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HOME AND AWAY: BLOGGING EMOTIONS IN A
PERSIAN VIRTUAL DOWREH

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics and Second Language Teaching
at Massey University

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2011
ABSTRACT

This study explores the creation of a virtual *dowreh* (family/social circle) via Persian language weblogs among a group of Iranian migrants in Australia. The motivation and inspiration for this study arose from my own experience as a migrant. I became interested in looking at how the new generation of Iranian migrants use weblogs to form digital diasporas and why they publish their emotional experiences online, thereby adding to the understanding of a relatively under-researched community.

The study draws upon a sociocultural approach in order to bring to light the role of weblogs in the context of the most recent Iranian migration and the way Iranian migrants use them to replace *dowrehs* disrupted by the migration experience where they could perform cultural identities and express and share their emotions. Using a grounded theory approach and discourse analysis to blog posts, the study investigates the expression of emotional challenges, expectations, and cultural performances of a group of Persian diasporic bloggers.

The exploration of a diasporic virtual *dowreh* produced several interesting results. The findings suggest the possibility of online community formation via weblogs where Iranians could meet and perform cultural identities which are not available to them in the host society. Two characteristics that marked the virtual *dowreh* were the type of Persian language used and the interaction between the bloggers and their audience. The analysis demonstrated that interactions between the bloggers and their audience via commenting functions were noticeably governed by Iranian notions of politeness and other Persian rules of decorum and cultural practices. The analysis also illustrated that the language used in the virtual *dowreh* was a combination of written and spoken Persian, Internet jargon, weblog terms, and concepts from the host society. Furthermore, the exploration of the emotional challenges of the bloggers revealed that certain emotions such as homesickness and self-conscious emotions were among the major sources of emotion in the diaspora and indexed the bloggers’ Iranian diasporic identities online. The study concludes with the importance of weblogs for Iranian migrants in creating virtual *dowrehs* where they could practise/perform cultural identities and express and thereby share their emotional experience.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I believe that it is impossible to start and finish a PhD journey without the help, support, and encouragement of many. For this reason I wish to show my sincerest appreciation to the people who made my PhD studies possible.

Firstly, a big thank you to my first supervisor Dr. Martin Paviour-Smith for his depth of knowledge, insightful comments, meticulous and patient reading of the drafts, and invaluable guidance all of which were of great help in fashioning and improving the thesis.

I would also like to thank my co-supervisor Dr. Peter Petrucci for his breadth of knowledge regarding diaspora and migration, and his insightful comments and discussions of other diasporic nations that lay the foundation of this thesis.

My debt of gratitude and special thanks are also due to Professor Cynthia White who made my PhD journey possible and encouraged me to embark on weblog and migration studies. I believe that my PhD dream would not have come true without her provision of this opportunity.

I also owe special thanks to Massey University’s Office of Development and Alumni Relations for awarding me the Massey University Alumni Doctoral Completion Bursary that lessened the strain of student life in my final year of PhD. Thank you so much indeed for providing me with this opportunity and giving me some time to concentrate on the completion of my thesis.

Finally, a big thank you to my family especially my parents for their belief in the value of education and their desire that my brother and sisters continue our education, something that they had not been able to. Their dedication, support, and all they have suffered and sacrificed made my PhD possible. My years of doctoral studies at Massey University aroused a thirst for learning in me that will continue forever.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................. iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ............................................................................................................. v
LIST OF TABLES ......................................................................................................................... x
LIST OF FIGURES ...................................................................................................................... x
A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSCRIPTION ......................................................... xi

CHAPTER ONE .......................................................................................................................... 1
INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................................ 1
  1.1 Searching for another dowreh: a personal experience that turned into the object of study ... 1
  1.2 Research questions and framework for the study ................................................................. 6
  1.3 Research problem: studying the emotional experience of migrants in cyberspace .......... 8
  1.4 Significance of the study ...................................................................................................... 9
  1.5 Overview of chapters ........................................................................................................ 12

CHAPTER TWO ......................................................................................................................... 15
"FRIDAY FOR LIVING": THE EMERGENCE OF A VIRTUAL DOWREH IN THE IRANIAN DIASPORA ...................................................................................................................... 15
  2.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 15
  2.2 The Iranian diaspora: from past to present ......................................................................... 15
    2.2.1 Studies on the Iranian diaspora .................................................................................... 18
    2.2.2 Consciousness and liminality in the Iranian diaspora .................................................... 21
  2.3 "Friday for living": the warmth of a virtual dowreh ............................................................. 23
  2.4 Weblogs in the Iranian diaspora .......................................................................................... 32
  2.5 Previous work on weblogs .................................................................................................. 33
  2.6 The functions of weblogs for Iranians in the diaspora ......................................................... 35
  2.7 Language in the Persian diasporic weblogs ....................................................................... 37
  2.8 Summary ............................................................................................................................ 47

