging for their children, they may try to make a connection between children and their families by reminding them that their grandparents do not understand English, and that Farsi is the language they share. In some cases, this approach can foster a commitment within their children to speak Farsi, at least in certain settings with specific people (Abdizadeh, 2020). Despite the inconsistent presence of grandparents in Iranian immigrant families, Kaveh (2018) found that many parents saw them as crucial for helping their children maintain Farsi. When grandparents are regularly involved, this has a significant positive impact on the children's Farsi proficiency. Kaveh also notes that Iranian immigrants often feel a sense of responsibility to speak Farsi, especially if their children are young and exposed to the language regularly.

Iranian immigrants may also have a desire to preserve Farsi as a symbol of their identity, culture, and heritage. Namei (2012), in her study of Iranian immigrants in Sweden, found that many first-generation immigrants still want to maintain their Farsi because it is an important part of their cultural identity. However, younger Iranian immigrants are shifting to Swedish more quickly due to constant exposure to the language through school and media, as well as pressure to fit in. Even so, Namei explains that many people still try to keep Farsi alive because it helps them stay connected to their heritage culture. Research conducted by Abdizadeh (2020) also confirms that many Iranian immigrants believe that knowing Farsi is an essential part of their cultural identity. Similarly, most parents in Kaveh's (2018) study expressed an interest in preserving Farsi and Iranian culture. However, this kind of emotional desire for Farsi may not guarantee its maintenance.

Focusing on an Iranian immigrant community in diaspora, Babae (2014) conducted research to determine if Farsi constituted a core value among students attending Farsi classes in British Columbia (Vancouver), while also being K-12 school students in public schools during weekdays. In her concluding remarks, Babae noted the challenges faced by students in maintaining the use of Farsi at home. She reported that insufficient time for Farsi homework arose due to the demands of English assignments and lessons. The students in Babae's study prioritized English homework due to their perception of the dominant role and significance of English in their lives. In addition to the heavy workload of English assignments, the students' involvement in weekend activities and social events reduced the time they had to practice Farsi at home.

The experiences and perspectives of Iranian immigrants further highlight the intricate nature of heritage-language maintenance. Sentiments of nostalgia and cultural pride can underscore the initial motivations to learn and preserve Farsi. Salahshoor (2017) studied the views and attitudes of Iranian American parents in Washington regarding Farsi as their heritage language. She examined their efforts and aspirations to preserve Farsi, the challenges they faced, and the nature of their language-maintenance experiences. The following excerpt from Salahshoor's (2017) study illustrates these efforts and challenges:

Iranian American parents in this study also viewed the prospect of losing the heritage language as a "tragedy" and said that they would be very "upset" if their children did not speak Farsi. Parents believed that by losing Farsi their children lose a good chance to learn about valuable things such as their cultural heritage. They identified the influences in the environment such as, regular school system, TV, lack of exposure in the family, siblings, and peer pressure as roots of language loss. In some cases, Iranian

American children chose not to speak their heritage language in public because they felt unsafe and subjected to ridicule, discrimination, and harassment from their peers. (p. 286)

However, the maintenance of Farsi as a heritage language is not limited to individuals and families. Salahshoor (2017) suggests that Iranian diaspora communities should collaborate with their members to plan and organize various heritage celebration events or opportunities. For example, the Iranian Community of Manitoba (ICM) has come together to advocate for cooperation and unity among Iranians, and to support them to have an active role in Canadian society. They promote and preserve Iranian art and culture and try to improve the quality of life for Iranians (Iranian Community of Manitoba, 2021). The ICM also implements Farsi classes on weekends. Similarly, Iranian communities in other places provide the same services. However, Abdizadeh (2020) argues that many Iranian immigrant children are unwilling to participate in community Farsi classes for various reasons. Although there is no direct data from children on this matter, some parents believe that this reluctance stems from the lack of qualified curricula in Farsi classes, and that their children feel they are not at the appropriate level for their knowledge and skills. One parent in the study believed that since these children spend weekdays in regular school, it looks unfair to them to attend Farsi school instead of relaxing and having fun like other children on weekends. Based on my personal experience as a Farsi teacher at the ICM's Farsi classes, I can confirm the above reasons and add another reason: learning Farsi is not an immediate requirement in children's everyday life in the diaspora.

Salahshoor (2017) found that Iranian immigrant families respond very positively to community-level opportunities to share their heritage language, culture, and food when these opportunities are available. Other examples also illustrate the interest and dedication to Farsi and heritage culture among Iranian immigrant communities. According to Karimi (2019), some

Iranians immigrants “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” (p. 10). However, other factors can also be relevant to the study of Iranian immigrants and the maintenance of Farsi. Kaveh (2018) argues that Iranian immigrants have faced historical discrimination. In recent decades, there has been news about the extremist regime in Iran and nuclear issues in the media. Consequently, many immigrants feel at risk of being identified as Iranian in any form, including through their language. Additionally, some of them identify as practicing Muslims, and their children associate their cultural identity with the religion. For this group, Kaveh reports that media portrayals of Muslims have influenced their children’s perceptions of their heritage. In addition, Elmianvari (2019) explores how factors such as migration trajectory, geographical location, and life stage at the time of immigration influence language-use patterns among Iranian immigrants in Belgium. First-generation immigrants, for example, often adapt their language practices to fit their social networks and professional needs. While Farsi remains culturally and symbolically significant, many immigrants transition to using English or other dominant local languages to enhance intercultural communication and integrate into their host communities. This shift highlights the dual identities of diasporic communities: maintaining Farsi preserves their connection to their homeland, while using dominant languages reflects their engagement with local and global environments.

There is also a group among Iranian immigrants who speak multiple heritage languages. The rise in international marriages has led to more children growing up with the ability to speak more than two languages (English, Farsi, and at least one other language) at the same time. For example, Choi (2019) studies the language practices of a trilingual child, Gyuan, from birth to age six, focusing on how he uses English, Korean, and Farsi to communicate meaning within a

multilingual household. Gyuan often used Farsi and Korean daily at home, frequently alternating between them to communicate with his parents. Unlike bilingual studies, where children tend to switch to a community language, often English, rather than speaking a heritage language, Gyuan demonstrated a flexible approach by purposefully switching between any of the three languages during conversations in Farsi or Korean, regardless of his proficiency in them. However, Choi's observations revealed that Gyuan did not switch to Korean or Farsi while speaking in English. This researcher's observations serve to confirm the power and dominance of the host language (English).

In conclusion, the maintenance of Farsi as a heritage language among Iranian immigrants presents both challenges and opportunities. While many Iranian families strive to preserve Farsi through strategies like speaking it at home, enrolling children in Farsi language schools, and engaging with Iranian media, the dominance of English and French in education and society often leads to language attrition. However, emotional ties to cultural identity and community support might play a significant role in motivating families to maintain Farsi. Community initiatives and intergenerational connections, particularly with grandparents, further enhance efforts to preserve the language. Despite these efforts, the pressures of assimilation and limited exposure to Farsi remain obstacles to its long-term preservation.

Immigrants as Heritage Language Speakers

According to Kelleher (2010), the term *heritage language* is used to describe various connections individuals, families, or communities have with a non-dominant language, whether it involves speaking, reading, writing, or simply being exposed to the language within family or community settings. In Kelleher's context, immigrant heritage languages are also the languages spoken by people who moved to the United States after it became an independent country. In this

section, I consider the work of researchers who study the use of heritage languages within immigrant communities. Polinsky (2018) explains that heritage-language speakers are often compared to monolingual speakers of the languages they know to different extents. This comparison is usually made to determine whether heritage-language speakers “qualify as native or as non-native speakers” (p. 10). Heritage-language speakers are categorized as a type of bilingual. Their stronger language is usually the dominant language of the society they live in, while their heritage language is often the minority language (Polinsky & Scontras, 2020).

Immigrant families engage in efforts to maintain their heritage language. For example, Romanowski (2022) explores the role of Polish-speaking fathers in heritage-language maintenance. These fathers, despite societal expectations, actively foster their children’s bilingual skills. By prioritizing time and effort in everyday language interactions, these fathers significantly influence their children’s cultural and linguistic identity. This phenomenon emphasizes the crucial role fathers play in maintaining heritage languages within families, highlighting broader societal benefits of cultural-diversity preservation. Similarly, Kaveh (2018) confirms that “effective maintenance of heritage languages over generations can be made possible with diligent support and strong commitment from families” (p. 444). Most of the parents in Kaveh’s study showed a strong commitment to preserving Farsi and Iranian heritage culture, and they often made efforts to achieve this goal, though their approaches varied. Abdizadeh (2020) also reports on immigrant families’ efforts to maintain their heritage language:

Nine of the participants reported that the only language they spoke with their children before the age of three was Persian. Even those parents who speak English to their children currently or do not make children speak Persian, expressed positive attitudes towards maintaining their community language (i.e., Persian) for their children. (p. 317)

When children lose their heritage languages, they may struggle to communicate with parents and community members who do not speak the dominant language (Kouritzin, 2006). Iranian immigrant families face the same challenge and try to mitigate it by encouraging their children to learn and practice Farsi (Abdizadeh, 2020). However, family efforts alone may not be enough. Carreira and Kagan (2018) argue that heritage-language education should be integrated into the core school curriculum to support both home language development and academic success for immigrant students. Their study also emphasizes that, for heritage-language education to be fully integrated, schools must remove disciplinary barriers, connect heritage-language curricula to other subjects, and build strong support networks among parents, communities, and educators.

Carreira and Kagan (2018) propose this integration as a key educational goal for the next 50 years in the United States. Meanwhile, other research highlights that children who speak a language other than English at home often reduce their use of that language during early childhood and may lose it after starting formal schooling. In a study on this issue, Verdon et al. (2014) examine how young children from ethnolinguistic minority communities in Australia maintain or lose their home languages. While some children continue speaking their home language, many shift to English by age five, with language retention patterns varying by group. For example, Arabic-speaking children are more likely to maintain their language, while many Italian-speaking children switch to English. In addition, Hsieh et al. (2020), in their study on Chinese American children, reflect that if schools had recognized and included immigrants' identities and home experiences in their education, they might have felt more confident maintaining their heritage language without losing their sense of being American.

Moreover, Immigrant families go through a transition as they adjust to a new social and cultural environment. This process is usually seen from the perspective of the host society, while immigrants themselves are often viewed as constantly unsettled, temporary, and different (Stavans & Ashkenazi, 2022). While many immigrant parents place a high value on their heritage language and try to preserve it across generations, often by enrolling their children in formal heritage-language instruction (Smith & Li, 2022), Stavans and Ashkenazi note that immigrant children face difficulties in bridging their home culture with the new culture.

In one specific context, Hsieh et al. (2020) highlight the challenges of heritage language and multilingual learning in Asian American families where parents are not fluent in the heritage language. These immigrants feel culturally disconnected due to their limited heritage-language proficiency. Although they want their children to learn their heritage language, factors like location, access, and family support have made it difficult. One of the participants in their study explained the way they felt about heritage-language loss:

My first sense of loss related to HL [heritage language] came when, as an undergraduate at the University of California, Berkeley, I was surrounded by other Asian Americans for the first time. I experienced discomfort, compounded by the loss of my mother during my junior year of high school. Grief and discomfort led to a long period of ethnic dissociation and ambivalence, despite my participation in some Asian American communities (e.g., church, advising an Asian/Pacific Islander student club). Although I placed myself in Asian American contexts, I never felt fully Asian American (p. 574).

This participant in Hsieh et al.'s (2020) study describes feeling discomfort when surrounded by other Asian Americans, suggesting that the absence of strong heritage-language and cultural connections can create a barrier to full inclusion within one's ethnic community.

The participant's experience reflects a common challenge among heritage-language speakers: even when they are physically present in ethnic spaces, they may still feel disconnected because they lack the linguistic and cultural fluency that would allow for full participation.

In conclusion, heritage-language maintenance is important for many immigrant families, but it can be challenging. Many parents try to teach their children their home language to stay connected to their culture and communicate with family members. However, children often stop using their heritage language as they grow up, especially if schools and society do not support it. Researchers suggest that schools should include heritage-language education in the curriculum, connect it to other subjects, and create supportive communities. Then, immigrant communities can maintain their language and culture while also feeling included in their new country.

Heritage Language and Identity

Heritage-language research is closely connected to immigrants' sense of identity. Knowing and using their heritage language may connect them to their heritage culture and give them more confidence in their current social settings. For instance, Kim (2015) recounts the story of a Korean American student to illustrate this interconnected relationship. Raised by parents who worked tirelessly to establish their lives in a new country, the student was not exposed to Korean language and heritage. Consequently, he grappled with issues of identity during his teenage years. Despite his fluency in English, he often encountered remarks from fellow Americans about his proficiency in the language, highlighting his status as an Asian individual. This sense of being an outsider was compounded by his perceived lack of belonging within both the Korean community in California and mainstream American society due to his cultural and linguistic disconnect. As a result, he felt alienated from both Korea and the United States (Kim, 2015). This student's example highlights how language serves as a core element of group

belonging and identity (Vedder & Virta, 2005) and that speakers' social identities affect heritage-language maintenance (Huang, 2024). Immigrants who are highly proficient in their heritage language tend to have a stronger sense of identity, a deeper understanding of their cultural background, and a stronger bond with their heritage community (Cho, 2000).

Kouritzin (1999) explores the connections between heritage language and identity through the stories of immigrants or Indigenous people who have experienced language loss. She argues that language is a crucial component of identity, and that the loss of one's first language can have significant implications for how one sees oneself and is seen by others. Kouritzin's book features personal stories from a diverse group of individuals who have lost their first language. Through these stories, the author demonstrates how language loss can impact one's sense of self and belonging. Kouritzin also explores how the preservation of heritage languages can be an important means of maintaining cultural identity and connection to one's community.

In conclusion, losing one's heritage language can lead to feelings of cultural disconnection and identity struggles among immigrants. Those who maintain strong proficiency in their heritage language often have a strong sense of their identity.

Heritage Language and Motivation

Motivation plays a critical role in heritage-language use and maintenance. Keller (2010) defines motivation as what people want, the choices they make, and the actions they follow through on. Research on motivation seeks to understand why people behave the way they do. This question has been explored in many fields, including heritage-language studies. One of the main motivators of use and maintenance of heritage languages among immigrants and minorities is to retain their connection to their cultural identity. In Huang's (2024) study, some participants, whose parents had lost their heritage language (Navajo), often expressed a desire to learn their

heritage language because it was an important part of their identity. Moreover, Stavans and Ashkenazi (2022), in their study on Spanish speakers in Israel, argue that within a family, the first members to migrate often take the role of motivator in maintaining and passing on the heritage language. This is because they are the ones who originally decided to migrate and first experienced the challenges of adjusting to a new culture. They also have the strongest proficiency in their heritage language, making them responsible for preserving and promoting it for future generations.

It is still essential to keep in mind that the strong presence of the dominant language in central parts of society (e.g., business, official education) appears to have a demotivating effect on heritage-language learners, especially on teenage learners. In contrast to immigrant parents' strong commitment to maintaining their heritage language, children are more likely to form personal and emotional connections through the dominant societal language (Kaveh, 2018). They often do not feel the need to learn their heritage languages to succeed in their daily life. Some observations in one heritage-language classroom elaborate on this feeling, which can hamper motivation for young people. Kim (2015) discusses the challenges faced by students at a Korean language school, where many came from Korean immigrant or multicultural backgrounds. Teaching a beginner-level class comprised of students aged 6 to 10, Kim observed varying degrees of language loss among the students. Some were reluctant to speak Korean due to feelings of embarrassment over their perceived lack of proficiency. Kim found it difficult to motivate young Korean Canadian students who did not use Korean regularly at home with their parents. Similarly, as a Farsi teacher, I have observed a parallel issue within the Iranian community in Manitoba. My lessons in Farsi class were designed for students with differing needs within various contexts. All beginner students were expected to study enough survival

Farsi to get them through a short visit to Iran. Whether a learner is married to an Iranian, interested in Iranian history and culture, or simply wants to maintain their Farsi skills, this class supports them. However, many of my students lacked confidence and proficiency in practicing Farsi, which hindered their motivation to communicate with their classmates in Farsi or to participate in Farsi discussions, and after one or two semesters, some of them left the class.

In conclusion, while many immigrants and minority groups see heritage languages as a vital link to their cultural identity, younger generations often feel less motivated to learn them, especially when the dominant language is more relevant to their daily lives. Research shows that immigrant parents play a crucial role in encouraging heritage-language maintenance, but their children may struggle with confidence or see little practical need for the language.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

In this chapter, I explain how I conducted the research. The purpose of this research was to examine how some Iranian immigrants use Farsi and promote their heritage culture on Instagram. I start by defining the problem and stating my research questions. Then, I justify why I chose my research approach, explaining why I believed it was the best fit. I described how I gathered the data, explaining my process of collecting information from Instagram. Next, I discuss how I analyzed this data, delineating my method step by step. I also touch on my personal connection to the topic and why it is important. Ethical considerations are highlighted, showing my commitment to conducting the research responsibly. Finally, I discuss the strengths and limitations of the methodology I used, setting the stage for the subsequent chapters of the study.

Restating the Research Problem, Purpose, and Questions

Iranian immigrants may have been exposed to Farsi through familial interactions but might lack formal instruction in Farsi or regular opportunities to use the language. For some Iranian immigrants, a baseline understanding and use of Farsi is important, especially for communicating with relatives in Iran, like grandparents, and for maintaining a connection to their cultural heritage (Abdizadeh, 2020; Kaveh, 2018; Salahshoor, 2017). In this study, I explore the opportunities for Farsi use among Iranians living in the diaspora, contributing to a deeper understanding of how some Instagram posts may incorporate Farsi and promote Iranian heritage culture among Iranian immigrants.

The purpose of this research was to explore how Iranian immigrants use Farsi on Instagram. Specifically, I identify some of the Farsi-specific cultural and linguistic content posted on Instagram that is potentially relevant to Iranian immigrants. I examine the content of

these posts and consider the potential for Instagram users to support Farsi maintenance before analyzing how this might be done. I was interested in understanding more about the potential benefits that Instagram might offer for maintaining and promoting Farsi, as well as the limitations of this platform. I use cultural identity theory (Hall, 1990/2021), along with a passive observational netnography approach (Costello et al., 2017), to address the following questions: How do Iranian immigrants use Farsi on Instagram? And what role, if any, does Instagram play in the maintenance and promotion of Farsi among Iranian immigrants?

Justification for the Research Approach

As I wanted to examine how Iranian immigrants use Instagram to share Farsi and Iranian heritage culture, I employed a research approach to study data derived from Instagram. In this study, I more specifically utilized Passive Observational Netnography (PON), a form of netnography that involves collecting and analyzing the content available in public without active participation in the online communities (Kozinets, 2015). This method seemed well suited for investigating how Iranian immigrants use Farsi when they share texts or images related to their cultural identity. The qualitative nature of netnography allows for a deep exploration of a social phenomenon, especially if the researcher uses an active, participatory approach (Costello et al., 2017). In this study, I chose Instagram due to its widespread popularity among Iranian immigrants, particularly as a space where they share Farsi text captions or culture-related imagery (Rezai, 2023). I selected passive observational netnography specifically because this research focuses on publicly available posts, meaning I did not engage with Instagram users during the data collection process. Passive observational netnography was a more convenient way to conduct the research but only allowed for a more surface-level exploration.

To gather and analyze data from Instagram, I first identified a sample of posts that featured both Farsi text and visuals related to Iranian cultural traditions, such as Nowruz, Farsi lyrics, and artistic depictions of Iranian heritage sites. I selected the posts based on specific criteria aligned with the research questions. These criteria included the number of the influencers' followers, the date of publication, the place that the influencers live (to be sure that they were immigrants), and the depth of Farsi captions paired with the visuals. This sampling strategy ensured that the posts analyzed would reflect meaningful interactions between language, culture, and Iranian immigrants.

