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**IS ALL CULTURE LEARNING CREATED EQUAL: STUDENTS'
PERCEPTIONS OF PERSIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

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IS ALL CULTURE LEARNING CREATED EQUAL: STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF PERSIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

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This study explores how cultural inquiry was integrated into a third-year Persian class via printed texts, film, WebQuests and PowerPoint presentations, and how that cultural inquiry was made sense of and understood by the students in the course. Specifically, this qualitative study addresses two research questions: 1. How do students experience the cultural inquiry pedagogy? 2. How do students' understandings about Persian culture develop?

The study’s participants were four college students in a fifth semester Persian language course at a large southwestern university during fall of 2009. Students were exposed to two sets of cultural integration including two films and WebQuest activities. The collected data included a demographic questionnaire, classroom observations, individual interviews and students’ reflective journals. Data were analyzed using Constant Comparative Method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

A major finding of this study was that that in all four cases, participants felt they benefited from the content presented through multimedia and technology and the knowledge they gained through the cultural inquiry activities contributed to the

development of their cultural awareness. In addition, the development of learners' cultural knowledge and awareness was another important finding of this study. The study also revealed the deconstruction of some of the stereotypes that students brought with them to the classroom. Through the cultural inquiry pedagogy and exposure to different types of texts and group discussions, some of these stereotypes were deconstructed and new ideas were formulated. Another important finding of the study was the importance of utilizing cultural inquiry pedagogy. This study showed in particular the crucial role of group discussions, the importance of pre- and post- viewing activities related to filmic texts and WebQuest activities as benefiting the students most in their cultural inquiry

The study's findings have implications for educators and curriculum developers to understand better the kinds of experiences and opportunities students have when they are engaged in cultural inquiry activities and are exposed to multimedia and technology, which contribute to the development of their cultural knowledge and awareness.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Persian language and Iranian studies are becoming increasingly popular courses among university students in the U.S. The number of students enrolled in Persian-language courses in US universities has soared from an enrollment of 472 in 1998 to almost two thousand in 2006 (Modern Language Association, 2007), and enrollment in these classes has increased even more in 2010.

The study of the Persian language has a long tradition in American universities. In the 1950's, American universities offered courses in Old Persian, the language of the Achaemenid Empire of the fifth century B.C. The older language is important in Indo-European comparative linguistics studies; however, the literature and everyday use in Modern Persian is far greater and of more general interest to students. Accordingly, currently, American universities with Persian Studies programs offer a wide variety of Persian language courses, from elementary to advanced levels, including courses for Heritage learners who can speak, but can't read and write well and want to improve their reading and writing skills of Persian. These programs also offer upper-division courses in Persian literature and culture.

Needless to say that interest in the Persian language began to increase after 2001. The post 9-11 world has underlined the need for professionals in the United States who have full command of a wider variety of foreign languages than the European languages

typically taught in the U.S. in earlier years. There is particularly a crucial need for individuals who are fluent in the critical or strategic languages (National Security Education Act, 1991), specifically languages of the Middle East and the Islamic World. In this respect, the U.S. Department of Education has initiated the National Security Education Program, focusing resources toward educating students, teachers and government workers to enhance the national security by increasing the capacity to deal effectively with the shortage of critical need language professionals including Persian.

Although these language initiatives stress the importance of the development of both language facility and cultural understanding in critical languages for strategic reasons, an examination of existing Persian textbooks used in American universities reveals that most are organized around traditional grammar and translation methodologies and that they do not address more real-world purposes of Persian such as the development of everyday speaking skills or cultural understanding. Reading selections used in these textbooks are taken mostly from sources that contain archaic forms of the language and styles no longer used in contemporary Iran, particularly in spoken Persian (Ghanoonparvar et al., 2004).

Most of the university centers of Persian studies agree on the general principle that language and culture study must be the core of teaching Persian. However, there seems to be no clear agreement on what the specific goals of Persian study should be, or what methodological and instructional approaches meet the needs of learners of this language (Ghanoonparvar et al., 2004).

Moreover, in spite of increased strategic interest in learning Persian language and culture, many students who take Persian are still heritage learners who want to reconnect with their family and heritage. Unfortunately, most Persian classes do not provide consistent opportunities for enhancing students' cultural knowledge and understanding and thus, they do not offer the opportunities for cultural growth that heritage learners seek. Syllabus demands and classroom time focus primarily on linguistic achievement, even though the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996) have made it a priority for educators to incorporate the study of culture into their foreign language classroom curricula. Cultural knowledge is one of the five goal areas of the national standards areas that are described as the five C's of foreign language education:

Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities:

“Through the study of other languages, students gain knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language; in fact, students cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs” (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996, p. 27).

Although the National Standards “do not describe specific course content nor recommend sequence of study,” the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages considers them useful guidelines for instruction “through high school and beyond” and for working “in conjunction with state and local curriculum frameworks to determine the best approaches and reasonable expectations for the students in individual

schools” (ACTFL, 1996, p. 2). The National Standards also strongly emphasize the teaching of culture in “the cultural contexts in which the language occurs” (ACTFL, 1996, p. 3). According to the Standards (2.1 & 2.2), students should “demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of culture studied” as well as the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied” (ACTFL, 1996, p. 4). They should learn about the target culture through comparisons with their own culture to gain insight into target language “perspectives” (ACTFL, 1996, p. 5).

Although much discussion has revolved around the importance of teaching culture, the issue of how to teach culture, especially Persian culture remains largely unexamined. In conveying authentic, contemporary cultural information to students in a lively, communicative fashion in the target language, researchers advocate the use of multimedia as particularly valuable in FL teaching and learning (Dubreil, 2006). Multimedia enhances the ways that language learners interact with the texts, sounds, and images of a foreign culture (Otto & Pusack, 1993). Students are not only presented with dynamics of interaction, but are exposed to linguistics as well as paralinguistic variations (e.g. postures, gestures). In other words, multimedia technology allows students to be exposed to current and authentic cultural situations as found in the target language (Herron, et al., 2000). Access to information on the World Wide Web and the use of new information technologies have provided opportunities for teachers to create better instructional material to teach language and culture more effectively than before (Moore,

et al., 2007). Furthermore, using computer technology can help students to move away from textbook dependence toward learning with a “combination of text, speech, images, video and sound in the classroom” (Moore, 2006). In teaching language and culture, some scholars suggest using authentic texts as an important instructional tool since these materials “take the learner to the heart of the target culture” (Omaggio, 2001). Thus, multimedia technology can serve as a valuable medium to provide easy access to these authentic sources. In other words, technology could introduce authentic sociolinguistic elements in the classroom without the necessity to travel (Meunier, 1994).

Several studies have examined the effectiveness of computer technology in teaching culture (Abrams, 2002; Chun & Plass, 2000; Furstenburg, 2001; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002; Lee, 1997; Ware & Kramsch, 2005). The key recurring element in these studies is the students’ linguistic and cultural gains due to technology’s ability to provide easy access to the target language and culture (Moore, 1996, 1997; Omaggio, 2001).

Among the different types of multimedia technology, WebQuest uses the power of the Internet and a scaffolded learning process to turn research-based theories into dependable learning-centered practices (Dodge, 1995). It provokes students to analyze, synthesize, and construct new ideas by engaging them in “doable & interesting” tasks (Dodge, 1995). PowerPoint makes teaching/learning interesting, meaningful and effective by creating a reciprocal engagement with the students, and invoking audience interests (Szabo & Hastings, 2000).

The use of FL films and videos in the classroom provide visual as well as

acoustic clues to different styles of language use, offer a variety of examples of language use, and have both, cognitive and affective advantages over textbooks (Dodds, 1997; Garza, 1996; Kasper & Singer, 2001; Kuttner, 2003). A large number of articles promote the use of these media, describing both materials and techniques for that use and reporting anecdotal accounts of their efficacy. Stephens (2001) suggests that filmic presentations offer "ethical boundaries, conceptual frameworks, national memory, and identity, and access to the cultural forces and attitudes that shape the civilization" (p. 22). Joiner (1990) proposes that film facilitates language acquisition because students can make sense of words they have not encountered before due to the combination of visual and auditory clues films provide. In a similar vein, Hennessey (1995) foresaw motivated students with positive attitudes towards their language and culture learning experience if the instructor knows how to utilize film in a foreign language classroom.

Thus, focusing on the need for cultural understanding and more specifically, on ways to promote cultural understanding in the Persian classroom is what has prompted my dissertation interest. An in-depth exploration of the role that culture plays in students' language learning and their responses towards cultural inquiry could provide valuable insights into their learning experience. To my knowledge no systematic research has been conducted to assess the claim that the integration of cultural inquiry through multimedia and technology (film, PowerPoint and WebQuest) into Persian language classroom enhances students' "perceptions of that language's culture." Thus, this study will enable educators and curriculum developers to help Persian learners more effectively

by developing enhanced and up-to-date Persian language courses and materials.

In order to accomplish this objective, the current study examines how cultural inquiry was integrated into a third-year Persian class via printed texts, film, WebQuests and PowerPoint presentations, and how that cultural inquiry was made sense of and understood by the students in the course.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The major purpose of this study is to explore what cultural knowledge students of Persian gain as cultural inquiry is integrated in their class and how that cultural knowledge contributes to their learning experience. The study intends to explore students' responses towards the incorporation of film, WebQuests, and PowerPoint presentations as tools for culture learning. These different types of technologies and multimedia will be used to establish students' preferences and to understand more fully whether certain types of media and technology might contribute to a more effective language learning experience.

Although Persian Studies Programs have experienced a consistent and notable increase in enrollment in course offerings since 9-11, there is no study in the literature that focuses on the experiences of Persian language learners. Thus, an in-depth representation of intermediate Persian students' perceptions towards culture and the use of media and technology could provide meaningful data for other Persian instructors who are interested in incorporating multimedia materials as a source of cultural inquiry in their curriculum. In a broader sense, the data from this study could be relevant to all

language instructors who are interested in making curriculum choices based on their students' learning experiences about culture and its role in language learning. Since there is no previous research on teaching Persian culture to language learners, this study will compare its findings to the findings of previous studies involving other foreign languages.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Several studies have suggested that students may come out of FL classrooms more inclined to engage in stereotypes (Brown, 1986; Fantini, 1991; Mantle-Bromley, 1997; Moore, 1997). In the field of foreign language education, the majority of studies related to teaching culture have focused on the study of English or the European languages typically taught in the U.S. Conversely, research on teaching culture in less commonly taught languages or more specifically, strategic languages, is rare, and in terms of Persian language such research is non-existent. Therefore, the results of this study will offer implications for the classroom in terms of how instructors of Persian could present cultural component via technology and multimedia to support syllabus design, materials development, and assessment, primarily by serving as a reminder of the variety of methodological tools available to teachers, which can be made available to students.

The current study explores how students experience culture as cultural inquiry is integrated in Persian classes via film, WebQuests and PowerPoint presentations, and how that cultural inquiry contributes to students' learning experiences. The dissertation seeks to understand students' responses towards the inclusion of cultural inquiry in the fifth-

semester Persian class—it is essential that students reflect upon and share their own thoughts. Thus, this qualitative study has been designed to address the following questions:

1. How do students experience the cultural inquiry pedagogy?
2. How do students' understandings about Persian culture develop?

The chapters that follow describe the basis for this qualitative study. Chapter 2 commences with a brief overview of culture and then turns to definition of culture, teaching culture, assessing culture, the role of technology and multimedia in engaging students in learning culture and concludes with teaching Persian language and culture in the American universities. Chapter 3 describes the research design, the research questions, the participants, the instruments for data collection, and the analytical approach used. Chapter 4 reports the results and presents the discussion. Chapter 5 summarizes the study and offers conclusions, reflects on the limitations and pedagogical implications, and suggests recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

CULTURE

A survey of the literature regarding culture in foreign language education highlights the prominent and essential role that culture plays in the process of learning a foreign language. The literature also highlights the complexity surrounding the topic of culture and the profound effect it has on an individual's learning experience.

Over the last few decades there has been an increase in attention given to the study of culture in foreign language classes. Culture, which was once considered by many teachers to be superfluous information presented in support of, or as secondary to grammar and vocabulary, is now viewed as a crucial component in the foreign language curriculum (National Standards, 1996). The current discussion is not whether or not culture should be included in the curriculum, but rather towards finding the most effective ways to present culture in the classroom. The dialogue regarding teaching culture brings up some areas of concern. Issues such as: stereotypes, diversity, similarities, assessment, teaching materials, teacher preparation, student perceptions, etc., are just a few of the topics that surface within the complexity of teaching culture. Although there are conflicting viewpoints regarding these issues, as well as a fairly wide gap between theory and practice, the debate reinforces how modern language educators are striving to find the best ways to bring culture teaching and learning into the classroom.

This chapter will therefore, present a review of literature focusing on teaching culture. Other areas which will be addressed in this chapter include the assessment of

cultural learning, and the role of technology and multimedia in teaching/learning culture. The section on assessing culture will include research and previous studies on evaluating/assessing culture. The section on technology and multimedia will include research and previous studies on how technology and multimedia have been used to teach culture. Since there is no previous research on teaching/learning Persian culture, previous studies involving other foreign languages will be cited.

Definition of Culture

Despite the profession's increased attempt on integrating teaching culture into the foreign language classroom (Byram & Zarate, 1997; Crawford-Lange & Lange, 1984; Galloway, 1985; Kramsch, 1993; Nostrand, 1974; Seelye, 1984), "there is no agreement on how culture can or should be defined operationally in the context of foreign language learning" (Schulz, 2007, p. 10), which according to Stern (1981) has been the main problem in designing quality instruction:

"The area of what constitutes culture is poorly defined, and courses offered in universities ...generally lack a foundation in theory and research. As long as there is such a lack of adequate research it is very difficult to develop a cultural syllabus of quality. Some improvisation is inevitable, and only gradual improvement, as the data base grows, can be expected" (as cited in Omaggio-Hadley, 2003, p. 361).

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1954) examined approximately 300 definitions in a study, where they did not find a "precise common denominator" (Seelye, 1984, p. 13). Brooks

(1968) in his seminal definition, defined culture as “patterns for living,” identifying five different types of culture: biological growth, personal refinement, literature and the fine arts, patterns of living, & the sum total of a way of life. Drawing on Brooks’ definition of culture, Seelye (1984) defined it as a broad concept that embraces all aspects of human life. Another similar classic definition is Nostrand’s (1989) who defined culture as a society’s system of values, thought patterns, and rules of making an interpreting meaning.

Byram (1989) on the other hand, places cultural studies at the core of FL learning and proposes a model of four related parts: language learning, language awareness, cultural experience and cultural awareness. Cultural awareness involves an understanding not only of the culture of the language being studied but also of the learners’ own culture. This is viewed as an intrinsic part of language learning and without it, successful communication may be impossible.

Kramsch (1995) proposes that defining culture gives rise to two different approaches:

“The *first definition comes from the humanities*; it focuses on the way a social group represents itself and others through its material productions, be they works of art, literature, social institutions, or artifacts of everyday life, and the mechanisms for their reproduction and preservation through history. The *second definition* comes from the social sciences: it refers to what educators like Howard Nostrand call the “ground of meaning” (Nostrand, 1989, p. 51), i.e. the attitudes and beliefs, ways of thinking, behaving and remembering shared by members of that community” (p. 84).

Kramersch further asserts that culture is constantly “mediated through language” and it is due to the “mediatory role of language that culture becomes the concern of the language teacher” (p. 85).

If cultural learning is to constitute a formal objective of FL education, developing an operational definition of culture is necessary. One of the most operational definitions of culture which has informed a number of studies (Dubreil, 2006; Schulz, 2007) has been proposed by Paige et al., (2003) as:

“The process of acquiring the culture-specific and culture-general knowledge, and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other cultures. It is a dynamic, developmental and ongoing process which engages the learner cognitively, behaviorally and affectively” (p. 324).

According to Schulz (2007), the process of learning culture in this definition is not memorization of cultural facts and information, but a dynamic, cognitive, behavioral and affective process.

Drawing upon the literature on definitions of culture, the definition of culture used in this study is understood as a complex system of meaning, values, beliefs, ideas, habits, everyday life, and patterns of social interactions.

Teaching Culture in the FL classroom

Teaching culture used to be monopolized by and for the fine arts, literature, geography, politics, and history (Seelye, 1984). In this context, culture was taught in a teacher-centered fashion with the teacher as an expert who presented bits and pieces of more

or less decontextualized and unrelated facts about the target culture. In 1971, Brooks called for a more anthropological approach to culture in language teaching. He urged FL educators to move beyond conceptualizing culture as mere achievements of a civilization in the arts, or as history, geography, or politics, and to include details of habits and patterns of daily living. He encouraged teachers not to merely teach the “Olympian Culture” (the great music, literature, and art of the country) but to include “Hearthstone culture” or “culture BBV” (beliefs, behavior, and values) in their teaching. Lafayette (1978) termed Olympian culture, “Culture with a capital C” representing civilization’s accomplishments in literature and the fine arts, its history, geography, and political systems, and Hearthstone culture, “culture with a small c” representing aspects of lifestyle or patterns of daily living.

Brooks’ work, as well as the new concept of communicative competence coupled with contributions of other anthropologists and sociologists to the understanding of culture, shifted FL educators focus from high culture to culture that was based on personal experiences and on the concept of shared codes and patterned behavior comprised of all aspects of human life (Lado, 1986; Seelye, 1984), and that these perspectives had to be examined in context (Kramsch, 1993).

The movement of convincing teachers to break away from the tradition of teaching merely a set of grammatical rules and vocabulary and to integrating language and culture learning had begun. Foreign language educators presented different sets of objectives and goal statements (Lafayette, 1975; Nostrand, 1974; Seelye, 1974), models (Kluckhohn & Strodbeck, 1961), approaches, strategies and techniques (culture

assimilator, culture cluster, culture capsule) for teaching culture (Crawford-Lange and Lange, 1984; Galloway, 1985; Kramersch, 1983; Seelye, 1984). However teachers were teaching culture as a fifth skill:

“Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them” (Kramersch, 1993, p. 1).

Furthermore, “cultural instruction often followed the goal of accumulating information and presenting a body of unrelated facts” (Moore, 1995, p. 597). In this respect, Galloway (1985) summarized the presentation of culture in the FL classroom under four common approaches:

1. The Frankenstein Approach, which concerns more or less stereotypical aspect and information
2. The 4-F Approach, which incorporates a culture’s folk tradition, dances, Festivals, fairs, and food
3. The Tour Guide Approach, which focuses on the identification of a culture’s monuments and geography
4. The “By-the-Way” Approach, which consists of the sporadic and random teaching of unrelated facts to show differences

Seelye (1984) maintained that teacher's role is not to convey facts, but to assist students to develop skills to make sense of facts they encounter in the foreign language. He asserted that "facts are cheap, and are also meaningless until interpreted within a problem-solving context" (p. 3). In a similar vein, Crawford-Lange and Lange (1984) discussed that those primarily factual approaches to teaching culture bear a multitude of pitfalls. Facts are unreliable since culture, as well as language, is not static but fluent and constantly changing. Therefore, learned information might not hold true over time (Jarvis, 1977; Galloway, 1985). In addition, Crawford-Lange & Lange advocated that teaching approaches based on information, foster stereotypes and do not account for cultural variation since they neglect the voice from inside the target culture. By neglecting to teach problem-solving skills, the students have no means to make sense out of unfamiliar cultural phenomena they might encounter on their own in the target culture. Therefore, students assume that new phenomena can be understood out of their own frame of reference.

Lafayette (1978) and Galloway (1984) advocated an alternative to a mere information-based approach by including affective and process objectives. Additionally, Galloway (1992) recommended a cross-cultural approach to language teaching that not only focused on products and practices but also examined their underlying perspectives and values. Students must first analyze their own frame of reference and cultural values and then build up a new frame of reference that is constructed by the people within the target culture.

In the second half of the 1990s, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages published the National Standards for foreign language learning (Standards, 1996). The Standards revolve around five goal areas that are described as the five C's of foreign language education: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. These Standards are guided by a focus on communication and the underlying objective of enabling students to communicate “in meaningful and appropriate ways with the users of other languages” (p. 2). This emphasis on communication acknowledges a change from the traditional emphasis on grammar and vocabulary to cultural knowledge, which is viewed as being equally important as linguistic knowledge in preparing students for meaningful and appropriate communication with members of the target language (Standards, 1996):

“Through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language and, in fact, cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occur

Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relation between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied

Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and the perspectives of the cultures studied” (p. 47).

The Standards, therefore, have redefined “little c” and “Big C” to three categories of *practices*, *products* and *perspectives*. Practices consist of habits, daily-life behaviors,

and patterns of social interactions, products are all tangible and intangible cultural objects, and perspectives refer to meaning, values, beliefs, and ideas. In other words, the Standards encourage students not only to identify cultural practices and products, but also to demonstrate the understanding of the different perspectives underlying the practices and products. Although the Standards provide sample activities and scenarios that can help teachers, the profession has yet to reach a consensus about what the objectives of learning and teaching cultural awareness in the FL classroom should be.

In the “postmodern” context of teaching culture, there is a focus on issues of process and development in culture learning. Kramsch (1993) highly advocates the teaching of language in the context of culture. She discusses the need of a dialogic pedagogy in order to heighten the students’ awareness that language functions within the framework of culture (Kramsch, 1998). Through dialogues among the students within the classroom, they can create a space in which they can construct their own meaning of unknown cultural phenomena. Kramsch calls this space of intersection “third place” and refers to it as a crossroad where several worlds and different frames of references - the native (C1) and the target (C2) - meet. In other words, understanding another culture has to happen through the interweaving of the native and the target cultures (Kramsch, 1993).

Within the context of understanding another culture by juxtaposing and comparing with one’s own culture, Byram (1997) discusses the concept of Intercultural Competence involving the development of the learners’ ability to interact with members of other cultures while being aware of differences and similarities and preventing

overemphasis on foreignness or stereotyping. Within this framework he proposed a five factor model of intercultural competence comprising the following:

1. Attitudes, “curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own” (p. 91)
2. Knowledge of practices and products of one’s own culture as well as the target culture
3. Skills of interpreting and relating events and documents from another culture to one’s own culture
4. Skills of discovery and interaction, allow the individual to acquire “new knowledge of culture and cultural practices,” including the ability to use existing knowledge, attitudes, and skills in cross-cultural interactions (ibid, p. 98)
5. Critical cultural awareness to evaluate critically on the basis of perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures.

According to Byram (1997), developing intercultural competence enables learners to “see and manage the relationships between their own beliefs, values and meanings and those of the target culture,” where learners are asked to take a step back and evaluate their own beliefs in order to be able to critically evaluate another individual’s beliefs and behaviors. In this process, learners become ‘intercultural speakers’ who not only “establish a relationship between their own social identities and those of their interlocutor, but also act as mediators between people of different origins and identities” (p. 38).

Byram, et al. (2001) show how intercultural competence can be realized in the classroom by “introducing trainee teachers ways in which they can develop interdisciplinary courses for students in schools” (p. 9). In a similar vein, a number of studies have promoted the development of intercultural competence and awareness of the interpersonal dimension in language learners (Alred & Byram, 2002; Cunico, 2005; Deardorff, 2006). Similarly, studies have examined the outcomes of intercultural exchanges in the electronic environment (Belz, 2002, 2003; Lomicka, 2006; Mueller-Hartmann, 2006; O’Dowd, 2003; Peng, et al., 2009; Schneider & von der Emde, 2006). There seems to be an agreement that while contact and interaction with native speakers facilitates intercultural education, such exchange does not guarantee that a successful intercultural experience will be achieved (Lomicka, 2006).

