From Silk Road to Silicon Valley: A Needs Assessment of English Language Services for the Iranian Community

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From Silk Road to Silicon Valley: A Needs Assessment of English Language
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ABSTRACT

A two-part anthropological project was conducted in the Iranian community of the Silicon Valley. Part one was a needs assessment to determine the need for English as a Second Language training (ESL) and identify potential barriers to the acquisition of this training; including how and why these barriers exist in the Iranian community. Part two was an intervention consisting of the development and implementation of a unique ESL program within the Persian Organization, a non-profit entity that assists Iranians, especially new arrivals. Ethnographic methods utilized in the project consisted of secondary source data, participant observation, interviews and casual conversations with community members. Immediately after the implementation of the ESL training program, a process of evaluation and monitoring was begun to evaluate its effectiveness and to make design improvements.

A variety of barriers were identified, both structural and cultural, many of which were overcome by design changes to the current program. A number of recommendations were made for future program changes. The goal was to provide results that could be replicated and expanded within the Persian Organization. The program design could also be utilized by other non-profit entities, especially agencies involved in resettlement of refugees and newly arrived immigrants from various other countries, which have federal and state policy guidelines that require them to provide English language training to their clients.

Several conclusions were derived from the project, primarily: there is a sizeable Iranian population in the Silicon Valley and a significant need for ESL training; traditional ESL programs found in community colleges and adult education centers do not meet many of the unique needs of Iranians; and ESL training is more effective when it is taught by instructors who

are proficient in the students' native language and are competent in American history and culture.

Based on participant observation in the classroom and feedback from community members, the Persian Organization ESL program has succeeded in furthering English proficiency and meeting the specific needs of Iranians. Key findings from this project provide new information regarding English language programs that can be utilized by community activists, anthropologists and policy makers to improve the service delivery of ESL training to traditionally underserved minority communities.

PROJECT INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

History of the Iranian Communities

In 1979 Iran was engulfed by the Islamic Revolution and a new government formed. Thus began the largest diaspora of Iranians in the 20th century, with an influx of students to Bay Area universities (Bozorgmehr, 1998:6). The first immigrants included men with student visas, but quickly women and entire families joined this movement (1998:7). The "pull" factors to the Silicon Valley were the moderate climate and the atmosphere of innovation and tolerance. The area provided economic and educational opportunities, and the Valley benefited from the wealth and previous work experience that accompanied this group. The "push" factors included the political conditions inside Iran, as the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned from exile in France to head up the new Islamic Republic (Axworthy, 2008:259).

Census records show a steady flow of Iranian immigrants to the Silicon Valley since the Islamic Revolution (Appendix A). In more recent years, individuals fled Iran due to high unemployment rates, harsh conditions imposed upon citizens by the government of Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad, and opposition to United Nations sanctions regarding Iran's nuclear program (Worth, Fathi, 2009). According to data from the U.S. Department of State, 2009 showed the highest number of all refugee arrivals in ten years (Appendix B). The annual number of refugees declined in the 1990's and subsequently reached a low point in 2002 because of security precautions and procedures after 9/11 (Appendix B).

The Department of Homeland Security reported 5,381 Iranian immigrants in 2009, 7.2 percent of all refugees admitted in that year (Appendix B). In 2010, there were 3,543 Iranian immigrants, making up 4.8 percent of all admissions. Department of State figures also show the leading states of residence for refugee arrivals in 2010, with California topping the list at 12 percent.

Nilou Mostofi states, "like many immigrants before them, Iranians in the United States construct a dual identity" (Mostofi, 2003:682). She suggests that "throughout this immigration, immigrants maintain a longing for their homeland and a desire to either return or preserve their nostalgia as a form of identification" (2003:682). Simultaneously, the Iranian population in Silicon Valley has for many years chosen to remain "under the radar" and assimilate into the larger population because of their shared belief as a group in the importance of success and education. They have not wanted to "incur social stigmas", mostly because of the 1979 Hostage Crisis and Revolution, but also since 9/11.

Iranians have often felt marginalized because of the negative media coverage of Iran and Iranians. Many individuals felt subjected to discrimination leveled against them as they were packaged together with various groups from the Middle East by Americans. Iranians have expressed frustration because they are labeled as "terrorists" and mistaken as "Arabs". Iran is a diverse and varied country with many people of different ethnic backgrounds and religions

(Axworthy, 2008:45). Some Iranians are particularly upset because they are Shi'a, which is a different branch of Islam and not practiced by any of the hijackers on September 11, 2001, who self-identified as Sunni and as "Al Qaeda", a specific group with a very small membership when compared to the amount of practicing Muslims world-wide (Wright, 2006:6-7).

According to Bozorgmehr (1998), Iranians who assimilate quickly to society's norms potentially want to shed their Iranian identity and be more American, often throwing off parental concerns, such as academic success in order to fit in with the dominant group and become "white". Mostofi says this image of "whiteness" has its roots in the racialization of many other immigrant ethnic groups (Mostofi, 2003). Mae M. Ngai puts forth that "the construction of racial hierarchies has been, of course, an ongoing project in American history since the colonial period" (Ngai, 2005:7). Ngai contends that "Euro-American identities turned both on ethnicity— that is, a nationality-based cultural identity that is defined as capable of transformation and assimilation—and on a racial identity defined by whiteness" (Ngai, 2005:7). This idea is manifest in the U.S. Census in which the majority of Iranian-Americans consider 'white' as an appropriate categorization of their ethnicity/race" (Mostofi 2003:694).

For many Iranians, embracing and perpetuating the image of "whiteness" described by Mostofi and Ngai would offer a solution to their dilemma of being associated with a country that has been vilified in popular American culture and media. This has been true in the past, but more recently, even though they still consider themselves "white", Iranians are embracing their language and cultural heritage. The self-reported "Language Spoken" field of the 2010 U.S. Census indicated that 82.7 percent of Iranians in Santa Clara County speak a language other than English at home, while 27.8 percent reported they speak English less than "very well".

These numbers were significant when compared to the general population, which reported 47.0 percent speaking a language other than English at home and 20.4 percent reporting they spoke English less than very well. The significance lies in the fact that the number of Iranians who did not speak English at home was almost twice the percentage for the total population, even though the statistics for educational attainment showed Iranians ahead of the general population with graduate or professional degrees at 32.4 percent, compared to 19.6 percent for the general population (Appendix A).

According to Bozorgmehr, "it is consistent with findings on other groups: the students who were having the most difficulty academically had assimilated to American norms, while those who had not assimilated, (spoke Farsi, had only Persian friends,) were more successful academically" (1998:25). Given the propensity for parents in the Persian communities to impress values of educational success on their children, those who maintain the native language and stay closer to the Iranian cultural enclave will be better students.

Why a Needs Assessment?

In January 2010, I enrolled in a Farsi class at DeAnza. The class was comprised of students with diverse backgrounds, including many Iranian-Americans. Most of these Iranian-Americans had enrolled in the course to learn how to read and write Farsi, which was imposed by their parents. These students all spoke Farsi at home, but they had a "duality" that was fascinating because it wasn't Farsi, but a "fusion" of two languages. The native Farsi speakers, many of them recent arrivals from Iran, were very vocal regarding their frustrations with obtaining English classes that fit their needs and a general sense of disillusionment with their English proficiency. These students told me they enrolled in the Farsi class to engage in conversation with native English speakers, who also had knowledge of Persian culture and Iran.

In February of 2010, I was asked to participate in the Language Exchange Program by the ESL department at DeAnza. They had a need for tutors who were native English speakers with knowledge of Farsi, who could be paired with Iranian students in the ESL program. I soon had four students who wanted to meet with me almost every day and were eager to spend time practicing with me. I discovered that these students prioritized learning American idioms and phrases, common in everyday conversation. They were dedicated to increasing the quality of their interactions with English speakers in Silicon Valley by learning more about the local culture. Soon I was not only providing conversation practice, I was helping them with written communication, providing them with knowledge about services in our area and helping them navigate DeAnza.

In April of 2010, I enrolled in Farsi classes at the Persian Language and Culture Association in Silicon Valley. DeAnza had canceled my Farsi class and I decided the Persian Language and Culture Association was perfect for me to gain further language skills. The manager and head instructor was Mahtab Razmah, a community leader with a vast network of friends and associates. She told me about concerns regarding lack of English services in the Iranian communities. She stated an interest in developing English classes within the local Iranian communities that would fit the specific needs of Persians, as opposed to the more generic ESL classes that were currently available in colleges, local non-profit organizations and adult education programs.

I asked Mahtab what she thought could be initiated to help with English language service gaps in the Iranian communities. She asked me to tutor English with some new arrivals that were in her social circle. Both were struggling to find ESL classes through the adult community centers. Mahtab told me these classes had waiting lists and the two men desperately wanted to

find employment. One was a former member of the Iranian National Futbal (Soccer Team) and the other was seeking employment at Google. Mahtab set up a small classroom for me at her school and I began tutoring these individuals every week. These sessions focused on improving their general English conversational skills, while also providing strategies for job interviews with potential employers. Both men accomplished their goals: one is now a soccer coach and the other is employed by Google.

Mahtab was very pleased and decided I should talk to Ali at the Persian Organization. The Persian Organization (PO) assists Iranians with English instruction, and other needed services for new arrivals, as well as other members of the Iranian community. This organization currently receives no local, state or federal funding and relies on donations from the community as well as volunteers.

The PO wanted to develop an English program and Mahtab thought I could help fulfill that need. Mahtab introduced me to Ali in May 2012 and he asked if I would assist him by developing a comprehensive needs assessment of English services at PO. He decided I could do this by designing an English language program and teaching classes. I decided this would not only give me the opportunity to volunteer in the community, but would also become my master's project for the Applied Anthropology Program at San Jose State University. I began teaching English classes in June 2012.

Definition of a Needs Assessment

Not all needs assessments are done by anthropologists. In "A Guide to Assessing Needs", a publication by The World Bank, it is clear that the target audience of this book is not necessarily anthropologists, even though it certainly does not preclude them. Directed towards individuals involved in development projects, the authors note:

Needs Assessments offer value by providing logical and disciplined methods for collecting useful information and making decisions based on that information. Needs assessments are often done before any action is taken (as with an assessment to define the needs of a community before a development loan is requested), although at other times a needs assessment is done to provide specific direction to activities that are already planned (as with an assessment to define desired outcomes and objectives of an infrastructure development grant). In all cases, the needs assessment offers a careful process for assessing gaps between current results and desired results (that is, needs) and then for applying that information to identify the available options so that decisions can be made. [Watkins, et al., 2012:2-3]

The unique benefits that come from a needs assessment formulated by anthropologists can be postulated as a holistic; culturally competent design. The application of anthropological knowledge, methodology and theoretical approaches to address societal problems and issues is at the heart of applied anthropology (Kedia, van Willigen, 2005:1).

Needs assessments can involve identification of community needs, where research is done to determine gaps in services that can be treated through policies, projects and programs (van Willigen, 2002:166). A needs assessment can also be used in program design for an organization, which also fills gaps in the larger community context. The identified needs in a program can also be used for subsequent monitoring and evaluation of that program (van Willigen, 2002:167).

To illustrate the idea of community needs assessments, two case studies are presented. The first, "Developing a Community-Based Definition of Needs for Persons Living with Chronic HIV", was intended to inform existing literature regarding individuals living with HIV and show the variations in needs as they related to ethnic groups and between genders, resulting in different outcomes and experiences for chronically ill patients and existing gaps in health care (Sankar, Luborsky, 2003).

