International Journal of Language Studies

IJLS

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE STUDIES (IJLS)

DESCRIPTION

International Journal of Language Studies (IJLS) is devoted to all areas of language and linguistics. Its aim is to present work of current interest in all areas of language study. No particular linguistic theories or scientific trends are favored: scientific quality and scholarly standing are the only criteria applied in the selection of papers accepted for publication. *IJLS* publishes papers of any length, if justified, as well as review articles surveying developments in the various fields of language study (including Language Teaching, Language Testing, TESOL, ESP, Pragmatics, Sociolinguistics, (Critical) Discourse Analysis, Curriculum Development, Politeness Research, Classroom Research, Language Policy, and so on). Also, a considerable number of pages in each issue are devoted to critical book reviews. *IJLS* commenced publication 2006 for people involved in language and linguistic studies.

Current Editorial Correspondence

Mohammad Ali Salmani Nodoushan

Address: No 1753
Dr Afshar Building
Valiasr Street
Zafaranieh
19617-33171 Tehran
Iran

Phone: +98-21-227-17117
Fax: +98-21-227-11311
E-mail: salmani.nodoushan@yahoo.com
Web site: www.ijls.net

Editorial Policy

International Journal of Language Studies (IJLS) is seeking submissions of previously unpublished manuscripts on any topic related to the area of language study. Articles should be written so that they are accessible to a broad audience, including those individuals who may not be familiar with the particular subject matter addressed in the article. Articles should report on original research or present original content that links to previous research, theory, and/or teaching practices. Contributors should note that articles containing only descriptions of software, classroom procedures, or those presenting results of attitude surveys without discussing data on actual language learning outcomes will not be considered. Full-length articles should be no more than 10,000 words in length, including references and appendices, and should include an abstract of no more than 150 words. Decision as to whether longer (i.e., up to a maximum of 25,000 words) papers will be accepted or not depends on *IJLS* reviewers' comments as well as the quality of the manuscript itself.

Submission of an article implies that the work described has not been published previously (except in the form of an abstract or as part of a published lecture or academic thesis), that it is not under consideration for publication elsewhere, that its publication is approved by all authors and tacitly or explicitly by the responsible authorities where the work was carried out, and that it will not be published elsewhere in the same form, in English or in any other language, without the written consent of *International Journal of Language Studies (IJLS)*. Authors should acknowledge these points in a cover letter that accompanies their manuscript.

Receipt of manuscripts will be acknowledged, but they cannot be returned; therefore, authors should retain a copy of the paper exactly as it was submitted. Since page proofs cannot be sent to authors for last minute corrections, authors must proofread manuscripts carefully, giving special attention to the accuracy of quotations and references. Acceptance of an article means that authors have transferred copyright to *IJLS*. Authors are encouraged to download the copyright transfer form from the journal site, complete it, and sign and send it to *IJLS* via surface mail or through a fax machine. This transfer will ensure the widest possible dissemination of information. If excerpts from other copyrighted works are included, the author(s) must obtain written permission from the copyright owners and credit the source(s) in the article.

All article manuscripts submitted to *International Journal of Language Studies (IJLS)* go through a two-step review process.

Step 1: Internal Review

The editor(s) of the journal first review each manuscript to see if it meets the basic requirements for articles published in the journal (i.e., that it reports on original research or presents original content that links to previous research, theory, and/or teaching practices), and that it is of sufficient quality to merit external review. Manuscripts which do not meet these requirements are not sent out for further review, and authors of these manuscripts are encouraged to submit their work elsewhere. This internal review may take up to about 6 weeks. Following the internal review, authors are notified by e-mail as to whether their manuscript has been sent out for external review or, if not, why not. Authors can get their papers sent out for external review by making sure that:

- the copyright transfer form is completed, signed, and sent to *IJLS*;
- a cover letter accompanies the manuscript;
- they have cited papers from earlier issues of *IJLS* in their works;
- first person usage has been avoided for more clarity in the paper;
- no or very little formatting is used;
- the manuscript is strictly blind;
- the manuscript follows APA Editorial Style;
- the manuscript title is concise (preferably fewer than 10 words) and adequately descriptive of the content of the article;
- the manuscript is accompanied by an abstract of about 100-150 words;
- the abstract is written so as to provide the substance of the full paper;
- the manuscript is in native or acceptable native-like English;
- a set of 5 to 8 keywords separated by semicolon follows the abstract;
- paragraphs are not indented and no tabs are used;
- typeface is Cambria, Times New Roman, Georgia or Courier New;
- Arial typeface has NOT been used in any part of the manuscript;
- if their work contains phonetic/African/complex non-English symbols, they have embedded all fonts in their DOC file and have also sent a PDF version of the manuscript;
- no manual hyphenation is used (i.e., Space bar on the keyboard should not be used for indenting text);
- quotations longer than 40 words appear as separate blocks without quotation marks;
- all citations are referenced and all references are cited;
- no headers and/or footers are used whatsoever;
- no pagination is used;
- tables and figures appear in the correct position, are numbered consecutively, and are captioned according to APA Editorial Style;

- graphics in the manuscript are only in black-and-white or patterned format;
- gray shading is not used in diagrams and tables;
- the manuscript is only saved in Microsoft Word 2003 DOC format; and
- a separate file including author data (e.g., full name, affiliation, country, email, short biography) and acknowledgments is also submitted.

Step 2: External Review

Submissions which meet the basic requirements are then sent out for blind peer review from 3-4 experts in the field, either from the journal's editorial board or from our larger list of reviewers. This second review process takes 4-6 months. Following the external review, the authors are sent copies of the external reviewers' comments and are notified as to the decision (accept as is, accept pending changes, revise and resubmit, or reject). Our reviewers make decisions based on a set of considerations; if authors know about their standards, they can take a strong step in getting their work published in *IJLS*. We, therefore, suggest that before submitting their work to *IJLS*, authors should make sure that:

- the paper is easy to read and free from grammatical or spelling errors;
- the paper is based on rigorous academic standards;
- the paper is presented in a format which is accessible by *IJLS* audience;
- the paper focuses on justification, results and implementation, and has readable content cast in APA Editorial Style;
- technical material (e.g., guide to phonetic symbols, questionnaires, etc.) is appendixed;
- the paper has clarity of presentation, is well organised and clearly written.
- the paper makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge related to *IJLS*;
- the topic is highly significant, breaks new ground, and provides a foundation for future research;
- the topic of the paper is relevant, timely, and of interest to the audience of *IJLS*;
- the rationale for the paper is well grounded; it is based on a known theory or on an interesting issue;
- The research methodology for the study is appropriate and applied properly;
- the material of the paper is technically accurate and sound;
- if this paper is a survey, it provides strong evidence of reliability and validity of the constructs;
- discussion of the results is based on analysis of data;
- results are not overstated or overgeneralized; and
- implications and recommendations are relevant and useful.

How to Submit Manuscripts

Contributors should submit their contributions in electronic form, as email attachment or on a computer disk. A short biographical note of the author/s is required as well as a complete address (in a separate file). Contributions should be sent to the editor in chief at: *salmani.nodoushan@yahoo.com*. The electronic manuscript should be strictly anonymous; authors should not identify themselves in the electronic manuscript itself, or in the filename used for the manuscript.

Legal Notice

According to the guidelines available from the official website of *International Journal of Language Studies (IJLS)*, submission of a paper to *IJLS* means that the author(s) are automatically transferring the copyright for their work to the editor-in-chief no matter whether the submission is accompanied by the completed and autographed copyright form or not. Submission of a paper to *International Journal of Language Studies (IJLS)* also means that (a) the author has not made double or parallel submissions elsewhere, and (b) the paper has not been previously published, presented, or disseminated elsewhere.

Disclaimer

Articles published in *IJLS* do not represent the views held by the editor and members of the editorial board. Authors are responsible for all aspects of their articles except editorial formatting.

<div align="right">

Mohammad Ali Salmani Nodoushan
Editor in Chief

</div>

PAGES	CONTENTS

NOTE: The order of papers in this journal is random.

Blog-assisted Language Learning: A Possibility in Teaching Reading to Iranian EFL Learners

Mojgan Rashtchi, Islamic Azad University at Tehran North, Iran
Hassan Hajihassani, Education Bureau of Takab, Iran

Among the four language skills, reading is the conduit through which Iranian EFL learners can keep contact with the outside world. It was predicted that using new technologies in classroom can contribute to enhancing the ability of learners in the skill and can help them develop a positive attitude toward reading in English. To this end, 52 students from a university in Takab, Iran, were selected based on convenient sampling, and assigned to two homogeneous groups of experimental and control. During 10 ninety-minute sessions within five weeks, the experimental group practiced reading through weblog while the control group participated using a traditional non-weblog reading method. A Mixed Between-Within Subjects Analysis of Variance (SPANOVA) was conducted to analyze the effect of two different types of treatment. Results indicated that the main effect was significant for time but not for group. It was further noticed that the interaction effect was also significant. The use of weblog in classroom, although not statistically significant, could enhance the reading ability of EFL learners as compared to the non-weblog method. Furthermore, the attitude questionnaire revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the attitude of the two groups toward EFL reading before and after the treatment. The results indicated that using weblogs as a teaching aid could develop a positive attitude in learners.

1. Introduction

Reading is a valuable source of input and plays a major role in the process of language learning. It helps learners gain information, broadens their understanding of different subjects, and thus assists them in achieving their academic goals (Grabe & Stoller, 2001). In EFL

settings, reading can partially make up for the lack of oral interaction and contact with the target language, an advantage which supports language learning in ESL environments. Additionally, choosing authentic reading materials can serve as a useful resource for promoting language use. Reading, as Renandya and Jacobs (2002) argue, improves general language proficiency and world knowledge of the readers, and is a medium of autonomous learning (Grabe & Stoller, 2001).

Language teaching pedagogy during the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000 has witnessed a shift to communicative language teaching with an emphasis on sociocultural variables, cooperative group learning, and student engagement in authentic, meaningful, and interactive contextualized discourse (Warschauer and Meskill, 2000; Hedge, 2000; Brown, 2000). This general communicative trend requires a revolution in the area of educational technologies. Using Internet related technologies and on line education can be considered as a response to this need. Recent literature has addressed the need for changes in the way reading comprehension is viewed as influenced by technology (Coiro 2003), As De Ridder (2002) puts forward, second language reading, either on paper or on the screen, is a meaningful language-learning activity through which, learners interact with different types of cultural, semantic, and syntactic information that can be processed and possibly learned or remembered. De Ridder believes that traditional classroom will not be the only choice for teaching and learning; it seems that new technologies, such as computer and the Internet will be an inevitable part of the future classes though virtual classes do not refute the role teachers have in the process of learning. In Such classes, teachers may or may not be present in the same space with their students at the same time; however, communication between teachers and students can take place either asynchronously, synchronously, or both. In facilitating L2 reading comprehension, the use of sound, pictures, and animated pictures have played an important role in overall text comprehension and are unquestionable components of instructional materials for language learning (Chun and Plass, 1996a, 1996b).

2. Background

By the early 1980s, technology was used for teaching reading. First computer-based programs were used to practice various aspects of decoding skills and

cognitive processes, and almost immediately thereafter Computer-Mediated Communicative (CMC) approaches via the Internet and local intranets expanded. Like CALL programs, early electronically-enhanced approaches to teaching reading replicated most of the history of paper-based reading instruction (Smith, 2003).

Nowadays, new technologies are constantly emerging and influencing language teaching and learning. With technological tools increasingly available in educational contexts around the world, many teachers and educators are incorporating a variety of applications into their teaching duties, turning to modern technologies to make their teaching tasks more efficient and gratifying. These technologies comprise powerful tools in providing learners with maximum opportunity for authentic social interaction and comprehensible input and can be used to promote positive student learning experiences. This study intends to show that in EFL settings where the target language is not the medium of communication in the society, technology can function as a facilitator in the process of language learning.

