

# Attitudes toward Writing English in Facebook: The Case of Prestige for Iranian Users

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**Abstract**—Facebook (FB) is a social networking service with more than 1.23 billion monthly active users all over the world. Millions of Iranians use this website and although it is possible for them to write in Persian, many of them prefer to write in English even when they communicate with their Iranian friends. Also, majority of them use the English interface of the FB rather than the Persian interface. This study investigates cultural and psychological motives behind Persian speakers' preference of English over Persian. For this aim, 180 Iranian FB users answered to a questionnaire asking about different aspects of use of English in FB. Then, 12 of them participated in a semi-structured interview. After coding and analysis, findings of the interview were used to add to the findings of the survey. Results indicated that Iranian users are willing to post dialogues from famous movies and scientific content in English rather than Persian, but prefer to discuss their feelings in Persian. In addition, it was found that majority of Iranians believe that writing English in FB can be interpreted as an indication of higher social class, education, and prestige of the users.

**Index Terms**—prestige, attitude, Facebook, writing

## I. INTRODUCTION

The study of attitudes has been the focus of interest for scholars in the fields related to social sciences. During the twentieth century, attitude has been probably among the most dominant issues in the field of social psychology (Louv & Edwards, 1997). Language attitudes, also, have been studied by many researchers in the subjects related to both language learning and sociolinguistics. Many studies have been conducted over attitudes of speakers of different languages toward English (Sonda, 2011; McKenzie, 2010; Uzum, 2007; El-Dash & Busnardo, 2001), but they have investigated attitude from a mostly pedagogical perspective and less attention has been paid to it from a sociolinguistic view.

Also, the matter of prestige is often related to dialects or varieties of the same language in which the standard variety is believed to be able to give prestige to speakers (Wardhaugh, 2006). It is possible that some speakers, due to prestige motive, borrow an element from a culturally or politically dominant language even when there are proper equivalents in their own language (Shukla & Connor-Linton, 2006).

What we look for, is to study how sociocultural and psychological parameters can affect speakers' attitudes toward the use and preference of English over Persian. We will try to investigate Persian speakers' attitudes toward English and the prestige they attribute to English. In addition, Persian speakers' attitudes toward English in an online internet-based social network will be investigated.

### **English and the Internet**

As computers were first developed in US, English became the mother tongue of computers. Similarly, Internet was originally an English medium which was originally developed in US (Crystal, 2003). Therefore, it is not a surprise that English has become the most dominant language of the Internet. In 1997, a survey conducted by Babel (1997, [alis.isoc.org](http://alis.isoc.org)), the first comprehensive study for the distribution of languages on the web, showed that about 82% of the web pages were in English. Similarly, Thomas (1996) quantified that 75% of the world's mail, 80% of computer data and 85% of all information are stored in English.

By the development of computer networks in non-English countries, the presence of other languages on the internet has increased gradually. At the present time, Internet users from different nationalities and language backgrounds are increasingly using web as an important part of their modern life. Internet World Stats estimated that by the year 2013, English, Chinese, Spanish and Japanese languages have 565, 509, 164 and 99 millions of users respectively. Even in many less developed countries and among minority language speakers, internet is now an indispensable medium for communication and education. Despite the fact that increasing number of internet users are publishing documents and web contents in different languages, English is still the dominant language of the web.

### **Why Facebook?**

In recent years, as people are becoming more mobile, trends for using social networks have been increased drastically. Among most popular platforms for social networking, Facebook (FB) was launched in February 2004 with the mission of giving people "the power to share and make the world more open and connected" (facebook.com). In recent few years, the number of FB users extended from the limited number of Harvard students to millions of people all over the world. By the end of December 2013, FB announced that it reaches over 1.23 billion monthly active users (facebook.com). Also, until 2011, FB offered its services in 40 language including less popular languages such as Persian.

New trends to use virtual social networks such as FB, Twitter, MySpace, and Google+ indicate that people want more than bare information exchange. The web is being changed to a place "where the subject-matter comprises – apart from the occasional aberration – real things in the real world" (Crystal, 2006, p. 178). In addition, some believe that it is possible for online social networks to make new forms of social capital by bridging the offline social capital to an online one (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007). Presence of shared networks and the real world has made it possible for researchers to study social and psychological parameters such as identity, relationships, affection and motivation (Stutzman, 2006; Hewitt & Forte, 2006; Mazer, Murphy & Simonds, 2007; Grasmuck, Martin & Zhao, 2009).

