The Iranian EFL Journal

December 2009

Volume 5

Chief Editors

Paul Robertson
&
Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh

**Index**

**Foreword**

Welcome to the last edition of the year 2009. The Iranian EFL Journal has had strong growth over the last few years with a monthly readership now exceeding 1,300 readers. For a new journal examining the topic of English second language acquisition from a local perspective, the growth and readership has been pleasing. Statistically readers are coming from almost 80 countries. This tends to show that the study of English as it's is taught in non English speaking countries, in this case, Iran has become a growth area for global academic research. In this issue we present 6 articles for your reading. In the first article the authors, Mohammad Hossein Keshavarz and Lotfollah Akbari Malek present a study using critical discourse analysis framework, aimed at examining three aspects of meaning, namely *social relations*, *subject positions*, and *contents* in the conversations of advanced parts of two series of textbooks namely *ILI* (Iran Language Institute) and *True to life* textbooks to find out whether there is any discernable ideological orientation(s) in the two series of textbooks. The second article by Mahmood Reza Atai & Hossein Rezaie Adriani combines an analysis of the current political situation of Iran's nuclear development. This study explores the representation of Iran's nuclear issues throughout forty editorials form a host of American news casting outlets with regard to their discursive manipulation at structural and strategic layers. Baqer Yaqubi & Vahid Rahmani Doqaruni report on an empirical investigation of the Iranian non-native English teachers' use of communication strategies in Iranian EFL contexts. In the fourth article, Khalil Motallebzadeh investigates the impact of three learning strategies for coaching candidates who were taking the IELTS speaking subtest: cognitive strategies, social strategies, and compensatory strategies.

The next article by our chief editor Dr. Rajabali Torgebah and his co-authors Majid Elahi and Saeed Khanalipour explored teaching, learning, and learner roles as entailed by the metaphors that were elicited from the participants categorized in the nine conceptual metaphors of provider of knowledge, friend, organizer, nurturer, spiritual leader, parent, entertainer, counselor, and innovator. Finally, Purya Baghaei and Nazila Amrahi introduces the Rasch model as an alternative measurement framework to classical test theory.

We hope you enjoy this edition and look forward to your readership in 2010.

## Title

# Critical Discourse Analysis of ELT Textbooks

## Authors

**Mohammad Hossein Keshavarz (Ph.D.)**
Teacher Training University

**Lotfollah Akbari Malek (M.A.)**

Teacher Training University

## Bio Data

**Mohammad Hossein Keshavarz** is professor emeritus of Applied Linguistics. He has published on various topics in Applied Linguistics and TEFL in several international journals including Language in Society, International Journal of Applied Linguistics, Journal of Research in Psycholinguistics, and International Journal of Bilingualism. He has also presented papers in professional conferences such as AILA, Systemic-Functional Linguistics Conferences and Bilingualism Symposia. His research interests include sociolinguistics, bilingualism, discourse analysis, and phonology.

**Lotfollah Akbari Malek** holds an MA in TEFL from Tarbiat Moallem University, Tehran, Iran. He has extensive experience of teaching English as a foreign language. His current fields of interest include critical discourse analysis, critical approaches to applied linguistics and sociolinguistics.

## Abstract

Using Critical Discourse Analysis framework, the present study aims at examining three aspects of meaning namely *social relations*, *subject positions*, and *contents* in the conversations of advanced parts of two series of textbooks namely *ILI* (Iran Language Institute) and *True to life* textbooks to find out whether there is any discernable ideological orientation(s) in the two series of textbooks. The analysis revealed that in both series of the textbooks social relations are mostly *equal*, i.e. conversations happen between participants who enjoy roughly equal social status. Regarding subject positions, analysis showed that after *friends*, *occupational* and *commercial* related positions are the dominant ones in the selected textbooks. Investigation of the contents in the conversations depicted that emphasis is mostly on *market* and *market related* issues. It seems that textbooks tend to represent a particular discourse type more dominantly – the discourse of western economy and capitalism which is the backbone of liberalism.

**Keywords:** Critical discourse analysis, Ideology, English textbooks

## Introduction

In today's world, Language is receiving the ever increasing importance as an instrument to bring about change. Language is used by different groups in society and the world at large to dominate other groups or sustain their dominance over them. As Fairclough (1989) expresses" language use- discourse -is not just a matter of performing tasks, it is also a matter of expressing, constituting and reproducing social identities and social relations" (p. 196).

With the improvement in education and awareness of the people, Fairclough (1992a, p.12) believes that "power relations work increasingly at an implicit level through language"; therefore, discourse will be consciously controlled and the dominant groups endeavor to inculcate their ideologies through discourse. That is why discourse is highly controlled by the ruling systems in most countries in the world in an effort to legitimize and preserve the dominance of the ruling people and prevent the production of the alternative discourses.

Considering the aforementioned complexities in this era, special skills are needed to understand and counteract against indoctrination and subjugation and school is the best place- because of its widespread presence and importance in the people's lives- to cater for these newly emerging needs.

According to Richards (2001, p.114), "curriculum focuses on determining what knowledge, skills, and values students should learn in school ", but what constitutes those knowledge, skills and values is highly controversial.

There are various philosophies of curriculum seeing the outcome of education differently. *Academic rationalism* considered the mastery of the classical works as an end without any inquiry about their origins. *Social and economic efficiency* was another curriculum philosophy which emerged to address the challenges of its own time which was training experts to do jobs in society. This curriculum like its predecessor was not concerned with the relationship between education and macrostructures of society. In other words, dialectical relation between education and society was missing. With development in psychology *learner-centeredness* philosophy of curriculum came into vogue emphasizing individual needs of the learners and the role of experience in learning. Although this approach addresses some neglected aspects of education, it falls short of dealing with the issues of power and dominance in society at large. In contrast, *Social Reconstructionism* and *cultural pluralism* put schools at the heart of the attention .These approaches recognize and theorize the role of school in society underscoring that school should prepare students to tackle the social injustices and inequalities. In this approach, school is considered a political place and site of clash and conflict.

*Social Reconstructionism* approach recognizes dealing with injustices and inequalities as one of the responsibilities of school. According to Maclaren (2003, p. 85), "knowledge acquired in classrooms should help the students participate in vital issues that affect their experience on a daily level". In other words, schools should help students to get a good glimpse of power relations in the society and prepare them to act against those wanting to subjugate them; however, Peter Maclaren (2003, p.70) believes that school can act as a double-edged sword," it can function simultaneously as a means of empowering students around the issues of social justice and as a means of sustaining, legitimizing, and reproducing dominant class interests".

As it can be inferred, curriculum represents more than a program of study; rather it presents the introduction to particular forms of life. Raymond William (cited in

Taxel, 1991) claims that curriculum is governed by *selective tradition* by which *knowledge* and *culture* is transmitted to the learner. It should be borne in mind that knowledge passed by the curriculum to students is selected from among huge amount of existing knowledge and this selection is usually fought over by different groups in society, because inclusion of a special kind of knowledge from specified perspective is ideological and will have implications in students' lives and society. *Cultural capital* and *selected knowledge* are packed into the textbooks which are sometimes the only channel for students to get familiar with the world. Despite textbooks writers' claims, knowledge and culture presented in the textbooks are not neutral, but mostly represent the dominant group's version of reality and good knowledge to pass on to students. As Apple and Christian-Smith (1991,p.4) put it "texts are not simply delivery systems of facts[…]but they are conceived, designed, and authored by real people with real interests", meaning that biases are inevitable ingredients of textbooks.

Controlling the knowledge and culture embedded in the textbooks, dominant groups show their perspective and version of the reality as the only possible one. This way they show their own perspective as the natural one, not one possible interpretation of reality among others.

Language teaching is no exception within the whole area of education. According to Richards (2001), textbooks are the key component of language teaching serving as the basis for much of the language input learners receive when learning a language. Textbook is a device to help students to get not only familiar with the linguistic aspects of the language but also with social and cultural aspects embedded in language.

Language teaching textbooks in tandem with other books should reflect the world and role of the language as it is; therefore, not only the true picture of power relations in the society should be shown, but also language textbooks should equip learners with the awareness to act against inequalities and injustices.

In the Iranian context, Koosha et al. (2004) and Taki (2008) have investigated English textbooks (Interchange, Streamline, Spectrum and Expressways) widely taught using critical discourse analytic framework. However, no study has so far investigated Kish and Iran Language Institutes' textbooks from a CDA perspective. It is worth mentioning here that the former employs internationally produced textbook and the latter produces its own textbooks. Since Iran Language Institute and Kish

Institute have many branches all over the country with a great number of students, and given the fact that these two institutes have their own different textbooks, it seems that textbooks used by these institutions are worth studying to find out how interactions are reflected (in terms of content, social relations and subject positions) in their materials and whether these materials reflect and promote any dominant ideological orientation.

Based on the above, the following research questions are posed:

1. What social relations are depicted in the conversations of the selected textbooks?

2. What are the subject positions in conversations of the selected textbooks?

3. What are the contents included in the conversations of the selected textbooks?

4. Is there any ideology embedded in the selected textbooks? If yes, what is it?

## Method

This study was an attempt to categorize and describe the already existing data in the selected textbooks employing a critical discourse analytic framework without establishing causal relationships between and among the variables. This study included some statistical quantification, but the overall design of the study was descriptive–analytic.

### Corpus

Not only meaning is of importance in CDA, but also formal representation of the material is significant, therefore authenticity of the selected materials is one of the principles that should be taken into account by the analyst. To address the above mentioned point advanced parts of two series of textbooks employed in two famous Iranian language institutes- Iran Language Institute and Kish Institute- were chosen as corpus of the present study. More specifically, conversations of the selected textbooks were analyzed in terms of contents, subject positions, and social relations.

### The Theoretical Model

Since discourse has constitutive power and people get their identity and worldview from discourses presented to them, it is of utmost significance to investigate the soundness and authenticity of them. To this end, a tripartite theoretical framework was adopted from Fairclough (2001), as illustrated in Table 1 below.

*Table 1: Formal features: Experiential, Relational, Expressive Values (Fairclough, 2001, p. 94)*

| Dimensions of meaning | Values of Features | Structural Effects |
|---|---|---|
| Contents | Experiential | Knowledge /beliefs |
| Relations | Relational | Social relations |
| Subjects | Expressive | Social identities |

According to this framework, texts at the same time are carriers of *contents, social relations*, and *subject positions* and their analyses can reveal the hidden ideology embedded in the texts. By *contents*, as one aspect of meaning, is meant the text producer's knowledge and beliefs or, as put by Fairclough (2001), one's experience of the social or natural world. Within the context of this research the topics of discussions such as health issues and buying a gift were counted as examples of contents. *Relations* refer to the social relationships depicted via the text between and among the interactants in the conversations, such as wife–husband or friends. And *subject positions* refer to the social identity of interactants such as an employer or a neighbor.

**Procedure**

Conversations of the textbooks were analyzed in a bid to understand the representation of dimensions of meaning. It is worth mentioning that in determining aspects of meaning different factors such as setting of the conversations, formal features of the discourse and intonation in audio conversation were taken into account. The first part of the study, using quantitative analysis, tried to find out what power relations (equal or unequal) are mostly depicted in the conversations of the textbooks between and among the conversants involved in the interactions. Relations depicted in the conversations were tallied and tabulated to decipher the hidden pattern. The second step was going to investigate the topic and activities discussed in the conversations, in order to specify the kinds of contents that are used in the interactions (e.g. cultural, entertainment, occupational, etc.). The third section of the

research aimed at clarifying the subject positions given to the participants involved in the interactions, i.e. to show who are involved and in what capacity (e.g. occupational, commercial and social) in the interactions. After quantification of the three dimensions of meaning the results of the above analyses were used to find out whether any ideology was embedded within the analyzed textbooks.

Also, to make sure that the classification of the data and the resulting categories are reliable, about 30% of the data were categorized by a second rater. Then, Kappa coefficient was used for each category as a measure of inter-rater reliability. The results are reported together with other statistical data in the related tables. Suffice it to mention here that in no case were coefficients less than 0.69.

## Results

A statistical survey of all the dialogs in the selected textbooks was done to classify the dimensions of meaning into a comprehensible set of data. In other words, the number of occurrences of each aspect of meaning (i.e. *relations, subject positions,* and *content*s) was counted through the books and then the obtained data were tabulated to get a clear picture of the dominant pattern of occurrences of these aspects of meaning.

The reason for examining these dimensions was to see which aspects of meaning were emphasized or de-emphasized since these choices reflect an ideological stance on the part of the textbook producers.

### Classification of Relations

In order to classify social relations, each textbook was reviewed page by page and audio conversations were transcribed. A relation was counted any time two characters in the dialogs were in verbal communication. Relations were specified in two ways. The most common was by two words, such as *teacher–student*. Otherwise, relations were denoted by one word in the plural form, as in *friends*.

In order to present a comprehensible set of data in categorizing the relations, wider categories were adopted in the analysis. Therefore, two broad categories of *equality* and *unequality* were chosen for the sake of convenience. The rationale for this approach was that social relations of the participants in interactions can either be equal or unequal. As Table 2 below illustrates social relations can be divided into two broad categories namely equal and unequal relationships.

*Table 2: Frequency of relations in the selected textbooks*

| Relations | True to life % | ILI % |
|-----------|----------------|-------|
| Equal | 64.8 | 74.5 |
| Unequal | 35.2 | 25.5 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Inter-rater | 0.7 | 0.76 |

As shown in Table 2, 64.8 and 74.5 percent of the interactions in True to Life and ILI textbooks, respectively, are among and between interactants with roughly equal social power.

**Classification of Subject Positions**

The differentiation between relations and subject positions is necessary despite some repetitions in tabulating the data. Fairclough (1989) remarks, "all three (aspect of meaning, i.e. relations, subjects, and contents) overlap and co-occur in practice, but it is helpful to be able to distinguish them" (p. 46). The distinction is useful to see how constraints operate in these areas.

An occurrence of a subject was counted every time it appeared in conversations of the selected textbooks. In the analyzed interactions sometimes both of the participants had the same subject positions (e.g. clerks) and sometimes they had different positions (e.g. boss and secretary). In tabulating the data, the subject positions were ultimately grouped into three categories: *occupational*, *commercial*, and *social*. In cases where an interactant appeared to be functioning in more than one subject position the one that seemed most salient in the context was selected.

After grouping the subject positions under the three categories, percentage of each category was calculated, as presented in Table 3.

*Table 3: Frequency of subject positions in the textbooks*

| Subject position | True to life % | ILI % |
|---|---|---|
| Occupational | 37.8 | 33.6 |
| Commercial | 5.4 | 15.1 |
| Social | 37.8 | 18.4 |
| Friends | 18.9 | 32.7 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Inter-rater reliability | 0.85 | 0.74 |

As can be seen, most of the subject positions of textbooks are market-oriented. Occupational and commercial subject positions comprise 43.2 and 48.7 of the subject positions in True to Life and ILI textbooks, respectively. Friends, as a subject position, has a strong presence in both series of textbooks: 18.9 and 32.7 percent is dedicated to this position in True to Life and ILI textbooks, respectively. The rest of subject positions are occupied by people active in social domains of the life. It is worth mentioning that *friends,* as a subject position, can be subsumed under social category, but it is treated separately here to highlight the emphasis these selected textbooks put on this subject position.

**Classification of Contents**

Contents were the most problematic aspect of the data to classify. The topic of each dialog was determined according to the general picture obtained from the whole data in the dialog, i.e. the dominant topic in the conversations was chosen as the content of the dialog ignoring other unimportant topics brought up in the interactions.

To present a comprehensible analysis of the data, the contents of all conversations were classified into seven broad categories: (a) cultural contrasts, festivals, and customs; (b) entertainment, human interest stories; (c) occupational; (d) consumer-oriented; and (e) (inter)personal, introspective, and interactional regarding individuals and institutions; (f) health; (g) educational. Table 4 presents the contents or topics brought up or discussed in the conversations of the two series of textbooks. In terms of content there were some differences between the two series of textbooks.

For example, health-related issues comprised 14.8 percent of content of ILI textbooks, whereas it was nonexistent in True to Life textbooks.

*Table 4: Frequency of content categories in individual textbooks*

| Category | True to Life (%) | ILI (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Cultural contrasts, festivals, customs | 3.7 | 12.9 |
| 2. Entertainment, human interest stories | 13.5 | 20.3 |
| 3. Occupational | 17.2 | 11.1 |
| 4. Consumer-oriented | 13.5 | 18.5 |
| 5. (Inter)personal, introspective, interactional | 45.9 | 16.6 |
| 6. Educational | 5.4 | 5.5 |
| 7. Health | 0 | 14.8 |
| Total percentage | 100 | 100 |
| Inter-rater reliability | 0.69 | 0.74 |

As illustrated in Table 4, in True to Life textbooks 45.9 percent of contents is dedicated to *(Inter)personal ,introspective ,interactional* issues, whereas in ILI textbooks this category occupies 16.6 percent of the contents brought up in all the books. *Occupational-* and *customer-oriented* topics form 30.7 and 28.6 of the contents in True to Life and ILI textbooks, respectively. Language learners are in need of cultural understanding to be able to interact with native speakers, accordingly True to Life and ILI textbooks have devoted 3.7 and 12.9 of contents to cultural issues, respectively. *Entertainment and interesting stories* are another category with different proportions in these textbooks.13.5 percent of True to Life textbooks is occupied with this category whereas 20.3 percent of ILI textbooks is dedicated to entertainment and interesting stories.

## Discussion

The findings of this study regarding *relations* showed that both series of textbooks tend to depict idealized interactions, that is, interactions between and among equals in terms of social relations, whereas it is quite clear that unlike what is portrayed in these selected books most of the interactions in real life situations happen between and among characters with unequal social relations. Engagement of equals in the interactions is in accordance with the findings of Koosha et al. (2004) and Taki (2008). These two studies (Koosha et al., 2004; Taki, 2008), which investigated the conversations of internationally and locally produced textbooks, found that both series tended to show the interactions mostly between and among people with roughly equal social power.

Although ILI textbooks are compiled by Iranian textbook writers, in terms of subject positions in the conversations no tangible difference was observed in comparison with its foreign counterpart. In both series of textbooks, occupational and commercial-related subject positions were dominant ones. This point can testify to the fact that language textbooks or at least these two series are presenting topics in compliance with western ideology. Therefore, as Pennycook (2000) warns we should be cautious not to fall into the trap of dealing simply with questions of language as if it was nothing but a neutral medium for the conveyance of knowledge and culture.

Also, examining the subject positions of the interactions, one can see that the depiction of interactants in the market subject positions is in line with the principal tenets of neo-liberalism. Underpinning this portrayal is a vision of students as human capital (Apple, 1999). As Apple remarks, the world is intensely competitive economically and students, as future workers, should be given the requisite skills and dispositions to compete efficiently and effectively.

Further, having the market place as the measure against which subject positions and contents have been shaped in these textbooks is in line with the fact that the English language, as Kress (1995) asserts, is the carrier of capitalism. In the same vein, Holborrow (1999) makes the assertion that "world English is not separable from the historical legacy of colonialism and from the internationalization of capitalism, both economically and politically" (p. 191). The fact that language can be so influential is implied by Eagleton's (1996) observation that "language is a rather weightless way of carrying the world around with us"(p. 73).

Content analysis of the conversations showed that topics are mostly trivial and unimportant issues. In True to Life textbooks 46% of the contents concentrate on (Inter) personal, introspective, and interactional issues whereas in ILI textbooks 20.3 % of contents are about entertainment, human interest stories. These findings, in terms of contents, are in accordance with Akbari (2008, p.267) stating that:

> The majority of coursebooks used for English instruction have been anesthetized to make them politically and socially harmless for an international audience. Most publishers advise coursebook writers to follow a set of guidelines to make sure that controversial topics are kept out of their books (…). As a result, most coursebooks deal with neutral, apparently harmless topics such as food, shopping, or travel.

In addition, market related topics were also salient in both textbooks (True to Life and ILI) so that almost 30 percent of the contents of each series were dedicated to occupational- or customer-oriented issues. This piece of finding also corroborated the findings of Taki (2008). Taki's study showed that most of the contents of the internationally-produced textbooks' (Interchange, Streamline, Spectrum, and Expressways) dialogs centered around occupational- and customer-related issues.

All in all, it seems that these two series of textbooks, like other ELT textbooks studied by Taki (2008) and Koosha et al. (2004), are carriers of neoliberalism-the dominant ideology of this era.

## Implications of the Study

Form a pedagogical point of view, insights provided by CDA in general, and the present study in particular, can be useful to material designers, teachers, and learners.

The findings of this research are hoped to benefit the material designers for English courses whose learners are pursuing their experience of a new language by controlling the ideological subtleties which are contained in their texts and often go unnoticed by both language learners and syllabus designers. More specifically, findings of the present study can remind material designers that, texts are carriers of ideologies and they should be aware of this point and act responsibly in presenting healthy discourses compatible with the cultures that their materials will be consumed.

Pennycook (1994, p. 297), instead of viewing schools as "neutral sites where a curricular body of information is passed on to students", believes that educational institutions are "cultural and political arenas" in which different values are in struggle.

This is I agreement with Giroux's (1997) view that "teachers need to see themselves as "transformative intellectuals" and not "classroom technicians employed to pass on a body of knowledge" (p.299). According to Pennycook, teaching is a process of political engagement and curriculum should be based on themes of social relevance on amalgam of approaches known as "critical pedagogy". To be relevant politically and culturally to the context, teachers are required to have deep understanding of the social, cultural and political statuses of their context. This knowledge , equip practitioners at the bottom of educational hierarchy and can also empower them in choosing the appropriate materials taking into account context, purpose and students' needs in the process of the language teaching. CDA is the discipline that can provide the enthusiasts with such knowledge. CDA and its findings can be considered as complementary toolkits accompanying the traditional skills in language teaching for teachers to act as "transformative intellectuals" and not as "technicians" unaware of the macrostructure of their society and the impact of their teaching.

   Furthermore, it seems quite necessary for students to acquire the required critical language awareness to understand subtly embedded ideological imports to resist the dominant or subjugating discourse and understand the central role language can play in structuring human mind and in promoting particular worldview. CDA can empower students to decipher problematic language use and problematize it.   Moreover, students can also sharpen their capabilities as writers by applying the results of CDA in general and this study in particular.

   Meanwhile, this study is hoped to bring about some degrees of consciousness raising among people involved in language teaching and learning by dispelling the misconception that language textbooks are neutral and value-free.

## References

Akbari, R. (2008). Transforming lives: Introducing critical pedagogy into FL classrooms. *ELT Journal*, 62, 276-283.

Apple, M. W. (1999). Freire, neoliberalism, and education. *Discourse: Studies in cultural politics of Education,* 20, 46-52.

Apple, M. W. & Christian-Smith, L. K. (1991). The politics of the Textbook. In Apple, M. W. & Christian-Smith, L. K. (Eds.) *The politics of the Textbook (pp.1-22).* London and  New York: Routledge.

Eagleton, P. (1996). *The illusions of postmodernism*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language  and Power*. London: Longman.

Fairclough, N. (1992). Introduction. In Fairclough, N. (Ed.) *Critical Language Awareness* (pp.1-30).  London: Longman.

Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and Power* (2$^{nd}$ edition). Essex: Pearson Education.

Giroux, H. (1997). *Pedagogy and politics of hope: Theory, culture, and Schooling*. Oxford: Westview Press.

Holborrow, M. (1999). *The politics of English: A Marxist view of Language*. London: Sage Publications.

Koosha, M., Talebeinezhad, M. R. and Taki, S. (2004). An analysis of the ideological import of internationally and locally-developed ELT textbooks widely used in Iran. *Iranian  Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *7*, 45-79.

Kress, G. (1995). *Writing the future*. Sheffield: National Association for Teaching English.

Maclaren, P. (2003).Critical Pedagogy: A Look at Major Concepts. In Darder, A. Baltodano, M. & Torres, R.D. (Eds.), *the Critical pedagogy Reader* (pp.69-97). London: Routledge  Falmer.

Pennycook, A. (1994).*The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. New York: Longman.

Richards, J.C. (2001).*Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Taki, S. (2008). International and local curricula: The question of ideology. *Language Teaching Research,* 12, 127–142.

Taxel, J. (1991). Reclaiming the voices of  resistance: The Fiction of Mildred Taylor. In Apple, W. and Christian-Smith, L. K. (Eds.) *The Politics of the Textbook* (pp.79-111). London: Routledge.

**Title**

# On the Representation of Iran's Post-resolution Nuclear Issues in American News Editorials; A Critical Discourse Analytic Perspective

**Authors**

**Mahmood Reza Atai (Ph.D.)**

Tehran Tarbiat Moallem University

**Hossein Rezaie Adriani (M.A.)**
Tehran Tarbiat Moallem University

## Bio Data

**Mahmood Reza Atai** is associate professor of TEFL at Tehran Tarbiat Moallem University. His research interests include ESP, task based language teaching, and teacher education. His publications include 17 research articles published in inter/national journals and three EAP textbooks for Iranian university students.

**Hossein Rezaie Adriani** got his  MA in TEFL at Tarbiat Moallem University, Tehran, Iran. He is currently teaching English at colleges. His areas of research interest are Discourse analysis and CDA.

## Abstract

This study explores the representation of Iran's nuclear issues throughout forty editorials form a host of American news casting outlets with regard

to their discursive manipulation at structural and strategic layers. All the editorials were released after declaring the resolution, 1696, by the United Nations Security Council on July 31, 2006. To analyze the corpus, the critical discourse analytic framework of Van Dijk (1998) was adopted as the model for examining the data. The results confirm the CD analysts' conviction about the penetration of bias in the representation of a discursive event, in this case the journalistic debate over Iran's nuclear issues. Likewise, the findings support Van Dijk's ideological circle of overstating the deeds of 'us' (i.e. the Western side of the conflict) and understating those of 'them' (i.e. the Iranian side) by making use of specific structures and strategies.

**Key Words:** Editorials, Text, Critical Discourse Analysis, Power, Ideology, Hegemony, Iran's nuclear issue.

## Introduction

The process of news dissemination is often construed by the layman to be purely objective. Certain reasons are enumerated by Bell (1998) for the significance of studying news excerpts as their accessibility, their influence on speech communities, culture, politics, ideological beliefs and social life, their disclosing of a great deal about social meanings and embedded stereotypes and finally their informativeness as exemplar instances of text and talk. However, from the point of view of media experts, this process goes through certain stages of selection and transformation that the commonly held belief about the neutrality of the news cannot be anymore authenticated and relied on (Fowler, 1991). In this regard, the mediating role of language in yielding a piece of information which is loaded with a specific line of thought and a particular way of seeing the world is seen to be highly probable which is in turn a testimony for embarking on specific analytical assets (van Dijk, 1988, p.176). Moreover, various forms of linguistic expression, including phonological, syntactic, lexical or semantic, are utilized by news producers for certain purposes. Accordingly, a critical discourse analytic framework is deemed to yield better assessment of the purported corpus in this study than a non-critical one, because as it is argued by Fairclough (1992),

"Critical approaches differ from non-critical approaches in not just describing discursive practices, but also showing how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, neither of which is normally apparent to discourse participants" ( p.12).

The main objective behind embarking on the present research was to assess the American mass media's representation of Iran's nuclear issues in the light of their ideological and hegemonic patterns in the aftermath of approving the resolution '1696' on July, 2006 by the United Nations Security Council. The resolution followed a lengthy series of negotiations between Iranian nuclear issue's officials and their European counterparts, known as the EU-Trio (Germany, England and France). In order to yield a better analysis of any discursive event, as it is suggested by Wodak and Meyer (2001), a quick reference to the historical background of the event is in order.

The initiation of Iran's nuclear technology can be traced back to 1950s, in which the West judged the regime sufficiently stable and friendly that nuclear proliferation would not become a threat. This technological asset was kept booming until the time span of 1979-1987, during which Iran's nuclear programs went through a cessation period due to the 1979 revolution and the subsequent War with Iraq. After this period, a few contracts with some countries of the region, including Pakistan, China and the Soviet Union resulted in the resumption of Iran's nuclear activities. In 2002, an opposition group whose headquarters were based in Paris revealed the existence of two previously unknown facilities in Arak and Natanz. Since then, a series of bilateral talks have been held between the Iranian and the Western sides of the conflict.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1- Are there any definite linguistic patterns in American newspapers and broadcast editorials which bear ideological and hegemonic proclivities toward Iran's nuclear issues?

2- Are the actors involved in the conflict over Iran's nuclear issues represented positively or negatively in the American newspaper and broadcast editorials?

## Method

Due to the qualitative nature of the research in hand, a critical discourse analysis approach was taken up for detailed investigation of the corpus. In addition, a descriptive-analytic method of research was utilized in order to deal with the questions raised in this study.

### Corpus

The corpus of the study included 40 editorials released by eight American news casting outlets after the issuance of the resolution '1696' on July, 2006 by the United Nations Security Council. More specifically, the editorials were extracted from The Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, The Houston Chronicles, The New York Times, The New York Post, The Newsday, the VOA, and The Fox News. The main criterion for the selection of the corpus was, first and foremost, their high circulation either domestically in the States or internationally among the public and specially their high popularity among English language learners in EFL contexts such as Iran. Besides, their ease of retrieval from their websites, manageability due to the limits of the study and being all commentary notes on the issue at hand, i.e. Iran's nuclear issues were other reasons for their inclusion. The corpus was analyzed at two levels of headlines and the text stories.

In order to analyze the corpus, the theoretical framework of this study was adopted from Van Dijk's (1998) model of doing CDA to come up with a description of linguistic features that give clues to the dominant ways of representing the social actors involved in Iran's post-resolution nuclear issues. Subsequently, the headlines were examined based on topics and *lexical choice.* By the same token, the main body of news reports was examined with regard to *lexical choice, nominalization, passivization, overcompleteness and voice*. It might seem that such a culling toward picking up certain categories from the model somehow distorts its comprehensibility. Nevertheless, this limited investment on just a few elements within the model is justified by van Dijk (1998), who explicitly comments that: "One of the more practical questions of a systemic analysis of discourse is which discourse structures or strategies to attend to" (p.10).

In order to control subjectivity throughout this research, Price's (2002) suggestion was appealed to. Price emphasizes that the best way for conducting a CDA-driven study, which is supposed to be done irrespective of the analyst's taste and prejudice, is detaching from engagement without estrangement. By avoiding to maintain any allegiances or partisanship with the participants in a given discourse, we can embark on charging or even challenging the status quo which often seems to be unchangeable. To be more consistent, a second examiner reanalyzed the data to ensure the reliability of the analyses.