CHAPTER THREE ....................................................................................................................... 49
PERSIAN DIASPORIC WEBLOGS AS ONLINE COMMUNITIES ................................................. 49
  3.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 49
  3.2 Developing social networks in online communities ............................................................. 50
    3.2.1 Weblogs as virtual communities .................................................................................. 52
    3.2.2 Diasporic weblogs as virtual communities ................................................................. 55
  3.3 Persian diasporic weblogs as virtual communities .............................................................. 55
  3.4 Social network analysis (SNA) ............................................................................................ 66
  3.5 Persian diasporic weblogs and their audience .................................................................... 70
    3.5.1 Explaining and sharing the new ................................................................................... 74
    3.5.2 Explaining and sharing the old .................................................................................... 76
    3.5.3 The blogger as the audience ....................................................................................... 79
  3.6 Accommodating to the weblog audience in the diaspora .................................................. 80
  3.7 Social sharing of emotion among the bloggers and their audience .................................... 81
  3.8 Summary ............................................................................................................................ 85

CHAPTER FOUR ........................................................................................................................ 87
RESEARCHING A VIRTUAL DOWREH ..................................................................................... 87
  4.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 87
  4.2 Rationale for the choice of a qualitative approach ............................................................... 88
7.3 Self-conscious emotions ................................................................. 228
7.4 Shame and guilt in Persian culture ............................................. 230
  7.4.1 The language of shame in Persian ......................................... 232
  7.4.2 The language of guilt in Persian ............................................ 237
7.5 Vicarious/collective shame and guilt ........................................... 240
7.6 The language of pride in Persian .................................................. 246
7.7 Summary ....................................................................................... 249

CHAPTER EIGHT ................................................................................... 251

CONCLUSION ...................................................................................... 251
  8.1 Summary of thesis ...................................................................... 251
  8.2 Conclusion .................................................................................. 255
    8.2.1 How do Iranians in the diaspora use weblogs to revive their dowrehs lost in migration?
    .............................................................................................................. 256
    8.2.2 Which emotions, and their linguistic expression, index Iranian diasporic identities online?
    .............................................................................................................. 258
  8.3 Contributions of the study ............................................................. 260
  8.4 Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research ......... 262
  8.5 A final word .................................................................................. 265

REFERENCES ...................................................................................... 267
LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Some English words used by the bloggers in Persian writing .......................... 42
Table 2.2 Neologisms coined by the bloggers .................................................................. 43

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Ethno-linguistic presentation of the study ......................................................... 7
Figure 2.1 A typical Persian sofreh on a Persian carpet .................................................... 28
Figure 2.2 A Persian dinner mehmaani (reception) .......................................................... 29
Figure 2.3 Persian diasporic language in weblogs ............................................................. 46
Figure 3.1 A typical Haft Sin in the diaspora ................................................................. 60
Figure 3.2 Mapping and visualisation of Persian weblogs in the diaspora ................. 68
Figure 3.3 Visualisation of blog connections after deleting the peripheral icons .... 69
Figure 4.1 Variations of online environment ................................................................. 91
Figure 4.2 The grounded theory analytic process ......................................................... 107
Figure 5.1 Homaayun’s pastry cooking as published in his weblog .......................... 134
Figure 6.1 Acculturation strategies ............................................................................... 190
Figure 6.2 A framework for acculturation research ..................................................... 192
A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSCRIPTION

In order to transliterate and transcribe the Persian language used in the body of this thesis I simply considered the computer keyboard as it was the fastest and the most convenient way of transliterating or transcribing Persian into Latin characters. Furthermore, I felt that using English keyboard and English alphabet were the most comprehensible way of presenting the Persian language to readers of English. In using the keyboard, I have tried very hard to create a simple and user-friendly way of representing the Persian sounds to the reader. However, there were two cases that I preferred to use two different symbols to represent the sounds. I have represented /i:/ with “i” and “ee”. This is because it is common in Persian to write “ee” for names that include /i:/ Therefore, all the Persian names that needed /i:/ have been transliterated with “ee”; other Persian words have been transliterated with “i”. The second case was the transliteration of /u:/ This was once again because some Persian names use “oo” to represent /u:/ Furthermore, I have used “oo” in the initial syllables of the Persian words so that the English reader does not confuse /u:/ with /ʌ/ elsewhere “u” has been used to represent /u:/.

