



Nazia Barani

IRAN DAILY

IRAN DAILY: First of all, please tell us about yourself and the responsibilities you have in Spain.

NAZIA BARANI: I am the professor of Persian language and culture, head of the Iranian Studies Center at the University of Salamanca, the official representative of the university's international department in all countries. I am also a translator and the head of the Spanish Desk of the Art News Press, member of the Society of Psychologists in Salamanca, founding member of the Iranology Society in Spain and member of the Center for Philosophy and Literature Experts in Valladolid.

My areas of expertise are Persian language and literature, Iranology, applied linguistics and corpus linguistics.

What made you get involved in translation activities especially from Spanish language?

I was always interested in learning different languages. Encouraged by a few friends, I chose to study Spanish language at the university.

I did various works in this field, for example, I translated two TV series named 'Don Quixote' and 'Man and the Sea'. I also translated the Celia Stories from Spanish to Persian. I was a professor at Allameh Tabataba'i University and Islamic Azad University and one of the founding members of the Spanish Language Department at the Kish Institute of Science and Technology.

Why did you go to Spain and how did you introduce Iran and Persian language?

I went to Salamanca to continue my studies, because at that time in Iran, it was possible to study Spanish language only at bachelor degree level.

After receiving my master's degree, I obtained Ph.D. and then I participated in various teacher-training courses in Salamanca and the Cervantes Institute of Madrid.

I tried to provide more information about Persian language to students and enthusiasts by holding international seminars at the university, organizing annual events to introduce Iranian cinema and creating databases about Persian culture and literature in various software and social networks such as Diarium and Facebook. My Facebook page called Persa en Salamanca has more than 2,000 followers in Spain.

I have been cooperating with Radio USAL of Salamanca for almost a year. On special occasions such as commemoration days of great Persian poets and writers including Hafez, Khayyam, Ferdowsi and Sa'di or special national celebrations such as Norouz, I produce some programs which are received very well by the Spanish-speaking listeners.

When did you start your career as a Persian language professor?

I started teaching Persian at the Faculty of Linguistics of the University of Salamanca in 2007. At first, Persian language was taught as a general and optional course, but with a lot of efforts, we managed to offer it as a second foreign language and a unit of study in various graduate and postgraduate courses.

Persian language is presently offered as a two-year course at various levels at the university. On the other hand, since 2017, another course called "Iranian Thought and Culture" is offered at the university, which helped attract the attention of Spanish students to the Iranian language and culture. It is worth mentioning that the University of Salamanca is the only Spanish academic center that offers Persian language to students both as a general course and a second foreign language.

EXCLUSIVE

Nazia Barani, Iranian professor at University of Salamanca: Many Spaniards interested in learning Persian language

By Sadeq Dehqan

Nazia Barani is an Iranian translator and a professor at the Faculty of Linguistics at the University of Salamanca in Spain, and head of its Iranian Studies Center.

She has taken fruitful steps in the development of Persian language in Spain and prompted many people to learn about the rich Persian literature.

Barani's interest in Iran and her mother tongue led her to obtain the approval of officials of the University of Salamanca for the establishment of the Iranian Studies Center. For the first time, Persian is offered as a second language in addition to elective courses.

"Teaching Persian language has been met with a great response from Spaniards in recent years and every year more students enroll in Persian language classes held in the country," she said in an exclusive interview with Iran Daily.

Please tell us more about the University of Salamanca and activities taken in the university for teaching Persian and Iranian languages.

The University of Salamanca is an 800-year-old public university that is currently one of the best and most famous academic centers of Europe.

The university has 26 faculties and 13 research centers. The Faculty of Linguistics also teaches more than 20 different languages, including Persian. Unfortunately, there is no Persian language chair in any of the Spanish universities. Also, no Iranology department exists in the Spanish universities, but the Iranian Studies Center has been operating at the Faculty of Linguistics since 2018.

It is a good place to carry out various scientific, research and cultural activities for introducing Iran to Spaniards.

How are your scientific, research and cultural activities organized?

We have been holding various events such as international seminars, poetry nights and courses introducing Iranian films at the university for many years. They have been very well received and the participants called for the continuation of such activities.

I was the manager of numerous innovative, scientific and research projects, including those entitled "The Role of Women in Iranian Cinema" and "Cinema, Especially Iranian Cinema". They were selected among a large number of projects submitted to the university from all Salamanca faculties, and therefore they are very important.