**Findings**

The analysis of the sample was conducted at two levels of headlines and the full-text stories of the editorials; the headlines were probed due to their macropropositions and lexical choices and the text stories were examined with regard to their discursive features of lexical choices, nominalization, passivization, overcompleteness and voice. The ultimate goal behind these discursive analyses was to assess the representation of Iran's nuclear issues throughout the sampled American news outlets and in turn to find out how the engaged participants in the discourse shaped around these issues are depicted throughout their selected editorials.

**The analysis of Headlines; Topics, and Lexical Choices**

The sampled headlines were analyzed with regard to their macrostructural level of topics about Iran's nuclear program in the post-resolution era. Moreover, the pertinent participants' representation was explored in the light of the discursive facets of lexical choice, nominalization, and passivization.

One of the distinctive characteristics of headlines is to yield a broad commentary on an issue to their prospective readers (van Dijk, 1988). In addition, lexical choices can echo the reporter's opinions about the participants in a news event and also his/her affiliation with a particular group which in turn can reveal something about his/her ideological stance. As a repercussion, by employing certain words, a positive or a negative attitude could be reached and also the approval of the readers could be manufactured (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). This function of vocabulary items is so much paramount that McGregor (1993) compellingly reminds us about its significance by holding that: "We should never again speak, read/hear others' words without being unconscious of the underlying

meaning of words. Our words are politicized, even if we are not aware of it, because they carry the power that reflects the interests of those who speak (p.2).

To begin with, the major topics covered by the American news casting outlets which ran like common threads through them are presented in Table 1 below.

*Table 1: The macropropositions of the selected headlines*

••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••

Iran defies international bodies

Iran is exhausting the World countries' patience

In dealing with Iran, no flexibility should be adopted

Iran is faced with a dilemma

Iran has ambitious goals in mind

Iran is slapped in the face either by its allies or its opponents

The US tries to gain the accompaniment of its European counterparts in dealing with Iran

There is a possibility of a war against Iran by the US and its allies

Iranian authorities are kind of fiery in dealing with the international community

••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••

These varied sets of headlines seem to reveal discrepancies in terms of the type of macropropositions which are presented by them and might be considered by their readers to be neutral on the surface. Yet, by delving into the sampled headlines, certain shared perspectives are found among all of them by virtue of their underlying thematic patterns which are powerful testimonies about Van Dijk's (1988) ideological dichotomy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation that ultimately results in an emphasis over the good deeds of the insiders and the bad deeds of the outsiders. By the same token, Iran is given an unpleasant image while the US and its allies are given a proper picture throughout the selected newspapers' headlines. After scanning through the sampled headlines, it was found that their overriding theme insinuates a state of rebelliousness and mutiny for Iran in its quest for the nuclear power. According to the headlines, Iranian authorities go ahead in making their minds on the

nuclear issues without paying due attention to international concerns. Such an overriding discourse of rebelliousness was found through the following editorial headlines:

1) Iran Announces Plans to Build 2 More Nuclear Power Plants (Fox News)

2) UN: Iran defies nuke rebuke (Houston Chronicles)

3) Iranian leader won't curtail nuclear development (New York Post)

4) Not Much of an Opening in the Mullahs' Robes (Washington Post)

5) Iran plans new nuke facility (News Day)

6) Iran's top leader has fighting words for US (Los Angeles Times)

7) Iran launches large-scale war games (New York Times)

8) Bush on Iran's intransigence (VOA)


Complementing this stigma of rebelliousness, a number of sub-topics are embedded in the sampled headlines which demonstrate a host of other news frames that unanimously add to the negative presentation of Iran. These news frames implicate in such unpleasant features as threat for the World, boastfulness, concealment, defiance and a particular source of threat for the US allies, i.e. Israelis, for commenting on the Iranian nuclear program. Those headlines which cover the threat theme are as follows:

 9) Iran warned deadline nears to stop nuking, start talking (Houston Chronicles)

10) Iranian Warns Against Added Nuclear Sanctions (New York Post)

11) Iran to resume nuclear research despite threat of UN sanctions (News Day)

12) Iran threatens to reject nuclear incentives if UN adopts sanctions resolution (Washington Post)

13) Iran's supreme leader talks tough to U.S (Houston Chronicles)

14) Iran: Sanctions Could Push Nuclear Drive (Fox News)

15) Iranian leader defends controversial stands (Washington Post)

16) Iran ups enrichment (News Day)

17) Iran's leader warns the US about carrying out any attack (New York Times)

18) Iran's dangerous nuclear program (VOA)


Still, another set of headlines point out to the boastful nature of the Iranian's claims. This sense of braggadocio is related throughout the following headlines:

 19) Is Iran bluffing about the progress of its nuclear program (Fox News)

20) Analysts Not Buying Ahmadinejad's Nuclear Success Tale (Fox News)

21) Claims about Iranian arms carry familiar lack of proof (News Day)

22) Iran years from nuclear weapons (Washington Post)

23) Russia Skeptical of Iran's Uranium Enrichment Expansion Announcement (Fox News)

Charging the Iranian for their covert activities on nukes is included in the following headlines:

24)  Iran not cooperating with nuclear inspectors, IAEA says (Washington Post)

25) IAEA chief calls for more cooperation from Iran on nuclear disclosures (News Day)

26) Iran's apocalyptic ideology (VOA)

27) Iran plot vote to reduce UN nuke agency ties (News Day)

28) No simple answers from the Iranians (Los Angeles Times)

29) Iran had secret nuclear program, UN agency says (Houston Chronicles)

30) Iran blocks UN cameras at big atomic sites (Washington Post)

In response to such secrecy form the side of Iran, the IAEA calls for more cooperation which again points out to the rebellious nature of the Iranians dealing with the matter in hand. It is interesting that in the 24th headline, Iran is thematized while in another example (#25) it is positioned in the rhyme slot. Once again, this thematization does its best in highlighting Iran' bad deeds and by the same token that case of assigning Iran to the right-most position of the utterance functions as to downgrade its activities which are another pieces of evidence that account for van Dijk's ideological dichotomy of insiders and outsiders.

Among the other themes which overrides the headlines is introducing the Iranians as a defiant nation. This thematic line is perceptible in the following instances:

31) UN: Iran defies nuke rebuke (Houston Chronicles)

32) Iranian president derides US threats (Washington Post)

33) Iran rebuffs UN, vows to speed up uranium enrichment (Washington Post)

34) Iran defies UN nuclear deadline (Houston Chronicles)

35) Iran forges ahead with uranium plans (News Day)

36) Defying UN, Iran installs centrifuges (Washington post)

Finally, the last noticeable thematic pattern which is embedded within the headlines is speaking of Iran as a potential source of jeopardy to the Israelis' existence. The following headlines are the epiphanies of such a portrayal:

37) On edge, Israelis seek out shelters; Nuclear threats see more citizens expanding underground protection    (News Day)

38) Olmert says still time to curb Iran nuclear plans (Washington Post)

39) Israeli official: Iran strike possible (News Day)

40) Israel and nuclear option against Iran (Los Angeles Times)

Table 2 illustrates the dominant lexico-thematic features of the headlines alongside their distribution in each news casting outlet. As it explicitly shows, all lexical items enjoy negative loadedness in describing Iran's nuclear issues at the level of headlines.

Table 2- The Lexico-thematic analysis of the Headlines

| Discursive pattern | VOA | FN | NYT | NYP | WP | LAT | HC | ND | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rebelliousness | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| Threat | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | ---- | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| Boastfulness | --- | 3 | --- | --- | 1 | --- | --- | 1 | 5 |
| Secrecy | 1 | --- | --- | --- | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| Defiance | --- | --- | --- | --- | 3 | --- | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| Jeopardy to Israel | --- | --- | --- | --- | 1 | 1 | --- | 2 | 4 |
| VOA: Voice of America, FN: Fox News, NYT: New York Times, NYP: New York Post, WP: Washington Post, LAT: Los Angeles Times, HC: Houston Chronicles, ND: News Day | | | | | | | | | |

**The Analysis of Full-text Stories**

In order to examine the image of Iran's nuclear issues in more detail, we probed into the full-text stories of the sampled editorials with regard to lexical choices, nominalization, passivization, overcompleteness and voice. In the following subsection the details of these strategies are illustrated.

**Lexical Choices and Thematic Patterns**

As it was mentioned, the choice of words exerts a significant influence in setting a mind-map for the readers of various texts through presenting a certain discursive framework which legitimizes the production and reception of utterances in particular ways from the side of participants in that given discourse. In what follows, the lexical choices that have been drawn up throughout the sampled American editorials' full texts for representing a set of thematic propositions will be dealt with.

A sense of threat is insinuated throughout the full-text stories of the editorials about Iran's nuclear activities for the whole world. In other words, Iran's nuclear activities are demonstrated as a threatening source for the world at large and for the Arabs, and the Middle East in particular. This sense of threat is boosted more by using certain lexical items such as 'fears', 'dangerous', 'concern', 'unrest', 'rogue', 'destabilizing', "hostile', 'threatening', 'worried', and 'terror'. Comparing such a program with an *unstoppable train which has no breaks* further depicts it as something that is going to harm itself and the others who try to stop it in any way, in this case the U.S and its European allies. A closer look at the lexical choices throughout the full-text stories shows a particular threat for the Israelis whose comfort and existence have been threatened by Iran's nuclear activities. Once again, these words help to magnify the negative deeds of outgroups (i.e. Iran) so much so that any reactions from the ingroups (i.e., The U.S and its allies) are accounted for. Consequently, Israel is emboldened to adopt any measures that seem urgent in order to counteract the Iranian imposed threats. Following the depreciation of Iran's nuclear issues, these newspapers and news agencies condemn Iran for taking secrecy as its main policy in developing its nuclear capabilities and simultaneously raising the international community's suspicions. Accordingly, the kind of lexical choices that are capitalized on throughout these news excerpts presume a set of speculations about the nature of an Iranian nuclear program which is allegedly highly prone to a deviation toward the development of a nuclear bomb. The source of possessing such a suspicion is the U.S which is joined by its allies. The rampant use of provocative terms such as *'secret, ambiguous, lack of trust, suspect/ suspicion, covert, clandestine, unanswered questions, uncertain, hazy, unclear, and underground chambers* serves best in depicting a highly dubious picture of the so-called nuclear program

of Iran. A particular use of the terms 'uncertain' and 'suspect' justifies the American-led front's apprehension that Iran's claims about the peaceful nature of its nuclear activities are not true and it is pursuing evil aspirations.

As table 3 demonstrates, 'defiance' is found as a frequently used term throughout the editorials that tries to introduce Iran's nuclear program as something which is in full breach of international accords and charters. By exploiting such a lexical item, Iran's nuclear program is proclaimed as insubordination towards the IAEA's safeguards which serve to guarantee the member-countries' legitimate use of the nuclear energy for civilian purposes.

*Tables 3- The Lexico-thematic analysis of full text stories*

| Discursive pattern | VOA | FN | NYT | NYP | WP | LAT | HC | ND | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Secrecy | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 2 | 3 | 22 |
| Defiance | 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 31 |
| Threat | 9 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 11 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 51 |
| Israel Jeopardizing | --- | --- | --- | 2 | 4 | 1 | --- | --- | 7 |

**Nominalization**

As it is noted by Fowler (1991), nominalization is categorized among those syntactic transformations throughout utterances which can bear certain ideological consequences for a given piece of news. It can guide the news consumers towards preferred modes of interpretation in which the agency of the ingroups in doing unpleasant deeds is marginalized and at the same time mitigated through assigning nominalized structures to their actions. In this section, this kind of clausal syntactic transformation is probed separately within the full text stories of the selected forty editorials from each news agency.

Nominal cases were frequently capitalized on throughout the editorials' full text stories in an attempt to highlight the accomplishments of the ingroups (in this case the U.S and its European allies) and at the same time downplay the breakthroughs of the outgroups (who were Iranian nuclear issues' officials). Their mystificatory function was best implemented within the following excerpts from the purported eight different news outlets. By using nominal structures, they try

to insinuate a sense of confusion and threat in the mind about Iran's nuclear related activities:

Fox News

1. *It was unclear what the purpose of the uranium gas feed was*

2. *Exaggerating the number of centrifuges gives the Iranians more room to negotiate with world powers*

3. *Last week, Iran said it had begun operating 3,000 centrifuges at its Natanz facility*

4. *If true, Iran's revelation Monday that it now has 3,000 centrifuges producing enriched uranium brings the country a giant step closer to being able to produce the nuclear material for a bomb*

5. *With its nuclear activities shrouded in suspicions, Iran's claims are difficult to independently verify*

6. *Iran's call for help in building a plutonium-producing reactor appeared headed for rejection*

7. *Regardless of the decision on Iran's aid request for Arak, construction of the reactor was expected to be finished in the next decade*

8. *The sanctions included the banning of Iranian arms exports and the freezing of assets of 28 people*

9. *and organizations involved in Iran's nuclear and missile programs*

10. *Tehran's heavy water enrichment facilities near Arak also are under suspicion*

11. *efforts to pass two U.N. Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions on Iran for refusing to suspend uranium enrichment*

12. *there was majority support for approving IAEA aid on seven other Iranian projects, but for refusing help on the eighth*

13. *Some diplomats accredited to the meeting also suggested a parallel decision to tread lightly*

14. *The diplomats emphasized that the agreement was tentative.*

Iran's accomplishments are downplayed by backgrounding its agency from them and using the nominals 'feed' (#1), 'exaggerating' (#2), 'operating' (#3), 'revelation' (#4), 'call for help' (#6) and 'refusing' (#10) which not only obfuscate the modality and any indication of time clues, but also do their best in effacing any allusion to Iran as the real cause behind the existing breakthroughs, although

reifying Iran as an animate entity. On the other hand, the ingroups' negative actions are marginalized by using the same structures such as 'suspicion' (#5, #9), 'rejection' (#6), 'decision' (#7, #12), 'sanctions' (#8, #10), 'freezing',' banning' (#8), 'support', 'approving' (#11), and 'agreement' (#13) in all of which their agency is given a blind eye.

Houston Chronicles

15. *The reliability of U.S. information and assessments on Iran is increasingly at issue*

16. *The agency is locked in a dispute with Tehran over additional information and access to determine whether the program is peaceful.*

17. *On Thursday, administration officials said they are hoping to use the IAEA's conclusions to return to the Security Council for approval of deeper sanctions*

18. *…a U.N. Security Council deadline that carries the threat of harsher sanctions*

19. *The launch of a Russian-built nuclear power plant in Iran could be delayed*

20. *Under a separate deal, Iran agreed to return to Russia all spent fuel from the plant in southern*

21. *Facing the prospect of broader international sanctions, Iran's president and national security chief on Sunday offered to resume negotiations over their country's nuclear program*

22. *The resistance threatens to open a new rift between Europe and the United States over Iran*

23. *Russia signaled Thursday that it would support a proposal to hold off imposing U.N. sanctions on Iran*

24. *Iran's announcement appears to be its latest gesture of defiance over its nuclear program*

25. *An Iranian nuclear agency official has denied claims that the Islamic Republic had begun installing 3,000 centrifuges at a uranium enrichment plant*

The agentless nominals, 'information, 'assessment' (#15), 'dispute', 'access' (#16), 'approval' (#17), 'threat' (#18), 'deal' (#20), 'sanctions' (#18, #22),

'negotiations' (#22), 'resistance' (#23), 'proposal', 'imposing', 'sanctions' (#24), and 'claims' (#25) mystify their typical participants who are all affiliated with the ingroups as opposed to the outgroups (i.e. Iranians) whose 'announcement' and 'defiance' (#25) are highlighted by using the same structural transformation.

Los Angeles Times

26. *Iran is at least six to 10 years away from a nuclear bomb, by most estimates*

27. *Rice termed "high talk" the Iranian president's ridiculing of possible U.N.-imposed sanctions*

28. *the imposition of sanctions on Iran because of its refusal to abandon its nuclear program*

29. *Iran's oil and natural-gas dilemma has no direct connection with the sanctions adopted last month*

30. *The resolution is the culmination of more than three years of persuasion by the United States*

31. *But China and Russia, permanent members of the Security Council, had resisted action*

32. *Russia said Friday that it would convene a new round of talks among leading world powers next week in a bid to head off a confrontation between Iran and the U.N. Security Council over Tehran's nuclear program*

33. *Iran is a troublemaker in the international system, a central banker of terrorism*

The source of 'estimates' (#26), 'imposition of sanctions' (#28) and 'sanctions' (#28,29) are made obscured by employing nominalized forms. Moreover, Iran's efforts with regard to the nuclear case are overlooked by using the same structure in 'ridiculing of ...sanctions' (#27), 'its refusal to...' (28), 'persuasion by the...' (30), and 'a troublemaker' (#33) which try to highlight Iran's overlooking of the world's concerns. The nature of Russia's attempts for mitigating the existing tension is made unclear by using the nominal terms 'talks' and 'bid' (#32).

News Day

34. *Amid Iran's nuclear defiance, the UN nuclear watchdog finalized a report*

*to be released today*

35. *Both Russia and China have agreed in principle to the levying of sanctions over Iran's defiance of a council ultimatum*

36. *Iran has a very limited number of centrifuges, the technology necessary for converting fuel to weapons grade.*

37. *Iran's injection of gas into a second network of centrifuges, reported by the Iranian Students News Agency*

38. *But it signaled Tehran's resolve to expand its atomic program at a time of divisions within the Security Council over a punishment for Iran's defiance.*

39. *Iran's argument that its resumption of "nuclear research" doesn't violate the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty is pure sophistry.*

40. *Further refinement turns uranium into a weapons-grade fuel. Whom is Iran kidding?*

41. *Iran refused every offer we made*

42. *The nuclear threat has been the focus of recent U.S. concern about its old adversary*

Iran's lack of cooperation with international communities is brought into spotlight by using the nominalized forms of 'defiance' (#34, #35), 'resolve to expand…' (#38) and 'argument' (#39). Such a behavior form the side of Iran is shown to jeopardize others by using the nominalized terms of 'converting fuel to…' (#36), 'injection of gas…' (#37), 'further refinement' (#40) and 'threat' (#42). These threatening acts are all in response to the proposal from the side of the ingroups whose nature and content is made unknown by using the nominal 'offer' (#41).

New York Post

43. *President Bush warned last night as a bombshell U.N. report revealed the rogue nation has been caught red-handed with a how-to guide on making nuclear warheads.*

44. *The report from the IAEA, which is part of the United Nations, revealed that Iran obtained a how-to guide on the complex process of molding enriched uranium into the cores of nuclear warheads.*

45. *The revelation that Iran is fortifying its key Natanz uranium plant came*

*amid speculation*

The kinds of realities that were disclosed by the U.S president's report is being kept ambiguous by using the nominalized term 'report' (#43) that is modified by 'bombshell' which adds obscurity to its nature. Similarly, the same nominalized term is employed in the other excerpt (#44) which does not clearly demonstrate its real providers. In addition, the nominalized term 'guide' (#44) which is modified by the phrase 'how-to' magnifies Iran's suspicious activities. The nominals 'revelation' and 'speculation' (#45) further obfuscates their agent(s) and do not tell something about the real social actors participating in yielding them.

New York Times

46. *Western political and economic pressure on Iran over its nuclear program has chilled foreign investment to extent that it is squeezing country's long-fragile energy industry*

47. *Merkel on Friday expressed the European frustration at Iran's stance*

Using the nominal form 'pressure' (#46) eradicates any needs for pointing out to the real agents; although it is modified by 'Western political and economic', but exempts the Western parties from undertaking the direct agency in this area. The same case is true for the use of 'frustration' (#47) which highlights the Europeans' dissatisfaction and at the same time keeps them away from the direct involvement.

The VOA

48. *increased concerns about experiments in separating plutonium In Iran*

49. *Mr. ElBaradei's report has bolstered suspicions that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons under the guise of a civilian energy program*

50. *The Iranian threat is not only a threat to Israel, it is a threat to the stability of the Middle East and the entire world*

51. *well-founded suspicions that the program is intended to help Iran build nuclear weapons*

Keeping the nature of the real agent unclear, these excerpts implicate in a series of agentless nominals, such as 'concerns' (#48), 'suspicions' (#49, #51), and

'threat' (#50) which not only obscure the agency from their nominalized items, but also deprive them the relevant modalities that could tell more about their agents' attitudes on the matters at hand.

Washington Post

52. *The Bush administration must also develop a set of creative options short of military strikes*

53. *Iran knows what it must do to alleviate concerns*

54. *The resolution emphasized the importance of diplomacy in seeking guarantees*

55. *Failure to penalize Tehran would undermine the Iranian pragmatists who favored negotiations*

56. *Sanctions on Iran's nuclear program are absolutely necessary*

57. *Encouraging exchanges with Iran's people is perfectly complimentary to a sanctions resolution*

The aggressive response from the side of the U.S is marginalized by using the nominal 'strikes' (#52) which mitigates its hostile attitudes by excluding direct agency form it and at the same time locating it in the rheme position. The nominal 'concerns' (#53) does not clarify exactly who is exactly concerned and does not tell something about the nature of these concerns. Similarly, the nominal 'guarantees' (#54) obscures its real provider(s) and also overshadows what is precisely stipulated as the content of such guarantees. Employing the nominalized term 'failure' (#55) make it possible to exclude the real agent(s) of its following act of 'penalizing'. In the same excerpt, the term 'negotiation' which is the nominalized form of the verb 'negotiate' mystifies what kind of talks are favored and also disguises its agents and beneficiaries. The two nominals 'sanction' and 'exchanges' (#55, #56) do not give the type of required information to the reader about their social actors.

*Table 4. Nominalization across full-text stories*

| News Outlet | VOA | FN | NYT | NYP | WP | LAT | HC | ND | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 4 | 13 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 11 | 9 | 56 |

## Passivization

Passivization, as another drastic syntactic transformation, causes the grammatical object or the so-called logical patient of an utterance "to be placed in the subject position in the sentence, the left-hand noun-phrase slot which is conventionally regarded as the theme or the topic of the sentence" (Fowler et al., 1979, p.209), which can obscure the agency through hiding its responsibility. The presence of this syntactic transformation throughout the full text stories is illustrated in Table 5.

*Table 5. Passivization across full-text stories*

| News Outlet | VOA | FN | NYT | NYP | WP | LAT | HC | ND | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 5 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 30 |
| Percentage | 17% | 7% | 3% | 13% | 7% | 27% | 13% | 13% | 100% |

## Overcompleteness

 As an effective means of representing the negative and positive quirks of the ingroups and outgroups, the rhetorical device of overcompleteness does have an effective ideological role in managing the sort of interpretations sought by the media audience. In what follows, this linguistic feature will be explored within the purported news reporting outlets' full text stories. The sort of the overcomplete forms used by either the news agencies or the newspapers were mainly in line with providing a negative image of Iran and its controversial nuclear issues. The irrelevant issues put forward by these news outlets mainly included Iran's domestic and international challenges:

 *Iran is also facing bitterness from Britain and the United States over its 13-day detention of 15 British sailors by Iran. The sailors, who were seized by Revolutionary Guards off the Iraqi coast, were released on Wednesday, but since then have said they were put under psychological pressure by their captors to force them to "confess" to being in Iranian waters when captured, angering many in Britain. (Fox News)*

*The price of tomatoes is skyrocketing in Iran. The overall inflation rate is now estimated by outside experts to be thirty percent. Rental and housing costs in Tehran have risen dramatically over the past year. Unemployment is reportedly at thirty percent. In a country with the world's second largest oil and gas reserves, gasoline shortages are so acute the government is planning to introduce rationing. (VOA)*

Issues such as the detention of British marine soldiers by the Iranian Guard Corps, the concerns of Israel over Iran's entrance into the world's nuclear club, the status of democracy in Iran, the parliamentary elections in Iran, the rationing of gasoline throughout Iran, and finally Iran's inflation rate and 'the high price of *tomato*' are among overcomplete forms that were used in the main body of the editorials and seem to be quite immaterial with regard to the nuclear issues of Iran.

In addition, a widely found marginal subject that was used by the sampled editorials was a constant blemishing of Iran with a military interference in Iraq:

*Iran is pressing Shiite militias in Iraq to step up attacks against the U.S.-led forces in retaliation for the Israeli assault on Lebanon, the American ambassador to Iraq said Friday. Iran may foment even more violence in the coming weeks as it faces off with the United States and United Nations over its nuclear program, he added. (Washington Post)*

This accusation of Iran with military presence in Iraq prompts a discussion over an American-led invasion of Iran which is supposed to counteract Iran's influence in the Middle East:

*An American invasion is out of the question. But perhaps we could do to Iran what the Iranians are doing to us in Iraq, where they are funneling weapons and money to militias that are killing our soldiers. (Los Angeles Times)*

A second offshoot of this probable invasion of Iran by the American-led troops is said to be the targeting of Iran's allegedly subterranean nuclear caches:

*Following a U.S. airstrike plan to blow up Iran's nuclear facilities, Iran is taking extraordinary precautions to try to protect its nuclear assets the growing talk of eliminating Iran's nuclear program from the air is pretty glib. (Washington Post)*

The analysis of the purported headlines with regard to their embedded overcomplete forms shows that Iran alongside its nuclear program is given a negative representation through magnifying its domestic and abroad challenges and also its assumed role in stirring violence in the Middle East at large and within Iraq in particular.

According to the investigations which were done on the editorials' headlines and full-text stories with regard to their discursive quirks of thematic, lexical, nominalized, passivized, and overcomplete forms, it was found that certain ideological and hegemonic inclinations are highlighted by the editorials.

In order to or address the second research question regarding the allocation of voice to either side of the conflict throughout the American news casting outlet, the discursive pattern of *voice* was explored in the full-text stories.

**Voice**

In this section, the assignment of voice to the parties engaged in Iran's nuclear case is examined throughout the sample of the study. The main aim was to see whether an equal opportunity is accommodated by the editorials for the representation of either Iran as one side of the argument or the Western countries as the other side of the conflict over the nukes. The study of the ways in which the voices of the main participants in Iran's nuclear case are incorporated showed that the voice of the Western side of the conflict is far more heard than the Iranians'. As a matter of fact, out of 77 instances of quoting each side either directly or indirectly, the voice of the Western side, including the American, the Europeans and the IAEA, was heard in 62 cases while the Iranian officials' voice was heard only in 15 cases. In other words, the Westerns' voice was reverberated in 86% of the cases and the Iranian's was echoed just in 14% of the total instances of voices. It is more interesting that the Iranian officials were quoted in most cases indirectly and their stance on different related issues to the nuclear case was represented by quoting them as 'branding' or 'accusing' the others:

*Iran's chief delegate Ali Ashgar Soltanieh accused opposing nations of "imposing their politically motivated and discriminatory policies on the meeting". (Fox News)*

On the other hand, the Western side of the debate was usually quoted directly and they are often the sayers of positive comments such as 'explaining', and 'noting' or at least of neutral statements including 'saying' or 'telling':

*"There are people in Iran who recognize that the path that they're on is not a useful path, not a constructive path," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in Berlin just before the release of the report. (Houston Chronicles)*

As a repercussion, there is a preferred sort of quoting each side of the conflict in the nuclear case; while the Western side was represented legitimately and positively through direct quotations, the Iranian side was given an illegitimate and negative stance by the news reporting outlets via indirect quotations which were often bearing negatively loaded verbs. The distribution of the either voices is given in Table 6 .

*Table 6- Voice distribution among the full-text stories*

|  | Iran | | The West | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| VOA | 3 | 20.00 | 14 | 22.58 | 17 | 22.08 |
| FN | 1 | 6.67 | 3 | 4.84 | 4 | 5.19 |
| NYT | 3 | 20.00 | 8 | 12.90 | 11 | 14.29 |
| NYP | 1 | 6.67 | 8 | 12.90 | 9 | 11.69 |
| WP | 2 | 13.33 | 10 | 16.30 | 12 | 15.58 |
| LAT | 2 | 13.33 | 6 | 9.68 | 8 | 10.39 |
| HC | 1 | 6.67 | 9 | 14.52 | 10 | 12.99 |
| ND | 2 | 13.33 | 4 | 6.45 | 6 | 7.79 |
| Total | 15 | 19.50 / 100 | 62 | 80.50 / 100 | 77 | 100 |

## Discussion

The findings of this study on the reflection of Iran's nuclear issues in American newscasting outlets' editorials support Fowler's (1991) viewpoint about the infliction of news dissemination process with the sort of selectivity and

transformation adopted by news casting institutions which were seen to have been manifested through a set of structural and strategic layers.

More specifically, at the level of headlines, Iran's nuclear issues are given a threatening picture throughout the editorials for the world peace and security at large and for the war torn region of Middle East and Israel in particular. This theme of threat is pervasively (25%) disseminated in each news reporting outlet except the Los Angeles Times. A second guise which is given to Iran's nuclear issues is that of rebelliousness which is equally present in the headlines (20%) and demonstrates a consensus on recognizing Iran's nuclear activities as an affront to an international will for banning the proliferation of nukes. A third theme which is preserved in the headlines due to Iran's nuclear issues is that of secrecy (17.50) that is followed by the thematic propositions of defiance (15%), boastfulness (12.50%) and finally a sense of jeopardy to Israel (10%). All in all, according to table 4.2, the nuclear program of Iran is given an unpleasant image at the level of headlines by using negatively loaded lexical items for the expression of certain themes that, according to van Dijk (1998) give rise to particular macropropositions, in this case around the nuclear case of Iran, and ultimately provide a kind of discourse with a special coherence and organization for directing the interpretation and perception of readers.

With regard to the full text stories of the purported editorials, the linguistic feature of lexical choice alongside the macro level of thematic propositions revealed four major themes of secrecy (20%), defiance (28%), threat (46%) and Israelis jeopardizing (6%). Once again, the lexico-thematic analysis revealed a negative representation of Iran's nuclear issues, nevertheless this time at the level of full text stories of the editorials. This emphasis on the negative aspects of Iran's nuclear program for the outside world is a testimony on this fact that the depiction of the nuclear case of Iran is not void of its own ideological proclivities throughout the American news casting outlets and there is an egregious interest for introducing it as a highly unpleasant prodigy for the world peace and security.

The examination of the nominalized forms reveals that whenever it comes to the achievements of the Iranians in their quest for the nuclear technology, their positive deeds, as the outgroups, are marginalized and the same marginalization is applied for the Western side of the conflict but in this case it is tried to hide

their brinksmanship and mischievous acts toward Iran. Consequently, the Iranian's activities which are related to the development of a civil nuclear capability are expressed less fervently by using nominalized forms in 36% of the cases and the West's attempts with regard to thwarting such a program and nipping it in the bud are mitigated by using the same forms in 64% of the cases which approves of van Dijk's (1988) ideological circle of 'us' and 'them'.