Netnography's flexibility enabled me to access diverse user-generated content while capturing the essence of visual storytelling and the interactive communication tools available on Instagram, such as hashtags. I explored how Instagram facilitates Farsi usage and heritage culture assertion through this methodological approach. In selecting the content for analysis, I focused on principles of qualitative sampling, focusing on posts that were publicly accessible and those that featured content directly relevant to Iranian cultural heritage and the use of Farsi. In essence, a purposive sampling strategy was used to identify a spectrum of Farsi usage among Iranian immigrants on Instagram. In purposive sampling, specific individuals or units are intentionally selected to obtain the most relevant information and contribute significantly to the development of knowledge (Patton, 2002). This approach aligns with Kozinets's (2015) recommendation for careful selection in passive observational netnography to ensure data relevance and richness.

In sum, I combined cultural identity theory (Hall, 1990/2021) within the framework of passive observational netnography (Costello et al., 2017). I also related my findings to those of other related research studies as part of the interpretation process. This combination offered a

robust methodological approach to understanding how Iranian immigrants utilize Instagram to use Farsi and express their cultural heritage. The careful selection of posts, combined with the analytical depth provided by cultural identity theory, aimed to highlight individual instances of language use and contribute to broader discussions about digital communication and the preservation of heritage culture.

Data Source and Research Context

The primary source of data for this study is Instagram, and the online digital environment is my research context. The Instagram platform is used for sharing visuals such as photographs, as well as texts. Each Instagram user creates their own profile; some are public, while some are private. They also build a list of following and followers while visiting other users' pages. "Since its launch in October 2010, Instagram has seen a meteoric rise to 2 billion active users, making it one of the top 4 social networks worldwide" (Dean, 2024). Instagram also allows its users to set up live events. A popular format is a live session with presentations of two influencers in which all followers of each influencer can participate in and have opportunities to react to the topic and the speakers, along with discussion or posting relevant content.

Data Collection

I collected the data for this study using a manual method to explore how Farsi-related content was being used on Instagram within a specific timeframe. Drawing inspiration from Sloan and Quan-Haase's (2016) hashtag and keyword tracking methodology, I followed a manual process to gather and analyze the relevant data. My approach involved manually observing Farsi-related content of Iranian immigrant accounts (with more than 100,000 followers) on Instagram during a limited timeline. I found this content through hashtags and keywords. The detailed steps I undertook are described below.

Timeline

I observed and collected textual and visual content associated with Farsi from Iranian immigrant Instagram influencers' accounts (users with more than 100,000 followers) as data, focusing on January 2022 to December 2023. I chose this duration to capture a recent and representative snapshot of Farsi-related posts and pictures on the platform. I prioritized more recent content to provide an up-to-date reflection. This timeline also acknowledges the dynamic nature of online social media, where rapid changes over time may affect content relevance.

Initial Identification and Categorization

Next, I initiated the data collection process by identifying public Instagram accounts that used specific Farsi-related hashtags, such as #ایرانیان_کانادا (Iranians in Canada), #ایرانیان_امریکا (Iranians in the United States), #ایرانی_مهاجر (Iranian immigrants), #فارسی (Farsi), #درست_بنویسیم (Let's write correctly), #فارسی_را_پاس_بداریم (Let's support Farsi), #فارسی_شکر_است (Farsi is sugar), and #زبان_مادری (mother tongue language). These hashtags served as entry points to access content that promotes Iranian heritage culture or raises awareness of Farsi. In addition to hashtags, I conducted keyword searches using terms like Farsi (فارسی) and mother tongue language (زبان مادری) to capture potentially relevant content that was not directly tagged with the identified hashtags.

Influencer Focus and Data Refinement

In the subsequent phase, data refinement occurred by excluding content from accounts with insufficient followers and through ascertaining to the best of my ability that the account owner was an immigrant. The emphasis was placed on Iranian immigrant influencers, defined as Iranian users with more than 100,000 followers who lived outside of Iran. This approach ensured that the analyzed data represented content that garnered substantial visibility within the

Instagram community. To help determine whether the influencers lived outside of Iran, I studied the biographies they provided on their pages.

I chose immigrant influencers because their content receives more views than that of other immigrant users. Therefore, it can reach a larger audience worldwide, including immigrants. It is important to note that the influencers in my research are not limited to those who are only known on Instagram or who have gained fame solely through their Instagram pages. Many of them are well-known figures outside of Instagram as well and were famous even before establishing their Instagram presence. For example, Jasmin Moghbeli is a NASA astronaut, Kaveh Madani is the director of the United Nations Water Think Tank, Yalda Ebtehaj is recognized as an artist, Mojgan Shajarian is a multifaceted artist celebrated for her mastery of Persian classical singing and Setar playing, and Masoud Behnoud is identified as a journalist and author.

Depth of Data Examination

I undertook the data-examination process through a comprehensive exploration of both posts and images. When implementing this step of the approach, I sought to uncover not only the content itself but also visuals that contributed to the discourse surrounding Farsi use and promotion of heritage culture on Instagram. For example, I collected 18 posts from Iranian immigrant influencers with more than 100,000 followers that featured visuals and Farsi captions about Nowruz. After reviewing all of them, I ultimately selected six. I prioritized these six posts over others to represent diverse perspectives on Nowruz among Iranian immigrants. Although my dataset is very limited, I aimed to maintain variety by avoiding posts with similar content. The first post included a caption in both Farsi and English that simply said, “Happy Nowruz!” (Post 2). The second post reflected the experience of an influencer celebrating Nowruz while

traveling (Post 14). However, since many immigrants may not have the financial means to travel, the third post focused on those who stay home to celebrate Nowruz (Post 28). This post also engaged in a deeper discussion about cultural recreation, illustrating how immigrants actively reshape traditions in new contexts and highlighting Iranian identity in the diaspora. The fourth post featured a photograph of a Haft Sin with a positive message conveying good wishes for Iranian immigrants (Post 15). The fifth post also included a Haft Sin photograph; however, instead of a Farsi caption, it contained an English caption that stated the date based on the Iranian solar calendar (Post 17). Finally, the last post discussed how Nowruz celebrations can be modified for Iranian immigrants compared to when they lived in Iran—such as purchasing a birthday cake instead of baking one or setting up a minimal Haft Sin (Post 18).

Data Analysis Methods

In this thesis, I used Saldana's (2021) coding method to analyze the data. First, I reviewed the selected Instagram posts (captions and visuals) to become familiar with the content. Then, I assigned codes to each post to identify common themes. To do this, I presented my coding in tables that included the name of the code, the Instagram user who generated the content representing that code, and a corresponding quote and visual image posted by the Instagram influencers. I also recorded the date of publication and the number of the influencer's followers. I then read through the data independently to familiarize myself with the content and identify initial codes. I used an iterative process of constant comparison and refinement (Saldana, 2021) to organize codes into categories and sub-categories. This process involves comparing each new piece of data (caption or photograph) to existing codes and categories and refining them as new patterns and relationships emerge. I identified overarching themes through coded posts (captions and visuals of selected posts). I organized these codes into categories and sub-

categories. Finally, the analysis led to the creation of key themes that captured the main ideas in the selected posts of Iranian immigrant influencers.

The Researcher's Positionality

In embarking on this research journey, I carried deep connections to the subject matter. I am Iranian. I was born in Zohan, a small-town east of Iran. Farsi is my mother-tongue language. I traveled to Ghana in 2018 and remained there as the manager-teacher at an Iranian School for two years. My small school had only six students, and I taught them Farsi. Students were of different ages (8 to 11) and had grown up in various cultural contexts. Two of them were born in Africa but grew up there, one came from the United States, another was born in Iran but grew up in Africa, and the last two had just arrived from Iran. Over time, I realized that the different upbringings influenced how they understood Farsi lessons. For example, one day, I was teaching them how to spell and pronounce Nowruz (نوروز). Nowruz is a Farsi word that is not too difficult to spell or pronounce. The students who had experienced being with their families in Iran during Nowruz felt a strong emotional connection to the word. They eagerly shared their emotions and memories about Nowruz and were more motivated to learn how to spell it in Farsi. However, for those who had not had a similar experience, even though I showed them pictures and described what Nowruz is like, they still could not fully grasp its significance. As a result, the learning process was less effective for them, and by the following week, they could hardly remember how to write Nowruz in Farsi. This variety made me realize that students with different connections to their heritage, culture, language, and life experiences may acquire different levels of Farsi proficiency.

Moreover, after moving to Canada in 2021 to study at the University of Manitoba, I contributed to the Farsi classes of the Iranian Community of Manitoba as a volunteer Farsi

teacher. I also participated in cultural events celebrating Iranian heritage ceremonies like Yalda Night and Nowruz. These experiences gave me a deep understanding of Iranian immigrant communities. I am also passionate about investigating Farsi learning and heritage culture within these communities.

Therefore, I identify as an insider researcher, according to the different researcher statuses in qualitative research (Court & Abbas, 2022). I bring plenty of experience that allows me to empathize with the lived experiences of Iranian immigrants and navigate the intricacies of their cultural identities. This insider status enables me to have a meaningful understanding of the posts and photographs I surveyed for selection. My connections and familiarity with the community helped me analyze examples of posts related to Farsi and Iranian culture.

Ethical Considerations

My study did not require informed consent because I did not engage with human participants, and my data came from public online sources. However, I was mindful of several ethical considerations throughout the research process. I recognize the potential impact of my study on the Iranian immigrant community, as it focuses on Iranian immigrants' use of Farsi on Instagram. This situation can have both benefits and challenges for the community. I wanted to ensure that my research was respectful and inclusive. Therefore, I have taken careful steps to share my findings in a way that respects the cultural diversity within the community. For example, my findings highlight successful strategies for promoting Farsi and Iranian heritage culture, which can lead to a sense of cultural continuity among Iranian immigrants.

Criteria for Ensuring Validity

I strove for validity in this study through several approaches. Firstly, the selection of relevant hashtags and keywords aimed to capture a diverse range of Farsi-related content on

Instagram, ensuring comprehensive data collection. Additionally, the focus on Iranian immigrant influencers with substantial follower counts ensured that the analyzed data represented content with significant visibility and engagement within the Instagram community. The temporal restriction on data collection from January 2022 to December 2023 ensured the capture of recent and relevant posts involving Farsi and Iranian culture. Furthermore, the iterative process of data analysis, involving segmentation, coding, and categorization, facilitated rigorous examination and interpretation of the collected data, enhancing the validity of the study's findings. Overall, these methodological considerations aimed to mitigate potential biases and ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of the research outcomes.

Strengths and Limitations of the Methodology

The methodology that I employed in this study offers several strengths, most notably its alignment with the digital nature of Instagram and the cultural context of Iranian immigrant communities. It is a cost-effective approach to doing research, with minimal ethical challenges. The use of netnography allows for the exploration of authentic online interactions, providing insights into how Farsi language and cultural identities are manifested on the platform. Furthermore, the systematic data collection process, including manual observation and refinement techniques, enhances the validity and comprehensiveness of the findings, contributing to a nuanced understanding of language-maintenance dynamics in the digital age (Kozinets, 2015).

However, there are also limitations inherent in the methodology. Hall's theories on representation and identity formation are useful for analyzing the selected posts of Iranian immigrant influencers on Instagram. Hall (1990/2021) also emphasizes the dialogic nature of identity, shaped through audience interaction. A shortcoming of the methodology used in this

study is that it focuses on content exposure rather than direct engagement, meaning that the interactive aspect of identity formation—such as audience comments and feedback—is not examined. Moreover, the reliance on publicly available Instagram content may introduce sampling biases, as the study primarily focuses on Iranian immigrants who are active on the platform and may not capture the perspectives of those who are less engaged with social media. The use of passive observational netography rather than active participatory netography only allows for a surface-level exploration of the social phenomenon under study and did not allow for a full examination of the data using Hall’s cultural identity theory with respect to interactions among Iranian immigrants. Additionally, the temporal restriction on data collection limits my ability to capture longitudinal trends and may overlook evolving language use patterns over time. An insider-outsider positionality is a strength but also requires the researcher to keep biases in check during data interpretation. Despite these limitations, the methodology provides valuable insights into the role of Instagram in shaping language-maintenance practices among Iranian immigrant communities.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, I introduce the selected posts analyzed in this study. I provide brief descriptions and summary tables with key details. Then, I interpret and discuss the findings using the thematic framework resulting from data analysis, relevant research, and theoretical literature. In the final section, I revisit my research questions and answer them based on my discussion.

Introduction to the Selected Posts and Visual Images

Before presenting the research findings, I will introduce the selected posts analyzed in this study. This section provides details about each post individually, including the Farsi captions and their English translations, the codes assigned to the post, and additional information about the influencers who shared it, such as their username, posting date, and follower count. This information is summarized in tables that follow each post description. Some posts include a caption accompanied by a photograph, while others are accompanied by short videos. For the latter, since I couldn't incorporate the videos directly into the text, I captured screenshots of the posts to provide a visual reference. Additionally, if any of these short videos contain speech, I mention and explain it in my introduction; however, many do not include any spoken content. Furthermore, I have provided links to all the selected posts, allowing readers to access the original content on Instagram. To better understand the posts and images and facilitate discussion of the research question, it is necessary to introduce the codes assigned to them. Table 1 below presents the established code list along with a brief description of each code.

Table 1*Code List and Descriptions*

<p><i>Category 1: Language Use</i> Code: Farsi Language - Posts that expose immigrants to Farsi. Code: Bilingual Content - Posts that includes both Farsi and English. Code: Language Practice - Posts that encourage correct Farsi writing.</p> <p><i>Category 2: Cultural Symbols</i> Code: Traditional Attire - Posts or pictures spotlighting individuals in traditional Iranian clothing. Code: Persian Cuisine - References or images of Iranian food. Code: Historical Iranian Sites - Images of old famous buildings, towers, and structures in Iran.</p> <p><i>Category 3: Cultural Practices</i> Code: Celebrations - Posts or pictures related to Iranian cultural or religious celebrations. Code: Representing the Iranian Arts Code: Other Iranian Cultural Symbols</p> <p><i>Category 4: Community Engagement</i> Code: Iranian Community Hashtags - Use of Farsi hashtags related to the Iranian community.</p> <p><i>Category 5: Identity Expression</i> Code: Heritage Narratives - Posts or captions that express personal narratives related to Iranian heritage. Code: Identity Labels - Use of identity labels (e.g., Iranian, Persian) in the profile bio or posts.</p> <p><i>Category 6: Challenges and Reflections</i> Code: Cultural Challenges - Posts discussing challenges faced in asserting Iranian identity. Code: Reflections - Thoughtful reflections on the intersection of heritage and identity on Instagram.</p>
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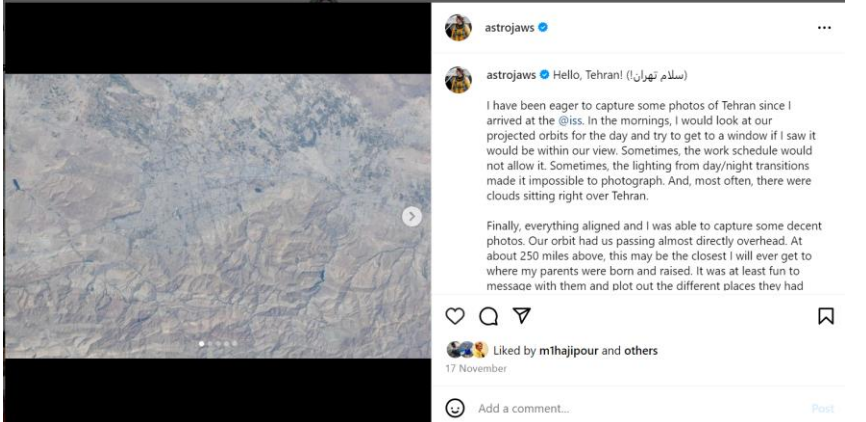
Post 1

The first example is a post shared by Jasmin Moghbeli, a mom, marine attack helicopter pilot, test pilot, and NASA astronaut, whose biography reflects her excitement in sharing her journey. The post, accessible via the link provided, features an image captioned with both English and Farsi phrases, translating to “Hello, Tehran!” in English. Moghbeli expresses her eagerness to capture photos of Tehran from the International Space Station (ISS) since her arrival

there. She recounts the challenges of photography due to varying work schedules, lighting transitions, and cloud cover over Tehran. Despite these obstacles, she eventually succeeds in capturing images as the ISS orbits almost directly overhead. Moghbeli reflects on the significance of this moment, acknowledging that it may be the closest she will ever get to where her parents were born and raised. The post was dated November 17, 2023, and Moghbeli has 347K followers on Instagram.

Table 2

Post 1 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Bilingual Content, Heritage Narratives, Cultural Challenges
User	Jasmin Moghbeli Bio: Mommy. Marine Attack Helicopter Pilot. Test Pilot. NASA Astronaut. Excited to share my journey!
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CzwGyCBr6Wz/
Visual Image	 <p>The image is a screenshot of an Instagram post. On the left, there is a satellite-style photograph of a city, identified as Tehran in the caption. On the right, there is the text of the post in Persian and English. The Persian text says 'سلام تهران!' (Hello, Tehran!). The English text describes the author's excitement to capture photos of Tehran from the International Space Station (ISS) and mentions the challenges of timing and lighting. The post includes a heart icon, a comment icon, a share icon, and a date of 17 November.</p>
Post	<p>سلام تهران! [translation: Hello, Tehran] Hello, Tehran! I have been eager to capture some photos of Tehran since I arrived at the @iss. In the mornings, I would look at our projected orbits for the day and try to get to a window if I saw it would be within our view. Sometimes, the work schedule would not allow it. Sometimes, the lighting from day/night transitions made it impossible to photograph. And, most often, there were clouds sitting right over Tehran.</p>


	Finally, everything aligned, and I was able to capture some decent photos. Our orbit had us passing almost directly overhead. At about 250 miles above, this may be the closest I will ever get to where my parents were born and raised. It was at least fun to message with them and plot out the different places they had lived growing up and in their early days together on a photograph that I had taken.
Date of Post	November 17, 2023
Follower Count	347K

Post 2

The second example is another post shared by Jasmin Moghbeli. In this post, Moghbeli celebrates Nowruz, the Iranian New Year, from the White House, expressing her disbelief at the opportunity. She extends warm wishes in Farsi, stating, “نوروز مبارک,” which translates to “Happy Nowruz.” This post is dated March 20, 2023.

Table 3

Post 2 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Bilingual Content, Celebrations, Heritage Narratives
User	Jasmin Moghbeli Bio: Mommy. Marine Attack Helicopter Pilot. Test Pilot. NASA Astronaut. Excited to share my journey!
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqBpea_OBzh/
Visual Image	
Post	نوروز مبارک [translation: Happy Nowruz] Never thought I would get the chance to say, “Nowruz Mobarak,” from the White House. Eid-e hame mobarak!!

	<p>[translation: Tabriz Ginger Halva You're hearing this from someone who absolutely doesn't like the taste or aroma of ginger in any dessert or dish—I completely fell in love with this halva! How can something be this delicious? 😍]</p> <p>First, let me say that this halva can be made plain, without cocoa powder, or even with saffron. But the way my mother-in-law, who is from Tabriz, makes it turned out incredibly amazing! That's why I wanted to share her recipe with you all. 😍]</p>
Date of Post	August 31, 2023
Follower Count	175K

Post 4

The next example is a post by Solmaz Naraghi, a London-based artist. It features a photograph of her with a thought-provoking Farsi caption. She reflects on how leaving one's homeland makes parts of it come alive within, like a growing plant. She highlights language as one way to carry home with us, comparing this to Heidegger's idea of language as the "house of being." Solmaz celebrates Farsi's poetic beauty and the responsibility for preserving it. She deeply admires the poet Ferdowsi (940–1025), who saw language as key to Iran's survival. She argues that Ferdowsi represents a mission, not just a poet—one that every Iranian carries: the duty to protect their language. This post was shared on May 11, 2023, and Solmaz has 178K Instagram followers.