One of the areas of most rapid expansion in English language education is Blog Assisted Language Learning (BALL) which is recently developed by researchers for new uses of web technology in foreign language education. Blogs with their immense positive potential can operate as an extremely valuable tool for teaching of second/foreign language skills. When used in EFL classes, blogs may show tremendous advantages both to teachers and students. They provide learners with genuine writing practice (Brooks, Nichols, and Priebe, 2004), offer a venue in which they can reflect, comment, question, review, and communicate outside the classroom in an authentic environment (Pinkman, 2005; Bella, 2005) provide an alternative way of communicating with teachers and peers (Mynard, 2007); help students to create a virtual collaborative classroom environment (Huffkar, 2004; Zorko, 2009; Philip and Nicholls, 2009), promote self-expression (Huffkar, 2004), and are a motivating learning activity (Pinkman, 2005; Carter and Nunan, 2001). Additionally, students can have a personal space to read and write alongside a communal one, where ideas are shared, questions are asked and answered, and social cohesion is developed. Popularity of blogs among students as well as their user-friendly nature makes them a useful tool for teachers who want to introduce out-of class resources to their learners.

Another important issue which affects second language learning is learners' attitude toward language classes. In fact, negative attitude, which emerges from indirect exposure to a culture or to groups through media, books, and other less reliable sources, may decrease motivation, impede input and interaction, and cause unsuccessful attainment of language proficiency (Brown, 2000). Furthermore, boring class settings is another source of such

attitude toward language learning although it can be terminated by making language learning environment enjoyable and interesting.

Integrating technology into language pedagogy has become a reality in the 21st century; thus, educators and teachers, now, consider the Internet and weblogs as effective tools containing huge amounts of information from a variety of sources. Although some studies have been carried out on the usefulness of using weblogs in language education especially on the improvement of the writing skill (Mynard, 2007; Askari-Arani, 2005; Holmes, 2005; Bella, 2005; Pinkman, 2005; Johnson, 2004), only a few studies have addressed the efficacy of using weblogs in reading classes. Therefore, the present study had a twofold aim: first, it intended to investigate whether using weblog as compared to non-weblog teaching could improve the reading ability of Iranian EFL learners; second, its attempt was to find out whether the use of weblog could have any effect on the learners' attitude toward reading. The researchers believed that the findings of this study could be of significant importance to all EFL teachers in general and to Iranian teachers of English in particular and could encourage them to incorporate a variety of modern technologies into their teaching duties. This, in turn, would promote language learning in EFL settings like Iran by bringing about a more relaxed and friendly atmosphere to English classes. Therefore, the following research questions were put forward for the purpose of the study:

- Does blog-assisted teaching of reading skill yield to better results than traditional non-weblog techniques regarding Iranian EFL learners' academic reading achievement?

- Does using weblog in EFL reading classes improve the attitude of the EFL learners towards the reading skill?

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants

In order to perform this study, 52 undergraduate students (20 females and 32 males) between 19 and 25 years of age were randomly selected from a university in Takab, Iran and were randomly assigned to two groups of control and experimental. They had been admitted from different parts of Iran on the basis of an entrance exam held by the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology. The participants were in the first semester of their university education and were studying different majors such as mining, accounting, and carpet weaving. Participants represented three different language backgrounds including Persian (15), Kurdish (18), and Turkish (19).

3.2. Instrumentation

The first instrument used in this study was the Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET) to measure general proficiency of the participants and to insure that they all belonged to the same population. The test is available at:

http://cambridgeesol.org/exams/general-english/pet.htmlis

and is mostly used for intermediate level students. The reliability of the test after administration to the participants of the study was computed through Cronbach's alpha (r=0.87) and showed a high reliability index. The second instrument was a teacher-made reading comprehension test consisting of 30 items used as a pre test. The pretest consisted of seven passages each followed by some multiple choice reading comprehension questions, 30 questions altogether. Before administering the test, it was piloted with a group of 30 students who were at the same language proficiency level as the participants of the study. After analyzing the results and excluding the mal-functioning items, the reliability estimate computed through Cronbach's alpha (r= 0.85) proved that the test was reliable with a relatively high reliability index. Its content validity was also approved by two experts. The test was, then, administered to the participants of the study. The purpose was to conclude that all further changes in learners' reading ability were due to the received treatment.

Furthermore, a blog was created by the researchers as a tool for teaching reading which is available at:

www.bariclass.blogspot.com.

In order to teach reading, a series of reading texts covering a variety of topics were selected from CNN Learning Resources available at:

http://literacynet.org/cnnsf/archives.html

and ELC study Zone available at:

http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/courses/elc/studyzone/

and were used accordingly. The readability of the selected texts were computed through Microsoft Office Flesch Reading Ease and contrasted with the participants' text book. The average readability of the selected texts (70.1) was close to that of the participants' textbook (73.8).

Additionally, to measure the attitude of the participants toward EFL reading, an attitude questionnaire (AQ) consisting of 30 items was constructed in a Likert-type scale. First, it was reviewed by two experts to decide upon its content validity and then piloted with a group of 30 students who volunteered to take the questionnaire; the reliability estimate computed through Cronbach's alpha (r = 0.82) supported its use in the study. Subsequently, to compare the attitude of the participants before and after the treatment, the questionnaire was administered to them. Moreover, in order to draw sound conclusions, the participants were interviewed to give the researchers an opinion on how they felt after the treatment.

3.3. Procedure

3.3.1. Pretest

The scores obtained from general proficiency test (PET) administered to the participants of the study showed that the learners were homogeneous in terms of their general language proficiency and their scores fell one standard deviation above and below the mean. The reading pretest proved the homogeneity of the participants in terms of their reading ability. Moreover, the AQ was administered to measure the students' attitude toward reading prior to the treatment.

3.3.2. Treatment

The treatment lasted for five weeks covering 10 ninety-minute sessions. Teaching reading to the experimental group started at the university computer site. After reading any of the passages, the students were linked to different activities, such as comprehension questions, quizzes, and vocabulary tests and afterward were asked to write a summary of the passage. In blog-based approach, the students were asked to follow links, use on line dictionaries, and monitor their own work trying to be less dependent on the teacher. They were also asked to share their ideas about the passage using class forum and put their comments in the comment area.

The control group used the same Internet materials and activities but in printed form and could look up difficult words in a dictionary. While the teacher was responsible for the correction of the student responses in the control group, there was no need for such corrections in the experimental group. They were corrected automatically and different types of feedback, such as *correct: your score is 100% correct, incorrect: please try again, or Sorry! Try again* were given to their answers by the computer. Hence, while in the control group the teacher played the main role, in the experimental group he was a facilitator. However, in both classes he tried to develop a positive

attitude in learners by creating a friendly atmosphere in class and boosting their motivation.

3.3.3. Posttest

After the treatment, the same reading test as well as the AQ was administered to the learners in both groups. Additionally in order to have a better understanding of how the participants felt about the instruction they received, an oral interview was conducted. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

4. Results
4.1. Reading comprehension test results

Table 1 below shows the descriptive statistics for the PET. The results of the skewness analysis obtained by dividing the statistic of skewness by the standard error of each of the three groups revealed that the assumption of normality was observed in the distribution of the scores of the both groups (0.76 for the Weblog group and 1 for the Non-weblog group, both of the indices falling within the range of -1.96 and +1.96). The Levene's test $F (1, 50) = 1.07$, $p = 0.31 > .05$ showed that the condition of equality of the variances was assumed. The independent t-test conducted to compare the general proficiency scores of the two groups ($t=0.89$, df= 50, p= .38> .05) showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the means of the Weblog group (M= 47.27, SD = 6.96) and the Non-weblog group (M= 49, SD = 6.49) on language proficiency.

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics for PET

Group	N	Mean	Std. Error	SD	Skewness	Std. Error
Weblog	26	47.27	1.36	6.96	.35	.46
Non-weblog	26	49	1.27	6.49	.46	.46

Table 2.
The Results of the t-test for PET

Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means				
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
1.07	.31	.89	50	.38	1.65	1.86

A Mixed Between-Within Subjects Analysis of Variance (SPANOVA) (See Pallant, 2007) was conducted to analyze the effect of two different types of reading (i.e., weblog and non-weblog) on the general reading ability of the EFL learners. This was done to see if there were main effects for each of the independent variables (i.e., main effect for

subject groups and main effect for time), and also for their interaction—to tell if the change in reading performance over time was different for the two groups.

It was necessary to check for *Homogeneity of intercorrelations*—to see if for each of the levels of the between-subjects variable (i.e., type of treatment) the pattern of intercorrelations among the levels of within-subjects variable (i.e., time) were the same. To test this assumption, Box's M statistic was used with the hope that the statistic would not be significant (i.e., that the *p* level would be greater than 0.01). In other words, Box's M statistic tests the null hypothesis that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups. Table 3 displays the result and indicates that this assumption was met (*Sig.*=.815> 0.01).

Table 3.
Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices

Box's M	.984
F	.314
df1	3
df2	450000.000
Sig.	.815

Multivariate Tests (table 4) signified that there was a change in reading ability of the learners across time and the main effect for time was significant. There was also an indication that the two groups were also different in terms of their reading performance across time. The main effect for the interaction between time and type of treatment was also significant. Wilks' Lambda values and the associated probability values support these findings.

Furthermore, based on the values in the Wilks' Lambda, as shown in table 4, it was found that there was a statistically significant change in the reading performance of the participants as a result of the treatment. Since the value for Wilks' Lambda for time was 0.148, with a *Sig.* value of .000 < .0001 it was concluded that there was a statistically significant effect for time. This suggested that there was a change in the reading performance across time; that is, the treatment affected the reading ability of the learners. Also, the value for partial Eta squared for time was 0.852 indicating a very large effect size for time (see Cohen, 1988).

Table 4.
Multivariate Tests

Effect		Value	F	Sig.	Partial Eta²
Time	Pillai's Trace	.852	287.859(a)	.000	.852
	Wilks' Lambda	.148	287.859 (a)	.000*	. 852
	Hotelling's Trace	5.757	287.859 (a)	.000	. 852
	Roy's Largest Root	5.757	287.859 (a)	.000	. 852
Time * Group	Pillai's Trace	.594	73.121(a)	.000	.594
	Wilks' Lambda	.406	73.121 (a)	.000*	. 594
	Hotelling's Trace	1.462	73.121 (a)	.000	. 594
	Roy's Largest Root	1.462	73.121 (a)	.000	. 594

Computed using alpha = .05 (Exact statistic, Design: Intercept+Group, Within Subjects Design: Time)

Additionally, since the value for Wilks' Lambda for time-group interaction was 0.406, with a *Sig.* value of .000 <.0001, it could be concluded that there was a statistically significant effect for time-group interaction. The partial Eta squared value for the interaction effect (0.594) suggests a very large effect for time-group interaction which means that the change occurred in the reading performance over time for the two groups was not the same. In other words, the reading performance for the weblog group was not statistically the same as that for the non-weblog group.
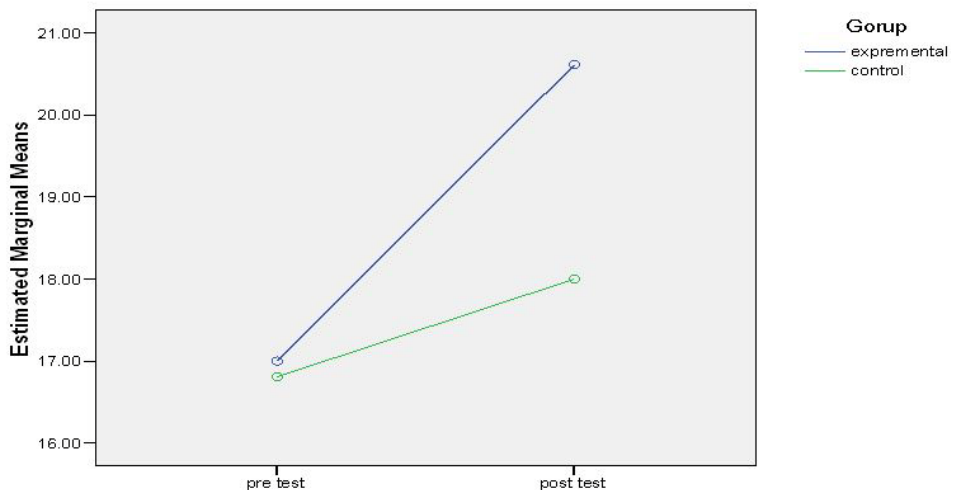
Figure 1. Difference in reading performance across subject groups.