The second case study, "Trying the Impossible: Relatively "Rapid" Methods in a City-Wide Needs Assessment" specifically looked at qualitative approaches as desirable in the

situation of a needs assessment that was conducted for the United Way in Saskatoon, Canada. This was a large project to identify human service delivery by several non-profit organizations and look for potential gaps in funding (Ervin, 1997).

Two excellent examples of program needs assessments are highlighted in this section. I begin with, "Quit Talking and Learn English: Conflicting Language Ideologies in an ESL Classroom". This was an ethnographic study of one ESL program in a Canadian senior public school. In this study, the needs assessment was also an evaluation and monitoring process that identified gaps in student learning by looking at teaching practices and curriculum and how these practices did not meet the desired needs of the students, but actually created barriers to the student goals of English language acquisition (Olivo, 2003).

"Beyond Language: The Many Dimensions of an ESL Program" was an ethnographic study of a successful ESL program in a Florida elementary school. The goal was to add to existing literature regarding what was being done in this program that addressed student needs and how the teachers identified and closed gaps that improved their program. The study was also intended to show how these results could be replicated, as is often the goal in program evaluation, assessment of needs and subsequent monitoring (Ernst, 1994). The case studies presented here were all conducted by anthropologists, or interdisciplinary teams that included anthropologists.

I also found methods suggested by E. Jane Davidson, "Evaluation Methodology Basics" (2005), helpful for the community needs assessment and design of the ESL program in PO that would have a positive impact on the clients of this organization and provide specific guidelines as to the fundamental purpose of the ESL program, while also putting into place a system of

monitoring student progress and ensuring that this program would produce positive outcomes for the students in advancing towards their goals (Davidson,2005:29-31).

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

My project consisted of two parts. One was an ethnographic needs assessment in the local Iranian community with the objective of determining the need for training in English as a Second Language (ESL) and to identify any potential barriers, either structural or cultural in nature, to the acquisition of this training. As pointed out by Davidson, cultural barriers might include such things as lack of motivation, family conflicts, or resistance to second language/culture acquisition resulting from personal issues (Davidson, 2005).

The other part of my project was to design, implement, and evaluate an actual ESL program for the Persian Organization. Normally, an intervention such as this would not be implemented until a needs assessment was completed. In this instance, however, the preliminary indications of the need for ESL training were so strong, including requests from the community itself, that the manager of PO was confident in starting a program immediately. Hence, I developed an ESL curriculum and began teaching classes simultaneously with the conduct of my needs assessment. If the needs assessment ultimately failed to show a significant need for the program or if the demand for the training from individuals in the community diminished, the program could always be discontinued.

For the sake of clarity in differentiating between these two parts of the project, throughout the remainder of this project report, I shall refer to the first one as "the Community Assessment" and the second as "the Program Evaluation".

Ali's goal was to have an ESL program that would be specific to Iranians, the first of its

kind in the Silicon Valley, as an alternative to the more generic programs in community colleges and adult education centers. He wanted his program to teach basic English skills to new arrivals so they could negotiate their way around the local area, help those with more advanced skills prepare for job interviews, and prepare clients of PO for eventual college classes.

In addition, Ali informed me that he was planning to apply for state and federal funding grants for the services provided by PO, particularly ESL training. He felt that it would be highly advantageous in this regard if he could show that he already had a well-designed program in progress that could produce results and be replicated by other non-profit organizations.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This project report focuses exclusively on the problem of English language acquisition by members of the Iranian communities in Silicon Valley. Since the goal of the project was to provide solutions to improving the delivery of English services, the project utilized the Language Socialization Theory as a framework to help understand the experiences of Iranian community members with the problem of language acquisition. The needs assessment was based in the idea that "linguistic and cultural knowledge are *constructed* through each other" and that language-acquiring children and adults "are active and selective agents in both processes" (Watson-Gegeo, 2004:339). "The learning of language, cultural meanings, and social behavior is experienced by the learner as a single, continuous (though neither linear nor necessarily unparadoxical) process" (Watson-Gegeo, 2004:339). ESL students "construct a set of (linguistic and behavioral) practices that enable them to communicate with and live among others in the highly complex, fluid, and hybridized cultural settings in which they may find themselves and need to act" (Watson-Gegeo, 2004:339).

We must look at the context of how not only first language acquisition occurs, but also the more complex nature of second language acquisition. All language learning occurs in social, cultural and political contexts. These can shape the way language is learned and also by what is not learned (Watson-Gegeo, 2004:340). The context of learning is "historically constituted between persons engaged in socioculturally constructed activity and the world with which they are engaged" (Watson-Gegeo, 2004:338).

Certainly the perspectives of second language acquisition and culture that emerged from various individuals interviewed for this project were multi-layered and complex. The Iranian perspectives varied, but certain themes remained intact. Farsi as an "identification of self" and in many ways a nostalgic tie to the homeland, was mostly valued, except in certain "outliers". Through participant observation and interviewing, it became evident that while people embraced the second language/culture acquisition, there was a certain resistance to some domains in American culture. This was not unexpected and fit with the experiences of many different diaspora communities.

The concepts of immigration, acculturation and assimilation have all been used to describe the experiences of diaspora communities. Especially in America, where immigration is the fabric of the nation, people from many backgrounds arrive and attempt to become part of a common destiny (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008). The term "flexible citizenship" is used to convey the agency that individuals can develop for their own immigration experience, even though they are still subject to the environments (laws) that lie in the domain of the nation-states as well as in the global financial markets (Ong, 1999). As flexible citizens, many Iranian-Americans maintain strong ties to the home country and travel back and forth, especially when they have family and friends and carry an American passport.

To understand Iranian-American experiences and identity, one must consider acculturative forces. Acculturation, or "cultural transformation initiated by contacts between different cultures" (Haller et al., 2011:735) actively "brings ethnic minorities into the mainstream of American life" (Chen and Takeuchi, 2011: 878). In this step of identity formation the individual has taken on characteristics of the larger culture, but keeps a sense of "self-hood" that harkens back to the homeland or native language. For the Silicon Valley Iranian communities, this can be seen through the lens of the importance and social capital placed on individuals in the community to have knowledge of Farsi, not only conversation, but competence with reading and writing the language. The evidence for this lies in the popularity of private Farsi schools and primarily Farsi being spoken at home. This trend was even apparent in the ESL classes at the Persian Organization, where most students were dedicated to English conversation during class, but before and after our sessions, even the more fluent English speakers would lapse into Farsi and this appeared to be a comfortable transition for most of the students.

Diane Hoffman's study of Iranian communities in Southern California suggests that "among Iranians, it is not accurate to assume that greater English language proficiency is linked to 'greater acculturation' to the United States" (Hoffman, 1989:120). Hoffman states, "proficiency in English serves as an extremely important means of instrumental integration into American society; but that there must be a distinction between instrumental participation in American life and a deeper level of commitment to American values and ways of meaning" (Hoffman, 1989:120). "Fluency and use of English does not necessarily reflect any inner, deeply held commitment to 'becoming American'. Hoffman asserts that "it is thus not related to 'identification' with the host society or culture acquisition at the deepest level" (Hoffman, 1989:121). Hoffman's study group was from an earlier migration, which would certainly contain

different variables than a study group in 2013. My research and data results did not always

parallel Hoffman's, but her work is important because it is specific to themes of immigration,

assimilation, acculturation and English language acquisition by Iranians in Southern California.

Aimee Garza and Lindy Crawford (2005) conducted an extensive study of an elementary

school in a prestigious school district with changing demographics in order to look at concepts of

English immersion and the expectations of schools in the assimilation process. Garza and

Crawford mention that Middle Eastern students are enrolled in this school, in addition to

individuals from various other ethnic and national backgrounds. The authors use the concept of

"hegemonic multiculturalism" to explain "the transitional nature of a school culture defined by

dissonance between the ideology of multiculturalism and the school's pervasive assimilation

agenda" (Garza, Crawford, 2005:599).

Garza and Crawford describe the idea that "racial minorities are culturally rather than

biologically deficient" (Garza, Crawford, 2005:601). Applying this paradigm to the field of

education, minority students and parents are often perceived as dysfunctional due to their

different cultural orientations (Garza, Crawford, 2005:601). The authors point out that "Critical

discourse studies are concerned with the ways in which language maintains and reproduces

power through consensus. Language, as a symbolic categorizing, and representing through words

(spoken or written), social inequalities are created, which are taken for granted as natural"

(2005:602). This analysis can be used to define terms such as "immigrant" or "refugee", which

can be used symbolically to separate a group from the larger population. Even perceived

innocuous terms such as "ESL", "assimilation" and "host society" can have the unintended

consequences of perpetuating social inequalities based on cultural differences.

METHODS

This project was conducted during the period June 25, 2012 through June 25, 2013. It was designed as a qualitative ethnographic research study to determine the need for ESL training in the local Iranian community, identify potential barriers to the acquisition of such training, and to develop and evaluate an actual ESL program. I personally designed the study, developed all the research instruments, and gathered all the data.

Project Instruments

I began the Community Assessment by gathering secondary source data from the US Census Bureau, The Department of State, and the Department of Homeland Security on the Iranian population in the United States and the San Jose Area. These data provided me with valuable background information about the size of the Iranian community in the local area and the proficiency with which its members spoke English. I found the ideas on archival and secondary data in "Essential Ethnographic Methods", by Stephen Schensul, Jean Schensul and Margaret LeCompte (1999) to be a useful guide in this effort.

My primary research instrument for the Community Assessment, however, consisted of interviews with individual members of the local Iranian community. I used LeCompte and Schensul's book, "Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research" (2010) as a guide in designing the interview questions. Each interview lasted 30-60 minutes. I began with a topic guide, but then conducted the interviews in an open-ended and conversational manner. My interview protocol included questions pertaining to demographic information, daily life experiences in Silicon Valley, family and social networks, immigration experiences, resettlement experiences, community building and activities, and future plans. Topics specifically related to English language instruction and services included where the informant received English

instruction, difficulties in obtaining the instruction, and ideas for improving its delivery. Additional questions pertained to overall fluency in English and its impact on such things as employment opportunities, educational opportunities, and access to health care institutions and social services. As an anthropologist, I was interested in questions regarding how English is adopted in the Iranian community, cultural attitudes regarding learning English, and existing barriers to obtaining language instruction. I took care in my questioning; however, to ensure that the interviewees did not feel compelled to reveal any personal or demographic information that might be too sensitive or threatening in any way. An additional interview with a counselor at a community college, who was a member of the Iranian community, gave me valuable insights about the experiences of Iranian students in dealing with their English speaking and writing requirements in college.

Participant observation was the third instrument for my Community Assessment. In my college Farsi class, I initiated conversations with Iranian native Farsi speakers to hear about their experiences in learning English. In addition, I attended many special events such as job fairs, refugee workshops and fundraisers sponsored by the Persian Organization, as well as cultural and recreational events sponsored by the Persian Language and Culture Association. These events provided me with opportunities to observe and engage people in conversations that yielded valuable information about English proficiency and acquisition.