Table 5

Post 4 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Identity Labels, Reflections, Representing the Iranian Arts
User	Solmaz Naraghi Artist, based in London, UK.
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CsHdmPLqcV1/
Visual Image	
Post	<p>وقتی از سرزمین مادری‌ات دور می‌شوی، بخش‌هایی از آن سرزمین در تو، دیگر بار زاده می‌شود و مانند گیاه جوانه می‌زند و قد می‌کشد و برگ و بار می‌دهد. زبان که به گفته‌ی هایدگر، خانه‌ی وجود است، رویای بر دوش بردن وطن از جایی به جای دیگر را به حقیقت بدل می‌کند و فارسی، این عمارت معمور با اندوه فیروزفامش بر پیشانی، قندی که «شکرشکن شوند همه طوطیان هند» از آن، در هزارتوهای مغزت شکوهی تازه‌تر می‌یابد. زنگ شاعرانه‌ی الفاظ و زنجیره‌ی دلنشین لغاتش را عمیق‌تر درمی‌یابی و روز به روز آگاه‌تر می‌شوی به مسئولیت خود در برابرش! آنچه تمام عمر در فردوسی می‌ستودم هرگز تا این اندازه به استخوانم نفوذ نکرده بود. فردوسی می‌دانست که «ایران ماندن ایران» در گرو چیست وقتی بسی رنج بردم در این سال سی، عجم زنده کردم بدین پارسی. من باور دارم که فردوسی یک فرد نیست یک رسالت است. هر ایرانی یک فردوسی درون دارد و آن چیزی نیست جز مسئولیتش در قبال زبان خود. اهمیت فارسی چیزی از بزرگی و منزلت زبان‌های رایج دیگر در این سرزمین کم نمی‌کند. ما قرن‌ها در کنار هم زیسته‌ایم و جان‌مان به جان یکدیگر بند است. فارسی یک توافق تاریخی یا سیاسی برای مرکزگرایی و فرودست‌انگاری دیگر زبان‌ها نبوده است. فارسی توافق زیباشناسانه‌ی ماست با یکدیگر. فارسی، مأمن تاریخی مان، خانه‌ی وجودمان است. جایی که شعور شاعرانه یک ملت در آن پرورده شده و صورت تحقق یافته از یاد نبریم که فردوسی در چه زمانه‌ای زیست و چگونه بر آنچه درست می‌دانست پای فشرد. از یاد نبریم فردوسی یک رسالت است و نه تنها یک شاعر.</p> <p>[translation: When you leave your homeland, parts of that land are reborn within you, sprouting like a young plant, growing tall, bearing leaves and fruit.</p> <p>Language, which Heidegger calls the house of being, turns the dream of carrying one’s homeland from place to place into reality. And Farsi—this grand edifice adorned with a sorrow as radiant as turquoise, the sugar that “makes all the parrots of India sugar-crushing”—finds a renewed splendor in the labyrinths of your mind.</p>

	<p>You grasp more deeply the poetic resonance of its words and the harmonious chain of its expressions, and with each passing day, you become more aware of your responsibility toward it.</p> <p>What I had always admired in Ferdowsi had never before penetrated my bones so profoundly. Ferdowsi knew well what the survival of Iran depended on when he wrote:</p> <p>“For thirty years, I labored hard, Reviving Persia with this Farsi.”</p> <p>I believe Ferdowsi is not just a person—he is a mission. Every Iranian carries a Ferdowsi within, and that is nothing but the responsibility they bear for their language. The significance of Farsi does not diminish the greatness and dignity of other languages spoken in this land. For centuries, we have lived side by side, our souls intertwined. Persian has never been a historical or political agreement imposed to centralize power or to undermine other languages. Persian is our shared aesthetic agreement. It is our historical refuge, our house of being—the space where the poetic consciousness of a nation has been nurtured and brought to life.</p> <p>Let us not forget the era in which Ferdowsi lived, nor the steadfastness with which he upheld what he knew to be right. Let us not forget that Ferdowsi is a mission, not merely a poet</p>
Date of Post	May 11, 2023
Follower Count	178K


Post 5

The next example is Mehran Rowshan’s post. He identifies himself as a coach on Instagram. He shares a photograph of Iranian great classic singer Master Mohammad Reza Shajarian (محمدرضا شجریان). Shajarian was a renowned Iranian vocalist and a master (*Ostad*) of traditional Persian music (Simms & Koushkani, 2012). Shajarian’s photograph in Rowshan’s post is accompanied by a caption featuring lyrics from one of Shajarian’s masterpieces. The lyrics are in Farsi and can be translated into English as: “In all circumstances, I sought truth and justice. Though truth is with you, my dear brother, one should not seek truth with a language that is a torch. If your conscience awakens from its slumber this time, drop your gun on the ground.” These introspective Farsi lyrics suggest a call for a peaceful dialogue, honesty, and self-

awareness. The post was shared on November 2, 2022, and Rowshan has 1 million followers on Instagram.

Table 6

Post 5 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Identity Labels, Reflections, Representing the Iranian Arts
User	Mehran Rowshan Bio: Coach
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CkFEK38jnzu/
Visual Image	 <p>[translation of the text inside the image: why should ...]</p>
Post	<p>گرفتم در همه احوال حق گوئی و حق جویی و حق با توست ولی حق را برادر جان به زور این زبان نافهم آتشبار نباید جُست اگر این بار شد وجدان خواب آلوده ات بیدار تفنگت را زمین بگذار</p> <p>[translation: In all circumstances, I sought truth and justice. Though truth is with you, my dear brother, one should not seek truth with a language that is a torch. If your conscience awakens from its slumber this time, drop your gun on the ground]</p>
Date of Post	November 2, 2022
Follower Count	1M

Post 6

The next example is a post from an Instagram account co-owned by Nika Niksefat and Hossein J., a travel couple based in California. They share this post featuring a caption written in

Farsi, highlighting the selection of Cyrus the Great's Charter as the basis for the Freedom Sculpture in Los Angeles, which was unveiled in 2017. Their caption explains that the sculpture was chosen because of the powerful and beautiful message of Cyrus the Great's Charter: the freedom of all human beings. The Charter is the first historical document to declare religious freedom and condemn slavery (Finkel, 2013). It may be noted that Cyrus the Great, one of the most famous ancient Persian kings, remains a significant national symbol for Iranians. Nika and Hossein's caption is accompanied by a short video in which they visit the Freedom Sculpture in Los Angeles, walking around the monument and speaking in Farsi about the significance of Cyrus the Great's Charter (as stated in their caption). They mention that at the time of the sculpture's unveiling, a major pop music concert was held, featuring two of the most famous Iranian pop stars, and the streets were blocked due to the event. In the video, they also point out scarves that, according to them, were hung from the sculpture in Los Angeles. While they do not explicitly explain the reason behind this act, they note that it occurred during the 'زن، زندگی، آزادی' (Women, Life, Freedom) movement in Iran. This gesture can be interpreted as an expression of solidarity with women inside Iran, who were protesting the country's mandatory hijab laws as part of the 'زن، زندگی، آزادی' (Women, Life, Freedom) movement. In the final seconds of the video, a graffiti image of Mahsa Amini on the body of the sculpture is visible. Mahsa was an Iranian woman arrested in Tehran for not fully covering her hair and tragically died in custody under suspicious circumstances, with evidence suggesting she was murdered (Zeidan, n.d.). The post was shared on August 6, 2023, and Nika and Hossein have 658K followers on Instagram.

Table 7

Post 6 Summary

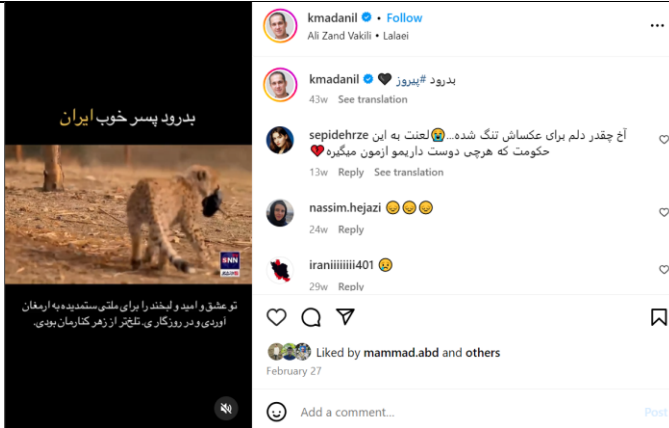
Codes	Farsi Language, Identity Labels, Reflections
Users	Nika Niksefat & Hossein.J Bio: Travel Couple 🧑🏻🧑🏻 📍 CaliforniaUS Hossein: Data Scientist 📁 Google 39 countries Nika: Engineering Leader 📁 33 countries
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CvnSfChthMs/
Visual Image	
Post	<p>طرح منشور کوروش، از بین بیش از سیصد تا طرح، به عنوان منشور آزادی لوس آنجلس انتخاب شد و تو سال ۲۰۱۷ بنا شد. دلیل انتخابش پیام زیبا و محکم منشور کوروش هست: که آزادی حق تمام انسانهای دنیاس. منشور کوروش اولین سند تاریخ هست که آزادی مذهب و ضد بردگی رو اعلام می‌کنه.</p> <p>[translation: The design of the Cyrus Charter was chosen as the Los Angeles Freedom Monument from over 300 designs and was built in 2017. The reason for its selection is the powerful and beautiful message of the Cyrus Charter: that freedom is the right of all people in the world. The Cyrus Charter is the first recorded document in history to proclaim religious freedom and oppose slavery.]</p>
Date of Post	August 6, 2023
Follower Count	658K

Post 7

Kaveh Madani, Director of the United Nations Water Think Tank, posted a short video of Pirooz on Instagram along with a farewell message in Farsi. Pirooz, born on May 1, 2022, and known as پیروز, was an Asiatic cheetah originating from Iran. Initially expected to reside in

Tehran until reaching six months of age, plans for potential transfer to Khar Turan National Park were considered contingent upon resolving his persistent health issues, including digestive and kidney ailments since birth. However, in February 2023, due to worsening health conditions, Pirooz was relocated to a veterinary hospital. Tragically, on February 28, 2023, Pirooz passed away at the age of ten months, succumbing to kidney failure (Mehr News Agency, 2023). At the time of his demise, Iran's Asiatic cheetah population had dwindled to a mere dozen individuals, comprising nine males and three females. Following the birth of Pirooz and the subsequent deaths of two other cubs, activists voiced strong criticisms regarding the care and conditions of these animals in Iran (Mehr News Agency, 2023). While Madani's short video of Pirooz does not have audio and only shows Pirooz walking and playing in a desert resort, he adds a farewell message in Farsi at the top of the video, which translates into English as: "Farewell, noble son of Iran. You brought love, hope, and smiles to an oppressed nation and stood by us in times more bitter than poison." This explanation refers to certain social and political hardships that occurred during that time. The life and death of Pirooz coincided with human activities in Iran, where large groups of protesters took to the streets to demonstrate against the death of Mahsa Amini, mentioned above. This sparked a movement known as 'زن، زندگی، آزادی' (Women, Life, Freedom) (Zeidan, n.d.). For some, Pirooz's death symbolized a sense of disillusionment, as his name in Farsi means "victory," and they had hoped for victory in their protests. Yet, Pirooz died. I will discuss this picture as a cultural symbol in the next part of this chapter. Madani's Instagram post was shared on February 27, 2023, and Madani has 442K followers.

Table 8*Post 7 Summary*


Codes	Farsi Language, Iranian Community Hashtags, Reflections, Other Iranian Cultural Symbols
User	Kaveh Madani Bio: Director of the United Nations Think Tank on Water @unuinweh
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CpMabyMDoWV/?hl=en
Visual Image	 <p>[translation of the text inside of the image: Farewell, noble son of Iran. You brought love, hope, and smiles to an oppressed nation and stood by us in times more bitter than poison.]</p>
Post	بدرود #پیروز [translation: Farewell, Pirooz]
Date of Post	February 27, 2023
Follower Count	442K

Post 8

In the next example, Farahmand Alipour, described as a traveler, blogger, and influencer, shares a post on a Farsi book. The post introduces a pictorial history book titled *Ancient Iran*, promising a unique and splendid narrative of Iran's ancient history. The post, accessible via the provided link, was shared on December 21, 2023, and Alipour has amassed a substantial following of 509K on Instagram.

Table 9

Post 8 Summary

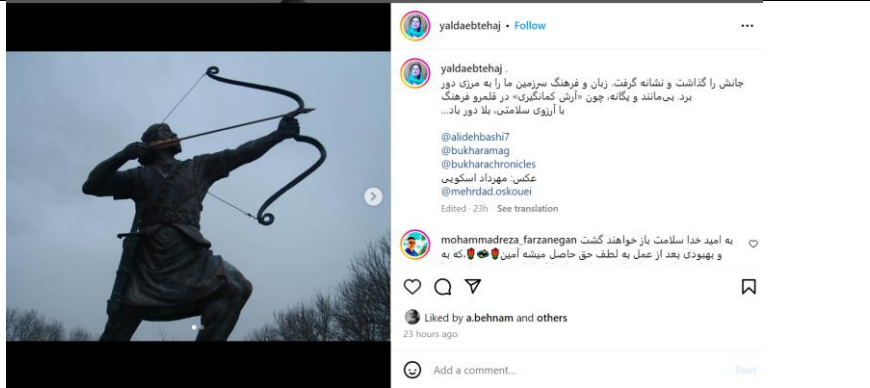
Codes	Farsi Language, Identity Labels, Cultural Challenges
User	Farahmand Alipour Bio: Traveler, Blogger & Influencer
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/C1Hejv3q8TV/?hl=en&img_index=1
Visual Image	
Post	<p>کتاب تاریخ مصور «ایران باستان» در ۴ جلد، روایت و بیانی متفاوت از تاریخ کهن و پرشکوه ایران زمین. کتابی که اکنون در حال چاپ است و انتشار آن به زودی آغاز خواهد شد. این مجموعه نفیس ۱۲۰۰ صفحه‌ای را می‌توانید از هم اکنون - با قیمتی مناسب‌تر - پیش خرید کنید. در این کتاب برای نخستین بار ده‌ها چهره و بنا و شهرهای ایران باستان بازسازی و بازمانده شده است. برای پیش خرید این کتاب به انتشارات سایان مراجعه کنید. ارسال به سراسر ایران و جهان. به بیچ سایان دایرکت بدید، یا از وبسایت اونها می‌تونید سفارش پیش خرید کتاب رو انجام بدید.</p> <p>[translation: The illustrated history book <i>Ancient Iran</i> is a four-volume collection offering a unique and distinctive narrative of Iran's rich and glorious past. Currently in the printing stage, this remarkable 1,200-page collection will soon be available for purchase. For the first time, this book reconstructs and visually represents dozens of historical figures, monuments, and ancient Iranian cities. To pre-order, visit Sayan Publications. Shipping is available across Iran and worldwide. You can send a direct message to Sayan's page or place your pre-order through their website.]</p>
Date of Post	December 21, 2023
Follower Count	509K

Post 9

The ninth example is a post shared by Yalda Ebtehaj, an Iranian immigrant artist. She shares an image of Arash Kamangir, accompanied by a caption written in Farsi. In Iranian folklore, the ancient border between Iran and Turan was established by an arrow shot by Arash Kamangir (Encyclopaedia Iranica, 2024). Arash gave his life to launch the arrow, which flew for several days before landing on a walnut tree across the Oxus River, hundreds of miles from the mountain where it was released. The caption accompanying this image includes a message for Yalda Ebtehaj’s friend, Dehbashi—a well-known Iranian cultural activist who was hospitalized at the time due to COVID-19. At the end of her caption, Ebtehaj tags Dehbashi’s Instagram account and compares his efforts to those of the legendary figure Arash, saying he is sacrificing his life to preserve Iranian culture, just as Arash gave his life to save the land of Iran. Ebtehaj published this post on September 30, 2023, and she has 146K followers on Instagram.

Table 10

Post 9 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Historical Iranian Sites, Identity Labels, Persian Culture
User	Yalda Ebtehaj
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/C1h3feZqHzG/?hl=en
Visual Image	
Post	<p>جانش را گذاشت و نشانه گرفت. زبان و فرهنگ سرزمین ما را به مرزی دور برد. بی‌مانند و یگانه، چون «آرش کمانگیری» در قلمرو فرهنگ با آرزوی سلامتی، بلا دور باد...</p>

	@alidehbashi7 @bukharamag @bukharachronicles [translation: He gave his life and took aim. He carried the language and culture of our land to distant frontiers. Unique and unparalleled, like Arash Kamangir in the realm of culture.]
Date of Post	September 30, 2023
Follower Count	146K

Post 10

The next example is a post from Solmaz Barghir, an Iranian immigrant influencer on Instagram who introduces herself as influential relationship strategist, writer, speaker, and podcaster. She shares a Farsi blessing for Yalda Night in her caption and expresses a heartfelt wish for happiness, urging everyone worldwide to experience just one more minute of joy, no matter where they are. This uplifting caption is accompanied by an incredible video featuring many Iranian people—who appear to be Solmaz’s followers or friends—lip-syncing the lyrics of a Farsi song about Yalda night in various locations around the world, including Canada, Switzerland, Peru, Russia, Sri Lanka, India, China, Spain, and multiple cities in Iran such as Tehran, Khorramabad, Mashhad, Karaj, Siahkal, and Deylaman. Among them, a couple is seen lip-syncing beside the Azadi Tower in Tehran, a deeply nostalgic landmark for Iranian immigrants, as it is one of the iconic symbols of the city.

Table 11*Post 10 Summary*

Codes	Farsi Language, Historical Iranian Sites, Cultural Challenges, Iranian Community Hashtags
User	Solmaz Barghgir Bio: Effective Relationship Strategist, Writer, Speaker, Podcaster
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/C1HNWFCuSLb/?hl=en
Visual Image	
Post	عمیقاً آرزو می کنم، هر جای دنیا که هستی، یک دقیقه بیشتر شاد باشی! #یلدا مبارک! [translation: I deeply wish that wherever you are in the world, you experience one more minute of happiness! Happy Yalda!]
Date of Post	December 21, 2023
Follower Count	240K

Post 11

The next example is a post from Leila Sefidgri, an Iranian immigrant influencer who lives in San Diego, California. She shares a photograph of herself wearing Iranian clothing, sitting on an Iranian carpet, and deseeding a pomegranate. She may be preparing the pomegranate seeds for an Iranian celebration, as eating pomegranate seeds is common in many Iranian gatherings, such as during Yalda Night. The post conveys a Farsi message of hope for those anticipating brighter days ahead. This post was shared on December 30, 2023, and Sefidgri has gathered a following of 170K on Instagram.

Table 12*Post 11 Summary*


Codes	Farsi Language, Heritage Narratives, Reflections
User	Leila Sefidgri Bio: Women, Life, Freedom
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/C1gVV17Lv7G/?hl=en
Visual Image	
Post	..برای آن‌ها که به آمدن روزهای روشن امید دارند [translation: For those who hope for the arrival of brighter days ...]
Date of Post	December 30, 2023
Follower Count	170K

Post 12

The next example is a post published by Kelly and Habib Arvan. Habib is an immigrant, and his partner, Kelly, does not have Iranian roots. They share a photograph of Kelly in Iranian Lori clothing, accompanied by a status written in Farsi, which translates to: “For all the breastfeeding women of Lorestan and Iran.” This post, accessible via the provided link, was shared on July 21, 2023, and Kelly and Habib Arvan have amassed a following of 1.3 million on Instagram.

Table 13

Post 12 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Traditional Attire, Cultural Challenges
User	Kelly & Habib Arvan
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cu8woIGyEts/
Visual Image	
Post	برای تمام شیر زنان لرستان و ایران [translation: For all the breastfeeding women of Lorestan and Iran]
Date of Post	July 21, 2023
Follower Count	1.3M

Post 13

In next example, Samaneh Asadi shares a photograph of herself in Iranian South clothing followed by a caption written in Farsi, encouraging readers to dare to live life on one’s own terms, not according to others’ expectations. The caption emphasizes the importance of personal happiness regardless of reaching goals or fulfilling all desires. The message urges embracing joy in every moment and being oneself without seeking validation from others. This post was shared on November 21, 2021, and Asadi has earned a following of 507K on Instagram.