Needless to say, these more recent theories, although contributing significantly to the profession, do not make the teaching of culture in the FL classroom any easier mainly because teachers still face the dilemma of what aspects of culture to choose or simply what culture to teach. In addition, since there is no research available on the students’ perspective as it regards to the teaching of culture in the FL classroom, there is definitely a gap which requires further study.

In conclusion, reviewing the literature of the teaching of culture in the classroom shows evidence of some major improvements, considering the crucial role of culture as a fundamental component in foreign language education. The creation of objectives and goal statements by educators, proposing strategies for teaching culture, developing the standards addressing the need for a set of guidelines, and focusing on the issues of

process and development in culture learning were all attempts to bring to teachers the means to address the topic of culture and improve upon teaching it in the classroom. Furthermore, moving away from merely teaching cultural information that can foster stereotypes toward integrating cultural inquiry by helping students to “develop skills to ask effective questions about other cultures” (Abrams, 2002, p. 142) is another important step in the teaching of culture in the foreign language classroom.

Assessing Cultural Learning

The issue of assessing culture in a foreign language classroom has been the subject of ongoing discussion. According to many FL educators, (Norstrand, 1970; Born, 1975; Lafayette and Schulz, 1975; Seelye 1984; Moore, 1994), the profession has been in great need of further research in the development of new ways of assessing and evaluating language learners’ cultural knowledge, and in this respect, there is a need for development of “valid and reliable tests” (Moore, 1994, p. 164).

Moore (1994) asserted that there were only three documented studies related to the topic of assessing culture: Nostrand (1975), Lafayette & Schulz (1975) and Born (1975). She further added that the difficulty with testing culture has been due to the fact that instructors approached teaching culture as conveying “bits and pieces of information,” (p. 164), and consequently, they have been measuring “knowledge of bits and pieces of information, rather than insights or awareness of the essence of a culture or society” (ibid).

Among the reasons pointing out the problems with assessing culture, Moore (1994) highlighted “a failure to set instructional objectives that are more closely related to real life competencies, and the failure to be innovative in the use of testing procedures” (p. 168) as the main reasons. In a similar vein, Seelye (1984) argued for clearly defined goals and objectives for teaching culture, and suggested seven goals of cultural instruction. He further discussed how cultural tests could easily lead to generalization beyond the scope of cultural practice and into stereotypes. For validation of cultural test items, he proposed three different methods: classroom authority, pretesting with the target people, and expert opinion. Moreover, Seelye proposed various formats for testing culture: classroom checklists, simulation, objective tests, and audiovisual, oral and tactile approaches, although, he did not discuss how these formats should be scored (Moore, 1994).

Lafayette (1975) proposed that the learning of culture can be either “active cultural knowledge, or passive cultural knowledge,” and that there are only “three culturally oriented goals that can be tested in most schools in the United States: knowledge, understanding, and behavior,” therefore, recommending “developing tests to assess cultural understanding and not factual information” (as cited in Moore, 1995, p. 601).

Although educators (Lafayette & Schulz, 1975; Nostrand, 1975; Seelye, 1984; Moore, 1994) unanimously agreed that fill-in-the-blank activities, short essay questions, true/false statements, and multiple-choice questions to a large extent fail to adequately address cultural performance, the types of questions presented to test cultural knowledge

were of the above formats and mostly multiple-choice, which tended to test “the students’ reading and listening skills more than their cultural knowledge” (Moore, 1994, p. 165). Moreover, objective tests “encouraged faulty generalizations and incorrect assumptions” (ibid). Nostrand (1974) cautioned against using objective tests for cultural assessment because such tests have the tendency to seek one true answer.

Due to the fact that the traditional methods were incapable of effectively assessing culture learning, FL scholars (Byram, 1997; Lange, 2003; Moore, 1997; Ramirez, 2004) called for “alternative forms of assessment, such as self-assessment, reflective journals, diaries, or portfolios” (Schulz, 2007, p. 18).

No only do portfolios provide an ideal framework for “self-directed work, self-correction, greater autonomy and greater time frames,” (Moore, 1994, p. 171) but they provide “continuous formative instructor guidance and feedback, thus encouraging discussion, collaboration, revision, elaboration and use of multiple sources of evidence” (Schulz, 2007, p. 18). Moore further provides 12 steps for implementing a portfolio on culture learning, gives examples of students’ cultural portfolio projects, and offers suggestions for establishing assessment criteria. Needless to say that since the recommendation of alternative forms of assessment, such as portfolio, no other effective proposal for assessing culture learning has been suggested.

In conclusion, in a curriculum that envisions a shift toward cultural knowledge, more empirical studies and investigations remain needed to bring to teachers accurate and adequate means of assessing learners’ cultural knowledge.

The next section will review research and studies on the use of technology and multimedia and its contribution to the teaching and learning of culture.

Technology and Multimedia

Researchers advocate the use of technology and multimedia as considerably valuable in FL teaching and learning because they appear to be excellent instructional mediums to convey authentic, contemporary cultural information to the students in a lively, communicative fashion in the target language (Dubreil, 2006). Students are not only presented with dynamics of interaction, but are exposed to linguistics as well as paralinguistic variations (e.g. postures, gestures). In addition, technology and multimedia allow students to be exposed to current and authentic cultural situations as found in the target language (Herron, et al., 2000), and provide “greater and more immediate access to native speakers and native cultures than ever before” (Blyth, 1999, p. 40).

Easy access to information on the World Wide Web and the use of new information technologies have also provided “opportunities for teachers to create better and more effective ways of developing and using instructional material for teaching language and culture (Bacon, 1995; Finneman, 1996; Walz, 1998)” (as cited in Moore, 2006, p. 580). Furthermore, using technology can help students “to move away from depending on words (textbooks) and use instead a combination of sight, sound and motion” (Moore, 2006, p. 580). By moving away from the traditional textbook which often tends to highlight only one aspect of a language, for example, “bourgeois Parisians,” technology and multimedia allow for a broader representation of the language

and the diverse societies in which it is spoken (i.e. French spoken in Canada, Africa, and the Caribbean)” (Blyth, 1999, p. 39).

In the discussion of previous research and studies on the implementation of technology and multimedia that follows, integration of technology comprises the use of WebQuest and PowerPoint presentations, and multimedia includes the use of films in teaching culture in the foreign language classroom.

WebQuests

WebQuests, which originated in 1995 by Bernie Dodge, were designed to provoke students to analyze, synthesize, and construct new ideas by engaging them in “doable & interesting” tasks (Dodge, 1995). It is considered to be an effective inquiry-oriented way to organize chaotic internet resources and help learners gain new knowledge through a guided learning environment, which requires students to go beyond “retelling and mastering factual information . . . to apply knowledge, engage in problem solving, creativity, design, and judgment” (Dodge, 2001, p. 9; Patterson & Pipkin, 2001).

Dodge (1995) defined two types of WebQuests: short-term and long-term. Short-term WebQuests are “designed to be completed in one to three class periods” (p. 10), and have the instructional goal of the acquisition and integration of knowledge. At the end of a short-term WebQuest, a learner should have gained a significant amount of new information and made sense of it. The long-term WebQuest, however, is “designed to be completed in a time period ranging from one week to one month,” (p. 10) and has the goal of extending and refining the knowledge. Thus, after completing a long-

term WebQuest, “a learner should have examined a body of knowledge, transformed it in some way, and showed an understanding of the material or knowledge gained (i.e. defining a stance and defending it)” (Halet, 2008, p. 109). The content of a WebQuest activity consists of several sections: (a) Introduction, (b) Task, (c) Process, (d) Evaluation, and (e) Conclusion (Dodge, 2001).

Several researchers have highlighted the importance of WebQuest design (Dodge, 1995, 2001; Hassanien, 2006; Maddux & Cummnings, 2007; March, 2004a, 2004b, 2006). Maddux & Cummnings (2007) maintain that teachers need to ensure that WebQuests are developmentally appropriate. While some researchers have emphasized the importance of designing motivating WebQuests for students (Hassanien, 2006; March, 2004b), others have focused on the function of WebQuests as authentic scaffolding tasks (Dodge, 2001; March, 2004a, 2004b). Dodge (2001) and March (2004a, 2006) include an organized list of relevant sites to ensure meaningful use of potential Internet resources to promote higher order thinking, and facilitate work in organized cooperative groups. Godwin-Jones (2004) examined whether WebQuests help to systematize Internet inquiry-based learning, while Halat (2008) and Sen & Neufeld (2006) investigated the effects of WebQuests on enhancing students’ motivation and engagement in class.

Studies focusing on how WebQuests promote higher-order thinking and inquiry skill (Crawford & Brown 2002; VanFossen 2004; Schweizer & Kossow 2007) “examine things from multiple lenses, proposing solutions with multiple approaches, and abilities to analyze and synthesize information” (Zheng, et al., 2007, p. 297). In the same vein,

Schweizer and Kossow (2007) assert that “WebQuests expose students to a specific, open-ended activity that requires higher level thinking skills to solve problems, not through a single, simple solution” (p. 31). In a workshop for in-service and pre-service teachers, Popham and Wentworth (2003) evaluated WebQuests, and found a significant correlation between problem-solving activities and critical thinking.

Studies examining learners’ perceptions towards WebQuests, have found them to be generally positive (Carroll, et al., 2003; Fox, 1999; Gaskill, et al., 2006). Murray (2006) investigated students’ perceptions of WebQuests, where his findings showed a generally positive attitude towards WebQuests. Results also “indicated a link between the difficulty of WebQuests and students’ motivation to complete the activity. A majority of students wanted to quit working when the activity became difficult. In follow-up interviews, students noted a loss of interest in the activity over the two-week period; however, they reported that they preferred WebQuests to textbooks and lectures” (p. 6).

In another study by Tsai (2006b), a correlation was found between motivation and perceived learning vocabulary and reading skills in an EFL course. Hassanien (2006) examined the effectiveness of WebQuests as instructional tools in higher education by investigating students’ perceptions related to the ease of using the WebQuest, the success of the learning experience, and the extent to which students interacted and were engaged. Results of that study indicated that students found the WebQuest stimulating, relevant, and useful, and that the WebQuest enhanced their progress and knowledge (p. 241).

While the studies described above focused on the examination of students' perceptions of the impact of WebQuests from different perspectives, Altstaedter & Jones (2009) examined students' culture acquisition by designing a WebQuest task that promoted a systematic inquiry-based approach to the study of the target culture through the completion of a series of tasks. The findings indicated that students reported higher ability perceptions and values in the target culture as a direct result of participating in the project. Results also suggested that "using WebQuests in teaching culture is a viable way to incorporate the study of culture into a university foreign language course" (p. 659).

PowerPoint Presentations

There has been a debate over the use and benefits of PowerPoint. While some researchers show that PowerPoint makes teaching and learning interesting, meaningful and effective by creating a dynamic, reciprocal and fluid engagement with the students (Szabo and Hastings, 2000; Mayer & Moreno, 2001), and that students prefer PowerPoint type presentations to more traditional ones such as lectures (Apperson, et al., 2006; Susskind & Gurien, 1999), others argue that PowerPoint "inhibits presenter-audience interaction (Driessnack, 2005), limits the amount of detail that can be presented (Tufte, 2003), and reduces a presentation's analytical quality (Stein, 2006; Tufte, 2003)" (as cited in Savoy et al., 2009, p. 858).

In a study by Szabo and Hastings (2000) ninety percent of the participants reported that PowerPoint was more attention capturing and interesting than traditional lectures (Mantei, 2000; Nowaczyk et al., 1998). Atkins-Sayre et al. (1998) indicated that

students reported PowerPoint enhanced instructors' delivery. They also found that students believed that they were better able to learn and retain the material from class. Other studies report that students find lectures better structured and clear when PowerPoint is employed (Mantei, 2000; Szabo & Hastings, 2000). Furthermore, Szabo and Hastings (2000) found that students reported being more motivated to attend the lectures when PowerPoint was used.

According to Mayer and Moreno (2001), research on multimedia learning is highly relevant to the design of PowerPoint presentations. Mayer describes six research-based principles for the design of multimedia instructional presentations: multimedia principle, in which students learn better from words and pictures than from words alone; coherence principle, in which students learn better when extraneous material are excluded rather than included; contiguity principle, according to which students learn better when corresponding words and pictures are presented at the same time or next to each other on the screen; modality principle, in which students learn better from animation with spoken text than animation with printed text; signaling principle, in which students learn better when the material is organized with clear outlines and headings; and personalization principle, in which students learn better from conversation style rather than formal style. Mayer further contends that these principles demonstrate how it is possible to take a learner-centered approach to instructional technology.

The research regarding the impact of lecturing with PowerPoint on academic performance has been mixed since some researchers have found that it enhances students'

academic performance (Kask, 2000; Lowry, 1999; Mantei, 2000) while others have found no effect (Daniels, 1999; Kask, 2000; Rankin & Hoas, 2001). In a study, Szabo and Hastings (2000) presented three types of lectures to students, where one used overheads, the second one with a PowerPoint presentation, and the third lecture used a PowerPoint and lecture notes. Results indicated that students performed worse on the exam that was based on lectures using overheads. Due to the fact that the content of the lectures were different, it couldn't be determined if the students' performance was a result of the lecture format or how hard it was to understand the material in each lecture. In another study, Mantei (2000) compared students who were taught with PowerPoint presentations to students who were taught in a traditional format. Students who received PowerPoint presentations outperformed those who did not.

Positive attitudes are observed concerning the use of PowerPoint presentations (Atkins-Sayre et al. 1998; Mantei, 2000; Szabo & Hastings, 2000). Furthermore, students felt it was easier to understand the course material and to take notes when PowerPoint was used (Kask, 2000; Nowaczyk et al., 1998). It may have been that students perceived PowerPoint presentations to be better structured than traditional lectures (Szabo & Hastings, 2000). While the research discussed above concerns the impact of PowerPoint lectures presented to the students by instructors, a search on literature on the effectiveness of students' PowerPoint presentations reveals very little.

Teaching Culture with Films

The use of films in the foreign language classroom has become increasingly common as “one important tool for challenging students’ imaginations and to help them consider alternative ways of seeing, feeling and understanding things” and for teachers to “systematically teach differences in meaning, mentality, and worldview as expressed in American English in the target language” (Modern Language Association, 2007, p. 4). Furthermore, films present students with images of “living, vibrant people who use the target language for daily communication” (Shrum & Glisan, 1994, p. 249). Garza (1996) discusses that in “the teaching of lingua-culture in a foreign language, or the synthesis of foreign language and culture, the authentic nature of instructional materials is of paramount importance,” and that materials prepared for foreign language such as “standard television programming, feature films, commercial, documentaries, and news items can all serve as effective pedagogical source of materials for teaching lingua-culture on all levels” (p. 3-4). Stephens (2001) suggests that filmic presentations offer “ethical boundaries, conceptual frameworks, national memory, and identity, and access to the cultural forces and attitudes that shape the civilization,” (p. 22) “they can help students infer main ideas of communicative events, figure out the meaning of unknown words, organize information extracted from linguistic input, and build schemata for the situational context” (Kitajima & Lyman-Hager, 1998, p. 40).

Several researchers have highlighted the effectiveness of using films and videos to teach about foreign cultures (Herron & Hanley, 1992; Herron, et al., 1995, 1999, 2000, 2002; Martinez-Gibson, 1998). Kitajima and Lyman-Hager (1998) conducted a study

that examined the effect of visual cues on students' cultural awareness. Students in their third semester of Japanese were individually shown a one-minute silent film about Japanese roads. In a think-aloud protocol, students stopped the film whenever they wanted to verbalize what they had noticed. Students' comments revealed that they were able to perceive cultural events such as "there are very few traffic signals in Japan" and that "traffic signals in Japan are less clear than in the U.S." (p. 44). The researchers interpreted these findings as demonstrating that silent film clips enhance students' discovery of processes of culturally unique phenomena such as "cars run on the left side of the street in Japan, there is no sidewalk for pedestrians, and a narrow alley allows two-way directions for the cars" (p. 44).

Martinez-Gibson (1998) examined students' ability to observe cultural differences between the target and native culture as presented in television commercials. Results indicated that "the addition of pre- and post-viewing discussions seemed to have positively affected students' ability to recognize cultural features in a foreign language commercial" (Herron, et al., 1999, p. 519). In addition, video can function as an advanced organizer for language learning activities (Altman, 1989; Herron, et al. 1995). In the same vein, Herron and Hanley (1992) examined whether video could be used to introduce children to cultural information. Results indicated that fifth-grade learners of French were significantly more successful in acquiring and retaining information about the target culture when they watched videos prior to reading cultural information in French and English. The researchers concluded that "whether it is the redundancy

provided by the combination of video and related reading, or the force of contextualization in video that enhances comprehension and retention...video acts as a most powerful tool in foreign language classroom” (p. 425).

Additional studies (Herron, et al., 1999, 2000) showed an improvement in cultural knowledge over the course of a semester for elementary-level French students. The researchers found that “video-based instructional programs” (p. 38) improved students' knowledge of cultural information, especially of every-day life practices. For their study, the researchers used the definitions of little c and big C culture (Brooks, 1968; Seelye, 1984) little c culture representing “aspects of lifestyle or patterns of daily living,” whereas big C culture representing “a civilization's accomplishments in literature and the fine arts, its social institutions, its history, geography, and political system” (p. 37). The findings indicated that the students performed significantly better with respect to the “little c” culture items than to “big C” culture items. They concluded that “perhaps the students were more interested in patterns of living than in cultural achievements because they relate to them easily from their personal association (past or future) with these events” (p. 39).

Teaching Persian Language and Culture

The teaching of Persian language in the American universities began in the 1950's with a focus on Old Persian studies. In other words, “the study of Persian, was not unlike the study of Western classical languages and literatures such as Latin and Old Greek” (Ghanoonparvar, 1994, p. 212), where the language and its literature were considered as

“archeological findings of an extinct culture” (ibid). In the next two decades, with the new developments in the area of FL teaching, Persian scholars shifted their focus of teaching Persian as a “dead language” (ibid) to teaching the language and its literature as a living and vibrant language.

In the 1980s, the United States provided funding for specific languages including Persian under what is known as Title VI, which according to Persian scholars "The resources provided by Title VI have been indispensable in the quality and quantity of Persian instruction" (Cincotta, 2009, p. 1). The Persian language is regarded as a "strategic" language, “where the U.S. government cannot find enough masters to fill all the government posts requiring the language” (ibid). In an attempt to fill this gap, numerous universities across the country (in addition to large state universities, which have had a long history of offering Persian studies programs) are now offering Persian as one of their foreign languages. In several of these Persian programs,

“Students now not only take [language] classes, but actually specialize in cross-cultural relations with Persian communities by working with other university departments -- art history, music and history -- exploring the culture in detail...

...the growth of Persian and Iranian studies in the United States can be viewed in several ways. One is through its evolution from the study of a predominantly ancient or classical civilization to a modern and international academic field. Another is through its pattern of growth at different institutions of higher learning, and a third is through the expansion of Persian language training.” (Cincotta, 2009, p. 1)

Among universities that have been offering Persian studies programs for a long time are: Columbia, Princeton, Harvard, Chicago, New York, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Michigan, Washington, Virginia, Arizona, Utah, and Texas. Two universities that have added Persian studies programs recently and established two major programs in Persian language and culture are University of California at Irvine and the University of Maryland. At UC Irvine, “Dr. Samuel M Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture,” not only has a Persian language program, but also concentrates on various cultural aspects and has become a vital part of the largest Persian community outside Iran, in California. The University of Maryland has established the “Roshan Cultural Center for Persian Studies” and serves as the Flagship program in Persian language instruction. Other universities across the country that have started Persian programs in recent years include: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Colorado, and Brown University.

Moreover, while every year, there are panels on Persian language instruction at conferences with a broader scope such as the Middle Eastern Studies Association of North America (MESA), the International Society for Iranian Studies (ISIS) and the American Association of Teachers of Persian (AATP) also host several panels on Persian language instruction with the objective of “advancing and improving the study and teaching of the Persian language and culture; to promote research in the field of Persian language, linguistics, and literature; to further the common interests of teachers in the field” (AATP, 2010). In addition, the Title VI institutions such as Texas, Arizona and UCLA (from the western part of the country) and NYU, Michigan and Ohio State (from

the eastern part of the United States) sponsor annual conferences and workshops on teaching Persian language and culture, where the issue of culture has been on the forefront in these professional meetings in recent years (Ghanoonparvar, personal communication).

Thus, with the new rising interest in the teaching of Persian language and culture, Persian scholars are beginning to pay more attention to the important role that culture plays in teaching/learning Persian as a foreign language. Within this context, Ghanoonparvar (1994) noted that “most Persianists are finding the need for a fundamental rethinking in terms of approach and aims in regards to teaching Persian language and literature” (p. 215). More than a decade later, Ghanoonparvar (forthcoming) discusses the practicality and effectiveness of exposing students of less-commonly-taught languages in general, and Persian in particular, to the use of movies “as authentic texts that provide the students with the necessary cultural context to help them develop the skills and knowledge to comprehend the nuances of the language and the language of the culture they are studying” (p. 4-5). He asserts that repeated viewings of films impact students’ interests and curiosity concerning the concepts and events which are addressed through discussions and class activities.

Needless to say that although most of the Persian studies programs in American universities agree on the general principle that language and culture must be the core of teaching Persian, there is no consensus on what the specific goals of Persian study should be, “in developing a unified curriculum, or a national standard” (Cincotta, 2009, p. 2) or

what methodological and instructional approaches meet the needs of learners of this language (Ghanoonparvar et al., 2004). Furthermore, research on teaching culture in the Persian classrooms is non-existent; therefore, this study is an attempt to initiate using multimedia and technology in teaching Persian culture.

Even in the earlier Persian Studies programs, inevitably some aspects of culture was part of the program because almost all instructors were specialists in some aspect of the culture such as literature, folklore, anthropology and history, inherently they provided their students with “Big C” (Lafayette, 1978) cultural information and knowledge.

More recent Persian programs, however, claim to follow the National Standards for Foreign Language teaching, focusing on communicative skills development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills at an appropriate level of linguistic development, and by using authentic materials help students develop an appreciation of Persian culture and engage in a wide range of learning activities including songs, games, visual and performing arts in teaching Persian to heritage and non-heritage learners of first through third year Persian (STARTALK, 2010). Nevertheless, there are no published research on the effectiveness of these programs or students’ learning experiences.

As the above studies suggest, there is tremendous potential for technology and multimedia to enhance students’ interaction with culture and language. However, further research regarding the relationship between culture, technology and multimedia is necessary in order to better understand its impact on students’ language learning

experience. Framed within this context, the present research will seek to understand how students respond to cultural information presented through technology and multimedia such as WebQuests, PowerPoint presentations and films in a third-year, fifth semester Persian classroom.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter first presents the research questions guiding this study and then describes the research design used to try to answer those questions. A discussion of the instruments used is followed by the data collection procedures and how the data were analyzed.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DESIGN

This study intends to address two research questions:

1. How do students experience the cultural inquiry pedagogy?
2. How do students' understandings about Persian culture develop?