Figure 1 visualizes this difference in reading performance across subject groups. As the figure shows, the Weblog group showed a greater gain in reading ability than the Non-weblog group.

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics for the two groups across time.

Table 5.
Descriptive Statistics for the Two Groups across Time

	Type of Treatment	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-test Score	Weblog Group	17.000	4.05956	26
	Non-weblog Group	16.8077	3.84728	26
Post-test Score	Weblog Group	20.6154	4.27155	26
	Non-weblog Group	18.0000	4.31741	26

As table 5 indicates, the pre-test mean for Weblog group was 17 while the post test mean was 20.61; the pre-test mean for Non-weblog group was 16.80 whereas the post test mean was 18. Table 6 below indicates that the Sig. value for treatment (0.222> 0.01) was not statistically significant and hence it was concluded the main effect for treatment (group) was not significant; that is, there was no significant difference in reading ability for the two groups.

Table 6.
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type II Sum of Squares	df	Mean^2	F	Sig.	Partial Eta^2
Intercept	34093.163	1	34093.163	65945.219	.000	.953
Treatment	51.240	1	1.527	.482	.222	.030
Error	1678.096	50	2.435			

Transformed Variable: Average
Computed using alpha = .01

4.2. Attitude questionnaire (AQ) results

As mentioned earlier, in order to measure the attitude of the participants toward EFL reading, an AQ was administered to all of the participants before and after the treatment. The descriptive statistics for the AQ before and after the treatment is illustrated in Table 7. As Table 8 shows, the Levene's test [F $(1, 50) < .001$] proved the homogeneity of the variances and the t- value (t= 0.37, df = 50, p=0.37) signified that there was no statistically significant difference between the attitude of the participants of the two groups toward EFL reading prior to the treatment.

Table7.
Descriptive statistics for the AQ, Pre and Posttests

	Group	N	Mean	SD
Before Treatment	Control	26	71.26	7.55
	Experimental	26	70.46	8.15
After Treatment	Control	26	70.46	7.73
	Experimental	26	88.00	9.52

Table 8.
Independent t-test for the AQ Pretest

Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means			
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference
.000	.98	.37	50	. 70	.80

After the treatment once again the AQ was administered to the participants in both groups to examine whether there had been any changes in their attitude toward EFL reading. The results of an independent t-test conducted to compare the attitude of the learners in the Experimental and Control groups before and after the treatment (t= 7.28, df= 50, p< 0.01) indicated that the attitude of the learners who were taught through using weblog significantly differed from the attitude of those learners who were taught without using weblog.

Table 9.
Independent t-test for the AQ Posttest

Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means			
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference
3.11	.08	7.28	50	. 000	17.50

4.3. Qualitative data results

Results obtained from the interviews with the students from BALL based class indicated that using web technology in class enabled them to be more independent from the teacher (68%), to evaluate their own learning (82%) and to interact with other students as well as their teacher in an interesting way (78%). The majority of the students maintained that the weblog enabled them to communicate with their classmates and even review the materials at home (80%). However, most of the students believed that it took time for them to get

accustomed with the new method and learn how to use the weblog efficiently (73%). On the other hand, students from Traditional Reading Class (TRC) found nothing new and especial but the reading materials (62.5%) and presumed that the teaching style and class environment was similar to other reading classes; about 37% of the learners considered the materials and activities useful. Moreover, the interviews showed that the students in BALL based class had a more positive feeling toward their learning process than the students in TRC and claimed that they had experienced a joyful (89%), friendly (82%) and supportive (77%) class environment and found reading through weblog more agreeable than using a textbook (75%). In contrast, students in TRC reported that the class environment was boring and they could not fully concentrate on the material taught by the teacher (62.5%).

Table 10.
The Results of the Interview

BALL based class interview results	%	Traditional reading class interview results	%
Being more independent from the teacher	68	Nothing new but the materials	62.5
Evaluate their own learning	82	Useful class material& activities	37
Better communication & reviewing the materials at home	80	Boring class environment	62.5
Learning new method is time consuming	73		
Interacting with students & teacher in an interesting way	78		
Joyful class environment	89		
Friendly class environment	82		

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine whether using weblogs in EFL classrooms could affect the reading ability of Iranian EFL learners. The results after analysis of the data illustrated that the main effect for time was significant. The positive mean difference for both groups as signified in figure 1 and table 5 above, showed that both groups had better performance regarding their reading ability as a result of the treatment they had received; however, the comparison of the two methods of treatment (weblog versus non-weblog) revealed that there was no significant difference between the two groups proving that both methods of treatment were almost equally effective in enhancing

reading ability of the participants; although Weblog group had better performance as compared to the Non-weblog group. However, this difference was not large enough to reach statistical significance. This finding indicates that although weblogs can be used by EFL teachers as a technique to improve the reading ability of EFL learners the use of non-weblog techniques in EFL classes cannot be refuted. It is worth mentioning that the ability to read fluently is an indispensable part of Iranian EFL learners' quest for gaining mastery in English and integration of weblog reading to language classes can assist EFL learners.

The positive answer to the second research question signified that weblog could help EFL learners develop a positive attitude toward EFL reading. One of the problems encountered in Iranian EFL situation is that learners look at language learning as a compulsory subject imposed on them at school. They do not have much incentive to participate in language classes and usually complain about the anomalous nature of the subject matter. Besides, since the crowded timetable of the schools does not permit additional language practice, students cannot productively benefit from real life and pedagogic tasks and are, thus, confined to the traditional way of language teaching which mostly includes learning grammar. Practicing reading through weblog can make the job more interesting for them and the immediate feedback they receive for their responses will give them confidence to continue the procedure.

The results obtained from the AQ and the interviews showed that using weblogs in language classes can encourage learners to actively participate in classroom discussions and activities while promoting cooperation and cultivating peer learning and group work activities. Commenting capability of the weblog, researchers believe, can add spirit to language classes and help learners to positively look at language learning. Moreover, the creativity involved in BALL contributes to learner autonomy and thus, facilitates language learning.

Furthermore, since BALL helps learners to learn how to navigate through electronic space in order to access dictionaries or reading comprehension questions in a hypertext system, it can support the development of interactive learning materials. Hence, it can be called a learning system rather than a teaching system because most activities are in hypertext format and hypertexts increase active participation of

the learners in the learning process, and urge them to take the responsibility for their own learning. As the students are engaged in new ways of presenting information through computer-based technology, they reflect upon their learning and as a result, are driven toward mental activities as well as self assessment. By and large, blogs are authentic, interesting, communicative, and collaborative resources that can serve a variety of purposes in the EFL classrooms and can provide a rich and easy-to-use environment for both learners and teachers.

6. Conclusion

Weblogs, as shown in this study, can be beneficial for EFL learners and can be used by teachers when they want to bring some change of atmosphere to their classes. The exciting and interactive nature of the Web which is realized through the use of comment area and forum in combination with authentic language materials available, are among the most important features which can help learners gain motivation and develop a positive attitude toward language learning.

Authors

Mojgan Rashtchi (*mojgan.rashtchi@gmail.com***)** is Head of the Graduate TEFL Department at Islamic Azad University, North Tehran Branch. She has published several articles and books on teaching English to children and adults. Her main areas of interest include issues of first language acquisition and exploring teaching techniques to children and adults.

Hassan Hajihassani (*hhajihassani@yahoo.com)* holds an MA in TEFL from Islamic Azad University, North Tehran Branch. He is presently an English teacher in Takab, Iran. His research interests include CALL and use of educational technology in language classroom.

References

Askari-Arani, J. (2005). Teaching writing and reading English in ESP through a Web based communicative medium: Weblog. *ESP World*, *11*. Retrieved March 15, 2008, from

http://www.espworld.info/Articles_11/TeachingReadingandWritinginESPthroughaWeb-BasedCommunicativeMedium.htm

Bella, M. (2005). Weblogs in education. In B. Hoffman (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of educational technology*. San Diego State University, Department of Educational Technology. Retrieved March 18, 2008, from http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/articles/blogsined/start.htm

Brandle, K. (2002). Integrating Internet-based reading materials into the foreign language curriculum: From teacher- to student-centered approaches. *Language Learning and Technology, 6*(3), 87-107.

Brooks, K., Nichols, C., & Priebe, S. (2004). Remediation, Genre, and Motivation: Key Concepts for Teaching with Weblogs. In L. Gurak, S. Antonijevic, L. Johnson, C. Ratliff, & J. Reyman (Eds.), *Into the Blogosphere: Rhetoric, Community, and Culture of Weblogs.* Retrieved March 15, 2008, from http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere/remediation_genre.html

Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching (4th Ed)*, NY: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

Carter, R., & Nunan, D. (2001). *Teaching English to speakers of other languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chun, D. M., & Plass, J. L. (1996a). Effects of multimedia annotations on vocabulary acquisition. *Modern language Journal, 80*, 183-198.

Chun, D. M., & Plass, J. L. (1996b). Facilitating reading comprehension with multimedia. *System, 24 (4)*, 503-519.

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Coiro, J. (2003). Reading comprehension on the internet: Expanding our understanding of reading comprehension to encompass new literacies. *The Reading Teacher, 56,* 458-464.

De Ridder, I. (2002).Visible or invisible links: Does the highlighting of hyperlinks affect incidental vocabulary learning, text comprehension, and vocabulary learning, text comprehension, and the reading process? *Language Learning & Technology, 6* (1), 123-146.

Furstenberg, G. (1997). Teaching with technology: What is at stake? *ADFL Bulletin*, *28(3),* 21-25.

Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. L. (2001). Reading for academic purposes: Guidelines for the ESL/EFL teacher. In Celce-Murcia, M. (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language (pp. 187- 203).* USA: Heinle & Heinle.

Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and learning in the classroom.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Holmes, A. J. (2005). Weblogs in the post-secondary writing classroom: A study of purposes. Retrieved June 10, 2008, from http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/theses/available/etd-03222005-205901/unrestricted/etd.pdf

Huffaker, D. (2004). The educated blogger: Using weblogs to promote literacy in the classroom. *First Monday,* 9 (6), Retrieved March 22, 2008, from http://www.firstmonday.dk/issues/issue9_6/huffaker/index.html

Johnson, A. (2004). Creating a writing course utilizing class and student blogs. *The internet TESL journal. 10* (8). Retrieved March 26, 2008, from http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Johnson-Blogs/.

Mynard, J. (2007). A blog as a tool for reflection for English language learners. *Asian EFL Journal, 25,* Article 2. Retrieved March 29, 2008, from www.asian-efl journal.com/pta_Nov_07_jm.php

Pallant, J. (2007)*. SPSS survival manual: A step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS for Windows.* England: Open University Press.

Philip, R., & Nicholls, J. (2009). Group blogs: Documenting collaborative drama processes. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, *25 (5)*, 683-699.

Pinkman, K. (2005). Using blogs in the foreign classroom: Encouraging learner independence. *JALT CALL journal*, *1*(1), 12-24.