Table 14

Post 13 Summary


Codes	Farsi Language, Traditional Attire, Identity Labels
User	Samaneh Asadi
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CWjTFsmgZUk/?ref=lbbpost&hl=af
Visual Image	
Post	<p>...جسارت داشته باش و زندگی کن اما جوری که خودت دوست داری، !نه جوری که دیگران از تو انتظار دارند مهم نیست که تا مقصدت می رسی یا نه، و مهم نیست که تمام آرزوهایت محقق می !شوند یا نه، مهم این است که حال دلت خوب باشد ...پس تا میتوانی شاد باش و از لحظه لحظه‌ی زندگی‌ات لذت ببر و خودت باش؛ خودت حاکم و معیار و قاضی کارهای خودت، خودت همه کاره‌ی دنیای خودت، ...و انگیزه‌ی آرزوهای خودت !تو نیاز به تایید هیچکس نداری [translation: Dare to live ... But live the way you want, Not the way others expect of you! It doesn't matter whether you reach your destination or not, and it doesn't matter whether all your dreams come true or not, what matters is that you feel good! So, be as happy as you can and enjoy every moment of your life ... And be yourself; Be the ruler, the standard, and the judge of your own actions, Be the one who controls your own world, And the driving force behind your own desires ... You don't need anyone's approval!]</p>
Date of Post	November 21, 2021
Follower Count	507K

Post 14

Flora Hadi introduced herself as a health and beauty enthusiast and Australia’s first Iranian lifestyle blogger. She shares a short video of Haft Sin with a Farsi caption that extends early New Year’s wishes to loved ones and showcases their beautiful Haft Sin spread during a Nowruz trip arranged with friends to celebrate the New Year and Nowruz. In the first second of the short video, the Haft Sin is shown. After that, Flora dances while her daughter is in her arms and Farsi music is playing. This post, accessible via the provided link, was shared on November 17, 2023, and Hadi has gathered a substantial following of 907K on Instagram.

Table 15

Post 14 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Heritage Narratives, Celebrations
User	Flora Hadi Bio: Health / Beauty AU اولین بلاگر لایف استایل ایرانی در استرالیا Lifestyle 🍷 Fashion 👗 Travel 🌍 @healthydietflora 📩 تبلیغات AU Sydney, Australia 💻 Software Engineer
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CbSVm4AJ_AZ/?hl=en
Visual Image	
Post	عزیزای دلم سال نو پیشاپیش مبارک باشه 🍷💖🌸 این هفت‌سین زیبای ما در سفر نوروزی هست که با همراهی دوستانم برای جشن نوروز و سال نو چیده شده نوروز و سال نو چیده شده

	<p>امیدوارم سال جدید پر از عشق و شادی و آرامش باشه براتون 🤍❤️ [translation: My dear ones, Happy New Year in advance!</p> <p>This is our beautiful Haft Sin from our Nowruz trip, set up with my friends to celebrate Nowruz and the New Year.</p> <p>I hope the new year is filled with love, joy, and peace for you all!]</p>
Date of Post	November 17, 2023
Follower Count	907K

Post 15

Nabaut Etminan, a creator and entrepreneur who describes herself as a woman who left her heart and soul in Iran and is based in Canada, shares a photograph of Haft Sin with a caption written in Farsi. The caption expresses hopes that this year, “your hearts” will remain unbroken and not longing for too long. Instead, it wishes that the lives of readers will overflow with love, tremble with joy, and be filled with sweetness, but very gently. This post, accessible via the provided link, was shared on March 21, 2021, and Etminan has collected a substantial following of 1.3 million on Instagram.

Table 16

Post 15 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Celebrations, Heritage Narratives
User	Nabaut Etminan Bio: A woman who left her heart and soul in Iran. Based in CA Creator Entrepreneur
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CMrL8BqHXCr/

<p>Visual Image</p>	
<p>Post</p>	<p>میدوارم امسال «دلاتون» هیچ جوره نشکنه و طولانی مدت تنگ نمونه و زیادی شور نزنه .</p> <p>. . .</p> <p>اما به جاش از عشق لبریز بشه و از خوشی بلرزه و توش قند اب شه و آروم باشه، خیلی آروم ❤️</p> <p>. .</p> <p>«سال چهارصدتون مبارک»</p> <p>[translation: I hope this year, your hearts never break, never stay heavy for too long, and never overflow with sorrow.</p> <p>Instead, may they be filled with love, tremble with happiness, melt with sweetness, and rest in deep peace. ❤️</p> <p>Happy 1400!]</p>
<p>Date of Post</p>	<p>March 21, 2021</p>
<p>Follower Count</p>	<p>1.3M</p>

Post 16

Mona Sayadi shares a post on Instagram addressing her language of choice for communication with her child, Nikan. She and her partner, Hamid, were certain before becoming parents that they would speak to their child in Farsi, citing several reasons for this decision. Firstly, both Mona and Hamid’s native language is Farsi, with other languages like English and German being their second languages. They feel most comfortable expressing emotions and

thoughts in Farsi and believe they can establish a stronger connection with their child through it. Secondly, they have observed that children growing up in Germany tend to naturally adopt German as their primary language, especially as they attend kindergarten and school, making it crucial for Nikan to learn Farsi fluently both in childhood and adulthood. They believe that learning German in a German environment is preferable to learning it from Iranian parents, who may not speak German perfectly or accurately. Mona also shares her experiences with second-generation friends in Germany, where some speak Farsi fluently while others find it challenging, suggesting that those who adapt more easily to the Iranian environment have an easier time socializing and generally fare better among Iranians. This post, accessible via the provided link, was shared on March 18, 2022, and Sayadi has collected a following of 190K on Instagram.

Table 17

Post 16 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Heritage Narratives, Identity Labels
User	Mona Sayadi
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/BvJMUqQlkr9/?hl=en
Visual Image	
Post	<p>سلام دوستان خوبم، مدتی پیش بهتون قول داده بودم که حتما در این مورد که ما با نیکان به چه زبانی صحبت میکنیم پست بزارم، بالاخره وقت شد و تونستم بنویسم .</p> <p>من و حمید از قبل از بچه‌دار شدن مطمئن بودیم که تصمیم داریم با فرزندمون به زبان فارسی صحبت کنیم و برای این تصمیم هم چند دلیل مهم داشتیم که براتون اینجا مینویسم</p> <p>اولین دلیلش این هست که واقعبیت اینه که زبان ما در ایران هستن و هیچ وقت راحتی کفتر و بویز احساسات که ما با زبان فارسی داریم و مینویسیم یا بچه‌مون ازناطه برقرار کنیم با زبان های دیگه نداریم . دومین و مهمتر از اولی تجربه‌ای ما طی این سالهاست که منوجه تصمیم بچه‌ای که در آلمان رشد میکنه، مهدکودک و مدرسه میره، ناخودآگاه زبان مادریش زبان آلمانی میشه و تعاملش بیشتر بر اینه که به آلمانی حرف بزنه و در اینصورت یادگیری و توانایی سلیس صحبت کردن زبان فارسی برایش چه در بچگی و چه در بزرگسالی یک افتضار محسوب میشه و چه بهتر که زبان آلمانی رو در محیط آلمانی یاد بگیره نه از پدر و مادر ایرانی که مسلما آلمانی رو نه برکت و نه صد در صد صحیح صحبت میکنند! من دوستان نسل دومی زیادی داشتم تو آلمان که خیلی‌هاشون فارسی</p>


	<p>گفتار و بروز احساسات که ما با زبان فارسی داریم و میتونیم با بچه‌مون ارتباط برقرار کنیم با زبان‌های دیگه نداریم</p> <p>دومین و مهمتر از اولی تجربه‌ی ما طی این سالهاست، که متوجه شدیم بچه‌ای که _ در آلمان رشد میکنه، مهدکودک و مدرسه میره، ناخودآگاه زبان مادریش زبان آلمانی میشه و تمایلش بیشتر بر اینه که به آلمانی حرف بزنه و در اینصورت یادگیری و توانایی سلیس صحبت کردن زبان فارسی برایش چه در بچگی و چه در بزرگسالی یک امتیاز محسوب میشه و چه بهتر که زبان آلمانی رو در محیط آلمانی یاد بگیره نه از پدر و مادر ایرانی که مسلماً آلمانی رو نه پرفکت و نه صد در صد صحیح صحبت میکنند!</p> <p>من دوستان نسل دومی زیادی داشتم تو آلمان که خیلی‌هاشون فارسی رو سلیس _ صحبت میکردن و یه عده‌شون هم فارسی رو خیلی سخت و با لهجه صحبت میکردن که خوب دسته‌ی اول خیلی راحت‌تر با محیط ایرانی ادابت میشن و رفت‌وآمد میکنند و در کل در جمع ایرانی بیشتر بهشون خوش میگذره</p> <p>[translation: Hello, my dear friends,</p> <p>Some time ago, I promised to share a post about the language we speak with Nikan, and I finally found the time to write it down.</p> <p>Hamid and I were certain even before having a child that we wanted to speak Farsi with our child. We had a few important reasons for this decision, which I'll share with you here:</p> <p>First and foremost, Farsi is our native language. Other languages like English and German are our second languages, and we don't have the same comfort, emotional expression, or natural fluency in them as we do in Farsi. Speaking Farsi allows us to communicate with our child more naturally and deeply.</p> <p>Secondly, and even more importantly, our experience over the years has shown us that a child growing up in Germany, attending kindergarten and school, will naturally adopt German as their primary language. They will have a stronger inclination to speak German, making fluency in Persian an advantage—both in childhood and later in life. And what better way to learn German than in a German-speaking environment, rather than from Iranian parents who, naturally, do not speak perfect, native-level German?</p> <p>I have met many second-generation Iranians in Germany. Some of them speak Persian fluently, while others struggle with it or speak with a heavy accent. Those in the first group generally find it easier to connect with Iranian culture, socialize in Iranian communities, and enjoy their experiences in Persian-speaking environments much more.]</p>
Date of Post	March 18, 2022
Follower Count	190K

Post 17

The next example is a post on Sina Kakavand’s Instagram account. He is an Iranian immigrant influencer who publishes his personal family experiences on his account. In the selected post, he shares a photograph of Haft Sin with a blessing for Nowruz. This post, accessible via the provided link, was shared on March 20, 2023, and Kakavand has collected a following of 248K on Instagram.

Table 18

Post 17 Summary

Codes	Celebrations, Iranian Community Hashtags
User	Sina Kakavand
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqBWUDBI6Lu/
Visual Image	
Post	Nowruz 1402
Date of Post	March 20, 2023
Follower Count	248K

Post 18

Maryam Bahadorbeigi is an Iranian immigrant influencer who publishes her experience of celebrating Nowruz. She shares a post with a Farsi caption in which she says “happy Nowruz” to all Iranians. The caption also reflects on the challenges and differences experienced by her family in their first year of migration, expressing gratitude for having her family by her side despite the difficulties. Maryam’s caption is accompanied by a short video in which she is setting Haft Sin while Iranian music is played. This post, accessible via the provided link, was shared on

March 20, 2023, and Bahadorbeigi has amassed a significant following of 2 million on Instagram.

Table 19

Post 18 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Heritage Narratives, Celebrations
User	Maryam Bahadorbeigi mojezeyechashni
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqBllv1jSsF/?ref=PRHAA113E74B92F&hl=bn
Visual Image	
Post	<p>سلام رفقا 🤗 سال نو مبارک 🍀🍀🍀🍀 امیدوارم سال جدید برای همگی مون پر از اتفاق های خوب، سلامتی، آرامش، آزادی و شادی باشه 🍀</p> <p>امسال در اولین سال مهاجرت برای خانواده ما پر از چالش و متفاوتی بود. تجربه های جدید و اتفاق های مختلفی رو پشت سر گذاشتیم. اولین ساله که کتک خوردنمون رو از قنادی خریدیم. سین نداشتیم. هفت سین نچیدم (البته هفت سین کوچولویی داریم که مروارید زحمتشو کشیده) و آخرین روز سال رو ده ساعت سر کار بودم 😊 ولی خوشحالم که حداقل خانواده ام اینجا کنارم 🍀🍀 هستن</p> <p>این ویدئو مال هفت سین پارساله که با خواهرام چیدیم</p> <p>[translation: Hello, dear friends! 🤗 Happy New Year! 🍀🍀🍀🍀 I hope this new year brings all of us wonderful moments, health, peace, freedom, and happiness. 🍀 This year, our first year of immigration, came to an end with many challenges and new experiences. We went through a lot of changes—it was the first time I bought Artin’s birthday cake from a bakery; I didn’t grow Sabzeh, and I didn’t set up a full Haft Sin (though we do have a small one, thanks to Marvarid! 😊). I even spent the last day of the year working for ten hours straight! 😊 But despite all of that, I’m grateful that my family is here with me. 🍀🍀 This video is from last year’s Haft Sin, which I set up with my sisters.]</p>


Date of Post	March 20, 2023
Follower Count	2M

Post 19

The next example is another post from Kelly and Habib Arvan, published on their family page. The Farsi caption of this post, which seems to be written by Habib, expresses pride in Kelly’s efforts to learn Farsi words, highlighting her dedication to the language. The post also includes a video in which Kelly explains her reflections on some Farsi idioms. She gives examples of how one can use these Farsi idioms and explains her belief that they are significant and respectful. In the video, she asks her followers to introduce her with more Farsi idioms. This post, accessible via the provided link, was shared on December 7, 2023, and Kelly and Habib have collected a significant following of 1.4 million on Instagram.

Table 20

Post 19 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Identity Labels, Heritage Narratives
User	Kelly & Habib Arvan Bio: 🎬 TikToks 470k+ 🌟 📮 PO Box 7228 Point Cook VIC 3030
Link	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C0i2vScy9f2/?id=3252402625052399606_55892334568
Visual Image	

Post	کلمات فارسي که کلي جان یادگرفته و من بهش افتخار میکنم که تا این حد تلاش میکنه 🥰🙌🏻👏👑 [translation: Farsi words that Kelly has learned—I'm so proud of how much effort they're putting in! 🥰🙌🏻👏👑]
Date of Post	December 7, 2023
Follower Count	1.4M

Post 20

Solmaz Hoomanzadeh, an Iranian immigrant fashion designer in Canada, shared this post featuring a photograph of herself hugging someone. The image is accompanied by a long Farsi caption discussing how Iranian immigrants perceive the situation in Iran. She reflects on comments like, “I went to Iran. Everything seemed fine. Yes, prices were high, but people were living their lives and having fun.” While some of this may be true, she argues that real change is happening beneath the surface. She highlights that revolutions do not start with the wealthy but from the working class, who are under immense pressure. Even the shift in hijab norms across society, she argues, is a major change. She urges people to look beyond Tehran and see the transformations in more traditional communities. Solmaz emphasizes that after 44 years, questioning the country’s constitution is a significant achievement. She believes Iranian women, especially in conservative areas, are making real progress. Change starts small, like aftershocks before an earthquake. She concludes by reminding women to support and uplift one another. This post was shared on September 13, 2023, and Solmaz has 143K Instagram followers.

Table 21

Post 20 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Heritage Narratives, Cultural Challenges
User	Solmaz Hoomanzadeh
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CxI8tDiu0jt/
Visual Image	
Post	<p>« من رفتم ایران، همه چیز خیلی خوب بود، گرونی بود، ولی مردم داشتن زندگیشون رو میکردن، همه مشغول خوشی و تفریح بودن، هیچ کس عین خیالش نیست و ...»</p> <p>این جملاتی هست که من از خیلی از آدمای اطرافم که این چند وقت اخیر رفتن ایران و برگشتن شنیدم و در موردش حرف زدیم. این جمله ها شاید به بخشیش درست باشه ولی به نظر من معنیش این نیست که هیچ چیزی تغییر نکرده، چونکه قطعاً کرده. این دیدگاه کلی من به اتفاقات یکسال اخیر ایرانه که میتونه درست یا غلط باشه؛</p> <p>درسته شاید در ظاهر اوضاع آروم باشه ولی اینو هم یادمون باشه که هیچ انقلابی از طبقه ثروتمند جامعه شکل نگرفته اتفاقاً طبقه کارگر و بی پول بوده که انقلاب ایجاد کرده... همین الان بخوابن به نگاه سطحی کنید طبقه تحت فشار هفتاد درصد جامعه رو در برگرفته</p> <p>اصلاً بیا فکر کنیم که تنها دستاورد این اعتراضات تغییر حجاب و پوشش توی لایه‌های مختلف جامعه بوده، واقعا فکر میکنید این تغییر کمی هست؟</p> <p>یادتون باشه که همه اجتماع ایران رو پایتخت نشین‌ها با سطح فرهنگ متوسط تشکیل نمیدن، باید دید در جامعه سنتی و مذهبی شهرستانها چه اتفاقی افتاده و این خودش یه انقلابه. برای بار سوم میگم، حتماً اپیزود آخر رادیو مرز رو گوش کنید؛ «بعد از ژینا» و ببینید که آدما با چه چیزهایی دارن می‌جنگن و چه چیزهایی رو تغییر دادن.</p> <p>به نظرت اینکه بعد چهل و چهار سال قانونی اساسی کشور زیر سوال رفته این دستاورد کمیه؟ جمهوری اسلامی چهل ساله همین حجاب رو پایه قدرت و تسلطش بر دیکتاتوریش میدونسته. اتفاقاً همین برداشتن حجاب که در ظاهر به چشم بعضی هامون ناچیز به حساب میاد، یعنی ستون دیکتاتوری داره از پایه میریزه</p>

به نظر من، دستاوردی که زنهای ایرانی هنوز دارن تو سطح جامعه، به ویژه جامعه سنتی در شهرستانها و خانواده‌های مذهبی، به دست میارن و باهش میجنگن اصلا چیزی کمی نیست. همیشه هر زلزله‌ای اول از پس لرزه شروع میشه و بعد به مرحله زلزله‌ای میرسه که ویران میکنه.

در آخر یادمون باشه هر کدوم از ما زنها، هر جای دنیا که هستیم، برای هر چیزی که مبارزه میکنیم، کار بزرگی انجام میدیم و قدم بزرگی بر میداریم. ما زنها فقط همدیگر رو داریم پس حواسمون باشه همیشه با عشق همدیگر رو به آغوش بکشیم و حامی هم باشیم.

مهسا امینی #زن زندگی آزادی#

[translation: “I went to Iran. Everything was fine. Yes, prices were high, but people were living their lives. Everyone was busy enjoying themselves, having fun—no one seemed to care ...”

These are the kinds of things I’ve heard from many people around me who recently traveled to Iran and came back. There may be some truth to these statements, but in my opinion, that doesn’t mean nothing has changed—because it certainly has. This is my overall perspective on the events of the past year in Iran, and it may be right or wrong.

Sure, on the surface, things might seem calm. But let’s not forget that no revolution has ever started from the wealthy class. It has always been the working class, the ones struggling financially, who have ignited change. Even now, if you take a closer look, about 70% of society is under pressure.

Let’s assume for a moment that the only outcome of these protests was the change in hijab and dress codes across different layers of society. Do you really think that’s a small change?

Remember, Iranian society isn’t just made up of middle-class city dwellers in the capital. We need to look at what’s happening in more traditional and religious communities in smaller cities. That, in itself, is a revolution. For the third time, I urge you to listen to the latest episode of Radio Marz, “After Zhina,” to understand what people are fighting against and what they have already changed.

Do you think that after 44 years, questioning the country’s constitution is a minor achievement? The Islamic Republic has spent four decades using compulsory hijab as a pillar of its power and control. So, when women remove it, even if it seems insignificant to some, it means that the foundation of dictatorship is crumbling.

In my view, the progress that Iranian women continue to make—especially in traditional communities, small towns, and religious families—is far from insignificant. Every major earthquake begins with aftershocks before it reaches full force and brings destruction.