In order to address these research questions – how cultural inquiry pedagogy is experienced and understandings of Persian culture developed in a fifth-semester Persian class - it is essential that students reflect upon and share their own thoughts. Therefore, a qualitative case study research design will be employed. Qualitative research “implies a direct concern with experience as it is ‘lived’ or ‘felt’ or ‘undergone’” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6) and thus, it seemed to be the best option for exploring students’ responses to cultural materials in the Persian language classroom. Within the qualitative paradigm, case study method appears to be the most appropriate research design for exploring what students experience and understand when cultural inquiry is integrated. As Yin (1984) posits, one of the purposes of a case study is “to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the

groups under study” (p. 11). This study intends to describe holistically and qualitatively the perceptions and opinions of the students as they experience and understand cultural inquiry via multimedia presentations over the course of a semester.

In addition to this holistic description, attempts are made to interpret and analyze students’ responses to make meaningful connections among the data in order to better conceptualize the role that culture and multimedia play in their language learning experience. Given such an intent, interpretive case study design was employed due to its overall objective to present as “...much information about the problem as possible with the intent of analyzing, interpreting, or theorizing about the phenomenon” (Merriam, 1998, p.38).

Research Site

This research study was conducted in a third-year, fifth semester Persian class, at a large university in the southwest of the United States. Third-year, fifth semester Persian is a course offered through the Persian Studies Program through the Middle Eastern Department. The Department teaches Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish and Persian. With fifty core faculty members, the Department offers five academic programs in Arabic Studies, Hebrew Studies, Islamic Studies, Persian Studies, and Turkish Studies.

The students in the Persian courses usually come from different academic backgrounds. The Persian Program serves to fulfill university foreign language requirements and for students majoring and minoring in Persian, Islamic Studies, or Middle Eastern Studies. The Persian Program also serves graduate students concentrating

or minoring in Persian in degree programs in Comparative Literature, Linguistics, and Middle Eastern Studies.

Participants

The participants in this study were four college students in a third-year, fifth semester Persian language course at a large southwestern university during the fall semester of 2009. The total number of students enrolled in this class was four, where three students were American, and one student was from India. All four were male, ranging in age from twenty one to twenty three. Among this group of students, one student had self-taught himself first-year Persian. What got him interested in the language in the first place was his contact with a Persian friend, who taught him a few words and introduced him to Persian calligraphy. Another student expressed that his knowledge of Indian languages like Hindi and Urdu which are really close to Persian, influenced him in learning Persian because he was always interested in similarities within languages. Overall, two of the students had prior exposure to Persian culture in their second-year Persian classes, while the other two did not.

This particular class was selected because I wanted to take a class as is, to present exactly what a class would do in real life, and the class in real life has to be four, which is very typical for a Third-year, fifth semester Persian class nation-wide, and the fact that I was given access by the instructor of this class. Because of the amount of (linguistic) material first and second-year classes have to cover, sometimes instructors do not feel as comfortable allocating class time for a study. However, this instructor was generous

enough to allow me to conduct the study in his classroom. Although a convenient sample, this sample was indeed also a typical sample in regards to the class size, their age and prior experience with the language, which is a very fair representation of a typical fifth-semester Persian course taught at a large American university.

Ideally, it would be good to look at multiple years, larger groups of students, possibly even longitudinally; however, due to restrictions in syllabus it was difficult to try to work in a study into the syllabus of First and Second-year, and the instructor ultimately did not feel comfortable assigning time for that.

After obtaining permission from the instructor to conduct this research in his classroom, I met with the students during the first week of the semester to introduce the project and to request their permission to participate in the study. After showing a sample piece of one of the media that would be used in the project, I explained what their contribution and commitment would entail (questionnaires, interviews and group discussions). I explained that their participation in this study was on a voluntary basis and would have no impact on their grades. They were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time for any reason with no adverse consequences. They were also informed that their identities would be kept confidential throughout the research process. Consent forms were distributed and students were encouraged to read and ask questions prior to signing them.

Descriptions of the two Iranian Films selected for instruction

For the purposes of this study, two Iranian movies were selected and shown in their entirety in class, each in three consecutive sessions.

The first film, “Atash Bas/Cease Fire” portrays a conflict between a traditional man married to a liberated woman. The director Tahmineh Milani has dealt with similar themes in several previous movies. The fact that she dealt with controversial and sensitive issues caused her to be sentenced to jail in Iran (Scott, 2001). “One of the most important problems that we are faced with in Iran’s society is that we are unable to express our true personality...,” she says. “For both men and women, their lives inside their homes where it is private is one way and outside of their homes where they have to observe social regulations it is another way... Our women also have two faces inside their homes: the image of what their spouses or their spouses’ families want them to have, and what is inside them” (as cited in Scott, 2001). In *Atash Bas*, Milani decides to use comedy to make the point that men have to adjust to the reality that modern women have changed and seek to be treated differently.

The film is the story of a young couple who “both have successful careers and economic independence, but their professional success does not extend into their marriage” (Rahimieh, 2009, p. 110). When the film begins, project engineer Sayeh seeks a divorce but by mistake walks into the office of a psychologist instead of a lawyer. The rest of the movie is “flashback narration,” through which “we glimpse the battles the couple has waged against each other” (ibid).

There are ample examples of disagreements on just about everything between the couple, but the arguments are highly interesting, and they are mostly won by Sayeh. Separately, the psychologist informs them that their problem is that they trying to act out their inner child and suggests therapy for both “to nurture the inner child as a first step toward learning to love themselves” (ibid). Although the couple seems to be equal in regards to their education and class, they are “products of a socialization that subordinates women to men” (p. 111). In one of the scenes in the film, Yusuf admits that even though he had liked to have an educated, independent woman as a wife, after marrying Sayeh, he realized that he wants a traditional wife and cannot deal with her independence. “Ceasefire looks like an olive branch held out in desperation by a woman artist towards her patriarchal society. In this comedy we glimpse the director’s sad spark of hope that the subjugation of women in Iran can be analyzed rationally and resolved to the satisfaction of both men and women” (Siletz, 2006, as cited in Rahimieh, 2009, p. 111). This movie was produced in 2006.

The purpose for selecting this film was because it covers issues of women’s role in society such as marriage and employment. The film has rich cultural input and messages including the point that Iranian men have to adjust to the reality that modern women have changed and seek to be treated differently, and that the subjugation of women needs be addressed and dealt with. Furthermore, the film covers current relations dealing with a young couple, which would be engaging for the students.

The second film titled “Dah/Ten” is directed by Abbas Kiarostami. Kiarostami is

one of the most “controversial pre- and post- revolutionary Iranian filmmakers, who began his film career in 1970, a time when Iranian cinema moved from FilmFarsi to more serious films” (McConatha, 2008, p. 434). In his films, he focuses on stories of people as they live their everyday life, “blurring the line between fiction and fact, often focusing on the importance of thinking critically about social life” (p. 436). “In addition, the abstract nature of his films parallels the abstract contours of both pre and post-Islamic Persian art. In Persian culture an important distinction is made between the presentation of the public and private self” (ibid).

The movie revolves around the experiences of a woman, her young son, and several other women she picks up on her drives around the city in ten episodes. The beginning is a dialogue between the mother and her son. The son cannot forgive his mother for divorcing his father, for marrying another man whom he considers to be a stranger, and for her selfishness. In his dialogue with his mother, the son tells his mother how her work as a photographer often kept her away from home and from taking care of her family. He also accuses her of having lied about his father court in order to get a divorce from him. She defends herself by saying that she had to lie because of the restricted divorce laws she did not have much of a choice. In her encounters with others in other episodes, she acquires a sense of inner peace which enables her to allow things to work out. The last episode is once again between the mother and her son, “bringing the audience right back where the film started” (Caputo, 2003). “Once Kiarostami's film is over, he hopes another richer, fuller, more imaginatively creative film will begin in the

spectator's head. The spectator will complete what the screen leaves incomplete” (ibid). This movie was produced in 2004. Although this was an Iranian film made for Iranians, it was banned and never shown in Iran.

The rich cultural input and messages of this movie made it very appropriate for showing. The film deals with the issue of role of women in society regarding their rights in divorce. It portrays the relationship of a mother and son and society’s expectations of a mother. It also covers the struggles of women and the extent they would have to go to obtain some of their rights.

The Teacher/Researcher

I am a female, originally born and raised in Iran. After completing my graduate studies in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, I started to teach English at the university level in Iran for eight years. I came to the U.S. four years ago to pursue a Ph.D. degree in Foreign Language Education. During the last four years, I have taught Persian to Heritage and non-Heritage learners of Persian at the university level including first, second and third-year Persian courses.

The essence of my teaching philosophy is that I believe language learning is not simply the internalization of knowledge and skill by an isolated mind interacting with a physical environment. Rather, I see the learner engaging in meaning construction through new insights, knowledge, and perspectives from his/her peers and the teacher that ultimately leads to learning from scaffolding. This meaning construction reflects the individual’s own perspective, past experiences and interpretation of the task. As a

teacher, my role is to establish a learner-centered context to influence students' learning conceptions and help them take a more active role in their learning. In other words, to create an environment that is interactive and collaborative and that promotes problem-solving and critical thinking. By encouraging students to present their opinions while respecting the opinions of others, and by giving students a voice in class, not only do they benefit from peer-peer learning by enriching the course material with personal experiences and knowledge, but they can also take responsibility for their own learning and, integrate their new knowledge into practice. Thus, I believe in promoting independent thinking in students so that they can take what they have learned and apply it in real-life situations.

Central to my philosophy of teaching is exposing my students to the cultural aspects of Persian language. With the integration of language and culture, students learn how to understand and express themselves in Persian; but it is having this cultural context which deepens language acquisition.

The Study Syllabus

In normal semesters, the fifth-semester Persian class at this particular university follows a syllabus designed by the instructor of the class based on the textbook chapters, as well as the main testing and evaluation procedures for the class level. The testing procedures include two take-home tests: a mid-term and a final exam. The syllabus for the fifth-semester class participating in this study displayed minor changes: two Persian feature films, two sets of WebQuest activities, and two students' PowerPoint

presentations were integrated into the class syllabus in consultation with the instructor of the class (see Appendix A).

Choosing Cultural Themes

In order to choose cultural themes and topics for the study objectively, I contacted twenty-five native informants in different parts of Iran (e.g. Tehran, Isfahan, Ahwaz), 10 men and 15 women ranging in age from 20 to 60, from middle- and upper-middle class families (these were the native informants to whom I had access). I interviewed them via telephone, and asked them to respond to two questions:

- 1. What do you think every foreigner should know about the culture(s) of Iran?*
- 2. What do you think people who want to move to Iran would absolutely need to know in order to be able to blend in with people living there (i.e., in order to "become" a member of the Iranian culture)?*

Native informants' responses were collected, categorized and ranked from most important to least important as follows:

<i>Women's public appearance</i>	<i>Language</i>
<i>Interpersonal Relationships</i>	<i>Past history</i>
<i>Social practices</i>	<i>Literature and arts</i>
<i>Public/private life</i>	<i>Ethnic Groups</i>
<i>Religion</i>	<i>Geography</i>

As an overarching theme, Social Practices included:

<i>Proper behavior in public</i>	<i>Clothing</i>
<i>People's interference in each other's lives</i>	<i>Celebrations (Norouz, wedding, etc.)</i>
<i>Family relations</i>	<i>Mourning</i>
<i>Custom and traditions</i>	<i>Respecting the elderly</i>
<i>Food</i>	<i>Lifestyle</i>

From the above list, one coherent theme was chosen: “women’s role in the society,” with the justification that such a controversial issue as the role of Iranian women would encourage students to think, analyze, construct arguments, and consequently form their own opinion on the topic (Claxton, 2008). In addition, this was an issue with probable stereotypes and potential for modifying those stereotypes. In other words, this topic was not a topic that simply emerged, but rather it was a topic that happens to have huge implication of what can be taught in a third-year class of Persian culturally. Furthermore, because of how many cultural values this topic draws in, it becomes even more appropriate for cultural education. Not every topic would have been as suitable because this topic brings in culture at home, at work, family relationships, marriage, divorce, all these different interactions and relations, what people wear, etc. Therefore, this was indeed a very bracing topic that has a lot of implications for not only cultural studies for all of Iran, but it could be true for almost any cultural population one is looking at.

Moreover, in order to teach culture systematically and coherently, I needed to select a topic that for which there were films that were accessible to the students, that there would be information that I would know how to address.

Data Collection

The data collection techniques used in this study involved a demographic questionnaire, classroom observations, individual interviews, students' reflective journals and culture portfolios. The multiple sources of evidence insured triangulation and corroborated findings and conclusions in a more convincing and accurate manner.

Questionnaire

One of the most common methods of data collection in foreign/second language (L2) research is to use questionnaires. The popularity of questionnaires is due to the fact that they are extremely versatile, and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processable (Dörnyei, 2003). Furthermore, questionnaires can yield factual (e.g. demographic and background information), behavioral (e.g. what the respondents are doing or have done in the past), and attitudinal (e.g. to find out what people think) information about the respondents (ibid).

For the purposes of this study, I designed a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B) and administered it to the students at the beginning of the study in order to have some background information before observing or interviewing them.

Classroom Observations

Observations are a common source of data in qualitative research. Observation is considered invaluable due to its unique ability to enable the researcher to view participants in their natural setting and to provide a firsthand encounter of the phenomenon being studied. Merriam (1998) points out that it is typical in qualitative

case studies to employ different data collection strategies while one predominates and the others provide support in gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Observations also serve as a resource for further questions to be asked throughout the data collection process. In this study, the classroom observations served to provide insights into the instructor's classroom practices, and students' engagement with the different types of activities as it related to cultural inquiry.

Interviews

An interview is one of the most common types of data collection in qualitative research. Merriam (1998) highlights that the open-ended questions of a semi-structured interview allow for the assumption that participants define the world in unique ways. Due to the fact that this study intended to understand students' experiences and responses towards the integration of cultural inquiry in their course, in-depth interviews were an essential part of the data collection process that enabled students to reflect upon and share their own thoughts. The semi-structured, in-depth interviews with open-ended questions provided me with the opportunity to respond to the uniqueness of each participant. In this respect, I interviewed each participant individually in week seven of the semester after the completion of cultural inquiry set one.

Students responded to Question 1, by stating how long they had been studying Persian, (Qs2 and 3), if they had learned any other foreign or second languages, and if they felt that learning other languages had any impact on learning Persian. Since the focus of this study is on culture, in Q4, students were asked if they had ever taken a

course with a focus on culture, (Q5), if they had ever participated in a study abroad program, in order to see if their study abroad experience had any impact on their Persian language and culture learning. Students were also asked to talk about their expectation in terms of learning culture in the class and if their expectations were met (Qs6 and 7). In Q8, they were asked to give a detailed description of how they defined culture, (Q9), on what they actually knew about Persian culture before coming to this class. Question 10 asked them to elaborate on their thoughts on Persians, Persian life and Persian culture, (Qs 11 and 12), inquired about how they came to hold their beliefs and why they chose to learn Persian, (Q13), asked about their likes/dislikes of learning culture. Questions 14 through 18 elicited information about students' perceptions of their learning experiences of culture via technology and multimedia and if using multimedia technology to present culture increased their motivation to learn Persian (see Appendix C).

A second interview followed the completion of Cultural Inquiry Set Two in week eleven with some slight modification in questions in that it did not contain questions related to students' language background. The second interview sought to elicit information about students' learning experiences indicating any changes in perceptions, if at all. Thus, students were also asked to talk about their expectation in terms of learning culture in the class and if their expectations were met (Qs1 and 2). In Q3, they were asked to give a detailed description of how they defined culture, (Q4), asked them to elaborate on their thoughts on Persians, Persian life and Persian culture, (Qs5), inquired about how they came to hold their beliefs, and (Q6), asked about their likes/dislikes of learning culture. Questions 7 through 10 inquired about students'

perceptions of their learning experiences of culture via technology and multimedia and if using multimedia technology to present culture increased their motivation to learn Persian language and culture (see Appendix D). In addition, I interviewed the class instructor in week seven of the semester as well (see Appendix E). Each interview was audio taped and transcribed.

Reflective Journals

Learning can be more profound when students are encouraged to reflect on the learning event and exercise their judgment about the content and the processes of learning. The benefits are that students learn to chart their development, identify barriers, patterns and strategies, and challenge their own beliefs. Reflection can also lead toward greater confidence and assertiveness or to a change in attitude, perspective or priorities (Hyatt & Beigy, 1999). Schumann and Schumann (1977) were one of the pioneers in keeping reflective journals for the purpose of gaining insight into the process of language learning as they wrote about their experiences of learning Persian and Arabic.

For the purpose of the present study, students were asked to keep a reflective journal to provide insights into their culture learning experiences. Participant wrote reflections in their diaries starting with week four of the semester until week twelve. They could either write in Persian or English.

Culture Portfolio

Culture portfolios give students an opportunity to “demonstrate process, performance and knowledge” (Moore, 1994, 176). Not only do portfolios provide an

ideal framework for “self-directed work, self-correction, greater autonomy and greater time frames,” (Moore, 1994, p. 171), they also allow for “continuous instructor guidance and feedback, encouraging discussion, collaboration, revision, elaboration and use of multiple sources of evidence” (Schulz, 2007, p. 18). Furthermore, portfolios enable teachers to “monitor the growth of the student’s knowledge toward the accomplishment of goals in an organized and systematic way” (Moore, 1994, p. 170).

For the purpose of this study, students were required to keep a culture portfolio during the course of the semester that included four response papers and two reaction papers on the films *Atash Bas/Cease Fire* and *Ten/Dah*, a character analysis based on the movie *Atash Bas/Cease Fire*, a short story of an Iranian woman as the protagonist, two PowerPoint presentations on the theme of the role of women reflecting their cultural knowledge and understanding gained from the movies and WebQuest activities, expressing their views and perspectives, and a collage expressing their reflection and understanding of the role of women.

Data Analysis

Given that this study’s focus is on culture learning experiences, I implemented a qualitative case study design to collect data that addressed the research questions and captured the students’ responses to learning culture and using multimedia. The data were gathered from multiple sources as discussed above: two interviews of four participants and one interview with the instructor, semester-long observation field-notes, one demographic questionnaire, reflective journal entries and culture portfolios. Having more

than one method of collecting data will result in triangulation, enhancing confidence in the findings by converging multiple data sources.

The data analysis technique I followed was the Constant Comparative Method coined by Glaser & Strauss (1967) :

“The analyst starts by coding each incident in his data into as many categories of analysis as possible, as categories emerge or as data emerge that fit an existing category...*while coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category.*”

(p.105-106)

After gathering the data, the audio-tapes from class and group discussions were transcribed as were the audio taped interviews. All documents including transcriptions of the interviews and group discussions, field notes, questionnaires, and reflective journals were coded and analyzed for emergent themes.

In phase I of my analysis, I analyzed most thoroughly the observation data, the interview data, the reflective journal data, and coded for themes and made notes in the margins. In phase II, I went back and reviewed more carefully according to the emergent themes, for example, cultural reflection or cultural awareness. In phase III, I came to culture portfolios analyzing the response papers, the reaction papers, the PowerPoint presentations, and the collages that would be useful as triangulation data sources. I read through the culture portfolio in ways that they might support the emergent themes, provide additional themes or question the emergent themes.

Trustworthiness

The aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative research is to “provide truth value through credibility, applicability through transferability, consistency through dependability, and neutrality through confirmability” (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 132).

In order to establish trustworthiness in this study, I used several techniques. First, I had “prolonged engagement” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 133) with the study. I was an observer for the entire semester, and a teacher/researcher for six weeks, which enabled me to understand the culture of the classroom and to build trust and rapport with the participants (Erlandson, et al, 1993). Second, I used multiple sources of data including classroom observations, individual interviews and students’ reflective journals. Third, I had the help of a competent peer debriefer, who was also in the process of finishing her own Ph.D. During our discussions, I would “think aloud” about different “ideas and concerns”, while she would ask “probing questions” playing “devil’s advocate,” and making suggestions (Erlandson, et al, 1993, p. 140). Finally, I included a “thick description specifying everything that a reader may need to know in order to understand the findings” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 125, as cited in Erlandson, et al, 1993, p. 145).

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The central aim of this study was to examine how cultural inquiry was integrated into a third-year Persian class via printed texts, film, WebQuests and PowerPoint presentations, and how that cultural inquiry was made sense of and understood by the students in the course.

As in any other qualitative case study, the data collection resulted in a vast amount of data. In order to best categorize the data, the actual words used by the participants to talk about their culture learning experiences guided the analysis. Therefore, students' experiences and understandings related to this cultural inquiry are best understood by examining each student's journey. Together these four cases- Jai, Mark, Robert and Anthony, provide a more nuanced understanding of how students may experience cultural inquiry. In this chapter, I will first offer a description of the course, with particular attention to the cultural inquiry activities. Next, I present and discuss case studies of the four participants. Then in the final section, I will offer a cross-case analysis and summary of these four cases.

Portrait of a third-year Persian class

This course, third-year Persian I, took place over fifteen weeks. The class met in the morning, twice a week for one hour and fifteen minutes. Over the course of the semester, students were exposed to different types of texts including printed texts, two films, WebQuest activities and PowerPoint presentations. I will begin this section by

describing the general class context and the pedagogy employed by the main instructor. Then, I will lay out a detailed portrait of the cultural inquiry activities that I engaged in with the students.

General description of classroom context

This class was taught by a native speaker instructor who specialized in Modern Persian and Comparative Literature and with a teaching background of more than thirty five years. His belief regarding the relationship between language and culture was that “they are inseparable, and that language cannot be separated from culture because language itself is culture, and that culture without language cannot exist either.” His belief concerning teaching culture was that “it should start from the beginning as part of language instruction and not as a separate culture lesson or culture day”.

The textbook used in this course consisted of advanced readings intended for learners of Persian as a foreign language written and published in Iran. The readings covered a variety of themes including literature, history, industry and politics followed by related comprehension questions, vocabulary exercises and grammar activities. In addition to the textbook, toward the end of the semester, the instructor provided the students with two additional handouts of reading passages, and worked with building vocabulary and developing the students’ reading skills. The two texts were a list of rude expressions and a humorous passage on earthquakes.

Each day, the instructor had a similar lesson plan: introducing the day’s focal text with pre-reading activities, followed by reading comprehension questions and concluding with a discussion of students’ answers to these questions. As part of his pre-reading

activities, the instructor would start each new lesson by clarifying the meaning of new vocabulary, engaging the students in the process in order to activate their background knowledge. This portion of the lesson, working with the new vocabulary and contextualizing them, would take a half an hour to forty-five minutes. During reading, the instructor would model the correct pronunciation of the text, and after modeling, he would ask the students to read the passage. He would then spend some time going over the text paragraph by paragraph addressing and clarifying students' questions regarding vocabulary. Post-reading activities would include such activities as responding to the comprehension questions as a whole class activity in order to confirm students' understanding of the content of the text. The language of instruction was Persian during the whole class time.