Renandya, W.A., & Jacobs, G.M. (2002). Extensive reading: Why aren't we doing it? In J. C. Richards & W. A. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching* (pp. 295-302). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, E. H. (2003). Reading electronically: Challenges and responses to the reading puzzle in technologically-enhanced environments. *The Reading Matrix*, *3 (3)*, Retrieved March15, 2008, from http://www.readingmatrix.com/articles/hanson-smith/index.html

Warschauer, M., & Meskill, C. (2000). Technology and second language teaching. In J. Rosenthal (Ed.), *Handbook of Undergraduate Second Language Education* (pp. 303- 318). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Zorko, V. (2009). Factors affecting the way students collaborate in a wiki for English language learning. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, *25 (5)*, 645-665.

Appendix: Attitude Scale

Please Read the following items and circle the choice that best suits you.

Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD)

		SA	A	D	SD
1.	Reading in English is fun.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
2.	I like to read in English.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
3.	Reading English is boring.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
4.	Time assigned for reading classes is very short.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
5.	Reading in English is waste of time.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
6.	Reading is time consuming.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
7.	Reading should be related to everyday life activities.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
8.	Reading in English is enjoyable.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
9.	I prefer reading comprehension to other language skills.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
10.	I like to take more reading comprehension courses after this class is finished.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
11.	Reading is for learning but not for enjoyment.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
12.	There is nothing to be gained from reading texts.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
13.	Reading is a good way to spend spare time.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
14.	Reading excites me.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
15.	Reading texts **are not** usually good enough to finish.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
16.	Reading is rewarding to me.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
17.	Reading is worth spending time.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
18.	There should be more time for free reading during the class.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
19.	Reading helps me to increase my vocabulary.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
20.	Reading helps me improve other language skills.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
21.	I can improve my knowledge about grammar by reading.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
22.	I think reading in English is an easy task.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
23.	I want to improve my reading strategies	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
24.	Reading increases my critical thinking.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
25.	Reading **is not** important in our daily life.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
26.	Reading makes me anxious.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
27.	Reading helps us to become familiar with other cultures.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
28.	I **do not** have motivation to take part in reading class.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
29.	I am so relaxed in reading class.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)
30.	Reading is one of the important skills that everybody should learn.	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)

An Evaluation of English Practicum at Yarmouk University from Cooperative Teachers and Student-Teachers' Perspectives

Ahmad Mohamed Faleh AL-Magableh

This paper aims at evaluating the English Practicum at Yarmouk University in Jordan from cooperative teachers' and student-teachers' perspectives. Two five point Likert scale questionnaires have been developed to collect data from subjects who participate in this study. The practicum's seven scopes are investigated; organization, cooperative teachers, cooperative school, supervisor, workshop, student-teachers and school students. Findings of the study reveal that problems related to organization are transport, lack of a manual for the training course, appointing too many students for a supervisor and non-outlined teaching skills for the trainees. As for cooperative teachers, the program has problems such as absence of written training plan, lack of training courses for the trainers, infrequency in following students up and insufficient familiarization of student-teachers to essential teaching skills. There are also supervisor-related problems like impressionistic assessment, sensitivity and lack of solutions for students' problems. Concerning workshop, it has weaknesses like focusing on familiar theoretical pedagogical issues, not specifying in advance teaching/learning related subjects for discussion, infrequent workshops held and lack of training on using teaching aids. Problems connected to cooperative schools are scarcity of following trainees up by the principal, not allocating them an office, inappropriateness of the evening classes for training and confining every trainee to one cooperative teacher. On the other hand, student-teachers-related problems are embodied in using Arabic in the classroom, teaching skills to be acquired, academic qualification and classroom management. Being classified as an extremely critical problematic scope, school students show that they unconstructively influence the training process more than any other area in practicum. Problems associated to them include crowded classes, poor performance, lack of preparation and discussion and not doing their daily assignments.

Keywords: Cooperative teachers; Student teachers; Yarmouk; Practicum

1. Introduction

Many nations have arisen from rock-bottom shortly after reforming their educational policy and changing or renovating their curricula, particularly those taught in early primary cycle. Therefore, well-qualified and competent

teachers have critical roles to play in determining renaissance and prosperity of their countries (Shahin and Alexander, 2006 & Abo Nimreh, 2003). Fixation of scientific facts, good values and customs that the future generations are expected to embrace are extremely essential so that they would be able to accept and make do with every day challenges including cultural changes, increasing amount of knowledge and speedy pace of development (Almikhlaphi, 2005 & ALnaji, 2000). Achieving such a goal necessitates that importance of the critical role shouldered by formal and informal educational establishments be recognized. Rapid cultural changes need parallel changes in the educational system, its philosophy and role which can result in saving the face of the nation and maintain its appropriate popular way of living.

Interrelation of the factors forming the teaching/learning process including students, teachers and curricula needs to be taken into consideration in any efforts exerted for a successful educational reform. Although teachers' awareness of the content (Vocabulary and structures) of the courses they teach is crucial (AL-Shalabi, 1988) and has stolen the lime light when teacher training programs were firstly initiated, it might not guarantee effective teaching with appropriate outcomes. Having a curriculum suitable for students' age and social environment (Cochran, DeRuiter, & King 1993) which is taught by poorly professionally qualified teachers does not produce outcomes that meet expectations of educationists and decision makers. Hence, teacher education has increasingly become important in the last few decades to guarantee that teachers are professionally qualified. In light of this, training courses started to focus on effective teaching techniques such as questioning in the classroom, curriculum design, assignments and assessment. Findings of research (Cochran et.al., 1993) show that instead of giving students answers directly, providing pre-teaching activities that urge them to think critically, giving tangible examples and adopting formative assessment as an alternative to the summative assessment have highly improved students' achievement.

2. Background

Despite the giant leaps and rapid progress in education including modern curricula and teaching aids to facilitate the teaching/learning process, teacher's role is still perceived as crucial for securing interaction and communication necessary for guaranteeing appropriate outcomes (Bisher, 2005; Mahmood, 2001). A well trained teacher can, for instance, promote and simplify knowledge for students considering their social and cultural backgrounds and individual differences among them. Thus, teachers are expected to step down to meet students' level and use their daily routine activities to help them learn (Hamdan and Hajooj, 2006 & Teel and Minarik, 1992). Moreover, a professionally and academically qualified teacher exerts

effort to develop and reinforce his students' creative thinking. This creates positive attitude towards the course taught regardless of the extent to which it is difficult and helps them develop their personalities and hobbies properly so that they will be efficient citizens. In this regard, Miz'al and Mohamad (1985:33) emphasize that:

> Any educational reform depends on employing teaching staff who can comprehend purposes of the changes required and fulfill them to actualize the outcomes wanted. People interested in education in the Arab World have become highly concerned with these facts. Authorities and educational organizations have increasingly recognized the importance of restructuring teacher institutions, their activities and programs.

In light of these latest trends and experiences of other educational institutions in the Arab World and advanced countries, it is inevitable for people concerned to focus on teacher's pre and in-service training. This process needs to be continuous employing qualified people at the universities and experienced teachers at schools (Condon, Clyde, Kyle and Hovda, 1993). They must be immersed in the training process where they can gain purposeful, scientific experiences planned in advance. Such experiences can help them develop their own potentials which qualify them to precisely perform their roles (Mostafa, 2005; Abo Jado, 2001). These potentials are embodied in skills such as planning, visualizing, control, critical thinking, decision-making and problem-solving (Alsaid, 2001). In this way, we can help teachers who are just about to start their work to learn by doing as theorizing alone is not satisfying in the field of education. Theories are to be actualized (Diab, 1999).

Teacher pre-service training programs in the way outlined above can not be promising without having an effective practicum program where teachers get involved in the field and make do with various educational classroom-related situations taking an appropriate decision for each of them (Aljasar and Altamar, 2004 & Ammar, 1997). Wrapping up such programs, teachers may successfully start preparing and planning their lessons, performing teaching and assessing students properly.

Ministry of Education in Jordan called for the First Educational Reform Conference in (1987) to make use of the experiences available in the field. The conference recommended that universities participate actively in the educational reform. In particular, they are expected to shoulder the responsibilities of educational staff certification and pre-service teacher training to enable them perform their jobs effectively. In the late nineties, the Ministry held a conference at Jordan University where highly qualified staff in all Jordanian universities participated. Various specialized workshops were

arranged to reform the educational process. As a response for such attempts of reform, Jordanian universities started to qualify teachers professionally in the Ministry of Education granting them bachelor/master in education. On the other hand, pre-service teaching programs were inaugurated to improve quality of the educational outcomes then.

Therefore, the present study comes to shed light on one of these programs in Jordan. It is mainly concerned with pre-service training of English teachers at Yarmouk University. The study attempts to collect data from many sources available about potential problems that might curb the training process in all scopes of the program. This may identify areas in need of critical revision and help in adopting new procedures or suggesting changes in the training process and the way it is performed.

Pre-service training programs have been reported to have problems that may influence the extent to which student-teachers are professionally qualified. Having two cultures appears to be accounted as a factor hindering the training process. Jahin and Alexander (2006) indicate that student-teachers start their training with deeply rooted perceptions and beliefs, stemming from the process of their socialization, about the ideal English teachers and efficient teaching approaches they can implement. Paradoxically, Saudi students included in their study sample were keen on learning English and showed a highly sophisticated understanding of its culture although they often expressed their allegiance towards their own culture and language. Being cautious of getting more and more immersed in the target culture so that they will not be dislocated from their own one, student-teachers may not be intrinsically motivated in getting involved in an EFL-oriented training program, which can add more challenges facing teacher educationists. However, perceiving the target culture as a potential cause of the problems facing trainees in the practicum is not supported by any other study particularly in the Arab World, which necessitates that such territory be more thoroughly investigated.

The majority of the practicum problems in the Faculty of Education-Benha as pointed out by Aliy and Abed (2005) were related to organization. They mentioned that the practicum had problems such as lack of visual aids in the schools, lack of vacancies after graduation, allocation in the cooperative schools, a large number of students in classes, lack of offices for student-teachers, lack of references, scarcity of participation in school activities and carelessness of school administrative team. It is clear that these problems are not completely associated to organization; rather they are linked to various areas in the training program. Criteria that the researcher has drawn on in classifying them as organization-related problems may need to be more appropriately detailed. Similarly, problems related to the practicum in School

of Education at University of Ebb was focused on by Almikhlaphi (2005) who reported that the problems were presented in poor supervision, short period of training and theoretical rather than practical program. When students start the training program, more practice is expected to be center of the training activities instead of theorizing classroom teaching practices.

Problems facing student-teachers in the training process can be linked to administration-related factors. Alabadi (2004) reported five problems related to class teachers at Yarmouk University; lack of teaching aids, shortage of cooperative schools, students being not fully engaged in the training process, crowded classes and teaching on the behalf of the cooperative teachers. If supervisors had performed their roles properly, student-teachers would not have faced such problems. Following students up and appropriate coordination with cooperative school can eliminate such problems easily. Likewise, Aljasar and Altamar (2004) evaluated practicum in Kuwait University from students' perspectives. The conclusion they draw from the study is that administrative roles performed by the practicum training team, cooperative schools were identified as sources of problems for trainees. Moreover, teaching and educational potentials gained from training were found to be not satisfactory.

Identifying training problems that faced trainees and finding out the influence of gender and specialization on them was the main concern of Abo Nimreh (2003). He found out that there were no problems in the practicum related to its organization, or cooperative schools. On the other hand, there were problems linked to the supervisor such as abandoning student-teachers when they start practicing teaching, not checking their lesson plan books and being busy with students in the class while student-teachers are engaged in teaching. These problems may be due to the large number of students that the supervisor had to follow in various regions. Other problems were related to cooperative teachers as they did not offer the trainees any help and were not happy to have them in the class observing teaching, either. On the other hand, they did not use to attend the classes demonstrated by the student-teachers in the macro teaching stage. This shows that relation between trainees and cooperative teachers is characterized with sensitivity, which may be remedied by an orientation course for cooperative teachers to be based on mutual respect.