	And in the end, let’s remember that no matter where we are in the world, every fight we take on as women is meaningful, every step we take is significant. We, as women, only have each other. So let’s always hold one another close with love and stand together in support.]
Date of Post	September 13, 2023
Follower Count	143K

Post 21

The next example is a post on Mojgan Shajarian’s Instagram page. She is a famous Persian classical singer and *Setar* player. She shares a Farsi caption about a gathering of famous Iranian immigrant women. Mojgan reflects on the role of famous people in Iranian society, highlighting the importance of unity and solidarity. Mojgan emphasizes the significance of standing together, even when far from home, recognizing the power that lies within unity and solidarity. This caption is accompanied by a short video in which these women are sitting around a table and talking, and Iranian classical music is played. Mojgan published this post on December 12, 2023. She has amassed a remarkable following of 760K on the platform.

Table 22

Post 21 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Persian Culture, Identity Labels
User	Mojgan Shajarian Bio: Artist, Persian classical singer, Setar player, painter and sculptor
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/C0wdk0_swrK/?hl=en
Visual Image	
Post	یکی ورزشکار است و دیگری هنرمند یکی معترض و یکی فعال حقوق بشر

	<p>سالها حقوق ما زنان ایرانی در عرصه‌های مختلف توسط جمهوری اسلامی نقض شد و حالا دور از وطن کنار هم ایستادیم و میدانیم قدرت ما در این هم‌صحبتی و اتحاد است</p> <p>[translation: One is an athlete, another an artist. One is a protester, another a human rights activist. For years, our rights as Iranian women have been violated by the Islamic Republic in various fields. But now, far from home, we stand together knowing that our strength lies in our voices and our unity.]</p>
Date of Post	December 12, 2023
Follower Count	760K

Post 22

Razieh Nejad, a blogger, shares a post featuring a short video with a Farsi caption. In this video, Razieh and her son, Arad, are dressed in traditional Iranian Arab clothing and dancing to Arabic music. In the Farsi caption, Razieh mentions that this is her first two-person reel with Arad. She adds that she had long wanted to wear Arabic clothing and take a memorable photograph in them, and yesterday, she finally had the opportunity. Not only did she wear them, but Arad also wore an outfit he really liked. This post, accessible via the provided link, was shared on May 9, 2022. Razieh has amassed a significant following of 1.2 million on Instagram.

Table 23

Post 22 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Traditional Attire, Iranian Community Hashtags, Heritage Narratives, Celebrations
User	Razieh Nejad Blogger
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CdV7OS_jXnT/?hl=en

Visual Image	
Post	<p>این اولین ریلز دو نفره من و آقا آراد گل 😍🥰 خیلی وقت بود که دوست داشتم لباس عربی بپوشم و باهانش به عکس یادگاری بگیرم که دیروز این فرصت پیش اومد نه تنها من بلکه آراد هم لباسی که خیلی دوستش داشتم رو پوشید 🥰 نظرتون رو راجع به ویدیو برام کامنت کنید خوشحال میشم بخونم 🥰</p> <p>#لباس#مادر#پسر#لباس عربی#خانواده#دوست</p> <p>[translation: This is my first duo reel with the wonderful Agha Arad! 🥰🥰]</p> <p>I've wanted to wear a traditional Arabic outfit and take a memorable photo for a long time, and yesterday, I finally got the chance! Not only me, but Arad also wore an outfit he absolutely loves. 🥰</p> <p>Let me know your thoughts about the video in the comments—I'd love to read them! 🥰]</p>
Date of Post	May 9, 2022
Follower Count	1.2M


Post 23

Tina Talebi is an Iranian immigrant influencer. She identifies herself as a blogger and an Iranian girl who fell for a Canadian boy, James. In the selected post, she shares a photograph of her hand and James's hand tied together. Inside the photograph, there is a short text in both Farsi and English: وحدت عالم انسانی (The unification of mankind). This post does not include a caption; however, it features Farsi and English hashtags with the same meanings: #MahsaAmini #Iran

#Freedom #ایران #مهسا_امینی #صلح #آزادی. Tina published this post on October 24, 2022, and she has 487K followers.

Table 24

Post 23 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Iranian Community Hashtags, Heritage Narratives
User	Tina Talebi Blogger Tina and James 🌍👤 📍Oh Canada CA
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CkGc8PdOunK/
Visual Image	
Post	#mahsaamini #iran #freedom #ایران #مهسا_امینی #صلح #آزادی
Date of Post	October 24, 2022
Follower Count	487K

Post 24

Seyedeh Massoumeh Mostafavi, an Iranian immigrant influencer with a BSc in chemistry and a culinary certificate, shares a post on Instagram featuring a Farsi caption that translates into English as: “Your birth wasn’t in your hands, but your transformation is ... Luck is in your hands, and your destiny is yours to shape! To build your life ... Never lose hope. One day, you’ll look back and be proud of how you kept going and never gave up. One day, you’ll change your life with success.” This caption is accompanied by a short video in which Mostafavi visits Konya, a city in Turkey where Rumi’s tomb is located. Rumi is one of the greatest Farsi poets of all time

(Mark, 2020). Mostafavi narrates the Farsi caption in the video as well. This reflection was shared on December 26, 2023, and Mostafavi has amassed a substantial following of 750K on Instagram.

Table 25

Post 24 Summary


Codes	Farsi Language, Language Practice, Reflections, Heritage Narratives
User	Seyedeh Massoumeh Mostafavi Blogger Influencer BSc in Chemistry Culinary Certificate holder
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/ChkFoaIILMc/
Visual Image	
Post	<p>... تولدت دست خودت نبوده ، ولی تحولات که دست خودته</p> <p>!شانس تویی، سرنوشت هم دست خودته</p> <p>.</p> <p>@vijeh_mostafavi</p> <p>@vijeh_mostafavi</p> <p>...برای ساختن زندگیت</p> <p>هیچگاه نا امید نشو</p> <p>یه روزی به خودت میای و افتخار میکنی از اینکه ادامه دادی و تسلیم نشدی</p> <p>یه روزی که با یک موفقیت، زندگی تو تغییر دادی</p> <p>😊!موافقی؟</p> <p>هدف تو چیه رفیق</p> <p>[translation: Your birth wasn't in your hands, but your transformation is ...</p>

	<p>Luck is in your hands, and your destiny is yours to shape!</p> <p>To build your life ... Never lose hope.</p> <p>One day, you'll look back and be proud of how you kept going and never gave up. One day, you'll change your life with a success.</p> <p>Do you agree?! 😊 What's your goal, my friend?]</p>
Date of Post	December 26, 2023
Follower Count	750K

Post 25

Ani shares a post on Instagram arguing for Farsi refinement. She tries to engage her audience with a thought-provoking question. In her post, dated December 16, 2023, Ani asks her followers, “What Farsi proverbs do you suggest?” She accompanies her query with relevant hashtags such as #درست_بنویسیم (Let's write correctly), #پارسی (Farsi), #ادبیات (Literature), #زبان_پارسی_را_پاس_بداریم (Let's preserve Farsi), #نویسنده (Writing), and #ویراستاری (Editing), encouraging discussion and engagement on the topic. Ani's Instagram presence boasts a significant following of 237K followers, showcasing her influence and reach within the community.

Table 26*Post 25 Summary*

Codes	Language Practice, Farsi Language
User	Ani آنی
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/C0566vuunfj/
Visual Image	
Post	شما چه برابرهای پارسی پیشنهاد میدید؟ [translation: What Farsi proverbs do you suggest?] درست_بنویسیم #پارسی #ادبیات #زبان_پارسی را_پاس_بداریم #نویسنده #ویراستاری
Date of Post	December 16, 2023
Follower Count	237K


Post 26

Masoud Behnoud, a journalist and author based in London, UK, shares a photograph of Professor Nadoushan, a renowned figure in Farsi literature. Professor Nadoushan (1924–2022) spent his final years in Canada, where he passed away. In his Farsi caption, Behnoud mentions that the professor's body, which had been in a Canadian cemetery since last year, is finally returning to Iran. Behnoud also reflects that if we had to pick one central theme from the more than 40 books Professor Nadoushan wrote, it would be the noble and shining name of Iran. In all his writings—diaries, travelogues, and lectures—the professor's main goal was to highlight Iran, a place where even the small town of Nadoushan has gained worldwide recognition because of

him. This post was shared on November 18, 2023, and Behnoud has 146K followers on Instagram.

Table 27

Post 26 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Identity Labels, Reflections, Representing the Iranian Arts
User	Masoud Behnoud Bio: Journalist and Author, based in London, UK.
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CzzQbHsrz3x/
Visual Image	
Post	<p>باری پیکر استاد محمدعلی اسلامی ندوشن که از اربیهشت پارسال در آرامگاهی در کانادا سپرده شده بود، سرانجام راهی وطن شد تا پیکر او به تهران رسد و و فردا دوشنبه از صحن دانشکده ادبیات دانشگاه تهران تشییع انجام شود تا مسجد دانشگاه و از آنجا موسسه اطلاعات وانگاه به نیشابور . این بزرگ ترین آرزوی شاگردان ندوشن بود. اگر بخواهیم ندوشن بود اگر بخواهیم در میان بیش از چهل عنوان کتاب ایشان، محوریترین موضوع را به سبب برجستگی محورترین موضوع را به سبب برجستگی نشان دهیم به نام ارجمند و درخشان ایران می‌رسیم.</p> <p>در همه یادداشت‌ها و خاطرات روزانه و در سفرنامه‌ها و سخنرانی‌های استاد اسلامی، هدف راستین و مورد نظر ایشان ایران است همان ایران که یک تکه بسیار کوچک آن (نوشن) هم با نام ایشان جهانی شده‌است و چیزی جز نشان دادن گونه‌ای دلپسنگی به زادبوم نیست. خود سروده بود: زودا باشد که روز بدرود رسد هر چند که دیر خوانیش، زود رسد وان بود بسر منزل نابود رسد بادی وزد و بشمع بی دود رسد</p> <p>[translation: The body of Professor Mohammad Ali Islami Nadoushan, who had been resting in a cemetery in Canada since last year, has finally returned to his homeland. It will reach Tehran, where his funeral procession will take place tomorrow, Monday, from the Faculty of Literature at the University of Tehran, heading to the university mosque, and from there to the Information Institute. Finally, his body will be taken to Nishapur. This was the greatest wish of his students.</p>

	<p>If we were to identify the most central theme among the more than forty titles of his books, we would reach the noble and shining name of Iran.</p> <p>In all of his notes, daily diaries, travelogues, and lectures, Professor Ismaili's true and intended goal was Iran. It is the very Iran where a small piece of it (Nadoushan) has been made world-renowned because of his name. This is nothing more than expressing a deep attachment to his homeland. He had written himself:</p> <p>“Soon the day will come for farewell, Although it may be read late, it will come soon. And it will arrive at the end of its journey, A breeze will blow, and the candle will burn without smoke.”]</p>
Date of Post	November 18, 2023
Follower Count	146K

Post 27

Farno Rezaee, an Iranian immigrant influencer in Canada, introduces herself as the founder of Madrese Farsi (مدرسه فارسی), a platform offering online courses on the art of quality living. In the selected post, Farno shares an image featuring a Farsi text that translates to: “A smile is a cost-free gift on all our faces when we have nothing else to give or share with kindness.” This image is followed by a Farsi caption elaborating on the idea: “To be generous, we don’t need money or wealth. True wealth lies in our hearts, smiles, and kindness—gifts we can give to anyone without cost, filling our surroundings with love ... Let’s be a little kinder to each other, forgive, so that we may be forgiven.” The post was shared on February 8, 2022. Farno’s page has over 1 million followers.

Table 28

Post 27 Summary


Codes	Language Practice, Farsi Language
User	مدرسه فارسی [translation: Farsi school] Education اینجا درس با کیفیت زندگی کردن می آموزیم، کارآفرینی، استقلال و توانمندسازی زنان هدف ماست. [translation: Here, we learn the art of quality living. Our goal is entrepreneurship, independence, and women's empowerment.] CA
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CZtohOVD15g/
Visual Image	 <p>[translation of the text inside the image: A smile is a cost-free gift on all our faces when we have nothing else to give or share with kindness.]</p>
Post	<p>برای بخشنده بودن نیاز به پول و ثروت نداریم، ثروت در قلب و لبخند و محبت ما نهفته ست، که بی هزینه میتونیم به هرکسی هدیه ش کنیم و اطراف خود رو با عشق پر کنیم. اتیکت زندگی در صلح و مهربانی رو بهمون یادآور میشه. با هم کمی مهربانتر باشیم بیخشیم تا بخشیده شویم آداب_ معاشرت #فرنو #اتیکت#</p> <p>[translation: To be generous, we don't need money or wealth. True wealth lies in our hearts, smiles, and kindness—gifts we can give to anyone without cost, filling our surroundings with love.</p> <p>Etiquette reminds us to live in peace and kindness.</p> <p>Let's be a little kinder to each other, Forgive, So that we may be forgiven.]</p>
Date of Post	February 8, 2022
Follower Count	1M

Post 28

Samaneh Savadi introduces her page as “The Personal Life of a Feminist & Gender Equality Advocate.” In the selected post, she reflects on celebrating Nowruz as an immigrant, sharing a Farsi caption about how she should recreate the holiday far from home. The post also includes a short video showing moments of her Nowruz preparations—cooking traditional Iranian dishes like Sabzi Polo with fish, decorating the dining table with flowers, candles, and calligraphy-adorned pots, dancing around the room, kissing her husband, and doing her makeup. A traditional Iranian song, often played at the turn of the year, plays in the background of this video. Samaneh’s post was published on March 21, 2022. She has 274K followers.

Table 29

Post 28 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Heritage Narratives
User	Samaneh Savadi The Personal Life of a Feminist & Gender Equality Advocate Based in GB
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CbXxcOZK1_N/
Visual Image	
Post	<p>🍲 خلق نوروز 🍲</p> <p>در ایران که زندگی می‌کنی نوروز ناگزیر و ناگزیر است. خوش یا ناخوش اگر باشی از راه می‌رسی و خودش را به رخ می‌کشد. بوی سنبلی و سمنو، شوق و تکاپوی بازارهای محلی و تعطیلات خبر از آمدن بهار دارد. بهار سایه مهربان و سخاوتمند خودش را بر سرت پهن می‌کند. مهاجر که باشی اما داستان فرق می‌کند. باید خودت آستین بالا بزنی و نوروز و بهار را در خانه خلق کنی. به دنیا بیآوری، برای!</p> <p>ما دور از خانه‌ها، پشت پنجره‌هایمان شاید باد و باران، برف و بوران باشد و کنی چیزی از نوروز نمی‌داند. ما در این چهار دیواری‌ها، در این خانه‌هایی که دور از خانه ساخته‌ایم، نوروز را می‌سازیم. ما خالقان نوروزیم.</p> <p>#نوروز #مهاجران #خالقان_نوروز</p>

	<p>خودش را بر سرت پهن می‌کند. مهاجر که باشی اما داستان فرق می‌کند. باید خودت! آستین بالا بزنی و نوروز و بهار را در خانه خلق کنی، به دنیا بیاوری، بزایی</p> <p>ما دور از خانه‌ها، پشت پنجره‌هایمان شاید باد و باران، برف و بوران باشد و کسی چیزی از نوروز نمی‌داند. ما در این چهار دیواری‌ها، در این خانه‌هایی که دور از خانه ساخته‌ایم، نوروز را می‌سازیم. ما خالقان نوروزیم</p> <p>نوروز #مهاجران #خالقان_نوروز</p> <p>[translation: 🖐️ The Creation of Nowruz 🖐️]</p> <p>In Iran, Nowruz is inevitable and inescapable. Whether you are joyful or sorrowful, it arrives, making its presence known. The scent of hyacinths and samanu, the excitement and bustle of local markets, and the holidays all signal the arrival of spring. Spring spreads its kind and generous shadow over you.</p> <p>But as an immigrant, the story is different. You must roll up your sleeves and create Nowruz and spring within your own home—you must bring them to life, give birth to them.</p> <p>Far from home, behind our windows, there may be wind and rain, snow and storms, and no one around us may know what Nowruz is. But within these four walls, in the homes we have built away from home, we create Nowruz.</p> <p>We are the creators of Nowruz.</p> <p>#Nowruz #Immigrants #CreatorsOfNowruz]</p>
Date of Post	March 21, 2022
Follower Count	274K

Post 29

The next example is a post from Yalda Abbasi, an Iranian-Kurdish musician living in Germany. She shares a photograph of herself in traditional Iranian attire while holding a dotar, a local musical instrument from eastern Iran. This photograph is accompanied by a Farsi poem in the caption, translated into English as: “We cannot be called travelers, for in exile, wherever we sat, remembering you became our homeland.” This is a piece by the classical Persian poet

Ghodsii Mashhadi. The post was shared on March 27, 2023, and Yalda Abbasi’s Instagram account has a substantial following of 582K.

Table 30

Post 29 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Iranian Community Hashtags, Heritage Narratives
User	Yalda Abbasi Official
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqTVB7bMsGu/
Visual Image	
Post	<p>ما را نتوان گفت مسافر که به غربت هر جا که نشستیم به یاد تو وطن شد</p> <p>#قدسی_مشهدی</p> <p>بهار ۱۴۰۲</p> <p>[translation: We cannot be called travelers, for in exile, Wherever we sat, remembering you became our homeland.</p> <p>— Ghodsii Mashhadi</p> <p>Spring 1402 (2023)]</p>
Date of Post	March 27, 2023
Follower Count	267K

Post 30

Shiva Aghaeibahmanbeglou, an educator in Canadian public schools, shares a photograph of herself holding a piece of artwork gifted by her friend, Nadia. The post, accompanied by a heartfelt Farsi caption, expresses Shiva’s deep appreciation for Nadia’s thoughtfulness and

warmth. The photo showcases a remarkable piece featuring a masterpiece of Farsi poetry rendered in Farsi calligraphy, also known as *Xošnevisi-ye Irani* (خوشنویسی ایرانی), an artistic tradition of writing in the Persian language that holds a deeply revered status in Iran’s cultural and historical heritage (Meidani, 2019). The post, uploaded on August 14, 2023, reflects Shiva’s connection to her roots and resonates with her audience of over 160K followers.

Table 31

Post 30 Summary

Codes	Farsi Language, Representing the Iranian Arts
User	Shiva Aghaeibahmanbeglou
Link	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cv8sc9NOtYc/?img_index=1
Visual Image	
Post	<p>ه قرار بود توی دنیا یه مهارت رو انتخاب کنی که داشته باشی و غول چراغ جادو درجا اونو بهت تمام و کمال بده، اون چی بود؟</p> <p>.</p> <p>.</p> <p>نادیای عزیزم مرسی ازینکه مهر و محبتت رو در شکل این هنر زیبا و پرمهر به من هدیه دادی ♥</p> <p>[translation: If you were to choose one skill in the world to have, and the genie would grant it to you fully and immediately, what would it be?</p> <p>...</p> <p>Dear Nadia, thank you for giving me your love and affection in the form of this beautiful and heartfelt art ♥]</p>
Date of Post	August 14, 2023
Follower Count	160K

Discussion

I collected the coded data from the selected Iranian immigrants' posts on Instagram for this study and grouped them together using themes. The following thematic structure, as shown in Table 32, resulted from the data analysis process. In this discussion, I am moving to an interpretation of the findings. Additionally, literature related to each theme is integrated into the discussion to enhance the strength of the research findings.