During the first class meeting, as part of an introduction to the course, the instructor announced to the students that he typically invites his students to his house for dinner each semester, as a planned "cultural event", and told them he would explain more about the event mid-semester. Later that semester, (October 1, 2009), he invited the students to dinner. For the instructor, teaching a culture lesson in the form of "inviting the students to join him for a Persian dinner at his house, eat Persian food and see an assimilated Persian house" not only provided an opportunity for the students to become more familiar with different aspects of the Persian culture (for example, meet and socialize with other Iranians), but also helped them with the development of their language skills. The dinner was an important cultural event for the students too, as they reflected on it later in their journal entries indicating how much they enjoyed it, being "in

the company of Persians in a social setting,” and that they had “a chance to learn Persian culture first hand.”

Study Implementation

In contrast to the regular days of instruction, there were two periods during the semester that I taught the class for three weeks each time, during weeks four to six and nine to eleven. During that time, I introduced the theme “the role of Iranian women in the society,” for a total of ten class sessions. Each time that I taught, I engaged the students in Cultural Inquiry (see Table 4.1 for an overview of the lessons over the fifteen weeks). For the remainder of the dissertation I will call the first set, Cultural Inquiry Set One and the second set will be called Cultural Inquiry Set Two.

Table 4.1
Overview of the Lessons over the fifteen weeks

Week	Instructor	Focus of Lesson
1	Instructor of Record	Topic: Grammar review
2	Instructor of Record	Topic: printed text on The Neighbor
3	Instructor of Record	Topic: printed text on Shemiran’s Bus
4	Researcher	Topic: filmic text - Atash Bas (parts 1 & II2)
5	Researcher	Topic: filmic text – Atash Bas (part 3) Topic: WebQuest activity on Role of Women
6	Researcher	Topic: PowerPoint Presentation on Role of Women

7	Instructor of Record	Topic: printed text on Industry
8	Instructor of Record	Topic: printed text on Aryans
9	Researcher	Topic: filmic text – Dah (parts 1 & 2)
10	Researcher	Topic: filmic text - Dah (part 3) Topic: WebQuest Activity on Role of women
11	Researcher	Topic: PowerPoint presentations on Role of women
12	Instructor of Record	Topic: printed text on Death Bells for France’s new employment laws (part 1) Printed text on Rude Expressions
13	Instructor of Record	Topic: printed text on Death Bells for France’s new employment laws (Part 2) Printed text on Earthquakes
14	Instructor of Record	Topic: printed text on The Windfall Treasure (Part 1)
15	Instructor of Record	Topic: printed text on The Windfall Treasure (Part 2)

At the beginning of the semester, the instructor introduced me and asked me to briefly explain what my role was and why I was observing the class. I explained to the students that I would be their teacher as part of my study, in an attempt to try innovative ways of teaching Persian language and culture. I also explained that I would show two films, take them to the computer lab two times, and ask them to present two PowerPoint presentations. I mentioned that their participation would be greatly appreciated, and that

it would not have any impact on their final grade. Students seemed excited and unanimously said they would participate in the study. Thus, in week three, five minutes before the end of the class, I handed out a demographic questionnaire to the students. I asked the students to fill out the questionnaire in class and to give it back to me as they were leaving. The demographic questionnaire was meant to provide information about their language and culture background. I reminded the students that starting the following session, I would teach the class. I also provided each student with a reflective journal and asked them to write their reflections on a weekly basis with a set of questions that served as a guideline (see Table 4.2 for sample questions).

Table 4.2

Questions to Consider in Writing Reflections in Reflective Journals

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What did you learn this week?2. What did you find difficult?3. What did you find interesting?4. What did you learn about Persian culture?5. What did you learn about the interaction of language and culture? |
|--|

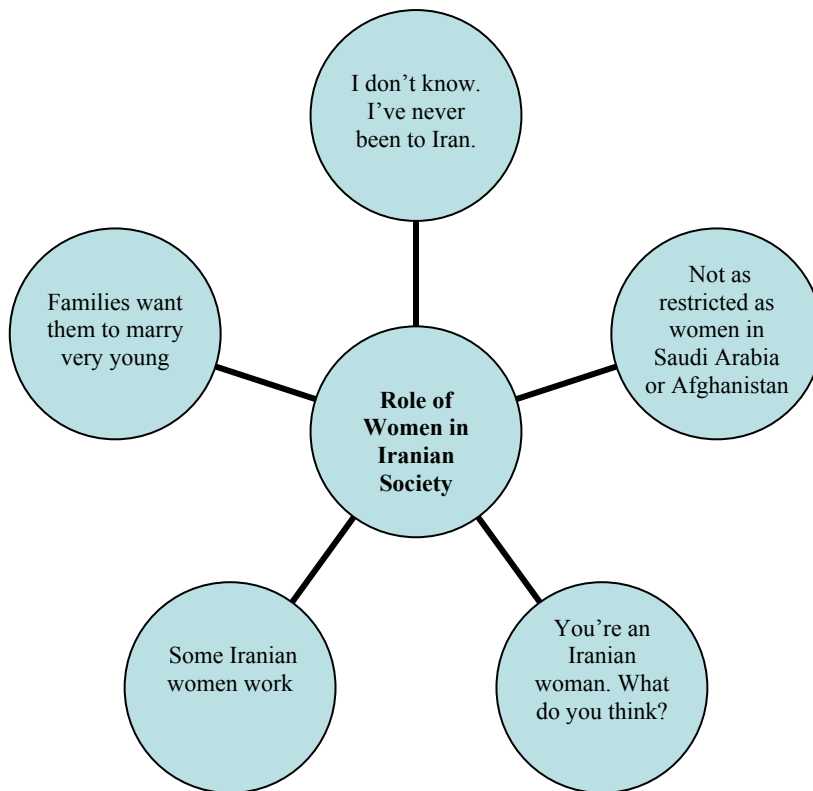
Cultural Inquiry Set One

In order to illustrate the teaching context and my pedagogical reasoning for choices that I made, I offer a few examples of tasks and activities in detail. On the first day of the study, I started by activating students' relevant background knowledge through a version of semantic mapping (see Figure 4.1) by writing down "women's role in Iranian society" on the board.

Then I asked the students to think about this phrase and suggest related ideas. I asked them if they knew the meaning of the phrase since I wrote it in Persian. I wrote it

in Persian because I thought as third-year students, they should be able to understand it. Anthony and Jai said they understood the phrase, but Mark and Robert said they did not know what the word “society” meant. At that point, Anthony provided the equivalent in English. Because I wanted all four students to be active and take an active part in the discussion, I suggested that they could use either Persian or English as long as they communicated their ideas and shared their thoughts with the rest of the class. Jai and Anthony said they would prefer to speak Persian, while Robert and Mark code-switched between Persian and English.

Figure 4.1
Semantic Mapping



(Zsuzsanna Abrams, personal communication)

Through the semantic mapping activity, it became evident to me that the four students had a range of experiences, beliefs and perspectives on the issue. This was a good starting point to know where the students began the semester, and to see if any changes or developments would occur throughout the semester.

As students suggested concepts and ideas (i.e. women in Iran have more freedom than women in Saudi Arabia or Afghanistan) I wrote them all on the board. Then we spent about five minutes discussing the different ideas written on the board. While the students were interested to know what I thought of several of the issues, especially about the hijab, I told them that I would first like to hear their opinion. The following is part of the group discussion we had, as the students shared their ideas and perspectives with the rest of the class in an attempt to better understand women's role in the Iranian society, and how women felt observing the hijab.

Anthony: I try not to think of their role, because I've never been in Iran. If I get my perceptions from the media or films, I think they could be wrong, very wrong, because..... better yet, you are an Iranian woman, I want to know your opinion.

Shahla: Let's hear everyone's opinion first, then I'll tell you what I think.

Jai: I imagined that Iranian women have responsibilities. But they're not as restricted as women in Saudi Arabia or Afghanistan.

Robert: She goes out of the house.

Mark: Some Iranian women might not like the hijab, some may like it—I don't know.

Anthony: I think you (Shahla) don't like it!

Shahla: Why do you think that?

Students: (laugh!)

Anthony: Because you don't observe it. I wonder how other women feel about it—they might be forced to wear the hijab.

Mark: I think we should interview some Iranian women.

Jai: But this would only give us a picture of how women feel about it here, not in Iran.

Shahla: I know it's going to be hard to interview anyone from inside Iran, but for your second PowerPoint presentation, you can interview a native speaker here, which would give you more insight. (transcript, class session 9/15/09)

As is clear above, students began to think, reflect and talk about their ideas as they reacted to the topic of discussion. My main objective was to try and have students engage in discussion with their peers, exchanging ideas, rather than telling them a personal account. Even though they were interested to hear what I had to say as a native-speaker, Iranian woman, I wanted them to be actively involved in the discussion and not just passively listening to my personal anecdotes.

My main activity for that day was to show the first part of the film. The movie was "*Atash Bas/Cease Fire*" (a brief description of the narrative is provided in Chapter 3). I chose this film because of the rich cultural perspectives and messages that are embedded in it. I wanted to use a film that would provide rich cultural input that the students could interact with by engaging in tasks that would provide them the opportunities to discover the differences or similarities between their own culture and that of Iranian culture(s). Before viewing the movie, I engaged the students, in groups of two, in pre-viewing activities, which comprised of responding to a series of questions related to the plot of the movie, the director and the characters in Persian, including questions

such as: What Iranian movies have you seen? What Iranian directors do you know? What do you think of Iranian movies in general? What kind of movie do you think *Atash Bas* is? And, Compare and contrast Iranian movies with American movies. With these questions, I hoped to elicit background knowledge about the filmic text to facilitate better understanding and engagement with the rich cultural input of the film. For this activity, Anthony and Mark were partners as were Jai and Robert in pair work. This arrangement was based on language proficiency. Both Jai and Anthony were more advanced based on what they wrote in their demographic questionnaire and my own observations. I thought that Jai and Anthony would scaffold Mark and Robert in doing the activity, if needed. As the students were discussing their responses with each other, I walked around the classroom noticing that at times Robert would read a question and wonder about a word that he did not understand. At that point, Jai would offer him clarification. The same thing was happening with the other pair, Anthony and Mark, as Anthony would provide Mark with clarifications.

After students spent five minutes going over the pre-viewing questions (see Appendix F) in pairs, they discussed their responses as a whole class. What follows is part of the discussion we had, as I talked about the title of the film in order to get the students to think about the film and what they thought they would see.

Shahla: Today's movie is called *Atash bas* what kind of movie do you think *Atash bas* is?

Anthony: Isn't *Atash Bas* cease fire in English? It could be about the Iran and Iraq war.

Jai: Iranian movies don't have an ending! The ending is inconclusive! And they often have sad endings.

Anthony: Ya, they can be very sad. Very beautiful! I've seen many movies about children.

Robert : I saw two Persian movies before in Persian I. I didn't know what was going on and I had to ask what was going on. There was one about a little boy and a little girl who had to share a pair of shoes because the boy lost the girl's shoes, the other one was a young girl was trying to buy a gold fish, and that was all he understood from the two movies.

Jai: I saw that movie in first-year, too! They showed us a movie about a young girl with a golden fish, and then she got lost. I think you really need to know more about the underlying idea before you watch the movie. They shouldn't just show a movie and say now watch this movie and learn Persian from it, when you have no clue of what's going on. (transcript, class session, 9/15/09)

We can see that the discussion above, started with the discussion of the movie's title. However, students contributed to the discussion by talking about their past experiences since they didn't feel they gained much from watching films in their first-year Persian courses. It seemed that pre-, during and post-viewing activities had not been part of their film viewing experience.

After all the students shared their ideas on Iranian movies, and their experiences of learning from films, we moved on to the next activity which was watching the first part of the film for thirty minutes in class. The reason I didn't show the film in its entirety was so that I would not overwhelm the students with the amount and variety of messages available through the film, and to provide opportunities to work with the different parts of the film exploring and making sense of the film and its cultural messages. In order to assist the learners' comprehension of the film, I provided them with another set of questions such as who was involved, what the overall movie plot was,

and what cultural issues were raised. These questions would serve as prompts and advanced organizers in order to help learners in their post-viewing discussions of the film. After watching the first part, I asked the class to comment about what they had observed. Students discussed what they had seen first in pairs, then as a whole class, while completing post-viewing exercises including vocabulary exercises and comprehension questions (see Appendix G).

My reasoning for choosing these types of questions was to engage the students with the filmic text, not just for them to recall information, but rather to articulate their perspective on cultural issues, analyze for similarities and differences between their own culture and Persian culture, and to foster cultural inquiry in group discussions that would facilitate an exchange of ideas among the students (see Table 4.3 for sample post-viewing comprehension questions based on Bloom’s Taxonomy).

Table 4.3
Sample Post-viewing Comprehension Questions Based on Bloom’s Taxonomy

<p style="text-align: center;">Knowledge</p>	<p>What was the young woman looking for? What happened to her? Who did she talk to? What did they talk about?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Comprehension</p>	<p>Discuss the young woman’s behavior at the traffic light. (Why do you think she acted that way?) What caused the couple’s first fight? (And Why?)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Analysis</p>	<p>Compare and contrast the couple’s interaction at their workplace with a similar situation in the U.S. What are some of the similarities and differences? Why would they be similar or different? How do you feel about that?</p>

For better understanding, the movie was shown with subtitles in English, especially since two of the students did not feel ready to watch the film without the subtitles. I asked the students to write a short reaction paper about the first part of the film as homework with a prompt that asked them to write a brief summary of the plot in one paragraph, and to write at least two more paragraphs reacting to what they had seen in the movie.

On the second day, I took a few minutes to explain to the students how to build a culture portfolio. I began by talking about how we might expect that other cultures behave similarly to our own, or that we might see other cultures with our own mindset of how things should be, which could lead to misconceptions and stereotypes. I also mentioned that often it is not purely a language problem that causes a cultural misunderstanding, but differences in cultural expectations. I then explained that the purpose of the culture portfolio was to encourage them to discover and examine some of these cultural differences by including samples of their works and projects. I added that my objective was to monitor to see if there would be any signs of growth in their cultural awareness. Then, I provided the students with instructions and assignments for their culture portfolio (see Appendix H). (My underlying objective for choosing those particular assignments is discussed in detail in Appendix I.)

Even though students had a choice of choosing either one of the languages, they chose to write their papers in Persian because they understood they were in a language class and wanted to use every opportunity to practice the target language. Students were concerned that writing in English would reduce their exposure to the target language.

After going over the list of assignments, I engaged the students in a group discussion as they articulated what they thought of the first part of the film where they could use the ideas they had written in their reaction paper. My objective for this warm-up activity was to help them recall some of the main points of the film and provide an opportunity for the students to exchange ideas as they had reflected and written in their reaction paper. This activity was followed by a discussion of what the students expected to see leading to the viewing of the second part. I provided the students with a worksheet consisting of vocabulary exercises based on the second part of the film consisting of words, idioms, expressions and phrases that I thought would be useful for students to know, to engage in discussions and use in their writings to express their views, and comprehension questions in order to help the students to make sense of the film. As the students were watching the film, I walked around the class noticing that several times they wrote the meanings of some of the vocabulary that was a matching exercise on their worksheet. They also wrote notes on the comprehension questions, which seemed to me as more engagement with the filmic text compared to the previous session, perhaps they were following the plot easier or understood the language better.

After viewing the second part for thirty minutes, I asked the students to discuss the comprehension questions first in pairs and then as a whole class. This time Anthony and Jai worked together and Robert and Mark formed another pair. As I walked around the class, I noticed that Anthony and Jai were focused on the task, discussing, speaking in Persian whereas Robert and Mark spoke in English and seemed to have problems with some of the questions which they asked the other pair for clarification.

In our group discussion that followed the pair-work, I asked the students to comment on the second part of the film. They said that following the plot was easier since they got to know the characters. What follows is part of the discussion we had regarding students' reflection on what they thought of the role of the main characters, their behavior.

Anthony: (reads the first question from the worksheet) Why do you think Yusef doesn't help out in the house? (he then responds) Well, I think it's because he's a male-chauvinist.

Shahla: What do you mean?

Anthony: He thinks he shouldn't help out with the housework. He thinks women are supposed to cook, do the shopping, everything that relates to housework, they should do.

Shahla: But why?

Robert: I think by Iranian social standards, she's misbehaving.

Shahla: What do you mean by misbehaving? Could you please clarify that?

Robert: Expressed in the film, she's supposed to wash the dishes, cook and clean. But in her case, she doesn't.

Anthony: Is that a traditional norm though? Is it fair for us to say that all Iranian men expect all Iranian women to behave this way? Is it fair for us to even suggest that?

Shahla: What do you think?

Anthony: I don't think you can generalize. (Transcript, class session, 9/22/09)

As is clear above, it seemed that students were challenging their stereotypical beliefs, doubting the truth value of the stereotypes. In this discussion, students responded to the comprehension questions which were basically knowledge and analysis type

questions, exchanging ideas concluding that they could not generalize the husband and his friend's male-chauvinistic attitude and behavior to the whole of the Iranian population and that they needed to see the ending the following class session and reflect on the issue more in-depth. In the discussion, Anthony, Jai and Mark spoke in Persian all the time. Robert spoke in Persian at first, but switched to English as he seemed to struggle with finding the appropriate vocabulary to express his ideas. If the discussion drew on ideas that could be easily expressed with their existing Persian vocabulary, they spoke in Persian; however, for articulating more complicated thoughts they asked each other for help. Jai, Mark and Anthony said that they needed to learn and look into more related vocabulary on their own in order to better communicate their ideas and reflections for group discussions and reaction papers in the next class sessions.

During the third session, I engaged the students in another group discussion as they discussed and predicted what the movie ending was going to be. Then we watched the last part of the movie. When the movie ended, students talked about it in pairs and as a whole class. In our whole class discussion, the students expressed that they were not surprised to see that although the couple underwent therapy and the husband expressed that he wanted to change, the change was not going to happen overnight because it was deeply rooted in the culture. They also talked about seeing a different image of Iranian women, as progressive, and a modern lifestyle which they had no idea existed in Iran. I asked them how they thought this new insight would help them in terms of learning Persian language and culture. Mark and Robert said they did not know they could learn

with a film and that they would watch more Iranian movies because this movie and the way it was presented made sense to them. Anthony said watching the movie “added to his ability to talk about it.” Jai thought that some of his previously held stereotypes about Iranian women were dispelled, for example, “I didn’t know Iranian women could choose their own husbands.”

In the fourth session, I engaged students in an inquiry-oriented WebQuest activity in which students engaged in web-based research following the links provided to further explore the theme of the study. The links comprised several video clips centered around the topic of Iranian women in both Persian and English.

My objective in engaging the students in a WebQuest activity was to involve students in process-oriented online tasks where students could construct their own meanings and form their own opinion about the target culture without being merely told the information. In choosing specific links and tasks, I tried to make connections between the cultural issues and messages of the feature film and the WebQuest. Issues touched upon in the film, *Atash Bas*, concerned rights of women in terms of employment, marriage and divorce. The three video clips, too, were documentaries on the same issues. In addition to the video clips, an article was also part of the activity that the students had to read online and based on that respond to a series of comprehension questions on their worksheet (see Appendix J). My objective for including that particular article was to engage the students in an activity that provided both language and culture since the article was regarding rights of women pre- and post-Islamic revolution era. I wanted the

students to have exposure to different viewpoints on this issue in order to form their own opinion.

To introduce this activity, I took the students to the computer lab and talked briefly about the WebQuest activity. I explained that the purpose of the activity was to allow them to engage in an inquiry-based task that would expose them to the culture from different perspectives in such a way that they could construct their own understandings and reflection. Then I passed out a worksheet containing the links and questions and the students engaged in the task working individually. As I monitored the students during the task, they helped each other find relevant vocabulary items or searched for equivalents using online dictionaries.

The last day of the Cultural Inquiry Set One started with students' PowerPoint presentations. For the powerpoint presentation, I asked students to present on the theme of the role of women reflecting on their cultural knowledge and understanding gained from the film and WebQuest activities, expressing their views and perspectives. PowerPoint presentations could be as simple as having only text on a colored screen, or complex with pictures, sound effects, visual effects, or video clips. Students had five days to prepare for the presentation with the freedom to do more research on the issue as needed, and to choose their own topic within the theme of the role of women.

Jai and Anthony presented in Persian while Mark and Robert spoke in English. Anthony volunteered to give the first presentation and talked about how watching the movie gave him some perspectives on Iranian women's role especially in marriage, but that he needed to imagine what the society's expectations from its women were. Robert's

who talked about how he thought the movie was banned in the country but it wasn't, since he thought it presented very bold ideas especially because of his preconceptions of how it was in Iran. Mark stated that like most westerners, most Americans, he didn't have much of an idea of what Iranian life was like. He further added that from the film he figured that as far as women, they have specific roles and men have more options on how to live their lives. Jai compared the WebQuest activity with the movie commenting that he understood from the WebQuest that actually sometimes the Iranian society is much more restrictive than the Iranian Islamic regime.

With students' PowerPoint presentations, the first set of cultural integration was completed. Upon completion of Cultural Inquiry Set One, the instructor resumed teaching the class in week seven and I became an observer again. According to the class syllabus, Lesson three on "Industry" from the textbook, was scheduled for that day; thus, with no connections made to the cultural lessons students had received during the previous three weeks, lesson three was taught. In other words, the two segments of the course, Cultural Inquiry Set One and the following lesson (Lesson three) did not connect to each other and were not connected to each other by the instructor of record. In essence then, the cultural lessons stood on their own.

Cultural Inquiry Set Two

Cultural Inquiry Set Two, commencing with the ninth week of the semester, followed the same procedure as the first set. Our warm-up activity was another semantic map based on the main concepts brought up in the presentations two weeks prior. As students recalled ideas from the film, WebQuests and presentations, I wrote them on the

board and then we discussed them as a whole class activity. This activity engaged the students in reflecting on the theme of the study again, where I could move on to introducing the second film “*Dah/Ten*” (a brief description of the narrative is provided in Chapter 3). I asked the students if they had seen any films directed by Kiarostami, the director of *Dah/Ten*. Jai and Anthony talked briefly about one or two of the director’s movies they had seen and commented that he is known for making films that are banned from showing and that his movies usually have quite thought-provoking plots.

Students watched the first part of the movie for thirty minutes. In order to scaffold students’ comprehension of the film, I provided a set of questions such as who was involved, what the overall movie plot was, and what cultural issues were raised that would serve as prompts and advanced organizers in order to help the learners in their post-viewing discussions of the film. After watching the first part, I asked the class to comment on what they had seen. Students discussed their ideas first in pairs, then as a whole class, while completing post-viewing exercises including vocabulary exercises and comprehension questions (see Appendix K).

In our group discussion that followed, what we did was to see a cultural point across different culture as presented below:

Anthony: I liked *Dah*. The plot is interesting- a woman taxi-driver.

Shahla: Do you think she is a taxi-driver?

Anthony: May be she wasn’t a taxi-driver. But why did she give a ride to the woman at the mausoleum?

Shahla: What do you think?

Anthony: If we don't know the person, we won't give them a ride. May be this is done in Iran.

Jai: In India, too, women might sometimes give rides to other women even if they don't know them. (transcript, class session, 9/29/09)

We can see that students were engaged in comparison of what they saw as Iranian culture with their own culture perhaps in an attempt to understand the differences and similarities.