A same mitigating effect is created by using passivized forms but in this case all of the passivized structures (100%) are preserved exclusively for the Western side in an effort to hide their real agency in opposing Iran's nuclear program both in words and in deeds.

The examination of overcomplete forms which were used by the American news agencies shows that these seemingly irrelevant pieces of information, either the alleged role of Iran in prodding violence in Iraq or its recurrent threatening of Israel, are employed for yielding a negative background about the Iranian side of the conflict by alluding to its domestic and abroad challenges other that the nuclear case. As a result, a certain mind-map is provided for the reader which tries to juxtapose Iran's quest for a civil nuclear capability with its domineering motives over the Middle East region. Accordingly, the reader is directed toward believing that the development of a nuclear capability is in line with the pursuit of hegemonic ambitions by Iran.

After examining the incorporation of different voices throughout the full text stories of the editorials, it was found that there is a sharp discrepancy between representing the either side of the conflict. While, Iranian's voice is heard just in 19.50% of cases, mostly via quoting Iranian president or nuclear case officials, the voice of the Western side is rampantly heard in 80.50% of all cases in which the American, European, and the IAEA's officials at every level, either president, vice president, or spokespersons, are frequently quoted. It is interesting to note that the infrequency through which the Iranian' voice is heard implicates in a series of negatively loaded quoting verbs while the other side is represented through positively loaded or at least neutral quoting verbs, so much so that Iranian officials are shown to be often accusing the others illegitimately while their Western counterparts are demonstrated to be stating or saying something with regard to the nuclear case in a quite legitimized manner.

The kind of analyses which were conducted throughout this research compellingly demonstrated that in order to yield a better examination of a discursive event, one must utilize a critical discourse analytic approach so that, according to Fairclough (1992), not only the involved practices are optimally described, but also the subtleties involved in the interrelationships of power, ideology and discourse would be efficiently revealed. Accordingly, the analysis of the kind of discourse which was used in the sampled editorials of American newspapers and news agencies reveals that Iran's nuclear issues are given a slanted and negative representation throughout them by using certain discursive patterns and strategies including lexico-thematic patterns, nominalizations, passivizations, overcomplete forms and voice which are all in harmony with the United States' foreign policies with regard to Iran's nuclear program. The analysis of the latter case, i.e. voice, provided ample evidence for a biased representation of the main actors involved in Iran's nuclear case.

## Conclusion

This study addressed the representation of Iran's nuclear issues through embarking on an analysis of a corpus of American editorials at two levels of headlines and the full-text stories. To this end, initially, the headlines of the selected editorials were examined with regard to their lexico-thematic patterns. Likewise, the same analysis was conducted for the full-text stories of the editorials and their embedded features of nominalization, passivization, overcompleteness and voice were investigated. Overall, the findings indicate that the Western side of the conflict was given an appropriate image in line with overstating the inner-circles deeds by capitalizing on positively loaded lexical items and passivizing its contribution in negative affairs against an Iranian-run nuclear capability. Moreover, the Western side was offered more opportunities for expressing its voice whereas the Iranian side was pushed to margin through understating its achievements by using more passivized, nominalized and negatively loaded lexical items, alongside overcomplete forms which boosted its negative deeds by providing irrelevant pieces of information. However, it should be pointed out that the results depicted here should not be over generalized about the nature of the mass media in an American context, since the scope of the study

was both limited to certain news casting outlets and at the same time, the corpus of the study was kept limited to their editorials and not the information in other news sections about the same issue. However, the current research is a testimony of CDA's versatility in uncovering the arcane beliefs propagated by the mass media and it consequent implications for pedagogical purposes.

Form a pedagogical point of view, CDA can pay lots of dividends to materials designers, teachers, and learners who deal with language for either general or specific purposes. With the current focus of some modern educational enterprises on nurturing students' critical thinking and their attentiveness to their surrounding world, a new derive has been shaped for including a critical approach to language. As a matter of fact, CDA can provide language practitioners with new perspectives and attitudes towards language by delineating the problematic and questionable nature of language use, and its underlying social and ideological processes. At a more practical level, CDA can be capitalized on as a means for critically analyzing the type of instructional materials that are chosen for teaching and learning a given language throughout different instructional settings. This possibility requires language teachers to assume an educational undertaking besides imparting sheer linguistic knowledge to their learners and work more toward developing their learners' and their own critical thinking capacities. Nonetheless, the investment of the researchers on this study is hoped to bring about a sort of consciousness rising among news audiences at large by virtue of their dealing with news in a way that the commonly held thought among them about the drifting of gospel truth out of news would not be anymore relied on and instead the prognostication of the CDA pronouncers of judgment about its potential for emancipating and empowering the social mass from the tyranny of the mass media comes true. At a more a specific level, the findings of this research are hoped to benefit the materials designers for EGP courses whose learners are pursuing their experience of a new language by taking care of the ideological subtleties which are contained in their texts and often go unnoticed by both language learners and syllabus designers. Finally, the ESP material designers, teachers and learners of Politics, Journalism and any other realm of science which deals with a specialized study of the mass media are considered to be the direct beneficiaries of the current study's outcomes that emphasize the need

for viewing language as a situated phenomenon in which the goals and the conditions stipulate the required linguistic and non-linguistic choices that the producers of a given discourse make. All in all, the fledgling field of CDA can be envisaged as a complementary model for both analyzing language and designing the relevant activities that are employed for leaning language for general or specific purposes.

# References

Bell, A. (1998). *The discourse structure of news stories*. In A. Bell & P. Garrett (Eds), *Approaches to media discourse* (pp. 64-104). Oxford: Blackwell.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the news: Discourse and ideology in the press.* London: Routledge.

Fowler, R., 1996. *On critical linguistics*. In: Caldas-Coulthard, C.R. and Coulthard, M., Editors, 1996. *Texts and practices: readings in critical discourse analysis*, Routledge, London.

Herman, E. & Chomsky, N. (1988) *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* . Pantheon , New York

McGregor, S.L.T (1993). *Critical discourse analysis: A primer*. In Critical Science and CDA, vol.15, N.1.pp.1-11.

Price, L. (2002). Industry and sustainability. Retrieved from *http: //www. Kabatana .net/docs/env/indsus t_1p020812 pdf.*

Van Dijk, T. A. (1988). *News analysis: Case studies of international and national news in the press*. Hillsdale, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Van Dijk, T.A. (1998): *Ideology. A multidisciplinary study.* London. Sage publications.

Wodak, R. and M. Meyer (2001). *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. Sage Publications.

**Title**

# Examining the Relationship between Iranian Non-native English Teachers' Use of Communication Strategies and Context Types within Iranian EFL Classrooms

**Authors**

**Baqer Yaqubi (Ph.D.)**

Mazandaran University

**Vahid Rahmani Doqaruni (M.A.)**

Mazandaran University

## Bio Data

**Baqer Yaqubi** is assistant professor in TEFL, teaching in the English Department of Mazandaran University, Iran. His main research interests are:
Discourse analysis and sociolinguistics.

**Vahid Rahmani Doqaruni** is an M.A. student in TEFL at Mazandaran University. His major research interests are: Second language acquisition and discourse analysis.

## Abstract

This article reports on an empirical investigation of the Iranian non-native English teachers' use of communication strategies in Iranian EFL contexts. It particularly aims at a) identifying the specific interactional contexts in

Iranian EFL classrooms in which communication strategies occur, and b) examining the extent to which teachers' use of different communication strategy types is related to the immediate types of context in which these communication strategies occur. The database is drawn from transcripts of audio-recordings of 15 lessons from five teachers (three lessons from each teacher) totaling 27 hours of naturally occurring data and including 262 communication strategies. Three different context types were identified and findings indicated that although there was not a statistically significant relationship between communication strategy types and context types, some interesting patterns occurred in the data. In addition, it was found that approximation is the most frequently used type of communication strategy among Iranian teachers and they prefer to use this type of communication strategy more than any other type of communication strategy in all context types.

**Key Terms:** Communication strategies, EFL contexts, Iranian teachers, Approximation.

## Introduction

The study of second/foreign language communication strategies (CSs) has a respectably long history in the field of second/foreign language acquisition. In fact language educators in many different contexts have always been interested in how second/foreign language learners make use of their linguistic repertoire in order to fill gaps in their efforts to communicate in foreign languages. Although there has not been a broad-based consensus among researchers on the definition of communication strategies, Bialystok's (1990) definition seems to be widely accepted. She asserts that native and non-native speakers of any language sometimes attempt to find appropriate expressions and/or grammatical constructions when struggling to communicate their meaning. Here, a gap is created between what the individual wants to communicate and the immediately available linguistic resources. The ways in which he/she tries to fill the gap are known as communication strategies. More specifically, communication strategies are potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents

itself as a problem in reaching a particular goal (Faerch and Kasper, 1983b). Communication strategies are an invaluable means of dealing with communication trouble spot, such as when a speaker doesn't know a particular word or misunderstands the other speaker. They can also enhance fluency and help to the efficiency of communication. Knowing such strategies is particularly useful for L2 speakers, who frequently experience such difficulties in conversation, because they may provide them with a sense of security in the language by allowing extra time and room to maneuver. It is argued that the application of foreign language communication strategies is viewed as one vehicle for promoting greater success.

Although both interactional and psycholinguistic research on CSs, which currently dominate the field, have been useful in clarifying this issue, maybe it's the time to change our perspective and pay more attention to the natural context in which CSs occur. While previous studies have presented CSs mainly from an outside researcher's perspective, the aim in this paper is to move the focus to that of classroom contexts, especially Iranian EFL teaching contexts. Furthermore, it is proposed that CSs should be studied in the talk of the most important element of the classroom, that is teacher, and not just second language learners. It should be noted that when we are talking about teachers, we mean non-native English teachers and we believe that these teachers' job is more difficult in comparison with their native English colleagues. Since most of these teachers have obvious deficiency of linguistic knowledge, they have another responsibility except their natural duty (teaching), that is learning (improving) language on their own. Metaphorically, non-native English teachers are potential learners that are teaching to other learners:

> In handling communication problems, teachers – like any speaker – are probably constantly planning ahead, making on-line adjustments and monitoring or responding to problems as they become manifest (Anani Sarab, 2004, p. 2).

The position adopted in this paper is that teachers play a much more central role than that advocated under both interactional and psycholinguistic approaches, signifying that the role of the teacher may need to be reconsidered in CSs research. Considering the centrality of this role, our argument focuses principally on one of the most important, and neglected, features of teacher talk that is CSs. In this way, we

show various instances from our database of teacher talk in EFL classroom contexts in which CSs have occurred.

## Review of Literature

Since the publication of the classic collection of papers on communication strategies in Faerch and Kasper's (1983a) book, there has always been interest in how second language learners make use of their linguistic repertoire in order to fill the communication gaps. Generally, there have been two different groups in approaching CSs. The first group tries to propose additional categories, maintain and expand existing taxonomies (e.g., Tarone et al., 1976). The second group denies the value of existing taxonomies and is always trying to reduce the number of categories of analysis (e.g., The Nijmegen Group). Yule and Tarone (1997), for ease of reference, call the proponents of the first group "the pros" since they are profligate in their liberal expansion of categories and the proponents of the second group "the cons" since they are rather conservative, given their emphasis on parsimony. Proponents of the first approach deal with the external and interactional perspective of learners (e.g., Varadi, 1973; Tarone et al., 1976; Tarone, 1983; and Corder, 1983); but advocates of the second approach take the internal and cognitive processes of learners into account (e.g., Faerch and Kasper, 1983b; Bialystok, 1990; and the Nijmegen Group). However, it should be noted that these all are superficial manifestations of two divergent theoretical perspectives, namely, interactional (sociolinguistic) and psycholinguistic. Due to their importance in CS research, a brief review of the studies of the leading scholars of these two opposing theoretical manifestations is represented in the following.

Varadi (1973; but published in 1983) gave a talk at a small European conference which is considered the first systematic analysis of strategic language behavior. This talk dealt with message adjustment in particular and was deeply rooted in Error Analysis. Briefly, Tamas Varadi's classic paper, "Strategies of Target Language Communication: Message Adjustment", establishes a model of interlanguage production which focuses on the strategies the learner employs when he experiences a "hiatus" in his interlanguage repertoire and he believes, "the question of how close the learner comes to communicating what he wanted to say must not be disregarded" (p.

80). He then offers a schematic view of the communication process of target language learners which takes into account the implications of this criterion. In order to adjust his message to his communicative resources, the learner either replaces the meaning or form of his intended message by using items which are part of his interlanguage, or he reduces his intended message on either the formal or the functional level. This model was tested out in a pilot study involving adult Hungarian learners of English at the intermediate level and the experiment confirmed the hypothetical model of adjustment strategies.

In another study, Tarone, Cohen and Dumas (1976) defined communication strategy "as a systematic attempt by the learner to express or decode meaning in the target language, in situations where the appropriate systematic target language rules have not been formed" (p. 5). They established the first systematic classification of communication strategies and based their CSs typology on data from nine subjects. Several distinct types of communication strategies which were for the most part observable in the various domains of language (phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical) were discussed and illustrated. These strategies involved transfer from native language, overgeneralization, prefabricated pattern, overelaboration, epenthesis, and avoidance (also divided into sub-categories). Their taxonomy is still seen as the most important in the field since most of the following taxonomies relied on it.

The relationship between CSs and meaning-negotiation mechanisms, for the first time, was presented by Tarone (1983), according to which CSs:

> Relate to a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared (p. 65).

This definition is potentially broader than Tarone et al.'s (1976) earlier one. It represented an interactional perspective. In other words, CSs are seen as tools used in a joint negotiation of meaning where both interlocutors are attempting to agree as to a communicative goal. This interactional perspective covered various repair mechanisms, which Tarone considered CSs if their intention was to clarify intended meaning rather than simply correct linguistic form.

Finally, Corder's (1983) survey, "Strategies of Communication", represents a markedly different way of defining communication strategies. According to Corder,

communication strategies are used by a speaker when faced with some difficulty due to his communicative ends outrunning his communicative means. In other words, communicative strategies "are a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his meaning when faced with some difficulty" (p. 16). He proposes two options for appointing communication strategies to different types: either the speaker tailors the intended message to his linguistic resources or manipulates the available linguistic competence in order to make it consistent with the intended meaning. Corder calls the strategies produced by the first option "message adjustment strategies" and those by the second, "resource expansion strategies".

Most of the research conducted on communication strategies up to the second half of the 1980s share one thing: namely, they follow a primarily linguistic approach to defining CSs (Dornyei and Scott, 1997). Instead of conducting product-oriented research, Faerch and Kasper (1983b), Bialystok (1990) and the Nijmegen Group recommended CS research adopts a new analytic perspective, focusing on the cognitive "deep structure" of strategic language behavior. In other words, these researchers considered communication strategies as mental plans implemented by the second language learner in response to an internal signal of an imminent problem, a form of self-help that does not have to engage the interlocutor's support for resolution. In Kellerman's (1991) conclusion,

> The systematic study of compensatory strategies has not been properly served by the construction of taxonomies of strategy types which are identified on the basis of variable and conflicting criteria which confound grammatical form, incidental and inherent properties of referents, and encoding medium with putative cognitive processes. This inconsistency has led to a proliferation of strategy types with little regard for such desirable requirements as psychological plausibility, parsimony and finiteness (p. 158).

The intraindividual, psycholinguistic view locates CS either in models of speech production (Faerch and Kasper, 1983b) or cognitive organization and processing (Bialystok, 1990; and the Nijmegen Group).

In this way, Faerch and Kasper (1983b) adopted, for the first time, a psycholinguistic approach to communication strategies and attempted to distinguish

strategies from processes, procedures, plans, tactics, etc. From this perspective, communication strategies are located within a general model of speech production, in which two phases are identified, the planning phase and the execution phase. They found that in the planning phase, language learners retrieve items from the relevant linguistic system. The product of the planning process is a plan that controls the execution phase. The execution phase consists of neurological/physiological processes. When non-native speakers of a target language encounter a problem during the course of communication, due to the lack of linguistic knowledge at either the planning or the execution phase of speech production, they produce a plan to overcome the problem. Communication strategies are part of this planning phase and are utilized when learners are prevented from executing their original plan because of some problem. Similar to Tarone's criteria, learners may choose avoidance by changing their original goal through some sort of "reduction" strategy. Alternatively, they may maintain their original goal through a substitute plan. This is referred to as an "achievement" strategy.

Bialystok (1990), another psycholinguistic researcher, believes that although considerable progress has been made through different approaches, the ultimate goal of integrating the observations into a coherent account of speech production has not been realized. According to Bialystok, the only solution to this problem is an approach based on the process of using language for communicative purposes. In this way, Bialystok's alternative cognitive framework of communication strategies is based on two cognitive skills: *analysis of knowledge* and *cognitive control*. Analysis of knowledge is defined as the ability to make some kind of alteration to the message content by exploiting knowledge of the concept. Strategies employed to accomplish this may include providing a definition of a concept or object, or engaging in circumlocution. Cognitive control refers to the manipulation of the method of expression by integrating resources from outside the L2 in order to communicate the intended message. Strategies employed to accomplish this may include use of the L1 or non-linguistic strategies such as miming.

Perhaps the most extensive series of studies to date into communication strategies was undertaken by the Nijmegen project throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Dornyei and Scott, 1997). The Nijmegen Group researchers (i.e., Kellerman, Bongaerts, and Poulisse) also approached communication strategies from a psycholinguistic perspective and chiefly concerned with investigating a subset of communication

strategies called "compensatory strategies". In the Nijmegen model, compensatory strategies will be one of two types, *conceptual* or *code* compensatory strategies (Kellerman and Bialystok, 1997). Conceptual strategies are those whereby the participant manipulates the concept of the target referent in an effort to explain the item and is consistent with Bialystok's notion of analysis of knowledge. Linguistic or code compensatory strategies are those where learners manipulate their linguistic knowledge.

Yule and Tarone (1997) summarize the duality of approaches taken by researchers – the "Pros" following the traditional approach and the "Cons" taking a primarily psychological stance – as follows:

> The taxonomic approach of the Pros focuses on the descriptions of the language produced by L2 learners, essentially characterizing the means used to accomplish reference in terms of the observed form. It is primarily a description of observed forms in L2 output, with implicit inferences being made about the differences in the psychological processing that produced them. The alternative approach of the Cons focuses on a description of the psychological processes used by L2 learners, essentially characterizing the cognitive decisions humans make in order to accomplish reference. It is primarily a description of cognitive processing, with implicit references being made about the inherent similarity of linguistically different forms observed in the L2 output (p. 19).

**A Different Approach**

Much of the research conducted on communication strategies has been rather narrow in that it has been conducted almost exclusively using elicitation tasks in laboratory-like settings with unnatural methods and no attention has been paid to the natural context of the classrooms (Varadi, 1983; Bialystok, 1983; Haastrup and Phillipson, 1983; Dechert, 1983; Raupach, 1983; Wagner, 1983; Paribakht, 1985; Jourdain, 2000; Littlemore, 2003; Nakatani, 2006; Maleki, 2007). In other words, researchers have treated CSs as independent and isolated units of analysis, paying little or no attention at all to the interactional context (classroom) in which they are used. Nakatani and Goh (2007, p. 213) contend, "while many studies have been conducted into the use of

CSs for negotiation and repairs in research settings, few have explored L2 learners' CS use in actual classroom contexts where learners might use CSs that are quantitatively and qualitatively different from experimental settings".

Thus, due to the lack of understanding of classroom's problems and teacher-student interaction, there has been an increase in the number of investigations of communication strategies in classroom discourse. In the last few years, new studies have appeared adopting what can be considered as a strictly interactional approach to the description of CS use (Fernandez Dobao and Palacios Martinez, 2007). Following Yule and Tarone's (1991) claim that for a comprehensive understanding of strategic communication, attention needs to be paid to "both sides of the page", i.e. to the actions of both learners and interlocutors, scholars, such as Firth and Wagner (1996; also Wagner and Firth 1997), have tried to describe strategic communication as an interactive activity. In these studies, CSs are analyzed as elements of the ongoing and co-constructed context of the interaction and their communicative function is established by taking into account the actions of all the conversational participants, not only students. It doesn't need just be the L2 student who is felt to have inadequate linguistic knowledge in classroom interaction (it may be the teacher; Rampton, 1997). As Willems (1987, p. 354) asserts "all of us [teachers] – and not just our pupils – have a natural tendency to use communication strategies when communication problems arise".

The latter argument is of particular importance in EFL classroom contexts where non-native English teachers are performing their duties. It is interesting to know that many language teachers are themselves second/foreign language speakers and lag behind their linguistic knowledge. In this way, communication strategies become important for two main reasons: they function as support for facilitating the understanding of the second language learner and, at the same time, as a resource for helping the second language speaking teachers (Anani Sarab, 2004).

These teachers' talk can reveal and make explicit to a large extent the conditions and consequences of teaching and learning principles in classroom contexts. Cullen (1998, p. 179) believes "while the question of how much teachers talk is still important, more emphasis is given to how effectively they are able to facilitate learning and promote communicative interaction in their classroom through, for example, the kind of questions they ask, the speech modifications they make when talking to learners [such as communication strategies], or the way they react to student errors". Thus, the

importance of teacher talk relies on two aspects: first, its role as a source for L2 learning; second, its role as a key interactional constituent of the language learning context. Anani Sarab (2004, p. 1) states,

> The implications [of teacher talk] are of interest generally in contemporary language teaching, and of course for teacher education and teacher development. This interest is motivated by the growing recognition of the role of teacher talk in determining the patterns of interaction and in effect the learning opportunities provided for the learners. The consensus is that through the investigation of teacher talk and classroom interaction we can come to a better understanding of the teaching-learning process.

Thus, although teacher talk has been of considerable interest in understanding and attempting to develop second language teaching pedagogy, little attention has been paid to teachers, especially a very significant aspect of teacher talk that is communication strategies. This paper is an attempt to deal with this important, and neglected, feature of teacher talk and particularly focuses on Iranian English teachers and their EFL classrooms.

## Research Questions

The current study aimed at investigating the teachers' use of communication strategies in EFL classroom contexts. Particularly, it attempted to identify different types of interactional context and to examine whether types of CS used by L2 teachers for dealing with their linguistic gaps vary according to types of context in which these CSs occur. In other words, the aim of this study was to identify the natural contexts emerging from Iranian EFL classrooms and shed some light on the question of how non-native teachers, with possible limited oral proficiency, make use of communication strategies in TEFL setting. More specifically, the following two research questions were addressed in this study:

1) What are the specific interactional contexts in Iranian EFL classrooms in which communication strategies occur?

2) Are the communication strategies used by Iranian non-native English teachers in classroom discourse (monologic or dialogic) related to these contexts created within classroom?

## Methodology

### Participants

In accordance with previous literature on investigating English teachers in language contexts generally (for example, Seedhouse, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1999, 2004; and Walsh, 2002, 2006), and Iranian non-native English teachers in EFL contexts specifically (for example, Farrokhi, 2006; and Anani Sarab, 2004),  five EFL teachers along with the students in their classes participated in this study. One class at pre-intermediate level was selected from each teacher. Each class had between 10 to 15 students who were between 14 and 20. All teachers were male, ranging from 1 to 27 years in terms of their experience in teaching EFL. They were between 21 and 47 years old, teaching in two private language institutes in Babolsar, Iran. Three classes of one institute met two times a week with 120-minute sessions each time and two classes of the other institute met two times a week with 90-minute sessions. The teachers were not made aware that the researcher intended to examine how they deal with linguistic gaps in their interlanguage repertoire. They were simply told that the study aimed at investigating general patterns of their talk in the classroom context.

### Procedure

According to Seedhouse (2004, p. 87) "classroom research has considered between five and ten lessons a reasonable database". This study rests on a corpus of 15 sessions, a reasonable sample size on which to make generalizations and draw conclusions. The data for the present study were collected from EFL classroom contexts in Iran. To collect the required data for this study, the researcher observed the classrooms as a non-participant and made audio-recordings from three lessons of each teacher. The reason for researcher's presence in the classroom as a non-participant observer was that some of the communication strategies are non-verbal (such as miming) and this fact justifies the researcher's presence in the classroom. We made use of a tape-recorder for making the audio-recordings of the whole class. An MP3 Player was also put near to the teacher in each class both to record whole-class

interaction and to capture teacher voice more clearly. Using the above-mentioned method, 27 hours of naturally occurring data was obtained from the five teachers (3 sessions for each teacher, with 9 sessions lasting about 120 minutes and 6 sessions lasting about 90 minutes) participating in this study.

## Coding and Analysis of the Data

In order to answer the research questions, the researcher analyzed the audio-recordings of the classroom data. In this way, he first transcribed the data and then identified the communication strategies in them. The next step in analyzing the data was to develop the categories of analysis for coding the communication strategies and various phases of the L2 lessons in which these communication strategies took place. In the end, a quantitative and qualitative analysis was carried out on these lessons which have already been transcribed and coded. The aim of the analysis was two-fold. First, it could reveal something about different interactional contexts emerging from Iranian EFL classroom discourse. Second, it could reveal similarities and differences in patterns of strategy use across the different contexts in EFL classrooms where the Iranian non-native English teachers are performing their duties. Different categories of analysis are defined and illustrated as follows:

## Coding Communication Strategies

Different types of communication strategy identified in the database of this study were coded into one of the following CS types: 1) approximation, 2) circumlocution, 3) avoidance, 4) miming, 5) appeal for assistance, and 6) code switching. This typology is basically developed based on theoretical considerations (Tarone et al., 1976; Tarone, 1977), though the categorization is supported by empirical research evidence (Bialystok, 1990). These communication strategies are defined and exemplified below. The transcripts presented below are based on the standard transcription system. Language has not been corrected and standard conventions of punctuation are not used, the aim being to represent "warts and all" the exchanges as they occurred in the classroom. The only contractions in the following transcriptions that seem necessary to be defined are T that stands for "teacher", L that stands for "learner" and LL that stands for "several learners at once".

**Approximation**

It is simply the use of a substitute word which shares some of the critical semantic features with the target item. Tarone (1977) identifies this type of CS within the broad category of paraphrase and defines it as "the use of a single target language vocabulary item or structure, which the learner knows is not correct, but which shares enough semantic features in common with the desired item to satisfy the learner" (p. 198). Approximation, then, includes virtually all word substitutions that the L2 speaker knowingly employs to serve in place of the more accurate term. The substitute word can refer to the correct concept but at an inappropriate level, such as worm for silkworm, or refer to another object that may give some hint to the intended referent, such as lamp for water-pipe (Bialystok, 1990). The examples below from our database illustrate approximation:

Extract 1:

1 L: you have eh… can eat… eat… the feather?

2 T: you can't eat the feather

3 L: can't?

4 T: you can't for example look imagine you wanna eh… your mother or your father or your sister or everyone you wanna have eh… chick or chicken all right first you kill all right and then you take the feather ok and then you cut it into different slices and we put it on the barbecue and you know have the chick all right

   In this exchange, the teacher is going to make clear the meaning of feather for one of the students. In this way, he tries to make this term explicit by giving an example in number 4. The teacher uses the expression "take the feather" instead of "pluck" to refer to removing the feather from the chicken. Although this expression is not correct, it semantically conveys the meaning to the students.

Extract 2:

1 T: all right I I've heard it's better to use cream why do you wanna burn yourself? Why do you do this? You wanna…

2 L: attract people

3 T: attract people? Really? Aha you said you wanna you wanna participate in champion yeah?

In this extract, the teacher is asking one of the students why he is making his skin brown. In number 3, he uses the word "champion" instead of "competition" that is not the accurate word but shares enough semantic features in common with the desired item and satisfies the teacher.

**Circumlocution**

This communication strategy is simply defined as the description of the characteristics or elements of the subject or action instead of using the appropriate target language structure. This strategy is also a subtype of paraphrase in Tarone's typology and is defined as "a wordly extended process in which the learner describes the characteristics or elements of the object or action instead of using the appropriate target language structure" (p. 198). The example Tarone gives from her study is a subject attempting to refer to water-pipe: "she is, uh, smoking something. I don't know what's its name. That's uh, Persian, and we use in Turkey, a lot of". Here the learner is groping for features that may help the listener guess what the intended object might be. Bialystok (1990) gives another example from her study. The following circumlocutions were provided for bench: a little wooden chair, to rest your legs when you are tired, it doesn't have a back. The examples below from our database illustrate circumlocution:

Extract 3:
1 T: look at the drawn painting it's very interesting look one two and three it's it's a normal
   yeah? but number four
2 LL: (the students laugh)
3 T: is the first one I think really sometimes eh… I don't know what do we call it it means you have eh… three p three p in Iran one of them is money yeah? One of them is you you are rude it means you have good conversation you have good connection to people and the last one is somebody help you yeah? Beyond the story yeah maybe it helps you this story that somebody helps him and it's very interesting four is the best all right let's go to option a

In this extract, the teacher is describing a caricature in the book. He refers to three Ps that are the first letters of three words in Farsi and he can not find an appropriate word for the last P in L2. In this way, he makes use of circumlocution in number 3 and describes the characteristics of what he is going to say that is "favoritism".

Extract 4:

1 T: Barcelona eh… bought it and eh… invest it means eh… expend I'm sorry spend some money

2 L: Support him

3 T: Yeah support him for example he has a doctor have special diet means the way of eating special vitamins and now he use eh… Cathalonia to play all is my business he's energetic yeah and some eh… I mean the committee sport soccer committee I don't know what do we call it said that maybe eh… Messi is eating something illegal Barcelona said no he just special diets to improve his ability he's clean all right interesting let's go to option b

In this extract, the teacher is trying to convey the meaning of the word "doping" in number 3 but it seems that he can not remember the word or he doesn't know the word in L2 at all. Therefore, he uses the sentence "Messi is eating something illegal" to convey his meaning to the students and keep the communication going.

**Avoidance**

L2 speakers sometimes make a deliberate decision not to speak because they expect communication problems to arise. This avoidance is a common strategy for second language speakers, causing them to remain silent simply because some aspect of vocabulary or grammar is not known. Although normally difficult to detect, Tarone's methodology made it clear when a subject was deliberately using an avoidance strategy. Omitting salient but lexically difficult objects shown in the picture, such as mushroom or water-pipe, was interpreted as evidence of this strategy. Bialystok (1990) believes, "such interpretations were especially well-grounded since each subject also provided descriptions in their native language. Content discrepancies between the two data sets pointed to cases of avoidance" (p. 40).