I am currently in charge of a new research project called "Word Therapy Through Omar Khayyam's Poems". Given that a limited number of resources are available to non-Persian speakers about Iranology and Persian language, I have created a site in both Persian and Spanish languages in Diarium.

Please tell us about the situation of the Persian language in Spain. How familiar are Spanish people with our language?

Most Spaniards do not know Persian language and Iran well. Although fruitful steps have been taken in recent years to introduce the Iranian language and culture in Spain, more programs should be drawn up in this respect.

Most of those who choose Persian language, whether as general or optional courses or a second foreign language, have no information about it and learn Persian alphabet first, but they can gradually advance to higher levels.

veyed the meanings of the poems in some of them, but many words were added to them which are not found in the original text at all. On the other hand, power and elegance of Persian poetry are not seen in most of these translations.

In which parts of Spain is Persian language taught and how many students are learning the language?

Persian language is currently taught at various levels in Alicante, Barcelona, Madrid and Salamanca, as well Iranian Cultural Consulate in Madrid. Persian language courses were previously offered in Vigo, which was stopped after the coronavirus outbreak.

In recent years, Spaniards have become more interested in learning Persian. About 125 people in Spain are learning Persian language, 60 of whom are students of the University of Salamanca.

Forty-two students were studying Persian language at the University of Salamanca last year, but the number rose to 60 in the current year. Also 28 students were studying Iranian culture and thought last year, while 35 students have registered for it, so far, and given the time left until the beginning of the course, the number may grow.

How are students attracted to learn Persian language at university?

Students can usually get the necessary information about all courses by visiting the university's website. However, based on the feedbacks I have from the questionnaires that I provide to students at the beginning of each semester, I found that most of them are encouraged by students of previous years who passed the course and expressed their satisfaction.

What are the sources of Persian language and Iranology studies in Spanish language?

Few sources are available to Spanish-speaking people. Unfortunately, some of the books were written for non-Persian speakers by the professors who do not have the experience of teaching this language outside of Iran. They are not familiar with the culture, problems and needs of the language learners. They may not have much knowledge of applied linguistics.

My book "Persian Language and Iranian Culture" was published by Salamanca University Press in 206 pages in 2021. I finished compiling this book a few years ago, but the process of evaluating and approving it by the university required more time. Due to my many years of experience in teaching Spanish and Persian languages, I considered the needs of my students.

In addition to strengthening language skills such as accuracy, recognition and use, special attention was paid to introducing social, cultural, religious, historical, literary and tourist features of Iran. Because no one can learn a language without knowing its culture, literature, history and art.

What should be done to spread the Persian language in Spain and attract more students to learn it?

We should take more effective steps to introduce Persian language, culture and civilization and create interests in Spaniards. We require the full cooperation and support of related authorities.

Holding cultural events and poetry nights, introducing Iranian films, music, Norouz celebrations and Yalda Night, organizing conferences to commemorate the most prominent Iranian literary figures including Sa'di, Hafez, Ferdowsi and Khayyam, preparing books and brochures on the related subjects and translating the works of well-known Iranian writers and poets into Spanish are among the measures which should be undertaken in this respect.

Establishing of Persian language and Iranology departments, awarding scholarships to students, writing books on Persian language and Iranology to be used as the reliable resources are among the things that need to be done.

What has been done by the two countries to boost their relations?

Fortunately, many measures have been carried out in recent years to improve scientific and cultural relations between Iran and Spain. For example, we signed a cooperation agreement with the University of Tehran in 2017. It helped 30 students to go to Salamanca University for a short language course — a great experience that can continue.



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A Persian language class at University of Salamanca

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Are there any similarities between Persian and Spanish languages and do they have common words?

Yes. Persian and Spanish languages are rooted from Indo-European languages and a number of words have been exchanged between them, including bazaar, shawl and jasmine which entered from Persian language into Spanish.

Explain about translations of the books written by famous Iranian authors into Spanish. Were these translations in a way that befit the names of the greats of Persian poetry and literature?

Unfortunately, the prominent works of famous Iranian literary figures have not been translated from Persian to Spanish directly. The existing ones, translated from other languages such as English, German and French to Spanish, are of low quality.

For example, poems by our great poets such as Hafez, Sa'di and Ferdowsi were translated into Spanish from other languages. Translators have con-