Student-teachers' attitude towards practicum and supervisor appear to be critical in determining the extent to which student get involved in the training process. Diab (1999) explored this area at Jordan University using a questionnaire for collecting the data. Findings of the study showed that student-teachers' attitude towards supervisors was generally positive, but it was negative towards the number of visits the supervisor paid to them. As for

organization of the program, their attitude was particularly positive towards the number of credit hours allotted for training, the extent to which the supervisor follows them up and having more than one cooperative teacher. On the other hand, the study signaled some problems in the practicum such as transportation and lack of teaching aids available in the cooperative schools. This does not only reflect a problem in the practicum, but it also shows scarcity of teaching aids at Jordanian schools- one of the sources that plays a crucial role in facilitating teaching and enhancing class atmosphere.

The way cooperative schools deal with student-teachers, on the other hand, is quite important. Studies show many problems related this aspect in particular. Naser's (1997) most prominent findings comprised not inviting student-teachers to attend staff meetings, no access to the library of the school, lack of interaction with their colleagues and scarcity of principal's cooperation in solving their training-related problems. A situation as such may give student-teachers the impression that they are strangers who are not welcome to stay at school, which may make them feel restless and skeptical. Thus, identifying student-teachers' impressions about the training process seems to be one of the primary concerns in planning and running the practicum. Zeatoon and Obeadat (1981) examined these impressions and found out that the practicum assisted student-teachers in forming teaching purposes for the classes they taught, using teaching aids appropriately and assessing students. Getting such feedback may help to a great extent in identifying areas in the program which need more attention where they can be amended to fulfill their purposes.

Some studies were not only concerned with identifying problems facing trainees at school, organizational or administrative, rather they attributed that personal factors; level of anxiety. In a study at Ein Shamis University, Radwan (2001) contended that there were major problems in the practicum embodied in maltreatment of cooperative schools and supervisor neither respected, nor paid attention to them. The problems were also related to unfamiliarity of the training courses, interaction with students, performing teaching, and obligations related to school and educational and scientific qualifications. The study confirmed that there was correlation between level of anxiety and practicum-related problems, which points to the importance of considering the psychological characteristics of the trainees side by side with the educational, administrative and organizational issues.

Arabic Practicum and suggesting means for developing it at Damascus University was Ammar's (1997) concern. He concluded that problems faced students during the training process were connected to shortage of cooperative schools, transportation, difficulty in getting an appointment with the supervisor, interference of the practicum with students' schedule at

school, difficulty of interaction with students, classroom discipline, authoritativeness, absenteeism and lack of punctuality of the supervisor and insufficient time allotted for observation and practice. It is clear that these problems are nearly related to all scopes of the practicum.

Other Studies were mainly concerned with efficiency of the training programs and the extent to which they guarantee student-teachers' professional qualification. In most of the studies, measures were suggested to ensure that the practicum is designed in a way to fulfill its purposes and end with promising outcomes. Alsa'eed (2006) suggests that before initiating the training process, there should be an orientation period where student-teachers professional needs are to be identified. He adds that more micro teaching is needed and the evaluation system is to be amended. However, he did neither detail the activities to be performed in the orientation period, nor did he elaborate on criteria for choosing supervisors.

Before implementing a program at a wide scale, educationists interested in the training process may need to experiment with the model they develop to estimate its efficiency. Findings of Hamdan and Hajhooj (2006) showed that the practicum that they run in AL-Agsa University was successful in developing students' positive attitude towards the teaching process. Senior students showed greater potentials in teaching and cooperative school and students' average did not have any influence on their training. As long as senior students were more academically qualified than the rest of the sample, it is self-evident that they would demonstrate teaching more appropriately than their junior peers.

Another study concerned with efficiency of the practicum is that of Mostafa (2005). Having evaluated the training program at Alsoweas Canal University, she concluded that it was effective in developing student-teachers' classroom performance and promoted some suggestions to elevate its efficiency such as focusing on professional qualification of trainees, developing workshops, preparing teacher guide and implementing information technology. Similarly, Bishir (2005) found out that the program of teacher education in the University of Ebb need to be thoroughly revised, emphasizing that it only met the needs of the secondary cycle and ignored those of the primary cycle. In order to make giant leaps as a result of implementing any educational reform, young learners' needs and characteristics in the nursery, kindergarten and primary cycle need to be considered.

Efficiency of Physical Education in developing performance trainees who were enrolled in the practicum at Mu'tah University was focused on by Khasawneh (2002). Results of the study showed that cooperative teachers were functional in guiding student-teachers and giving them an idea in the beginning of the training program as how to communicate and interact with

people at school. However, the extent to which cooperative teachers developed cooperative teachers' teaching skills was determined to be moderate. Correspondingly, Alnaji (2000) surveyed graduates of various specializations about the importance of the teaching skills and the extent to which they acquired them in the practicum at Mu'tah University. He employed a forty teaching skill scale divided into academic, cultural and professional areas. The study revealed that the extent to which the graduates acquired such skills was determined to be moderate. This can be as a result of shortage of frequent visits to schools by supervisors to make sure that cooperative teachers shoulder their training obligations correctly, and student-teachers are abided to the training schedule.

Students' gender and attitudes are likely to influence the efficiency of the training programs. In a survey comprehensive study accomplished by Almageedi (1998) for evaluating practicum at King Faisal University, the practicum seemed to be more successful in female schools than in male ones in terms of the roles performed by the supervisor, cooperative teachers and principals. Student-teachers' attitude towards the program was positive, which proves that the practicum was very efficient. Pieces of evidence in other studies (Miz'el and Mohamad, 1985) pointed out that the practicum was not successful in developing professional, scientific and personal potentials. Since that period teacher education has been maturing and made giant leaps of progress in terms of quality and quantity.

One means to check efficiency of the program is to compare it to other programs in terms of attainment, content and administration. Evaluating English practicum in the School of Education at Kuwait University was the purpose of Alshalabi's (1988) study. It investigated the extent to which it was identical to those in the developed world. He stated that the program was observant to the latest development in teacher education. Performance of the majority of the students was determined to be highly professional. However, the study indicated that trainees did not manage to use English correctly when interacting with students in the classroom.

The aim of Abid Alhameed (1988) was to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of the practicum from supervisor's and student-teachers' point of views in Nainawa Governorate Institute in Iraq. Student-teachers declared that the program had advantages such as writing lesson daily plan, performing teaching, shouldering responsibilities and managing classes. Nevertheless, there were some disadvantages such as shortage of teaching aids, complexity of teaching and insufficient time for training. Supervisors, on the other hand, assured that the program raised student-teachers' self-confidence, created positive attitude toward teaching, and gave trainees an idea about school management and actualization of teaching methods. Yet, they mentioned that

the practicum had some disadvantages like random distribution of trainees, scarcity of the teaching aids, carelessness of the administrative team and insufficiency of observation classes. It is clear that this study confined itself to two scopes in the training process and neglected the other important fields in the training program.

Although literature overflows with a huge number of studies focusing on training practicum at the Arab World level, English practicum, in particular, has rarely been cultivated. Alshalabi (1988) is the only study concerned with focusing on efficiency of the English training program.

More attention needs to be paid by researchers and educationists to English teacher education for many reasons. First, English is taught as a foreign language in the Arab World. Second, its teaching is heavily drawn on interaction, communication and actualization of teaching outcomes in students' daily lives, which is not the case for content course such as history, physics and science. Thus, it is irrational to generalize that student-teachers' training problems in the field are similar regardless of their specializations.

The second inappropriate feature in the studies conducted so far is that most of them rely heavily on students, even in evaluating themselves, as the only reliable source of data using the questionnaire. However, it is possible to vary sources of data by drawing on other parties participating in the program, or employing additional means for triangulation pieces of evidence (Evaluation cards, observation and interview), which may make the findings more objective and reliable.

Finally, most of the related literature was not comprehensive enough in searching the training programs. Except for the study of Almageedi (1998) conducted in King Faisal College in Saudi Arabia, one can always find that important scopes of the training programs were ignored by the researchers.

English practicum promoted at Yarmouk University is a multi-scope program where many parties cooperate in carrying it out. It has an important role in training teachers just about to start their jobs. They will be, as planned in this program, professionally qualified in order to play a part effectively in developing the teaching process and accommodate themselves to rapid educational changes and newly coming advancements in curricula and instruction. Planning, managing and performing such a crucial program, whose main concern is teacher pre-service professional and academic qualification, need revision and scrutinizing every now and then to ensure it fulfills its purposes and it is carried out appropriately. Accordingly, the present study has come in response to a field need presented in surveying problems and obstacles facing student-teachers during the training process. To achieve such a goal, the study focused on the English practicum including

its seven scopes; organization of the program, cooperative teachers, supervisor, workshop, cooperative school, student-teachers and school students.

In particular, the present study aims at answering the following research questions:

1. What are the problems facing English student-teachers in the practicum program from their perspectives due to
    1. Organization of the program?
    2. Cooperative teachers?
    3. Supervisor?
    4. Workshop?
    5. Cooperative school?
2. What are the problems facing English student-teachers in the practicum program from cooperative teachers' perspectives due to
    1. Student-teachers?
    2. School students?
3. What is the most critically problematic scope in the program; organization, cooperative teachers, supervisor, workshop, cooperative school, student-teachers, or school students?

The present study is expected to be significant for teacher education in Jordan for several reasons: First, it is the only study at the Jordanian scale that focuses particularly on the English practicum. At the Arab world level, there is only one study (Alshalabi, 1988) conducted for evaluating English teacher training program in the school of Education at Kuwait University. The vast majority of the studies investigate generally the training programs regardless of their specializations (Jahin & Alexander, 2006; Aliya & Abid, 2005; Abo Nimreh, 2003 & 2002; Radwan, 2001; Alnaji, 2000, Diab, 1999, Almageedi, 1998; Ammar, 1997; Naser, 1997; Miz'el & Mohamad, 1985; Abid Almajeed & Alhayani, 1988), or focus on the efficiency of the programs of other specializations such as social studies (Kamil & Hamdan, 2001), Islamics (ALkhawaldeh, 2003), Physical Education (Alnadaf and Abo Zemi', 2003; Khasawneh, 2002), Special Education (Alhadeedi, 1990 & 1991), Artistic Education (Alsaid, 2001) and Science (Salameh, 2000).

Second, the study explored all parties participating in the training program at one time, which has not been cultivated by any other study. This may help in uncovering highly objective findings that are likely to develop this field to a substantial extent.

Third, the study aims at identifying potential impediments that curb professional and academic training for Jordanian English specialists, which

makes it a reliable source of knowledge (facts about the educational field) for educationists interested in the development of the teaching/learning process.

Fourth, the study embodies a key source of feedback for people organizing and designing practicum programs at Yarmouk University, Jordanian universities and other Universities interested in this field at the World level to defuse problems that may negatively influence quality of the outcomes of such programs and guarantee that student-teachers gain appropriate teaching skills as planned.

3. METHOD

3. 1. Setting

Yarmouk University was established in the Northern part of Jordan in 1976. Decision was taken to inaugurate School of Education was in the academic year1988/1989. It had three department then; Education, Arts and Physical Education. In 1991, three more new departments emerged from the School of Education; Curricula and Instruction, Counseling and Educational Psychology. In 1992, Department of Physical Education became independent arising College of Physical Education. Similarly, in 2001, decision was taken to detach Department of Arts from the School of Education springing College of Beautiful Arts.

Nowadays, School of Education grants Bachelor, Diploma, Master and doctorate degrees in the following specialization:

1. Bachelor in Class Teacher, Child Education and Educational Psychology

2. Diploma in Curricula and Instruction and school Administration

3. Master in Curricula and Instruction of Arabic, English, Science and Social Studies, Information Technology, Educational Psychology, Measurement and Assessment, Educational Counseling, Educational Administration, Psychological Counseling, Vocational Education and Fundamentals of Education.

4. PhD in Curricula and Instruction of Arabic, English, Educational Psychology, Fundamentals of Education, Educational Administration, Measurement and Assessment and Educational Counseling.