Tarone refined this strategy by distinguishing between *topic avoidance* and *message abandonment*. For the former, specific topics or words are avoided to the best of the learner's ability. In other words, learners manage to prevent the occurrence of topics that are certain to present difficulties. For the latter, learners stumble into a topic that is too difficult and simply give up and go on to another. The examples below from the database illustrate both of these avoidance strategies:

Extract 5:

T: backbite to talk not to talk behind talk and say bad things behind the person not good things backbite gossip rumor and slander they are some eh… wrong and false information that is eh… among the people among the people of the society for example in these days eh… <u>Mr. Ahmadinejad no it's about politics let me say something else</u> eh… for example I have one million dollars yes? I'm the richest person in the city I tell to my friends go and they repeat it repeat it between different people in the city this is a wrong information yes?

In this extract, the teacher consciously avoids the topic about politics. It shows that maybe the teacher finds this topic rather difficult to discuss and in this way prefers to avoid this topic. This extract is an example of the first type of avoidance that is topic avoidance.

Extract 6:

1 T: he's huge man? Yeah I know huge, the meaning of huge you mean batman is huge? We are not talking about batman we are talking about bat, all right?

2 L: blind /bli:nd/

3 T: <u>yes, I've heard. It's blind. It's eh… and continue</u> what is the special feature of this animal?

In this extract, the teacher is talking about different features of bat and asks the students to tell him about its different characteristics. It seems that in number 3 the teacher is going to elaborate on one of the students' contribution in number 2 but suddenly leaves the message and continues. This extract is an illustration of the second type of avoidance that is message abandonment.

**Miming**

This strategy includes all non-verbal accompaniments to communication, particularly those that serve in the place of a missing target language word. Tarone's example makes this type of communication strategy more clear. The subject claps his hands to indicate applause. Two examples of miming are provided below:

Extract 7:

1 T: I I have a question first of all was your wedding party apart or no? mix? Mixture? A party of men and women

2 L: eh…

3 T: together?

4 L: (miming) No no

5 T: you mean separate apart so did you dance?

6 L: No

7 T: <u>no you didn't just you sat and</u> (the teacher claps his hands)


In this exchange, the teacher asks one of the students about his wedding party and encourages him to talk about his wedding party. In number 7, he claps his hands and conveys the meaning of applause. It seems that in this especial situation the teacher could not remember the word applause and so resorted to miming as a communication strategy.


<u>Extract 8:</u>

1 T: why do people smoke is it fine?

2 L: yeah

3 T: I've heard different reasons that some of them are interesting I've heard eh… from a person who smoke he said when I use cigarette in my hand even when I don't light it light here means turn it on

4 LL: turn it on

5 T: even when I don't light it when I keep it in my hand and <u>I do this action</u> (the teacher mimes) ok when eh… it is finished you will clean it more this makes me comfortable or relax


In this extract, the teacher is talking about disadvantages of smoking cigarette. In number 5, he mimes that he is holding something between his fingers and moves his fingers as he is turning something. It seems that the teacher could not find an appropriate word for this action and, therefore, made use of miming to convey his intended meaning.


**Appeal for Assistance**

This type of strategy occurs when the L2 speaker seeks direct or indirect help from one's interlocutor in resolving problems. An appeal for assistance occurs when the L2 speaker consults any source of authority: a native speaker, the experimenter, a dictionary. This strategy also takes into account other more verbal efforts such as

prosodic features like rising intonation which implicitly elicits some assistance or validation from the listener. In other words, there are two kinds of appeal for assistance as follows:

1) Explicit appeal for assistance: giving up one's efforts to express meaning and asking the interlocutor to help.

2) Implicit appeal for assistance: disfluency marker realized in one's speech signaling linguistic problems in production.

The examples below are drawn from our own database and take into account both types of appeal for assistance:

Extract 9:
1 T: so be careful so why he made the golf history? He became the first golfer to win all four majors the most important tournaments within the same year we sometimes for example we say Manchester United they won Champions League and they won Champions League eh… help me
2 L: World cup
3 T: Yeah the world cup

In this extract, the teacher is describing the word "majors". In order to make this word more clear, he gives an example but he can not remember the appropriate term. Therefore, he asks the students to help him. In the interview with the teacher, he said that he intended to say "UEFA Cup" but he couldn't remember this term, thus, he appealed for assistance. This extract clearly depicts the use of an explicit appeal for assistance by an EFL teacher.

Extract 10:
1 T: Ali and I were responsible for this fighting and eh… Ali's father came and he said I'm sorry if it's necessary let's go to eh…
2 L: Hospital
3 T: Hospital yes and take some pictures on your mind

In this extract, the teacher is talking about his experience when he was a child and had bloodshed. At the end of number 1, the teacher uses a disfluency marker to show that he can not remember the intended word and, in this way, implicitly appeals for assistance. In number 2, one of the students helped him and in number 3, the teacher confirms that this word was his intended word.

**Code Switching**

This strategy is simply defined as switching to a language other than L2. In Tarone's typology code switching (language switch) is a manifestation of the broader category *conscious transfer*. In her definition, code switch is the straightforward insertion of words from another language. The examples below clearly illustrate this type of communication strategy:

Extract 11:

1 T: Oh really? Your your motorbike was caught by police?

2 L1: Yes

3 L2: Why?

4 T: You couldn't (پارتی)?

5 L1: No

   In this exchange, one of the students' motorbike is confiscated by the police and the teacher asks whether the police officer could ignore the law and let him go. In order to convey his meaning, he resorts to the first language (Farsi) and uses an L1 word that has the same meaning as favoritism.

Extract 12:

1 L1: I take one hundred fish

2 T: you caught really? river or on the sea?

3 L1: river eh… on the (student mimes)

4 T: near

5 L1: yeah near the sea a few eh…

6 T: you mean one hundred is is not a lot?

7 L2: Really?

8 T: in a year?

9 L1: some people…

10 L3: two thousand and three thousand

11 L1: yeah

12 T: I'm sorry totally in a year or no just one time?

13 L1: at night one night six hundred

14 T: really?

15 L1: yeah six hundred seven hundred

16 T: <u>I think they don't eh… fish with</u> تور

In this exchange, one of the students is talking about his fishing experience. In the last line, the teacher makes use of a first language word that is equivalent to "net" in the second language. It seems that the teacher could not find the appropriate word for his intended meaning in the second language and finally resorted to code switching.

Having described the categories developed for analyzing communication strategies, we next proceed to show the method for coding the various phases of the L2 lessons in which these communication strategies took place.

**Coding the Various Phases of the L2 Lessons**

This section first defines a conversation analysis approach to investigating L2 classroom context, and then describes the heuristics which were used to help identify type of context in the exchanges in question.

According to Drew and Heritage (1992; cited in Walsh, 2006), much of the research on L2 classroom interaction to date has adopted an approach whereby context is viewed as something static, fixed and concrete. The majority of studies have had one of two central goals, attempting to account for either the nature of verbal exchanges, or the relationship between second language acquisition (SLA) and interaction (Wu, 1998). Whatever their focus, most studies have referred to the L2 classroom context (singular), implying that there exists such an entity and that it has fixed and describable features which are common to all L2 contexts. More recent works, however, propose modes of investigation which focus on the shifting environment of the L2 classroom and which offer an understanding of the interactional processes at work (Walsh, 2006). A number of writers have proposed that classroom interaction should be investigated from a multi-layered perspective; a perspective where participants play a crucial role in constructing the interaction and under which

different varieties of communication prevail as the lesson unfolds according to particular pedagogic purposes (Van Lier, 2000; Seedhouse, 1997a; Lantolf, 2000).

In this way, conversation analysis (CA) approaches to classroom interaction have a number of features that set them apart from the more quantitative, static and product-oriented techniques. The underlying philosophy in CA is that social contexts are not static but are constantly being formed by the participants through their use of language and the ways in which turn-taking, openings and closures, sequencing of acts, and so on are locally managed. Interaction is examined in relation to meaning and context; the ways in which actions are sequenced is central to the process. According to this view, interaction is *context-shaped* and *context-renewing*; that is, one contribution is dependent on a previous one and subsequent contributions create a new context for later actions (Walsh, 2006). Walsh concludes nicely "Possibly the most significant role of CA is to *interpret* from the data rather than *impose* predetermined structural or functional categories" (p. 52).

The data in this study were analyzed using a conversation analysis methodology that centered on turn-taking mechanisms and focus of the talk. In other words, context is defined as focus of the talk in terms of turn-taking patterns in the discourse. Different interaction patterns manifested themselves in the turn-taking and sequence of turns. Once a pattern had been identified, the data were analyzed for further examples of the same pattern as is the norm under conversation analysis (Psathas, 1995; cited in Walsh, 2006). Following this procedure, it was possible, by analyzing the corpus, to identify three patterns: 1) focus on text books and teaching materials, 2) focus on teacher talk and his personal views, 3) focus on learners' contributions and ideas. This classification of the "focus of the talk" leads to three context types respectively, that is, 1) Material-oriented context, 2) Teacher-oriented context, and, 3) Learner-oriented context.

The primary source for identifying type of context in the exchanges in question is the focus of the talk or the meaning-bearing content of the discourse itself. In other words, the primary criterion to recognize context type is to identify whether the focus in any one discourse event is on the "text books and teaching materials" (material-oriented context), "teacher talk and his personal views" (teacher-oriented context), or on "learners' contributions and ideas" (learner-oriented context). However, if the primary source failed and type of context was not identifiable on the basis of the meaning-bearing content of the discourse itself, some "heuristics" were used to do

this. Heuristics are "aids" which help recognize focus of the talk and increase confidence in the validity of the analysis (Farrokhi, 2006).

If the primary source is adequate for identifying the type of context, heuristics are used as supplementary indicators to validate the identification. However, if the primary source fails as an indicator of the context type, then heuristics are used to help identify the type of context. One or more heuristics might be used at the same time either to validate the identification, or help identify the type of context. The heuristics used in this study were: 1) teacher's explicit cues about the focus of the talk, 2) learners' explicit contributions in the classroom context, and 3) conventional interpretation of the discourse. These heuristics are defined and illustrated as follows:

**Heuristic 1: Teacher's Explicit Cues**
This type of heuristic defines focus of the talk on the basis of the teacher's explicit linguistic markers or overt verbal signals in a communication strategy exchange. This heuristic can be interpreted as a reference point for the focus of the participants in the exchange in question.

Extract 13:
1 T: ok let's go to number three (teacher reads the exercise) option a bike riding fishing
   swimming windsurfing
2 LL: go
3 T: b track and field judo
4 LL: do
5 T: and option c basketball golf soccer tennis volleyball
6 LL: play
7 T: golf is very expensive do we have professional people (**Approximation**; athletes) in Iran
   to play golf? Do we have especial course or field?
8 L: yes in Tehran

In extract 13, the teacher makes explicit the focus of the talk in this exchange in number 1 where he says "let's go to number three". He is obviously teaching grammar to the students (differences among go, do and play) by reference to an exercise in the book and focus is on the material. This extract clearly shows the role of teacher's explicit linguistic signal in identifying or validating the context type.

**Heuristic 2: Learners' Explicit Contributions**

This type of heuristic refers to a situation in which the students try to contribute and express their own ideas and opinions. In fact, the students arouse the teacher and make him to talk about the subject matter in question. The following extract from our database illustrates heuristic 2:

Extract 14:

1 L: ؟ دیــافـراگم چی مـیشه

2 T: It's a I mean medical name دیــافـراگم something we say /daiafragm/ or /diafragm/ I don't care about the pronunciation actually ok? It means the same because it's a medical term you see? <u>For example eh… you diaphragm I mean it is I've heard you see</u> **(Avoidance)** but diaphragm or something like this it has the same dictation because it is a medical term actually it is translated to Persian

In this extract, one of the students in line 1 asks the teacher about the meaning of an unknown word. The teacher apparently doesn't know the meaning but tries to circumvent this situation in number 2. In the middle of number 2, the teacher realizes that this word is too difficult for him to explain and simply gives up the message and goes on to another. As it is clear from this extract, the student's contribution stimulates the teacher and leads to the teacher's use of a type of CS, that is message abandonment.

**Heuristic 3: Conventional Interpretation**

It refers to interpretation made on the basis of understandings that can be reasonably derived from the focus of the activity in previous classes, previous encounters, previous experiences of recurrence of a similar pattern, and shared understanding of the participants as to the nature of an activity, defining what the focus actually is. This is used as a basis for interpreting teacher's intentions in the use of procedural signals which are not explicit about the nature of the intended focus. This type of interpretation needs care and insider understanding of the activity in question on the part of the researcher.

Extract 15:

1 T: … in Superstar eh… Mrs. Tahmine Milani shows that eh… Kurosh Zand Kurosh Zand is the name of Shahab Hosseini in the movie Kurosh Zand is the most famous actor in Iran

2 L: Superstar?

3 T: Yeah Superstar and eh… he's not eh… he's proud of himself yeah? for example when the editor or a person a member of eh… recording the movie (**Approximation**; crew) saying something he looks angry I don't play **(Approximation,** Act) I don't go you don't know you don't respect to me my salary is not enough yes he's selfish he's selfish and he's proud of himself it's not good and he does some actions he has some relationships with girl especially he breaks his promise easily dif different aspects of famous actor and suddenly a girl comes to his life and he changes but let's watch it

This extract is the last part of a rather long exchange in which the teacher asks one of the students who is the most famous actor in Iran. Although this exchange started in the form of an exercise in the book, it converted into telling a movie by the teacher. In other words, an exchange with a focus on material changes into an exchange with a focus on teacher's experience and is not a material-oriented context anymore. It is only through the researcher's interpretation and insider understanding of the activity in question that the accurate context type, that is teacher-oriented, is identifiable.

Having described the heuristics, we next proceed to show the results occurring in our database.

## Results

This section consists of two major sections. The first section deals with identifying different context types in Iranian EFL classroom discourse and the second one elaborates on the relationship between different types of communication strategies and context types.

**Specific Context Types**
**Material-oriented Contexts**
Exchanges in which the focus is on the accurate and standard use of the second language forms (i.e., grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation exercises) and also provide the students with cultural issues of the target language. The examples below illustrate material-oriented contexts:

Extract 16:

1 T: For example I say eh… you can use old yeah? New **(Approximation; young)** old old
   maybe we use old in eh… when we are talking about age of a person old means a person
   who has eh… high age (**Approximation; elderly**) all right? So for example I'm saying eh…
   Mr. Moradi is the oldest is the oldest student in class ok? Mr. Moradi in front of other
   students in class maybe more than two yeah? So one one comparative one two three four
   five it means superlative ok? And for example in my idea (**Approximation; opinion**) eh…
   for example

2 L: Mr. Nariman is huge man in the class

3 T: Oh… Nariman is the hugest

4 L: The hugest man

5 T: In class

6 L: Yeah

7 T: or the most enormous all right? the most enormous the the biggest in shape in body  all
      right

   In this extract, the teacher is talking about grammar points (comparative and
superlative adjectives). Although type of the context in these exchanges tends to be
identifiable on the basis of the primary source or the meaning-bearing content of the
discourse, heuristic 3 is used as supplementary indicator to validate the identification.
In fact, the nature of the teacher talk in the initiating move (number 1) reveals that the
focus is on describing a grammar point to the students but previous utterances act as
supplementary indicators for identifying material-oriented context.

Extract 17:

1 T: thank you next exercise after this exercise we will read the story all right? (teacher reads
   the exercise) ok option a it's very interesting it has extra information you have to listen to
   the listening and find the true answer it gives you extra information about the amounts
   (**Approximation; numbers**) for example for speed we say miles per hour mph for a sum of
   money we say for example million

2 L: yeah

3 T: a big number a percentage we say percent for distance we say mile a soccer score all
   right? But do you how do you pronounce it? how do we say it? a a soccer score Danial can
   you read? How do you say it?

4 L: Four

5 T: four to

6 L: no four one

7 T: four one? what is the next one?

In this extract, the nature of the teacher talk in the initiating move (number 1) (next exercise) followed by teacher's reading of the exercise reveals that the focus is on a new exercise. Type of the context (that is material-oriented) is not identifiable on the basis of the primary source or the meaning-bearing content of the discourse (based on the previous utterances) but teacher's explicit utterance (that is heuristic 1) in number 1 is applied as a help to identify the type of context.

**Teacher-oriented Contexts**

This type of context refers to exchanges in which the teacher is engaged in using English for articulation of his own opinions, views, feelings, real-life experiences, and topics of personal interest. In a teacher-oriented context, the teacher feels that his contributions can help the students to understand the subject matter in hand better and add to their knowledge. The examples below illustrate teacher-oriented contexts:

Extract 18:

1 T: Such a beautiful league we have yeah? All right let me tell you the story about Messi I've heard that Messi eh… was of course is the best soccer player in the world it's it's natural really it's natural but eh… last years eh… he didn't have eh… enough potential (**Approximation**; energy) it means for example for ten minutes fifteen minutes he could play because eh… his body was weak (**Circumlocution;** energy) all right? Did you understand? He he didn't have enough potential energy to play but Barcelona

2 L: So many years ago

3 T: Yeah in last years so many years ago is last years yeah? And I've heard but I didn't read

In this exchange, the nature of the teacher talk in the initiating move (number 1) (that is telling a story) indicates that the focus is on talking about his personal views and opinions. In fact, type of the context (that is teacher-oriented context) is identifiable on the basis of the primary source, though the teacher's explicit signal in line 1 (let me tell you the story) is applied as a supplementary indicator (that is heuristic 1) to increase the validity of the identification.

Extract 19:

1 T: cucumber yes she's as cool as a cucumber as you know when you eat cucumber eh… it's cool and it makes you relax yeah? And it's cool when you're hot especially in summer and

I've heard a doctor he said when you're studying in summer it's better to eat cucumber eh…
it will help you to increase your ability to eh… to save information

2 L: what? (miming)

3 T: in summer when you're studying eat cucumber it helps you ok? and I've heard again
again I've heard that eh… when you're studying in different seasons except summer eat
eh… honey and eh… I forgot honey and…

4 L: jam

5 T: <u>no honey and… forget honey and something (teacher laughs) I forget I can't remember</u>
   **<u>(Avoidance)</u>**

   In this extract, the teacher's use of "I've heard" in numbers 1 and 3 indicates that the
teacher is talking about his own personal views and opinions. Although type of the
context in these exchanges (that is teacher-oriented context) tends not to be
identifiable on the basis of the primary source or the meaning-bearing content of the
discourse, researcher's conventional interpretation (that is heuristic 3) is applied as a
help to identify the type of context.

**Learner-oriented Contexts**

This type of context refers to exchanges in which the students engage the teacher in
talking about the unknown or problematic areas of the second language. In a learner-
oriented context, the students ask or arouse the teacher to give them more information
about the subject matter in hand or make him give answers to their questions. The
examples below illustrate learner-oriented contexts:

Extract 20:

1 L1: I take one hundred fish

2 T: you caught really? river or on the sea?

3 L1: river eh… on the (student mimes)

4 T: near

5 L1: yeah near the sea a few eh…

6 T: you mean one hundred is is not a lot?

7 L2: Really?

8 T: in a year?

9 L1: some people…

10 L3: two thousand and three thousand

11 L1: yeah

12 T: I'm sorry totally in a year or no just one time?

13 L1: at night one night six hundred

14 T: really?

15 L1: yeah six hundred seven hundred

16 T: <u>I think they don't eh… fish with</u> تـور **(Code Switching)**

17 L1: no calf

18 T: calf? How do you spell it? c a l f

19 L1: yeah

20 T: thank you

   In this exchange, focus of the talk is on fishing as one of the students is talking about his personal experience. In fact, type of the context is identifiable on the basis of the primary source and the meaning-bearing content of the discourse, though the researcher's conventional interpretation is applied as a supplementary indicator (that is heuristic 3) to increase the validity of the identification.

<u>Extract 21:</u>

1 L: pretty is short or not?

2 T: Pretty?

3 L: Yes

4 T: It's short but please <u>remember</u> **(Approximation;** <u>remind)</u> me to to <u>tell</u> (**Approximation**; <u>explain)</u> your point about eh… comparative adjective in long in short form ok? Sometimes we do some actions when we want to eh… plus er and superlative eh… adjective (the teacher writes on the board as he describes the grammar) it means we have an object or a subject for a person a car a student or everything in front of other things you want to compare one thing in front of other things for example Javad in front of other students in the class you want to compare them about the adjectives so if it's short you say the plus adjective plus est and if it's long you say the most plus your adjective remember when you see than it's comparative so it's a symbol and when you see the it's a symbol or sign of superlative form all right?

   In this extract, the focus of the talk is on answering one of the students' question. In fact, the nature of the student's question in the initiating move (line 1) (pretty is short or not?) followed by the teacher's answer reveals that the focus is on a problematic area of the second language on the part of the student. Although type of the context in these exchanges tends not to be identifiable on the basis of the primary source or the

meaning-bearing content of the discourse, student's explicit question (that is heuristic 2) in line 1 is applied as a help to identify the type of context.

**The Relationship between CS Types and Context Types**

This section, which is the second major part under results section, itself consists of two major parts: 1) Frequency of communication strategies across context types, and 2) Interactions between communication strategy types and context types. These two sub-sections are elaborated on in more detail in the following:

**Frequency of Communication Strategies across Context Types**

This section gives a more general view of the results and provides an overall representation of the frequencies of communication strategies across context types for each teacher. This data is provided in Table 1.

***Table 1:*** *Distribution of communication strategies across context types (numbers in parentheses show the frequencies)*

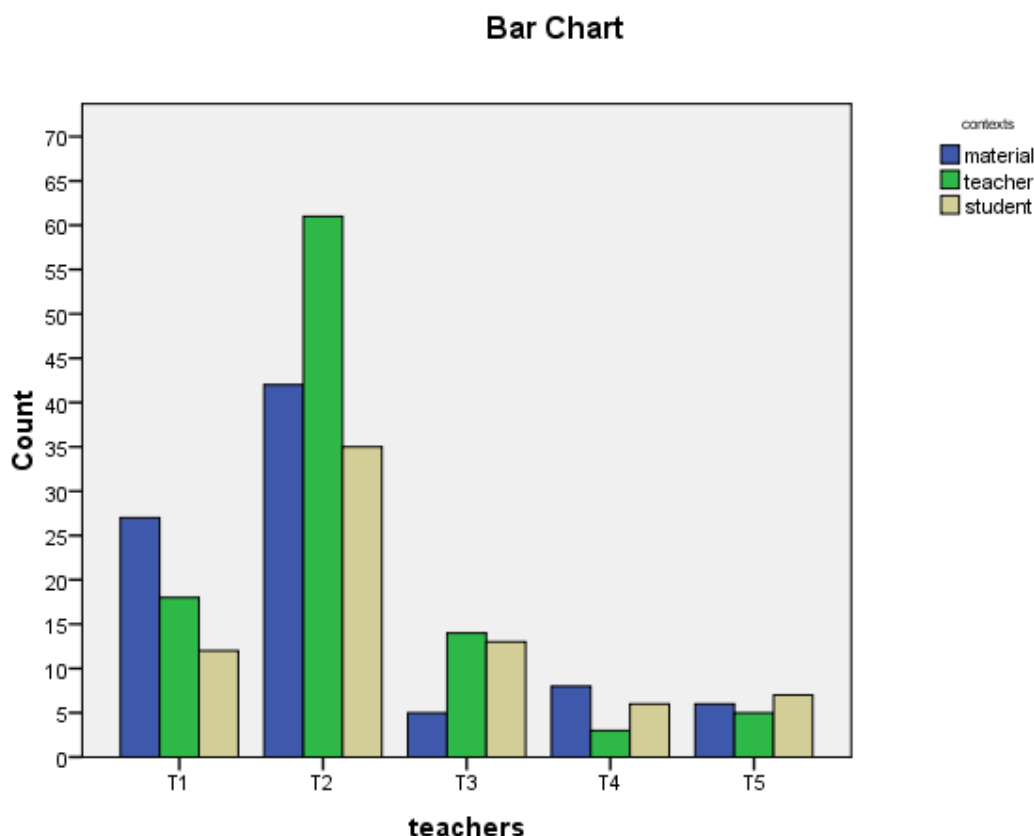| Teachers | Material-oriented | Teacher-oriented | Student-oriented | Row Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher 1 | 47.4% (27) | 31.6%(18) | 21.1%(12) | 21.8%(57) |
| Teacher 2 | 30.4%(42) | 44.2%(61) | 25.4%(35) | 52.7%(138) |
| Teacher 3 | 15.6%(5) | 43.8%(14) | 40.6%(13) | 12.2%(32) |
| Teacher 4 | 47.1%(8) | 17.6%(3) | 35.3%(6) | 6.5%(17) |
| Teacher 5 | 33.3%(6) | 27.8%(5) | 38.9%(7) | 6.9%(18) |
| Column Totals | 33.6%(88) | 38.5%(101) | 27.9%(73) | Grand Total: 262 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean | 34.7% | 33% | 32.3% | |

According to the overall means of communication strategies in the three context types, material-oriented context has the highest mean (that is 34.7%). However, the overall means of communication strategies in teacher-oriented and student-oriented, although lower (that is 33% and 32.3% respectively), are not significantly different from material-oriented context. Looking at the figures in the column totals, we can see that the story changes. The table shows that teacher-oriented column has the highest frequencies of communication strategies (that is 38.5%) and the next highest one is material-oriented column (that is 33.6%) and the last one in terms of frequencies is learner-oriented context (that is 27.9%).

We now turn to the profiles of individual teachers in terms of the frequencies of communication strategies in different context types. Looking at the data for each individual teacher, we can see that they vary around the mean and appear to have different patterns. Figure 1 (below) is used to graphically represent the patterns of communication strategies by different teachers across the three context types (as provided in Table 1). For teacher 1, the highest frequencies of communication strategies are material-oriented and teacher-oriented contexts. As the bar chart shows, teacher 1 has used the lowest number of communication strategies in student-oriented context. For teachers 2 and 3, the highest frequency of communication strategies is in teacher-oriented context whereas the second highest frequency for teacher 2 is in material-oriented context and for teacher 3 is in student-oriented context. Teachers 4 and 5 are more balanced than the other three teachers in terms of the distribution of communication strategies in all three context types. However, teacher 4 has the highest frequency in material-oriented context and the second highest frequency for this teacher is in student-oriented context. For teacher 5, the highest frequencies are in student-oriented and material-oriented contexts respectively. Both of the teachers have used the lowest number of communication strategies in teacher-oriented context. According to Figure 1, teacher 1 follows a progressive manner and frequencies increase gradually from student-oriented context to material-oriented context with teacher-oriented context in between. Although the frequencies of communication strategies in different context types for teachers 2 and 3 are remarkably different, it

seems that they have developed unique profiles of their own. And finally, it seems that teachers 4 and 5 have a similar profile since the frequencies are relatively evenly spread across the contexts for both of the teachers. Generally, it seems that these teachers do not follow a particular pattern in terms of frequencies of communication strategies in different context types and each of them has developed a unique pattern for himself both in terms of frequencies and spread of communication strategies. However, the only two teachers who have somehow used the same frequencies of communication strategies in all three context types are teachers 4 and 5 (respectively 6.5% and 6.9%).



**Figure 1:** Distribution of communication strategies in context types across teachers (T stands for Teacher, material for material-oriented context, teacher for teacher-oriented context and student for student-oriented context)

**Interactions between Communication Strategy Types and Context Types**

This section deals with exploring the interactions between communication strategy types and context types. It consists of two sub-sections: 1) exploring the interactions across the group profile, and 2) exploring the interactions across individual teachers.

**Group profile**

This sub-section is concerned with interactions between communication strategy types and context types in the whole group. Analyzing the group profile enables us to identify the salient general patterns. Table 2 presents the results:

*Table 2: Interactions between communication strategy types and context types across group profile*

| Communication Strategy Types | Material-oriented | Teacher-oriented | Student-oriented | Row Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Approximation | 75%(66) | 76.2%(77) | 64.4%(47) | 72.5%(190) |
| Circumlocution | 8%(7) | 6.9%(7) | 4.1%(3) | 6.5%(17) |
| Avoidance | 9.1%(8) | 7.9%(8) | 16.4%(12) | 10.7%(28) |
| Miming | 3.4%(3) | 3%(3) | 4.1%(3) | 3.4%(9) |
| Appeal Assis. | 4.5%(4) | 3%(3) | 6.8%(5) | 4.6%(12) |
| Code Switching | 0%(0) | 3%(3) | 4.1%(3) | 2.3%(6) |
| Column Totals | 100%(88) | 100%(101) | 100%(73) | Grand Total: 262 |

(Chi-square= 10, df= 10, p> 0.05)

Table 2 shows the overall frequencies of different communication strategy types within each particular context type to enable us to explore the interactions. Percentages are in terms of total communication strategies in each particular column for keeping the time factor constant. The overall pattern which emerges from Table 2 is that in all three context types, "approximation" is the most frequently used communication strategy type. It is massively more frequent than any other communication strategy type. Having identified this general pattern, we now turn to explore the interactions in each particular context type.

In material-oriented contexts, approximation occurs with the highest frequency, whereas avoidance and circumlocution which occur with similar frequencies are the second and the third respectively. The least frequently used types of communication strategy in this context type are appeal for assistance, miming and code switching respectively. What is interesting in analyzing Table 2 is the behavior of code switching which has not been used at all in material-oriented context. In teacher-oriented contexts, approximation again occurs with the higher frequency than other communication strategy types and avoidance and circumlocution which occur with similar frequencies are the second and the third respectively. The other types of communication strategy in this context type have been used with the same frequency. Similar to other context types, in student-oriented context, approximation occurs with the highest frequency but unlike the other two contexts, avoidance and appeal for assistance are the second and the third respectively in terms of frequency in student-oriented context. The other three types of communication strategy have been used again with the same frequency in this context type.