As it became popular in Iran, FB released the beta Persian version of its website in which all the menus, buttons and main features were translated into Persian. Although the Persian interface of FB is offered, many Iranians are still using the English version. Moreover, although it is possible for the users to write their posts in Persian, many Persian users prefer to write in English even when their friends are all native speakers of Persian. There are also other users who prefer to write in English only occasionally.

### **Current Status of English in Iran**

Historical, political and social variables in Iran have resulted in the dominance of English as the first foreign language. English is being taught in Iranian educational system from the beginning of guidance school and it continues to post-graduate university levels. In addition, many private language institutes teach English as the most popular language in their programs. Even in small cities, numerous Language institutes are busy teaching English. Besides, many parents tend to put their children in such English classes even before sending them to primary schools (Vazeei, 2009).

In higher education, English proficiency has become a key for students' success. Post-graduate university students are usually asked to read English journals and books and to publish their works in English. Having an acceptable English proficiency is also a pre-requisite for doctoral programs. In addition, many prestigious conferences are held in English and scholars should be able to present their articles in English. People who wish to immigrate need to have good command of English for passing international examinations such as IELTS and TOEFL. Also, as the English has become the language of science, most experts and scientists use English jargons as an indication of their deep knowledge in their field. To sum up, it can be stated that English knowledge in Iran is associated with high degree of education and higher social and economic status. Therefore, in Iranian context, learning and knowing English has progressively become more prestigious and more popular (Chalak & Kassaian, 2010).

## **II. METHODS**

### **Procedure**

For achieving a more in-depth understanding of Iranians' attitudes toward English in online environments, the research was conducted in three phases. In the first phase of the study, public posts and comments of 180 volunteer FB users were analyzed to estimate the use of English. For this aim, publicly shared content of the 180 Iranian FB users, including their posts and comments, which exceeded 13,100 words, were collected and analyzed to estimate their use of English. In order to estimate the percentages of different languages used in the participants' writings on FB, the authors first read all the writings and classified them into different languages. After the categorization was finished, through word count feature of the MS Word, the number of words for each language was calculated and the percentages were calculated.

In the second stage, the participants completed a questionnaire with questions related to their bio-data, FB membership experience, and their attitudes toward use of English in FB. In the last phase, following completion of the questionnaires, interview sessions were conducted with 12 volunteer participants to elicit more in-depth information regarding the participants' attitudes.

### **Participants**

More than 500 surveys were emailed to Iranian FB users around the world. In doing so, around 100 FB users were identified as the core list. Attempts were made to keep the group representative of all FB users regarding their gender, age, and education. Furthermore, snowball sampling was employed to add up to the number of recipients. After two weeks, a reminder e-mail was sent to those who didn't reply the first e-mail. Finally, a total of 180 people responded to the survey, with a return rate of 48%. Fifty five percent of the respondents were male, and 45% were female with an average age of 24.09. Table 1 summarizes demographics of the participants.

TABLE 1:  
PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHICS (N=180)

	Mean or %
<b>Gender:</b>	
Male	55% (99)
Female	45% (81)
<b>Age</b>	24.09
<b>Academic degree:</b>	
PhD	10% (18)
Master's degree	35% (63)
Bachelor	48% (87)
School/college	7% (12)
<b>Perceived English proficiency*</b>	3.2
<b>Residence in foreign country:</b>	
Yes	26% (47)
No	74% (133)

\* represents English proficiency of the users as perceived by themselves,  
1= very poor, 2= poor, 3= fair, 4= very good, 5= excellent;

## Instruments

### Questionnaire

In order to develop the questionnaire, after panel discussions between the authors, three focus groups were identified: a) teenagers, b) university students and youngsters below the age of thirty, c) people above the age thirty. The people in the focus groups included colleagues, friends, relatives and volunteer participants selected by convenience sampling. After conducting discussion sessions in the three focus groups, several ideas and recurring themes were identified. Then, using the themes identified in the group discussions, the first draft of the questionnaire was developed. Later, the draft was reviewed by two research experts resulting in several modifications in the format, and wording of the items. The final version of the questionnaire was used to collect participants' perceptions. The file format of the questionnaire was .doc in order to be compatible with older versions of MS Word and Open Office. Respondents answered the questionnaire by typing in the document and highlighting the choices.

