Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute of Iranian Studies

University of Toronto

Toronto, Canada

8 August, 2022

**Re: Application for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies**

Please find attached my application for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies at the University of Toronto. I would be thrilled to join Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute of Iranian Studies’ vibrant and multi-disciplinary research community and have the opportunity to deepen and further my research work focused on how changes in historical circumstances and political, cultural, and ideological orientations shape the use of different political invective and satire language in Iran, between 1900-1953. I argue that there is a shift in the use of swearwords and invective language in Persian newspapers from predominantly familial to non-familial themes between 1900-1953. I believe, as detailed below, that my experience, scholarship and expertise align very well with the requirements for this fellowship.

I have a life-long passion for studying emotion language (as part of Iranian Studies) and the way it is shaped by multiple variables such as socio-biographical variables (age, gender, education, social class); gender identity; distribution of power; social class or socio-economic status; cultural identity; immigration status; and bilingualism/ multilingualism. I completed my PhD in Applied Linguistics at Birkbeck College, University of London (United Kingdom) in 2019. My dissertation, titled “*The Effects of Socio-biographical Background, Acculturation, and Personality on Persian Immigrants’ Swearing Behaviour*”, is an investigation of the complexity of factors influencing swearing behavior in Persian Immigrants. Following my PhD, I had a health-related family responsibility leave, which impacted my productivity for about one year. However, for the past year, I have been successfully working on revising and publishing my doctoral work: one paper was published in “*Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development”;* one chapter in “*Recent advances in second language emotion research*”; and one is in progress in “*Journal of Pragmatics*”. Moreover, I have been an active reviewer for “*Journal of Pragmatics*” and “*Journal of Scientific Research and Reports*”, in order to further contribute to the field of emotion language, linguistics and to the research community.

For my postdoctoral work, I will take a step beyond what has been done to date, while building and expanding on my PhD research and I will investigate the transformation of swearwords and invective language in Persian newspapers from early to mid-20th century. I am particularly interested in how censorship law regulates the public discourse and use of vindictive language in politics. My central argument is that the expression of emotion language through swearwords and invectives is shaped by the context, and specifically, it varies over time (reflecting the intensity of the political conflict) and as a function of the individual characteristics of the speakers (religion, political affiliation, ideological extremism). To this end, I have started the collection of vindictive political language from “Hamleh”; “Atash”; “Mard-e emruz”; and Towfiq” newspapers belonging to the 1900-1953 period in Iran. My preliminary research indicated that during times of political polarization and crisis there is a sharp increase in the use of invective language. Similarly, during the constitutional revolution, the crisis of oil nationalization and the coup in 1953, there is an evolution of the use of swearwords by the political parties, with a shift from harsher swearwords focused on maternal relations, sexual activities, prostitution, and scatological themes to non-familial swearwords that focus on animals, death, religious themes and treacherous language.

During my postdoctoral fellowship, I plan to synthesize my doctoral research and combine it with the proposed postdoctoral work. My goal is to publish a book that provides a rich analysis of emotion language (swearwords, invective language) in the Persian language and how the discourse is shaped by various factors (individual characteristics of the speakers, but also larger contextual variables such as the historic period and ideological conflicts). To my knowledge, this has not been studied to date and, as such, this work will make important contributions to Iranian studies, and, more generally, to linguistics, historical studies, and social science and humanities. Long-term, I intend to explore the evolution of emotion language in the political rhetoric in the late 20th century.

I believe that my expertise and experience align with the focus of the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute of Iranian Studies and, in my postdoctoral fellow role, I will contribute to advancing research, collaboration and knowledge mobilization. In addition, I plan to be an active member of the Persian studies seminars, contribute to the Institute and its initiatives and publish my book. The diverse range of initiatives, events, archives, reading groups, and collaborative projects held at the university are all key opportunities for me to grow and contribute to the current research on Persian studies. Through the support of the host institution and the supervision of Professor Tavakoli-Targhi, I will have a unique opportunity to grow as a historical linguist, and to promote my work more broadly.

I hope that I am given the opportunity to share with you my ideas about what I can accomplish during my term as a postdoctoral fellow in Iranian Studies. Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,



Nooshin Shakiba, MA, PhD