It is interesting to see avoidance as the second in student-oriented contexts with reference to its lowest frequencies in other context types. It is also interesting to see that the only vacant cell in the table belongs to code switching in material-oriented context. Although approximation has the highest frequency in all three context types, the proportional amount of this communication strategy type is higher, though slightly, in teacher-oriented contexts than in the other contexts. Figure 2 (below) is used to graphically represent the patterns of communication strategies in context types across group profile (as provided in Table 2).
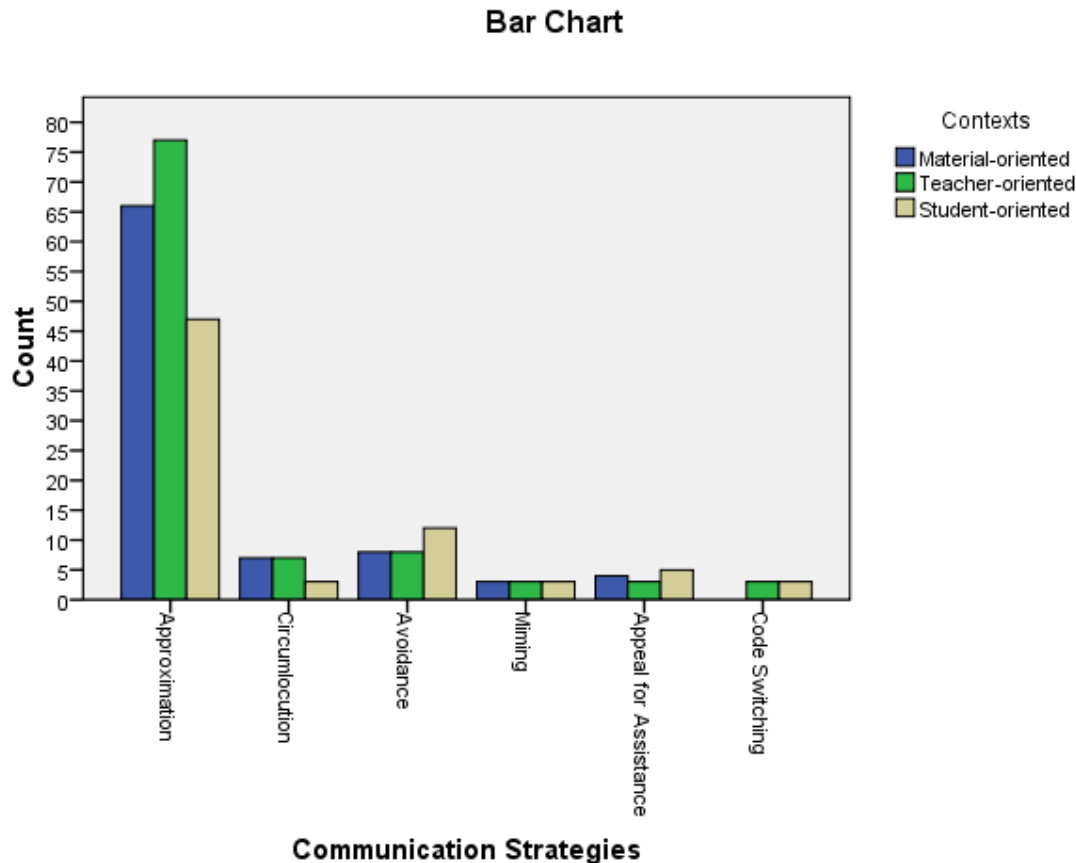
## Bar Chart



Figure 2: Distribution of communication strategy types in context types across group profile

The chi-square test result (Chi-square= 10, df= 10, p> 0.05) confirmed that there is not a statistically significant association between communication strategy types and context types in the current study. This means that choice of communication strategy types is not related to context types. This might be due to various factors to be discussed later.

**Individual Teachers**

This sub-section is concerned with finding out the patterns of interaction between communication strategy types and context types for each individual teacher and exploring the extent to which each teacher varies the use of communication strategy

types according to context. First, let us see the distribution of communication strategy types in different context types by teachers. This is provided in Table 3.

*Table 3:* *Interactions between communication strategy types and context types across individual teachers*

| Teachers | Communication Strategy Types | Material-oriented | Teacher-oriented | Student-oriented | Row Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher 1 | Approximation | 70.4%(19) | 88.9%(16) | 41.7%(5) | 70.2%(40) |
| | Circumlocution | 11.1%(3) | 0%(0) | 8.3%(1) | 7%(4) |
| | Avoidance | 11.1%(3) | 5.6%(1) | 25%(3) | 12.3%(7) |
| | Miming | 3.7%(1) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 1.8%(1) |
| | Appeal Assist. | 3.7%(1) | 0%(0) | 16.7%(2) | 5.3%(3) |
| | Code Switching | 0%(0) | 5.6%(1) | 8.3%(1) | 3.5%(2) |
| | Column Totals | 100%(27) | 100%(18) | 100%(12) | 100%(57) |
| Teacher 2 | Approximation | 69%(29) | 72.1%(44) | 68.6%(24) | 70.3%(97) |
| | Circumlocution | 9.5%(4) | 9.8%(6) | 2.9%(1) | 8%(11) |
| | Avoidance | 9.5%(4) | 6.6%(4) | 14.3%(5) | 9.4%(13) |
| | Miming | 4.8%(2) | 3.3%(2) | 8.6%(3) | 5.1%(7) |
| | Appeal Assist. | 7.1%(3) | 4.9%(3) | 0%(0) | 4.3%(6) |
| | Code Switching | 0%(0) | 3.3%(2) | 5.7%(2) | 2.9%(4) |
| | Column Totals | 100%(42) | 100%(61) | 100%(35) | 100%(138) |
| Teacher 3 | Approximation | 80%(4) | 71.4%(10) | 38.5%(5) | 59.4%(19) |
| | Circumlocution | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 7.7%(1) | 3.1%(1) |
| | Avoidance | 20%(1) | 21.4%(3) | 30.8%(4) | 25%(8) |
| | Miming | 0%(0) | 7.1%(1) | 0%(0) | 3.1%(1) |
| | Appeal Assist. | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 23.1%(3) | 9.4%(3) |
| | Code Switching | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) |
| | Column Totals | 100%(5) | 100%(14) | 100%(13) | 100%(32) |
| Teacher 4 | Approximation | 100%(8) | 100%(3) | 100%(6) | 100%(17) |
| | Circumlocution | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Avoidance | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) |
| | Miming | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) |
| | Appeal Assist. | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) |
| | Code Switching | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) |
| | Column Totals | 100%(8) | 100%(3) | 100%(6) | 100%(17) |
| Teacher 5 | Approximation | 100%(6) | 80%(4) | 100%(7) | 94.4%(17) |
| | Circumlocution | 0%(0) | 20%(1) | 0%(0) | 5.6%(1) |
| | Avoidance | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) |
| | Miming | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) |
| | Appeal Assist. | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) |
| | Code Switching | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) | 0%(0) |
| | Column Totals | 100%(6) | 100%(5) | 100%(7) | 100%(18) |

Grand Total: 262

Table 3 indicates the frequencies of communication strategies to explore the interactions between communication strategy types and context types across each individual teacher. Percentages are in terms of total communication strategies in each particular column for each teacher. To deal with teachers' use of communication strategies in all three context types, approximation is overall used with massively more frequency than any other communication strategy type across all teachers. As seen above, patterns of dealing with communication strategies in material-oriented contexts are the same for teachers 1, 2, and 3. They all have used avoidance and circumlocution (except teacher 3) with the highest frequencies, after approximation, in this context type whereas the other two teachers (teachers 4 and 5) have not used any other type of communication strategy other than approximation. In teacher-oriented context, teachers 1 and 3 follow the same pattern, that is they have used avoidance strategy with the highest frequency after approximation in this context type. On the other hand, teachers 2 and 5 have used circumlocution strategy more frequently than any other communication strategy type, after approximation, in this context type. And finally in the student-oriented contexts, it seems that teachers 1, 2 and 3 follow relatively the same pattern of communication strategy use. As it is shown in Table 3, all of these teachers have used avoidance strategy more than any

other type of communication strategy except approximation. What is interesting in this context type is the proportional amount of appeal for assistance that is significantly high for teachers 1 and 3 (respectively 16.7% and 23.1%) with reference to its lowest frequencies in other context types. Teachers 4 and 5, like material-oriented context, have not used any other type of communication strategy except approximation in this context type.

## Discussion

In response to the first research question, three specific interactional contexts in Iranian EFL classrooms in which communication strategies occur have already been identified. Thus, this section solely deals with answering the second research question in more detail. In other words, this section is an attempt to explore whether communication strategies used by Iranian non-native English teachers in classroom discourse (monologic or dialogic) are related to the contexts created within classroom.

As shown in Table 2, the overall frequencies of communication strategy types revealed that approximation was significantly more frequent than any other communication strategy types. It was also found that in all context types, approximation was overall the most frequently used communication strategy type. However, different patterns were identified regarding the frequencies of other communication strategy types in different context types. The second most frequent communication strategy, after approximation, is avoidance that has been used more frequently than any other type of communication strategy in all three context types. The third communication strategy type, in terms of frequency, is circumlocution that has been used more frequently than any other type of communication strategy, after approximation and avoidance, in material-oriented contexts and teacher-oriented contexts but in student-oriented context appeal for assistance has been used more frequently than other types of communication strategy, after approximation and avoidance. It seems that findings are in accordance with previous literature (Willems, 1987; Anani Sarab, 2004). Willems (1987, p. 357) contends "Intuitively we tend to believe that *paraphrase* and *approximation* are the most commonly used communication strategies ...this may be, the statement that skill in the use of *approximation* and *paraphrase* strategies in particular will be extremely useful for everyone trying to master or (later) use an L2, seems completely justified".

Meanwhile, it is interesting to see that code switching is generally the lowest frequent type of communication strategy.

Significantly higher frequency of approximation than the other communication strategy types and its predominant use in all three context types (see Tables 2 and 3) might be due to several reasons. First, using approximations might enable us to obtain the maximum economy owing to the fact that they are fast and short. Approximations are possibly the "quickest" and "easiest" types of communication strategy to be used by the teachers for dealing with their linguistic gaps and deficiencies: quickest in the sense that they are less time-consuming, and easiest in the sense that they do not require the teachers to devote a lot of effort and energy for dealing with their linguistic problems, they just simply substitute a word with another. The following example from database illustrates this feature more clearly:

Extract 22:

T: so suppose that for example Mr. Sobhi Mr. Ravaei is going to have a party tonight it's a kind of birthday party so what do you what items or what things we are supposed to have? Bars of chocolate and how about you? Did you have a party? You like party? Yeah you are the man of party suppose that I mean you are supposed to have a party tonight I mean what do you bring? What do you wanna bring over there? Ok let's talk about these things bring balloons bring bars of chocolate it's from your mom it's from let's say talk about it ready?

In this extract, the teacher is clarifying an exercise in the book that is about birthday party. As he is explaining the exercise, he uses "items" instead of "presents" that is not the correct word but shares enough semantic features with the target word to satisfy the teacher. What is interesting in this extract is the use of a substitute word instead of another word which conveys the meaning without hindering the flow of the conversation and as easily and quickly as possible.

Second, approximations are less "intrusive" in the sense that because of being short and less time-consuming, they are less disruptive of the ongoing flow of talk while the problem is dealt with. The following example help to understand this feature of approximation more easily:

Extract 23:

T: we call it as a multi company for example Mr. Sobhi goes to a company and apply for a job for example hello sir I want to work here you know? <u>And that girl or that boy or the man</u> says (the teacher mimes) he says ok you would come tomorrow and start your job there and you are so happy yes? you are over the moon you know over the moon? Something like this you're so happy نیــشین بنــد یـکجا come on I'm going to start my job tomorrow you are over the moon you are so happy you are over the moon means you are so happy you can not walk you can not talk hey mom you see? Like this

In this extract, the teacher is defining the term "multi-national company". In the heat of his talk, he makes use of approximation (girl, boy or man) to convey his intended meaning that is "secretary". In order to realize the importance of this communication strategy type in this extract, imagine that the teacher used another communication strategy, such as circumlocution, instead of approximation. It is out of question that any type of communication strategy except approximation disrupts the flow of the talk in this extract.

Third, since the substitute word can refer to the correct concept but at an inappropriate level or refer to another object that may give some hint to the intended referent, it is obvious that just conveying the meaning to students is crucially more important than the grammatical structure of the talk. Therefore, the teachers tend to use this type of communication strategy more than any other type of communication strategy in a flow of the talk, where meaning is more important than form, when they are faced with a linguistic gap. The following example might be helpful in understanding this feature:

Extract 24:
T: Wow could would enough oh my God for next session I will bring some cassettes actually we're just going to have listening skill because now just but not available because I'm just going to act as cassette could would and enough you know them what's difference <u>between</u> them I just talked about them yes?

In this extract, the teacher is teaching grammar and tries to elicit the students' contributions on the grammar point in question. He wrongly uses "between" instead of "among". Since the meaning is more important to him in the flow of the talk, he does not care whether he is using the right grammatical structure or word. Although he knows the word is grammatically incorrect, he prefers meaning to form.

These features might help us to understand why approximation is the most predominant type of communication strategy in all three context types.

Having discussed the possible reasons for the high frequency of approximation in all three context types, I now proceed to discuss a further explanation for the finding that the highest proportional amount of approximation was in teacher-oriented context, although its proportional amount was also rather high in the other two context types (see Table 2). The reason for this finding might be laid in the nature of the talk of the teachers themselves. In defining teacher-oriented context, it was proposed that in this type of context, the teachers are engaged in using English for production of their own opinions, views, feelings, real-life experiences, and topics of personal interest. Therefore, what is important in this type of context is conveying the intended meaning to the students and grammatical accuracy of the language is not so much important for the teachers. As it was mentioned earlier, approximation acts as an appropriate tool for teachers in conveying their meaning to students in a flow of the talk. In contrast, teachers are dealing with accurate use of language in material-oriented and learner-oriented contexts and, in this way, they might prefer to use other types of communication strategy that are more helpful in dealing with students' problems.

Now we proceed to discuss other patterns that have appeared in our data. As it was mentioned earlier, the second most frequent communication strategy, after approximation, is avoidance that has been used more frequently than any other type of communication strategy in all three context types (see Table 2). The reason for popularity of this type of communication strategy might be the same as the first feature of the popularity of approximation (that is quick and easy). But another reason that was obtained from interviews with teachers is more interesting, that is preventing students from misleading. In the interviews with teachers, all of them confessed that when they are confronted with a situation in which they do not know the right answer or their answer might mislead students, they prefer to say "I don't know" or do not talk about the subject matter in hand. In this way, the most experienced teacher's answer needs considerable attention: "in all my teaching experience years, I have found out that sometimes saying just a simple 'I don't know' is better than a wrong answer". Another interesting finding regarding avoidance strategy is the higher proportional amount of avoidance in learner-oriented context with reference to its lower frequencies in other context types. This finding might confirm the latter

argument that when teachers are confronted with situations in which their talk might mislead students, they try to avoid the subject matter in question.

The third communication strategy type, in terms of frequency, is circumlocution that has been used more frequently than any other type of communication strategy, after approximation and avoidance, in material-oriented contexts and teacher-oriented contexts but in student-oriented context appeal for assistance has been used more frequently than circumlocution (Table 2). This finding suggests that when the teachers are confronted with a question on the part of the students and they do not know the answer, they try to engage other students in the subject matter in hand or even appeal to an authority (such as dictionary).

After taking a look at Table 2, it would become obvious that other communication strategy types are at the same level with reference to their frequency and nothing especial can be said about them but it is worth mentioning that code switching is the lowest frequent type of communication strategy in general.

Now, we shift our focus to individual teachers and discuss their various uses of different types of communication strategy. As Table 1 shows, teachers 4 and 5 have used the least number of communication strategies in their talk (6.5% and 6.9% respectively). This might be due to some reasons such as following: first, both of the teachers are experienced (teachers 4 and 5 have been teaching English as a foreign language for 18 and 27 years respectively). This means that they have internalized structures and patterns of the second language in their minds and are more competent than the other three teachers participating in this study (teachers 1, 2 and 3 have been teaching English as a foreign language for 1, 3, and 5 years respectively). Second, these two teachers were overwhelmingly material-oriented in their classrooms. This may be another reason for their least use of communication strategies because when a teacher is dealing with just text book and material and does not engage himself in new contexts and situations, it is not far from reality that he memorizes the contents of the text book and predominates the material. Third, and the most important reason, is students' low-level language competency. Since the students were at pre-intermediate level, they were not capable enough to challenge the teachers and consequently new contexts and situations were not created for teachers.

Taking a look at Table 1 indicates that Teacher 2 has used communication strategies significantly more than other four teachers. It might be interesting to know that this teacher always tried to create new contexts and situations in his classroom and was

more active than other four teachers in this term. It means that he used to make use of his personal experience most of the times and always tried to elaborate on subject matter in hand. Table 1 also shows that teachers 1 and 3 follow their own individual patterns of communication strategy use in their talk.

After discussing the results in detail, it's now more plausible to answer the second research question. According to Table 2, approximation reveals higher proportional amounts in teacher-oriented contexts (76.2%) in which the focus is on teacher talk and his personal views whereas circumlocution tends to be used more frequently in material-oriented contexts (8%) where text books and teaching materials are the focus. The other four communication strategy types, that is avoidance, appeal for assistance, miming and code switching, have occurred with the highest frequency in student-oriented contexts (16.4%, 6.8%, 4.1% and 4.1% respectively) in which learners' contributions and ideas are dealt with. This discussion is intended to suggest that approximation is communication strategy type which is more congruent with teacher-oriented contexts than other communication strategy types. Unlike circumlocution which is in agreement with material-oriented contexts, the other four communication strategy types (avoidance, appeal for assistance, miming and code switching) are in accordance with learner-oriented contexts. Thus, it seems that there is a meaningful relationship between communication strategies used by Iranian non-native English teachers in classroom discourse and the contexts created within classroom.

As it was mentioned earlier, the chi-square test was used to find out whether there was any relationship between communication strategy types and context types statistically. The chi-square test for independence is used to determine if two categorical variables (communication strategy types and context types in this study) are related. It compares the frequency of cases found in the various categories of one variable across the different categories of another variable (Pallant, 2001). The chi-square test result obtained for this study (Chi-square= 10, df= 10, p> 0.05) confirmed that there is not a statistically significant association between communication strategy types and context types in the current study. This means that choice of communication strategy types is not related to context types. This might be due to the violation of chi-square test assumption that states the lowest expected frequency in any cell should be 5 or more or at least 80 per cent of cells should have expected frequencies of 5 or more. If we take a look at Table 3, we will find out that most of the cells in the lower

part of the table are vacant. As Table 3 indicates, this part belongs to teachers 4 and 5 that have used the lowest number of communication strategy types due to some reasons discussed earlier.

## Conclusion

Many papers have examined the predominant view of communication strategies within second language acquisition research (SLA) individually but they have failed to account in a satisfactory way for interactional and sociolinguistic dimensions of language. As such it may be far from realistic, and obviates insight into the nature of language. By challenging prevailing views and concepts, and by critically examining theoretical assumptions and methodological practices, our ultimate goal is to argue for a reconceptualization of CSs within SLA research. While findings and theories in SLA regarding CSs have been important and insightful, it is argued, on the whole, work that purports to examine non-native/non-native discourse and interaction is impaired. This may well be a result of an imbalance of theoretical concerns and methodologies, an imbalance that hinders progression within SLA. The reconceptualization requires a significantly enhanced awareness of the social, contextual, and interactional dimensions of language use within EFL contexts and paying more attention to the most important element of the EFL classroom context that is teacher. The issue raised is that both the L2 teachers and students are learners of the target language in foreign language classrooms.

Thus, this study was an attempt to shed some light on the notion of communication strategies from a new perspective. In this way, this study particularly dealt with Iranian non-native English teachers' use of communication strategies within EFL contexts. Three different context types were identified. Furthermore, it was found that approximation is the most frequently used type of communication strategy among Iranian teachers and they prefer to use this type of communication strategy in different types of context. Although there was not a significant relationship between communication strategy types and context types, some interesting patterns occurred in the data. Overall then, it can be concluded that exploring the interactions between communication strategy types and context types might help us develop better understanding of the immensely complex process of communication strategy use and

factors which might affect teachers' decisions in using different communication strategy types.

# References

Anani Sarab, M. R. (2004). The study of communication strategies in teacher talk. *Iranian Journal of Applied linguistics*, 7, 1-44.

Bialystok, E. (1983). Some factors in the selection and implementation of communication strategies. In C. Faerch & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication* (pp. 100-118). London: Longman.

Bialystok, E. (1990). *Communication Strategies: A Psychological Analysis of Second Language Use*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Corder, S. P. (1983). Strategies of communication. In C. Faerch and G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in interlanguage communication* (pp. 15-19). London: Longman.

Cullen, R. (1998). Teacher talk and the classroom context. *ELT Journal*, 52, 179-187.

Dechert, H. (1983). How a story is done in a second language. In C. Faerch & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication* (pp. 175-195). London: Longman.

Dornyei, Z., & Scott, M. L. (1997). Communication strategies in a second language: Definitions and taxonomies. *Language Learning,* 47, 173-209.

Drew, P. & Heritage, J. (Eds.) (1992). *Talk at Work: Interaction in Institutional Settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Faerch, C., & Kasper, G. (Eds.). (1983a). *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication*. London: Longman.

Faerch, C. & Kasper, G. (1983b). Plans and strategies in foreign language communication. In C. Faerch and G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in interlanguage communication* (pp. 20-60). London: Longman.

Farrokhi, F. (2006). A practical step towards combining focus on form and focus on meaning. *Journal of Faculty of Letters and Humanities of Tabriz University*, 49 , 99-148.

Fernandez Dobao, A. M. & Palacios Martinez, I. M. (2007). Negotiating meaning in interaction between English and Spanish speakers via communication strategies. *Atlantis*, 29, 87-105.

Firth, A. and Wagner, J. (1996). On discourse, communication, and (some) fundamental concepts in SLA. Paper presented at the AILA conference (Scientific Commission on Discourse Analysis), Finland.

Haastrup, K., & Phillipson, R. (1983). Achievement strategies in learner/native speaker interaction. In C. Faerch & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication* (pp. 140-158). London: Longman.

Jourdain, S. (2000). A native-like ability to circumlocute. *The Modern Language Journal*, *84*, 185-195.

Kellerman, E. (1991). Compensatory strategies in second language research: A critique, a revision, and some (non-)implications for the classroom. In R. Phillipson, E. Kellerman, L. Selinker, M. Sharwood Smith, & M. Swain (Eds.), *Foreign/Second Language Pedagogy Research* (pp. 142-161). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Kellerman, E. & Bialystok, E. (1997). On psychological plausibility in the study of communication strategies. In G. Kasper and E. Kellerman (Eds.), *communication strategies: psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives* (pp. 31-48). New York: Longman.

Lantolf, J. P. (2000). *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Littlemore, J. (2003). The communicative effectiveness of different types of communication strategy. *System*, 31, 331-347.

Maleki, A. (2007). Teachability of communication strategies: an Iranian experience. *System*, *35*, 1-12.

Nakatani, Y. (2006). Developing an oral communication strategy inventory. *The Modern Language Journal*, 90 , 151-168.

Nakatani, Y. and Goh, C. (2007). A review of oral communication strategies: focus on interactionist and psycholinguistic perspectives. In A. D. Cohen and E. Macaro (Eds.), *language learner strategies* (pp. 207-227). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pallant, J. (2001). *SPSS Survival Manual*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Paribakht, T. (1985). Strategic competence and language proficiency. *Applied Linguistics, 6,* 132-146.

Psathas, G. (1995). *Conversation Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rampton, B. (1997). A sociolinguistic perspective on L2 communication strategies. In G. Kasper and E. Kellerman (Eds.), *communication strategies: psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives* (pp. 279-303). New York: Longman.

Raupach, M. (1983). Analysis and evaluation of communication strategies. In C. Faerch & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication* (pp. 199-209). London: Longman.

Seedhouse, P. (1996). Classroom interaction: possibilities and impossibilities. *ELT Journal,* 50, 16–24.

Seedhouse, P. (1997a). The case of the missing "no": the relationship between pedagogy and interaction. *Language Learning*, 47, 547-83.

Seedhouse, P. (1997b). Combining form and meaning. *ELT Journal*, 51 (4), 336-344.

Seedhouse, P. (1999). The relationship between context and the organization of repair in the L2 classroom. *IRAL*, 37 (1), 59-80.

Seedhouse, P. (2004). *The Interactional Architecture of the Second Language Classroom: A Conversational Analysis Perspective*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Tarone, E. (1977). Conscious communication strategies in interlanguage: A progress report. In H. D. Brown, C. A. Yorio & R. C. Crymes (Eds.), *On TESOL 77* (pp. 194-203). Washington, DC: TESOL.

Tarone, E. (1983). Some thoughts on the notion of 'communication strategy.' In C. Faerch & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in interlanguage communication* (pp. 61-74). London: Longman.

Tarone, E., Cohen, A. D. & Dumas, G. (1976). A closer look at some interlanguage terminology: a framework for communication strategies. In C. Faerch and G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in interlanguage communication* (pp. 4-14). London: Longman.

Van Lier, L. (2000). From input to affordance: social-interactive learning from an ecological perspective. In J. P. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning* (pp. 245-259). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Varadi, T. (1973). Strategies of target language learner communication: Message adjustment. Paper presented at the 6th Conference of the Rumanian-English Linguistics Project, Timisoara.

Varadi, T. (1983). Strategies of target language learner communication: Message adjustment. In C. Faerch and G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication* (pp. 79-99). London: Longman.

Wagner, J. (1983). Dann du tagen eineeeee – weisse Platte: an analysis of interlanguage communication in instructions. In C. Faerch & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication* (pp. 159-174). London: Longman.

Wagner, J. and Firth, A. (1997). Communication Strategies at Work. In G. Kasper and E. Kellerman (Eds.), *communication strategies: psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives* (pp. 323-344). New York: Longman.

Walsh, S. (2002). Construction or obstruction: teacher talk and learner involvement in the EFL classroom. *Language Teaching Research*, *6*, 3-23.

Walsh, S. (2006). *Investigating Classroom Discourse*. Cambridge: Routledge.

Willems, G. (1987). Communication strategies and their significance in foreign language teaching. *System*, *15,* 351-364.

Wu, B. (1998). Towards an understanding of the dynamic process of L2 classroom interaction. *System*, *26,* 525-40.

Yule, G., & Tarone, E. (1991). The other side of the page: Integrating the study of communication strategies and negotiated input in SLA. In R. Phillipson, E. Kellerman, L. Selinker, M. Sharwood Smith, & M. Swain (Eds.), *Foreign/second language pedagogy research* (pp. 142-161). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Yule, G. & Tarone, E. (1997). Investigating communication strategies in L2 reference: pros and cons. In G. Kasper and E. Kellerman (Eds.), *communication strategies: psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives* (pp. 17-30). New York: Longman.

**Title**

**Strategy-Based Instruction: A Focus on Improvement of IELTS Speaking**

**Author**

**Khalil Motallebzadeh (Ph.D.)**

Islamic Azad University, Mashad Branch

**Bio Data**

**Khalil Motallebzadeh** is assistant professor in Islamic Azad University (IAU), Iran. He has a Ph.D. in TEFL and is especially interested in language testing, teacher education, and e-learning. He has published articles in national and international academic journals. He has also attended several international conferences on ELT. He has been a visiting scholar at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (UIUC) in 2007-2008.

**Abstract**

Many studies have been conducted to explore language learning strategies and their relations or effects on learners' performances (Prokop, 1989; Oxford, 1990; Gallo-Crail & Zerwekh, 2002). This study investigates the impact of three learning strategies for coaching candidates who were taking the IELTS speaking subtest: cognitive strategies, social strategies, and compensatory strategies. These strategies were applied to improve

candidates' language skills in analyzing and outlining information, asking questions for clarification and verification as well as guessing from the context to make up for missing knowledge. In a non-intensive IELTS coaching program, 53 students were instructed through learning strategies for a period of four and half months. These candidates sat the academic module of IELTS in July 2007 and their scores were analyzed. There was significant evidence that the strategies were effective in raising their scores on the speaking component.

**Keywords:** Language Learning Strategies, IELTS, Strategy-Based Instruction, Cognitive Strategies, Social Strategies, Compensatory Strategies

## Introduction

In the last two decades, due to the shift from teaching to learning in SLA, many studies have focused on the good language learners' characteristics (Oxford 1986; Prokop, 1989; Gallo-Crail & Zerwekh, 2002). Researchers have also shown interests in the factors that may affect performance and scores on tests of language proficiency. Bachman (1990) proposed a model to investigate the effects of three types of systematic source of variability on test scores: communicative language ability, test takers' personal characteristics, and the characteristics of test method or test task. He also argued that the second factor includes a variety of personal attitudes such as age, gender, native language, educational background, motivation, anxiety, learning strategies, and learning styles. The current study examines three learning strategies: cognitive strategies, social strategies, and compensatory strategies and their effect on score gain on IELTS speaking subset.

## Learning Strategies

The word strategy comes from the ancient Greek word *strategia,* which means steps or actions taken for the purpose of winning a war known as military strategy (Wikipedia 2009). Learning strategies are broadly defined as operations and procedures employed by learners to facilitate the process of acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information in their learning (Rigney, 1978). Oxford(1990)

expanded this definition by noting that learning strategies are "specific actions taken by learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (p 8). Learning strategies can also enable students to become more independent, autonomous, lifelong learners (Allwright, 1990; Little, 1991). Chamot (2004) also confirms that strategic learners have metacognitive knowledge about their own thinking and learning approaches, a good understanding of what a task entails, and the ability to orchestrate the strategies that best meet both the task demands and their own learning strengths. Therefore, researchers have tried to identify strategies used by successful learners that might be transferred to less successful learners. Thanks to the advances made in second language acquisition (SLA), cognitive psychology, and information processing systems, as well as qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques, new procedures were developed for gathering and validating learning strategies (Ellis, 1994).

Strategies for language learning and language use have been receiving evergrowing attention in the areas of foreign language teaching and learning (Oxford 1990, Cohen 1990, O'Malley & Chamot 1990, Wenden 1991, Brown 1991, Rubin & Thompson 1994, Mendelsohn 1994, McDonough 1995). It is fair to say that language educators in many different contexts have been seeking ways to help students become more successful in their efforts to learn and communicate in foreign languages. The application of foreign language learning and use strategies is viewed as one vehicle for promoting greater success. A strategy is considered to be "effective" if it provides positive support to the students in their attempts to learn or use the foreign language. The broad definition of *foreign language learning and use strategies* consists of the steps or actions selected by learners to improve the *learning* of a foreign language, the *use* of a foreign language, or both. This definition encompasses those actions that are clearly intended for language learning, as well as those that may well lead to learning but which do not ostensibly include learning as the primary goal.