Table 32

Themes

Theme 1: Farsi Assertion, Preservation, and Adaptation

Theme 2: Cultural Representation

Theme 3: Community Connection and Solidarity

Theme 4: Identity Narratives and Reflections

Theme 1: Farsi Assertion, Preservation, and Adaptation

All but one of the 30 posts (97%) feature Farsi, either exclusively or in bilingual formats. Three posts of 30 (1, 2, and 24), or 10%, contain captions in both Farsi and English, while all others use Farsi as the primary language. It was found that only some of these posts aligned with elements of Hall's (1990/2021) cultural identity theory, while others do not. For example, in post 4, Solmaz Naraghi emphasizes the poetic beauty of Farsi and the responsibility of immigrants to safeguard its richness, which aligns with Hall's assertion that diaspora identities maintain strong symbolic ties to the past. Naraghi's post reflects the idea that language is not simply a tool for communication but a repository of cultural memory, shaping both individual and collective identity. Her invocation of Heidegger's concept of language as the "house of being" reinforces

the existential significance of Farsi in the diasporic experience—a means by which displaced individuals sustain their connection to homeland. She poetically describes this process:

وقتی از سرزمین مادری‌ات دور می‌شوی، بخش‌هایی از آن سرزمین در تو، دیگر بار زاده می‌شود و مانند گیاه جوانه می‌زند و قد می‌کشد و برگ و بار می‌دهد. زبان که به گفته‌ی هایدگر، خانه‌ی وجود است، رویای بر دوش بردن وطن از جایی به جای دیگر را به حقیقت بدل می‌کند و فارسی، این عمارت معمور با اندوه فیروزفامش بر پیشانی، قندی که «شکرشکن شوند همه طوطیان هند» از آن، در هزارتوهای مغزت شکوهی تازه‌تر می‌یابد.

Translation: When you leave your homeland, parts of that land are reborn within you, sprouting like a young plant, growing tall, bearing leaves and fruit.

Language, which Heidegger calls the house of being, turns the dream of carrying one's homeland from place to place into reality. And Farsi—this grand edifice adorned with a sorrow as radiant as turquoise, the sugar that “makes all the parrots of India sugar-crushing”—finds a renewed splendor in the labyrinths of your mind. (Post 4)

Naraghi's metaphor of language as a living entity—growing, blossoming, and being carried across borders—echoes Hall's (1991/2019a) argument that language and identity are deeply intertwined. Hall describes identity as a space where the “true self” (p. 64) is hidden beneath layers of external influences, only to be fully realized when expressed in its authentic form. This notion is evident in Naraghi's writing, where Farsi is not just a means of communication but a conduit for existential self-recognition and authenticity in the diaspora. Furthermore, Naraghi's admiration for Ferdowsi (940–1025), the Persian poet who preserved Farsi through his literary masterpiece, *Shahnameh*, frames language as an active duty rather than a passive inheritance:

هر ایرانی یک فردوسی درون دارد و آن چیزی نیست جز مسئولیتش در قبال زبان خود.

Translation: Every Iranian carries a Ferdowsi within, and that is nothing but the responsibility they bear for their language. (Post 4)

By positioning every Iranian as a metaphorical Ferdowsi, Naraghi reaffirms the role of language preservation as an ongoing, active duty, one that requires conscious effort rather than mere nostalgia. This finding resonates with Hall's (1990/2021) argument that identity is not fixed but rather an evolving process shaped by cultural and linguistic engagement. In the context of the diaspora, this process is particularly urgent, as language becomes a means of sustaining belonging while also adapting to new realities. Naraghi's reflections thus bridge Hall's concept of diasporic identity with the existential weight of language, illustrating how Farsi serves both as a vessel of historical memory and a site of self-actualization for Iranian immigrants. Through her poetic language, she transforms Farsi into more than a linguistic system, it becomes a home, a legacy, and a responsibility carried across generations.

In post 5, Mehran Rowshan features lyrics, written in Farsi, that advocate for peaceful dialogue, honesty, and self-awareness, urging individuals to seek truth without violence. While this post engages with ideas of justice and ethical reflection, it does not directly align with Hall's (1990/2021) perspective on cultural identity as a contested and historically situated process. Instead, it presents language as an inherently moral medium, conveying an essentialist view that contrasts with Hall's rejection of fixed cultural meanings. Nonetheless, it might reflect the broader role of language in shaping individual and collective consciousness within the diaspora.

In post 26, Masoud Behnoud shares a tribute to an Iranian prominent literary figure who passed away in Canada. Behnoud's post mourns Nadoushan's passing and reflects on his lifelong dedication to Iran, highlighting the symbolic act of returning his body to his homeland. The

caption includes a poem by Nadoushan that poetically addresses themes of departure and transience:

زودا باشد که روز بدرود رسد
 هر چند که دیر خوانیش، زود رسد
 وان بود بسر منزل نابود رسد
 بادی وزد و بشمع بی دود رسد

Translation: Soon the day will come for farewell,

Although it may be read late, it will come soon.

And it will arrive at the end of its journey,

A breeze will blow, and the candle will burn without smoke. (Post 26)

This act of commemoration aligns with Hall's (2008/2019f) perspective on diaspora as both a space of freedom and a site of loss, where immigrants remain connected to their origins while simultaneously experiencing displacement. Behnoud's post underscores the tension between belonging and separation, as Nadoushan's intellectual legacy remains deeply tied to Iran despite his physical absence. However, Hall (2008/2019f) reminds us that returning "home" does not always provide closure: "Whenever I go back, I think I'm at home, but still I'm not at home" (p. 275). Nadoushan's return in death symbolizes a final reunion with his homeland, but for diasporic individuals still living, such a return might be filled with unfulfilled expectations and a sense of being neither fully at home nor entirely foreign. Hall (1996/2019b) describes this experience as an "always-postponed arrival" (p. 192), where one knows both places intimately but belongs fully to neither. In this sense, Behnoud's tribute to Nadoushan does more than mourn a personal loss—it gestures toward the unresolved tension of diaspora itself. Moreover, Nadoushan's poetry, with its emphasis on impermanence and inevitability, might speak to the

broader condition of diasporic identity, which Hall (1999/2019e) describes as being shaped by cultural hybridity and reappropriation. While diaspora is often framed as loss, Hall argues that it also represents a space where new identities emerge through hybridity and transformation. The act of commemorating Nadoushan through Farsi poetry—even while physically removed from Iran—demonstrates how cultural memory and literary tradition might continue to shape diasporic identity across borders.

In post 29, Yalda Abbasi publishes a Farsi poem to express the emotional complexity of exile.

ما را نتوان گفت مسافر که به غربت
هر جا که نشستیم به یاد تو وطن شد

Translation: We cannot be called travelers, for in exile,
wherever we sat, remembering you became our homeland. (Post 29)

Abbasi's post reflects Hall's (1990/2021) argument that identity is constructed through cultural memory and shared imagination rather than a physical return to one's origin. This perspective suggests that home is not simply where one is born but also where it is recreated through memory and cultural practice. Moreover, Abbasi's use of this Farsi poem to express exile might reflect the diasporic ability to turn absence into presence and loss into continuity. Therefore, it aligns with Hall's (1996/2019b) idea that identity is not something static to be reclaimed—instead, it is something that is continuously imagined and carried forward across time and space.

Three posts (16, 19, and 25), or 10%, show various efforts to promote or maintain Farsi. Post 16 presents Mona Sayadi's commitment to raising her child as a Farsi speaker despite the prevailing tendency among Iranian immigrants in Germany to shift toward German. Sayadi and

her partner, Hamid, emphasize the importance of using their native language, as they believe Farsi enables deeper emotional connections with their child:

اولین دلیلش این هست که واقعیت اینه که زبان مادری من و حمید هر دو فارسی هست و زبان‌های دیگر مثل انگلیسی و آلمانی زبان دوم ما هستن و هیچ وقت راحتی گفتار و بروز احساسات که ما با زبان فارسی داریم و میتونیم با بچه‌مون ارتباط برقرار کنیم با زبان‌های دیگه نداریم.

Translation: First and foremost, Farsi is our native language. Other languages like English and German are our second languages, and we don't have the same comfort, emotional expression, or natural fluency in them as we do in Farsi. Speaking Farsi allows us to communicate with our child more naturally and deeply. (Post 16)

Sayadi also highlights the natural tendency of second-generation children to adopt German as their dominant language, making early exposure to Farsi essential for long-term fluency. Additionally, she draws from personal experiences with second-generation Iranians in Germany, observing that those proficient in Farsi tend to integrate more easily into Iranian communities and maintain a stronger cultural connection. Therefore, Sayadi clearly focuses on the importance of language in the community and its role in preserving cultural connections. Drawing on the ideas of Lévi-Strauss, Hall (1980) also emphasizes the key role of language in defining culture and introduces language as “the principal medium of culture” (p. 65). Moreover, Hall (1990/2021) argues that language functions as an evolving marker of cultural continuity amid migration. He suggests that identity is both “being” and “becoming.” Therefore, learning Farsi as a heritage language can play a role in shaping the cultural identity of immigrant children. Similarly, Post 19 features a non-Iranian individual, Kelly, discussing Farsi idioms and their

meanings. However, this Farsi practice is too limited to be considered as a reflection of Hall's idea that cultural identity is hybrid and constantly reformulated through new contexts.

Post 25, on the other hand, which emphasizes correct Farsi writing and the importance of linguistic accuracy, does not fully align with Hall's (1980) view of identity as fluid and negotiated. In this post, Ani encourages her followers to contribute pure Farsi proverbs. The accompanying hashtags, such as *#درست_بنویسیم* (Let's write correctly) and *#زبان_پارسی_را_پاس_بداریم* (Let's preserve Farsi), reinforce a prescriptive approach to language use, suggesting that there is a right way to write and speak Farsi. Additionally, Ani advocates for the replacement of commonly used Arabic loanwords with their correct Farsi equivalents. This perspective implies a fixed, regulated notion of language that stands in contrast to Hall's emphasis on identity as dynamic, constructed, and constantly reshaped through discourse and interaction. While Ani's post tries to engage with cultural preservation, it presents language as something to be safeguarded and purified rather than as a site of ongoing negotiation and adaptation. This idea contrasts with Hall's (2008/2019f) argument that identity, including linguistic identity, is not a stable essence but rather a process shaped by historical and social contexts.

Many other posts in my data set feature Iranian immigrant influencers using Farsi without directly promoting or emphasizing its preservation. In some of these posts, like Post 6 and Post 27, the influencers choose to express their thoughts and feelings in Farsi within an English-speaking society. Post 6 highlights the selection of Cyrus the Great's Charter as the basis for the Freedom Sculpture in Los Angeles. While this post references Iranian heritage, its focus on an ancient historical figure does not directly align with Hall's (1990/2021) argument that cultural identity is shaped through contemporary social struggles and power dynamics. Instead, it views

Iranian culture as rooted in a distant, glorified past rather than as an ongoing, contested process.

Similarly, Farno Rezaee, founder of a platform offering online Farsi courses in Canada, writes in Farsi about the value of a smile:

برای بخشنده بودن نیاز به پول و ثروت نداریم، ثروت در قلب و لبخند و محبت ما نهفته ست ، که بی
هزینه میتونیم به هرکسی هدیه ش کنیم و اطراف خود رو با عشق پر کنیم

Translation: To be generous, we don't need money or wealth. True wealth lies in our hearts, smiles, and kindness—gifts we can give to anyone without cost, filling our surroundings with love. (Post 27)

This post, while expressing personal sentiment, does not explicitly connect to the idea of cultural identity that Hall emphasizes. Instead, it reflects an individualized use of language without necessarily positioning Farsi within a broader diasporic struggle. Posts 18 and 28, however, use Farsi captions to discuss migration experiences which might reinforce Hall's (1990/2021) notion of diaspora identities as constructed through transformation and difference. Post 18, shared by Maryam Bahadorbeigi, illustrates the role of Farsi in expressing diasporic experiences. Her caption, written in Farsi, reflects on the challenges of her first year of immigration:

امسال در اولین سال مهاجرت برای خانواده ما پر از چالش و متفاوت تموم شد، تجربه های جدید و اتفاق
های مختلفی رو پشت سر گذاشتیم، اولین سالیه که کیک تولد آرتین رو از قنادی خریدم، سبزه ننداختم،
هفت سین نچیدم(البته هفت سین کوچولویی داریم که مروارید زحمتشو کشیده) و آخرین روز سال رو ده
ساعت سر کار بودم

Translation: This year, our first year of immigration, came to an end with many challenges and new experiences. We went through a lot of changes—it was the first time I bought Artin's birthday cake from a bakery; I didn't grow Sabzeh, and

I didn't set up a full Haft Sin (though we do have a small one, thanks to Marvarid!) I even spent the last day of the year working for ten hours straight!

(Post 18)

Bahadorbeigi mentions the modifications to her Nowruz celebration, such as purchasing a birthday cake instead of baking one or having a minimal Haft Sin (Chapter 1 offers more details about the Haft Sin table). The experiences highlighted in this post align with Hall's (1990/2021) argument that diaspora identity is shaped by transformation rather than static preservation. In other words, her family continues to celebrate Nowruz, but the way they do so has changed.

Post 28 similarly reinforces the transformation that Hall (1997/2019c) mentions, by illustrating how immigrants might recreate cultural traditions in new contexts. Hall reflects on his own experience as a Jamaican intellectual in England, emphasizing the complexities of cultural belonging and adaptation. Rather than simply returning to his homeland and reintegrating into its traditions, he describes how he remained engaged with Caribbean culture while also shaping new cultural and intellectual movements abroad. He states, "Because I am not coming home. Because I have taken the decision not to come home. And once you have taken that decision, you are in a very difficult situation in terms of who ... who do you represent? What do you speak for?" (p. 241). This quote supports the broader idea that immigrants do not merely replicate their original cultural traditions but transform them in response to new social and historical circumstances. This transformation is evident in Post 28, where Samaneh Savadi, a feminist and gender equality advocate, shares her personal experience of celebrating Nowruz in the diaspora. She highlights the necessity of actively reconstructing the holiday outside its natural cultural environment. Her Farsi caption poetically describes how Nowruz is an inevitable presence in Iran but requires conscious effort to be recreated abroad:

در ایران که زندگی می‌کنی نوروز ناگزیر و ناگزیر است. خوش یا ناخوش اگر باشی از راه می‌رسد و خودش را به رخ می‌کشد. بوی سنبل و سمنو، شوق و تکاپوی بازارهای محلی و تعطیلات خبر از آمدن بهار دارد. بهار سایه مهربان و سخاوتمند خودش را بر سرت پهن می‌کند. مهاجر که باشی اما داستان فرق می‌کند. باید خودت آستین بالا بزنی و نوروز و بهار را در خانه خلق کنی، به دنیا بیاوری، بزایی. ما دور از خانه‌ها، پشت پنجره‌هایمان شاید باد و باران، برف و بوران باشد و کسی چیزی از نوروز نمی‌داند. ما در این چهار دیواری‌ها، در این خانه‌هایی که دور از خانه ساخته‌ایم، نوروز را می‌سازیم. ما خالقان نوروزیم

Translation: In Iran, Nowruz is inevitable and inescapable. Whether you are joyful or sorrowful, it arrives, making its presence known. The scent of hyacinths and Samanu, the excitement and bustle of local markets, and the holidays all signal the arrival of spring. Spring spreads its kind and generous shadow over you.

Far from home, behind our windows, there may be wind and rain, snow and storms, and no one around us may know what Nowruz is. But within these four walls, in the homes we have built away from home, we create Nowruz. We are the creators of Nowruz. (Post 28)

Samaneh's poetic use of Farsi narrative, in which she depicts images of Nowruz in Iran that she has experienced in the past, seemingly aligns with Hall's (1990/2021) assertion that identity is formed through cultural practices and shared memory rather than solely through geographical belonging. Hall states, "The past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple, factual 'past' ... It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative, and myths" (p. 261). Moreover, in the second paragraph, she positively acknowledges the changes that have emerged after migration and seeks to create her own version of Nowruz as

an Iranian immigrant in a new way. This influencer's account might reinforce Hall's emphasis on the transformative dimension of cultural identity.

Three posts (1, 2, and 23), or 10%, are bilingual. Moghbeli, in Posts 1 and 2, places short Farsi phrases at the beginning of each caption before switching to English:

نوروز مبارک

[Translation: Happy Nowruz]

Never thought I would get the chance to say, "Nowruz Mobarak," from the White House.

Eid-e hame mobarak!! (Post 2)

This practice suggests a conscious effort to address both Farsi and English-speaking audiences, reflecting her dual positionality in an ongoing process of cultural translation. She celebrates Nowruz in Farsi while writing the entire caption in English, and experiencing Nowruz as a cultural event at the White House seems to be a surprise for her. When she says, "Never thought I would get the chance," this phrase may indicate that she is actively navigating this cultural translation process. This post illustrates Hall's (1990/2021) assertion that cultural identity is shaped through hybridity and negotiation.

In Post 23, English takes precedence over Farsi in both the text and hashtags. The prioritization of English suggests an adaptation to dominant linguistic structures rather than a direct engagement with Hall's notion of cultural resistance. This adaptation is evident in Tina Talebi's approach, as she first writes in English before providing a Farsi translation in the second line and exclusively uses English for names. Hall (1997/2019c) challenges the idea that resistance must always take the form of direct opposition, emphasizing instead that "if you give culture not a primary but a constitutive role in this analysis, then you look at questions of cultural politics, cultural resistance, disaffiliation, etc., as the seeds or signs or symptoms of what is not resolved within the conjuncture" (p. 253). From this perspective, Talebi's language choice may

not reflect passive assimilation but rather a strategic way of navigating a dominant linguistic environment.

Theme 2: Cultural Representation

Some of the selected Instagram posts might illustrate cultural representation through codes, such as traditional attire, Persian cuisine, and Iranian arts. These posts may serve as expressions of cultural identity, aligning—at least partially—with Hall’s (1990/2021) theory. In 4 out of 30 posts (Posts 12, 13, 22, and 29), or around 13%, Farsi captions accompany visuals that depict Iranian traditional attire. Post 12 features a photograph of Kelly Arvan wearing Lor tribal attire, accompanied by a Farsi caption that celebrates the resilience of women in Lorestan and Iran:

برای تمام شیر زنان لرستان و ایران

Translation: For all the resilient women of Lorestan and Iran. (Post 12)

This caption connects to a long-standing tradition of strength and resilience in Lor culture, rooted in the history, geography, and values of the Lorestan region in Iran (Britannica, 2024). By wearing attire from a culture that Kelly (the influencer) is not originally from and blending it into a modern, diasporic setting, she may be engaging in what Hall (1999/2019e) calls cultural translation—the way culture changes through diasporic experiences. In addition, the Farsi caption, in which Kelly honors Iranian women’s courage and resilience, suggests a connection to Iran despite her Western background. However, while her post acknowledges these women, it is unclear whether this act signifies deeper cultural transformation. A photograph and a Farsi caption alone may not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that Kelly is actively participating in a meaningful cultural shift. Moreover, the post might also be interpreted as a commercial strategy. Featuring a beautiful western woman in Iranian traditional attire could

serve a commercial purpose, potentially commodifying cultural symbols rather than engaging with the transformation of culture in the way Hall describes. This commercial aspect suggests that the post may be driven not only by cultural reclamation or empowerment but also by the desire for a wider Instagram following. This limitation can also be considered in Posts 13 and 22. However, these posts show connections with Hall's theory in other ways. Post 13 may tie into Hall's (1990/2021) idea of cultural identity as a fluid and evolving process. Samaneh's choice to wear traditional attire and her Farsi caption might reflect an effort to ask her followers (or to address herself as well) to assert personal identity against external expectations:

جسارت داشته باش و زندگی کن... اما جوری که خودت دوست داری، نه جوری که دیگران از تو انتظار دارند!...
!تو نیاز به تایید هیچکس نداری

Translation: Have the courage to live the way you love, not the way others expect you!

You don't need anyone's approval! (Post 13)

The combination of a photograph featuring traditional attire and a caption emphasizing the importance of having courage and living according to one's own interests without seeking others' approval suggests a fluid identity based on individual agency and authenticity. In other words, Samaneh wears Iranian attire not merely as a tradition but as a symbolic element of her heritage culture, which empowers her and affirms her agency.