For better understanding, the movie was shown with subtitles in English, especially since two of the students still felt they were not ready to watch the film without the subtitles. I asked the students to write a short reaction paper about the first part of the film as homework with a prompt that asked them to write a brief summary of the plot in one paragraph, and to write at least two more paragraphs reacting to what they had seen in the movie. I also added that in their reflection and reaction to the movie, they could draw on their understandings of the First Cultural Inquiry Set as well. My objective for this addition was to guide the students in the process of developing the ability to engage in comparison between different perspectives and perhaps to even compare between Persian culture and their own so that they could better understand both.

On the second day, as in the First Cultural Inquiry Set, I engaged the students in a group discussion as they discussed and articulated what they thought of the first part of the film where they could use the ideas they had written in their reaction paper. My objective for this warm-up activity was to help them recall some of the main points of the film and provide an opportunity for the students to exchange ideas as they had reflected and written in their reaction paper. This activity was followed by a discussion of what

the students expected to see leading to the viewing of the second part. I provided the students with a worksheet consisting of vocabulary exercises based on the second part of the film. After viewing the second part for thirty minutes, I asked the students to discuss the comprehension questions first in pairs and then as a whole class. In our group discussion, I asked the students to express their view on the second part of the film:

Anthony: I think there's no difference between a mother and a father.

Jai: If there are problems that are affecting the raising of the children and the parents don't like each other then they shouldn't be married.

Robert: I think that you can't just expect, like how the judge in the WebQuest video expected marriage to work out by simply telling the woman to make herself beautiful, or you can't expect to raise a child by just making parents stay in a marriage. (transcriptions, class session, 10/22/09)

Clearly, the students were reflecting on the movie, bringing in what they understood from the WebQuest activity, adding their own opinions and perspectives, and exchanging ideas. As the students were discussing and responding to my question reflecting on the second part of the film, I noticed that they were actively engaged in a discussion in Persian utilizing ideas, vocabulary, perhaps their understandings not only of the second part of the film, but also from their understandings of both cultural sets.

On the third day, students watched the last part of the film for thirty minutes. I provided the students with a worksheet that comprised of vocabulary exercises and comprehension questions. Students worked on the worksheet first in pairs and then as a whole class. One of the comprehension questions asked the students to compare and contrast the two films. Anthony thought that "women in both films had to struggle

against something, in the first movie it was male-chauvinism, in the second it was a disrespectful boy, rules and laws of the society, and that the women in both movies were strong willed.” Robert commented the woman in *Atash Bas* is more progressive, successful in the workplace, respected by her male-peers and out of her way to divorce her husband.” Jai on the other hand commented that he thought “*Dah* was more realistic than *Atash bas*.”

An inquiry-oriented WebQuest activity followed the showing of the film in the fourth session as students engaged in web-based research following the links provided to further explore the theme of the study. The links comprised three video clips centered around the topic of Iranian women in both Persian and English. In addition, an article was also part of the activity that the students had to read online and based on that respond to a series of comprehension questions on their worksheet. After students watched the video clips and read the article, they worked on the worksheets in pairs.

The last session of the second cultural set similar to the first, was a PowerPoint presentation by the students. For their PowerPoint presentation, students had interviewed a native speaker; therefore, they were asked to discuss the interview, reflect on it while making connections to both films and WebQuest activities. Robert had video taped his interview with an Iranian woman, which he showed in class as part of his presentation. Mark and Jai had incorporated their collage assignment into their presentation, while Anthony presented his paper copy collage via the doc cam. Mark, Jai and Anthony presented in Persian while Robert presented in English as in the first cultural set.

Jai explained that in his collage, he wanted to depict that the restrictions that have been imposed (even before the Revolution), and the restrictions that are currently actually officially imposed by the government, were already present in the mind of the people even before the revolution because they had traditionally Islamic culture set. Anthony commented that the photos in his collage depict a woman who has covered her hair completely, and other women who are showing hair. And to him, this showed that today in Iran there are women with different viewpoints. Mark stated that his collage shows that women are demanding progress and making progress.

With completion of Cultural Inquiry Set Two, the instructor resumed teaching the class in week twelve. Again as with the first cultural integration set, no connections were made to the cultural lessons students had received during the previous three weeks.

Case Studies

According to Merriam (1998) case studies are “intensive descriptions and analyses of a single unit or bounded system such as an individual, program, event, group, intervention, or community (p. 19)..... [which] can be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice” (p. 41). Employing case study methods in this study allowed each student’s growth to be examined individually and helped provide a more nuanced understanding of each participant’s cultural understanding. For this case study analysis, I drew on multiple data sources, including student interviews, students’ reflective journals, observational notes, as well as relevant portions of the culture portfolio, including the reaction papers, the

powerpoint presentations, and the collage. The following sections will therefore report findings from four individual cases followed by a cross-case analysis of all four cases in order to identify similarities and differences to provide further insight concerning participants' development of cultural understanding and awareness.

Case Study One: Jai

Jai was pursuing a double major in Government and Russian Studies. Jai was a native speaker of Hindi and a speaker of several dialects and two other languages. He reported feeling more confident in his ability to learn Persian since two of these languages were "really close" to Persian. Thus, he reported that his knowledge of Indian languages like Hindi and Urdu "influenced him in learning Persian". The fact that most words used in Persian can also be used in Hindi and Urdu was very motivating to him. He felt he would sound more "sophisticated" if he used Persian words as he spoke Hindi, since Hindi is a mixture of Persian, Urdu, Arabic, Sanskrit and Turkish, and the fact that Urdu and Persian have similar grammar and vocabulary.

In his interview, he stated that he thought Persians were very cultured, hospitable, nice, and poetic, and that there were many similarities between Indian and Persian cultures. The main reason he wanted to study Persian was because he was very interested in learning foreign languages, and thought that not only was the Persian language beautiful but also Persian had a lot of importance in India, in terms of its natural closeness to Hindi and Urdu, and its historical significance.

What follows is Jai's journey in cultural awareness and as a part of the cultural inquiry activities. In Jai's case, analysis indicated four important themes: 1) Relationship

of language and culture, 2) Culture learning through Multimedia and technology, 3) Cultural Reflection on the role of Iranian Women, and 4) Cultural awareness. These themes are discussed in the sections below.

Relationship of language and culture

Jai seemed to continually make reference to what he perceived as the importance of culture in language learning as the following comments suggest:

“Culture really helps put language into context like there may be words that you use, but if you don’t use them in the right way, you might sound like you are talking out of a textbook, or you may sound very offensive to some people.” (first interview)

Jai felt that putting language into context helped him use words in a more meaningful way that was more culturally-appropriate and less like something out of a textbook. Here, he could be referring to cultural influences contributing to building intercultural pragmatics (Decapua and Wintergrest, 2004), which draws on the inseparable role of language and culture. In other words, one way he feels he learns language (specifically, pragmatics) is by learning culture.

Jai also wrote the following comment in his journal as he reflected on the relationship of culture and language:

“This week we read a short text about Iran’s industry, which I found very helpful and interesting because I want to learn necessary vocabulary for business and commerce. This text talked about public and private companies which is very important to know in order to understand the business culture.” (journal entry, wk 6)

Jai’s comment suggested that he felt for understanding the business culture of Iran he needed to read and learn vocabulary. It also seemed that he felt he could understand

culture through reading. It is possible that for Jai, learning language happens through culture, and learning culture happens through language. In other words, the two are inseparable:

“Language and culture are highly inter-related. Language has come into culture because culture was in the language first.” (first interview)

Of the four case study participants, Jai seemed the most aware of the inter-related nature of culture and language. Yet, it seemed that his understanding of culture was somewhat limited to what some researchers call big C culture (Lafayette, 1978). For example, in his journal, below, Jai writes about Iran’s history:

“This week we read a short passage about Aryans. In order to understand Persian culture, it’s important to know the nation’s history because culture is based on its people’s history. We learned that Aryans immigrated to India, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, and that’s why these countries have such similar culture.” (journal entry, wk 8)

For Jai, understanding the Persian culture meant knowing the nation’s history through reading. Although foreign language scholars have long agreed that culture includes both big C and small c, it seems that Jai made less reference to people’s everyday lives and talked more about learning culture from the nation’s history. Furthermore, he wrote that India, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran have similar cultures while these cultures are actually quite distinct. Jai’s journal entries and interview indicate that early on in the semester he held limited views of Persian culture. As I will show in the next section, the cultural inquiry activities provided opportunities to question his existing understandings.

Culture learning through Multimedia and technology

Jai discussed various ways that he interacted with multimedia and technology

texts which he felt helped him learn more about Iranian's everyday lives and interactions as it related to the role of women through audio and visual representations.

“This week we saw the movie *Atash Bas*. It was an interesting movie, which shows women's stereotypes in Iran. The main character is a woman who works in a male-dominated work place and ends up marrying an engineer from her work. She chose to marry him out of her own will. I had no idea women in Iran could choose their own spouse. (journal entry, wk 4)

Jai's journal entry indicated his preconceptions about Iranian women—that they don't normally work in male-dominated work places and don't normally choose to marry out of their own will. It seems as if the *Atash Bas* movie helped dispel some of these preconceptions as he engaged in the discovery of new knowledge and perspectives. His reflection on the topic of women continued as he engages with more texts:

“It was only in the WebQuest that I saw that there's a difference between government suppression and societal suppression of women. That was really expressively said in the WebQuest. I really came to know about how women actually feel about such things as the hijab or veil. It really did help me in terms of ppt. and in terms of my understanding of Iranian culture.” (first interview)

Based on the above two comments, it is possible that watching the film gave Jai a starting point to think and reflect on some of the issues and stereotypes of women. Perhaps the content of the WebQuest video clips afforded him further opportunities to engage in critical thinking, analyzing, interpreting, “coming to know” how women actually feel contributing to his understanding of the Iranian culture in general and women's actual feeling about different issues, for example the hijab, in particular. It is possible that Jai's reflection on and interpretation of the WebQuest video clips were different from film in that, in the WebQuest activity. “societal suppression of women was expressively said,” whereas in the film. due to restrictions, such issues could not be stated. In other words,

the Webquest activity offered opportunities to view “real” people telling their real stories and this seemed to resonate with Jai. It seems that the WebQuest activity helped him in the developing his understanding of the Iranian culture. This finding is in accordance with previous studies (Dodge, 2001) on the role of WebQuest activities to promote higher order thinking and inquiry skills as students examine things from “multiple lenses”, and develop “abilities to analyze information” (Zheng, et al., 2007, p. 297). Jai also commented on how he feels about his culture learning via PowerPoint presentation:

“I guess you really learn about other people’s viewpoints through their ppt. presentations because I think it’s really nice to exchange views on a subject so that you can come to consensus of what the actual situation is for us, non-Persians. Because it’s really hard to imagine what the actual situation in Iran is. But discussing that in a group, I guess we could still come in wrong but there was for example you, who brought us back to the right track, saying that’s not exactly what I was aiming for on this topic, let’s go back, or that’s not exactly how things in Iran are. So it’s really nice that we have a discussion with a Persian and we also exchange our own views. It just makes it really interesting. It really helps in learning culture.” (first interview)

According to Jai, PowerPoint presentations afforded him the opportunity to learn about his peers’ view points. Learning about others’ perspectives coupled with his own ideas and reflection on the role of women enabled him to exchange ideas with his peers, discuss the topic in a group discussion, and benefit from the presence of the teacher acting as a facilitator aiding the discussion, all of which seemed to contribute to his culture learning experience. He also seemed to suggest that engaging in group discussions and exchanging ideas in a group, are among factors that he felt helped him learn culture and develop an understanding of situations in Iran.

Cultural Reflection on the role of Iranian Women

According to Kramersch (1993), “learners and teachers of a foreign language could profitably reflect upon the cultural faultlines” taking advantage of the “many opportunities for cultural reflection” (p. 357) in order to become culturally more competent. Jai seemed to continually engage in cultural reflection as the following comments suggest:

“When I was comparing the movie with the WebQuest activity that we did, I figured out, actually one woman said that sometimes the Iranian society is much more restrictor than the Iranian Islamic regime! I found that really interesting. (ppt. presentation, 9/29/09)

The above comment highlights two important points. One is that Jai engaged in the comparison of the two different media and technology outlets, perhaps to reflect on their cultural message, or on the different kind of interaction each afforded him. The other point is that he seemed to have become aware of a new perspective from within the culture, the voice of an Iranian woman expressing her view that she sees the society as more restrictive than the government. Jai seemed to find this new perspective from a primary source very compelling.

He also engaged in reflection on the movie *Ten* in one of his assignments:

“In my opinion, the director (of the movie *Ten*) has been very successful in showing the audience a quick view of problems Iranian women face; however, this view does not tell the whole story.” (reaction paper, 10/29/09)

In this excerpt, it seems that Jai was not simply a “receptive input receiver, or rote memorizer of facts, but an active person who looks for ways to utilize the affordances of the target language and [culture] to fit his own needs and goals” (van Lier, 2007, p. 48;

as cited in Nguyen and Kellogg, 2010, p. 70). It is possible that Jai felt before he could draw any conclusions he needed more perspectives on the issue.

“I think *Atash Bas* is about modern and contemporary women in Iran. The film portrays new and idealistic ideas, and the director seems to be pro women’s rights. (reaction paper, 9/24/09)

In Jai’s reaction paper, Jai again reflects on the film, evaluating the hijab situation. In his reflection, he begins to question some of his stereotypes related to Iranian women. Alred, Byram, & Fleming (2003) argue that reflection is part of the critical thinking process that refers to the processes of analyzing and making judgments leading to the development of cultural awareness.

Cultural awareness

According to Fenner (2000) developing cultural awareness in foreign language learning depends considerably on the learner’s interaction with the foreign language culture. For the purpose of this study, cultural awareness much as in Byram’s (1997) work refers to “the ability to evaluate [values, beliefs and behaviors] of one’s own and other cultures and countries” (p. 53), as through interaction with the text, learners were able to form their own understanding of the cultural phenomena.

In the following section, I will present and examine Jai’s comments regarding the development of his cultural awareness.

“I personally thought Iranian woman is more free than she actually is, because we have Zoroasterians in India, and they are the most westernized people in India, so I just thought people in Iran are just like them. (first interview)

“I knew about the veil, the hijab, that women have to wear the chador. It’s not a big deal for me to see a woman in hijab or chador. So I personally never paid too much attention to the Islamic dress code for women. Actually through the

WebQuest, not through the film because the film is also regulated by the government, so she doesn't have much to say about it. I guess through the WebQuest, I really came to know about how women actually feel about such things.” (first interview)

It appeared that Jai's preconceptions of Zoroasterians (followers of an ancient Iranian religion) representing Iranian culture, or the issue of women as it concerned for example the hijab, were simplistic views of what he saw as Persian culture when it came to processing culture. He reported that he did not engage in any reflection or analysis of the underlying perspectives or as he put it “never paid too much attention.” However, in the same quote above he talks about a new awareness developing through the WebQuest activity. It is possible that the activity acted as an awareness-raising tool for Jai, as he felt the video clips were representing real people who were expressing their actual feelings, not actors acting out a scenario influenced by the film director and regulated by the government. It is also possible that the documentary nature of the video clips had more credibility for him of how the actual situation for women in Iran is, and how women feel about different issues such as the hijab. Jai's analysis and engagement with the issues of women continued as the following comment suggests:

“I think as most of you mentioned in your presentation, most of the university students in Iran are women, and the government actually encourages the education of women. So the government actually doesn't mind the women working, it's the people. It's the society of Iran that does not allow women to work in certain fields, it's not the government. The government says you are free to work where you want. It's the people that don't hire you to work where you want.” (ppt. presentation, 9/29/09)

Jai highlights an important fact (based on statistics) about Iran's higher education, that most university students in Iran are women. Unlike his earlier comments that suggested

simplistic views of Persian culture, his analysis here seemed to show his reflection and critical thinking. Perhaps, this was an attempt to gain a better understanding or it could be that he was processing the culture differently, more analytically.

Jai also talks about the impact of cultural inquiry on his cultural knowledge:

“I think it (cultural inquiry) has really enhanced my view of the study of the role of women in society, as increased my knowledge about role of society in general, like in personal life and public life. It has also dispelled the stereotypes of Iranian women, I guess. I honestly didn’t know there was a woman firefighter in Iran. That was pretty interesting, because I didn’t know that things like that could happen in an Islamic country.” (first interview)

“Because Iran is an Islamic country, hijab will not be more relaxed. But they (the government) might let the women wear more chic and colorful outfits.” (ppt. presentation, 11/3/09)

Jai reported that engaging in cultural inquiry has broadened his perspective on the role of women. It seems possible that cultural inquiry may have enabled him to recognize some of his existing stereotypes, questioning their truth value. The cultural inquiry offered opportunities to deconstruct some of his stereotypes and reformulate new perspectives through contextualizing life and language of Persians in Iran. In that way, it helped Jai develop awareness and understanding of not only the role of women, but also society in general.

In particular, it is interesting how in his second PowerPoint presentation, Jai engaged in reasoning which lead to drawing a conclusion on the issue of hijab indicating the growth of his cultural understanding. This finding was in accordance with the existing literature on the development of cultural awareness that providing cultural information in the context of the language classroom may consequently assist students in developing

cultural awareness and abilities for understanding foreign cultures (Kramsch,1993). Furthermore, developing cultural awareness reduces the possibilities of getting involved in cultural misunderstandings and stereotypes (Abrams, 2002) moving away from merely teaching cultural information that can foster stereotypes toward integrating cultural inquiry by helping students to “develop skills to ask effective questions about other cultures” (p. 142).

His critical analysis of his understandings continues until he feels that he has a good view of the Iranian society as the following comments suggest:

“Now I think I have a good view of what Iranian society is like, it’s not too liberated, not too repressed, somewhat there in the middle. I don’t know if it’s true or not anymore. I guess I can only figure that out once I go to Iran and see that for myself. (first interview)

“It (cultural inquiry) definitely did help me. I now know more about Persian culture than I did before. (second interview)

Jai has challenged his previous assumptions. He has processed bits and pieces of information, checking, verifying all that he learned through the cultural inquiry pedagogy and now thinks that he has a good view of the Iranian society, but for final verification he feels he needs to travel to Iran.

Summary of Jai’s Case

Jai started out by seeing culture as language, pragmatics, learning vocabulary, and a nation’s history. At times, he seemed to have a simplistic view of the Persian culture where he would not question his preconceptions or engage in any kind of critical thinking. However, through cultural inquiry pedagogy, as he interacted with different types of texts, WebQuest activities in particular, and engaged in group discussions and activities, some

of his stereotypes were deconstructed, and he began to reflect and develop cultural awareness where he was able to engage in analysis, interpretation and evaluation which led to the development of his cultural understanding. Jai's cumulative works over the second cultural inquiry set such as the reaction papers and PowerPoint presentation suggested that he was actively involved in processing the culture.

Case Study two: Robert

Robert had studied one year of Persian and taken two study abroad summer courses in beginning Tajik and Persian language and culture in Tajikistan. He majored in Government. In his interview, he mentioned that he chose to study the Persian language because that was one of the languages that the Defense Language Institute had on their list of what an officer should learn. When I asked him what he thought of the relationship of language and culture, he said that he thought "language and culture are integral parts of each other, and that it would be possible to have an Iranian culture class in English, but almost impossible to have a language class without culture." He also mentioned that he thought "learning about other cultures means learning about yourself, expanding your beliefs, expanding how you perceive things and learning how others perceive things." Apparently, Robert's beliefs about the integral relationship between language and culture contributed to developing his cultural awareness as I will discuss in the sections below.

Robert thought of Persian culture as very interesting, and Iran as "a very patriarchal society, and that the traditional Persian culture is very reserved, hospitable and

polite.” He expressed a strong desire “to visit Iran and visit all the architecture, archeological sites and ancient ruins because those have always interested” him the most.

Robert also mentioned that he was not surprised about what he learned about Iranian women - that there was some façade of repression and some degree of restrictions towards women. He felt saddened by what he called “social pressure” on women, comparing it to the American society, where women have opportunities to do things, things as in work, or divorce if they want to, or not get married if they don’t want to. Nevertheless, he felt that is how things are in Iran.

What follows is Robert’s journey in cultural awareness and as a part of the cultural inquiry activities. Analysis of Robert’s case generated four themes related to his experiences and culture learning: 1) Learning Culture learning through Multimedia and technology, 2) Cultural Reflection on the role of Iranian Women, 3) Cultural awareness, and 4) On the way of becoming a life-long learner. These themes are discussed in the sections below.

Learning Culture through Multimedia and Technology

A first theme generated during analysis was learning culture through multimedia and technology. Robert seemed to refer to what he perceived as the importance of incorporating multimedia and technology into the Persian language courses as the following comment suggest. This comment was in response to my question in his first interview, as I asked him what he thought about teaching culture via multimedia technology.

“I think using multimedia especially with Persian or cultures and countries that people don’t know about shines more light onto it than a piece of paper in front of you. When you start having that aspect of trying to assume how things are, you

are reading about it, it can lead to you being inaccurate about how they assume things. So having a film about it and seeing how people actually look and how they actually speak really helps.” (first interview)

Robert touched upon an important point in his first interview that he felt perhaps some cultural misconceptions could be due in part to readings (texts) that are not addressed by teachers for their cultural contents. Thus, learners left on their own to make meaning of the readings might end up with cultural misunderstandings (National Standards, 1999). He seemed to feel that films (with their added visual element) help in understanding cultural nuances. It appeared that he felt films afforded opportunities for him to get a better grasp of how Iranians actually interact with each other.

“What I found particularly interesting this week is the existence of such progressive artists like the director Tahmineh Milani. It is refreshing to see these kinds of acts in her film *Atash Bas*, saying, declaring these types of things. I didn’t think these kinds of films could be shown in Iran. I thought it was banned, but it wasn’t. I thought it was bold, because of my preconceptions of how things are in Iran.” (journal entry, wk 4)

Evidently, the film and its director provided Robert with new and interesting information, especially as it related to the role of women. The fact that the movie director was a woman, yet allowed to make what Robert called a “bold” movie, offered Robert a new perspective and perhaps even his “preconceptions” were challenged. His comment also suggest that he might have developed a new understanding of the type of movies that are shown in Iran.

Robert reported benefiting most from the WebQuest activities:

“The WebQuest gives a hard solid foundation of how it is because you can tell that these are real people and this is really being recorded. So I think a good support is film but a real solid foundation is the WebQuest stuff.” (first interview)

“Not only did I learn about culture, but wow, seeing those tv shows on the webquest exercise, it looked like E-Entertainment Tonight here in the U.S. or Sixty Minutes. So I can relate to it even easier, seeing it, having a face, or something to look at than just someone telling me and trying to think it up in my head.” (first interview)

It was very interesting how Robert compared WebQuest activities with film. The above comments suggest that the WebQuest activities, especially the video clips, acted as an awareness-raising tool for Robert since he felt the video clips were representing real people who were expressing their actual feelings, not actors acting out a scenario influenced by the film director. It seems that the documentary nature of the video clips had more credibility for Robert compared to the feature film *Atash Bas*. Furthermore, his comment suggested that Robert engaged in comparing video clips in WebQuest activities with programs in American TV, feeling that he could relate to what he saw “easier” since the content of the video clips resembled similar American TV programs. He also declared himself as a visual learner who learns better by seeing than by hearing.