**Strategy-Based Instruction**

Styles- and strategies-based instruction (SSBI) (Cohen's term) or strategy-based instruction (SBI) refers to a form of learner-focused language teaching that explicitly combines styles and strategy training activities with everyday classroom language

instruction (Oxford, 2001; Cohen & Dörnyei, 2002). The underlying premise of the SBI approach is that students should be given the opportunity to understand not only what they can learn in the language classroom, but also how they can learn the language they are studying more effectively and efficiently. SBI helps learners become more aware of what kinds of strategies are available to them, understand how to organize and use strategies systematically and effectively given their learning-style preferences, and learn when and how to transfer the strategies to new language learning and using contexts Cohen (2007).

Explicit learning strategy-instruction, as Chamot (2004) argues, essentially involves the development of "students' awareness of the strategies they use, teacher modeling of strategic thinking, student practice with new strategies, student self-evaluation of the strategies used, and practice in transferring strategies to new tasks". While many other researchers in SL contexts agree on the importance of integrating strategy instruction into the language curriculum or teaching them separately (Cohen, 1998; Nunan, 1997; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford & Leaver, 1996; Shen, 2003), others have voiced concerns. Some researchers believe that strategies learned within a language class are less likely to transfer to other tasks (Gu, 1996), and from a practical point of view, it is easier to plan for one separate strategy course than to prepare all teachers to teach strategies (Vance, 1999). This indicates that teacher development programs should pay more attention to SBI in order to enable novice teachers to teach strategies explicitly and implicitly (Motallebzadeh, 2005).

However, there is less agreement on the issue of whether strategies instruction should be integrated into language curriculum. To increase L2 proficiency, some researchers and teachers have provided instruction that helped students learn how to use more relevant and more powerful learning strategies. In ESL/EFL studies, positive effects of strategy instruction emerged for proficiency in speaking and reading (Dadour & Robbins, 1996). The most effective aspect of SBI appears to include demonstrating when a given strategy might be useful, as well as how to use and evaluate it, and how to transfer it to other related tasks and situations. So far, research has shown the most beneficial strategy instruction to be woven into regular, everyday L2 teaching, although other ways of doing strategy instruction are possible (Oxford & Leaver, 1996).

One of the key findings from the work on strategies among good language learners is that while there will always be "natural learners," many language learners

stand to benefit from explicit strategy instruction (Rubin et al, 2007; Chamot, 2008). In other words, explicit strategy instruction can enhance their language ability. The tenets of such instruction, as Cohen (2008:53) states, would include the following:

- raising awareness about the strategies that the learners are already using,
- presenting and modeling strategies so that learners become increasingly aware of their own thinking and learning processes,
- providing multiple practice opportunities to help learners move towards autonomous use of the strategies through gradual withdraw of teacher scaffolding,
- and getting learners to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used and efforts they make to transfer these strategies to new tasks.

Cohen and Pinilla-Herrea (2009) emphasize that the effectiveness of strategy instruction would depend on several variables such as learning context, task at hand, learners' background knowledge, learners' goal for learning language, learners' style preferences, and ;learners' knowledge strategy repertoire. Meanwhile, Purpura (1997: 314) sees the relationships between strategy use and performance on second language tests as extremely complex. He maintains that strategies beneficial effects depend both on the type of task in which the test takers deploy them and on the combination of the other strategies with which the test takers use them (p. 315).

One thing that researchers and teachers must keep in mind is that there are no good or bad strategies; there is good or bad application of strategies. Anderson's research (1991) shows that effective and less effective learners reported using the same kinds of strategies. Cohen (1998) supports this concept; He states, "…with some exceptions, strategies themselves are not inherently good or bad, but have the potential to be used effectively" (p. 8).

**Identifying and Categorizing Strategies**

Early research into language learning strategies was concerned with attempting to establish what good language learning strategies might be; researchers were hoping to identify strategies used by successful learners with the idea that they might be transferred to less successful learners. Hot-win believes that the ultimate purpose of studying learner strategies is an applied one; he argues that researchers' and teachers'

main concern is to determine which strategies are most effective and to help students adopt more productive learning procedures (1987 p. 126).

Oxford (1990) developed a Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) for learners of English and it has been used extensively by researchers throughout the world, indicating high validity, reliability and utility (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). The SILL questionnaire measures the frequency with which a student uses *memory*, *cognitive*, *compensation*, *metacognitive*, *affective* and *social* language learning strategies. Oxford (1990 pp.37 & 135) describes these strategy types thus:

- *Memory strategies*, such as grouping or using imagery, have a highly specific function: helping students store and retrieve new information.
- *Cognitive strategies*, such as summarizing or reasoning deductively, enable learners to understand and produce new language by many different means.
- *Compensation strategies*, like guessing or using synonyms, allow learners to use the language despite their often large gaps in knowledge.
- *Metacognitive strategies* allow learners to control their own cognition–that is, to coordinate the learning process by using functions such as centering, arranging, planning, and evaluating.
- *Affective strategies* help to regulate emotions, motivations, and attitudes.
- *Social strategies* help students learn through interaction with others.

Cohen (1996) makes the distinction between language use and language learning strategies. This distinction can be useful for L2 researchers and teachers. Cohen indicates "*language use* strategies focus primarily on employing the language that learners have in their current interlanguage" (p. 2). Under this umbrella term, the following strategies apply: retrieval strategies (e.g., strategies used to recall learned material; similar to Oxford's memory strategies), rehearsal strategies (e.g., strategies used to practice vocabulary or grammar structures), cover strategies (also known as compensation strategies, e.g., strategies used to get around missing knowledge), and communication strategies (e.g., strategies used to express a message). Cohen continues by indicating *"language learning* strategies have an explicit goal of assisting learners in improving their knowledge in a target language" (pp. 1-2).

**Models for Language Learning Strategy Instruction**

A number of models for teaching learning strategies in both first and second language contexts have been developed (see, for example, Chamot et al., 1999; Cohen, 1998; Graham & Harris, 2003; Grenfell & Harris, 1999; Harris, 2003; O' Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Pressley et al, 1992). These instructional models share many features. All agree on the importance of developing students' metacognitive understanding of the value of learning strategies and suggest that this is facilitated through teacher demonstration and modeling. All emphasize the importance of providing multiple practice opportunities with the strategies so that students can use them autonomously. All suggest that students should evaluate how well a strategy has worked, choose strategies for a task, and actively transfer strategies to new tasks. Table 1 compares three current models for language learning strategy instruction (Chamot, 2005; Chamot et al., 1999; Cohen, 1998; Grenfell & Harris, 1999).

All three models begin by identifying students' current learning strategies through activities such as completing questionnaires, engaging in discussions about familiar tasks, and reflecting on strategies used immediately after performing a task. These models all suggest that the teacher should model the new strategy, thus making the instruction explicit. The CALLA model is recursive rather than linear so that teachers and students always have the option of revisiting prior instructional phases as needed (Chamot, 2005). The Grenfell and Harris (1999) model, on the other hand, has students work through a cycle of six steps, then begin a new cycle. The Cohen (1998) model has the teacher take on a variety of roles in order to help students learn to use learning strategies appropriate to their own learning styles. The Grenfell and Harris model provides initial familiarization with the new strategies, then has students make personal action plans to improve their own learning, whereas the CALLA model builds in a self-evaluation phase for students to reflect on their use of strategies before going on to transfer the strategies to new tasks.

In summary, current models of language learning strategy instruction are solidly based on developing students' knowledge about their own thinking and strategic processes and encouraging them to adopt strategies that will improve their language learning and proficiency.

*Table 1*. *Models for Language Learning Strategy Instruction Adapted from Harris (2003)*

| SSBI* Model (Cohen, 1998) | CALLA** Model (Chamot, 2005; Chamot et al., 1999) | Grenfell & Harris (1999) |
|---|---|---|
| Teacher as diagnostician: Helps students identify current strategies and learning styles. | Preparation: Teacher identifies students' current learning strategies for familiar tasks. | Awareness raising: Students complete a task, and then identify the strategies they used. |
| Teacher as language learner: Shares own learning experiences and thinking processes. | Presentation: Teacher models, names, and explains new strategy; asks students if and how they have used it. | Modeling: Teacher models, discusses value of new strategy, makes checklist of strategies for later use. |
| Teacher as learner trainer: Trains students how to use learning strategies. | Practice: Students practice new strategy; in subsequent strategy practice, teacher fades reminders to encourage independent strategy use. | General practice: Students practice new strategies with different tasks. |
| Teacher as coordinator: Supervises students' study plans and monitors difficulties. | Self-evaluation: Students evaluate their own strategy use immediately after practice. | Action planning: Students set goals and choose strategies to attain those goals. |
| Teacher as coach: Provides ongoing guidance on students' progress. | Expansion: Students transfer strategies to new tasks, combine strategies into clusters, develop repertoire of preferred strategies. | Focused practice: Students carry out action plan using selected strategies; teacher fades prompts so that students use strategies automatically. |
| | Assessment: Teacher assesses students' use of strategies and impact on performance. | Evaluation: Teacher and students evaluate success of action plan; set new goals; cycle begins again. |

* *Styles and Strategies-Based Instruction*

** *Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach*

**The Relationship between Proficiency and Strategy Use**

Various studies have investigated the relationship between proficiency and strategy use. Politzer and McGroarty (1985 p. 103), for example, looked at the relationship between a range of "good learning behaviors", measured through a questionnaire, and gain scores on an intensive course. They reported mixed results: while the gain scores did not relate to their categories of strategy use as a whole (classroom behaviors, individual study behaviors, and social interaction behaviors outside the classroom), there were certain individual items which showed significant correlation. Their conclusion indicates that caution in "prescribing good learning behaviors is warranted" (p. 103).

Abraham and Vann (1987, 1990), in two separate studies, looked at the language learning strategies employed by both successful and unsuccessful learners. They found that unsuccessful learners were using strategies generally considered as useful, and often the same ones as those employed by the successful learners. As they concluded the difference was placed in the degree of flexibility the learners showed when choosing strategies, and how appropriately they were applied to the given situation. The findings from these studies raise a question over the theory that successful learners use a larger repertoire of strategies, and use them more frequently.

This is perhaps a gloomier picture than that painted by Green and Oxford (1995): they say that in studies investigating the relationship between proficiency and language learning strategy use "conducted in a wide variety of cultural and geographical settings. Students who were better in their language performance generally reported higher levels of overall strategy use and frequent use of a greater number of strategy categories" (1995, p.265).

Such findings might indicate an association between reported strategy use and level of language proficiency, but the exact nature of this association, particularly the issue of causality, is a subject of some debate. Skehan (1989) and Rees-Miller (1993) among others have pointed out that the existence of correlation between the two does not necessarily suggest causality in a particular direction. McIntyre (1994) has attempted to unravel the relationship between the two variables. On the one hand he stresses a need for caution when looking at studies which suggest that more proficient students make better use of strategies: "This might be interpreted to mean that either proficiency influences the choice of strategies or that strategy choice is simply a sign of proficiency level" (1994, p. 188). However, in answer to his own question as to

whether strategy use results from or leads to increased proficiency, he is rather less cautious: "The answer, undoubtedly, is BOTH" (1994. p. 189) (His emphasis). The case made for this statement is not a strong one: the idea that strategies are both the causes and outcomes of improved language proficiency needs much more investigation before such a confident conclusion can be warranted.

**International English Language Testing System**

International English language System (IELTS) is designed to assess the language ability of candidates who need to study or work where English is the language of communication (IELTS Handbook 2007). IELTS is jointly managed by the University of Cambridge ESOL

Examinations (Cambridge ESOL), British Council and IDP: IELTS Australia, know as IELTS partners. It covers the four language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking (IELTS Handbook 2007). The IELTS is graded using band scores from 1.0 (nonuser) to 9.0 (expert user). The four band scores are both presented separately and as well as averaged into one overall band score on the candidate's test report form (TRF).

The IELTS speaking module assesses whether candidates can communicate effectively in English. This test takes between 11 and 14 minutes and has three parts. In the first section (4 to 5 minutes) candidates are invited to talk about themselves and their interests and to answer questions on familiar topic areas. In the second section (3 to 4 minutes) the candidate receives a task or prompt card with a topic. S/He then has 1 minute to prepare and make notes before speaking about the topic for 1 to 2 minutes. In the third section (4 to 5 minutes), the candidate has the opportunity to discuss issues of a more abstract nature. These topics are thematically linked to part two. All interviews are recorded on audio cassettes.

The four criteria used in IELTS speaking to assess candidates are as fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation. The criteria have equal weighting in their contribution to the final band, which is currently given as a whole band; see Appendix 1 for band descriptors and marking criteria for IELTS speaking component. From 1 July 2007, speaking scores have been reported on a scale including half bands (IELTS Handbook 2007).

The speaking component of the IELTS test probably "induces more tension than the paper sections" (Issit, 2008 p. 131). Candidates are examined individually. They have to perform in a short time, often after having waited nervously for their appointment. In other words, personal factors rather than language proficiency can affect a candidate's speaking score in IELTS. Some researchers have reported a significant relationship between employing learning strategies or strategy use and language performance on speaking component of IELTS and MELAB (Issitt, 2008; Song, 2005). Although there are several controversies in data collection procedures such as the questionnaires employed and statistical analysis used in these researches and other studies, most agree that strategy awareness can develop test takers' control on the exam situation (Oxford, 1996; Cohen, 1998).

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

For the purpose of the current study, the following question was set:

*Can explicit teaching of strategies (cognitive, social, and compensatory) impact students' score gain on IELTS speaking subset?*

To find answers to the above-mentioned question, the following null hypothesis was proposed:

*Strategy-based instruction has no positive or negative effect on students' score gain on IELTS speaking subset.*

## Method

### Participants

The participants in this study were 53 IELTS candidates (30 males and 23 females). These candidates had enrolled in Abureihan IELTS Preparation Institute (an offsite IELTS venue in Mashhad, Iran). The participants took preparation courses and coaching classes for a period four and half months from March to July 2007. The age of the participants ranged from 17 to 51, with a mean of 31.15. Through conversations with the participants, it was fond that most of them wanted to take IELTS to continue their education in English speaking countries, mostly for Australia, Canada, and England. These participants had various English-learning experiences: around 10

years in formal settings in high schools and universities. Thirty four of the participants (62%) had additional English studies in private language institutes.

**Instruments**

Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was used for this study. The purpose of this questionnaire was to target the distribution of strategy use among the participants at the beginning of the study. This inventory consisted of two parts; demographic information as appears on IELTS application forms including candidates' gender, age, years of English study, country of destination, and field of study. The second part contained 50 items: memory strategies 9 items, cognitive strategies 13 items, compensation or compensatory strategies 6 items, metacognitive strategies 9 items, affective strategies 6 items, and social strategies 6 items. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale (1) Never or almost never true, (2) Usually not true, (3) Somewhat true, (4) Usually true, (5) Always or almost always true. The time period needed for filling out the questionnaire was 20 to 30 minutes. In some cases, the researcher had to clarify some statements in the participants' native language.

IELTS speaking subtest was the next instrument. This was used as pretest and posttest in this study. As pretest, students were interview on the basis of true IELTS interview. This was handled by IELTS certified examiners following the same procedure in IELTS interview. The materials used for this part of the study conformed to true tasks employed for an authentic IELTS. For posttest, the candidates sat for the academic module of IELTS in July 2007. This test was administered by British Council, Iran (IR008), in Mashhad off-site venue. Here, the speaking scores were only reported as the final indicator of the candidates' achievement.

A verbal protocol was also conducted with the participants in experimental group at the post-study phase. This was handled in students' native language, Farsi. Participants were asked to reflectively present their ideas about their progress during the course. They were also invited to let the interviewer know which type of activities they found effective in the improvement of their speaking skill for IELTS.

**Procedure**

The candidates participated in IELTS preparation course for a period of 4.5 months. They were divided into two experimental and control groups: 28 and 25 learners in each group, respectively. After the 4th week, 6 (4 males and 2 females) learners quitted for personal reasons and 25 (14 males and 11 females) and 22 (12 males and 10 females) kept up with the program. During this period, in addition to the routine educational program developed by the institute, students in the experimental group were presented several activities listed under three types of strategies: cognitive strategies (analyzing words or structures, summarizing information, making notes, and linking new information with prior knowledge), social strategies (asking for help, practicing language with others, and asking for others' comments) , and compensation or compensatory (guessing games, making up new words or structures, using gestures, communication avoidance, using synonyms). The researcher used explicit and indirect approaches to help learners practice and adopt these tasks. The control group received no strategy-based instruction except for the memory enhancing activities such as vocabulary games and pronunciation tasks included in the routine program.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The strategy questionnaires were collected and analyzed. Among 53 questionnaires collected, there were 2 copies with some missing values with 4 questions left unanswered; i.e. less than 10% of all variables. The initial analysis revealed that most participants (53%) relied on their memory. Also the analysis showed that 20% of the participants used affective, social and compensation strategies. The least strategy used by the participants was metacognitive strategy (15%).

The results for descriptive analysis of the IELTS speaking scores in pretest and posttest are presented in tables 2 and 3. As table 2 indicates, there is not much difference between the two means in both control and experimental groups before the study begins. The lowest scores in both groups were reported as 4 and the highest scores as 5.5 for both groups. Such as difference is more evident in posttest phase comparing mean and standard deviation of the two groups (see table 3).

*Table 2. Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Pretest IELTS Speaking*

| Groups | No. of Participants | Mean Score | SD |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |

| Experimental | 25 | 4.360 | 0.468 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Control | 22 | 4.295 | 0.527 |

*Table 3. Mean Score and Standard Deviation for posttest IELTS Speaking*

| Group Variables | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Control Group | 25 | 5.640 | 0.963 | 0.193 |
| Experimental Group | 22 | 5.000 | 0.707 | 0.151 |

To compare the group means for the study, an independent t-test analysis was employed for posttest phase (see table 4). As shown in this table, the difference is considered to be statistically significant between the two experimental and control groups (P<0.0137). That is the candidates in experimental group have outperformed the ones in control group in IELTS speaking scores.

*Table 4. Independent Samples Test*

| | | Levene's Test for Equality variances | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |
| IELTS Speaking | Equal variances assumed | 1.248 | 0.264 | 2.265 | 45 | 0.0137 | 0.640 | 0.246 | 0.138 | 0.142 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | 2.265 | 43.23 | 0.0137 | 0.640 | 0.246 | 0.149 | 0.145 |

This confirms that explicit presentation of language learning strategies can positively impact learners' achievement in IELTS speaking program ad as a result increase their score in IELTS. Tables 5 and 6 show the speaking scores in both groups before and after the study.

*Table 5. Participants' IELTS Speaking Scores before Study*

| Before Study | IELTS Score | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | High | Low | Mean |
| Participants Initial Scores | 5.5 | 4 | 4.29 |

*Table 6.* *Participants' IELTS Speaking Scores in Experimental and Control Groups after Study*

| Before Study | IELTS Score | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | High | Low | Mean |
| Experimental Group | 7.5 | 4 | 6.45 |
| Control Group | 7 | 4 | 5 |

As indicated in these tables, students in both groups have significantly improved in speaking component of IELTS during the study although this improvement is more significant for experimental group (mean=6.45) than control group (mean=5).

Having analyzed the verbal protocols in the final phase of the study, the researcher found that the participants preferred some strategies more appropriate to their real exam tasks. Table 7 shows the distribution of the strategies used by the participants during the real interview.

*Table 7.* *Distribution of Strategies Used by the Participants during IELTS Interview*

| Strategy Used | Percentage |
| --- | --- |
| summarizing information | 93% |
| making notes | 88% |
| communication avoidance | 76% |
| using gestures | 74% |
| guessing games | 70% |
| linking new information with prior knowledge | 67% |
| analyzing words or structures | 61% |

## Conclusion

As the results of this study reveal, a strategy-based instructional program, if planned and supervised properly, can show impact on speaking proficiency development. This supports Issitt (2008) and Song (2005). The findings also confirm the position that SBI can impact students' exam performance (Dreyer & Oxford, 1996; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Green & Oxford, 1995). Meanwhile, the results proved that candidates could directly benefit from strategy instruction and make variable progress in English during the study period with an average gain of about 1.5 to 2 band scores.  In addition, findings of this study addressed the participants' strategy preferences reporting that summarizing information, making notes, and communication avoidance are the most frequent type of strategies employed by Iranian EFL learners in IELTS speaking exam.

The results of this study can also be useful for the IELTS/TOEFL exam coaching institutes to include strategy-based instruction in their ordinary or intensive programs to enable the candidates to become more autonomous in test-taking conditions.

## Acknowledgements

## References

Abraham, R.G., & Vann, R.J. (1987). Strategies of two language learners: A case study. In A. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), Learner strategies in language /earning (pp. 8.5 102), Englewood  Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Allwright, D. (1990): *Autonomy in Language Pedagogy.* CRILE Working Paper 6. Centre for Research in Education, University of Lancaster, U.K.

Anderson, N. J. (1991). Individual differences in strategy use in second language reading and testing. *Modern Language Journal, 75,*460-472.

Bachman, L.F. (1990). Fundamental Considerations in Language Testing. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brown, H. D. (1991). *Breaking the language barrier*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Chamot, A.U. (2004). Issues in Language Learning Strategy Research and Teaching. Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching, , Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 14-26, Centre for  Language Studies, National University of Singapore

Chamot, A.U. (2005). The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA): An update. In P.A. Richard-Amato & M.A. Snow (Eds.), *Academic success for English language learners: Strategies for K-12 mainstream teachers* (pp. 87-101). White Plains, NY: Longman.

Chamot, A.U., Barnhardt, S., El-Dinary, P.B., & Robbins, J. (1999). *The learning strategies handbook*. White Plains, NY: Addison Wesley Longman.

Chamot, A.U., & El-Dinary, P.B. (1999). Children's learning strategies in immersion classrooms. *The Modern Language Journal, 83*, 319-341.

Cohen, A. D. (1990). *Language learning: Insights for learners, instructors, and researchers*. NY: Newbury House/HarperCollins.

Cohen, A.D. (1998). Strategies in learning and using a second language. London: Longman.

Cohen, A.D. (2008). Strategy instruction for learners of Japanese How do you do it and what's in it for them? In Y.A. Hatasa (Ed., Japanese as a foreign language education: Multiple

perspectives (pp. 45-60). Tokyo: Kurosio Shuppan.

Cohen, A. D. (2008). Speaking strategies for independent learning: A focus on pragmatic performance. In S. Hurd & T. Lewis (Eds.), *Language learning strategies in independent  settings* (pp. 119-140). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Cohen A. D. (2007) Styles- and Strategies-Based Instruction (SSBI). www.carla.umn.edu/strategies/SBIinfo.html (retrieved March 2009)

Cohen, A. D. (1998). *Strategies in learning and using a second language.* New York: Longman.

Cohen, A. & Pinilla-Herrea (2009). Communicating Grammatically: Constructing a Learner Strategies Website for Spanish. 2009 LTTC International Conference: A New Look at Language Teaching & Testing.

Cohen, A. D. & Weaver, S. J. (1998). Strategies-based instruction for second language learners. In W.A. Renandya & G.M. Jacobs (Eds.), *Learners and*

*language learning* (pp. 1-25). Anthology Series 39. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Dadour, E.S. & Robbins, J. (1996). *University-level studies using strategy instruction to improve speaking ability in Egypt and Japan*. In R.L. Oxford (Ed.), *Language learning strategies around the world: Cross-cultural perspectives* (pp. 157-166). Honolulu: University of Hawaii.

Dreyer, C., & Oxford, R. L. (1996). Learning strategies and other predictors of ESL proficiency among Afrikaans speakers in South Africa. In R. L. Oxford (Ed.), *Language learning strategies around the world:Crosscultural perspectives* (pp. 61-74). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.

Dornyei, Z. (1995). On the teachability of communication strategies. *TESOL Quarterly, 29,* 55-85.

Ehrman, M., & Oxford, R. L. (1995). Cognition plus: Correlates of adult language proficiency. *Modern Language Journal, 79,*67-89.

Ellis, R. (1994).The Study of Second Language acquisition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gallo-Crail, R., & Zerwekh, R. (2002). Language learning and the Intenet: Student strategies in vocabulary acquisition. In C. A. Spreen (Ed.), *New technologies and language learning: Cases in the less commonly taught languages* (Technical Report #25; pp. 55–79). Honolulu, HI:University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center.

Graham, S., & Harris, K.R. (2003). Students with learning disabilities and the process of writing: A meta-analysis of SRSD studies. In L. Swanson, K.R. Harris, & S. Graham (Eds.), *Handbook of research on learning disabilities* (pp. 323-344). New York: Guildford.

Green, J.M, & Oxford, R. L. (1995). A closer look at learning strategies, L2 proficiency, and gender. *TESOL Quarterly, 29,*261-297.

Grenfell, M., & Harris, V. (1999). *Modern languages and learning strategies: In theory and practice*. London: Routledge.

Gu, Y. & Johnson, R. K. (1996). Vocabulary Strategies and Language Learning Outcomes. *Language Testing, 46, 643-679.*

Harris, V. (2003). Adapting classroom-based strategy instruction to a distance learning context. *TESL-EJ, 7*(2). Available at: http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ/ej26/ a1.html

IELTS Handbook (2007). University of Cambridge: ESOL Examinations. Available at: www.ielts.org

Issitt, S. (2008). Improving scores on the IELTS speaking test. ELT Journal 2008 62, 131-138.

Little, D., (1991): *Learner autonomy 1: Definitions, issues, and problems.* Dublin: Authentik. McDonough, S. H. (1995). *Strategy and skill in learning a foreign language*. London: Edward Arnold.

McIntyre, P.D. (1994). Toward a social psychological model of strategy use. *Foreign Language Annals*, 27, 185-195.

Mendelsohn, D. J. (1994). *Learning to listen: A strategy-based approach for the secondlanguage learner*. San Diego: Dominie Press.

Motallebzadeh, Khalil. 2005, *Impact of IELTS Preparation Program on Iranian Candidates' Band Score Gain.* A paper presented to 12th International Learning Conference on 'Design for Learning', Granada, Spain. Sponsered by University of Melborne, Australia and University of Granada, Spain.

Nunan, D. (1997). Does learner strategy training make a difference? *Lenguas Modernas, 24,*123-142.

O'Malley, J.M & Chamot, A.U. (1990). *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Oxford. R. L. (1996). Employing a questionnaire to assess the use of language learning strategies. *Applied Language Learning, 7,*25-46.

Oxford, R.L., (1990): *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know.*Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Oxford, R.L. (1986). Strategy Inventory for Language Learning. Various Versions. Tuscaloosa, AL: Oxford Associates.

Oxford, R.L & Burry-Stock, J. (1995). Assessing the Use of Language Learning Strategies Worldwide with ESL/EFL Version of Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). *System, 23, 1-23.*

Oxford, R. L., & Leaver, B. L. (1996). A synthesis of strategy instruction for language learners. In R. L. Oxford (Ed.), *Language learning strategies around the world: Cross-cultural perspectives* (pp. 227-246). National Foreign Language Resource Center. Manoa: University of Hawaii Press.

Politzer, R. L., & McGroat-ty, M. (I 985). An exploratory study of learning behaviors and their relationship to gains in linguistic and communicative competence. TESOL Quarterly, 19, 103-123.

Pressley, M., El-Dinary, P.B., Gaskins, I., Schuder, T., Bergman, J.L., Almasi, J., & Brown, R. (1992). Beyond direct explanation: Transactional instruction of reading comprehension strategies. *Elementary School Journal, 92*, 513-555.

Prokop, Manfred. (1989). Learning Strategies for Second Language Users. Wales, United Kingdom: The Edwin Mellen Press

Purpura, J.M. (1997). An Analysis of the Relationship between Test Takers' Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategy Use and Second Language Test performance. Language Learning, 47, 289-325.

Rees-Miller, J. (1993). A critical appraisal of learnertraining: Theoretical bases and teaching implications. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27, 679-689.

Rigney, J. W. (1978). Learning strategies: A theoretical perspective. In H.F. O'Neil, Jr. (Ed.), Learning strategies, pp164-205. New York: Academic Press.

Rubin, J. & Thompson, I. (1994). *How to be a more successful language learner.* Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Shen, H-J. (2003) The role of explicit instruction in ESL/EFL reading. *Foreign Language Annals, 36*(3), 424-433.

Skehan, P. (1989). Individual differences in second-language learning. London. Edward Arnold.

Song, X. (2005). Language Learner Strategy Use and English Proficiency on the Michigan English language Proficiency Battery. University of Michigan Working Papers in Second or Foreign Language Assessment.

Vance, S.J. (1999). *Language learning strategies: Is there a best way to teach them?* Unpublished manuscript. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 438-716; FL 026-146)

Wenden, A. (1991). *Learner Strategies for Learner Autonomy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

# Appendix

*Band Descriptors or Marking Criteria for IELTS Speaking*

| Band | Fluency and coherence | Lexical resource | Grammatical range and accuracy | Pronunciation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | • speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar<br>• speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features<br>• develops topics fully and appropriately | • uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics<br>• uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately | • uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately<br>• produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech | |
| 8 | • speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language<br>• develops topics coherently and appropriately | • uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning<br>• uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skillfully with occasional inaccuracies<br>• uses paraphrase effectively as required | • uses a wide range of structures flexibly<br>• produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors | • is easy to understand throughout, with L1 accent having minimal effect on intelligibility<br>uses a wide range of phonological features to convey meaning effectively |
| 7 | • speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence<br>• uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility<br>• may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction | • uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics<br>• uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation with some inappropriate choices<br>• uses paraphrase effectively | • uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility<br>• frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist | |
| 6 | • is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation<br>• uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not | • has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies<br>• generally | • uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility<br>• may make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these | • can be understood throughout, though mispronunciation may occasionally |

|  |  |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | always appropriately | paraphrases successfully | rarely cause comprehension problems | cause momentary strain for the listener<br>• |
| 5 | • usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going<br>• may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers<br>• produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems | • manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility<br>• attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success | • produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy<br>• uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems |  |
| 4 | • cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction<br>• links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence | • is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice<br>• rarely attempts paraphrase | • produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare<br>• errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding | • produces some acceptable features of English pronunciation but overall control is limited and there can be severe strain for the listener |
| 3 | • speaks with long pauses<br>• has limited ability to link simple sentences<br>• gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message | • uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information<br>• has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics | • attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorized utterances<br>• makes numerous errors except in memorized expressions |  |
| 2 | • pauses lengthily before most words<br>• little communication possible | • only produces isolated words or memorized utterances | • cannot produce basic sentence forms | • speech is often unintelligible |
| 1 | • no communication possible<br>• no ratable language |  |  |  |
| 0 | • does not attend |  |  |  |

**Title**

# Examining Iranian EFL Learners' and Teachers' Beliefs about Teachers Through Metaphor Analysis

**Authors**

**Dr. Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh (Ph.D.)**

Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

**Majid Elahi (M.A.)**

Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

**Saeed Khanalipour (M.A.)**

University of Sabzevar

**Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh** is assistant professor in English language and literature. He is teaching in the Department of English, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran. His main research interests are: English language learning/teaching, English and American literature.