The college aims at qualifying teachers, principals, supervisors and researchers in Education. The college performs many community service activities by arranging conferences, seminars, workshops and lectures for

training purposes. The college reviews regularly its academic plans of higher education so that they would be updated to the latest technological developments worldwide.

Department of Curricula and Instruction was established since 1991 in the School of Education at Yarmouk University in Jordan. It runs seven programs at the Diploma and Master levels and five at the doctorate level. The college aims at certifying EFL Teachers in the primary and secondary cycles to enrich their pedagogy-related knowledge and develop their occupational experiences. Major aims targeted in the department are to develop students' classroom teaching skills related to all specializations, giving students the opportunity to access latest research on pedagogy, developing students' analytical assessment skills of designing and evaluating curricula and enhancing their classroom management potentials.

Scientific research which aims at developing the educational process is one of the major concerns of the Department of Curricula and Instruction. The department also aims at designing and reforming curricula in Jordan and in the Arab World. It also participates in overcoming educational problems at the national scale. Finally, the Department has participated effectively in the Educational and teacher education in Yemen.

3. 2. The practicum Program

One of programs promoted in the Department of Curricula and Instruction is the six credit hour pre-service EFL teacher training practicum which aims at getting students immersed in actual teaching situations and developing their teaching competencies. It is designed to achieve three purposes. First, it gives EFL student-teachers opportunities to observe intensively cooperative teachers performing their duties in a real classroom environment. Second, it helps them actualize their teaching-related theories by planning, performing and evaluating teaching situations. Finally, the program provides a multi-source feedback where trainees will be oriented, observed and evaluated by the principal. Academically, they will have feedback from an experienced specialist, a supervisor, cooperative teachers and other student-teachers in the same school.

The program, which lasts for a whole academic term, includes four stages of training. Stage one is called "general observation" where trainees get themselves familiarized to school for two weeks and they observe activities that take place at a routine base there. In the second stage, they observe teachers preparing, planning, teaching, and interacting with students and evaluate them. This can last for six weeks. In the third stage, they start teaching partially for a whole month, whilst they teach full classes in the forth

month. In the last two stages, they are observed by cooperative teachers and supervisors where they get feedback following every class they teach.

Organization and management of the program are performed in the following way. Cooperative schools are spotted by contacting educational directorates in the region. Then, students will be allocated to appropriate schools in light of their preferences and social circumstances. As soon as students start the program, they are frequently followed up and observed by a team specialized in teacher education. In addition, student-teachers are expected to write reports describing various stages of the training process they have and reflect on their personal experiences in this regard. All this is a subject for discussion and retroflection by trainees and supervisors in the workshops held once a week at the university.

3.3. Participants

Population of the study contains thirty four cooperative teachers and thirty four English student-teachers; (26) males and (8) females. They were enrolled in the practicum in the first term in the academic year 2005/2006. As for sample of the study, it included all its population. Students were distributed to various schools in Irbid Governorate after making appropriate arrangement with cooperative schools in the region.

3.4. Instruments

Following the critical review of related literature, the researcher established that some scopes of the training programs were overlooked to a great extent; school students and weekly workshop. Data collection in some of these studies was more likely to be subjective. To avoid such mishaps (student-teachers evaluating themselves in various training skills), two separate questionnaires were developed to collect data needed for answering questions of the study. One questionnaire was for cooperative teachers and the other was for student-teachers where they evaluated one another. In addition to the items related to the scopes of the program, the questionnaire comprised background knowledge such as gender and name of cooperative schools. Cooperative teacher questionnaire contained (8) negative items on two main scopes; student-teachers and school students. Student-teachers questionnaire, on the other hand, included (21) negative items focusing on five scopes; organization of the program, cooperative teachers, cooperative school, supervisor and workshop. Sample of the study responded to the questionnaires on a five point Likert scale; extremely agree, agree, do not know, disagree and extremely disagree.

Content validity of the questionnaires was checked as five experienced university staff members at Yarmouk University reviewed them and wrote

comments on some of the items. The comments were taken into consideration in developing the items as some of them were deleted, modified or shifted to another scope.

Getting student-teachers immersed in the training process for 10 weeks to make sure that they were fully aware of the scopes of the practicum, questionnaires were distributed to 12 student-teachers and 6 cooperative teachers. Subjects filled in the questionnaires. Questionnaires were distributed to the same subjects who filled in them again in two weeks to check their reliability. Person formula was used to calculate reliability of the instruments employed. As long as reliability factor is correlation factor (Naser, 1997), it was determined to be 85.6 between student-teachers' responses in both cases and 85 for those of the cooperative teachers. Table 1 shows reliability factor of the seven scopes in the student-teachers and cooperative teachers' questionnaires.

Table 1
Reliability Factor of Student-teachers and Cooperative Teachers

Questionnaire	Scopes	Reliability	Total Reliability
Student-teachers	Organization	.86	.856
	Cooperative Teachers	.86	
	Cooperative School	.88	
	Supervisor	.84	
	Workshop	.84	
Cooperative Teachers	Student-teachers	.86	.85
	School Students	.84	

3.5. Data Collection and Analysis:

Questionnaires were distributed to cooperative teachers at their schools and to student-teachers when they were all present in one of the workshops. There were inquiries about some items where the researcher clarified them. Having the questionnaires filled in, I collected them for analysis.

To analyze the data, the researcher gave levels of Likert scale numerical values to estimate the extent to which problems are critical in each scope of the study. For example, (5) was given to for extremely agree, (4) for agree, (3) for do not know, (2) for disagree and (1) for extremely disagree. Data were processed by using SPSS program for calculating percentages and means for items in each scope were compared to one another to estimate the extent of their criticality as potential problems. The researcher suggested a scale, presented in Table (2) for such purpose.

In addition, means of percentages for main scopes of the study were calculated and compared to one another to find out the extent to which each one of them is problematic.

Table 2
Criticality of the Problem

		Mean	Total Means
1.	Criticality of the Problem	4-5	15-20
2.	Extremely critical	3-3.99	12-14.99
3.	Critical	2-2.99	8-11.99
4.	Moderate	1-1.99	4-7.99
5.	Low	0-0.99	0-3.99
	Extremely low		

3.6. Definition of Terms

Most of the terms used in this study do not necessarily need any definition because they are regularly used in it the field of research and education. Others, such as supervisor and workshop, were to be defined to avoid ambiguity. Supervisor is an academically and professionally certified person appointed in the practicum for the purpose of following up student-teachers' training in the field, checking the extent to which they shoulder their training responsibilities and assessing them at the end of the program. In other words, s/he is responsible for training a group of student-teachers in various cooperative schools and communicates with them as a representative for the university. Workshop is a weekly assembly the supervisor organizes in accordance with student-teachers' free time and their training obligations in the field. Agenda of the workshop are usually flexible as they may include students' feedback about the training process, direct and indirect micro teaching, or discussion of some pedagogical issues. Trainees are also likely to narrate some of the problems they face in the field and discuss suggestions as how to overcome them.

3.7. Procedures

The purpose of the study was to evaluate English Practicum at Yarmouk University in Jordan from student-teachers' and cooperative teachers' perspectives. All student-teachers who participated in the study were English seniors involved in the training practicum which lasts for four months. Passing the training program was the last university requirement to obtain their bachelor degrees in the teaching of English language. Students are usually given the chance to choose their cooperative school, but not their cooperative teacher, or supervisor who are appointed by the school and university respectively.

Reviewing literature up to date on teacher education, I developed two questionnaires. The first was for student-teachers and the second one was for cooperative teachers comprising. Validity of the questionnaire was checked by getting them reviewed by three university experienced English staff members. Many items were deleted in light of their comments when the questionnaires were in their primary versions. Reliability of the questionnaires was checked by using test-retest procedures employing Person formula. Total reliability of student-teachers' and cooperative teachers' questionnaires was determined to be 85.6 and 85 respectively.

In the last few weeks of the training program, the questionnaires were distributed to the two samples of the study where they responded. Then, they were collected. The responses were tabulated and prepared to be processed in the computer for statistical analysis by using SPSS.

Results were presented in tables in the same order of questions of the study. Next, findings related to the seven scopes investigated were discussed in light related literature up-to-date. Conclusions were deduced form the findings and training-related implications were suggested including an internet-based training model.

4. Results and Discussion

The broad goal of the study was to explore potential problems that face EFL student-teachers in their pre-service training program at Yarmouk University. Hence, means, percentages, and standard deviation of items in the questionnaire estimated to represent prominent problems are tabulated and discussed. Findings of the study are presented in three main sections in accordance with the questions of the study; student-teachers' perspectives, cooperative teachers' perspectives and comparison of the scopes.

4.1. Problems in the Training Program from Student-Teachers' Point of Views

This section includes findings related student-teachers' views with regard to five scopes of the program; organization, cooperative teachers, supervisor, workshop, and cooperative school.

4.1.1. Organization of the Program:

In order to identify problems related to organization of the program, 34 student-teachers responded to four items in the questionnaire on transport, number of students being supervised, teaching skill and training guide. As presented in Table 3, means, frequency and standard deviation of the items were calculated and compared to one another to estimate the extent to which they were critical.

Table 3
Organization of the Program (5 = strongly agree -1 = strongly disagree)

	1		2		3		4		5			
Item	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Mean	SD
01	4	11.76	1	2.94	---	---	12	35.29	17	50.00	4.08	1.31
02	1	2.94	3	8.82	5	14.70	11	32.35	14	41.17	4.00	1.10
03	3	8.82	5	14.70	5	14.70	14	41.17	7	20.58	3.50	1.23
04	2	5.88	7	20.58	4	11.76	13	38.23	8	23.52	3.52	1.23

Findings presented in the study show that the program appeared to be not well-organized - a situation which can add more impediments to the challenges trainees face in the field. Item 1 "The university does not provide student-teachers with means of transport to travel to the cooperative schools" has, for example, generated the highest mean (4.08), representing an extremely critical problem. Such a problem may be due to the fact that students do not ask for having such a service and the university must have assumed that students have their own means of transport. This finding comes in accordance with the findings stated by Alabadi (2004), Diab (1999) and Ammar (1997) who reported that student-teachers that had problems related to transport.

Item 2 "Student-teachers did not get a manual for the training course" has the second highest mean (4.00), which represents a critical problem for them. Having such a guide, they would be more aware of the activities they are going to observe and perform, not to mention that they could shoulder their obligations more appropriately. This finding does not agree with Abo Nimreh (2003) who argues that the program he investigated does not have organizational problems. This may be due to not including the training guide in the survey questionnaire he developed. However, it comes in accordance with the findings reported by Mostafa (2005).

Two other critical problems are presented in Item 3 "The supervisor is allotted many students to follow up" and Item 4 "Teaching skills to be mastered are not outlined for trainees" receiving the third and fourth means (3.50 and 3.52) respectively. When supervisors are in charge of training a huge number of students, in addition to their daily routine duties in the department, insufficient time for training purposes is spared, depriving students from having the right opportunities in order to develop themselves professionally. This is supported by Alsa'eed (2006), Almikhlafi (2005) Mostafa (2005), Bishir (2005), Diab (1999), and Radwan (2001) who conclude that more light needs to be shed on student-teachers' qualification in response to their training needs identified. On the other hand, to debrief students of the teaching skills they are expected to master at school will help them to be more focused and develop themselves gradually, overcoming challenges and solving obstacles in the training process. Having not done so

allows students to achieve only little progress. ALnaji (2000) declares similar findings. However, Zeatoon and Obeadat (1981) argue that student-teachers are familiarized enough to the teaching skills they are expected to perform before getting involved in the training program. They report that there is a correlation between theoretical courses they learnt and the way they perform teaching. The context of these findings is different from that of the present study as it was conducted 26 years ago.