Post 22 might reflect the diasporic experience of continuously negotiating one's identity in relation to both the homeland and the host country. Hall (1990/2021) emphasizes that diasporic identity is not about returning to a pure origin but is instead an ongoing process of redefinition and adaptation. Nejad's choice to wear Iranian Arab attire and involve her son in the experience reflects how diasporic individuals reconnect with their cultural roots in the context of their new lives:

خیلی وقت بود که دوست داشتم لباس عربی بپوشم و باهانش یه عکس یادگاری بپوشم که دیروز این فرصت پیش اومد نه تنها من بلکه آراد هم لباسی که خیلی دوست داشتم رو پوشید

I've wanted to wear a traditional Arabic outfit and take a memorable photo for a long time, and yesterday, I finally got the chance! Not only me, but Arad also wore an outfit he absolutely loves. (Post 22)

The shared experience between Nejad and her son, Arad, in wearing the Iranian Arab outfit may also reflect the intergenerational negotiation of identity. By wearing traditional attire and dancing, Nejad creates an opportunity to introduce Iranian heritage to her son. However, the post does not provide further evidence of this process. According to Kaveh (2018), Iranian immigrant parents show a strong commitment to preserving Farsi and Iranian cultural traditions, albeit through different approaches. Similarly, Abdizadeh (2020) highlights the ongoing efforts of Iranian families to sustain their language and culture. But in Post 22, similar serious effort is not visible. While Nejad mentions that Arad liked the attire and the short video shows him appearing happy and skillful in Iranian Arab dance, there is no direct quote or dialogue in the post that explicitly addresses their concern about maintaining heritage culture. Similarly, Post 29 does not explicitly address the preservation of Iranian heritage culture in the diaspora. However, Yalda Abbasi's attire and the dotar (a traditional Iranian musical instrument) in a photograph she published while living in Germany may serve as a self-representation of her identity—one that bridges her heritage and her present diasporic experience. Abbasi's choice to share this photograph with her followers could be seen as a way of asserting her identity in a globalized world, where cultural symbols such as traditional attire and musical instruments function as tools for reclaiming one's cultural heritage. This aligns with Elmianvari's (2019) findings, which

suggest that Iranian immigrants might shape and negotiate their identities within a globalized and diasporic setting. Elmianvari states,

Although the transformation of identity from local/national to global/transnational is relative, the pattern of language choice among the Iranian immigrants in Belgium indicates their overall tendency to reconstruct their national identity under the influence of the hybridity and diversity of the globalised world. The pluralizing effect of globalisation on the identity of immigrants makes identities more positional and diverse, and less fixed and united. (p. 68)

However, Elmianvari's study focuses on Facebook, and as I explained in Chapter 2, Instagram may offer fewer opportunities for engagement compared to Facebook.

Two out of 30 posts (Posts 3 and 28), or approximately 7%, feature Persian cuisine. Post 3 introduces a recipe for a unique Iranian dish that is typically unavailable in restaurants, emphasizing that the recipe comes directly from an elderly woman in Tabriz, the city where the dish originates. While this effort to preserve traditional Iranian cuisine among immigrants is valuable, it does not explicitly engage with concepts such as identity formation, diaspora, or power relations. However, it may still contribute to a broader understanding of Iranian culture, particularly in diasporic communities where food serves as a means of cultural representation. Persian cuisine is also highlighted in Post 28 in a deeper way. Through her video, which showcases Iranian culinary traditions, festive decorations, and moments of joy, Samaneh engages with Hall's notion of identity as an ongoing process. The act of cooking a traditional Nowruz dish (Sabzi Polo) in a new environment while reflecting on the differences between the diasporic experience of Nowruz and her past experiences in Iran aligns with Hall's (1990/2021) second perspective on identity as "a matter of becoming as well as of being" (p. 260). Hall states that

“cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation” (p. 260). In this post, Samaneh explains how her practices regarding Nowruz have changed in diaspora. Moreover, cooking Persian cuisine in Posts 3 and 28 aligns with Ginzarly and Srour’s (2022) study, which confirms that people on Instagram do not merely share virtual tours of heritage sites but also engage in personal activities such as dancing, cooking, and playing. Ginzarly and Srour believe that these activities contribute to the creation of new, digitally mediated forms of heritage. In this context, visuals of cooking special Iranian dishes may help shape a new form of Iranian heritage in the diaspora.

Farsi calligraphy (خوشنویسی ایرانی) is one of Iran’s cultural symbols, as seen in Post 30. The artwork displayed in the background of a portrait of a woman features a masterpiece of Farsi poetry rendered in Farsi calligraphy—an artistic tradition deeply revered in Iran’s cultural and historical heritage (Meidani, 2019). While this post can be seen as promoting Iranian art in the diaspora, it also appears that the influencer is attempting to advertise a friend who is a calligrapher-painter to attract more customers. Therefore, like some other posts, Post 30 also raises suspicion of having commercial motives, which may undermine the influencer’s commitment to promoting Farsi calligraphy in the diaspora.

Theme 3: Community Connection and Solidarity

Around 43% of the selected posts include codes related to Iranian diasporic community connections and solidarity. Meanwhile, 23% (Posts 2, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18, and 28) reflect Iranian celebrations and gatherings, which may indicate the promotion of Iranian heritage culture. Another 20% (Posts 6, 7, 20, 21, 23, and 28) feature captions or visuals in solidarity with Iranians living in Iran who are protesting for human rights and freedom. The latter is significant in part due to my data collection timeline (2022–2023). As previously explained, in 2022, a

movement rose up in Iran after the death of Mahsa Amini. Mahsa was an Iranian woman arrested in Tehran for not fully covering her hair who tragically died in custody under suspicious circumstances, with evidence suggesting she was murdered. During this period, large groups of protesters took to the streets to demonstrate. This sparked a movement known as *زن، زندگی، آزادی* (Women, Life, Freedom) (Zeidan, n.d.). This movement influenced Iranian immigrant influencers, even though they were outside of Iran. Still, some of them (20% of the selected posts) expressed their solidarity through these posts. I will discuss this in greater detail later in this section.

Seven out of 30 posts reflect Iranian celebrations and gatherings like Nowruz and Yalda Night. These posts often emphasize immigrant influencers' interest and attention to Iranian cultural heritage and highlight the shared experiences within their community, even across distances. It seems that these posts are not about conflict or resistance but about preservation and celebration of identity in a diasporic context. For example, Flora, in Post 14, shares a short video of Haft Sin with a Farsi caption that extends early New Year's wishes to loved ones during a Nowruz trip arranged with friends:

عزیزای دلم سال نو پیشاپیش مبارک باشه 🌸💖🌸

این هفت‌سین زیبای ما در سفر نوروزی هست که با همراهی دوستانم برای جشن نوروز و سال نو چیده شده

امیدوارم سال جدید پر از عشق و شادی و آرامش باشه براتون 🌸💖

Translation: My dear ones, Happy New Year in advance!

This is our beautiful Haft Sin from our Nowruz trip, set up with my friends to celebrate Nowruz and the New Year.

I hope the new year is filled with love, joy, and peace for you all!

In the first second of the short video that Flora shares, Haft Sin is shown. After that, Flora dances while holding her daughter in her arms, with Farsi music playing in the background. This Farsi caption and short video demonstrate Flora's intention to stay connected with the Iranian community through the visual and textual representation of Haft Sin, a key symbol of Nowruz. Hall (1990/2021) argues that cultural identity is not an essence but a positioning, meaning that identity is shaped through historical and representational processes. By showcasing Haft Sin, dancing to Farsi music, and writing her caption in Farsi, Flora might affirm her Iranian cultural identity in the digital space. This seemingly aligns with Hall's assertion that identity is continuously shaped by culture and representation rather than existing as a static entity. Additionally, since Flora has more than 907K followers, the publication of this post, which has been viewed by many of her followers, could be considered an act of promoting Iranian heritage culture in the diaspora. In a diasporic context, Iranian immigrants often strive to preserve their heritage culture. Salahshoor (2017), in her study on maintaining Farsi as a heritage language in the United States, confirms that Iranian immigrants place significant emphasis on heritage celebrations as an essential part of their desired heritage education for their children:

Parents' expectations were characterized by their desire for their children to participate in Iranian cultural celebrations and acceptance of certain cultural values associated with such participation, and at the same time, by resistance to identification with American culture at the level of cultural identity. (pp. 177–178)

As a participant in Salahshoor's study, one Iranian immigrant, a housewife and mother of one, went beyond teaching her daughter about Persian celebrations. She organized a "show-and-tell" activity at her daughter's public school, where she and her daughter set up a Haft Sin table and explained its components and significance to the schoolchildren. Salahshoor argues that

public events and cultural celebrations within the Iranian American community play a significant role in raising awareness, fostering appreciation, and garnering support for the preservation of Farsi as a heritage language. However, the efforts described in Salahshoor's example are not entirely comparable to showcasing Nowruz on Instagram. In Salahshoor's example, the promotion of Nowruz occurs face to face in a smaller setting (a school), yet it appears to be more effective than simply sharing visuals and text on Instagram.

The selected posts related to Iranian celebrations and gatherings also show some differences. For example, while Post 28 provides a deeper view of Nowruz in the diaspora and the ways Iranian immigrants might celebrate it far from Iran (as discussed in the previous section), Post 17 features a simple photograph of a Haft Sin with a short English caption instead of a Farsi one. This difference may suggest that, while showcasing visuals or text about Nowruz can contribute to its preservation among Iranians in the diaspora, only a few individuals (like Samaneh in Post 28) view it as an integral part of their cultural identity, as suggested by Hall's theory.

Instagram, however, offers features like hashtags that may help foster community connections among Iranian immigrants. Around 60% (19 posts) of the selected posts used Farsi hashtags. In 10 of 30 posts (33%), the influencers used hashtags that directly target Farsi or Iranian culture, such as #فارسی (Farsi), #ایران (Iran), and #نوروز (Nowruz). In a diasporic context, if Farsi, the heritage language of Iranian immigrants, is considered as a minority language, McMonagle et al. (2019) argue that "the minority language hashtag refers to different ambient communities, is partly used to tag content in the languages considered, is more often used to tag content about those languages, and sometimes leads to information that has little to do with those languages" (p. 45). However, it should be noted that McMonagle et al.'s study is limited to

Twitter and a specific time period. While hashtags might hold greater importance on Twitter, as it is a text-based platform, hashtags are still widely used on Instagram by influencers to make their text and visuals more visible to users. From this perspective, hashtags like #فارسی (Farsi) and #نوروز (Nowruz) might help immigrants solidify the social cohesion of the diaspora community. These hashtags allow Iranian immigrant influencers to showcase their linguistic and cultural identities in the diaspora within a predominantly English-speaking society. This aligns with Hall's argument that identity is formed through practices of cultural representation. Hall (1990/2021) states: "Practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write" (p. 257). Hall argues that how we represent ourselves is always influenced by our perspective, background, and social position. The way we speak or write is shaped by our experiences, culture, and history. This notion means that representation is never neutral—it always reflects a specific viewpoint. Therefore, sharing hashtags like #فارسی (Farsi) and #نوروز (Nowruz) can point to the cultural identity of the influencers and their Iranian background. Furthermore, hashtags sometimes play a role in fostering a sense of connectedness within the diaspora. In 4 of 30 posts (13%), Farsi hashtags related to immigration were used, such as #ایرانیان_مقیم_آمریکا (Iranians living in America), #کوچ (Migration), and #مهاجران (Immigrants). These hashtags may help Iranian immigrants find one another in the diaspora and share their migration experiences. This aligns with Smoliarova and Bodrunova's (2021) study, which highlights the case of Russian-speaking female Instagram users with migration backgrounds who share their immigration experiences and discuss daily life issues beyond their immediate host countries. Posting under the hashtag #international_girl, these bloggers are aware of their global audience and tailor their content—such as personal migration stories or reflections on daily life—to reach this diverse, international community.

On the other hand, a more critical analysis of migration-related content on the selected posts reveals that, while these hashtags can create a sense of solidarity and connectedness, they also risk oversimplifying and commodifying the immigrant experience. Rosa and Soto-Vásquez (2022) explore the hashtags #caravanamigrante and #migrantcaravan, showing how the representation of migrant caravans is largely controlled by professionals and organizations—photojournalists, NGOs, and media entities—rather than the migrants themselves. This raises concerns about the authenticity of migration-related content, especially when it is created by the influencers who may prioritize visibility over accurate representation. For instance, while hashtags like #ایرانیان_مقیم_آمریکا (Iranians living in America) or #مهاجران (Immigrants) may provide a platform for Iranian immigrants to connect, the influencers also benefit commercially from these posts. Instagram’s commercial nature can turn migration stories into products for consumption. Moreover, as Rosa and Soto-Vásquez (2022) argue, activism surrounding migration on Instagram can sometimes lose its grassroots momentum, becoming a form of digital activism that lacks real-world impact. This trend mirrors the commercialization of migration-related content, where the focus shifts from effecting social change to generating likes, shares, and profits. While the visibility generated by hashtags like #مهاجران (Immigrants) may indeed raise awareness of migration issues, it may not necessarily lead to tangible social change. Instead, these hashtags and their associated content might become a form of artistic product, consumed by a global audience without addressing the deeper systemic issues faced by Iranian immigrants themselves.

Another group of hashtags promotes the Iranian protest movement and expresses solidarity with those in Iran. In 6 of 30 posts (25%), influencers use hashtags such as #مهسا_امینی (Mahsa Amini), #زن_زندگی_آزادی (Women, Life, Freedom), and #تفنگت_را_زمین_بگذار (Put down

your gun). These hashtags have also been used by other Iranian individuals, including those living in Iran, reacting to the protests for human rights and freedom. In fact, these hashtags originated in Iran, and immigrants used them to show their solidarity and support. In some cases, they reflected Iranian immigrants' actions in the diaspora and their role in drawing international attention to the crimes occurring in Iran. For example, in a short video in Post 6, a graffiti image of Mahsa Amini on the body of the Freedom Sculpture in Los Angeles is visible. The post also highlights scarves that, according to the influencers, were hung from the sculpture in Los Angeles during the آزادی، زندگی، زن (Women, Life, Freedom) movement in Iran. The graffiti and hanging scarves may signify how Iranian immigrants reinterpret national symbols within a transnational setting. This post aligns with Hall's (1990/2021) idea that cultural identity is shaped through the "continuous 'play' of history, culture, and power" (p. 260), as Iranian immigrants utilize familiar imagery to maintain cultural solidarity while engaging with a new sociopolitical environment.

As another example, within the photograph in Post 23, there is a short text in both Farsi and English: "The unification of mankind" (وحدت عالم انسانی). This post does not include a caption; however, it features Farsi and English hashtags with the same meanings: #MahsaAmini, #Iran, #Freedom, #آزادی (Freedom), #صلح (Peace), and #مهسا_امینی (Mahsa Amini). Hall (1990/2021) asserts that representation always involves a position of enunciation, the standpoint from which individuals speak and construct meaning. Post 23 reflects Talebli's navigating her positioning between her homeland and host country. The bilingual text "The unification of mankind" (وحدت عالم انسانی) emphasizes a globalized message of unity, yet it is presented alongside hashtags referencing Iranian protests. This juxtaposition illustrates Hall's (1990/2021)

notion that diaspora identity is not about returning to an original homeland but about reimagining and redefining identity through cultural translation and representation.

Similarly, the emotional significance attached to Pirooz, the Iranian cheetah in Post 7, exemplifies the symbolic nature of identity in the diaspora. The farewell message in Farsi (translated into English as: “Farewell, noble son of Iran. You brought love, hope, and smiles to an oppressed nation and stood by us in times more bitter than poison.”), which links Pirooz’s death to the dashed hopes of Iranian protesters, represents what Hall (2008/2019f) describes as the duality of diaspora: a space of both loss and creative rearticulation. While the cheetah’s name means “victory” in Farsi, its death serves as a metaphor for the political disillusionment among protesters. Moreover, Hall’s (1990/2021) concept of “imaginative geography and history” (p. 265) is seemingly relevant here, as the memory and symbolism of Pirooz are used to reinforce a collective diasporic consciousness, even though the protest movement itself is physically located in Iran.

In Post 21, Mojgan emphasizes the significance of standing together, even when far from home, recognizing the power of unity:

یکی ورزشکار است و دیگری هنرمند یکی معترض و یکی فعال حقوق بشر.

سالها حقوق ما زنان ایرانی در عرصه‌های مختلف توسط جمهوری اسلامی نقض شد و حالا دور از وطن کنار هم

ایستادیم و میدانیم قدرت ما در این هم‌صحبتی و اتحاد است

Translation: One is an athlete, another an artist. One is a protester, another a human rights activist. For years, our rights as Iranian women have been violated by the Islamic Republic in various fields. But now, far from home, we stand together knowing that our strength lies in our voices and our unity. (Post 21)

However, her post does not entirely align with Hall's theory. Hall (1990/2021) emphasizes that identity is fluid, hybrid, and shaped by multiple influences over time. Yet Shajarian's post presents a more stable and unified notion of Iranian women's identity, focusing on collective solidarity rather than the complexities and contradictions of identity formation in exile. The post suggests a clear sense of Iranian-ness that remains unchanged despite displacement, whereas Hall argues that diaspora identity is always in flux, shaped by interactions between the homeland and the host country.

Theme 4: Identity Narratives and Reflections

I identified codes related to identity narratives and reflections in approximately 43% of the selected posts. Four out of 30 posts (Posts 4, 9, 24, and 26), or around 13%, use Farsi as a core identity symbol. Five out of 30 posts (Posts 11, 17, 21, 23, and 30), or 20%, include identity affirmation. Lastly, four out of 30 posts (Posts 16, 18, 20, and 28) contain reflective discourses on heritage and identity. While many posts in these three groups (partially) align with elements of Hall's theory, in some cases, they do not align.

Hall (1990/2021) argues that diaspora identity isn't about returning to a lost homeland but about reshaping identity through change. Naraghi, in Post 4, expresses a longing for Iran,

but she also recognizes that fully returning—either physically or culturally—isn't possible. Instead, she uses Instagram to keep Farsi alive, constantly reconstructing her sense of identity.

وقتی از سرزمین مادریات دور می‌شوی، بخش‌هایی از آن سرزمین در تو، دیگر بار زاده می‌شود و مانند گیاه جوانه می‌زند و قد می‌کشد و برگ و بار می‌دهد.

زبان که به گفته‌ی هایدگر، خانه‌ی وجود است، رویای بر دوش بردن وطن از جایی به جای دیگر را به حقیقت بدل می‌کند و فارسی، این عمارت معمور با اندوه فیروزفامش بر پیشانی، قندی که «شکرشکن شوند همه طوطیان هند» از آن، در هزارتوهای مغزت شکوهی تازه‌تر می‌یابد.

Translation: When you leave your homeland, parts of that land are reborn within you, sprouting like a young plant, growing tall, bearing leaves and fruit.

Language, which Heidegger calls the house of being, turns the dream of carrying one's homeland from place to place into reality. And Farsi—this grand edifice adorned with a sorrow as radiant as turquoise, the sugar that “makes all the parrots of India sugar-crushing”—finds a renewed splendor in the labyrinths of your mind. (Post 4)

This post aligns with Hall's idea that the past isn't fixed but is an active part of how identity is formed. Moreover, Naraghi uses Farsi as a core identity symbol for Iranian immigrants. She sees Farsi not as “a historical or political agreement imposed to centralize power,” but as “shared aesthetic agreement” and “house of being” (Post 4). Studies like Babae's (2014) also confirm the significance of Farsi literature in preserving Iranian heritage culture in the diaspora. In Babae's research, a Farsi class teacher in Canada explains how Iranian children in their classes learn to read literary classics like the *Shahnameh* (Ferdowsi's masterpiece) and works by Hafez, which deepen their understanding of Iran's history, culture, and traditions.

While Post 4 focuses on a fluid identity, some other posts look at identity as a more fixed term. For example, Post 8 introduces a pictorial history book titled *Ancient Iran*, promising a unique and splendid narrative of Iran's ancient history. This post promotes Iranian ancient history by advertising this book. In contrast with Hall's theory, this introduction may make immigrants more familiar with their history and be more aware of Iran ancient history. Further, advertising this Farsi book may represent another effort of Iranian immigrants in alignment with Abdizadeh's (2020) study, which finds that many Iranian immigrants consider Farsi essential to their cultural identity.