The questionnaire included three sections: Section 1 dealt with age, gender, educational background, and English learning experience. In the second section, participants were asked to report their membership experience; how long they have been using the FB, how much time they spend on it, and how frequently do they use it. They also answered questions about their friends in FB and whether they are from different language backgrounds. The third section contained items regarding attitudes of the participants toward the use of English in FB. In this section, fifteen items were categorized into three sets; genre preference, the effect of initiating language on the language choice, and attitudes toward others who write in English. The items were in the form of five-point Likert items with answers ranging from *Strongly agree* to *Strongly disagree*.

### Interview

Among 180 FB users who completed the questionnaire, 12 volunteered to participate in the interview session. Upon completion of the questionnaires, a request for interview was sent to all the 180 respondents. Finally, after considering variables such as age, gender, and perceived English proficiency, 12 participants took part in the interview. The interview sessions were conducted over voice call using Yahoo voice chat, Skype, and telephone calls. This was unavoidable because most of the participants were living in different cities and distant locations. All the interviews were digitally recorded by a computer software. The participants were asked to make their places calm and relax beforehand so the possibility of interruption was decreased. The participants were informed about the conversation being recorded and were ensured that the information will be kept anonymous.

The interview started with a welcome and a short greeting. Participants were told that the interview has academic purposes and it deals with language and Internet. However, the particular subject of the study was kept untold to prevent participants' possible prejudice and biases such as social desirability bias and acquiescence bias (McKenzie, 2010). To deal with the ethical issues, participants were debriefed at the end of the interview session about the subject of the study (Smith & Mackie, 2000).

Although the interviewer followed an interview guide consisting pre-prepared questions and prompts, the format of the interview was open-ended. Due to the purposes of our study, the interviewer tried to be less interrupting in order to elicit a vast range of ideas from the participants. The interviewer, who was a general linguist, tried to be very specific in his wordings. The initial interviews were reviewed several times by the researcher and the interviewer to make up for drawbacks. This helped the interviewer not seem biased to a specific answer. The interview session lasted for 24 minutes on the average, ranging from 20 to 40 minutes.

The interview was consisted of three general parts. The first part started with greetings and asked about basic information and information related to their English proficiency level, exposure to English, FB membership experience and daily use of FB. In the second part, questions were asked related to their language use in FB including Persian and English. Also, participants' opinions, attitudes and beliefs toward different aspects of using Persian and English were elicited. Finally, in the concluding part, interviewees were asked to comment on any important, not-mentioned, issues related to the topic.

## III. FINDINGS

**Content analysis**

In most cases (83%), the participants used only one language in a single piece of writing. However, there were posts or comments in which the participants have used a mixture of two languages (Persian as the pivot, and one other language, mostly English). Table 2 shows summary information regarding their language choice in FB. As indicated, most content of the sample (86%) is in Persian (written in Persian script and Romanized script), but about 13% of the communication is conveyed in English and less than one percent is in other languages.

TABLE2:  
SUMMARY INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS' LANGUAGE CHOICE IN FB

Language	Number of Words	Percent%
Persian	8,489	65
Romanized Persian	2,817	21
English	1,709	13
Others	141	<1

**Questionnaire**

In order to further investigate the effects of different patterns of FB use on the social variables, four questions were developed to elicit necessary information. For example, we collected information related to user's length of membership in FB. We also asked them whether they use FB with Persian interface or English one, the time they spend on FB and if they have English speaking friends in their circles. The summary of the information is presented in Table 3.

TABLE3:  
SUMMARY OF INFORMATION RELATED TO PARTICIPANTS' FB ACCOUNT

	Mean or %
<b>Length of membership in Facebook</b>	3.01 (years)
<b>Language interface in Use:</b>	
Persian	19% (34)
English	81% (146)
<b>Facebook usage time</b>	40 (minutes per day)
<b>English speaking friends in Facebook:</b>	
Yes	14% (25)
No	86% (155)

**Set A: genre preference**

Set A included four items asking participants about the genre of English contents they post in FB. A summary of information about genre preference is shown in Table 4.

TABLE4:  
SUMMARY OF INFORMATION FOR SET B

Individual items <sup>1</sup>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I prefer to write my feelings in English	2(1%)	4(2%)	48(27%)	71(39%)	55(30%)
I prefer to write news in English	7(4%)	12(7%)	52(29%)	57(32%)	52(29%)
I prefer to write scientific contents in English	26(14%)	65(36%)	42(23%)	29(16%)	18(10%)
I prefer to write lyrics and dialogues from famous songs and movies in English	62(34%)	66(37%)	20(11%)	19(10%)	13(7%)

As indicated, majority of the participants (69%) showed a negative attitude toward writing their feelings in English. In addition, regarding writing news in English, majority of them (61%) indicated a negative attitude. For the third item in the set, about half of the participants were positive about writing scientific contents in English, while a minority (26%) disagreed and the others were neutral. The most extreme preference is shown toward writing lyrics and dialogues in English. While seventy-one percent of the respondents agreed on their preference to write such topics in English, only seventeen percent of them disagreed.