**Majid Elahi,** M.A. student in English language, in the Department of English, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran.

**Saeed Khanalipour,** M.A. student in English language, in the Department of English, University of Sabzevar, Iran.

**Abstract**

In language teaching, metaphors are the representations of how teachers identify themselves. Through metaphor analysis we can get deep detailed insights into English language teaching and learning

process. In this study, we first explored teaching, learning, and learner roles as entailed by the metaphors that were elicited from the participants categorized in the nine conceptual metaphors of provider of knowledge, friend, organizer, nurturer, spiritual leader, parent, entertainer, counselor, and innovator. We also took into account the metaphors mentioned by male and female teachers separately. Then, we examined learners' beliefs about teachers. Finally, we investigated to what extent teachers' beliefs conformed to their practice through enquiring their learners.

**Key words**: Metaphor analysis, Teachers' beliefs, Learners' beliefs

## Introduction

Significant insights into different aspects of education can be gained by carefully studying the teachers' beliefs. Kagan (1992, p.85) refers to the fact that studying teachers' beliefs is "the clearest measure of a teachers' professional growth." Pajares (1992) also asserts that it is necessary to investigate teachers' beliefs to improve their professional development. Although studying teachers' beliefs is really important, they can't be really observed. One way to infer teachers' beliefs is through using metaphors.

Dickmeyer (1985, p.151) explains that a metaphor is "the characterization of a phenomenon in familiar terms". Senge (1990, p.175) believes that metaphors are assumptions, Images and stories which humans make in their heads and they determine how we take action and also make sense of the world.

The essence of metaphors according to Lackoff and Johnson (1980, p.5) is the "understanding and experiencing of one kind of thing in terms of another."
Lack off and Johnson (1980, p.232_33) further suggest that our self understanding relates to "the search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of our lives."

Clandinin (1986) explains that metaphors show the way teachers act in the classroom and also how they think about teaching. Pajark (1986, p.123) also considers metaphors as a "tool for teachers to verbalize their professional identity"

Cortazzi and Jin (1999, as cited in Ellis and Barkhuzin, 2005, p.316) investigated the metaphors used by teachers in their classroom experiences. They report the reasons underlying teachers' metaphors, for example, some teachers identified themselves based on what they experienced in the classroom.

Some studies have investigated the extent to which teachers' classroom practice is affected by their belief system. Johnson (1992, as cited in Richards, 1998, p.69) point to three teachers ' methodological beliefs: a function – based approach, a rule – based approach and a skill – based approach. Having observed the teachers' classrooms, she found that most of their lessons were consistent with their beliefs.

Smith (1996, cited in Richards, 1998) studied the ESL teachers' beliefs in Canadian post-secondary English classes and found a high level of consistency between their teachers' orientations and their practical decisions in the classroom.

Duffly and Anderson (1986, as cited in Richards, 1998, p.70) in their study found only a partial match between teachers' practice and their beliefs. Furthermore, Yim (1993, as cited in Richards, 1998, p.70-71) also found no relationship between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices in Singapore. Zacharias (2005) refers to different contexts of teaching situations as an important reason for the match between teachers' beliefs and practice in some classes and the mismatch between how teachers identify themselves and their practice.

Based on Kachru's concentric model, within the inner circle countries like Australia and New Zealand, English is used as a first language and in the outer circle; English is used as an institutionalized additional language. This circle includes countries like India, the Philippines and Malaysia some countries like Japan, China and Iran use English as a foreign language. Holliday (1994, p.4) also proposes two learning situations in English language teaching: The BANA (Britain, Australia and North America) contexts and the TESEP (tertiary, secondary and primary) contexts. He believes that in BANA settings, there is enough freedom to improve classroom practice, but in TESEP context, there is limited freedom due external factors like curriculum forces.

Therefore, the context in which teachers act, plays a significant role in putting their beliefs into practice. In expanding circle countries or TESEP contexts, the teachers' beliefs can influence their practice against the planning and language policy imposed by the curriculum forces. In other words, external forces can interfere with the teachers' practice.

Despite the growing body of literatures concerning teachers' beliefs with regard o the teaching and learning processes, little research has been done on the teachers' beliefs about classroom practice in Iran. Based on Kachru's concentric model of English, Iran can be placed in the expanding circle of English users in Asia, in which English is not a native language but it is used as a lingua-franca for international relations and business. Iran is also placed in the TESEP contexts based on Holliday's classification, in which teachers' freedom is very much constrained by institutional forces.

Our aim to conducting this study was to investigate the beliefs of Iranian English teachers with regard to their metaphors about language teaching. We also aimed to see if there was a congruence between the teachers' beliefs and firstly the learners' beliefs and secondly their classroom practice.

## Method

### Participants

Forty –seven teachers participated in our study. All of them were teaching English as a foreign language at different private language institutes in Mashhad, Iran. Their years of experience, varied from one to fifteen years. Five of the participants had more than ten years of experience; eight of them had a teaching experience of between five and ten years; and thirty three of them had less than five years of experience. Thirty one of the participants had |Bachelor's degrees, and sixteen had Master's degrees in TEFL. Thirty – two of the teachers who participated in the study were female and the other fifteen participants were male. Thirty seven of the participants' age ranged between twenty and thirty, and the remaining ten participants were older than thirty.

### Instruments

For the purpose of data eliciting, three questionnaires and interviews were used. (see Appendix A).

The first questionnaire was used to elicit metaphors from teachers. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In the first part, participants were asked to provide some personal information such as their age, education level, gender and teaching experience. In the second part, they were asked to complete the sentence "a

good teacher is like a ….."They were told that they could us at most three metaphors to complete the sentence.

Another questionnaire which was developed by the authors was used to figure out whether teachers put their beliefs into practice in their classes. This questionnaire was designed based on the teachers' characteristics that some of the participants introduced during interviews and was given to their students. The questionnaire consisted of nine parts, with each part representing teacher s' characteristics relating to one conceptual metaphor. In a pilot study done with students, the items on the questionnaire were explained to them, and they were asked to respond to the items. The feedback from the students was used to modify some of the items which were ambiguous and difficult to understand.

The third questionnaire was designed to see how teachers 'beliefs about themselves are similar to their students' beliefs about teachers. All the nine conceptual metaphors used in the study were listed on the questionnaire, and students were asked to express their opinions abut teachers by giving a rating of zero to ten to each metaphor.

Some experienced university English teachers were asked to comment on the suitability of the items on the questionnaires. Their suggestions and comments were taken into account in improving the scales.

In addition, interviews were conducted to gain more in – depth responses from the participants, and to find out about the participants' underlying reasons for the metaphors they offered. They also were asked to express their views about the characteristics teachers represented by such metaphors should have.

**Data Collection**

For the purpose of metaphor elicitation, fist, a questionnaire (as cited in Ellis, 2005:319) was distributed among teachers teaching EFL at different private institutes in Mashhad. They were told that their participation was entirely voluntary and that their responses would remain anonymous and that confidentiality would be maintained. Each participant was asked to provide at most three metaphors for teachers and to identify learners entailed by their metaphors. They were asked to write down metaphors that, they thought, would reflect their own practice as EFL teachers.

Then the researchers interviewed all the participants to find out about their assumptions and rationale underlying their metaphors. They were also asked to provide entailments of their metaphors by considering learners, learning and teaching.

All the interviews were tape recorded and then analyzed by the researchers.

They were also asked which of the metaphors they had offered is most prominent in their opinion, and what characteristics a teacher representing that metaphor should have. Characteristics offered by interviewees were made into a questionnaire. This questionnaire was used to determine whether teachers' beliefs and their practice matched. It was distributed among the interviewees' students. They were asked to check the characteristics they believed their teacher possessed.

Finally, another questionnaire was designed based on the conceptual metaphors that the researchers used for data analysis. This questionnaire was designed to check learners' beliefs about their teachers and to see how the way they approach teachers and their roles is similar to teachers 'beliefs about themselves. All the nine conceptual metaphors used in the data analysis phase of the study were listed on the questionnaire. The learners were asked to score each metaphor on a 1- 10 scale based on their beliefs about their teachers.

**Data Analysis**

We followed metaphor analysis methodology, which is used to analyze elicited metaphors to reach their underlying conceptualizations. According to Cameron and Low (1999, as cited in de Guerrero and Villamil (2002)) metaphor analysis consists of three steps," collecting examples of linguistic metaphors used t talk about the topic… Generalizing from them to conceptual metaphors they exemplify and using the result to suggest understandings or thought patterns which construct or constrain peoples' beliefs and actions". De Guerrero and Villamil (2002) refer to conceptual metaphor as the "the overarching comparison by which two different mental domains are brought together" and refer to linguistic metaphors as "the specific metaphorical expressions taken as an example of the more general conceptual metaphor"

First we made a list of conceptual metaphors based on Deguerrero and Villamil (2002). We also added some conceptual metaphors that were prevalent in the literature but were absent in Deguerrero and Villiamil's list. Furthermore, on conceptual metaphor, i.e. spiritual leader was added to the list by considering the context of Iran based on some of the linguistic metaphors given by our participants. e.g.," a patient prophet, who doesn't get angry at his followers' ignorance, doesn't take sides and works to satisfy God."

We then tried to fit the metaphors that the participants had written down on the questionnaire into broader conceptual metaphors by taking into account the participants' own explanations derived from the interviews and some guiding tips given by experts in the field of linguistics and literature. However, some of the metaphors could fit into more than one conceptual metaphor, e.g.," sun " and "tree" could be considered as examples of the conceptual metaphor" provider of knowledge". Nevertheless, concerning the Iranian culture and the participants' explanations about their rationale underlying their metaphors, we decided to categorize them as "nurture".

Most of the metaphors were in the form of similes in which the points of comparison were explained, e.g.," a strict but understanding boss whose power and kindness, both, keep you up". Previous researchers have also used similes as data in metaphor analysis; see Deguerreo and Villamil (2002) and Marchant, (1992).

We also took the participants' gender into account. By considering these factors, we investigated what male/ female teachers' beliefs about their practice as FFL teachers are.

Next, we derived the metaphors' entailments, i.e. learner, teaching and learning process from the recorded interviews with the participants. We traced some patches of different ESL/EFL learning and teaching theories and models in the interviews.

## Results

The results of the study are presented in three sections. The first section deals with the metaphors offered by the teachers and their categorization into the broader conceptual metaphors together with their entailments. The second section is concerned with learners' beliefs about teachers. In the third section, learners' views about their teachers' characteristics are reported.

**Section One**

The results of the study are categorized under the nine conceptual metaphors below. Moreover, the metaphor entailments are discussed. Table 1 demonstrates a summary of exemplar metaphors and conceptual categories and their derived concepts of teaching, learning and learner in each category.

Tables 2 and 3 demonstrate the male and female teachers' metaphors and their entailments.

*Table 1:   Metaphorical conceptualizations of the ESL teacher and entailed learner,*
*teaching and learning concepts*

| Conceptual category for teacher | Exemplar metaphors | The learner is … | Teaching is… | Learning is…. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1)Provider of knowledge(N=21) | An information transmitter, encyclopedia,(3),a manual, the internet(2),a mirror, glasses, a reference book(2), a water tap, a light bright day in spring, source of information, a specialist, music trainer, a dictionary, sea, ocean, a river that always flows ,waters and never stops | A recipient of knowledge | Transmitting information to the learners, providing them with the necessary input | Receiving information and input, processing them |
| 2)Friend (N=10) | a close friend(2), a good listener to the learners' demands, a reliable friend, a trustworthy friend, a person who is always there for you, enthusiastic friend, a kind and sympathetic companion, influential partner(2) | Friend | Listening to the learners' demands and problems. Sympathizing with them. Presenting the materials in a friendly manner | Acquiring the appropriate knowledge in a friendly atmosphere |
| 3)Organizer(9) | Manager, organizer, simplifier of the subject matter, boss(2), conductor of orchestra, director(2),supervisor | Active participant who give feedbacks to the learners | Organizing the topics, the learners' activities and the teaching process, scaffolding and guiding the learners | Giving feedback to the teachers, participating actively in the tasks |
| 4)Nurturer(9) | Gardener(2),moon, rain, a golden waterfall in a great forest, a strong tree with a deep root, a fruit tree, garden(2) | Organisms to be grown and developed with the help of the teacher | Facilitating language learning, improving learners' | Growth and development |

| | | | capabilities | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5)Spiritual leader(8) | Prophet(4), angel(2),God's disciple, a man of truth | follower | Leading and guiding students | Following the teacher's guidelines |
| 6)Entertainer(5) | Comedian, juggler, magician, actor,(2) | Viewer | Presenting the subject matter in a fun way | Learning the subject matters in a fun way |
| 7)Parent(5) | Father(2),mother, parent, godfather | Child | Providing the students with what they need, setting the scene for the students' development, paying equal attention to all learners and to their progress, helping them remove their problems | Receiving care, attention and guidance |
| 8)Counselor(4) | Psychologist(4),therapist | Client | Considering the learners as a whole person, paying attention to their emotions and learning | Expressing feelings and emotions in a non threatening atmosphere |
| 9)Innovator(2) | Creator of new useful methods, critical thinker | Resistor | Critically reflecting on their own practice , creating new ways of teaching and presenting materials | |

*Table 2 Metaphorical conceptualizations of the ESL male teacher*

| Conceptual category for teacher | Exemplar metaphors |
|---|---|
| 1)Provider of knowledge(8) | A water tap, a bright day in spring, light, reference book, river which always flows, waters and never stops, encyclopedia, the internet, music trainer |
| 2)Friend(5) | Close friend, good listener to the learners' demands |
| 3)Nurturer(4) | a strong tree with a deep root, a fruit tree, garden, gardener |
| 4)Spiritual leader(3) | Prophet, angel, a man of truth |
| 5)Counselor(2) | Psychologist, therapist |
| 6)Entertainer(1) | Actor |
| 7)Parent (1) | Godfather |

*Table3:  Metaphorical conceptualizations of the ESL female teacher*

| Conceptual category for teacher | Exemplar metaphors |
|---|---|
| 1) Provider of knowledge (13) | Information transmitter, encyclopedia(2), manual, the internet , mirror, glasses, reference book, source of information, specialist, dictionary, sea, ocean |
| 2) Organizer (9) | Manager, organizer, simplifier of the subject matter, director(2), boss(2), conductor of orchestra, supervisor |
| 3) Friend (5) | Close friend, person who is always there for you, enthusiastic  friend, kind and sympathetic companion, influential partner |
| 4) Nurturer (5) | Gardener, moon ,rain, golden waterfall in a great forest, garden |
| 5) Spiritual leader (5) | Prophet(3),angel, God's disciple |
| 6) Parent (4) | Father(2),mother, parent |
| 7) Entertainer (4) | Comedian, Jugular,  magician, actor |
| 8) Counselor (2) | Psychologist |
| 9) Innovator (2) | Creator of new useful methods, critical thinker |

**Provider of Knowledge**

This category (teacher as an encyclopedia, reference book, glasses, mirror, an information transmitter, manual, the internet, source of information, specialist

, dictionary, sea, ocean) refers to the traditional belief about a teacher as a source and transmitter of knowledge. For example, the metaphor "an encyclopedia" indicates that a teacher is a source of knowledge whose role is that of a source of knowledge. "A teacher is like an encyclopedia whose role is that of source of knowledge which students can refer to when they have a problem or need some information ", said a teacher. Some other teachers referred to a teacher as the sea, or an ocean which they believed is a great resource for knowledge.

  The author of the metaphor" glasses" considered teacher as" a medium through with learners can get knowledge and information as clearly as possible". The mirror metaphor indicates that a teacher reflects the real world, culture, and language.

  Teaching as entailed by the metaphors in this category is a process of transmitting information to the learners and providing them with the necessary language input. Thus what the learner does is to receive the information and input provided by the teacher and to process them.

  Most of the metaphors given by teachers fit into this category that indicates the dominant view held by Iranian EFL teachers. Taking gender into consideration, we found out that both male and female teachers were similar, to a great extent, in their beliefs about a teacher as a provider of knowledge.


**Friend**

This category ( teacher as a close friend, a good listener to the learners' demands, a reliable friend, a trustworthy friend, a person who is always there for you, enthusiastic friend, kind and sympathetic companion, influential partners ) points to the friendly relationship between teachers and learners.

  Teacher is a friend who sympathizes with the learners if they have any problems. He/she is kind, trustworthy, reliable and a good listener for the learners. This friendship indicated that the teaching process in not a threatening, frustrating and a boring one. It refers to an equal status relationship between learners and teachers in the classroom. These teachers like to call their learners by first name. "I always call my students by first name, because I'm into this friendship and it's so enjoyable for me", a teacher said. "When I was a learner myself,

most of my teachers were strict and the atmosphere of the classroom was threatening and I liked those teachers who were friendly. So, I don't want my students to feel as I did". Generally, these metaphors view teaching as humanistic one. Neglecting the learners' feelings and creating a threatening atmosphere may lead to the learners' diffidence.

Friend metaphor had the same frequency among female and male teachers. However, it placed second among female and third among male teachers.


**Organizer**

This category (manager, simplifier of the subject matters, director, boss, conductor of orchestra, supervisor) relates to the classified concept of leadership in the classroom. The teacher organizes the topic, the teaching process and the learners' activities in the classroom. The author of the manager metaphor explains that she as a manager "expects feedback from the learners to improve the organization of the tasks and activities in the classroom". The director metaphor takes into account "the responsibility of a teacher to determine the role of learners while doing activities".

In this category the teaching process is that of assistance, scaffolding and guidance. "As a teacher, I make all my attempts to assist learners by simplifying the complex topics for the learners". This teacher refers to the theoretical belief of teacher as a scaffolder proposed by Vygotsky (1962, 1978). Learners in this category are dependent on their teachers. "Learners should pay carefully to the teachers' suggestions, tips and feedback. As an orchestra conductor I want them to be sensitive my feedbacks".

Learners are not passive but active participants. "They cooperate to sound harmonious "while the teacher conducts them. The author of the boss metaphor also points to the active role of the learners. She really needs "the learners' feedbacks to make proper decisions about learners' needs and a better supervision" as it was mentioned by the teacher who considered himself as a supervisor.


**Nurturer**

We categorize a number of other metaphors (a gardener, moon, and rain, a golden waterfall in a great forest, a strong tree with a deep root, a fruit tree, and garden) as the nurturer. In this category, the teacher improves, develops and sometimes identifies the capabilities learners have by nature. For example, in he "gardener" metaphor, the teacher "trims, cleans and take care of the students and helps them grow and improve their capabilities ".

By the "rain" metaphor, one of our participants referred to the nurturing power of water and asserted "it fertilizes the soil and makes it ready for growing plants."

Among the eight metaphors that fit into this category, half of them were mentioned by female teachers and another half by male teachers.

The authors of these metaphors considered teaching processes which facilitates language learning and improves the capabilities learners have by nature. This process helps learners develop their capabilities for learning. Therefore, learners are considered as organisms.

**Entertainer**

This category (teacher as a comedian, juggler, magician, and actor) focuses on the entertaining role of a teacher in the classroom. Teacher as a juggler should "make learners feel happy and joyful". The teacher is not strict but "a comedian who presents even the most complicated subject matters in a fun way". The teaching process in this category is highlighted by the interesting, exciting and entertaining atmosphere of the classroom. "I don't want my learners to feel bored in the classroom, but I want to present the subject matters to my learners like a magician". Learners in this category "have fun during the class time as I teach them like an actor". In general, this category of metaphors suggests that teachers have the ability to present the materials to the learners in a fun way. The entertainer metaphor was supported more by the female learners than the male ones.

**Parent**

Some of the metaphors provided (father, mother, parent, godfather) refers to the parental role of the teacher. A teacher like a father " who tries to bring up his children in the best way possible by providing them with what they need and setting the scene for their development , provides his students with what they need for their learning. A good teacher is like a mother who is concerned about her children and tries to remove her children's' problems and pays equal attention to all of them. The only thing she is concerned about is her children's' health and progress. Unlike the friend metaphor the unequal power relation between the learners and their teachers as parents is e3vident.

However, this unequal power relation does not hurt their affection, love, and care for one another.

Some features discussed in most categories are present. The teacher as a parent is a provider of knowledge in a kind and sincere way. He/she also plays the role of a nurturer in

providing the conditions for learners in such a way that helps them develop their potential capabilities. Furthermore, the teacher as a parent has the role of a counselor and a friend. Therefore, we decided to consider parent as a separate conceptual metaphors rather than fitting metaphors father and mother into other categories.

The participants who considered teacher as a parent defined teaching as facilitating the learning process, providing the necessary tools, taking into account the learners' emotions. Learner is a child who needs parents' care, attention and guidance.

**Spiritual Leader**

In the Iranian Islamic culture, spirituality has a high value among the people. Teacher as a prophet or God's disciple points t "the spirituality and perfectness of the teacher. Teachers' job is sacred; he/she has "the responsibility to make learners aware of the ultimate truth of the language".

Teacher is almighty and has "a great power to guide learners and lead them to what is beneficial for them". The teaching process is that of leadership considering the spiritual implication of a leader in the Iran. Teacher is "respectable as a man of truth by all the learners". Learners in this category follow the teachers' will to reach their linguistic goals by carefully paying attention to the teachers' guiding tips and suggestions. This category of metaphors was supported by both male and female teachers, highlighting spirituality of leadership.

**Counselor**

In this category (teacher as a psychologist and a therapist) teaching process is seen as a humanistic one and it refers to Rogerian psychological counseling. The teacher's role as a psychologist is to "respond supportively to learners' problems". Teachers should understand their learners' feelings. The authors of the psychologist metaphor refer to the Curren's community language learning (1972) as their theoretical beliefs about the role of a teacher in the classroom. The teachers' relationship with the learners is not of an equal status as it is in the friend metaphor but an unequal one and supportive. "The teaching process is not just the transformation of the information to learners but a process which considers learners as a whole person, regarding their emotions and feelings.

In this category, learners express their feelings and emotions in a friendly atmosphere. "If they have problems, I like them to report their inner feelings about those problems. If they

are excited or frustrated, it's my responsibility to be sensitive to them, said the author of the therapist metaphor.

The counselor metaphor was expressed by both male and female teachers but was among the frequent metaphors for both groups.

**Innovator**

The metaphors in this category (a creator of new useful methods and a critical thinker) imply a sense of innovation. To be successful, a teacher requires keeping up himself with the new trends in language teaching and with changes deriving from research that occur over time.

In the creator metaphor the teacher "should develop a capacity for creating new ways of teaching and presenting materials by keeping himself aware of the changes that happen in the field of English language teaching." The critical thinker metaphor suggests that teachers should critically reflect on their own practice to figure out whether the way they are teaching English is effective for their students in a certain context. The teacher as a critical thinker "should be innovative and should use new methods and techniques in different contexts and different kind of learners".

The teaching process thus should conform to the latest changes brought about by research in the field. Nevertheless, there is a problem in the way of a teacher as an innovator.

One of the authors of these metaphors pointed out" the learners seem to be inflexible when they face new methods of teaching and it seems very difficult for a creative teacher to get them out of the boundaries of inflexibility".

**Section Two**

More than eighty percent of learners who participated in our study gave a score of nine or ten to the teacher as a provider of knowledge metaphor. And more than sixty five percent of them scored the friend metaphor over eight.

These statistics reveal that there is a concordance between learners' beliefs about teachers and teachers' beliefs about themselves.

**Section Three**

The results from the third phase of the study indicated a match between the beliefs of those teachers who metaphorically considered teachers as providers of knowledge, organizers,

entertainers, friends, and their practice in classroom. However, they revealed a mismatch between the beliefs of those teachers who considered teachers as counselors, parents, nurturers, spiritual leaders, innovators, and their practice.

It is interesting to note that the learners of those teachers, whose beliefs didn't match their practice, believed that they possessed characteristics represented by other metaphors. For example, the participant who referred to the counselor metaphor was reported by his learners to posses the characteristics of an organizer and a provider of knowledge rather than a counselor. It was also observed that most of the teachers who were the focus of the third phase of the study were reported by their learners to have the characteristics of a provider of knowledge, although those teachers referred to other metaphors than the provider of knowledge metaphor.

## Discussion

In this study we identified nine conceptual metaphors with their derived EFL learning and teaching entailments. Teachers were mostly regarded as a provider of knowledge, a friend, an organizer and a nurturer. Learner roles ranged from a recipient of knowledge, and a follower, to a friend, to a resistor. Teaching process was identified as transmitting information to learners, listening to learners' demands, organizing the topics and learning activities, facilitating learning, leading and guiding learners, paying attention to students' emotions, creating new ways of teaching and presenting materials.

Learning process was viewed as receiving information and input, giving feedback to the teacher, actively participating in classroom activities, following guidelines and expressing their emotions.

Some theoretical assumptions which underlie the metaphors as referred to by teachers were Curren's community language learning and Vygotskian concept of scaffolding. According to Curren (1972), one of the responsibilities of a language teacher is to understand the feelings of the learners and respond supportively to them.

Based on his theory, some teachers referred to the counselor metaphor. A teacher as a counselor should consider the learners as a whole person, taking into account their emotions and feelings. This also refers to Rogerian humanistic psychology, which emphasizes the role of affective factors in teaching and learning.

Vygotsky (1962, 1978) signifies the effect of scaffolding in language teaching. By assisting learners, teachers can foster their potential learning and guide them in their zone of proximal development. The roots of the metaphors provider of knowledge and organizer can be found in this theory.

One of the underlying theories for the provider of knowledge metaphor is jugs and mugs (Williams & Burden, 1997). Based on this theory, learners are considered as mugs that are to be filled by the jugs of knowledge. In fact, learners are recipient of knowledge provided by the teacher.

Regardless of the teachers' beliefs about themselves, learners highly emphasized the knowledge providing role of the teachers in the context of Iran. This fact indicates that Iranian learners of English greatly expect their teachers to be source of language knowledge. In fact, as observed in this study, the teachers' characteristics' underlying other metaphors was overshadowed by the knowledge proving role of the teacher. In other words, teachers won't be accepted by the learners unless their learners feel that they can rely on them as a source of knowledge in spite of all the other good characteristics that a teacher might have.

## Conclusions

Metaphor analysis is a tool that gives those involved in EFL teaching and learning new insights into their practice and affects their beliefs and orientations. It also gives them an awareness of what exists in their context of language teaching. In our study which was conducted in the context of Iran, learner's beliefs about teachers were also examined through their teachers' presented metaphors and the underlying characteristics of those metaphors. It was discovered that learners expect their teachers to be provider s of knowledge. Such an expectation indirectly gets them to behave as a provider of knowledge in their classes. This fact was further confirmed by the characteristics learners believed their teachers had. Such a belief may be due to Iranians' tendency to resort to a source of knowledge and to be directed by a center of power. Teachers should be aware of this expectation of learners and of the fact that they are responding to their learners' expectations either consciously or unconsciously. This response is vividly evident in their practice. Therefore they should consider other metaphors and entailments which might improve their practice. Knowledge providing is certainly one the roles that a successful teacher should play. However, teachers have other roles which are conveyed through other metaphors that they should take into account with regard to their instructional decisions and practices in the classroom. Consequently this will

affect how learners identify their teachers. Thus, it is the teachers' responsibility to draw learners' attention to this point that characteristics other than the knowledge providing role are equally important

# References

Block, D. (1992). Metaphors we teach and learn by. *Prospect*, 7, 42-550

Block, D. (1997). Learning by listening to language learners. *System*, 25, 347-60

Clandini, D. J. (1986).*Classroom Practice*: *Teachers' images in action.* London: Falmer Press

Curren, C. A.(1972). *Counseling-learning: A whole-person model for education* . New York: Grune and Stratton.

De Guerrero,M.& Villamil,O.(2002). Metaphorical conceptualizations of ESL teaching and Learning. *Language Teaching Reasearch, 6*, 95-120.

Dickmeyer, N. (1985). Metaphor, model, and theory in education research. *Teachers College Record, 91*,151-60

Ellis, R. & Barkhuzin, G (2005).*Analyzing learner language*. Oxford, Oxford University Press

Holliday, A. (1994). The house of TESEP and communicative approach: The spread needs of state English language education. *ELT Journal, 48*, 3-11

Kachru, B. (1986). *The alchemy of English: The spread, functions and models of non- native Englishes*. Oxford:Pergamon Press

Kagan, D. (1992). Implications of research on teacher belief. *Educational Psychologist, 27*, 65-90

Lackoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Marchant, G. J. **(**1992**).** A teacher is like a...: Using simile lists to explore personal metaphors . *Language and Education* 6, 33-45**.**

Pajak,E.F.(1986).Psychoanalysis, teaching, and supervision. *Journal of Curriculum Supervision, 1*,122-31

Pajares,M.F.(1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Clearing up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research, 70*,509-17

Richards,J.C.(1998).*Beyond teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Senge,P.M.(1990). *The fifth description*, New York: Bantom Books

Williams, M., & Burden, R. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers* . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press

Vygotsky,L.S.(1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press

Zacharias,N.T.(2005). Teachers' beliefs about internationally-published materials: A survey of tertiary English teachers in Indonesia. *Relc Journal, 36*(1):23-37

# Appendix A

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this project. This study is attempting to asses various aspects of learning and teaching metaphors. The information gathered will be used towards the completion of my academic research.

I want to let you know that:

1) Your participation is entirely voluntary.

2) Your responses will remain anonymous and confidentiality will be maintained.

Please answer the following questions and fill out the attached form as honestly as possible. Thank you again for participating in this survey.

**1) Gender: _____**

**2) Age: _____**

**3) Education Level: _____**

**4) Teaching Experience:_____**

**What is your idea of a good teacher?**

**Think of three ways of completing the following sentence to reflect your ideas of a good teacher.**

**A good teacher is like……….**

**1)** _____

**2)** _____

**3)** _____

# Appendix B

Which of the following metaphors describe a teacher best? Score each metaphor on a scale of 1-10 more than one metaphor can receive the same score.

a. Provider of knowledge

b. Spiritual leader

c. Organizer

d. Innovator

e. Parent

f. Counselor

g. Nurturer

h. Artist

i. Friend

# Appendix   C

**Organizer**

1) My teacher has the ability to manage the classroom.