Instrumentation for the Program Evaluation consisted mostly of participant observation. While instructing my ESL classes, I observed the learning progress of my students. I also raised questions in class from time to time and engaged various individuals in casual conversations about how the classes should be conducted to best meet their needs. In addition, I visited an instructor of an ESL class at a community college to get advice on how to design my own

program. Also, I occasionally received feedback from former students of my ESL program.

Participant Recruitment

The primary interview subject population consisted of members of the Iranian community in Silicon Valley. Since there is continual variance within the local Iranian community, a broad array of cultural perspectives, religions, social circumstances, gender and ages were represented in the sample. Only English speakers were considered for participation. Twenty participants in total included eleven women and nine men between the ages of 20-80. The interviewees represented a highly diverse group in terms of occupations, both here and in Iran. They included students, retirees, professionals, new arrivals and those who have lived in the valley for many years. With a few exceptions, these individuals did not know each other on a personal basis. The recruitment of participants occurred through theoretical convenience sampling while attending local community events and through participant networks, as well as key community collaborators.

With the support of the Persian Language and Culture Association of Silicon Valley, I was granted permission to conduct participant observation in the Farsi classes and to obtain informed consent for interviews from certain management staff and members of the center. Recruitment methods, and procedures were designed to ensure there were no conflicts of interest, and disciplinary ethical standards were strictly upheld. The Persian Organization commissioned me to teach their English classes and produce field notes and project evaluations on behalf of PO and their management staff.

Data Collection

Data collection included secondary sources of existing data, field notes from ethnographic participant observation, and individual interviews.

Secondary source data was gathered through online searches of the U.S. Census Bureau, the Department of State, and the Department of Homeland Security (Appendices A and B). These statistics presented a picture of the flow of Iranian immigration to the United States and the Silicon Valley, the size of national and local Iranian populations, and various demographic characteristics of their communities.

Ethnographic participant observation data came from a wide variety of sources including my participation in Iranian community events over many years, personal friendships with Iranian community members, my Farsi classes, my work with two local community organizations (the Persian Organization and the Persian Language and Culture Association), my tutoring experience with newly arrived Iranian individuals, and from teaching my own ESL classes.

Prior to my interviews, interviewees were asked to sign a consent form, either in Farsi or English, specifying that they were participating voluntarily, their identity would not be revealed, and the information they provided would become part of a research project. I carefully reviewed the document with each person to ensure their complete understanding, and they were then given the option not to be interviewed. No one declined. Their anonymity was protected through the use of pseudonyms in this report. In fact, the names of all Iranian individuals and organizations mentioned in this report are pseudonyms.

My interviews were conducted in a place of each person's choosing. They were recorded on a digital recording device and later transcribed and coded. If requested, participants were given a copy of their transcribed interview for their own personal records.

Data Analysis

I coded my interview data in order to identify major themes. I followed the methods of Greg Guest and Kathleen MacQueen (2008) which involved a system of "tagging", in which I

used a "memo" and a separate color for each memo in "MTM" (Memo to Me). These codes along with my participant observation notes from both community events and my ESL classes were essential to my being able to analyze the findings of the project.

Strengths and Limitations of the Data Collection

There is no question that my long-term ties to the Iranian community were an important factor in my ability to conduct this research project. Many people in the community are suspicious of outsiders, especially those who just "show up" at their events. There have been occasions when I was attending a community event that a friend would whisper to me, "See that guy over there?" I would then observe that the individual in question appeared to be a younger looking white man dressed in a suit who seemed to be scanning attendees. My friend would again whisper, "He didn't come here with anyone, I think he is from the CIA".

It needs to be emphasized that many individuals in these communities are uncomfortable talking to outsiders and typically would not consent to an interview with someone they did not trust. Usually, the trust is built by being known and recommended by a friend or family member to others in the community. I also would never have been allowed to teach ESL classes had I not been recommended by the director of the Persian Language and Culture Association of Silicon Valley. The Iranian communities are very concerned about privacy and issues of discrimination, as well as perceptions of Iranians held by the larger population, as perpetuated by American media sources. My ability to speak Farsi was another great advantage in gaining trust in the community.

One limitation of my data collection was my decision not to interview any of the students in my ESL classes. I was concerned they might provide answers they assumed I would want to hear, especially any ideas or thoughts on how to improve the ESL instruction and service, and

thus give me biased results. There was also the chance a student might feel intimidated during the interview, since I was their teacher, and potentially fear retaliation if they offended me.

Many interviewees seemed willing to discuss personal demographic information, but I was careful to stay focused on English language learning and life here in the Silicon Valley. I often left out questions about their homeland that I felt were too sensitive or might intrude on an individual's privacy or security. These questions included such things as an individual's legal status in the United States, details regarding their life in Iran such as where they had resided and attended school, and their reasons for leaving Iran and choosing to live in the Silicon Valley. Questions regarding family members were also omitted in some cases. Unfortunately, the omission of these questions had a limiting effect on my ability to discover information gaps in English service delivery to these individuals.

Another limitation was the fact that all my interviews were conducted in English, and only with people who had solid English proficiency. I did not have an official translator for this project, so I was not able to interview anyone whose English speaking skills were limited. This eliminated most new arrivals from my sample. With the few new arrivals I did include, I had to be careful to limit "slang phrases" or "idioms" and to keep my questions in more formalized English in order to avoid any confusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the Community Assessment

Iranian Population in the Silicon Valley

The 2010 census data, the latest available, show that there were 15,726 Iranians in the Silicon Valley at that time (Appendix A, Table 1). However, this number is substantially

understated because many Iranians identify themselves as "white" in census surveys. This was made very clear by Mona in one of my interviews:

> Because when you have those papers to put your ethnicity, it says White, Spanish, Hispanic, whatever, Asian, we're not considered Asian, not considered any other. There is no part that says Iranian, so we all put "White" in there and they don't know how many Iranians are living here. They have no idea. Each time we are going to put down "White" as our ethnicity, which we are "White", but as our nationality they should have an Iranian part in there so we could. Yeah and that is only the part that you force us, it's only "White" or "Asian". We're not Asian. So we have to put the "White" in there. Or they have, "Other." Why should we put "Other"? It means we are left as part of the rest of the world? These are the important part and we are the other part? No, we don't put "Other" in there. Yes, they don't know how many Iranians are here perhaps.

This is an important finding because, according to Kevin Pollard and William O'Hare in an article titled, "America's Racial and Ethnic Minorities", minority and ethnic groups have traditionally been under represented in census data. This under representation can affect services in their communities, especially education. Federal funds are allocated based on population numbers and many ethnic groups feel they don't receive their fair share of funding because their numbers are not accurately represented (Pollard, O'Hare, 1999:20). Regardless of inaccuracies in the statistics, it can be stated unequivocally that there is a large Iranian population living in the Silicon Valley.

The census data also showed that 82.7 percent of this Iranian population speak a language other than English at home, compared to 47 percent in the general population. Furthermore, 27.8 percent reported speaking English "less than very well", despite the fact that they were more highly educated than the general population and the fact that the majority of them, 58.2 percent, were employed in professional occupations such as management, business, science, and the arts (Appendix A, Table 4).

These findings show that, at least from a statistical point of view, there is a significant need for ESL training in the local Iranian community.

The Need for ESL Training per Community Members

Many of the following themes expressed by interviewees also emerged from my ethnographic observations while teaching, participating in community events, and from various individual casual conversations.

English Learned in Iran

Studying English is a common requirement in Iranian schools. However, the quality of instruction depends on one's wealth. I discovered that some Iranian individuals who had the most difficulty speaking English were either elderly or from lower economic backgrounds. Many said they studied "British English", instead of "American English", which is the only version taught since the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Unfortunately, these two styles of English contain differences in slang, idioms and word spellings. For this reason, many newer arrivals have more difficulty understanding Americans when attempting to engage in conversations. An interview with Nasrin reflected this theme:

> Usually public education for English starts in middle school and goes all the way through college, so you usually have to take an English course. But there are tons of private institutions that people go to as a child three years old, four years old. That's the language [British English] that most of the people in Iran are interested in learning. French and Spanish is not as popular. Most of the people who come from wealthy families and can afford the private classes; they know English before middle school. But for most of the people living in villages and all the deprived parts of the country, they're introduced to English in middle school. As I said, it's the most popular one [British English] and it's the most used one. Because if they want to work as a tour leader, as anything, that would be mostly associated with the foreigners it's mostly British English.

The Importance of Learning English

Almost everyone interviewed said that learning English was one of the most important first steps in making a new life here in the valley. New arrivals, in particular, wanted to acquire English conversation skills that would give them the ability to navigate their new environment and the errands of daily life such as shopping, banking, and accessing healthcare. Also, they perceived that a lack of English conversation skills further prevented them from finding employment or pursuing higher education. Individuals expressed a strong belief that the ability to speak English opened doors to important opportunities and enabled them to flourish as they moved forward with new their lives in Silicon Valley. Ali discussed this in his interview:

> That is absolutely right. Not only for Iranians, but for whoever goes through whatever countries they want to leave, they want to resettle and this is the first tool that they have to have to start settling and start their new life there and English is very essential to learn, to get a job, to move on with their life in a new land and it must be the first thing that every new arrival will start learning it before they arrive and from the time they arrive from the first day.

Difficulty Finding Employment

When asked about future goals, nearly everyone mentioned landing a good job. In one of my interviews, Bob talked about the how hard it was for him upon arriving in the Silicon Valley from Iran in 1986. He couldn't speak English very well, and not only did he have difficulty finding employment but he had no financial credit established here and was unfamiliar with the American financial systems. He was proud of his accomplishments since arriving here, though. He now owns a home and a business, and he and his wife have grown children and grandchildren. His interview was especially poignant. He was very open and willing to share all of his experiences since he felt it was important that he tell his story:

I went to high school, and college. And I have a Masters in Social Science. I was looking for any job. I found newspaper advertising. I saw that Kentucky Fried Chicken needed managers. I don't know, but they wanted a certificate or something from De Anza College. After 2-4 months, you could go working as a manager. After that, they hired the people, for a salary, I don't know, health insurance, everything, I think. Then I go for the classes to De Anza College. After that, I pass the classes. We had 45 people in the classes. And then I was number one in the class, the number one. But, I'm excited, for what? Today I pass [he begins to cry]…I have a degree in Social Science…Masters in Social Science…I have to work in Kentucky Fried Chicken…That time was very sad, but you know, I must show my family that I will go working for anything. I said [to my family], "I must do it, I will do it!" I was going to work at Kentucky Fried Chicken. After 2-3 months, the supervisor said, "What was your job before?" I said, "Why do you ask this question of me?" He said, "You are different." I told him he was wrong. The supervisor said, "Someday I want to go to the bank during the shift, and you have here all the employees". I will tell them, "Bob is here instead of me, and he is the manager, so you will all listen to him".

Embarrassment Due to the Lack of English Proficiency

In Iran, adults are the caretakers and cultural "brokers", while children and young adults are the learners. In America, however, when an adult has to go back to school or learn something new such as English, it's embarrassing. Nearly all interviewees mentioned embarrassment when discussing the subject of trying to learn conversational English. Many of the older adults have advanced degrees from Iranian universities but now depend on their children for translation. Soraya, employed as a counselor, mentions this subject in her interview:

I have doctors that come to see me [at the college] and their older children come with them to translate [English] for them. I have actually had situations like that last week. I had a couple, one was computer engineer and wife was an attorney in Iran, practicing in Iran. But they didn't speak English and they were embarrassed. Then you want them to go and start from the basic ESL and [you tell them] how long it will take. For the wife they agreed that maybe she can become a Paralegal, but still you need to learn good English. You know like, when she arrived here at the college she was thinking that in a few months she will learn English and she will go to law school here, again.