Robert also commented on how he felt about the use of PowerPoint presentations as part of the cultural inquiry activities as the following quote suggests:

“The ppt. presentation gives you different people’s views from different backgrounds, like Jai who is Indian. So he is able to give a background on how his culture does marriage or whatever. I think that’s even more enlightening because it gives you relative knowledge, and you can give it relevancy from one culture to another, not just American culture, but Indian culture and vice-versa, and how Jai sees it from the American culture to Persian culture, being an Indian.” (first interview)

Clearly, the content of PowerPoints presented by Robert’s peers afforded him opportunities to become aware of diverse views and opinions. What seemed to be of

particular interest to him was the fact that Jai, being an Indian national, shared aspects of his culture, enabling the students to compare, for example, the role of women across three cultures: Persian, Indian and American. Perhaps Robert felt he was able to engage in a more informed comparison seeing the issue through another lens. According to National Standards (1998), “the enduring dimension of cultural study is the actual participation in the exchange of information and ideas among members of various cultures using the foreign language” (p. 49). Robert’s cultural development continued over the course of the semester as the following comments from his second interview suggest:

“When you add the films, I feel like I’m learning more than from the day to day read this, do this assignment do that assignment. I feel I was still gaining from it because I was listening to the language and understanding it. Without that, I would not be very motivated to learn. I think my learning of Persian language and culture has been facilitated by the multimedia outlets that we have been using in the class.” (second interview)

“It is very, very hard to get a grasp of Iranian culture by assigning assignments, just reading and doing assignments, answering some questions about it and doing them. It encompasses a lot more dynamics when you can actually see what the buildings look like, what the people look like, and how they actually talk to each other.” (second interview)

Robert felt the addition of film to the course syllabus provided him with opportunities to engage in learning through seeing, listening and understanding, perhaps more so than “day to day” reading assignments. It further motivated him to learn, and facilitated his learning. Robert discussed what he felt was the importance of incorporating multimedia outlets into the course syllabus, indicating that perhaps “getting a grasp” of the culture by only engaging in reading would be a difficult task. According to Dubreil (2006):

“multimedia technology offers students immediate access to images and native

speakers...an excellent medium to convey authentic, contemporary cultural information in a lively, communicative fashion, in the target language. Not only can students be presented with the dynamics of interaction, they can also benefit from cultural contextual clues (settings), linguistic variations and paralinguistic cues” (p. 243).

Thus, Robert felt he was a visual learner, and that visual representations conveyed a better picture of how people interacted or how things looked like in the target culture, which he found both interesting and motivating.

Cultural Reflection on the role of Iranian Women

Another theme that emerged from Robert’s case was his cultural reflections on the issue of women. According to Kramsch (1993) learners can take advantage of the “many opportunities for cultural reflection” (p. 357) in order to become culturally more competent. Reflection is part of the critical thinking process which refers to the processes of analyzing and making judgments leading to the development of cultural awareness (Alred, Byram & Fleming, 2003). Robert seemed to continually engage in reflection as the following comments suggested:

“I think women in Iran are modern, educated, capable and successful career women. On September 3rd, the first woman minister went into office and there were actually three other women ministers that were nominated. I think that says a lot. They are doing things, they are going to work and I think the culture of Iran is now allowing that to happen.” (ppt. presentation 9/29/09)

Robert seemed to reflect on how he thought of the role of women in contemporary Iran as opposed to what he thought of their role in the beginning of the semester as discussed above. It appeared that through the cultural inquiry activities, some of his stereotypes of

Iranian women were addressed and deconstructed as he commented, “Iranian women are modern, educated, capable and successful career women.” In his first PowerPoint presentation he discussed what he thought of as new roles for women, where they enjoy more freedom, and are allowed to engage in more activities outside of home. Robert continued reflecting on the issue across the semester as he wrote the following comment in his reaction paper:

“I think the movie *Dah* is trying to say: There is not enough being done for Iranian women and their rights.” (reaction paper, 10/29/09)

Clearly, Robert seemed to have engaged with the second film, *Dah*, as his comment above suggested. He was involved in the evaluation of the situation, making judgments and opinion statements, expressing his views. This suggested that in his interpretation and reflection of the film, he felt he understood the message and that more needed to be done for Iranian women’s rights. Robert also talked about his reflections in his PowerPoint presentation:

“I interviewed a thirty year-old Iranian woman from Tehran. During my interview she got heated about certain aspects of Iranian policies. It was very interesting and eye-opening to see that face-to-face. One of the first questions I asked her was, just bluntly “how do you feel about the marriage clauses and policy in Iran?” Automatically, she got excited because someone had an interest in it. I think that expresses that in her view the way the rest of the world sees the current marriage environment in Iran is that it’s not a very large issue. So to her, for someone else to ask about it, and ask her opinion on it, who’s not Iranian, is a big deal. So what I got from it was, just to take her for example, perhaps generally Iranian women don’t see that their issue of marriage policy is being recognized by the rest of the world.” (ppt. presentation, 11/3/09)

The above comment highlights how Robert engaged in reflection as he came to the conclusion that the reason the interviewee got “heated and excited” was because a “non-

Iranian” showed interest in the topic of marriage, and asked for her opinion. Perhaps the above comment also suggests that involving Robert in an interview with a native speaker, enabled him to see the issue from a different lens. Robert has previously mentioned (in the above section) that the use of multimedia afforded opportunities for him to engage in a different type of learning in comparison to reading and doing assignment. Engaging in an interview seemed to afford him a different type of learning experience which he felt was “very interesting and eye-opening to see face-to-face.” This finding aligns with the literature on using “native informants as valuable sources of current information about the target culture and as linguistic models for the students” (Omaggio, 2002, p. 376). Furthermore, Seelye (1984) discusses the importance of the “process of inquiry” involved in interviewing native informants (p. 161).

Cultural awareness

Another theme that was generated during analysis (as in Jai’s case) was cultural awareness. In the following section, I will present and examine Robert’s comments regarding the development of his cultural awareness.

“Now I think Persians are much more than just Arabs. I know their language is Indo-European not Arabic. I know in the country they have Converse, modern clothing and modern wears and things. I think Persian life is very modern; they have cars, tall buildings, small buildings, just like the United States in a way.
(first interview)

Robert gained new information which addressed some of his misconceptions regarding Iranians, and the fact that they are actually distinct from Arabs. Furthermore, as his stereotypes of Iran were addressed, he began to develop cultural awareness as he compared Persian life to the U.S. in terms of contemporary life styles. It is possible that

his exposure to cultural inquiry activities led to the development of his cultural awareness, as he describes in his second interview.

“What I expected to learn after coming out of third-year Persian was, how to properly interact with Iranians if I were to visit there, and know customs and courtesies, know some background information about why they do these customs and courtesies. I think my expectations were met because I learned a lot from a combination of film, the presentation and WebQuest stuff.” (second interview)

Robert felt that the materials presented to him through the two cultural inquiry activities provided him with enough information and afforded him opportunities to learn the proper interaction with native speakers of Persian. It is possible that Robert is on his way to developing the National Standard 2.1: “an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied” (National Standards, 1999, p. 50).

“I feel like this class gave me a lot of new information on how I want to think about this topic. I guess it gave me more solid feel for it. As in I was assuming there was repression towards women. And like my Iranian teacher told me various aspects of the law there towards women in marriage. It is different coming from an Iranian than from an American telling me that because she’s lived there and she’s experienced it. So I was really exposed to that. And then watching the films just reconfirmed that. I didn’t even know that films like the ones we watched existed. I thought the government would censor it or edit it before it could be shown in theatres. (second interview)

Here, Robert reported that his cultural awareness was influenced by the cultural inquiry activities. He felt that the course provided him with much new information, enabling him to “think about” the topic of women. It also seemed that the above comment points to the credibility of the information the teacher imparted, from Robert’s perspective. Another important point that he reported contributing to the development of his cultural awareness was watching a movie that addressed some of the modern Iranian women’s issues without censorship.

On the way of becoming a life-long learner

A fourth theme generated during analysis was Robert's journey to becoming a life-long learner. According to the National Standards (1999), Standard 5.2: "students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment" (p. 68). In this section, I will present and examine Robert's comments that seem to suggest he is on his way of becoming a life-long learner.

"I learned of how unjust, from my perspective, the divorce system is in Iran. It affected me so much that I looked into it more." (Journal entry, wk 5)

Robert's attempt at researching more on the topic of divorce system in Iran could be an evidence of his becoming a life-long learner. Robert seemed to have started "to look into" more resources as the following comment suggest:

"This week, was a good week. I was able to follow along in class much easier, because I've started reading BBC Persian and watch Persian YouTube clip in addition to my regular homework." (Journal entry, wk 10)

Robert seemed to have developed an interest in engaging in more outside classroom resources as a way of improving his knowledge of Persian language and culture through online reading and watching Persian video clips.

"I've been looking into Persian culture on my own. I have found that Iranian students have a much different college experience than I do. In the U.S. going to college is finding out what you are interested in and discovering it, in Iran, it is about getting a degree that is practical." (Journal entry, wk 11)

It is interesting how Robert is attempting to learn more about Iranian culture, not only of women's issues but also about other aspects of the Persian culture. The fact that he engaged in comparing the higher education system of Iran with that of the U.S. presents more evidence of his becoming a life-long learner.

“Following up on the education culture of Iran, I spoke to my friend Hassan to get his opinion on it.” (Journal entry, wk 12)

Robert seemed to have really engaged with the new information, so much that he decided to contact a native informant for the confirmation of his new findings.

Summary of Robert’s case

Robert started out his journey with some preconceptions on the role of Iranian women. Across the course, some of his stereotypes were deconstructed, for example when he commented that he thought “Iranian women are modern, educated, capable and successful career women,” some others were reconfirmed as he mentioned that “he was not surprised when he learned that there was some façade of repression and some degree of restrictions towards women.” Nevertheless, he felt that is how things are in Iran.

However, through cultural inquiry pedagogy, as he interacted with different types of texts, WebQuest activities in particular, and engaged in group discussions and activities, he felt that the materials presented to him provided him with enough information and afforded him opportunities to learn the proper interaction with native speakers of Persian.

Case Study Three: Mark

Mark was pursuing a major in Linguistics. As a Linguistic major, he needed to take on a language other than Spanish. Since he was given the option of going on study abroad in Tajikistan to learn Persian, he felt that he would be learning the language along with the culture; therefore, he chose to study the Persian language, and spent two summers in Tajikistan. In his interview, he mentioned that he did not have much of an

idea about Persian language and culture prior to living in Tajikistan. Having lived in Tajikistan (especially after the second study abroad), he reported realizing that although there are some similarities between Tajik culture and Persian culture, they are in fact quite distinct. Furthermore, even though Tajik language is an archaic form of the Persian language, Tajik alphabet is Cyrillic not Perso-Arabic as is in Persian/Farsi. Nevertheless, in his study abroad he learned about the food, history, literary history and the importance of poetry of Tajikistan and at times of Iran.

Across the semester, Mark talked about the lack of adequate exposure to Persian culture before taking third-year Persian. He mentioned that by taking third-year Persian he was able to compare what he had experienced in Tajikistan with what he learned about Iran's culture in class. He also reported that he "didn't have much of an idea about Persian culture, and didn't spend a lot of time learning Persian culture in first-year," and that they basically focused on language in his previous course. Mark felt there needed to be more time spent on culture learning in his previous courses. It is possible that Mark's reported lack of exposure to culture during first-year Persian may have shaped his beliefs about how language and culture should be taught.

I asked him what he thought of the relationship between language and culture. He stated that he didn't think language and culture are completely separated, but it would be better to teach them separately at the beginning. He further added that he thought "it would be better to focus strongly on one (either language or culture), and to mix them up at later stages." Based on his own experience, he thought language should be taught first, then culture. As I discussed above, his beliefs about the separation of language and

culture could have been based on his own experience in first-year Persian where the focus had been on teaching language.

What follows is Mark's journey in cultural awareness and as a part of the cultural inquiry activities. Analysis of Mark's case generated 3 themes related to his experiences and learning in the culture learning activities: 1) Culture learning through Multimedia and technology, 2) Deconstruction of Stereotypes, and 3) Cultural Reflection. These themes are discussed in the sections below.

Culture learning through Multimedia and technology

Mark discussed various ways that he interacted with multimedia and technology texts. He felt that WebQuest in particular, afforded him opportunities to learn more about aspects of Iranian culture that he did not know, as the following comments suggest:

“After finishing Atash Bas, we had the opportunity to watch several videos about Iranian women in our WebQuest. I was unaware that women in Iran are allowed to be firefighters, drive taxis or even drive race cars. It is amazing that the country's number three rally driver is a woman. Women in the racing world are almost unseen, with the exception of Danica Patrick. It is ridiculous that women in Iran can do these things, and hold public office, but they are required by law to ride on the back of the bus.” (journal entry, wk 6)

Mark wrote in his journal that the information he received through the video clips as part of the WebQuest activity, was new information which he was not aware of before. He seemed to have been very surprised by the idea of Iranian women working as firefighters and taxi drivers, even more so by the fact that there were women rally drivers in Iran. What is interesting is that he was able to compare and contrast one video clip which showed women working as firefighters and tax drivers, with another video clip where there was a segregated bus, and women had to ride on the back of the bus. Evidently,

some of his stereotypes about Iranian women were addressed in the video clips of women working in places he did not think was possible. However, it was difficult for him to understand why women would be given the privilege of holding public office but in riding the bus, they would have to ride in the back. Perhaps he needed to understand this through the perspective of Iranian people, “American students need to develop an awareness of other people’s world views...such awareness will help combat their ethnocentrism” (National Standards, 1999, p. 47). He reflected on these points and reacted by calling it “ridiculous”, indicating how he felt about the apparently contradictory approach to enacting rules and regulations regarding women.

Mark also talked about PowerPoint presentations in his first interview:

“The ppt. was good for having discussions between everybody. For example, when Robert pointed out that the film was the highest grossing in Iran. That was a good point to bring up. This goes to show that people certainly like it there or at least they’ve gone to see it. (first interview)

Mark seemed to have benefited from PowerPoint presentations as the materials presented afforded opportunities for “having discussions between everybody.” Perhaps, presenting new and interesting information to peers, and group discussions engaged Mark in constructing and sharing knowledge with his peers. In sum, Mark reported that interacting with multimedia and technology helped him to learn about Persian culture:

“I was excited to watch the films, watch the WebQuest and learn different things I hadn’t done before. And then I learned to make a ppt. Gives me some freedom to research more within different areas and discuss what I thought.”
(second interview)

Incorporating multimedia and technology into the course afforded opportunities for Mark to engage in learning and doing things he “hadn’t done before.” His above comment

further suggests how cultural inquiry activities enabled him to engage in more research, perhaps looking more into related areas and the opportunity to speak about his thoughts. In other words, he felt interacting with the three mediums (film, WebQuest and PowerPoint) helped him engage in more learning. For example, having to prepare a PowerPoint presentation to show in class to his peers, led him into further research on the topic and enabled him to discuss his opinion.

Deconstruction of Stereotypes of Iranian women

Considering the fact that this study revolves around culture, particularly students' perceptions of culture, stereotypes were an issue that was likely to surface. While the aim of this study was not to highlight stereotypes, Mark's comments suggested that he engaged in examining and analyzing his stereotypes in an attempt for either confirmation or formulation of new perspectives. Stereotype in this study refers to generalizations based on limited, inaccurate information to a general population (English Teaching Forum Online, 2010). In the following section, I will present and examine Mark's comments regarding stereotypes:

“Americans think that Iranian women are pretty oppressed. A lot of it is based upon being required to cover their hair, for example. But lack the realization of other rights they may maintain. America doesn't have any contact with Iran, so if you know or hear anything about Iran is basically that it's a repressive government and that women have no rights there. That's the general conception that I had received prior to learning Persian, so that really based a lot of my ideas of what women were allowed to do there and what their role was compared to men. (first interview)

Here, Mark reported not knowing much about Iranian women prior to learning Persian.

Obviously, he had stereotypes about women even before he started learning Persian and

taking classes. However, it also seemed that some of his stereotypes were deconstructed when he remarked that Americans “lack the realization of other rights women may maintain.” Mark’s comment below discusses some of the ways his stereotypes of Iranian women were deconstructed:

“Through the WebQuest and stuff, I definitely noticed that women certainly have more rights, or you could say stronger presence in Persian culture than had been the American stereotypes in my head, for example, having female fire fighters and race car drivers. I didn’t know they were allowed to do that, for example. So it’s definitely been more of an eye-opener, as far as that is concerned. (second interview)

Through utilization of WebQuest activity and “stuff” (filmic texts and PowerPoint presentations), Mark seemed to have been afforded opportunities to challenge his stereotypes. By watching video clips of women as “fire fighters” and “race car drivers, Mark saw an aspect of Persian culture in regards to women that he was quite unaware of. In both his interviews, he repeatedly mentioned that seeing women in roles of fire fighters, and race car drivers became an eye opener perhaps in helping him deconstruct his stereotypes. It seems that with the onset of the cultural inquiry activities, Mark may have begun to deconstruct some of his stereotypes of Iranian women as he engaged in cultural inquiry (WebQuest activities in particular) recognizing his own existing stereotypes. Thus, questioning their truth value, he may have noticed that perhaps a large portion of those stereotypes did not hold.

Cultural Reflection on Iranian women’s rights

As Mark became more culturally aware, his writings and comments reflected his thoughts and ideas on the issue as the following comments suggest:

“I think because Iran is much more traditional than the U.S., women will face many challenges before their lives get better. American women, too, had to fight for equal rights, but they succeeded, and so will Iranian women!” (reaction paper, 10/29/09)

It seemed that Mark’s understanding and reaction to the topic of women was suggesting that perhaps he was on his way of becoming a “skilled observer and analyst of the culture” (National Standards, 1999, p. 48), as the cultural inquiries enabled him to compare and contrast Iranian women’s situation with that of the Americans, to evaluate it and to draw conclusions. Mark continued to reflect on the topic voicing his opinion in his PowerPoint presentation:

“The courtroom we saw was very sad. Why should it always be the woman’s fault? I think when a woman goes for divorce, her parents are very unhappy. Getting a divorce is very difficult for women. (ppt. presentation, 11/3/09)

Mark’s reaction to his newly-developed cultural awareness seemed to continue as he reflected on the issue and tried to evaluate and question certain behavior towards women. It also seemed that he was engaged in thinking and reflecting further about the issue as he reflected that getting a divorce is difficult for women and that parents do not want their daughters to divorce. It may be that he was reflecting on the social impact of such an act in what he called a “more traditional” society than the U.S. The above two comments suggest that Mark was comparing the two societies of Iran and the U.S. and perhaps felt that Iranian women were struggling for more rights as he commented “(Iranian) women will face many challenges before their lives get better.” Apparently, he thought there needed to be some changes to make things “better” for women. In other words, he

seemed to be “making judgments” (Bloom’s Taxonomy, 1956). His comparison of the two cultures continues as the following comments suggest:

“It seems like the laws as well as part of the Persian mind-set, kind of inhibits the rights of women; it definitely seem to come thru. in the film, plus the WebQuest with regards to divorce rights for women. It seems they have none compared to women in the US, where in the US seems pretty fair, both partners making a decision.” (second interview)

“I think women are demanding progress and making progress.” (ppt. presentation, 11/3/09)

“What you did definitely helped, seeing some of those similarities between cultures and then take out different things about Iranian culture that I hadn’t known before. There seems to be more movement now, running for the rights of women, as it has happened to other countries around the world throughout time, and it’s just heading their way now.” (second interview)

After two sets of cultural inquiries, Mark seemed engaged in reflection, reacting to the issue of women by analyzing, comparing and contrasting, criticizing and evaluating the situation of Iranian women (National Standards, 1999), where it is possible that the cultural inquiry activities provided opportunities for Mark to “develop insight” into the Persian culture’s practices and perspectives (p. 47). According to Kramsch (1993), cultural awareness is based on knowledge of the foreign culture along with knowledge of one's own culture. Any process of comparison or contrast has its starting point in the learner's perceptions. Thus, learner's perceptions of his or her own culture, as well as of the foreign culture, are important factors in the development of the individual’s cultural awareness.

Summary of Mark's Case

Mark's journey in experiencing cultural inquiries and developing cultural understandings started with his beliefs of language first, culture second. However, across the semester, he seemed to begin to see that through cultural inquiry activities he was able to learn about the culture as he did with the language. Furthermore, through the cultural inquiry pedagogy, as he interacted with different types of texts, WebQuest activities in particular, and engaged in group discussions and activities, some of his stereotypes were deconstructed. At times, he engaged in comparing and contrasting, evaluating the role of women and their rights in Iranian society with that of the American, which seemed to enable him to reflect and develop cultural awareness. His engagement in analysis and interpretation of observed differences seemed to have led to the development of his cultural understanding.

Case Study Four: Anthony

Anthony had studied Persian for about two and a half years before he took third-year Persian. He self-studied for about a year and a half, and took formal classes starting with second-year Persian. He was majoring in Middle Eastern Studies and his interest in learning Persian was through a Persian friend who taught him a couple of words, and eventually Anthony started to like the Persian language. He mentioned in his interview that he was particularly interested in the Persian calligraphy, and since the alphabet was completely new to him that sparked his interest even more. He also talked about how motivating it was for him to learn to read, write and speak a language with a different

writing system and a new set of sounds. He expressed how he had reached a point where he really enjoyed speaking it.

In his interview, he also mentioned that he had learned many things about Persian culture in his second-year Persian course; therefore, he knew a lot before coming to third-year Persian. However, before coming to second-year Persian, he “did not know much about Persian culture except for some stereotypes such as Iranians stay up late, eat dinner for five hours, and come late to parties.”

He felt that he needed to learn more of the culture so that if he “could go to Iran,” he would “be able to actually connect with Iranians, talk to them about festivals, celebrations, their everyday lives, and things they do and say.” In his interview, he also stated that he “thought of Iranians as happy and hospitable people who appreciate art and poetry,” and that he had a very positive view of Persian culture from class and from what he had seen himself.

When I asked him what he thought of the relationship between language and culture, he stated that he thought “language is part of the culture and culture is part of the language – kind of intertwined.” However, he also thought that language can be taught without talking about culture, and that culture is not as important in the beginning because “language learners just need to learn basic stuff.” On the one hand, Anthony thought of language and culture as “kind of intertwined” on the other, he thought language and culture could be taught separately and that culture is not “basic stuff” that language learners need to know. His statements pointed out a conflict in his beliefs about the relationship of language and culture.

Although Anthony reported that he felt he did not learn much about the topic of women from the two cultural inquiry activities, that he “kind of had some ideas about Iranian women before” and that he didn’t learn “brand new stuff.”, his interviews, journal entries and reaction papers seemed to suggest that he did in fact “learn” or “understand” new cultural knowledge as it related to the issue of women.

In Anthony’s case, analysis indicated four important themes: 1) Learning language and colloquialism through film, 2) Learning language and culture through Multimedia and technology, 3) Cultural reflection on the role of women, and 4) Cultural awareness. These themes are discussed in the sections below.

