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August 14, 2024

Selection committee
Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies
University of Toronto

Dear members of the selection committee,

I am writing to enthusiastically support Mr. **Esmail Moghiseh**'s application for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies.

I was a member of the advisory committee for Mr. Moghiseh's doctoral thesis, which he successfully defended this summer. It is in this capacity that I am pleased to offer comments on the nature and significance of his research, as well as my assessment of his accomplishments and potential.

Mr. Moghiseh's doctoral thesis, entitled *Free Choice Items: The view from Farsi*, provides an in-depth investigation of a central aspect of the grammar of Farsi, viz. the system of indefinite noun phrases. Within this system, the thesis focuses on the varied and intricate ways in which different types of indefinite noun phrases interact with their linguistic context, in particular with expressions of modality and negative polarity. A major line of recent research in theoretical linguistics (spearheaded by internationally leading scholars like, e.g., Alonso-Ovalle and Chierchia) has identified remarkably complex cross-linguistic patterns in Romance languages. Advancing this line of investigation, Mr. Moghiseh's thesis breaks new ground both empirically and theoretically. On the one hand, by charting in detail the complex ways in which a diverse family of Farsi indefinites contribute to sentence meanings, the thesis greatly advances the study of Farsi itself. On the other hand, by branching out to Indo-Iranian and drawing attention to the Farsi data, the thesis elucidates the ways in which human languages at large can in principle vary in terms of how indefinite noun phrases can be interpreted, and it thereby makes an important contribution to the theory of linguistic meaning at large.

Unsurprisingly, the importance of Mr. Moghiseh's findings has already been recognized in the international linguistic community. This is evident from the fact that outcomes of his thesis research have already been appeared in six (co-authored) papers in the proceedings of premier international conferences (with typical acceptance rates of merely 10 to 20 percent), as well a (co-authored) article accepted for

publication in a leading peer-reviewed international journal for research on meaning (*Semantics and Pragmatics*).

Given Mr. Moghiseh's excellent track record to date, there is every expectation that he will continue to make ground-breaking contributions to the study of Farsi and linguistic theory in general, and develop into an internationally leading researcher. In the immediate future, his next step is to publish further chapters of his doctoral thesis as articles in premier peer-reviewed international journals. It bears note that in our discipline, it is journal articles (and conference proceedings papers) rather than monographs that serve as the main vehicle for the dissemination of research outcomes, and it is in fact relatively rare for scholars in linguistics, especially junior researchers, to publish monographs. Aligned with this practice, the peer-review process in our field tends to be more rigorous and unsparing for journal articles than for monographs. Mr. Moghiseh's plan to focus on journal articles is therefore fully in line with conventions in our field, and in fact constitutes the most promising strategy for drawing attention to his research outcomes in the global community of linguists.

In sum, pursuing a research program that elucidates the workings of human language through the in-depth study of Farsi, Mr. Moghiseh has already made significant contributions to the study of Farsi, hence to Indo-Iranian, thereby advancing linguistic theory at large. Given his track record, all the signs are that he is poised to build a career in research and teaching in linguistics or Iranian Studies. An Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship would be an effective way for Mr. Moghiseh to begin developing this career. I hope you will carefully consider his application. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bernhard Schwarz', with a stylized, flowing script.

Bernhard Schwarz
Professor