Students in my classes frequently acknowledged their embarrassment at their lack of English skills. Even some of the more advanced people seemed shy and lacked

confidence in the classroom. They spoke about not wanting an accent and having trouble in conversations with native English speakers because neither can understand the other very well. Parisa talked about being embarrassed when speaking in front of others in the classroom:

> Like speaking in college was, you know the hardest part. I had some problems, because, you know, it was hard to explain what I meant so I had a real problem speaking in college in different classes. It wasn't, at times in front of the class, with people from different countries, you know, making communication with them, sometimes I was afraid to speak in front of the class. So speaking with different people was my hardest time.

Preference for Conversational English

Almost every person interviewed said they preferred learning everyday conversational English over more formal English. When I interviewed Soraya, she mentioned how difficult it was for her when she first arrived in Silicon Valley in 1991:

> I thought I knew a little bit of English because this was like my second language in high school. Only that was my education in high school. Education and I studied a little bit of English grammar but never conversation. So when I arrived here, I couldn't understand a word of English, nothing.

The Acquisition of English Skills

Many people said that, of the six English skills – listening, conversation, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar – conversational skills should be learned first. During her interview Mona stated:

> I needed to practice on speaking English [conversation] more than grammar, because I needed to talk to people so they could understand me.

> Golcher, a young female college student, expressed similar ideas:

> When I came here, I had to learn how to speak, just a regular conversation, 'Hi, Bye, How are you'? 'Cold day, hot day, how is your day'? It was stuff like that. I didn't have that and they were not teaching me that on ESL classes, it was just too much grammar. If I was going out there, make a couple of friends, go do things with them my age and stuff, I was having regular conversation, 'what's this, what's that'?

I.J. also brought up this theme when he began to discuss his older parents who themselves had taken ESL classes in Silicon Valley. He expressed frustration, because after so many years his parents still had not mastered what he called, "everyday conversation". He was often called upon to assist them. This caused him concern about what people were actually able to learn in the local adult community center ESL classes. According to I.J.,

> Once you teach them conversations you can teach them grammar and writing and other things. But to teach them grammar and writing, in my mind, it actually hinders them from learning conversation.

Writing Skills

Many people said they still had trouble with their writing skills even after becoming fluent in conversation. Likewise, many of my ESL students with excellent conversational skills struggled with English composition. When I tutored, my students soon began to ask for help in writing emails, school assignments, and business letters. Several of my friends ask me for help on a regular basis. This probably stems from the difference in the grammatical structure of Farsi and English, but more importantly, due to Farsi being written in Arabic Script. Since I am learning the language myself, I can see how English composition would create challenges for native Farsi speakers. Hasti expressed this in her interview:

> Because my writing was really bad in the beginning and in Iran we don't have writing for English. Or even they don't focus on writing in Farsi. My major was math and science so they didn't focus on writing so it was the new thing for me. And I had so much difficulty with writing so I like, took all the writing classes and this helped me.

When I interviewed another student, Parisa, I asked her about her difficulties in learning English, especially with writing. She expressed frustration with another ESL program she was in and the challenges she was facing. I asked her about seeking tutoring, especially for writing. Parisa made the following statements about learning written skills:

Just in the ESL classes and sometimes there's tutoring for writing but, because you know people that tutor sometimes didn't pass high school in this country. Sometimes they come from different countries. So they are good in some English writing, but they just learned this stuff here and they didn't have, you know, it wasn't their major. So they just learned here and based on what their instructor taught them, so, it's not really enough and good.

Aids to Learning English

I found that many individuals used television, movies, and the internet as additional sources for learning English. These aids added another dimension by providing a cultural context within which they could read and hear American English conversation.

Duality of Cultures

Several parents of young children in the Iranian community told me that they spoke only Farsi at home because they knew their children would learn English easily in school. Regardless of whether the children were born in Iran or the U.S., they were required to have instruction in Farsi so they would maintain a fluency in that language. The goal was to retain a duality in both Persian and American cultures.

Barriers to the Acquisition of English Learning

Many Iranian individuals face a variety of barriers to the acquisition of English, both structural and cultural.

Structural Barriers

One important structural barrier that is unique to Iranian communities has to do with US/Iran relations. The United States and Iran have no formal governmental relationship (Worth, Fathi, 2009). The result is that documents from Iran that are needed for such things as employment or college entrance in the U.S. are not easy to obtain. Those that are available often require special translation services. Degrees and course units from Iranian universities are not recognized here, which makes it difficult for Iranians to enroll in U.S. colleges and universities

where they can learn English. Additionally, it's difficult to transfer money and other assets from Iran to the U.S., due to the international sanctions imposed on Iran. This often requires consultation from legal experts with special knowledge of which assets can be transferred (Maloney, 2010). These conditions are specific to Iranian communities in contrast to other ethnic communities, where individuals can take advantage of their multinational connections, because in most circumstances, there are economic connections between their homelands and the U.S.

Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, there has been less access to American English language programs in Iran, even in private schools. Students can learn English in private elementary schools, but these are costly. Public schools offer English instruction at the middle and high school levels, but this is taught as British English. More recently, French and German are also offered at the high school level and in the universities. Students are choosing these languages more frequently, often foregoing English instruction. For those who have the goal of attending college in the United States on a student visa, English instruction is still considered essential, however, many refugees did not realize they would be residing in the Silicon Valley and came here unprepared for their new lives.

Governmental funding for immigrant support services is based on census data. Since the data on Iranians are an under representation of population size, the Iranian community receives less funding for ESL training than that to which it is entitled.

Many Iranian individuals come to the United States to join family members already established here. Some are young students who depend financially on those family networks. Hasti spoke about this in her interview:

> You know learning English is important, but at the same times they need to be
> supported financially. So if they don't have home or if they are worried about
> their financial aid situation, they can't focus on learning, first they need to have
> supports here. And then when they focus on English and they can speak English

fluently they can find job, they can go to school and stuff. But when I came here I used to live with my uncle's family. I had like so much worries, I was nervous because I couldn't learn English and also I wanted to be independent and then finding a job. Usually people who just come here, they can find job easily.

As with other immigrant communities, family, friends, and social networks are crucial for Iranians. "Word of mouth" is an important information source. Many of my ESL students said they heard about the class from a friend or family member. Hasti's interview was also important because she talked about "not having any organizations to help her in adjusting to the Silicon Valley". The Persian Organization was not in existence when she first arrived. She was adamant in her interview about the need for Iranian organizations to help new arrivals:

> Yeah, it's really important. Even for me, I'm a young girl and even I had so many difficulties, I didn't know about services, social services, financial aid and stuff. So when I first came here and my uncle didn't know anything about these services, it was hard for me. I couldn't speak English very well and I was looking for a job and I was feeling lonely and nobody was there to support me, to help me, 'Ok, you should do this' or 'It helps you'. It took me almost nine months to hear about financial aid at school or hear about MediCal. Also, in MediCal there are no people that can translate English to Farsi for you. There is no English-Farsi translator.

Participants in this project who had taken ESL classes at adult community education centers or community colleges did not find them very satisfactory. College programs are designed mostly for students, not working adults. Their classes are held during the daytime, they involve placement tests, the classes are conducted in a series, and each class has a separate fee. Many students, including Iranians, qualify for grants and funding, which essentially makes these programs free. Even with this advantage, many Iranian individuals declined these options for certain classes. Out of necessity, the classes include students of all ethnic groups, so the subject matter is taught in a generic manner.

The individuals in this project complained that those programs did not give them the specific knowledge and skills they needed to seek employment or pursue higher education.

Moreover, these programs can take as long as two years to complete. Many of the adult education programs have been cut back or discontinued due to reductions in funding, thereby restricting access to their training. Lack of transportation is another barrier. Some Iranians, particularly young adults, do not have a car, do not drive, and depend on public transportation or other people to take them to classes.

A few individuals in this project seemed to lack proficiency in their native language, Farsi. When someone experiences literacy issues in their own language, it is more difficult for them to learn second language skills, for example, the principles of grammar. On rare occasions, I encountered individuals with issues pertaining to disabilities in hearing, sight, and memory which possibly interfered with their learning.

Cultural Barriers

Women, perhaps more so than men, find it difficult to attend classes. They often have time consuming family obligations in addition to regular household duties, such as raising children and caring for older family members. Many also have outside jobs to supplement the family income. This is true even for younger women who are dependent on the family for financial support. Furthermore, this dependence sometimes results in subtle pressure from the family not to take time out to attend classes.

Hasti also touched on social networks that are so important for people who are new arrivals. She also talked about "some individuals in the Iranian communities that she felt were not helpful". In her mind, there were people in these communities who did not want to help those who had just arrived. Since Hasti has lived in the Silicon Valley for about three years, I used some of her interview to compare and contrast experiences between those who came here in 1979 and those who arrived more recently. Hasti stated,

You know some people who have been here for thirty years … I feel that they want to escape from Iranian people. They don't like to talk to new people [newly arrived from Iran] or, they just have group of Iranians who came with them and they went to college together and they are, you know, like a family. But they don't want to give information or help to people who just come to the United States. There are other people who help. [Iranian community members] who have been here eight years or ten years, they help. They are willing to help because they have been going through the same situation that other people didn't help them but now they want to help.

While feelings of fear, lack of confidence, and embarrassment at not being able to speak English well create motivation to undertake ESL training, they also become a barrier for some individuals, particularly older ones, by causing them to procrastinate in signing up for classes. Even after enrolling, they tend to hold back and not participate fully in class.

In Iran, it's common for parents to care for their children until they are well into their adulthood, due to recent high youth unemployment (Worth, Fathi, 2009). In Silicon Valley, Iranian parents often become dependent on their children to serve as "cultural brokers" in the broader community. Unless employed in American companies, the older adults tend to congregate mostly with Farsi speaking friends and relatives, and do not get much practice in conversational English. This dependence on their children becomes habitual and may result in the avoidance of ESL training.

Complex family relationships can present a barrier, for example, when one or more members of the family want to go back to Iran and exert pressure on those who want to stay here. One woman told me about her husband, an Iranian-American, whom she had met and married while he was on an extended visit to Iran. He insisted they come back to the Silicon Valley. Leaving her parents behind, she accompanied him to the United States and gave birth to a daughter. She told me she had not enjoyed learning English while attending high school in Iran, and did not want to learn it here. She was desperately homesick and angry and depressed with

her situation.

Refugees, in particular, sometimes show resistance to second language acquisition. They're not happy about being uprooted from their homeland and placed in a strange environment. They're homesick, and prefer to speak Farsi as a way of staying connected to home. Sometimes they even exhibit symptoms similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), possibly the result of some hidden trauma.

Results of the ESL Program Evaluation

Enrollees in my ESL classes represented a wide range of English proficiency, with some being quite advanced. Some had good conversational skills but had trouble with reading and comprehension. Almost all had difficulty with written composition. In the beginning, all students were placed in the same class. This resulted in considerable frustration for many of the students. I had difficulty gauging the level of the subject matter at which I should be teaching. The advanced students got bored, while the beginners struggled to keep up. A few individuals actually left the program.