Learning language and colloquialism through film

The idea of learning language and colloquialism from film surfaced in Anthony’s interviews and journal entries. Colloquial Persian represents an informal style of speech which Persians use in every day speech, but it is usually not included in textbooks. It is heard in relaxed conversation among friends and relations, where the formal style is taken as the base form. In addition, Colloquial Persian also refers to informal expressions used in everyday conversations (Henderson, 1975).

In this section, I present and examine comments from Anthony’s interviews and journal entries regarding learning language and colloquialism through film:

“Watching the film is helping with language learning because we are hearing the modern Iranians in Tehran actually speak.” (journal entry, wk 4)

“Movies are really helpful because I see and hear how normal people are supposed to be talking, and I can copy it. And I hear the way they say certain things at home and whatever, so it’s easier to tell how I would actually want to talk if I went there.” (first interview)

The above comments seemed to highlight several points. First, Anthony felt that watching films provided opportunities to learn the language as it is spoken in the target culture. Second, he was able to make a distinction between modern Iranians of Tehran and traditional Iranians in regards to their everyday spoken language. A third point was his attempt to try and copy the speech of “normal people” if he were to go to Iran.

“There were so many new expressions in the film that I did not know. This shows how important it is for students to learn colloquialism because that’s how people talk.” (journal entry, wk 9)

“I think the film is so good to learn language because you learn colloquialism *zaban-e mohavere*, you learn like you are actually talking, pretty good and useful for that angle.” (second interview)

Anthony seemed to feel that he learned new colloquialism from the film. In addition to writing about the importance of learning colloquial language in his journal, in his second interview he talked about it as well, which could be an indication of its importance to him. His interest in learning colloquialism is perhaps due to the fact that the typical material in Persian textbooks serve the purpose of building vocabulary and structure, but fail to teach colloquial language which is an essential part of the language and culture learning process and proper ways of communication. Needless to say that if language and culture are inseparable and intertwined, so are colloquialism and culture. If language is learned through culture, so is colloquial language. The need for teaching colloquialism in the context of culture is just as important.

Learning language and culture through Multimedia and technology

A second theme generated during analysis was learning language and culture through multimedia and technology. Anthony seemed to continually refer to the

importance of learning language and culture through multimedia and technology as the following comments suggested:

“I thought the first video was very interesting because I understood that although some people might treat women as subordinates, there are others who don’t. In fact, many Iranian women know that men and women are equal.” (reaction paper, 9/24/09)

Although Anthony seemed to think he hadn’t learned a lot of “brand new stuff” as the above comments suggested, it was interesting how he mentioned that he “understood” from the content of the video clip that there are different perspectives on the topic of equality of men and women. This seemed to be evidence of learning new information, which he found important enough to reflect and write about in his reaction paper.

“I really enjoyed the film *Atash Bas* and I think the ending was very effective. I’m not sure how much I can apply specifically what I saw to the whole of Iranian culture; it would seem unfair to assign a set of behaviors and attitudes to an entire population of people, but I still believe that this film is a telling film. I think showing this film and looking at some of the expressions they use is an effective way to teach both language and culture.” (journal entry, wk 5)

Anthony was able to engage in critical thinking as he watched the film *Atash Bas*, mainly because he reflected that he wasn’t sure if he could generalize what he had seen in the movie to all the Iranian population. What this could indicate was that perhaps he engaged deeply enough with the content of the movie to feel that one person’s (the movie director’s) perspective as shown in the film, was not a complete representation of a whole nation. Anthony commented on how he felt about the use of multimedia technology to teach language and culture as the following comment suggests:

“I think the films, interaction with the teacher, and the webquests are definitely most helpful in terms of learning the actual culture, and the ppt. with learning the language.” (second interview)

Anthony seemed to have separated the learning of language and culture as he did in his first interview. He expressed that he felt he learned culture from films, interacting with me and the WebQuest activities, while the PowerPoint presentations helped him with his language, although he had mentioned in his first interview that he believed language and culture are “intertwined.” It was possible that he stated something he didn’t believe in.

In the following quote, Anthony talks about the visual aspect of multimedia and technology.

“I like learning with films, ppt., videos and things like that. I think it’s quicker, more visual. You can stop it and talk about it, it’s easy to use. Like I said, it’s visual which is very appealing.” (second interview)

Anthony felt he liked learning via multimedia and technology, and found the visual aspect of films and videos “appealing.” He also seemed to refer to the advantage of using DVDs in foreign language classroom, where a scene can be replayed multiple times for better comprehension and understanding. According to Sommer (2001), films should not be regarded as merely extra in a foreign language classroom; on the contrary, they can function as the core content and become an integral part of the curriculum. Furthermore, films about issues that draw the learners’ interest can positively affect their motivation to learn (Stempleski, 1992). While students are engaged in watching films, they can learn language components such as vocabulary, colloquialism and pronunciation. Films can contribute to learners’ comprehension, enabling them to listen to verbal exchanges and see gestures at the same time (Allan, 1985), which may reinforce their insights into the topic of the conversation. In addition to the visual supports, films provide exposures to the language in authentic settings (Stempleski, 1992). Films also present the cultural

context of the conversations (Herron et al, 2002); thus, enhancing more appropriate use of language and cultural understanding.

It appeared that in Anthony's case, he felt he benefited from the "visual supports" as well as "exposure to the language" because as he commented above, that is how "modern Iranians in Tehran actually speak." Anthony talked about how he felt about PowerPoint presentations in his second interview as the following comment suggests:

"The ppts. are my least favorite thing to do, but I learned the most from doing them. I kind of like to have to write something that I'm going to say about it, may be a cultural thing. I can make a coherent thought about it." (second interview)

Anthony felt he benefited most from engaging in PowerPoint presentations, perhaps because preparation for PowerPoint afforded him opportunities to write his thoughts, and using slides, he was able to articulate those thoughts.

Cultural reflection on the role of women

Another theme generated during analysis was Anthony's reflection on the role of women. He discussed various ways that seemed to be his reflections on the topic as the following comment suggests:

"This week, I learned from watching *Atash Bas* that there are many preconceptions and attitudes about the place women should occupy in society and the way they should behave, and that traditionally they are sometimes expected to work in the home and not have too much responsibility outside of that. This film not only breaks that stereotype down by portraying a woman in a high-power administrative position, but also by portraying sexist attitudes towards marriage as offensive, and *Sayeh* proves that women don't have to put up with these attitudes and that they shouldn't have to deal with men who would treat them that way." (journal entry, wk 4)

Anthony reflected on the movie *Atash Bas* and wrote in his journal in week four of the cultural inquiry activities that he "learned" about preconceptions about the place of

women, although later on in his first interview which took place in week seven, he indicated that he felt he did not learn much from the cultural inquiry. It was possible that he was not aware of the conflicting statements he was writing and stating in his journal and interview. In addition, it could be that he *thought* he knew much about the topic and that he was not learning from the cultural inquiries. However, as he was exposed to new information, he reflected on it and wrote in his journal that he in fact “learned” and gained new knowledge. Furthermore, the above comment seemed to suggest his engagement in critical thinking on the topic of women as he wrote that the content of the film broke down the stereotype of women staying home.

Anthony reacted to a video clip he saw as part of a WebQuest activity by writing about it in his reaction paper:

“I think that women are required to enter through the bus back doors and sit in the back of the bus is very unfair. But I think it’s important to know how women feel about this segregation.” (reaction paper, 10/29/09)

Anthony seemed to engage in critical thinking again as he wrote in his reaction paper about what he thought of women’s segregation in regards to using the bus services. However, he felt it was important to find out women’s views and perspective on this practice that could be an indication of what, according to National Standards (1999), is an attempt “to develop an awareness of other people’s world views, of their unique ways of life, and of the patterns of behavior which order their world” (p. 47). Anthony took a stance on the issue and made the following statement:

“Women need to continue their fight for equal rights, and that change will not happen overnight.” (ppt. presentation, 11/3/09)

Clearly, Anthony seemed to take a stance as it related to the topic of women. His comment seemed to suggest his critical thinking as he evaluated the situation and suggested a solution (Bloom's Taxonomy, 1956). Yet, he seemed to realize that what he suggested would not be easy to achieve. What this could indicate is that perhaps Anthony was "developing insight" into the Persian culture (National Standards, 1999, p. 47).

Cultural awareness

A fourth theme generated during analysis was the development of cultural awareness in Anthony as his comments seemed to suggest:

"At first I thought Persians were Arab and didn't really understand the difference between them." (first interview)

He seemed to have overcome his initial confusion distinguishing between Iranians and Arabs. He seemed to think that he understood they were different. The development of his cultural awareness continued across the semester as the following journal entry suggests:

"I think the film *Atash Bas* showed that sometimes, a societal change or a change in attitudes is going to happen very slowly, if it happens at all. (journal entry, wk5)

Anthony seemed to be engaged in interpreting the film's message, analyzing and evaluate it, suggesting that either women's situation would "change" over a long period, or it might "not change at all." His journey in the development of his cultural awareness continued as he made the following comment in his second interview:

"I would say that I'm more aware of this issue (role of women) now, but I still have to learn a whole lot more about it. I'd probably need to go and see what life is like for women there or talk to women here about it. (second interview)

By his second interview, Anthony felt that he had become “more aware” of the topic of women. What was most interesting was that he wanted to travel there to “see” for himself “what life is like for women there,” which could mean that he wanted to explore more perspectives from the people in the target culture. In other words, by “interaction with members of the other culture, students draw informed conclusions and develop sensitivity to the perspectives of others” (National Standards, 1999, p. 49).

Summary of Anthony’s case

Anthony started out his journey by thinking that he already knew much about the topic of role of Iranian women. However, across the semester, as he interacted with different types of texts, films and PowerPoint presentations in particular, and engaged in group discussions and activities, he began to reflect and develop cultural awareness where he was able to engage in analysis, interpretation and evaluation which led to the development of his cultural understanding. His cumulative works over the course, such as the reaction papers, reflective journal entries and PowerPoint presentations suggested that he was actively involved in processing the culture.

Cross-Case Analysis

The cross-case analysis technique is “especially relevant if a case study consists of at least two cases” (Yin, 2003, p. 133) as the researcher attempts to “build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases” (Yin, 1994, p. 112, cited in Merriam, 1998). For the purposes of the present study, I will first display the emerging themes

from the four case studies in a table (see Table 4.4), followed by a discussion of similarities and differences across the four cases:

Table 4.4
Similarities and Differences across the four Cases

Case Study	Emergent Themes
Jai	Relationship of language and culture Culture learning through multimedia and technology Cultural reflection on the role of Iranian women Cultural awareness
Robert	Learning culture through multimedia and technology Cultural reflection on the role of Iranian women Cultural awareness On the way of becoming a life-long learner
Mark	Culture learning through multimedia and technology Deconstruction of stereotypes of Iranian women Cultural reflections on Iranian women's rights
Anthony	Learning language and colloquialism thru film Learning language and culture through multimedia and technology Cultural reflection of the role of women Cultural awareness

The analysis addressed two research questions:

1. How do students experience the cultural inquiry pedagogy?
3. How do students' understandings about Persian culture develop?

Together the four cases of Jai, Robert, Mark and Robert provided a more nuanced understanding of how students may experience cultural inquiry. It seems that in all four cases, participants felt they benefited from the content presented through multimedia and technology and the knowledge they gained through the cultural inquiry activities contributed to the development of their cultural awareness. Jai, Robert and Mark reported benefiting mostly from WebQuest activities, while Anthony felt films afforded more opportunities for language and culture learning. It may be argued that this could be due to individual preferences in learning. Also, the credibility of documentary video clips in WebQuest activity offered opportunities to view “real” people telling their real stories and this seemed to resonate with Jai, Mark and Robert. Furthermore, Robert, Mark and Jai felt that films conveyed the director’s perspective and “do not tell the whole story.” However, Anthony felt “seeing how modern Iranians actually look and how they actually speak” afforded him more opportunities to learn language and culture. It could also be argued that Anthony felt films offered him opportunities to learn colloquialism which he thought was an important aspect of language and culture learning. Needless to say, even though participants reported their preference for an outlet they felt they benefited mostly from, they also reported that a combination of the three mediums contributed to their learning.

Another theme that emerged across all four cases was cultural reflection. Evidently, the two cultural inquiry activities engaged the students in reflecting on their understanding of the issue of role of women. Closely related to this theme was cultural awareness. One of the main findings of this study was the important role of cultural inquiry pedagogy in developing the participants' cultural awareness. Through the carefully chosen content of films and video clips, the different set of activities, the group discussions, and the presentations, participants gained more insight into the culture and became culturally aware of different aspects of the topic of role of Iranian women. The participants started the course with some misconceptions of women and their role in today's Iranian society. Through the cultural inquiry pedagogy some of their misconceptions were addressed, deconstructed and new ideas were formed. More importantly, students gained skills to "look into and research on their own" on the topic. According to Alred, Byram & Fleming (2003) cultural awareness requires reflection and analysis, which lead to a process of interaction between language, culture and learner. Thus, if questioning the "values and presuppositions of cultural practices," (Byram, 1997, p. 92) and engaging in cultural awareness, are components of intercultural competence, then perhaps as suggested by the participants comments, they are "on their way to developing intercultural competence" (Schuetze, 2008, p. 671).

In addition to the commonalities among the four cases, each student's journey resulted in different learning experience and cultural development. Jai discussed how he felt the cultural activities enhanced his view of the study of the role of women in society,

increased his knowledge about the role of society in general, and also dispelled the stereotypes of Iranian women.

Robert talked about how he felt through the cultural inquiry activities he became “much more learned now than before,” and how he gained “much better knowledge and grasp of that façade of Iranian culture” because he can actually “talk about it with other people.” Furthermore, he felt that the materials presented to him through the two cultural inquiry activities provided him with enough information and afforded him opportunities to learn the proper interaction with native speakers of Persian.

Mark discussed how the cultural inquiry activities helped him “see similarities between the two (Iranian and American) cultures,” enabling him to “take out different things” about Iranian culture that he “hadn’t known before.”

Anthony felt films afforded opportunities for him to learn colloquialism. Furthermore, as Anthony talked about his language and culture learning experience through the cultural inquiry pedagogy, he discussed that he knew how he felt about the topic before taking third-year Persian course, but he “didn’t know what to say about it.” He felt the activities enabled him to articulate his thoughts and take a stance on the topic.

What contributed to the differences in cultural experiences of the four participants in the study may have been their unique backgrounds and life experiences, learning styles and preferences for the different types of multimedia and technology activities as discussed above. In other words, the fact that Jai spoke Indian and Urdu that share many words with Persian, and that there were many similarities between Indian and Persian cultures could have made the cultural inquiry a different learning experience from

Anthony, Mark and Robert who were Americans and their language and culture were very distinct from Persian. At times, Jai would talk about aspects of Indian culture that was similar to Iranian, for example when students discussed women giving rides to other women. Anthony, Mark and Robert started the cultural inquiry with certain misconceptions about the role of women, which could have been because they “didn’t have much of an idea about Persian culture” or what they knew were some “stereotypes” about the Iranian culture.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter first summarizes the study, then the findings. This is followed by pedagogical implications of the study, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine how cultural inquiry was integrated into a third-year Persian class via printed texts, film, WebQuests and PowerPoint presentations, and how that cultural inquiry was made sense of and understood by the students in the course. The current study is the first research attempt to examine American university students' of Persian's cultural learning experiences by incorporating cultural inquiry pedagogy via multimedia and technology.

This study used a qualitative case study methodology to answer the following two research questions:

1. How do students experience the cultural inquiry pedagogy?
4. How do students' understandings about Persian culture develop?

This research study was conducted in a third-year, fifth semester Persian class, at a large university in the southwest of the United States. The participants in this study were four college students in a third-year, fifth semester Persian language course at a large southwestern university during the fall semester of 2009. The total number of

students enrolled in this class was four, where three students were American, and one student was from India. Cultural inquiry activities were integrated into the course via two films, and two WebQuest activities during weeks 4-6 and 9-11 of the semester. The data collection techniques used involved a demographic questionnaire, observation field-notes, individual interviews, students' culture portfolio and reflective journal entries. The data analysis technique followed was the Constant Comparative Method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Summary of Findings

A major finding of this study was that in all four cases, participants felt they benefited from the content presented through multimedia and technology and the knowledge they gained through the cultural inquiry activities contributed to the development of their cultural awareness. This finding is supported by several earlier studies that have highlighted the effectiveness of using films and videos to teach about foreign cultures (Herron & Hanley, 1992; Herron, et al. 1995, 1999, 2000, 2002; Kitajima & Lyman-Hager 1998). In addition, Altstaedter & Jones (2009) study suggested that using WebQuests in teaching culture is a viable way to incorporate the study of culture into a foreign language course.

Another finding of this study was the development of learners' cultural knowledge and awareness. While students' responses suggested that they had learned new information and new knowledge about the culture, they also started to show the development of cultural awareness as suggested by the comments presented in the

previous chapter. According to scholars such as Byram (1997) and Kramsch (1998), not only the understanding of different cultures but also developing cultural awareness of other cultures is important in developing learners' ability to interact with other cultures and to prevent stereotypes.

Another finding of this study was the deconstruction of some of the stereotypes that students brought with them to the classroom. Through the cultural inquiry pedagogy and exposure to different types of texts and group discussions, some of these stereotypes were deconstructed and new ideas were formulated.

The participants in this study not only benefited from cultural inquiry activities, but the fact that they kept a reflective journal and created a culture portfolio also helped them in reflecting on the cultural information and knowledge that they had gained and developing cultural awareness, as seen in Byram (1997) Lange (2003) and Moore (1994). Students' collection of works including their PowerPoint presentations, reaction papers and collages provided further evidence in addition to interviews and reflective journals that they were processing through some aspects of culture, and perhaps processing through their own stereotypes that they brought to the class, that they were engaged in cultural inquiry, actively involved in thinking and reflections.

Another important finding is the importance of utilizing cultural inquiry pedagogy. This study showed in particular the crucial role of group discussions, the importance of pre- and post- viewing activities related to filmic texts and WebQuest activities as benefiting the students most in their cultural inquiry. In other words, media and technology are merely educational tools, and their use "does not constitute a method"

(Garrett, 1991, as cited in Moore, 1999, p. 1); therefore, what engages students in reflection and develops cultural awareness is how these tools are utilized. Martinez-Gibson's (1998) exploratory study emphasized the importance of incorporating activities and revealed that "the addition of pre- and post-viewing discussions seemed to have positively affected students' ability to recognize cultural features in a foreign language commercial" (Herron et al., 1999, p. 519). This could be due to the visual effects of multimedia which aid the language learner in developing their cultural knowledge and awareness. The students in my study also engaged in pre- and post-viewing activities and group discussions, and seem to have benefited from these activities and discussions just as the students in Martinez-Gibson's (1998) study did.

Another finding of the study was the participants' different cultural learning experience and cultural awareness development. Given the fact that a typical university Persian language class is comprised of students with different backgrounds, learning styles and preferences, it is likely that this is a typical scenario that Persian language instructors would encounter when incorporating cultural inquiry activities via multimedia and technology in their classroom.

Pedagogical Implications

This study has several interdisciplinary implications in areas such as media studies, technological studies, gender studies, and pedagogy. In other words, this study looks at how cultural inquiry pedagogy and multimedia and technology impact how students perceive information. Is it really more beneficial that students are exposed to

culture visually through films and online through WebQuests in addition to printed texts or should they just read about it in printed texts? Does cultural inquiry pedagogy help students develop cultural awareness?

Perhaps the main practical implication of this study has to do with the kinds of experiences and opportunities students have when they are engaged in cultural inquiry activities and are exposed to multimedia and technology, which contribute to the development of their cultural knowledge and awareness. Thus, the study highlights the potential and the importance of integrating cultural inquiry activities via multimedia and technology in foreign language classroom. The findings of this study support the tenet that media and technology should play a more dominant role in the Persian language classroom, and curriculum developers and program designers should be encouraged to incorporate cultural integration in their curriculum.

Clearly, it is not a simple or straight forward matter to institutionalize cultural education or inquiry into a foreign language curriculum by just having a few lessons or activities added every once in a while, rather it requires careful planning and designing that leads to a curriculum in which culture has been embedded from the very beginning.

Furthermore, media and technology should be included in the Persian classroom more frequently with related in- and out- of classroom activities and materials in conjunction with class discussions to promote students' understanding of the Persian culture. Thus, there is a need of contextualizing cultural integration within the curriculum and the class syllabus. Furthermore, based on the different preferences that surfaced during participants' cultural inquiry activities, it is essential to include a variety of

multimedia and technology materials to ensure that learners would be able to benefit from the types of multimedia and technology.

Considering the fact that the WebQuest activities, as reported by the students, contributed significantly to their critical engagement with the texts and cultural inquiry, including WebQuests in the classroom syllabus, structuring and implementing them in a way that students find it easy and enjoyable to use is strongly suggested. In other words, a process-oriented approach to teaching culture will expose students to the culture in such a way that they can “engage in active construction of their own understandings and reflection about the target culture” (Alstaedter & Jones, 2009, p. 642). Thus, exposing students to a variety of internet resources such as video clips, articles, etc., is highly recommended, followed by completion of inquiry-based tasks as the learners engage in reflecting on cultural information, knowledge and understanding gained from WebQuest activities.

There is definitely a need to develop a better understanding of the important role that film plays in foreign language classrooms. Thus, awareness-raising among both teachers and students of foreign languages as it regards to filmic texts is crucial. As teachers bring the topic of culture in the classroom, they must perhaps switch their role as the transmitter of the information to that of a facilitator. Due to culture’s subjective nature, it calls for individual’s inputs and insights as Lange (2003) argues:

“Traditional pedagogy recognized the teacher as the master of the subject and the giver of the knowledge. However, as we allow learners to focus on the

perspectives, practices, and products of others, the learners will have and will want to voice their own perspectives” (p. 279).

There is also a need for material developers to create and develop language and culture activities specific to the art of films, for example developing a textbook that enhances students’ language skills, cultural awareness, and critical thinking abilities by engaging the learners in different types of tasks, activities and questions related to the study of Iranian films. Perhaps, feature films allow for deeper immersion with the topic and phenomena because students have more extended exposure as opposed to facts and figures which are presented quickly. Because film is too often considered as a type of entertainment, teachers hesitate to use it as an educational tool in the classroom. On the part of the students, their reaction is that if they are watching a movie, they are not involved in any learning experience.

Another important pedagogical implication of this study is utilizing culture portfolio for demonstration of accumulative product, for making students more culturally aware, as culture learning through portfolios is in keeping with the teaching of culture as a process rather than product (Moore, 1994). Implementing culture portfolios means that “students are not expected to be at the same levels of intellectual growth at the same time, so assessment is not synchronic” (Moore, 1994, p. 177). In this study, the collection of students’ various works representing their cultural reflections, and cultural understanding and learning, provided further evidence as a triangulation data source. Thus, utilizing

culture portfolio in foreign language teaching/learning is highly recommended to actively involve the students in the process of culture learning.

Limitations

One of the limitations of the study was the fact that the number of participants in this study was only four and they were all male. Although significant insights were obtained from the study, this small number of students cannot adequately represent the population of Persian students, nor can the findings of this study be generalized. Additionally, perhaps in addition to audio taping class sessions, a video recording of the post-viewing discussions would offer a fuller picture of students' comments, attitudes and behavior or how they responded to group discussions.