4.1.2. Cooperative Teachers:

As the next scope investigated in the study, responses of student-teachers' on five items in the questionnaire related to cooperative teachers (providing a written plan, qualification as trainers, following students up, and familiarizing trainees to teaching skills) were analyzed in terms of their means, frequency and standard deviation. Table 4 represents the results.

Table 4
Cooperative Teachers (5 = strongly agree -1 = strongly disagree)

	1		2		3		4		5			
Item	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Mean	SD
01	1	2.94	1	2.94	2	5.88	19	55.88	11	32.35	4.11	1.64
02	9	26.47	3	8.82	---	---	11	32.35	11	32.35	3.35	0.87
03	6	17.64	7	20.58	2	5.88	8	23.52	11	32.35	3.32	1.55
04	6	17.64	7	20.58	2	5.88	8	23.52	11	32.35	3.32	1.55
05	4	11.76	8	23.52	5	14.70	10	29.41	7	20.58	3.23	1.34

Based on table 4, Item 1 "Cooperative teachers have not promoted trainees a written training plan" was ranked top as an extremely critical training problem related to cooperative teachers, generating the highest mean (4.11). Having an idea about the details of the program provides the opportunity for students to be familiarized to it. They could be well- prepared and stimulated to move to the next step as well. In contrast, when they are not provided with such a written plan, they are likely to be apprehensive and misguided. Perceived according to the scale as a critical problem, item 2 "Cooperative teacher needs training on how to deal with student-teachers and run the training program" was ranked second with a mean of (3.35). Training on how to deal with student-teachers and run the training process appears to be crucial. Thus, people in charge of running the training course may need to reconsider the way and the criteria on which cooperative teachers are chosen for participating in the training process. For instance, developing a list of academic and professional parameters can probably be of great advantage to draw on, which is likely to assure recruiting highly professionally qualified trainees. Standard deviation of this item was (0.87) which means that the majority of the trainees agreed it represented a critical problem for them. The program had three more moderate critical problems. Item 3 "Cooperative-teacher did not follow up my lesson plans" was (3.32). Sharing experiences

and feedback in such a rarely cultivated territory is quite important for trainees to be aware of their weakness as well as strengths and pledge more promising professional development. Similarly Item 4 "Student-teachers neither attended classes of their peers regularly, nor did they comment on them" had the mean (3.32). This means that trainees were deprived from exchanging ideas, critiquing one another and sharing pedagogical strengths as well as discovering others' weaknesses. Item 5 "Students-teachers were insufficiently familiarized to essential teaching skills" had the lowest mean score for familiarity to essential teaching skills. Such skills need to be one of the primary concerns of the cooperative teachers. Alabadi (2004), Aljaser and Altamar (2004), Abo Nimreh (2003) and Naser (1997) support these findings as they reported that cooperative teacher were not well qualified as trainers. They neglected trainees, let them teach on their behalf and did not follow them up. However, Khasouneh (2002) and ALmageedi (1998) state contrastive results as they mention that cooperative teachers are very effective and cooperative with student-teachers. This controversy may be due to different research contexts.

4.1.3. Supervisor

For supervisor, all student-teachers included in the sample of the study responded to four points presented in Table 5. These points focus on the roles s/he played in the training process; assessing their performance, type of relation with trainees, visits and solutions to their problems.

Table 5
Supervisor (5 = strongly agree -1 = strongly disagree)

	1		2		3		4		5			
Item	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Mean	SD
01	---	---	4	11.76	---	---	16	47.05	14	41.17	4.17	0.93
02	4	11.74	1	2.94	4	11.76	16	47.05	9	26.47	3.73	1.23
03	6	17.64	1	2.94	7	20.58	8	23.52	12	35.29	3.55	1.46
04	11	32.35	3	8.82	2	5.88	14	41.17	4	11.76	2.91	1.52

In light of the findings in the table above, supervisor seems to be not professionally qualified to interact with trainees, assess them and make use of their strengths and weaknesses. For instance, Item 1 "He did not draw on multi-references in assessing my performance; attendance, lesson planning, reports and class demonstration" had the highest mean score (4.17) with the lowest standard deviation (0.93), which indicates that the vast majority of the subjects (82.34%) agreed that they were not satisfied with the impressionistic way of assessment that the supervisor experienced, which is considered an extremely critical problem. He did not drew in assessing their performances on multi-references in doing that such as attendance, lesson planning, reports and class demonstration. The second highest mean (3.73) was determined to be for Item Two where nearly three fourths of the trainees

(73.52%) regretted that the supervisor did not manage to establish a good rapport with them as his relation with them was more likely to be sensitive and tense. This is classified as a critical problem in the practicum. Item 3 "The only visit he paid to school was to assess my performance" supported such piece of evidence as a critical problem. It got a mean of (3.32). Item 4 "He does not suggest solution to my problems" had the lowest mean score (2.91), representing a moderately critical problem. The main target of the training process is to raise trainees' awareness of their weakness to get rid of them and highlight their strengths to build on, which can only be achieved by frequent visits where rapport, negotiation, interaction and discussion can take place between trainees and their supervisor. These findings appear to be in agreement with those of Alsa'eed (2006) Almikhlafi (2005), Abo Nimreh (2003) and Radwan (2001) who assured that supervisors needed to be more professionally qualified as their supervision was characterized as ineffective and poor. However, the findings of the present study in this regard are not in line with those of Diab (1999) and Mageedi (1998). One interpretation for this dissimilarity is likely to be due to the nature of the relation between the supervisor and his trainees. Research findings objectivity may negatively be influenced by the researcher when he is the supervisor himself.

4.1.4. Workshop:

The study investigated four points including focus of the workshop, pedagogical issues for discussion, number of workshops held and teaching aids. Results related to the four items which were administered to students are presented in Table 6.

Table 6
Workshop (5 = strongly agree -1 = strongly disagree)

	1		2		3		4		5			
Item	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Mean	SD
01	---	---	4	11.76	---	---	16	47.05	14	41.17	3.50	1.26
02	4	11.76	1	2.94	4	11.76	16	47.05	9	26.47	3.11	1.38
03	6	17.64	1	2.94	7	20.58	8	23.52	12	35.29	3.14	1.47
04	11	32.35	3	8.82	2	5.88	14	41.17	4	11.76	2.91	1.37

It is clear that trainees got a very bad impression about agenda of the workshop held weekly and the way it is organized. There are three critical problems in this regard. The highest mean score (3.50) was for Item 1 "Weekly workshops focus on familiar theoretical pedagogical issues". Item 2 "The supervisor does not specify in advance some aspects of the teaching/learning process to be subjects for discussion in the weekly workshops" had the second highest mean (3.11). The third problem is presented in Item Three "Number of workshops at college for discussing key teaching issues is not sufficient", which had a mean score of (3.14). Item 4 "Workshops do not focus on how to use teaching aids in the classroom" had

the lowest mean score. It is classified according to the scale in the study as a moderately critical problem. A workshop would be more fruitful if trainees were aware of its agenda in advance. It would also be more beneficial if it tackled practical problems facing students in the field rather than focusing on theories which were covered thoroughly in other courses. To be efficient, they need to be held at a weakly base where trainees meet, discuss their problems and exchange experiences. These findings are in accordance with Aliy and Abed (2005), Bishir (2005), Almikhlafi (2005), Alabdi (2004) and Aljaser and Altamar (2004). However, they do not agree with Zeatoon and Obeadat's (1981) findings which emphasize that the training program helps students write teaching purposes, use teaching aids and assess students appropriately; some of the issues used to be discussed with students in the workshops or during the supervisory meetings.

4.1.5. Cooperative School:

In order to identify cooperative school-related problems, subjects responded to four items on lesson plan, evening classes, allocating offices for trainees and appointing more than one cooperative teacher. Table 7 presents the results of these items.

Table 7
Cooperative School (5 = strongly agree -1 = strongly disagree)

Item	1		2		3		4		5		Mean	SD
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
01	2	5.88	7	20.58	6	17.64	10	29.41	9	26.47	3.88	1.14
02	8	23.52	2	5.88	6	17.64	14	41.17	4	11.76	3.79	1.200
03	6	17.64	8	23.52	3	8.82	9	26.47	8	23.52	3.55	1.46
04	7	20.58	7	20.58	7	20.58	8	23.52	5	14.70	3.55	1.37

Based on the findings in Table 7, cooperative school did not meet trainees' expectations with regard to some activities related to the training process. Items included in this scope represent four critical problems in the practicum. Item 1 "The principal did not follow up my lesson plan book" had the highest mean score (3.88). This must have deprived them from getting benefits from her/his rich experience with regard to how to prepare a lesson. Moreover, when trainees are not followed up regularly, they may intend to neglect their training assignments and may not abide themselves to the system of the school. Item 2 "Evening teaching is not appropriate for training purposes" generated the second highest mean (3.79). Evening classes are likely to be problematic for them because of some social obligations or the slightly different education system. Item 3 "The principal did not allocate an office for student-teachers" got a mean score of (3.55). Not allocating an office for trainees might have embarrassed them as they had to use other teachers' offices and gave them problems because they did not have a specific a place to set, or keep their books and papers, either. Similarly, Item 4 "Appointing one

cooperative teacher (instead of two or more) minimizes to a great extent the experiences and knowledge that a trainee may gain" had a mean of (3.55). Trainees preferred to have two ,or more cooperative teachers, instead of one as this could have increased to great extent the experiences and knowledge that a trainee might get himself acquainted to. However, many administrative obstacles may prevent the principal from actualizing this at school. For example, some teachers may not be willing to act as cooperative teachers, or participate in the training program. Aliy and Abid (2005), Almikhlafi (2005), Alabadi (2004), Aljaser and Altamar (2004) Abid Ahameed and Alhayani (1988), Naser (1997) and Radwan (2001) report similar findings related to cooperative school such as crowded classes and lack of teaching aids, references and offices. However, Abo Nimreh (2003) is the only study to reveal that there are no cooperative school-related problems in the training program.

4.2. Problems from Cooperative Teachers' Point of View

This section includes results related to cooperative teachers' views with regard to student-teachers and school students.

4.2.1. Student-teachers:

Cooperative teachers responded to four items on a five point Likert scale to explore the extent to which student-teachers shoulder their training responsibilities properly. The items cover issues such as language of communication in the classroom, teaching skills to be acquired, academic qualification and classroom management. These items yielded the results presented in Table 8.

Table 8
Student-Teachers (5 = strongly agree -1 = strongly disagree)

Item	1		2		3		4		5		Mean	SD
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
01	2	5.88	12	35.29	5	14.70	6	17.64	9	26.47	3.23	1.34
02	2	5.88	12	35.29	4	11.76	11	32.35	5	14.70	3.14	1.23
03	5	14.70	9	26.47	2	5.88	13	38.23	5	14.70	3.11	1.36
04	2	5.88	12	35.29	5	14.70	12	35.29	3	8.82	3.05	1.15

It appears from the findings presented in Table 8 that student-teachers did not meet cooperative teachers' training expectations, giving an impression they were not able to show satisfactory performance. Item 1 "Courses taught at the university do not qualify student-teachers to teach appropriately" had the highest mean score (3.23). This necessitates that such courses be reformed. Zeatoon and Obeadat (1988) show contrastive findings as they mentioned that pre-training courses taught at the university equipped student-teachers with the teaching skills they need in the field. Item 2 "Teaching skills to be acquired are not specific" had the second highest mean

(3.14), which may indicate that targets of the training program were not clear enough. Such a situation can harmfully influence type and quality of training student-teachers receive. Miz'il and Mohamad (1985) and ALnaji (2000) draw attention to similar findings as student-teachers were not aware of the teaching skills that are expected to master. Item 3 "Cooperative teachers use Arabic to communicate with students in the class." This may not necessarily reflect student-teachers' lack of fluency in English, rather an action they take to differentiate among their students in terms of listening comprehension. For example, some teachers switch into Arabic, or translate what they say in English simply because some of the students do not understand spoken English. Such classroom practice needs not be encouraged as it may have some negative influences on the extent to which students can develop their potentials in listening; they will only listen to their English teacher and follow him up when s/he starts translating what they say in English into Arabic. Teachers' English fluency, on the other hand, may even deteriorate, as another negative influence of such classroom practice. ALabadi (2004) and Alshalbi (1988) signify the equivalent findings reporting that English teachers tend to switch into Arabic to communicate with students in the classroom. Finally, Item 4 "Cooperative teachers are not prepared theoretically as how to manage the class effectively" had the lowest mean (3.05). The way the classroom activities are managed (time, beginning of the class, interaction with students, reinforcement and end of the class) determines the extent to which English teachers are successful in running the teaching/learning process, a point which may need to be considered in the academic and professional teacher qualification. Almikhlafi (2005) reported similar findings pointing out more practice needs to be the focus of the training activities instead of theorizing classroom teaching practices. Moreover, Alsa'eed (2006) suggests that before initiating the training process, there should be an orientation period.