2) My teacher organizes the materials used in the classroom well.

3) My teacher is punctual.

4) My teacher can manage the time appropriately.

5) My teacher can give the scores of the tests on time.

6) My teacher is well prepared for the class.

**Friend**

7) My teacher is good – tempered.

8) My teacher has a good relationship with the learners.

9) My teacher is patient.

10) My teacher understands the learners' feelings and emotions.

11) My teacher motivates learners and encourages them to use better strategies for learning.

**Counselor**

12) My teacher carefully pays attention to each learner in the classroom.

13) My teacher gives all learners equal opportunities to express their opinions in the classroom.

14) All learners are involved in the activities in the classroom.

15) My teacher is able to present materials for the learners in a comprehensible way.

16) My teacher is really aware of the learners ' talents and abilities in learning English.

17) My teacher helps learners to feel self – confident.

**Provider of knowledge**

18) My teacher is up to date

19) My teacher has enough knowledge about the materials used for teaching English in the classroom.

20) My teacher has a high level of language proficiency

21) My teacher has a native like accent

22) My teacher has a high level of vocabulary knowledge

23) My teacher's pronunciation is accurate

**Innovator**

24) My teacher is familiar with new methods and techniques for teaching English  25) My teacher uses used for materials to improve learner's understanding such as       flash card, video tapes etc.

26) My teacher encourages learners in different ways to improve their knowledge in different skills

27) My teacher has creativity in his teaching.

**Entertainer**

28) My teacher has a good sense of humor

29) The atmosphere of class is lively and fun

30) My teacher is excited about and interested in teaching

31) My teacher is funny and attractive


**Parent**

32) My teacher is fair in learners' evaluation and scoring

33) My teacher is impartial in sharing his attention to the learners

34) My teacher really pays fatherly attention to the learner's problems

35) My teacher shows a parental affection and enthusiasm to the learner's linguistic behavior

36) My teacher identifies learners' potential capabilities.

37) My teacher helps the learners foster their capabilities.


**Spiritual leader**

38) My teacher makes learners familiar with spiritual concepts through English language.
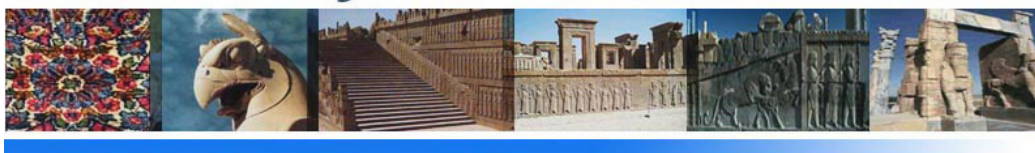
**Title**

# Introduction to Rasch Measurement

**Authors**

**Purya Baghaei (Ph.D.)**

Islamic Azad University, Mashad Branch

**Nazila Amrahi (M.A.)**

Urmia University

**Bio Data**

**Purya Baghaei**, assistant professor in the English Department of Islamic Azad University, Mashad, Iran. His main research interests are language testing and the application of Rasch modeling in social science research.

**Nazila Amrahi**, M.A. student in TEFL at Urmia University, Iran. Her main research interests are language testing and the applications of Rasch modeling in social science research.

**Abstract**

The present paper introduces the Rasch model as an alternative measurement framework to classical test theory (CTT). A brief note on measurement and theories of measurement is first given. Then the CTT and its limitations are discussed. Afterwards the Rasch model as an improvement over CTT along with its assumptions, properties and applications is introduced. The

contribution that Rasch model can make to establish test validity is finally delineated.

**Keywords**: Classical test theory, Rasch model, Invariance, Fit statistics, Unidimensionality

## Introduction

Measurement has always been an indispensable part of human life. Numbers, as means of making measures, have always been present and applied in almost all aspects of human life. The classical definition of measurement which is usually drawn upon is that of Stevens (1946): "the assignment of numerals to objects or events according to rule"(p.667).

The challenge of measurement in the social sciences is that one no longer deals with concrete physical attributes. Instead, the social scientist attempts to measure some unobservable abstract mental and psychological attributes called *constructs*. Constructs are "hypothetical concepts — products of the informed scientific imagination of social scientists who attempt to develop theories for explaining human behavior" (Crocker & Algina, 1986, p. 4). Thus constructs are first formed and then measured. For example, a linguist may notice that some individuals are more skillful at using a particular language than others, i.e., they can read, write, speak or understand the language better than others. Having observed such kinds of behaviors "consistently over time and in different contexts for the same individuals" (Crocker & Algina, 1986, p. 4), he may form the construct of *language proficiency* in his mind. However, since this construct is an abstract concept which cannot be directly measured, he needs to "establish some rule of correspondence between the theoretical construct and observable behaviors that are legitimate indicants of that construct" (Crocker & Algina, 1986, p. 4). In other words, he needs to relate the theoretical construct of *language proficiency* to some *observable behaviors* like reading, writing, speaking or understanding the language. This is called "establishing an operational definition". (Crocker & Algina, 1986, p. 4) The next step is to plan a way to elicit such types of behaviors. This is done by developing and using instruments like tests, in this case a test of language proficiency.

Though the measurement of abstract constructs is made possible, there are still many problems involved in the indirect measurement of mental and psychological attributes. Crocker & Algina (1986) summarize the most important problems encountered in measurement of constructs as:

- There is not a single universally accepted approach to the measurement of any construct

- Measurements are usually based on limited samples of behavior

- Measurements are always subject to error

- There are no well-defined units on measurement scales

- There is a need to demonstrate the relationships of any construct to other constructs or observable phenomena in addition to defining them in terms of operational definition.

"The study of the pervasive measurement problems just described and methods for their resolution have evolved into the specialized discipline in education and psychology known as *test theory*" (Crocker & Algina, 1986, p. 7). Test theories are some general frameworks which link abstract constructs (unobservable underlying traits also called independent variables in research contexts) to their operational definitions (observable indicant samples of behaviors also called dependent variables in research contexts). Within these general frameworks, a number of models are identified. Unlike other fields of study in which the term *model* may make one to think of a kind of concrete replica of something or a figure representing some kinds of relationships existing among the elements of a particular system, in educational and psychological measurement, model's "most relevant meaning is a mathematical model in which independent variables are combined numerically to optimally predict a dependent variable" (Embretson & Reise, 2000, p. 41). A mathematical model typically specifies one or more independent variables, a scale for observable dependent variables, as well as "how the independent variables are *combined numerically* to predict the dependent variable" (Embretson & Reise, 2000, p. 41).

Thus each test theory is a general framework having models included within it. It has some general fundamental assumptions, properties and limitations which form the basis of and are common across all the models of that particular test theory. However, there are also some assumptions, properties and limitations which are unique to each model.

Classical test theory and the Rasch model, the former dating back to more than 80 years ago while the latter being a more recent development, are two test theories of widespread use and popularity. Each of them has its own assumptions, properties and limitations.

## Classical Test Theory

The classical test theory (CTT) is built upon the concept of true score. Having the true score as its cornerstone, the whole theory revolves around the true score, observed score, and random error score. The classical test theory's assumptions are:

◆ The observed score (X) is made up of the true score (T) plus the random error score (E).

$$X = T + E$$

◆ The random errors are distributed normally around the true score.

◆ There is no systematic relationship between the random errors. In other words, they are uncorrelated with each other.

◆ There is no systematic relationship between a true score and a random error score. In other words, a true score is uncorrelated with random error scores.

An individual's observed score (X) is simply the total score (raw score) he gets on a test (e.g. 18 out of 20). However, the point is that having repeated the same test assuming no learning or remembering the items is involved, would this individual get the same score on the same test? Almost everyone has experienced times when s/he did poorly on a test because s/he was tired. There were also times s/he was in a good mood, and as a result did quite well on the test, better than he could have done in normal circumstances. Thus some random errors are always included within the observed score. That is why an individual's observed score is not equal to his true score. In fact, an observed score is made up of true score plus the error score. From what is mentioned, one can conclude that a true score is a hypothetical concept the measurement of which seems to be difficult. The best estimate of one's true score can be achieved by taking the average of one's observed scores on an infinite number of administrations of the same test assuming no leaning or remembrance of the items of the test (i.e. practice effect) takes place.

In addition, it is assumed that the random error scores (involved in infinite administrations of the test) are distributed normally around the true score. The standard deviation of the normal distribution of random error scores is called standard error of measurement. "The lower it is, the more tightly packed around the true score the random errors will be" (Kline, 2005, p. 92). Thus the lower the standard deviation is, the better the estimate of the true score will be.

Classical test theory, a framework within which the theoretical construct or the independent variable of true score is related to the observable behavior or the dependent

variable of the observed score, has served us more than 80 years, and as Schultz and Whitney (2004) put it, "has been a workhorse over the years for test developers and users who want to improve the quality of their tests" (p. 337). It is still popular and applied in many testing situations. Nevertheless, it has some limitations which had triggered some scholars to find ways to overcome them.

Sample dependence, test dependence and assuming a single standard error of measurement for the whole sample are some of the most outstanding limitations of classical test theory. In addition, raw scores produced by classical test theory do not yield linear interval scales, but nonlinear ordinal ones.

A major deficiency of classical test theory is that item characteristics like item facility are sample dependent. Having a look at the formula for calculating item facility in CTT, clarifies the point:

$$\text{IF} = \frac{N_{correct}}{N_{total}}$$

Thus if the sample to which the test is given is smart, more test takers will respond correctly to the items, and as a result, the items will be characterized as easy. However, if the same test is given to a less able sample, fewer test takers will respond correctly to the items leading to the characterization of the items as difficult. So, within CTT framework, one cannot come up with stable characterizations of test items.

Another main drawback to CTT is that persons' abilities measured on the basis of raw scores are highly test dependent. This means if a group of test takers are given a difficult test, their scores would be low, thus concluding they are of low ability levels. However, if the same group is given an easy test, their scores would be high, thus concluding they are of high ability levels. So there is no consistency in measuring the test takers' abilities.

Furthermore, a single standard error of measurement is assumed for all the individuals within the sample, but no doubt each individual's true score is contaminated with a particular amount of random error, unique to him. This is especially obvious in the case of extremely high or extremely low raw scores which include more random errors of measurement than the other scores falling in the middle.

Finally, unlike what is assumed, raw scores are not linear interval scales. Though improving a score of 14 to 15 may need approximately as much studying and effort as is needed for changing 15 to 16, it is quite evident that improving the score of 18 to 19 needs

much more studying and effort than improving 10 to 11, while the difference between the two scores in each case is only 1. So if the ability is plotted as an independent variable on the x-axis and scores as dependent ones on the y-axis, the resulting shape would not be a straight line since in some places (the middle scores) a single unit of increase in ability will lead to a single unit of increase in score, while there are places (extreme scores) where a great increase in ability (maybe 2 or more units) leads to again a single unit of increase in the score. Thus raw scores neither produce linear scales nor are there equal distances between them (i.e. they are not interval).

**Rasch Model: An Overview**

Rasch model, named after the Danish mathematician and statistician Georg Rasch, is a prescriptive probabilistic mathematical model. It is highly distinguished for its two remarkable properties of invariance and interval scaling which are obtained in case the basic assumption of unidimensionality underlying the model is met, i.e. when the data fit the model.

To put it briefly, the model revolves around the probability of providing a correct response to an item of a specific difficulty by a particular individual. The difficulty of each item and the ability of each individual are estimated on the same scale. Thus one can easily compare the difficulty of the items, the abilities of the persons as well as the difficulty of an item with the ability of a person. An amount of error is always associated with and calculated for each item difficulty estimate as well as each person ability estimate. Thus the estimates of item difficulties and person abilities are always taken into account with regard to their standard errors which are unique for each individual item estimate and each individual person estimate.

A distinguishing feature of the Rasch model, called *separation*, is that the difficulty of items are estimated independent of the persons who have answered them, and the abilities of the persons are estimated independent of the items they have answered. That is, item parameters are separated from person parameters. In addition, each item's total score (i.e. the number of persons who have answered the item correctly) and each person's total score (i.e. the number of items a person has answered correctly) are considered to contain all the information necessary to estimate the difficulty of an item and the ability of a person respectively. In other words, items' total scores as well as the persons' total scores, though

not indicating the difficulties of items or the abilities of persons in and of themselves, are sufficient statistics to estimate the difficulty of items and the abilities of persons. This is an important concept within Rasch model framework referred to as *sufficiency*.

Moreover, the response patterns within Rasch Model framework should follow Guttman pattern. That is, if items are rank ordered from easy to difficult, a person who has responded correctly to an item should reply correctly to all the easier items as well. In other words, it is not expected that a person respond correctly to difficult items, but miss the easier ones or vice versa. The more the data is Guttman-like, the more it is likely to fit the model.

Having calculated the probabilities of providing correct responses to items of specific estimated difficulties (within estimation errors) by individuals of particular estimated abilities (within estimation errors), one should check whether the model's expectations realized in the form of probabilities are consistent enough with the observed data or not. This is done by checking the probabilities against the real observed data which can be done statistically as well as graphically. It should be noted that there always exists some difference between the model's predictions and the real data since the model is a perfect mathematical ideal, a feature almost impossible to come across in the real world. If the data's deviation from the ideal model is tolerable, it is said that the data fit the model, thus enabling one to benefit from the attractive properties provided by the model. If not, the remarkable properties of the model which are in fact the properties of a fundamental measurement will not hold.

## Rasch Model Assumptions

### Unidimensionality

It is amazing how the simplest and the most obvious rules of measurement which are routinely observed in daily life are broken when it comes to educational measurement. One never measures the height of a person and adds it up with his weight to report his size. It is quiet evident that a person's height and weight should be measured separately. However, within educational measurement contexts, a number of tests measuring two or more attributes at one time are sometimes encountered.

A measurement instrument, be it an attitude scale or an educational test, should measure only one property or attribute at one time. In order to observe the simple and logical rule of measuring one attribute at one time within educational measurement contexts, one needs to specify the construct theory before test construction. It is important to draw upon

the specified construct theory in the whole process of test construction and to avoid contaminating the measurement instrument with including other constructs or permitting extraneous factors to interfere.

Though theoretically sound, practically it is almost impossible to construct a test which measures only one attribute or to prevent the interference of extraneous factors. One may unintentionally measure language proficiency in a math test which is primarily intended to measure the test takers' mathematical skills. This is usually the case with math tests including worded problems, especially when the test is administered to nonnative speakers of the language of the test. Moreover, in almost all testing situations, a number of extraneous factors are involved which contaminate the results of the measurement. Henning, Hudson and Turner (1985) clarify the point:

> Examinee performance is confounded with many cognitive and affective test factors such as test wiseness, cognitive style, test-taking strategy, fatigue, motivation and anxiety. Thus, no test can strictly be said to measure one and only one trait (p. 142).

The question is: if, as Henning et al. (1985) state, "no test can strictly be said to measure one and only one trait" (p. 142), how can unidimensionality be achieved in practice? The answer to this question is provided by Bejar (1983):

> Unidimensionality does not imply that performance on items is due to a single psychological process. In fact, a variety of psychological processes are involved in responding to a set of test items. However, as long as they function in unison, that is, performance on each item is affected by the same process and in the same form unidimensionality will hold (p. 31).

McNamara (1996) further clarifies the issue by distinguishing two separate meanings for the term *unidimensionality*: psychological and psychometrical. He defines psychological unidimensionality as referring to "a single underlying (psychological) construct or trait" (p. 271) and psychometrical unidimensionality as referring to "a single underlying measurement dimension; loosely, a single pattern of scores in the data matrix" (p. 271).

McNamara delineates these two types of meanings by bringing an example of a mathematics test including both naked number problems and worded problems. He explains that in case the test is given to a group of test takers consisting of two groups of the native speakers (Group A) and non-native speakers of the language of the test (Group B), some of the non-native speakers may perform poorly on the worded problems due to low language proficiency while they would outperform the native-speakers in naked-number problems.

Thus the test is measuring language in addition to mathematics. However, when the same test is given only to native-speakers, though two constructs of language and mathematics are involved again, no problem arises, and those who have done well on the naked-number problems, do well on the worded problems, too. In other words, this mathematics test is not psychologically unidimensional since it has at least two underlying constructs of mathematics and language. Nevertheless, the test is psychometrically unidimensional in the latter case when it is given only to the native speakers since the unintended dimension, i.e. language, does not contaminate the measurement of the dimension of mathematics which is of interest in this example. The type of unidimentionality with which the Rasch model is concerned is that of psychometrical one.

**Local Item Independence**

Local independence of items is an assumption in all IRT models. That is, the items in a test should not be related to each other. Sharing a common passage, which is prevalent in reading comprehension tests, cloze tests and C-Tests can be a potential source of local item dependence (LID). It is argued in the literature that LID results in biased parameter estimation and affects the unidimensionality of the test.

The items that are put to Rasch analysis are required to be independent of each other. That is, a correct or wrong reply to one item should not lead to a correct or wrong reply to another item. This means that there should not be any correlation between two items after the effect of the underlying trait is conditioned out, i.e., the correlation of residuals should be zero. The items should only be correlated through the latent trait that the test is measuring (Lord and Novick, 1968). If there are significant correlations among the items after the contribution of the latent trait is removed, i.e., among the residuals, then the items are locally dependent or there is a subsidiary dimension in the measurement which is not accounted for by the main Rasch dimension (Linacre, 1998, Lee, 2004). In other words, performance on the items depends to some extent on a trait other than the Rasch dimension which is a violation of the assumptions of local independence and unidimensionality.

> If the assumption of local item independence is violated, any statistical analysis based on it would be misleading. Specifically, estimates of the latent variables and item parameters will generally be biased because of model misspecification, which in turn leads to incorrect decisions on subsequent statistical analysis, such as testing group differences and correlations between latent variables. In addition, it is not clear what constructs the item responses reflect, and consequently, it is not clear how to combine

those responses into a single test score, whether IRT is being used or not (Steinberg & Thissen, 1996) (Wang et al., 2005, p.6).

**Fit Statistics**

Once the values for persons' abilities and items' difficulties are estimated, difficulties are ordered in a row and abilities in a column. The corresponding response probabilities (i.e. the probability that a person with a particular ability respond correctly to an item with a particular difficulty) are calculated using logistic function formula. So a matrix of probabilities is constructed which represents the ideal expectations the model has from the data since, as mentioned before, Rasch model is *a probabilistic mathematical ideal*.

However, it is rarely, if ever, the case that real data meet the ideal mathematical expectations of a model. This problem is solved by checking the degree of data's violation of the model's expectations. In case, the degree of violation is tolerable, the data is said to fit the model implying the model is applicable for the data. Otherwise, the data is said not to fit the model implying the need for revisions or omissions in the test. Whether the data fit the model or not can be examined statistically, by means of fit statistics, as well as graphically, by means of item characteristic curves.

In order to check the fit of the data to the model statistically, first of all, residuals are computed. Residuals indicate the degree to which the real data violate the model's ideal expectations and are calculated via subtracting the response probabilities included in the matrix from the actual responses for every person-item interaction. The residuals are then standardized and summarized, and fit statistics are computed on the basis of summarized standardized residuals.

Although over forty fit indices have been developed by psychometricians, mainly two of them are implemented in Rasch software written in North America and Australia: infit and outfit statistics. While the former is sensitive to the unexpected patterns of response in the zones where the items are quite targeted to the persons' abilities, the latter is highly sensitive to lucky guesses and careless mistakes. Both types of fit statistics are expressed in the form of mean square values as well as standardized values. The ideal value is 1 for mean square values and 0 for standardized ones. The acceptable range for mean square values is from 0.70 to 1.3 and for standardized ones from -2 to +2.

In order to examine the fit of the data to the model graphically, the empirical item characteristics curve is drawn and checked against the ideal model expected curve while both curves are placed on a single plot.

In case the data fit the model, one can be confident that s/he can benefit from remarkable properties of the model, i.e. interval scale measurement and invariance of person and item measures.

## Rasch Model Properties

Interval scale measurement and invariance of person and item parameters are two major properties of the Rasch model which are crucial in establishing it as a type of fundamental measurement model.

Conforming to the axioms of conjoint measurement, the Rasch model yields interval scales not attainable within classical test theory or other item response theory models. Moreover, once the data fit the model, item measures invariant across different populations or over time, as well as person measures invariant across different sets of items are obtained. Invariance of the measures can also be tested by splitting the items or persons into two halves and running independent analyses to check whether the item and person estimates remain invariant across the analyses. To be more specific, either the same test is given to two groups of people or the sample to which the test is given is divided and considered as two groups. Then, the difficulty estimates of each item, derived from two separate analyses, are plotted against each other on the *x* and *y* axes. The procedure is the same for persons, with the difference that in this case there are two groups of items and one group of persons. That is, two ability estimates for each person is estimated based on the two sets of items and then the ability estimates are plotted against each other. A dotted line which indicates "the modeled relationship required for invariance" (Bond & Fox, 2007, p. 72) is drawn and 95% control lines based on standard errors of item or person pairs are constructed around it. The items or persons falling between the control lines are considered to be invariant.

## Rasch Model Applications

Rasch model has proven to be of a variety of applications in testing situations. The model's property of invariance makes it a helpful tool in developing item banks wherein all the items are brought upon the original measurement scale. In addition, it is considered to be a good candidate for detecting differential item functioning (DIF) due to its remarkable property of invariance. As Bond and Fox (2007) point out, "When an item's difficulty estimate location

varies across samples by more than the modeled error, then *prima facie* evidence for DIF exists" (p.92). A simple example can be gender-related DIF where an item proves to be more difficult for boys than girls or vice versa. Moreover, Rasch model makes a substantial contribution to computerized adaptive testing (CAT) by means of providing a large bank of calibrated items targeted to different ability levels as well as presenting the test takers with successive items based on 50% probability of success on the currently presented ones. Determining the optimal number of response categories for rating scales as well as optimal number of options for multiple-choice test items can also be accomplished via taking advantage of Rasch model's properties and diagnostics.

## Rasch and Validity

With Rasch model proven to be a better choice than classical test theory, many of the social science researchers are concerned with validating their measurement instruments within Rasch framework. As a result, attempts have been made to extend the current Messickian view of construct validity along with its six facets to Rasch model framework. Smith (2001), Bond (2003) and Wolfe & Smith (2007) have all attempted to point out how the analyses carried out within Rasch framework can be linked to current validity arguments.

In this part summarizing briefly the works of Bond (2003), Smith (2001) and Wolfe and Smith (2007), the contribution that Rasch analysis can make to demonstrate different aspects of construct validity is pointed out.

A number of analyses are performed to provide evidence for the content aspect of validity within Rasch framework. Fit indices are used to check the relevance of the test content to the intended construct. If an item does not fit the model, it is not acting the same way as the other items of the test. Misfitting items may be measuring a totally different and irrelevant construct. Moreover, person-item map and item strata are two important criteria for checking the representativeness of the items. Noticeable gaps in the item difficulty hierarchy point to the fact that some area of the construct domain has not been covered by the test. Item strata, i.e. "the number of statistically distinct regions of item difficulty that the persons have distinguished" (Smith, 2001, p. 293), is another clue which is drawn upon to check representativeness. There should be at least two item difficulty levels distinguished so as to judge the items as being appropriate representatives of the intended content. Furthermore, technical quality of the test items can be assessed via fit indices as well as item-measure correlations since the former is a good indicator of multidimensionality, poor

item quality or miskeying and the latter is an indicator of "the degree to which the scores on a particular item are consistent with the average score across the remaining items" (Wolfe & Smith, 2007, p. 206). With regard to the expected values of the item-measure correlations, Wolfe and Smith (2007) summarize the issue as:

> Item-measure correlations should be positive, indicating that the scores on the item are positively correlated with the average score on the remaining items. Negative item-measure correlations typically indicate negatively polarized items that were not reverse scored. Near zero item-measure correlations typically indicate that the item is either extremely easy or difficult to answer correctly or to endorse or that the item may not measure the construct in the same manner as the remaining items. (p. 206)

Person fit statistics and, in the case of multiple-choice tests, multiple choice distracter analysis are considered to be important indicators of substantive aspect of validity. Person fit statistics provide empirical clues for "the extent to which a person's pattern of responses to the items correspond to that predicted by the model" (Smith, 2001, p. 296). Person misfit may be due to factors like carelessness, guessing, etc. Distracter analysis within Rasch framework involves distracter p-value, choice mean and distracter-measure correlation. P-values indicate "the proportion of respondents choosing each distracter" (Wolfe & Smith, 2007, p. 209). Ideally, it is expected that the distracters be equally attractive; however, this seems to be almost impossible in practice. Thus, p-values are used to detect malfunctioning as well as non-functioning distracters. Choice means represent "the average measure of respondents who choose each distracter" (Wolfe and Smith, 2007, p. 209). They indicate the discrimination power of the distracters. It is expected that distracters be chosen by less able test takers, thus discriminating between test takers of high and low ability levels. As Wolfe and Smith (2007) put it," If a distracter does not attract less able respondents, then its validity as a measure of the underlying construct is questionable." (p. 209). So the lower the choice mean of a distracter, the more valid the distracter is. Finally, distracter-measure correlations are correlations between distracters and test takers' ability measures and indicate "the degree to which each distracter is a plausible answer to the prompt" (Wolfe and Smith, 2007, p. 209). Since, again, it is expected that test takers of low ability choose the distracters (rather than a correct option), thus negative values for correlations are desired. However, since the number of test takers choosing a particular distracter may be small, it is likely that the distracter measure correlations be attenuated and consequently result in correlation values which are not considerably negative. In such cases, choice means are drawn upon to compensate for the attenuation effect.

Fit statistics, used to assure whether the test is unidimensional or not, guide one to decide upon the way the test should be scored. That is, in case the test is shown to be unidimensional, reporting a single score for the whole test would suffice. However, in case of multidimensionality, separate scores should be reported for those dimensions, and one should be cautious not to add up the scores on different dimensions. Thus, fit statistics provide helpful evidence with regard to the structural aspect of construct validity.

Checking the invariance of item measures across different populations or over time as well as checking the invariance of person measures across different sets of items can be drawn upon so as to check for the generalizability aspect of construct validity.

In the case of external aspect of construct validity, the extent to which the meanings of the scores of a test hold relations with some other related test or non-test behaviors is usually checked via building multitrait-multimethod matrices. The external aspect of validity is usually checked via monotrait and heterotrait correlations which have traditionally been referred to as convergent and discriminant evidence repectively. It is expected that monotrait correlations be higher than the heterotrait ones in order to serve as proof for the external aspect of validity. Moreover, the capacity of a test to detect within-individual changes (over time, e.g. as a result of exposure to treatment) and between-group differences, is another indicator of external validity. This capacity can be checked via visual inspection of person-item map as well as checking the person strata index. In case a test is given to a group before treatment and the map manifests "a floor effect, and a wide dispersion of item calibrations beyond the highest person measure" (Wolfe & Smith, 2007, p. 222), the test is said to be responsive to treatment and thus capable of detecting within-individual changes. The same applies to situations where the test is used to compare different groups which undergo different experimental treatments. Person strata index, which represents the number of statistically separate ability strata that the test can distinguish, is another evidence for external aspect of construct validity. High values for person strata (at least 2) are needed to confirm the external aspect of validity of a test.

Rasch has not explicitly put forward a way to check the consequential aspect of validity. However, implicitly, it is concluded that considering issues like item bias and thus examining differential item functioning (DIF) or a close examination of the person-item map, which reveals the amount of information on the basis of which decisions for action are taken, can provide helpful evidence to decide about the consequential aspect of construct validity of a test.

In conclusion, yielding person and item parameter estimates which are placed on a common linear interval scale and are invariant as well as the possibility of demonstrating validity, the most important test characteristic, make the Rasch model a more attractive option

## References

Baghaei, P. (in press) Understanding the Rasch model. Mashad: Mashad Islamic Azad University Press.

Baghaei, P. (2008) The Rasch model as a construct validation tool. *Rasch Measurement Transactions*. *22*, 1145-1146. Available: http://www.rasch.org/rmt/rmt221a.htm.

Baghaei, P. (2007) *C-Test construct validation: A Rasch modeling approach*. Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Klagenfurt University.

Bejar, I.I. (1983) *Achievement testing: recent advances*. Beverly Hills, CA Sage.

Bond, T.G. & Fox, C.M. (2007) (2nd ed.) *Applying the Rasch model: fundamental measurement in the human sciences*. Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bond, T.G. (2003) Validity and assessment: a Rasch measurement perspective. *Metodología de las Ciencias del Comportamiento 5*, 179–194.

Crocker, L. & Algina, J. (1986) *Introduction to classical and modern test theory.* Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.

Embretson, S.E., & Reise, S.P. (2000) *Item response theory for psychologists*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Guttman, L. (1950) The basis for scalogram analysis. In S.A. Stouffer (ed.) *Measurement and Prediction*. New York: John Wiley.

Henning, G., Hudson, T. & Turner, J. (1985) Item response theory and the assumption of unidimensionality for language test. *Language testing*. *2*, 141-154.

Kline, T.J.B. (2005) *Psychological testing: a practical approach to design and evaluation*. Sage Publications.

Lee, Y. (2004) Examining passage-related local item dependence (LID) and measurement construct using Q3 statistics in an EFL reading comprehension test. *Language Testing*, *21*, 74-100.

Linacre, J.M. (1998) Structure in Rasch residuals: why principal component analysis*? Rasch Measurement Transaction*, 12, 636. Available: http://www.rasch.org/rmt/rmt122m.htm.

Lord, F.M. & Novick, M.R. (1968) *Statistical theories of mental test scores*. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley.

McNamara, T.F. (1996) *Measuring second language performance*. New York: Longman.

Rasch, G. (1960/1980) Probabilistic models for some intelligence and attainment tests. Copenhagen: Danish Institute for Educational Research, 1960. (Expanded edition, Chicago: The university of Chicago Press, 1980).

Shultz, K.S. & Whitney D.J. (2004) *Measurement theory in action: case studies and exercises.* Sage Publications.

Smith, E. V. Jr. (2001) Evidence for the reliability of measures and validity of measure interpretation: A Rasch measurement perspective. *Journal of Applied Measurement*. *2*, 281-311.

Stevens, S. S. (1946) On the theory of scales of measurement. *Science*, 103, 667-680.

Wang, W.-C., Cheng, Y.-Y. & Wilson, M. (2005) Local item dependence for items across tests connected by common stimuli. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *65*, 5-27.

Wolf, E. W. & Smith, E. V. (2007) Instrument development tools and activities for measure validation using Rasch models: Part II-validation activities. *Journal of Applied Measurement*. *8*, 204-234.