**Set B: the effect of initiating language on the language choice**

Based on the interviews with the focus groups, we hypothesized that when a discussion is initiated in a specific language, friends will be more likely to continue it in the same language. Four questions asked participants whether they continue the discussions in the same language or not. The summary of findings is presented in Table 5.

TABLE5:  
SUMMARY OF INFORMATION FOR SET B

Individual items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
When my friends write in English, I comment on them in English	34(19%)	49(27%)	59(33%)	20(11%)	18(10%)
When I write In English, my friends comment on it in English	38(21%)	54(30%)	52(29%)	17(9%)	19(10%)
When my friends write in Persian, I comment on them in English	2(1%)	9(5%)	43(24%)	65(36%)	61(34%)
When I write in Persian, my friends comment on it in English	3(2%)	7(4%)	44(24%)	62(34%)	64(35%)

As shown in the table, the results for items 1 and 2, and for items 3 and 4 are identical. For items 1 and 2, about half of the respondents agreed that initiating a post in English, may lead either their friends or themselves to continue the discussion in the same language. On the other hand, a minority of them (about 20%) did not agree and about 30% of them were neutral. For the third and fourth items, the results were different. A majority of participants (about 70%) disagreed to continue a discussion in English when it is initiated in Persian either by themselves or by their friends. This leaves only about 6% of the respondents to agree, and 24% to be neutral.

#### Set C: Attitudes toward others writing English

Set C dealt with participants' attitudes toward others who write English in FB. The participants were asked what they think about their friends when they write in English. In Table 6 a summary of the findings is shown.

As shown in the table, a majority of respondents (57%) agree that those who write in English in their FB are educated. However, regarding the second item, the answers are not considerably different. While 40% of the respondents disagree, 29% of them agree on the statement that those who write in English seem more prestigious. For the third item, about 26% of the respondents agree and 27% of them disagree with the account that those who write in English share contents that are more interesting. Finally, a majority of the participants (55%) agreed that those who use Persian interface of Facebook may be less educated than those who use the English interface.

TABLE 6:  
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR SET C

Individual items	Strongly agree	agree	Neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
Those who write in English are educated	36 (20%)	68(37%)	37(20%)	28(15%)	11(6%)
Those who write in English seem more prestigious	16 (9%)	37(20%)	55(30%)	50(28%)	22(12%)
Those who write in English share more interesting contents	24(13%)	24(13%)	83(46%)	26(14%)	23(13%)
Those who use Persian interface of Facebook may be less educated than those who use English interface	39(22%)	59(33%)	34(19%)	17(9%)	31(17%)

#### Set D: purpose of writing English

Understanding the purpose of writing English is inherent to our study. Four items were developed to ask participants why they choose English to write in FB. Findings are summarized in Table 7.

TABLE 7  
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR SET D

Individual items <sup>1</sup>	Strongly agree	agree	Neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
I write English to show my abilities in using it	2(1%)	7(4%)	97(54%)	54(30%)	20(11%)
I write English to improve my English proficiency	17(9%)	29(16%)	48(27%)	55(30%)	31(17%)
I write English because it seems more cool on the net	23(13%)	66(37%)	45(25%)	31(17%)	15(8%)
I write English because it seems more prestigious	16(8%)	36(20%)	68(38%)	39(22%)	21(12%)

The findings indicate that while only minority of the participants (5%) agreed on writing in English to show their abilities in using it, about 31% of them disagreed with such a purpose, and majority of them (54%) neither agreed nor disagreed with it. Improving English proficiency was not considered as a reason of writing in English for 74% of the respondents. Half of the respondents agreed that looking *more cool* is a reason for their writing in English. Being aware of the ambiguity the term *cool* conveys, we decided to include it in our survey due to its repetition in our interviews with the focus groups. Later, in the interview sessions, respondents were asked to clarify on their interpretation of the term. Results for the last item were not conclusive. While 28% of the respondents agreed on the prestige of writing in English, 34% of them disagreed and 38% were neutral.