There have been some problems with attendance. Since the classes are free and there is no exact "entry point" in the program, many individuals don't attend on a regular basis. It's not uncommon for someone to be absent for three weeks or more, and upon returning, ask for all the class materials and lessons they missed. Other students show up in class without a writing instrument or notebook. Some consistently come without materials previously given them either by email or class handouts. This makes it difficult to teach subject matter in a way in which all students can progress at the same rate.

There were problems with students socializing in class and speaking Farsi to one another even after being asked repeatedly not to do so. Occasionally, a self-appointed "class comedian"

made jokes (in Farsi) about the lessons. Some of the students who were socializing were refugees who were still feeling homesick. Others were simply lonely and wanted to be with people who shared their language and culture. This "seeming resistance" to learning may have been a manifestation of their anxiety about being in a new, unfamiliar home, and specifically a class in which they were struggling to learn a new language. Regardless, it constituted a disruption to the group.

Feedback in class told me that conversational skills were the most important to the students. They wanted to work on phraseology but also improve their vocabulary including American idioms and slang. They were also interested in learning American history and culture, and were fascinated with certain holidays. They were particularly amused at Halloween, and couldn't understand why anyone would put replicas of ghosts, skeletons, and graves on their front lawns.

There were a few older students who seemed to struggle harder than the others in class. They were dedicated but blocked in their learning for some reason. I believe they were in need of special assistance.

There were several success stories in the short time I taught these classes. Some students left the class and afterward sent me an email saying all they needed was to build their confidence in their English skills. They told me that as a result of the class, they were better able to pursue their outside goals. Many students who were shy and quiet at first made remarkable progress, and later consistently contributed to class discussions. There were even a couple of individuals who moved back to Iran, but valued my ESL training so much, they asked me to keep sending them lessons and class materials so they could continue to practice.

Discussion

The Community Assessment in this project confirmed that there is a sizeable Iranian population in the Silicon Valley and a substantial need for an ESL training program. The assessment also uncovered a number of potential barriers to the acquisition of this training. My intervention was to design an ESL program that would overcome as many of these barriers as possible, and serve the specific needs of the Iranian community. The barriers included:

The difficulty of transferring important documents and financial assets from Iran that would facilitate the acquisition of ESL training in the U.S., due to the lack of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

English learned in Iranian schools does not translate readily to American English.

Less government funding for programs such as ESL in Iranian communities due to inaccurate census data.

Lack of social networks and organizations in the community that would normally provide support and guidance to help new arrivals with resettlement issues.

The reluctance on the part of some long-term immigrants to help new arrivals.

The inadequacy of established ESL programs in community colleges and adult education centers in meeting the specific needs of Iranians.

The special problems women have in attending ESL training due to heavy family obligations.

Dependence of older people on their children for help in communicating with English speakers.

The special problems of refugees in adjusting to a new homeland.

Feelings of fear, lack of self confidence, and embarrassment that inhibit some people from enrolling in ESL training.

Lack of literacy in Farsi that cause difficulties in learning English.

Lack of financial resources.

Lack of transportation to attend classes.

Issues of disabilities in hearing, sight, and memory.

Symptoms of PTSD in some refugees that inhibited learning.

Language Socialization Theory suggests that language and culture are constructed together and that individuals involved in language acquisition possess their own agency in both these processes (Watson-Gegeo, 2004:339). All language learning occurs in social, cultural and political contexts. These can shape the way language is learned and also by what is not learned (Watson-Gegeo, 2004:338).

Language Socialization Theory combined with the findings of the Community Assessment and the Program Evaluation phases of my project led to the following set of guidelines for the design of the ESL program. The program must teach all six English skills – listening, conversation, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar - but have the flexibility to accommodate a wide range of English proficiency on the part of students enrolled in the classes. Building conversational skills is a high priority, so qualified instructors should present a curriculum that includes American slang, idioms, and colloquialisms, along with American history and culture. These instructors should also have solid proficiency in Farsi, and knowledge of Persian culture in addition to the history of Iran. Classes should be held at convenient times of the day for working adults, preferably tuition free or with minimal fees per class. The objective of the training is to

enable students to navigate their way around the broader community environment and to prepare them for seeking employment or pursuing higher education. Lastly, it would be helpful if the program were conducted within a respected organization in the Iranian community that could solicit volunteers and financial resources to support the program.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be derived from this project.

There is a sizeable population of Iranians in the Silicon Valley that is in need of ESL training.

Census data understate the number of Iranians in the United States. Since government funding is based on these data, Iranian communities do not receive the amount of funding they are entitled to for programs such as ESL training.

The local Iranian communities are not well understood by others. Many individuals feel discrimination due to the strained relations between the United States and Iran.

Despite the fact that many Iranian immigrants are highly educated and already hold degrees from Iranian universities, they still experience difficulties upon their arrival to the Silicon Valley, particularly when attempting to find employment in their field or area of expertise. These individuals feel an urgency to improve their English skills.

Traditional ESL programs, such as those in community colleges and adult education centers, do not meet the specific needs of many Iranian individuals.

There are many barriers, both structural and cultural, that inhibit Iranians from undertaking ESL training. Most of these barriers were overcome through the design features of the ESL program in this project.

ESL programs are more effective when they are taught by bi-lingual instructors who speak the native language of the students as well as English, and are also knowledgeable of the culture in which each language is embedded.

Based on evaluation and monitoring over the period of a year, the ESL program designed in this project is succeeding in meeting the specific needs of Iranians. The project can serve as a model for community leaders who might be interested in developing an ESL program in their respective communities.

OUTCOMES

The ESL Program

This ESL program was designed to meet the specific needs of the Iranian community, thereby becoming the first of its kind. It's practical in nature as opposed to being academic, and its goal is to prepare people for navigating their way through the broader community as they go about their daily lives, seeking employment, and pursuing higher education.

The curriculum consists of three classes based on enrollees' proficiency in English – beginning, intermediate, and advanced. The classes are held early in the evening, two days per week. When someone enrolls, a private appointment is arranged in which a brief oral assessment is made to determine to which class the individual should be assigned. The student is also asked to sign a document that spells out the requirements

for participating in the program. These requirements consist of a "code of conduct" for one's deportment inside the classroom, and the necessity of bringing all materials to each session such as homework, notebooks, and pens or pencils. They're told that if they should violate the code of conduct on a continual basis, they will be asked to leave the program.

Six skills are taught in each class – listening, conversation, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar – with an emphasis on conversation. The subject matter covers not only traditional English expressions but also American slang, idioms, colloquialisms, basic history, and culture.

The beginning level requires some background in English. The students must know the alphabet, some grammar, and how to phrase basic verbal instructions and requests. They must complete a short written assignment that involves an understanding of basic writing strategies. This class is highly focused on the six English learning categories, and devoted entirely to the development of sufficient skill to enable students to advance to the next level.

The intermediate level is a more comprehensive review of the six language skills, but with an increased emphasis on American slang, idioms, and complex everyday conversational styles. These classes also provide discussions of American culture, history, and government. This class can be used to prepare those who want to take the test for citizenship in the U.S.

The advanced level is a continuation of the six language skills, but with lessons that include more detailed content on American culture and history. Students will spend more time with popular American media, articles, and novels. At this level, students should be able to engage easily and confidently in English conversation including current American cultural expressions. Upon completion, they should be able to successfully interview for a job or pass a

college entrance exam.

Much of the classroom time for advanced students is devoted to popular cultural expressions. In addition, they're given assignments to watch particular movies or TV shows and then write summaries of the content along with their understanding of the central themes.

Homework is assigned in each session consisting of such things as reading text presented in a handout, reading a newspaper, listening to a TV program, or preparing some topic of interest for discussion in the next session. Students are encouraged to read books and articles on their own, watch TV programs and movies, and spend at least 15 minutes each day practicing by conversing in English with a family member or friend. They're also encouraged to keep a "vocabulary diary" and to review it every day in order to expand their word fluency.

Great efforts are made to create a relaxed, supportive classroom atmosphere that promotes self-confidence and trust building. Many students are shy and nervous when they first come to class. They're repeatedly reminded to speak out and not be afraid to make mistakes. In fact, mistakes are encouraged, as a natural pathway to learning.

Students advance from one level to another based on the personal observation and subjective assessment of the instructor. As they advance or complete the program altogether, they're given a "letter" of recognition.

To combat attendance problems, attendance sheets are filled out in every class. Problem students are given individual counseling, and reminded of the attendance clause in their "code of conduct" contract.

In some cases, individuals who finish the program are referred to tutors outside the organization who can provide specialized help, for example, in preparing to look for a job. In a few cases of severe financial hardship, PO gives certain individuals free passes on local transportation so they can come to class.

The enrollment in the ESL program has steadily grown from 5 students when I first began teaching in June of 2012 to 60 in April 2013. More instructors have been added. Plans are being made to expand the program into PO's several other locations. This is substantial evidence that the program is succeeding in meeting the needs of the people in the Iranian community.

Recommendations for the Future

An ongoing process of evaluation and monitoring of this ESL program should continue to reveal the need for additional improvements. At the close of this project, however, my recommendations for the future include the following.

The beginning class should include four sessions per week instead of two. Twice a week is sufficient for the intermediate and advanced levels. One of the two weekly meetings of the advanced class should be devoted to the development of writing skills, and require students to produce written materials such as emails and essays. Incentives should be created to encourage regular class attendance at all three levels.

Three special classes would be helpful additions to the curriculum. The first addition would be a class for intermediate and advanced students who are seeking employment. This class would focus on job searching, writing resumes, interviewing skills, and professional networking websites, and could be taught by a volunteer instructor from the Iranian community. The second class would be designed for older adults at the beginning level of proficiency, and would consist

only of conversational instruction and practice. Subject matter of the class would be topics of interest to that age group such as estate planning. A subordinate purpose of the class would be to start conversation groups that could turn into social circles. The third additional class would be a training program for the ESL instructors. These are volunteers from the local community whose experience in teaching varies widely. This instruction would include not only how to teach ESL subject matter, but also how to establish a safe, supportive classroom environment.

Some students need more practice than is possible in a two-hour class. One way of providing this practice would be to solicit volunteers from the Iranian community who could tutor students, particularly at the beginning level, especially students who are struggling and having difficulty keeping up in class. Another way would be to institute a language exchange program in which both Iranians and Americans, who are interested in increasing their proficiency in Farsi, would be invited to come in and pair up with ESL students for the purpose of practicing conversational skills. The native Farsi speakers would converse in English and the native English speakers would practice Farsi.

The ESL program presently lacks a formal syllabus for each class. These should be developed, along with curriculum tests designed for the purpose of determining when students are ready to advance to a higher class level or graduate from the program.

Further ways in which the learning experience of students could be enhanced in the program would be to install a DVD player and monitor in each classroom so that video clips could be shown of movies, television shows, sporting events, and other programs that would facilitate the learning of American popular culture. Field trips, especially for beginning students, to places like grocery stores, shopping malls, local landmarks, and sporting events could potentially accelerate their ability to navigate new environments.

It would be helpful to locate ESL textbooks or develop worksheets specifically for native Farsi speakers. These materials could provide English instruction through familiar scenarios of American culture such as holidays, famous landmarks, common idioms, slang, and aspects of everyday life. At the same time, the students would also have important, familiar cultural aspects from Iran, such as the Persian New Year.