The Persian language has six vowel phonemes and twenty three consonant phonemes. The following tables show the Persian vowel and consonant phonemes and their Romanised equivalents that have been used in this thesis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phoneme</th>
<th>Sound in IPA</th>
<th>Persian Letter</th>
<th>Romanisation in this thesis</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/i:/</td>
<td>[i:]</td>
<td>ی</td>
<td>i, ee</td>
<td>ist /i:st/ (stop); Saeed /sai:d/ (a Persian name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/e/</td>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>ketaab /keta:b/ (book)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/æ/</td>
<td>[æ]</td>
<td>َ</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>dard /dærd/ (pain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/u:/</td>
<td>[u:]</td>
<td>ۆ</td>
<td>oo, u</td>
<td>moo /mu:/ (hair); nofuz /nofu:z/ (influence);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/o/</td>
<td>[o]</td>
<td>ۆ, ۆ, ۆ, ۆ, ۆ</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>gol /gol/ (flower)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/a:/</td>
<td>[a:]</td>
<td>ُ</td>
<td>aa</td>
<td>maar /ma:r/ (snake)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoneme</td>
<td>Sound in IPA</td>
<td>Persian Letter</td>
<td>Romanisation in this thesis</td>
<td>Example</td>
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<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/p/</td>
<td>[p]</td>
<td>ب</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>par /paːr/ (feather)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/b/</td>
<td>[b]</td>
<td>ب</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>baaraan/baːraːn/ (rain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/t/</td>
<td>[t]</td>
<td>ت، ط</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>taa /taː/ (till)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/d/</td>
<td>[d]</td>
<td>د</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>dast /dæst/ (hand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/k/</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>ک</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>keshavaazr/keːfaːværz/ (farmer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/g/</td>
<td>[g]</td>
<td>گ</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>goruh /goruːh/ (group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʔ/</td>
<td>[ʔ]</td>
<td>ء، ع</td>
<td>'</td>
<td>maʾani /maʔːniː/ (meaning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʧ/</td>
<td>[ʧ]</td>
<td>چ</td>
<td>ch</td>
<td>chaaneh /tʃaːne/ (chin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʤ/</td>
<td>[ʤ]</td>
<td>ج</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>jeld /ʤeːld/ (cover)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʃ/</td>
<td>[ʃ]</td>
<td>ف</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>faraar /færər/ (escape)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/v/</td>
<td>[v]</td>
<td>و</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>vazn /væzn / (weight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>س، ص، ث</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>saraab /særəb / (mirage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/z/</td>
<td>[z]</td>
<td>ژ</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>zabaan /zæbɑːn/ (tongue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʃ/</td>
<td>[ʃ]</td>
<td>ش</td>
<td>sh</td>
<td>shaad /ʃaːd/ (happy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʒ/</td>
<td>[ʒ]</td>
<td>ژ</td>
<td>zh</td>
<td>zhaaleh /ʒɑːleː/ (dew)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʃ/</td>
<td>[ʃ]</td>
<td>خ</td>
<td>kh</td>
<td>khaahar /xaːhɑr/ (sister)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ɣ/</td>
<td>[ɣ]</td>
<td>گ، ق</td>
<td>gh</td>
<td>gholaaam /ɣoːlaːm/ (sister)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/h/</td>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>ه، ح</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>haft /hæft/ (seven)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/m/</td>
<td>[m]</td>
<td>م</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>maadar /maːdɑr/ (mother)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/n/</td>
<td>[n]</td>
<td>ن</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>narm /nærn/ (soft)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/l/</td>
<td>[l]</td>
<td>ل</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>lab /læb/ (lip)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/r/</td>
<td>[r]</td>
<td>ر</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>iraan /iːraːn/ (Iran)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/j/</td>
<td>[j]</td>
<td>ی</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>yaa /jaː/ (or)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Persian also has long consonants which are a borrowing from Arabic. The long consonants are called *tashdid* (literally ‘emphasis’) which is represented as ّ over a consonant. In most English texts Persian consonants with *tashdid* have been transcribed with double consonants. In the same way, I have used double consonants in the transliteration of some Persian words to show the long consonants. For example, the word meaning ‘sensitivity’ in Persian has been transliterated as *hassasiat*. 