#### Interview

In the interview sessions, attempts were made to elaborate on the results found from the survey. In what follows, the most significant findings are presented. While more than 15 head questions plus numerous follow up questions were asked in the interview session, only four head questions will be offered here. The first question asked whether the participants use English or Persian interface and why do they prefer one over another. Majority of our respondents (n=10) used English interface while only two of them used Persian interface.

##### 1) Why do you use FB with English interface?

There was an agreement on the answers to this question. All the interviewees answered that they use English interface because they are used to do this. For example, interviewee 1 who is using FB for more than three years states that:

The English one is better... Firstly, I'm *adapted* [the respondent uses the loan word]. Also it takes time to be comfortable with the words that are used as substitutes in Persian such as using "میپسندم" instead of "Like". If from the beginning it was "میپسندم", then I wouldn't get used to use "Like".

Interviewee 7 who is an FB user for about two years, holds the same view and adds:

"میپسندم" does not seem cool to me... once I decided to make it Persian and I tried it in my friend's page which was Persian... I didn't like it... I became confused...

An interesting finding was that the two respondents who stated to prefer Persian over English interface was both recently signed up in FB, and, therefore, had the chance to get used to Persian interface from the beginning. However, the other respondents had signed up in FB before Persian interface was developed.

2) When do you write English in FB? What do you write in English?

We could not come to any categorization based on the answers to this question. Most respondents told they could not think of any specific reason for their use of English in FB. Other respondents, however, had opposing ideas. For example, Interviewee 5 believes that:

It depends on the previous comments. If they are English then [I write] English... if it is Persian I will continue in Persian...

Then the interview goes like this:

Q: What about when you initiate?

A: Persian

Q: What is the reason?

A: There is no specific reason.

Q: Do you see any advantage?

A: No, no...

In a different way, Interviewee 7 says:

I prefer some special expressions in English which are common ... such as: *Wow, my God...* things like this... or things that are easy to say and the Persian equivalent is difficult... for example *nice pic...* these things are common in FB... but other things, I can express my feelings in Persian better I think...

Interviewee 1, who is in an opposite view toward using English expressions in FB, criticizes those who prefer English over Persian expressions and discusses:

... we use English expressions which have very good equivalents in Persian... For example, for *it's ok*, "حله" is shorter and smoother than "it's ok".

3) Why do you think some Persian speakers in FB write in English?

The answers to this question were also from different perspectives. For example, Interviewee 6 mentions that English media has had effects on our use of language and states that:

For example, for me, when I read something in English, I don't translate it into Persian. Or, when you watch a movie, and there is a dialogue in English, you just repeat it... sometimes when somebody writes his/her status in English, you try to comment on it in English, this is the common way... just like some Iranian guys who live abroad...

However, Interviewee 4 insists that:

Some people want to show prestige... they want to show they know English and they can use it...

Also, Interviewee 1 admits that:

Maybe some wants to show prestige, or he/she is so used to use English.

On a different perspective, Interviewee 5 believes that FB is a good context to practice English for learners and explains:

Everybody is going toward English... They are trying to learn it, they have to use it somehow... they are at the pick of learning English, they come with this mood and write in English...

4) Far from other things you mentioned, do you agree that some people use English to show their prestige or higher social class? Do you think English can be used to show prestige?

Interviewee 4 who lives in Malaysia for her study, believes that:

Yes, why not? When you know English, it shows that you have tried hard... Just like a person who works hard and buys a new Mercedes Benz. Of course it is prestigious... why not? He/she has tried hard. Many Iranians come here [Malaysia] and stay for long, but they do not manage to learn English because they do not study... when you study, why not to be proud of it?

Interviewee 5 has a different opinion:

If you have asked this question some years ago I would think like that, but now I don't think so. Today it is so common, most people know English pretty well, now everybody have understood that except their mother tongue, they have to learn another language, and that's English which will work for them... maybe because I myself have studied English and this is my major I say this... maybe somebody else would not say that... but it has become ordinary for me.

Interviewee 7 thinks that using English can be associated with prestige, but unlike Interviewee 4, has a negative opinion toward this prestige:

For me, when I see somebody has expressed his/her feelings very good in Persian, I love it... on the contrary when somebody says it in English I feel he/she is showing off!

Although the answers to this question differed extensively, Interviewee 1's opinion looks like a conclusion to this discussion:

It depends... for those who know English, it is not prestigious... it is common for them... but for those who are trying to learn it, it can be...