Some members of the community have remained underserved for various reasons. Women in particular, tend to have family obligations that often prevent them from attending classes. In the future, students should be encouraged to bring family members, including children, to the classes. This would increase the awareness of the entire family to the benefits of ESL training and encourage its support of students' attendance.

After the ESL program has been operating for a longer time, a quantitative evaluation of the program should be conducted to determine whether it is successful in enabling students to achieve their outside personal goals, such as employment and higher education, which depend so heavily on English proficiency.

REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Reflections

The Persian Organization and Persian Culture and Language Association were interested in utilizing the skills of an anthropologist because of my ability to work cross-culturally, cultural sensitivity and the ability to understand the complex layers of these communities. My ethnographic skills were reinforced by my understanding of belief systems, cultural practices and the structural and cultural barriers keeping Iranian community members from English language acquisition and second culture acquisition in the new country they now called home. I employed

a theoretical standpoint, ethnographic methods and cultural sensitivity to explain the barriers to acculturation, assimilation, second language acquisition and second culture acquisition by members of the Iranian communities.

Since I had already spent so much time in the communities, learning Farsi, attending many cultural events and spending time with friends and acquaintances, I began to wonder if perhaps I had crossed over into "advocacy". This was a personal reflection for me, as every anthropologist experiences fieldwork differently. I had seen this theme many times over the past few years in my literature reviews of anthropology in applied praxis. I knew that my experiences were not unique. According to Alayne Unterberger, "working at the grassroots, community level means that first and foremost, our subjects become people, friends and sometimes, guides, we establish long-term relationships with them and that changes things" (Unterberger, 2009:2). He states further: "The people with whom we work have rights and one right is for them to question why they should engage in a voluntary project with us. What do they get out of it?" (Unterberger, 2009:2).

Kedia and van Willigen describe the role of "cultural broker" in applied praxis. "Cultural brokers liaise between programs or organizations and communities. In this role, many anthropologists serve as advocates for people unfamiliar with the entities who usually have some power over them" (Kedia, van Willigen, 2005:12). They also emphasize that "cultural brokering always involves two-way communication and is rarely an anthropologist's primary role" (Kedia, van Willigen, 2005:12).

Unterberger's use of the word "subject" did not align with my belief system, however, I did agree with his analysis of communities under study. Kedia and van Willigen talk about cultural brokering and at least in my situation, most of my community collaborators understand

perfectly how the system works and can navigate it. The people who are in a vulnerable position tend to be the new arrivals, refugees and English language learners. Iranian community members know very well how to help these individuals, but I have still found that I could take on a role of helping those outside the communities understand more about Persian language and culture and work toward improving the media's portrayal of Iranians, especially in our own Silicon Valley.

My own personal experiences of second language acquisition (Farsi) which predisposed me to take on a journey of "inquiry" into a second culture, informed my research with a certain "reflexivity", in other words, brief glimpses into the mirror of my imagination concerning what it might be like to reinvent various portions of "selfhood" in a pragmatic attempt to ensure that one gains the necessary knowledge for admittance to the various institutions in the new society, while choosing to hold onto parts of personal identity that one feels are irreplaceable.

Implications for Anthropology

Since the 1980's, immigrants and their children have become the fastest growing demographic of the American population (Haller, et al., 2011). The Iranian communities in Silicon Valley are part of this demographic, as census numbers show Santa Clara County and California as home to a large population of persons claiming Iranian ancestry in the United States. Given the knowledge that census numbers for Iranians are widely regarded as understated, their significance as part of the future of Silicon Valley in regard to shaping the landscape of diversity, innovation, education and political economy, should be viewed with the same anthropological emphasis currently placed on other immigrant populations and the population of Silicon Valley generally, as it relates to charting the future of this area for all who call this valley home.

I believe that anthropologists can find ways to improve the knowledge of Iranian populations in Santa Clara County using structured quantitative methods combined with qualitative/ethnographic methods that are the hallmark of anthropology. H. Russell Bernard in his book "Research Methods in Anthropology" (2011), offers great advice for novice, as well as experienced fieldworkers regarding census data and sampling options that will help fill in the gaps. This project would also benefit other immigrant communities in the Silicon Valley that are currently underserved, especially in areas of English language services.

Following the theoretical model in this report of Second Language Acquisition (Watson-Gegeo, 2004), it is important to connect anthropological studies that look at the symbiotic relationships existing between immigration, language and culture, especially in the United States and our valley. "Linguistic and cultural knowledge are constructed through each other" (Watson-Gegeo, 2004:339). This becomes apparent when individuals leave one culture to reinvent themselves in another. There emerges a duality of self that must reconcile not only narratives of place, but create new language modes, a linguistic cultural syncretism that builds new self-identity through second language acquisition.

Anthropologists study immigration (Bubinas 2005; King 2005; Ong 1999; Unterberger 2009) and they study and evaluate English as a Second Language (ESL) programs designed to "integrate" immigrants, especially children, into American society (Ernst 1994; Olivo 2003; Suarez-Orozco et al. 2008). Anthropologists also look at immigration and the subsequent second language acquisition, acculturation and socialization which occur in those communities (Parsons-Dick 2011; Garrett, Baquedano-Lopez, 2002).

My research concentrated on the need for English language services in the Iranian community in Silicon Valley, a need that had not been identified. My intervention was to design

an English language program inside an organization, after an extensive community needs assessment which showed that this program was a crucial need. The anthropological literature has provided important theories and praxis on how second language acquisition occurs and the processes of language socialization and reproduction. Anthropologists have also evaluated ESL programs designed to teach English to young children, while the anthropological research is scant on ESL programs for older English learners.

My project not only looked at ESL as it is presented to older students, I stepped into the Iranian immigrant communities who wanted to learn English so they can find employment, navigate the environment and improve the quality of their lives. I wanted to have an anthropological perspective of English with a different lens, looking at it as a series of sounds which produce symbols in the cognitive stratosphere of those who strive to become part of the "English body" and move past the gatekeepers holding the keys to structural barriers against those who do not have those sounds and symbols.

For many Iranian individuals English is a "tool"; it can be deconstructed as part of a journey that is embarked upon often as an involuntary experience, as with refugees, or a voluntary migration that is taken to benefit the family or individual. Courage, innovation and perseverance in both these situations were a common reaction.

Iranians as an immigrant group have been mostly overlooked by anthropologists. Diane Hoffman states, "The case of Iranian immigrants in the United States is a difficult one to address, if only because few studies have been conducted on Iranians abroad, and even fewer of these have been done by anthropologists" (Hoffman, 1989:119). Both Mostofi (2003) and Bozorgmehr (1989) indicated a belief that the Iranian populations in the United States were vastly understudied and not well understood. Both these researchers noted that the political climate in

the U.S. and the reluctance of Iranians to put their names on any official government documents has severely hampered scholarly research within the Iranian communities.

Many Iranian individuals have chosen to leave their homeland and forge new identities in the Silicon Valley. For some, it has meant leaving everything behind, family, occupation, friends and most importantly, their culture, a shared sense of values and meanings that have defined them since birth. In order to function successfully in Silicon Valley, English language acquisition as well as understanding the subjective meanings within American culture gives individuals the ability to develop their own agency regarding personal decisions in relation to how they choose to represent their selfhood in the acquired second culture.

Once again returning to the Second Language Acquisition paradigm (Watson-Gegeo, 2004) and combining this with the agency of the language learners, it is important to look at another tenet of SLA, which is how that agency is allowed to emerge through programs which provide the knowledge of the second language, in this instance, English. What has occurred in other communities that does or does not match Silicon Valley? Many studies of ESL programs in the United States and abroad offer valuable insights, but a few in particular are worthy of inclusion.

Garza and Crawford (2005) studied an ESL program in an upper-class elementary school that proved to be unsuccessful in fulfilling the needs of ESL students in that school. The researchers postulated a direct contradiction between the school's official policies and actual praxis within the classrooms. ESL teachers were seen by non-ESL teaching staff as subaltern and less qualified. Another serious flaw in this program was the preponderance of cases where the native languages and cultures of the ESL students were actually "devalued within the adaptive

English-immersion model designed to serve their educational needs" (Garza, Crawford, 2005:607).

Olivo (2003) conducted an ethnographic study for one school year in a Canadian middle school that was situated in a lower economic area. He found that in that ESL program, English language learners were kept apart from "mainstream" students and that the teachers controlled all student interactions and lessons regarding English. He also found that the staff was not culturally competent, only English was ever spoken in the classrooms, even though some of the staff was multilingual and could speak the native language of some of the students. Olivo observed that English was placed in a power position, maintaining hegemonic control over other values, belief systems and backgrounds (Olivo, 2003:53-57).

One of the pioneering ethnographic projects involving ESL programs and immigrant communities was "Learning in a New Land", by Suarez-Orozco, et al. 2008). They concentrated on students from Mexico, Central America, China, Haiti and Dominican Republic, drawn from school districts in Boston and San Francisco. They focused on Language Acquisition and in particular, Second Language Acquisition.

These researchers concluded that ESL programs were scattered, fragmented and policies varied by district and especially by state (Suarez-Orozco, et al. 2008:370). They also found that immigrants wanted to learn English and saw it as crucial to their success in employment and future academic endeavors; in essence, it was one of the most important acquired skills that would shape their lives (2008:369). The team also emphasized that unlike the immigrants that came 100 years ago, these individuals were transnational, they had connections to the homeland and wanted to develop a duality. This was not the case in the past century when immigrants

became monolingual and "mono-cultural" with the belief system that it was better for their future happiness (2008:371).

Gisela Ernst (1994) who conducted an ethnographic study of an ESL program in a Florida elementary school located in an economically depressed area, reported amazing results that reflect non-hegemonic praxis and could serve as a model for applied anthropologists engaged in public policy. In this one year study, students from 30 countries were represented and Ernst discovered that the program was successful because the teaching staff was multilingual and culturally competent, while volunteers from a local senior center came to work with individual students in conversation practice (1994:319). There was an entry point and exit point to this program which gave each student an individualized schedule that integrated their backgrounds, interests and strengths (1994:321).

The program included many different facets of English learning and staff was attentive to first language literacy and any signs of trauma, learning disabilities, or physical impairments such as hearing or eyesight. They also paid attention to any mistakes on official documents that would have incorrectly identified the student's native language or heritage (1994:324-327).

Anthropologists associated with communities, organizations, or development projects involving the establishment of ESL programs will find value in the findings of my project. An ancillary goal of this project was to research the structural and cultural barriers to English language acquisition for Iranians in the Silicon Valley. The results of this applied research were then used in the design of an ESL program within a non-profit organization. However, there was another component included in the process of my needs assessment for English services. I was not only providing recommendations to the organization, I was also assessing the needs for English acquisition of the Iranian community in Silicon Valley and looking deeply through my

data results for nuanced themes that would further contribute to future programs for this community.

Following closely the results I had uncovered throughout the literature, I wanted to mimic the results from the ESL program that had been described by Gisela Ernst (1994). The staff had carefully considered the needs of their students by looking for data that might not be on the surface or easily articulated, while having an impact on the success of the program.

Future programs in the Iranian communities would include results from the needs assessment, both community needs and program evaluation. The needs assessment was the result of a long-term qualitative/ethnographic engagement within the Iranian community. Through conversations, interviews and participant observation, (which admittedly was more participant, than observation in the early stages); I gained insights for future English language programs in these communities.