Another potential limitation was the lack of connection between the two sets of cultural integration and the textbook. Perhaps if some of the readings were related to the films or WebqQuest activities, it would have been more beneficial to the development of students' cultural knowledge. Also, evidently, there are many different ways to use technology to foster culture development or cultural inquiry, such as internet-based researching, telecollaboration, etc. However, with the particular context that I was working with, some of these technologies were simply not possible. For example, telecollaboration is difficult for students of Persian since they use a different orthography (Perso-Arabic alphabet). Furthermore, finding a university in Iran that would be willing to take part in a telecollaborative study was not feasible.

Another limitation was the fact that the interviews didn't take place until after their first experiences with cultural inquiry. It would have been better to have a baseline inquiry to assess their cultural awareness before the class began.

Future Research

Although much discussion has revolved around the importance of teaching culture, the issue of how to teach culture, especially Persian culture has been largely unexamined. In the field of foreign language education, the majority of studies related to teaching culture have focused on the study of English or the European languages typically taught in the U.S. (Byram, 1997; Galloway, 1985; Herron et al, 2000; Kramersch, 1989; Moore, 1996; Seelye, 1984; Nostrand, 1974). Conversely, research on teaching culture in less commonly taught languages or more specifically, strategic languages, is rare, and in terms of Persian language such research was non-existent. Thus, this study explored what cultural knowledge students of Persian gained as cultural inquiry was integrated in their class via multimedia and technology, and how that cultural knowledge contributed to their learning experience. In other words, findings suggested that multimodal texts afforded more opportunities for students to engage in critical analysis of cultural information and knowledge gained, which contributed to deconstruction of some of their stereotypes.

This study was conducted with a small sample size of only four students because nation-wide, the total number of students in third-year Persian classes usually does not exceed four to six students. More such studies with first and second year Persian classes

that have more enrollments may verify the benefits and shortcoming of this study. In addition, studies of students of different levels of language proficiency could establish if cultural inquiry via technology and media impact learners' cultural knowledge at different language levels.

Future studies could also explore use of other types of technology and multimedia to foster culture development or cultural inquiry, such as an asynchronous telecollaborative project between learners of Persian in the U.S. and learners of English in Iran.

Furthermore, this study was done over the course of one semester. A longitudinal study of one year or more would provide a better understanding of students' cultural experiences. Another area worth pursuing could be students' stereotypes, and the process they go through to deconstruct or modify those stereotypes, since it would bring insights into appropriate curriculum developing for teaching culture. Due to the fact that cultural integration in this study had no impact on students' final course grade, it would be interesting to see how students respond to cultural integration that are actually part of the course syllabus involving assessment that would count towards students' final grade.

Conclusion

In the field of foreign language education, the majority of studies related to teaching culture have focused on the study of English or the European languages typically taught in the American universities. Conversely, research on teaching culture in less commonly taught languages or more specifically, strategic languages, is rare, and in

terms of Persian language such research is non-existent. Thus, this study offers a close look at how cultural inquiry happens in a Persian language class. It validates the importance of incorporating cultural inquiry pedagogy into the Persian language course syllabi via technology and media. Perhaps not only the integration of cultural inquiry itself, but also choosing different cultural topics that interest and motivate students is just as important. In addition, the study attests to utilizing process-oriented pedagogy and activities around technology and multimedia.

The main contribution of this study to the existing literature is the fact that perhaps in teaching strategic languages such as Persian where there is so much concentration on the language that teaching culture is overlooked (as it was reported by the participants in this study in regards to their first-year Persian course). Therefore, the integration of cultural inquiry pedagogy through media and technology will afford more opportunities for the students to engage in culture learning. This study also opens new avenues for further research on exploring new and innovative ways of teaching Persian culture in American universities.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: THE COURSE SYLLABUS

Third-Year Persian I فارسی سال سوم-نیمسال اول

Fall 2009

Course website: <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/deps/mes/courses/24750>

Description: This advanced Persian language proficiency course is designed for students who have completed Second-Year Persian II or its equivalent as well as students who have had exposure to Persian at this level and who pass a placement examination for PRS 312L. The material for this course will consist of prose and poetry, both classical and modern. The course aims to expand active vocabulary to approximately 1200 words by the end of the semester. Grammatical work focuses on complex grammatical constructions and demands increased accuracy in understanding and producing complex structures in paragraph-length discourse. Students should expect three hours of class preparation for each class hour. Although the texts will be supplemented with a glossary and explanations of culture-specific aspects of the text and idiomatic expressions, dictionary use is required. The reading material will also be made available in audio format. Daily homework assignments are corrected and discussed with students on a regular basis.

Week 1	Aug. 27	Introduction – Grammar review
Week 2	Sep. 1	Lesson One, pp. 1-5
	Sep. 3	Lesson one, pp. 6-10
Week 3	Sep. 8	Lesson Two, pp. 11-15
	Sep. 10	Lesson Two, pp. 16-21
Week 4	Sep. 15	Movie 1 (<i>Atash Bas</i> : Part I)
	Sep. 17	Movie 1 (<i>Atash Bas</i> : Part II)
Week 5	Sep. 22	Movie 1 (<i>Atash Bas</i> : Part III)
	Sep. 24	Webquest – MEZ (computer lab)
Week 6	Sep. 29	Student Presentations
	Oct. 1	Lesson Three, pp. 22-27

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Week 7	Oct. 6	Lesson Three, pp. 27-29
	Oct. 8	Lesson Three, pp. 29-32
Week 8	Oct. 13	Midterm Test due, pp. 33-43 Lesson Four, pp. 44-48
	Oct. 15	Lesson Four, pp. 49-52
Week 9	Oct. 20	Movie 2 (<i>Ten</i> : Part I)
	Oct. 22	Movie 2 (<i>Ten</i> : Part II)
Week 10	Oct. 27	Movie 2 (<i>Ten</i> : Part III)
	Oct. 29	Webquest – MEZ (computer lab)
Week 11	Nov. 3	Student Presentations
	Nov. 5	Lesson Four, pp. 53-55
Week 12	Nov. 10	Lesson Five, pp. 56-59
	Nov. 12	Lesson Five, pp. 59-63
Week 13	Nov. 17	Lesson Five, pp. 64-70
	Nov. 19	Lesson Six, pp. 71-73
Week 14	Nov. 24	Lesson Six, pp. 74-76
	Nov. 26	Thanksgiving
Week 15	Dec. 1	Lesson Six, pp. 77-80
	Dec. 3	Review, pp. 81-8

Third-Year Persian I

فارسی سال سوم-نیمسال اول

Requirements: Exams, weekly tests, daily assignments, class participation and presentations.

Grading: Exams and weekly tests, 60%; daily assignments, 20%; class presentations 20%.

Grading Policy:

Average Grade	Letter Grade	Average Grade	Letter Grade
93-100	A	73-75	C
89-92	A-	69-72	C-
86-88	B+	66-68	D+
83-85	B	63-65	D
79-82	B-	60-62	D-
76-78	C+	59 and below	F

Textbook and Internet resources:

فاطمه جعفری: فارسی پیشرفته یک

Pages and lessons in the syllabus refer to this textbook.

Lessons 1-10, Intermediate-Advanced 1, on the following website:

<http://www.nyu.edu/pages/gsasweb/dept/mideast/virtualpersian/index.html>

For grammar, visit University of Texas “Persian on-line”:

<http://liberalartists.seework.com>

Other materials and handout.

Accommodations: The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-6441 TTY.

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty: Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information please visit the Student Judicial Services website:

<http://deanostudents.utexas.edu/sjs>.

E-mail: Please check your email at least twice a week.

Third-Year Persian I فارسی سال سوم-نیمسال اول

Homework and other assignments:

Week 1	Aug. 27	Introduction
Week 2	Sep. 1	Lesson One Answer the questions and prepare “new vocabulary” (p. 1) Read “همسایه” (p. 2) Answer the comprehension questions (Exercise 1, p. 3)
	Sep. 3	Lesson one All assigned exercises due.
Week 3	Sep. 8	Lesson Two Answer the questions and prepare “new vocabulary” (p.11) Read “اتوبوس شمیران” (p. 12-13) Answer the comprehension questions (Exercise 1, p. 14)
	Sep. 10	Lesson Two All assigned exercises due.
Week 4	Sep. 15	To be assigned
	Sep. 17	To be assigned
Week 5	Sep. 22	To be assigned
	Sep. 24	To be assigned
Week 6	Sep. 29	To be assigned
	Oct. 1	Lesson Three, pp. 22-27 Answer the questions and prepare “new vocabulary” (p.22) Read “صنعت” (p. 23) Answer the comprehension questions (Exercise 1, p. 24)
Week 7	Oct. 6	Lesson Three, pp. 27-29

	Oct. 8	Assigned exercises Lesson Three, pp. 29-32 All assigned exercises due.
Week 8	Oct. 13	Midterm Test due, pp. 33-43
	Oct. 15	Lesson Four, pp. 49-52 Answer the questions and prepare “new vocabulary” (p. 44) Read “آریایی ها” (p. 45-46) Answer the comprehension questions (Exercise 1, p. 47-48)
Week 9	Oct. 20	To be assigned.
	Oct. 22	To be assigned.
Week 10	Oct. 27	To be assigned.
	Oct. 29	To be assigned.
Week 11	Nov. 3	To be assigned.
	Nov. 5	Lesson Four All assigned exercises due.
Week 12	Nov. 10	Lesson Five Answer the questions and prepare “new vocabulary” (p. 56) Read “نافوس مرگ برای قانون جدید استخدام فرانسه” Part I (p. 57) Answer the comprehension questions (Exercise 1, p. 58-59)
	Nov. 12	Lesson Five, pp. 59-63 Answer the questions and prepare “new vocabulary” (p. 61) Read “نافوس مرگ برای قانون جدید استخدام فرانسه” Part II (p. 60) Answer the comprehension questions (Exercise 1, p. 61-62)
Week 13	Nov. 17	Lesson Five All assigned exercises due.
	Nov. 19	Lesson Six Answer the questions and prepare “new vocabulary”(p. 71) Read “کنج باد آورده” (p. 72-74)
Week 14	Nov. 24	Lesson Six Answer the comprehension questions (Exercise 1, p.75-76)

Exercises 2 through 12, pp. 76-80

Nov. 26 Thanksgiving

Week 15

Dec. 1 Lesson Six, pp. 77-80
All assigned exercises due.

Dec. 3 Review, pp. 81-84

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please provide the following demographic information about yourself.

1. Age: _____

2. Major: _____

3. What Persian courses have you taken so far? _____

4. What are your primary reasons for taking this course?

5. How long have you studied Persian?

6. How would you describe your current proficiency in the Persian language in each of the following language skills?

a) Speaking _____

b) Listening _____

c) Reading _____

d) Writing _____

7. Describe what you knew, and what you are curious to find out about the Persian language and culture.

8. How much technology has been incorporated into the Persian classes you have taken? Please be specific.

9. How important do you see the role of technology in learning Persian?

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONS FOR THE FIRST INTERVIEW

1. How long have you been studying Persian?
2. Have you learned other foreign or second languages? If yes, which ones and for how long?
3. Has the other languages you learned had any impact on learning Persian? Please explain.
4. Have you ever taken a class with a focus on culture? If yes, please explain
5. Have you ever participated in a study abroad program? If yes, where and for how long?
6. In terms of percentages, how was the language/culture ratio in this class?
7. What was your expectation in terms of learning culture in the class?
8. How would you define culture? Please give a detailed description.
9. What did you actually know about Persian culture before coming to this class? Please be specific.
10. What do you think of Persians, Persian life and Persian culture? Please be specific.
11. How do you think you came to hold these beliefs? How did you acquire this knowledge?
12. What made you want to learn Persian? Why did you choose to study Persian?
13. What did you like/dislike about learning culture? Please explain.
14. Did you like learning culture via film, WebQuest and PowerPoint presentation.? Please explain
15. What did you find most effective in terms of conveying culture? Was it from the readings that you learned the most? Interactions with the teacher? Was it the film, WebQuest or PowerPoint presentation? Please explain.
16. What did you learn about Iranian culture in this class?
17. Do you think teaching culture via multimedia technology is an effective way to learn about Persian? Please explain.
18. Has the use of multimedia and technology to present culture to you, increased your motivation to learn Persian? Please explain.

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONS FOR THE SECOND INTERVIEW

1. In terms of percentages, how was the language/culture ratio in this class?
2. What was your expectation in terms of learning culture in the class?
3. How would you define “culture” ? Please give a detailed description!
4. What do you think of Persians, Persian life and Persian culture?
5. How do you think this class helped form these beliefs?
6. What did you like/dislike about learning culture in this course? Please explain.
7. Did you like learning culture via film, webquest and ppt.? Please explain.
8. What did you find most effective in terms of conveying culture? Was it from the readings that you learned the most? Interactions with the teacher? Was it the film, webquest or ppt?
9. Do you think teaching culture via multimedia technology is an effective way to learn about Persian? Please explain.
10. Has the use of multimedia technology to present culture to you increased your motivation to learn Persian? Please explain.

APPENDIX E: QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW WITH THE INSTRUCTOR

1. Please describe your educational and teaching background.
2. Have you had training in teaching culture? Please explain.
3. What is your teaching philosophy?
4. In your opinion, what is the relationship between language and culture?
5. In terms of percentages, how is the language /culture ratio in your class?
6. How would you define “culture”?
7. When do you think teaching culture should begin? Please explain.
8. What culture should be taught at different levels of language proficiency?
9. What was a cultural lesson you recently taught? How did you introduce it to the students?
10. Do you ever assess culture on exams or quizzes? If yes, how do you assess it?
11. Has any of your students made stereotypical comments in class, and if yes, how did you deal with it?
12. Do you use multimedia and technology to teach language and culture, and if yes, how do you think it helps the students?

APPENDIX F: PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY QUESTIONS

I. Respond to the following questions.

- I. نظر خود را در مورد سوالات زیر بیان کنید.
1. در مورد فیلم های ایرانی چه می دانید؟
2. تا کنون چه فیلم های ایرانی دیده اید؟
3. کدام کارگردانهای ایرانی را می شناسید؟
4. تصور می کنید فیلم «آتش بس» چگونه باشد؟
5. انتظار دارید در فیلم چه چیزهایی را ببینید؟

APPENDIX G: POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES 1

Post-viewing vocabulary exercises and comprehension questions based on the first part of the movie Atash Bas:

I. مترادف (synonyms) کلمات زیر را از میان کلمات داده شده پیدا کنید.

خراب کردن	عرض کردم
بنویسید	قرار قبلی
گفتم	تشریف ببرید تو
پایان یافت	تخریب
وقت ملاقات	به اتمام رسید
بروید داخل	یادداشت کنید

II. متضاد (antonyms) کلمات زیر را از کلمات داده شده پیدا کنید.

محکم	مقتدر
مطیع	خوش تیپ
خونسرد	دست و دل باز
خسیس	شکننده
ضعیف	عصبی
بد ترکیب	لجوج

III. معادل (equivalents) انگلیسی کلمات زیر را از میان کلمات داده شده انتخاب کنید.

to inform	گیر دادن
Officially	طلاق گرفتن
self-fascinated	محرم اسرار
no way	رسماً
good-looking	میدان جنگ
Coordination	اطلاع دادن
Confidant	خوش تیپ
pick on (someone/something)	عمرأ
Battlefield	خودشیفته
to divorce	هماهنگی

IV. معادل (equivalents) انگلیسی اصطلاحات (expressions) و ضرب المثل های زیر را مشخص کنید.

Tit for tat	نشونت می دم!
To have a nice meal	به زن جماعت نباید رو داد!
What's your hurry	جوجه رو آخر پاییز می شمارن!
I'll show you	گرچه رو دم حجله کشتن!
Takes after his father	لنگه باباشه!
Are you listening to me	آدمت می کنم!
One shouldn't let women get too friendly	حواست با منه!
To show who wears the pants in the family	هر چی عوض داره گله نداره!
Don't count your chickens before they hatch	دلی از عزا درآوردن!
I'll teach you a good lesson	چه خبرته!

V. جملات زیر را به فارسی نوشتاری (formal Persian) تغییر دهید.

1. لاله جون، وایسا اومدم.

2. آقا دارن می رن بیرون.

3. خانم مهندس، ترمز دستی رو بخوابون!

4. همه این کارا رو کردی که اسم کوچیک تو به من بگی!

5. سایه، اینو بذار تو آشپزخونه.

VI. Respond to the following questions.

VI. با توجه به آنچه که در فیلم مشاهده کردید، به سوالات زیر پاسخ دهید.

1. زن جوان در ساختمان بدنبال چه کسی بود و چرا عجله داشت؟
2. مرد جوان بدنبال چه بود و چگونه برخوردی داشت؟ چرا؟
3. زن جوان با چه کسانی و در چه موردی صحبت کرد؟
4. نظر شما نسبت به رفتار زن جوان در پشت چراغ قرمز چیست؟
5. بنظر شما رفتارها و برخوردهایی که بین زن و مرد جوان در محیط کار ردوبدل می شد بیانگر چیست؟ تصور می کنید در جامعه ایرانی این رفتارها چه بازتابی داشته باشد؟
6. زن جوان نسبت به جنسیت و هویت خود از دوران کودکی چه نظری داشت؟ چرا؟
7. علت اولین دعوی زن و مرد چه بود؟ نقش هر کدام را در این جریان چگونه بررسی می کنید؟
8. بنظر شما زوجهای آمریکایی با چنین مسائلی روبرو می شوند؟ توضیح دهید.

APPENDIX H: INSTRUCTIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS FOR CULTURE PORTFOLIO

Instructions and Assignments for Culture Portfolio

1. During this course, you will be asked to develop a culture portfolio to show evidence of your reflection, improvement, achievement and growth as it relates to the topic of “Iranian women.”
2. Please familiarize yourself with the tasks to be performed, and be sure to document all sources you use in your portfolio, such as Websites, encyclopedias, journalistic texts, quotes from people, etc. You may use Persian and/or English.

Cultural Inquiry Set One Assignments

Assignments	Due date	Descriptions
Reaction paper	Sep. 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief summary of the part seen in one paragraph - Personal reaction towards the issues discussed in this part in at least two more paragraphs
Reaction paper	Sep. 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief summary of the part seen in one paragraph - Personal reaction towards the issues discussed in this part in at least two more paragraphs
Character Analysis paper	Sep. 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief explanation of the role of the character in the movie, and why that particular character was chosen to be analyzed - Analysis of at least three characters in one paragraph each
Reaction paper	Sep. 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief summary of the part seen in one paragraph - Reflecting on the film as a whole in at least three more paragraphs
PowerPoint Presentation	Sep. 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10-15 minutes presentation - Reflecting on the movie, WebQuest activities and class discussions - Research on the issue as needed - Choose own topic within the issue of the role of women

Cultural Inquiry Set Two Assignments

Assignments	Due date	Descriptions
Reaction paper	Oct. 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief summary of the part seen in one paragraph - Personal reaction towards the issues discussed in this part in at least two more paragraphs
Reaction paper	Oct. 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief summary of the part seen in one paragraph - Personal reaction towards the issues discussed in this part in at least two more paragraphs
Reaction paper	Oct. 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief summary of the part seen in one paragraph - Reflecting on the film as a whole in at least three more paragraphs
Short Story	Oct. 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tell a story of an Iranian woman as the protagonist in at least two pages - Points to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the story about? - What is the point of your story?
PowerPoint Presentation & Collage	Nov. 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10-15 minutes presentation - Reflecting on the two movies and WebQuest activities - Interview with a native speaker of Persian on the issue of the role of women - Make a collage expressing feelings about the theme of role of women using photos

APPENDIX I: UNDERLYING OBJECTIVES FOR THE ASSIGNMENTS

Underlying Objectives for Assignments

Assignments	Objectives
Reaction paper	Present their personal reaction to the film, reflect on seeing nuances, supporting their ideas with evidence from the filmic text through writing
Character analysis	Think and reflect more in-depth about the characters involved in the movie in terms of their actions and ideas concerning the role of women
Short story	Think about a woman as the protagonist of the story, developing a plot, creating a situation and reflecting on how they saw and felt about the position of women in the Iranian society by writing a story
PowerPoint presentation	Present their perspectives on the issue of women drawing on their understanding from film, WebQuest activity and their own reflection
Collage	Present and advocate their perspectives and reflections, emotions and ideas through visual representation

APPENDIX J: Sample WebQuest Activity

Sample WebQuest Activity

A. INSTRUCTIONS: Use the URLs below to watch 3 video clips on YouTube. Then respond to the questions that follow each video.

Link to Video Clip 1:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zu2ZjuvURv4&feature=related>

1. What are 5 things you understood about Iranian women by watching this video?

2. What do you think about what was said in this video? Do you agree or disagree? Please explain.

Link to Video Clip 2:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qx6MOaF ah4&feature=channel>

1. What did you learn about “Iranian divorce” by watching this video clip?

2. What did you think about separate “entrances”? Please explain.

Link to Video Clip 3:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GR2cF5RsC38&NR=1>

1. What are 5 things you understood about Iranian women by watching this video?

APPENDIX K: POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES 2

Post-viewing vocabulary exercises and comprehension questions based on the first part of the second movie *Dah*:

I. مترادف کلمات زیر را از میان کلمات داده شده پیدا کنید.

نیاز	نصیحت
سرنوشت	تضاد
دلسوزی	بهانه
پند و اندرز	حاجت
ناسازگاری	قسمت
عذر	ترحم

II. متضاد کلمات زیر را از کلمات داده شده پیدا کنید.

آشنا	بدبین
استقلال	سطحی
خوش بین	غریبه
عمیق	وابستگی

III. معادل انگلیسی کلمات زیر را از میان کلمات داده شده انتخاب کنید.

mausoleum	برعکس
selfish	انتقام
believer	تجربه کردن
to feel guilty	باتلاق
on the contrary	خودخواه
remarry	میانبر
revenge	ناپدری
to experience	امامزاده
step-father	معتقد
swamp	احساس گناه کردن
shortcut	ازدواج مجدد

IV. معادل انگلیسی عبارات زیر را مشخص کنید.

come what may
he/she doesn't understand
your needs will be granted
at step-father's table
such strange times
beggar of love
(you) drive me mad

حالش نیست
روزگار عجیبه
گدای محبت
اعصابم را بهم می ریزی
سر سفره ی ناپدری
حاجتت را می گیری
هر چی قسمت باشه

V. با توجه به فیلم به سوالات زیر پاسخ دهید.

قسمت اول:

1. چرا زن جوان (راننده) صدایش را بلند کرد؟
2. چرا پسر به مادرش گفت که او "دروغگو" (liar) است؟
3. پسر نسبت به طلاق گرفتن مادرش چه نظری دارد؟
4. نظر شما در مورد دلایل (reasons) پسر در مورد خودخواهی (selfishness) مادرش چیست؟
5. چرا پسر نمی خواهد با مادرش زندگی کند؟
6. زن جوان (راننده) به پسرش گفت: "هر آدمی که در وجودش عشق باشد و خودش را دوست داشته باشد می تواند دیگری را هم دوست داشته باشد." آیا با این نظر موافقت می کنید؟ توضیح دهید.

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