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The participants of this study used English less than Persian, though majority of them used FB with English interface. Findings from the survey yielded interesting insights into Iranian FB users' perceptions and attitudes toward the use of English. Results showed an inclination of the respondents toward using English to share famous movie dialogues, lyrics, as well as scientific content. However, most of the respondents were not positive about using English to talk about their feeling or share interesting news. It seems that the effect of English media on the world and the popularity of English movies and TV series are key factors leading to this phenomenon. Also, with English as the language of science (see, e.g., Tardy, 2004), it is not surprising that sharing scientific findings in English may be preferable to Iranian FB users especially for those with higher academic degrees. Later interviews revealed that the inclination to share scientific topics in English is quite normal for university students because, as one of the interviewees put forward, "it is somehow a standard for university students to study scientific articles mostly in English".

When it comes to expressing feelings, participants mostly preferred to use Persian rather than English. This does not seem surprising as it is widely discussed that feelings are best conveyed through the native language and speakers experience reduced emotions when using their second language (see e.g., Caldwell-Harris & Ayçiğeci-Dinn, 2009). In addition, for sharing news, findings indicated that respondents prefer to use Persian. Nevertheless, interview sessions indicated that the respondents might prefer to use Persian to talk about domestic news while they show more inclination to use English for talking about international news.

By considering the answers found in interview, it can be concluded that English seems more convenient for FB users because they are accustomed to it. This is not surprising as most of the students use English operating systems and applications in their PCs or smartphones. In addition, not all the web-services provide Persian interface. For example, Yahoo Mail, which has been used by many Persian speakers for mailing and instant messaging for years, does not provide Persian versions for its services. This has made Iranian Internet users independent of Persian translations and inclined to the use of English.

Another significant finding was that the initiating language of a post has an important effect on the choice of language that is going to continue it. Therefore, when somebody writes a post in English, friends are more likely to continue it in English. Close to this finding, we asked our participant in the interview what they would think if a friend switches from English to Persian. Three of them answered they will find this inappropriate, two of them have no ideas and four of them stated that it does not matter to them. It seems that being worried about others' judgment and respecting to others' choice of language can be potential reasons for this preference of FB users. Also, friends who want to participate in the discussion may intend to show their group membership by following the same code their friends use.

An interesting finding was related to the purpose of writing in English. First of all, participants showed a disagreement toward all the items related to their purpose of writing English. Interestingly, they showed a disagreement toward the claim that they write English to improve their English proficiencies. Also, they disagreed the statement "I write English to make a better status of myself among my friends" more strongly. It can be concluded that none of the provided statements are good reasons for their choice of English in FB. However, it can be related to the social desirability bias which has led the participants in the way that will be more desirable socially (Schuman & Presser, 1996).

The most important finding in this study is based on the attitudes of participants toward others who write English in FB. Although participants stated that they don't use English to show their prestige to their friends, they believed that those who use English are more educated. Also they partially agreed that those who write in English want to show themselves more prestigious. Also they agreed that those who use English FB are more educated than those who use the Persian FB. In this paradoxical situation, as a conclusion, we found that sample's FB users with higher educational levels and higher English proficiency levels believed that English cannot be considered as the language of prestige in FB environment. In addition, some participants stated they have negative attitudes toward people who write English when there is no reason for writing in English. They believed that these people want to show themselves classy and prestigious. On the other hand, participants with lower education and lower English proficiency levels showed an agreement toward the prestigious status of people who write English. To conclude our discussion, we believe that this pilot study showed variables that can be investigated deeply in our further research.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study provided insights into our understanding of Iranian FB users' attitude toward using English. Additionally, it explored reasons behind participants' preferences of English over Persian in some cases in FB. It was found that although many Iranian FB users do not associate prestige with the use of English in their writings, for many users, there is still a positive value attached to it.

As with any study, there were limitations for the present work. First, the sampling method employed in this study was based on snowball sampling and may have led to sample bias. That is, the participants may include those who use FB more than an average FB user. Therefore, their perceptions may not necessarily be representative of the community of Iranian FB users. Second, due to administrative limitations imposed by geographical distances between the authors and the participants, conducting an in-depth interview sessions was challenging. Therefore, it was not possible for the authors to include a larger number of participants with more follow-up questions.

This study did not give any information about the relationship between the age, gender, and educational background of the participants with their attitudes toward the use of English and the amount of prestige they attach to its use. Therefore, further investigations may explore the possible relationships between these variables. Additionally, the study relied only on descriptive studies and interview findings to draw conclusions on the participants' attitudes. Consequently, the information within this work can be served as a foundation for developing and validating new questionnaires and research instruments that can enlarge the scope of our understanding about internet users' attitude toward the use of English as their second or foreign language.

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