Nuanced themes included the emphasis put on learning English conversation as a priority over reading and writing. Slang phrases and greetings, especially "popular cultural" expressions in English conversation were expressed to me as a primary need. At first I simply assumed that this was because it enabled individuals to engage with others so they could navigate the valley for daily errands and accessing institutions. Then it occurred to me that there was more to this. Almost everyone had distinct gaps in their ability to communicate in written English. This would be crucial in navigating institutions and especially in finding employment. Emails, memos, school assignments, even text messages all play into finding employment and navigating the valley.

I would try to help with the written communication, only to be re-directed back to conversation practice. This fact, combined with the many complaints about ESL programs finally

made me realize that in Iran, ESL is taught differently. There is hardly any emphasis on written English and what is taught is sentence structure and grammar. It is not taught in a meaningful context and many students find it exceedingly boring. Future programs would have to take into account the past learning styles of many of these individuals and the ways in which ESL programs in the valley do not engage them.

I also decided that income disparities not readily apparent to me, could be affecting community members. Unless I was informed by an individual, I could not know if they had been wealthy in Iran and now found themselves suddenly in a financially precarious position. The same could be true of others who had experienced poverty in Iran, but now had family or were themselves in a position of prosperity. This would affect relationships within the community, but not necessarily with me. Sometimes however, there were community members who saw me as of a lower economic and social status, but because I possessed "native" knowledge, they were willing to "put up with me".

Nuanced themes that were hinted at in conversations and interviews were potential family conflicts and trauma. No one went into specific details but a few interviewees talked about how financial or family stress kept them from learning not just English skills, but many other things as well. Extended families have been a common theme in the Iranian communities, as well as in Iran. These culturally constructed symbols cannot be overlooked and differing belief systems must be taken into account. The Farsi language offers vital clues by the vocabulary used for paternal or maternal relatives and how senior family members are addressed.

Future language programs need to consider complex relationships that extend past the Silicon Valley and connect back to Iran. However, that being said, it is important to consider the words of Elinor Ochs (2000). She cautions anthropologists who study language and communities

not to fall into the well of "generalizing cultures and communities as if they are frozen in time" (Ochs, 2000:231). She adds that cultures and communities are "fluid and changing over the course of a generation, a life and even a social encounter" (Ochs, 2000:231).

Language and culture are intrinsically sewn together using textured and varied fabrics of sound and gesture that become the clothing worn to cover the individual. Like clothing, cyclical changes of style and trends occur with language, timeless, but also sensitive to timing within the permutations of culture. Anthropology attempts to provide the questions to the assumptive answers that define the meaning of language. These questions are amaranthine in the hearts and minds of anthropologists who have chosen to embark on journeys that lead to linguistic inquiries about individual and cultural agency in choosing second language acquisition. There is no doubt that the study of language and culture as eternal twins will be a guiding premise in the acquisition of all languages, now and in the future.

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APPENDIX A

Reference: All data in the following tables were taken from the US Census Bureau, www.census.gov.

Table 1. Population of Persons of Iranian Ancestry

	Santa Clara County			United States		
	Total Population	**Iranian Population**	**Percent**	**Total Population**	**Iranian Population**	**Percent**
2010	1,739,396	15,726	.9	303,965,272	425,587	.1
2000	1.682,585	13,467	.8	281,421,906	338,266	.1
1990	1,497,577	8,798	.6	248,709,873	235,521	.1
1980	1,298,071	6844	.5	226,545,805	243,010	.1

Notes:

1. Population numbers shown here for years 1990 and 1980 in Santa Clara County are presented in the US census tables as the San Jose Metropolitan Area rather than Santa Clara County. However, the San Jose Metropolitan Area comprises virtually all of Santa Clara County except for a few outlying cities such as Morgan Hill.

2. Population numbers for census years 2010 and 2000 are taken from a 5-year sample because the US census tables from a 1-year sample do not include data for Santa Clara County. Also population estimates based on a multiple-year sample are more reliable than those based on a 1-year sample.

Table 2. Percentage Increase in the Iranian Population from One Decade to Another

	Santa Clara County		United States	
	Total Population	**Iranian Population**	**Total Population**	**Iranian Population**
2000-2010	3.4	16.8	8.0	25.8
1990-2000	12.4	53.1	13.2	43.6
1980-1990	15.6	28.6	9.8	3.1
1970-1980	NA	NA	NA	NA

Note: Percentages were computed by dividing the population numbers in each decade by the population numbers in the previous decade.

Table 3. Year of Entry of Foreign Born Iranians into the United States

	Santa Clara County		United States	
	Number	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
2000-2010	2686	17.1	63,084	14.8
1990-2000	2856	18.2	61,534	14.5
1980-1990	3543	22.5	82,180	19.3
1970-1980	3422	21.8	121,505	28.5

Note: Percentages are based on the total numbers of Iranians in the county and the US in 2010.

Table 4. Selected Characteristics of the Iranian Population in Santa Clara County In 2010

	Total Population	Iranian Population
Educational Attainment – Age 25 And Older		
Bachelor's degree	25.7%	31.6%
Graduate or professional degree	19.6%	32.4%
Language Spoken – Age 5 And Older		
Speak a language other than English in the home	47.0%	82.7%
Speak English less than "very well"	20.4%	27.8%
Housing		
Owner occupied	59.2%	60.7%
Median value of property	$701,000	$875,700
Renter occupied	40.8%	39.3%
Employment – Age 16 And Older		
Occupation		
Management, business, science, the arts	49.1%	58.2%
Sales and office	21.5%	25.1%
Service	14.0%	11.4%
Industry		
Manufacturing	19.8%	17.5%
Education, healthcare, social assistance	18.1%	20.4%
Professional, scientific, management, administration	17.7%	17.9%
Retail	9.6%	12.6%
Median household income (2010 inflation adjusted dollars)	$86,850	$85,873

Notes:

1. Housing percentages are based on the total number of occupied housing units in the county.

2. Employment percentages are based on the total number of persons employed in the civilian labor force.

APPENDIX B

Source: U.S. Department of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System.

Lawful Permanent Residence and Citizenship

One year after being admitted to the United States, refugees are required by statute to apply for legal permanent resident (LPR) status. Refugees granted LPR status may apply for citizenship 5 years after their refugee admission date.

DATA

The refugee data presented in this report were obtained from the Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS) of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) of the U.S. Department of State.

TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF REFUGEES

In 2010, 73,293 refugees were admitted to the United States—a 1.8 percent decrease from 2009, which had the highest number of refugee arrivals in a decade (See Figure 1). The annual number of refugee arrivals declined during the 1990s reflecting a shift in the refugee program's focus to more diverse populations in dispersed areas. Admissions decreased further, reaching a low point in 2002, due largely to changes in security procedures and admission requirements after September 11, 2001. The number of refugee arrivals subsequently increased and, by 2009, recovered to pre-2001 levels.

Category of Admission

Principal applicants accounted for 32,251 (44 percent) of the 73,293 refugees admitted to the United States in 2010 (see Table 2).[8] Dependent children and spouses represented 39 percent and 18 percent, respectively, of refugee admissions.

Country of Nationality

In 2010, the leading countries of nationality for refugee admissions were Iraq (25 percent), Burma (23 percent), and Bhutan (17 percent) (see Table 3). Approximately 64 percent of refugees were from these three countries. Other leading countries include Somalia (6.7 percent), Cuba (6.6 percent), Iran (4.8 percent), Democratic Republic of Congo (4.3 percent), and Eritrea (3.5 percent).

Age, Gender, and Marital Status

Thirty-five percent of refugees admitted to the United States in 2010 were under 18 years of age (see Table 4). Refugees are, on average, younger than the U.S. native-born population. In 2010, the median age of refugees arriving in the United States was 24 years; in contrast, the median age of the native-born population in

[8] As of January 2011.

Table 3.

Refugee Arrivals by Country of Nationality:
Fiscal Years 2008 to 2010
(Ranked by 2010 country of nationality)

Country of nationality	2010		2009		2008	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total.	73,293	100.0	74,602	100.0	60,107	100.0
Iraq.	18,016	24.6	18,838	25.3	13,822	23.0
Burma.	16,693	22.8	18,202	24.4	18,139	30.2
Bhutan	12,363	16.9	13,452	18.0	5,320	8.9
Somalia.	4,884	6.7	4,189	5.6	2,523	4.2
Cuba.	4,818	6.6	4,800	6.4	4,177	6.9
Iran.	3,543	4.8	5,381	7.2	5,270	8.8
Congo, Democratic Republic	3,174	4.3	1,135	1.5	727	1.2
Eritrea	2,570	3.5	1,571	2.1	251	0.4
Vietnam.	873	1.2	1,486	2.0	1,112	1.9
Ethiopia.	668	0.9	321	0.4	299	0.5
All other countries, including unknown.	5,691	7.8	5,227	7.0	8,467	14.1

Source: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS).

Table 4.

Refugee Arrivals by Age, Gender, and Marital Status:
Fiscal Years 2008 to 2010

Age	2010		2009		2008	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total.	73,293	100.0	74,602	100.0	60,107	100.0
0 to 17 years.	25,373	34.6	25,185	33.8	21,637	36.0
18 to 24 years.	11,853	16.2	11,747	15.7	9,429	15.7
25 to 34 years.	14,954	20.4	14,842	19.9	10,906	18.1
35 to 44 years.	9,587	13.1	10,082	13.5	8,057	13.4
45 to 54 years.	5,727	7.8	5,971	8.0	5,000	8.3
55 to 64 years.	3,218	4.4	3,649	4.9	2,812	4.7
65 years and over	2,581	3.5	3,126	4.2	2,266	3.8
Gender						
Male	38,624	52.7	38,491	51.6	30,939	51.5
Female	34,669	47.3	36,111	48.4	29,168	48.5
Marital status						
Married	28,567	39.0	29,770	39.9	23,010	38.3
Single	41,022	56.0	40,798	54.7	33,969	56.5
Other*.	3,704	5.1	4,034	5.4	3,128	5.2

*Includes persons who were divorced, separated, widowed, or of unknown marital status.
Source: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS).

2010 was 35 years.[9] A slight majority of refugees were male (53 percent), and 56 percent were single.

State of Residence

The leading states of residence of refugees admitted to the United States in 2010 were California (12 percent), Texas (11 percent), New York (6.2 percent), and Florida (5.8 percent) (see Table 5). Refugee arrivals in California decreased 24 percent from 11,274 in 2009 to 8,577 in 2010. Refugee admissions in Washington and Pennsylvania both increased in 2010 by 16 percent and 22 percent, respectively.

[9] Calculated from the March 2010 Current Population Survey public use microdata file from the U.S. Census Bureau.

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INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

From Silk Road to Silicon Valley, Iranians Reflect on the Journey
Interview Protocol

Primary Investigator: Cheryl Tombrink

Introduction to Interview:
Thank you for agreeing to take part in this project. I am currently conducting research in support of my Master's Project in the Applied Anthropology Department at San Jose State University. This study focuses on the experiences and perceptions of Iranians who have immigrated to the Silicon Valley and how and where they have received English language instruction and if this need is being met. I am also interested in learning more about other services needed in the community. All of your comments in this interview are confidential and anonymous (they will remain private). I am recording this interview with a digital tape recorder so that I may understand everything you say. I would like to have your permission to tape record the interview during our conversation. I would also like to take a few digital photos of any personal items which you feel might help you tell your story, but if you do not wish me to take any photos, I will not do so. I would like you to read and sign the consent form and ask me any questions about anything you don't understand. By signing the form, you are allowing me to use information you provide for research publications, presentations or information that can be given to organizations involved in English learning services to possibly improve those services. This interview may take about two hours and nothing that can identify you, your family, friends or any names of places will be known by anyone but me and my Professor, Dr. Charlotte Sunseri. Any published materials will have all names of persons and places changed (no real names of persons or places will be used), so that all information remains confidential and private. Any digital tape recordings, digital photos or notes will be kept locked in a safe in Dr. Sunseri's office and destroyed at the end of this Master's Project.