Post 9, shared by Yalda Ebtehaj, includes historical and mythological narratives that express cultural identity. The post features an image of Arash Kamangir, a legendary archer from Iranian folklore, accompanied by a Farsi caption that compares Arash's sacrifice to that of Dehbashi, an Iranian cultural activist. Ebtehaj writes,

جانش را گذاشت و نشانه گرفت. زبان و فرهنگ سرزمین ما را به مرزی دور برد. بی‌مانند و یگانه، چون «آرش
کمانگیری» در قلمرو فرهنگ

Translation: He gave his life and took aim. He carried the language and culture of our land to distant frontiers. Unique and unparalleled, like Arash Kamangir in the realm of culture. (Post 9)

By invoking Arash's legendary act, Ebtehaj positions cultural activism as a form of sacrifice and resilience. Hall (1990/2021) suggests that cultural identity is continuously formed through historical and symbolic representations rather than simply being inherited. By using Arash as a metaphor, Ebtehaj reinterprets Iranian cultural identity in a diasporic context, framing it as something that extends beyond geographical borders. The phrase "carried the language and culture of our land to distant frontiers" reflects Hall's idea of diaspora identity, where culture is not confined to the homeland but is instead reimagined across different locations.

Post 20, by Solmaz Hoomanzadeh, offers a different perspective on Iranian identity by addressing political and social transformations in Iran from an immigrant's viewpoint. Solmaz critiques the superficial perception that Iran remains unchanged despite economic struggles and social movements. She highlights that revolutions do not originate from the wealthy but from the working class, emphasizing the significant yet often overlooked shifts occurring in more traditional communities. Her commentary on the ongoing hijab protests underscores how change starts in subtle ways before leading to major social upheavals. She writes,

به نظر من، دستاوردی که زنهای ایرانی هنوز دارن تو سطح جامعه، به ویژه جامعه سنتی در شهرستانها و خانواده‌های مذهبی، به دست میارن و باهش میجنگن اصلا چیزی کمی نیست. همیشه هر زلزله‌ای اول از پس لرزه شروع میشه و بعد به مرحله زلزله‌ای میرسه که ویران میکنه.

Translation: In my view, the progress that Iranian women continue to make—especially in traditional communities, small towns, and religious families—is far from insignificant. Every major earthquake begins with aftershocks before it reaches full force and brings destruction. (Post 20)

Hoomanzadeh's reflections illustrate Hall's (2000/2019d) argument that identity is shaped through continuous struggles and transformations. She portrays Iranian women's fight for autonomy as an ongoing process of renegotiating cultural norms like hijab. Similar renegotiation can be seen in Post 24, where Mostafavi offers a personal reflection on self-transformation. She shares a Farsi caption that encourages resilience:

. . . تولدت دست خودت نبوده ، ولی تحولات که دست خودته
 !شانس تویی، سرنوشت هم دست خودته
 . . . برای ساختن زندگیت
 هیچگاه نا امید نشو
 یه روزی به خودت میای و افتخار میکنی از اینکه ادامه دادی و تسلیم نشدی
 یه روزی که با یک موفقیت، زندگی تو تغییر دادی

Translation: Your birth wasn't in your hands, but your transformation is ...

Luck is in your hands, and your destiny is yours to shape!

To build your life ...

Never lose hope.

One day, you'll look back and be proud of how you kept going and never gave up.

One day, you'll change your life with a success. (Post 24)

This Farsi caption, paired with a visit to Rumi's tomb in Konya, symbolizes a diasporic self-motivation rooted in Persian spiritual heritage. This blend of self-motivation and cultural

identity mirrors Koutrouba and Georgalou's (2025) findings, where Greek immigrants use Instagram to either reinforce national pride or to negotiate a more fluid identity. Mostafavi's post similarly might be demonstrated both as a site of personal empowerment and as a bridge to her cultural past.

Revisiting the Research Questions

In the previous sections, I presented my findings and discussed the themes I identified from the selected posts by Iranian immigrant influencers on Instagram. In this section, I revisit my two research questions and attempt to provide answers, focusing specifically on the themes that emerged from the selected posts. The first question I address is as follows: How do Iranian immigrants use Farsi on Instagram? Most selected posts (97%) use Farsi as a tool for communication; however, many go further in various ways. These include reflecting Iranian heritage through discussions on poetry and traditions, preserving Farsi as a core part of cultural identity, emphasizing its role in maintaining emotional and familial bonds, treating Farsi or Iranian heritage culture as a fixed entity to be preserved, or avoiding direct engagement with identity struggles. I will explain these points in more detail below.

Influencers like Naraghi (Post 4) underscore the poetic beauty of Farsi and the responsibility of immigrants to safeguard its richness, aligning with Hall's (1990/2021) view that diaspora identities maintain symbolic ties to the past. Some other Farsi poems in the selected posts (like Post 29) express exile's emotional complexity, reinforcing Hall's view that identity is constructed through cultural memory rather than physical return.

Other influencers, such as Sayadi (Post 16), emphasize the role of Farsi in maintaining emotional and familial bonds. Sayadi also emphasizes the long-term importance of early Farsi exposure, noting that second-generation Iranians who retain fluency in Farsi integrate more

easily into Iranian communities and maintain a stronger cultural connection. Her perspective aligns with Hall's (1990/2021) view that language serves as both a cultural anchor and an evolving marker of identity, reinforcing the idea that heritage language plays a vital role in shaping the identity of immigrant children.

Some posts reflect Iranian heritage, such as discussions on poetry and traditions, reinforcing a connection to the immigrants' roots. For example, Post 28 poetically describes the challenges of celebrating Nowruz abroad, emphasizing that immigrants must actively recreate their cultural traditions. The reflections in this post align with Hall's (1997/2019c) argument that identity is continuously shaped through cultural memory and adaptation rather than solely through geographical belonging.

However, many of the posts examined deviate from Hall's (1990/2021) conceptualization of identity as fluid, hybrid, and continually rearticulated. Instead, they often present Farsi and Iranian heritage as static symbols to be preserved rather than transformed through diasporic experience. For example, Post 8's promotion of ancient Iran frames Iranian history as a monolithic and unchanging entity. Similarly, Post 12, featuring a western woman in Lor attire with a Farsi caption, may appear to celebrate resilience, but it risks commodifying Iranian cultural symbols rather than meaningfully engaging in identity negotiation. This concern extends to Posts 13 and 22, where traditional attire functions more as an aesthetic or nostalgic element rather than a reflection of evolving identity. While these posts may symbolically connect to Iranian heritage, they lack explicit engagement with the complexities of diasporic identity formation. Moreover, Post 21's portrayal of Iranian women's solidarity reinforces a unified and stable identity that contrasts with Hall's assertion that diaspora identity is shaped by contradictions and ongoing negotiation. This post presents Iranian-ness as an immutable quality

that transcends displacement, rather than acknowledging the hybridity and transformation inherent in diasporic existence. Likewise, while Post 7's tribute to Pirooz metaphorically links Iranian identity to loss and resistance, it remains rooted in a nationalist sentiment that does not engage with the fragmented and dynamic nature of identity in exile. Even posts featuring Persian cuisine, such as Post 3, tend to emphasize preservation rather than transformation.

Furthermore, commercial interests appear to undercut the authenticity of some representations. For example, Post 30, which shows Farsi calligraphy, functions more as an advertisement than a genuine engagement with cultural heritage, reflecting the broader trend of cultural commodification on social media. This raises questions about whether such posts serve as genuine expressions of identity or if they primarily cater to audience engagement and visibility.

The second research question addressed in this study is: What role, if any, does Instagram play in the maintenance and promotion of Farsi among Iranian immigrants? While the posts analyzed here represent only a small fraction of the Farsi-language content produced by Iranian immigrants on Instagram, they offer insight into how widely followed influencers—many with hundreds of thousands of followers—expose their heritage language and culture on this platform.

By incorporating Farsi in captions and hashtags, many influencers create content that both reflects Iranian cultural identity and fosters diasporic connections. Hashtags like #فارسی (Farsi) and #نوروز (Nowruz), used in 60% of the selected posts, contribute to cultural representation and identity affirmation among Iranian immigrants. In some cases, Instagram serves as a space for negotiating identity through representations of Persian literature (e.g., Post 4), mythology (e.g., Post 9), and sociopolitical movements such as Women, Life, Freedom (e.g., Post 6), where Farsi is used as a tool for both cultural expression and activism.

Few posts explicitly emphasize Farsi language maintenance. For example, Post 16 highlights Mona Sayadi's commitment to raising her child as a Farsi speaker despite the dominant tendency among Iranian immigrants in Germany to shift toward German. Her perspective aligns with Hall's (1980) argument that language is "the principal medium of culture" (p. 65) and his later assertion (1990/2021) that identity is both being and becoming. However, other posts reveal a more superficial or problematic engagement with Farsi. For example, Post 19 features a non-Iranian individual, Kelly, discussing Farsi idioms and their meanings. While this reflects a degree of linguistic engagement, it remains too limited to fully illustrate Hall's idea of cultural identity as hybrid and continuously reformulated. Similarly, Post 25, which promotes linguistic purity by encouraging the use of correct Farsi writing, reflects a prescriptive rather than dynamic view of language. By advocating for a fixed linguistic standard, this post contradicts Hall's (2008/2019f) argument that identity—linguistic or otherwise—is not a stable essence but rather an evolving process shaped by historical and social contexts.

However, while Instagram facilitates the visibility of Farsi in the diaspora, its role in long-term language maintenance is limited. Many posts featuring traditional attire, Persian cuisine, or Farsi calligraphy reinforce cultural identity but do not necessarily engage in substantive linguistic preservation. Additionally, the commercial motives behind some posts—such as those promoting Farsi calligraphy or traditional attire—raise concerns about whether these representations genuinely contribute to heritage language sustainability or merely commodify cultural symbols for wider social media appeal. Moreover, Instagram's emphasis on visual storytelling and short captions restricts opportunities for deeper linguistic engagement, particularly when compared to platforms like Facebook, which allow for more extensive discussions and interactive language use.

Further, while hashtags like #ایرانیان_مقیم_آمریکا (Iranians living in America) may foster a sense of community among Iranian immigrants, they also reflect broader trends in the commercialization and algorithmic control of migration-related content. This observation underscores a critical tension in Instagram's role as a platform for activism and identity representation: while it can amplify marginalized voices and strengthen diasporic ties, it simultaneously risks distorting and commodifying these lived experiences (Rosa & Soto-Vásquez, 2022). Ultimately, while Instagram provides a space for celebrating Farsi and Iranian cultural identity, its capacity for meaningful language preservation remains constrained by the platform's structural limitations and commercialized nature.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Future Research

In this chapter, I first present a summary of the study. Next, I outline the conclusions drawn from my findings. These conclusions explain how a sample of Iranian immigrants use or promote Farsi using Instagram and the role, if any, that Instagram plays in the maintenance and promotion of Farsi among the 30 Iranian immigrants' posts selected for examination in this study. Following that, I will discuss the limitations of these conclusions. The chapter then continues with recommendations based on the findings, implications for practice, and final reflections.

Summary of Study

The purpose of this research was to explore how some Iranian immigrants use Farsi on Instagram. I examined 30 selected Instagram posts for Farsi use among Iranians living in the diaspora, contributing to a deeper understanding of how some Instagram posts may incorporate Farsi and promote Iranian heritage culture among Iranian immigrants. I used Hall's (1990/2021) cultural identity theory, along with a passive observational netnography approach (Kozinets, 2015) to address the following questions: How do Iranian immigrants use Farsi on Instagram? And what role, if any, does Instagram play in the maintenance and promotion of Farsi among Iranian immigrants? I used a passive observational netnography approach because I focused on analyzing publicly available online content without direct engagement. In this thesis, I also highlighted both the opportunities and limitations of Instagram in fostering linguistic and cultural expression. Instagram, through media-sharing tools, hashtags, and influencer-driven online communities, might assist in the cultivation and maintenance of Iranian immigrants' cultural identities by facilitating the visibility of Farsi and Iranian heritage elements. However, Instagram's commercial-based nature presents some challenges. While exposure to Farsi on

Instagram can support informal language acquisition or maintenance, the platform's effectiveness as a language-learning tool is very limited. Moreover, Instagram content is often superficial, reducing opportunities for meaningful cultural or linguistic engagement.

Additionally, some influencers who create heritage-related content may be commercially motivated. They may use Farsi and Iranian heritage culture symbols to attract followers and promote products. This commercialization may lead to skepticism about the authenticity of cultural promotion efforts.

Conclusions

In this thesis, I examined how some Iranian immigrants use Farsi on Instagram and the role this platform might play in the maintenance and promotion of Farsi as a heritage language. By analyzing selected Instagram posts from 30 Iranian immigrant influencers, I have identified various ways in which Farsi is used to express cultural identity, maintain heritage, and foster connections within the diaspora. My findings indicate that while many influencers employ Farsi primarily as a communication tool, others use it to reinforce Iranian heritage through discussions of poetry, traditions, and emotional bonds with Iran. However, these representations are not uniform, as some posts reflect a more static and nostalgic view of identity, while others engage in more dynamic negotiations of cultural identity. This finding supports Hall's (1990/2021) assertion that identity is not a fixed essence, but a continuously evolving process shaped by history, power, and representation.

The study also highlights that while some Instagram posts align with Hall's view of identity as fluid and hybrid, others treat Iranian heritage and Farsi as unchanging symbols to be preserved. For instance, posts emphasizing traditional attire, historical narratives, or poetic expressions often present an essentialist view of Iranian identity. In contrast, posts that engage

with Farsi's evolving role in the diaspora—such as those exploring its impact on second-generation immigrants or its intersection with sociopolitical movements—better reflect Hall's (1990/2021) concept of cultural identity as both “being” and “becoming.” Furthermore, commercial motives within some posts raise concerns about the commodification of heritage symbols, which may dilute the authenticity of cultural representation and hinder meaningful engagement with Farsi as a living language.

Regarding Instagram's role in Farsi language maintenance, my research finds that while the platform provides visibility for Farsi, its impact on sustained language preservation is limited. Many posts employ Farsi in captions, hashtags, and cultural references, which contribute to identity affirmation and community-building among Iranian immigrants. However, the platform's emphasis on visual storytelling and brevity restricts opportunities for deeper linguistic engagement compared to other digital spaces. Additionally, some posts promote a prescriptive approach to Farsi, advocating for linguistic purity rather than embracing the natural evolution of language in diasporic contexts. This result suggests that while Instagram can serve as a space for cultural representation and identity negotiation, its structural limitations and commercial nature constrain its effectiveness in fostering long-term Farsi maintenance.

Ultimately, this study underscores the complexity of heritage-language use in digital spaces and the multifaceted ways that some Iranian immigrants use Farsi on Instagram. While the platform enables diasporic Iranians to celebrate and affirm their cultural identity, it also presents challenges in terms of language preservation, identity negotiation, and the commercialization of cultural symbols.

Limitations of the Conclusions

Although I have offered various insights into how some Iranian immigrants use Farsi on Instagram to preserve their heritage identity, there are limitations to consider. First, the data do not represent all Iranian immigrants, as it mainly focuses on a small subset of 30 influencers and active Instagram users. This sample excludes individuals who do not use Instagram or who engage with other platforms, leading to a focus on a specific group within the community. Additionally, in formulating the conclusions I relied solely on publicly available content, which might not capture more private uses of Farsi, such as within family settings or smaller online groups. Because I did not speak with any of the influencers or readers of their posts, I cannot know what the precise intentions were behind many of the posts, or how the posts were received by others. Finally, because social media trends change quickly, the findings might not apply to future practices as platforms and cultural behaviors evolve. Despite these limitations, this study provides some insights into the role of Instagram in using Farsi and expressing cultural identity among Iranian immigrants.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research investigated how some Iranian immigrants use Farsi on Instagram. The findings revealed that Iranian immigrants on the selected posts on Instagram utilize Farsi to strengthen cultural ties, enhance community engagement, and express their heritage. Instagram may also serve as a platform for promoting Iran's historical and cultural symbols, helping to foster cultural pride, maintain identity, and support continuity within the immigrant community. Considering this finding, it is recommended that future research be conducted to investigate how different social media platforms, beyond Instagram, influence the assertion of heritage language and cultural identities among Iranian immigrants. For example, platforms like Facebook, X, and

YouTube could be researched to understand the extent to which they facilitate cultural representation, community connection, and identity narratives within the Iranian diaspora community, and whether there are key differences among platforms. A further suggestion would be to explore the role of visual content, such as images and videos, in shaping cultural representation and identity narratives on social media. Researchers could analyze how visual elements interact with linguistic practices to convey cultural heritage and foster community cohesion among Iranian immigrants. It would be interesting to explore the dynamics of cross-cultural interactions between the Iranian diaspora community and other cultural groups on social media platforms, and examine how these self-expressions influence identity formation, cultural exchange, and intergroup relations within diverse online communities. Other types of netnography studies, perhaps more active ones, could be performed to more deeply explore the influence of social media influencers within the Farsi diaspora community on cultural representation, community cohesion, and identity narratives. Such studies could also examine how influencers shape perceptions of Persian culture, amplify marginalized voices, and promote inclusive narratives that celebrate the diversity of Iranian immigrants.

Implications for Practice

My findings suggest that Iranian immigrants around the world use Instagram to promote Farsi and Iranian heritage by sharing content in Farsi and showcasing cultural events like Nowruz and Yalda through text and visuals. This practice helps raise awareness of Farsi as a heritage language and Iranian heritage culture and encourages community participation. However, these efforts on Instagram cannot replace Farsi classes or in-person cultural events that Iranian communities regularly participate in worldwide, though Iranian communities might use this platform for disseminating announcements or finding new members among recent Iranian

immigrants. Education programs, community initiatives, and policy support remain essential for keeping Farsi alive beyond social media. While watching visuals of Nowruz celebrations or receiving messages of congratulations on Instagram is valuable for an Iranian immigrant, this will not be equivalent to the experience of participating in one of these celebrations in person. Moreover, my findings show that in some cases Instagram can strengthen Iranian immigrant cultural identity and belonging, but its portrayal of Iranian heritage is not always diverse or in-depth. In fact, Instagram's focus on visually appealing, easily digestible content may limit the depth of cultural representation. Additionally, commercial pressures influence what gets seen. This feature of Instagram can result in a commercialized portrayal of Iranian heritage.

To address the challenges, I have observed during this research, Iranian community leaders, Farsi educators, and nonprofit cultural organizations can promote deeper Farsi exposure on Instagram by creating online support groups about Farsi preservation, identity, and diaspora life. Collaboration between Iranian immigrant influencers and community leaders could also help to ensure that content is culturally representative, not just entertainment focused. While some of the influencers may not care about the Iranian community's advocacy and prefer to follow their commercial goals, others who have previous cultural activities on their resume (e.g. artists, feminists, journalists, etc.) may welcome collaboration with Farsi educators and Iranian community leaders to support Farsi and Iranian heritage in diaspora. Finally, to truly support Farsi preservation, individuals' efforts must be part of a larger strategy that includes community-driven, long-term engagement beyond the digital world. This strategy may be created and monitored by leaders of Iranian communities in diaspora. Without critical awareness, platforms like Instagram risk simplifying or commodifying heritage rather than preserving it meaningfully.

Final Reflections

As I conclude these reflections, I am filled with optimism and hope for the future of Farsi among Iranian immigrants. By embracing diversity and amplifying voices from various backgrounds, we can build a more inclusive and vibrant community that celebrates the richness of Iranian culture and heritage globally. I am aware of the commercial motives behind many influencers on Instagram, as well as the hypocrisy and exaggeration often present in online social media content, including the use of fake names or misrepresented facts. However, the fact that Iranian immigrants today have greater exposure to Farsi daily—unlike those who immigrated twenty years ago—offers a unique opportunity to promote Farsi and preserve Iranian heritage.

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