I will be conducting "Conversational Interviews" around the following topics:

Demographic Information:
1). What is your name?
2). How old are you?
3). What languages are spoken in your home?
4). Who lives in your household?
5). Do you have any children?

Daily Life Experiences in Silicon Valley
1). In what city do you currently live?
2). Are you employed?
3). Where do you work?
4). Are you a student?
5). Where do you go to school?

6). Could you describe for me a "typical day" for you and what activities you engage in and where you go?

7). Do you use public transportation, your own car or another way to get where you need to go?

Family and Social Networks

1). Do you have family living here in the Silicon Valley that does not live in your home?

2). Do you have family living in Iran?

3). If you have family in Iran, what is the best way for you to stay in touch with them?

4). Do you travel to Iran to see your family and friends?

5). Do you have friends living here in the Silicon Valley?

6). What kinds of activities to you enjoy doing with your friends?

English Language Instruction and Services

1), Did you study English in school while in Iran?

2). Did you study English in elementary, middle school, high school or university in Iran?

3). When you first came to Silicon Valley, did you receive English instruction?

4). Where did you receive this instruction?

5). How did you find out about English language instruction?

6). Have you participated in any tutoring programs with native English speakers who also have knowledge of Farsi?

7). How did you feel about your English language instruction?

8). What improvements do you feel could be made for Iranians arriving in the Silicon Valley for English language instruction?

9). What are your ideas for improving information availability about English language instruction for people just arriving to this area?

10). Was English one of the first things that you felt you needed to feel comfortable in your new home?

11). Are you currently enrolled in an ESL program at a community center, college or university?

12). Are you able to practice your English skills with others or native speakers so you can improve your fluency?

13). Do you think it would be helpful if there was a brochure available in local Iranian businesses that informed you of where you could obtain English language instruction? Would this brochure be better published in Farsi and English?

14). Do you think it would be helpful if there were an advertisement in local Iranian community magazines or web sites that indicated where English language services could be found?

15). Do you have any further comments about learning English when you first arrived in the Silicon Valley?

Immigration Experiences

1). How long have you lived in this city? Where did you live before?

2). Did you live in another country before coming here?

3). What city or state in Iran are you from?

4). What influenced your decision to immigrate to the Silicon Valley?

5). Can you describe for me your life in Iran? What was your occupation? What were your favorite activities?

6). Have you received any services since coming here such as assistance with housing, medical needs, English language?
7). What organizations assisted you?
8). Before you arrived in the Silicon Valley, what were your expectations of how your life would be here?

Community Building and Activities
1).Do you participate in local cultural events in the Iranian community?
2).Which events do you like most?
3). Do you feel connected to others in the Iranian community here in this area? How do you feel connected?
4). Do you have some favorite stores you like to go to that have items that remind you of home?
5). Do you belong to any religious or other organizations?
6). Do you have any favorite restaurants that serve food that reminds you of home?

Making a New Home and Future Plans
1). What would you say were your biggest challenges when you first moved to the valley?
2). Can you tell me of an experience(s) that stands out in your mind as being special, making you feel welcome and comfortable when you first arrived? Was there something that made you feel uncomfortable or unwelcome?
3). Have you been able to make new friends? Where did you meet them?
4). Where do you see yourself in one year from now? Five years from now? Ten years from now?
5). Do you have any other comments, ideas or stories that you would like to tell me about your experiences living in the Silicon Valley?

CONSENT FORMS

English

Interview Consent Form (for Adult Participants)
Agreement to Participate in Research

 Primary Investigator: Cheryl Tombrink, SJSU Applied Anthropology MA Student

Title of Study: From Silk Road to Silicon Valley, Iranians Reflect on the Journey

1. You have been asked to participate in a project to learn more about how to improve the service delivery of English language instruction to newly arrived individuals from Iran and the general experiences of immigration to the Silicon Valley.
2. You will be asked to participate in an interview regarding your experiences with immigration or refugee resettlement services, especially the availability of English language instruction to individuals from Iran in the Silicon Valley. Interview participants will be protected as anonymous interviewees. Interviews will be tape recorded and digital photographs may be taken of personal cultural artifacts with the permission of the interviewee. All publications or dissemination of this research will exclude name and identifying information associated with quotes from this interview. All audio files and any digital photographs will be destroyed upon the completion of the study and will remain in a locked filing cabinet until that time. Interviews will be scheduled at the participant's convenience, based on his or her availability, and preferred interview setting (i.e. private or public).
3. There is no foreseeable risk in your participation beyond that which is encountered in daily life. Please be assured that you are under no obligation to participate in this study.
4. Your participation primarily benefits the student's MA project requirements at San Jose State University and is expected to benefit the greater Iranian community in the Silicon Valley.
5. Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included. Pseudonyms will be used in all interview notes in place of actual identifying information.
6. There is no compensation for participation in this study.
7. Questions about this research may be addressed to Cheryl Tombrink, Graduate Student, San Jose State University, at (408) 371-7286, **Cheryl.Tombrink@gmail.com.** Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Charles Darrah, Chair, Anthropology Department, (408) 924-5314, **Chuck.Darrah@sjsu.edu.** Questions about a research subjects' rights, or research-related injury may be presented to Pamela Stacks, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2427.
 8. No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose not to participate in the study.
 9. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study. You have the right to not answer questions you do not wish to answer. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University or with any participating organizations in regards to this study.
 10. At the time that you sign this consent form, you will receive a copy of it for your records, signed and dated by the investigator.

1
The signature of a subject on this document indicates agreement to participate in the study.
The signature of a researcher on this document indicates agreement to include the above named subject in the research and attestation that the subject has been fully informed of his or her rights.

_____ _____
Participant's Signature Date
_____ _____
Investigator's Signature Date

Farsi

فرم رضایت نامه ی مصاحبه (برای شرکت کنندگان بزرگسال
توافقتامه برای شرکت در مصاحبه
محقق اولیه: شرل نامبرینک دانشجوی برنامه ی ام ای مردم شناسی دانشگاه ایالتی سن حوزه
عنوان پژوهش : از جاده ی ایریشم تا سیلیکون ولی. بازتاب ایرانیان در سفر

1 . شما دعوت به همکاری به یک پروژهٔ فراگیری بیشتر درمورد نحوه ی بهبود بخشیدن به ارائه ی
خدمات در تعلیم زبان انگلیسی به افراد تازه وارد ایرانی و تجربیات کلی مهاجرت به سیلیکون
ولی
شده اید .

2. شما دعوت به همکاری در یک مصاحبه در ارتباط با تجربیاتتان در زمینهٔ مهاجرت یا خدمات
اسکان
پناهندگان ایرانی به خصوص دسترسی تعلیم زبان انگلیسی به افراد ایرانی در سیلیکون ولی
شده اید . مصاحبه شوندگان به عنوان افراد ناشناس باقی خواهند ماند . مصاحبه ها با اجازه از
مصاحبه شونده به صورت نوار و تصاویر دیجیتالی که ممکن است از مصنوعات فرهنگی شخصی
گرفته شود ، ضبط و ثبت خواهد شد . تمامی مطالب منتشر شده از این تحقیق با ذکر نمونه از
این
مصاحبه و بدون ذکر اسامی و اطلاعات هویتی (فردی) شرکت کنندگان خواهد بود . تمامی پرونده
های صوتی و تصاویر دیجیتال از بین خواهد رفت ولی تا آن زمان و تا کامل شدن مطالعات در
قفسهٔ
مخصوص نگهداری خواهد شد . مصاحبه برای راحتی شرکت کنندگان و بر اساس قابل دسترس
بودن آنها و نحوهٔ ی مصاحبهٔ ترجیح داده شده (اعم از خصوصی یا عمومی) برنامه ریزی خواهد
شد.

3. مشارکت شما هیچ مشکل خاصی در زندگی روزمره شما به وجود نخواهد آورد در ضمن شما
. هیچ الزامی یا اجباری برای شرکت در این مطالعات را ندارید

4 . مشارکت شما عمد ت آ به نفع و لازمهٔ پروژهٔ ام ای دانشجویان در دانشگاه ایالتی سن حوزه
خواهد
بود و انتظار میرود به نفع جمع بزرگی از ایرانیان در سیلیکون ولی باشد.

5 . ممکن است نتیجهٔ این مطالعات منتشر شود ولی شامل هیچ یک از اطلاعات هویتی شما
نخواهد بود و به جای آنها از اسامی مستعار در یادداشت ها استفاده خواهد شد.

6 . هیچ مزایایی برای مشارکت در این مطالعات وجود ندارد.

7 . می توان سوالات دربارهٔ این تحقیق را برای شرل تمبرینک دانشجوی کارشناسی ارشد
دانشگاه ایالتی سن حوزه به شماره تلفن ۴۰۸۳۷۱۷۲۸۶ و آدرس ایمیل زیر فرستاد.
Cheryl.Tombrink@gmail.com

همچنین می توان شکایات دربارهٔ این تحقیق را به دکتر چارلز دارا رئیس اداره ی گروه اموزشی
(دایره) مردم شناسی به شماره تلفن ۴۰۸۹۲۴۵۳۱۴ به آدرس ایمیل زیر فرستاد.
Chuck.Darrah@sjsu.edu

همچنین سوالات دربارهٔ حقوق اشخاص یا زیان مربوط به تحقیق به معاون مطالعات و تحقیقات
کارشناسی ارشد دکتر پلمو استکیز به شماره تلفن ۴۰۸۹۲۴۲۴۲۷ فرستاده شود .

8 . در صورت عدم مشارکت شما در این پژوهش شما هیچ خدماتی را که از جهاتی محق ان
هستید دست نخواهید داد.

9 . رضایت و یا توافق شما به صورت داوطلبانه خواهد بود . شما می توانید شرکت در این
مطالعات

یا بخشی از آن را رد کنید . شما حق دارید به سوالاتی که دوست ندارید جواب ندهید . شما در هر
زمانی بدون هیچ تاثیر منفی بر ارتباط شما با دانشگاه ایالتی سن حوزه و یا با هر سازمان که در
ارتباط با این مطالعات آزاد هست می توانید از ادامۀ کار انصراف دهید.
۱۰ . در زمانی که شما این فرم رضایت را امضا می کنید شما یک کپی تاریخ دار و امضا شده توسط
محقق را برای ثبت شخصی خود دریافت خواهید کرد.
امضای شخص شرکت کننده در این سند نشان دهندۀ توافق به شرکت در مطالعات می باشد.
امضای محقق در این سند نشان دهنده توافق بر موضوعات ذکر شده در بالا و گواهی حقوق
شخص شرکت کننده می باشد.

_____

امضا و تاریخ شرکت کننده در مصاحبه

_____
_____
امضا و تاریخ پژوهشگر