4.2.2. School Students:

In order to explore problems related to school student, the sample's responses on four items were statistically analyzed. The items included crowded classes, students' performance, lack of preparation and discussion and assignments.

School students can curb the training process to a great extent. They may not, for instance, cooperate or interact actively with student-teachers. Item 1 "Classes are crowded" received the highest mean score (4.32) and represented an extremely critical problem in the practicum. Standard deviation was (0.91) was low which indicates that the vast majority of the sample agreed (44.11%), or extremely agreed (38.23%) that crowded classes pose some impediments on the learning/teaching process. This may curb

trainees from dealing with students or managing the daily routine class activities. It is quite probable that they will also have problems when attempting to follow up, or interact with students individually. Considering that student-teachers have short experience in teaching, they are expected to face some difficulties in disciplining crowded classes as a result. Likewise, Item 2 "Students' performance is poor" generated the second highest mean (4.11) with a low standard deviation which was determined to be (0.94). On the other hand, Item 3 "Students neglect preparation and discussion" had a mean score of (3.97). Finally, Item 4 "Students do not do their daily assignments" had the lowest mean (3.58) in the scope. It is clear form Items 2, 3, and 4 that students with such characteristics can be disappointing for the trainees and disadvantaging the learning/teaching process, which may negatively influence the outcomes expected from the training program. Trainees have, as a consequence, to pay extra effort in simplifying the courses taught and observing individual differences, not to mention that the teaching process can be more salient and easy going when students are initiative, stimulated and high achievers. These findings are supported by Aliy & Abi (2005), Aljaser & Altamar (2004) and Ammar (1997). Table 9 illustrates potential problems of the program connected to school students from cooperative teachers' perspectives.

Table 9
School Students (5 = strongly agree -1 = strongly disagree)

Item	1		2		3		4		5		Mean	SD
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
01	1	2.94	1	2.94	1	2.94	14	41.17	17	50.00	4.32	0.91
02	1	2.94	1	2.94	4	11.76	15	44.11	13	38.23	4.11	0.94
03	---	---	8	23.52	3	8.82	5	14.70	18	52.94	3.97	1.26
04	2	5.88	9	26.47	3	8.82	7	20.58	13	38.23	3.58	1.39

5. Comparison of the Scopes

The present study covered seven scopes related to the pre-service training program. These include organization of the program, cooperative teachers, supervisor, workshop, cooperative school, student-teachers and school students. This section comes to hold a comparison among them to find out the extent to which each one of them curbs the training process. To achieve this, total means and standard deviation of responses on all items in the scopes included in student-teachers' and cooperative teachers' questionnaires were calculated.

As present in Table 10, Item 7 "School" students had the highest total means (16.00) with the lowest standard deviation among all scopes (4.26). It is ranked as the top extremely critical problematic scope with regard to curbing the training process as school students are likely to restrain student-teachers from performing as skillfully as original teachers. Having in mind that

student-teachers are mere trainers who do not participate actively in the assessment process and determining their final marks in the exams, school students may not interact with them as active and stimulated as they do with the original teachers. Thus, it is quite possible that they would not do their assignments or even participate actively in the classroom. Running the training program in an atmosphere as such can negatively influence to a great extent the outcomes expected from the training process. In light of this, orienting school students by the principal and cooperative teachers to have the impression that student-teachers are as influential and qualified in teaching and assessment as the original teachers is crucial. Aliy and Abid (2005) highlighted that the large number of students the student-teachers had to deal with can negatively influence outcomes expected from the training process

Related results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Comparison of Scopes of the Study

	Questionnaire	Item	Freq	%	Total Means	SD
1	Student-teachers	Organization of the program	34	100	15.11	4.68
2		Cooperative teacher	34	100	14.04	5.17
3		Cooperative school	34	100	14.38	4.85
4		Training supervisor	34	100	12.67	5.37
5		Workshop	34	100	14.79	5.09
6	Cooperative teachers	Student-teachers	34	100	12.55	5.01
7		School students	34	100	16	4.26

Item 1 "organization of the program" had a total mean of (15.11), giving it the second highest rank as a critical problematic scope. Training guide was missing, lack of means of transports and non-qualified cooperative teachers were the most prominent obstacles in this regard. Alsa'eed (2006) report similar findings mentioning that there should be orientation period and training need analysis before getting trainees involved in the practicum.

Workshop, as presented in item 5 is the third top critical problematic scope with a total mean of (14.79). This shows that trainees had a very negative impression about its efficiency in the training program as a result of its schedule, organization and management. Cooperative school (see Item 3) was ranked as the third critically problematic scope with a mean score of (14.38), which can be due to the way trainees are treated by the staff as well as the principal. Likewise, Item 2 indicates that cooperative teachers came forth as a critical problematic scope with a mean score of (14.04). Sensitivity, lack of rapport and lack of fruitful feedback on student-teachers' seem to be the major reason of such negative impression about these two items. Mostafa

(2005) revealed similar findings when he assured that workshops need to be reviewed and developed.

Items 4 and 6 "training supervisors" and "student-teachers" generated the lowest two means; (12.67) and (12.55) respectively. Drawing on the scale used in the study, they are classified as critical problematic scopes. This indicates that the obstacles facing students in the training process are also related to training supervisor. It appears that roles performed by the training supervisor and student-teachers are of a considerable importance in the practicum. Consequently, they may require revision and adaptation so that mishaps and defects can be remedied or eliminated for elevating efficiency of the training program. Supporting such findings, Alsa'eed (2006) indicates that supervisors need be chosen according to a group of professional and academic criteria. On the other hand, Alabadi (2005) assures that appropriate follow up and coordination with cooperative teachers can help to overcome student-teachers-related training problems.

6. Conclusions and Implications

Drawing on findings of the present study, a number of conclusions related to the three sections of the study can be elicited. In Section Number One, the pre-service training program under investigation appears to have problems in its five areas; organization, cooperative teacher, supervisor, workshop, cooperative school. These problems are determined to be of three levels; extremely critical, critical and moderately critical. It is quite likely that they can negatively influence the extent to which trainees get acquainted with the teaching skills they badly need in their daily routine practices at school.

Problems related to organization of the program include transport, lack of manual for the training course, appointing too many students for a supervisor and non-outlined teaching skills for the trainees. As for cooperative teachers, the program has problems such as absence of written training plan, lack of training courses for the trainers, infrequency in following students up and insufficient familiarization of student-teachers to essential teaching skills. There are supervisor-related problems such as impressionistic assessment, sensitivity and lack of solutions for students' problems. Concerning workshop, it has weaknesses like focusing on familiar theoretical pedagogical issues, not specifying in advance teaching/learning related subjects for discussion, infrequent number of workshops held and lack of training on using teaching aids.

Finally, there are other problems connected to cooperative schools like scarcity of following trainees up by the principal, not allocating them an office, inappropriateness of the evening classes for training and confining every trainee to no more than one cooperative teacher.

It can be concluded from the analysis of the findings related to viewpoints of cooperative teachers in Section Number Two that the program seems to have problems in two areas; student-teachers and school students. Student-teachers-related problems classified as critical include using Arabic in the classroom, teaching skills to be acquired, academic qualification and classroom management. This means that such problems can hinder the training process. However, problems associated to school students, the corner stone of the teaching /learning process, give the impression that they unconstructively influence the training process more than any other area in the study. Two of these problems are extremely critical (crowded classes and poor performance) and some are critical (lack of preparation and discussion, and not doing daily assignments). Aliy and Abed (2005) show similar finding with regard to the negative influence of crowded classes on the training process.

Comparison of the seven scopes of the study shows that the only extremely critical area in the practicum was school students who appear to be the most influential factor that can probably curb the training process. The other six scopes were classified as critical in terms of the problems they include. Findings of the present study seem to show that the program did not satisfy student-teachers' expectations and proved that it was not sufficiently functional to qualify them professionally. These findings neither agree with Hamdan and Hanhooj (2006) who mentioned that trainees had positive attitude towards the program. They did either agree with Mostafa (2005) who found out that the training program he investigated was effective in developing student-teachers' performance in teaching.

More attention needs to be paid for organization of the program where issues related to availability of transport, manual for the training course, number of trainees per a supervisor, roles of supervisors and skills of teaching targeted be appropriately planned before initiation of the training process. Workshop is expected to focus on practical problems facing student-teachers in the classroom rather than theoretical issues. Communication and interaction among all parties participating in the training process are to be enhanced and developed where ideas, suggestions and instructions can be exchanged smoothly. For more details, see a suggested internet-based pre-service training alternative program in Appendix One.

Academically and professionally qualified cooperative teachers are to be chosen according to a group of training-related professional criteria. A scale can be developed for this purpose including qualification, experiences in supervision, teaching and training, willingness of participation in training, familiarity to the training program, behavior at school and relation to colleague. Head of the training program needs to consider moral and financial

support for principals and cooperative teachers to ensure that they follow up student-teachers and participate actively in assessing them.

Student-supervisor relation is to be based on mutual respect and rapport. Criteria for multi-reference formative assessment of student-teachers need to be developed. These may include assignments, reports, teaching performance, cooperative teacher assessment, principal assessment, absenteeism, appearance and interaction with the supervisor.

More courses on methods of English teaching and assessment are necessarily required before getting student-teachers involved in the training process. Orientation for school students is quite important to have the right impression about the trainees and purposes of training. Immersing student-teachers in situations where they can familiarize themselves to employing computer assisted language learning in the classroom. Student-teachers' attention should be drawn to the importance of using English, not Arabic, as a means of communication during the training period; teaching and contacts with students. Peer critiquing is of a considerable importance for giving student-teachers feedback on the classes they demonstrate.

Caution may need to be considered in interpreting findings of the present study. They can only be generalized to Jordan or to any other country of similar training context. In particular, they are confined to English practicum at Yarmouk University in the academic year 2005/2006, cooperative English teachers and English student-teachers in the practicum.

A further step may include investigating means of stimulating school students for a more active participation in the training process, efficiency of the practicum in light of variable like cooperative teacher' academic and professional qualification and a comparison of efficiency of a traditional training program to an internet-based model.

The Author

Ahmad Mohamed Faleh AL-Magableh (Email: amfmagabeh.2005@yahoo.com or magableh@operamail.com) is Assistant Professor, TEFL at the College of Languages and Translation, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia. His main area of interest is EFL writing.

References

Abedalhameed, K., & Alhayani, K. (1988). An Evaluation of Practicum in Nainawa Governorate Teacher Institute. *Educational Journal, 5*(16), 179-2001.

Abo Jado, S. (2001). Modern Trends in Practicum. Institute of Education, ANRAWA-Yunisco-Amman.

Abo Jahjooh, Y., & Hamdan, M. (2006). A Suggested Model for Developing Practicum for Students of Primary Cycle Department in the School of Education at Alagsa University. *Studies in Curricula and Instruction, 114*, 195-239.

Abo Nimreh, M. (2003). Problems Facing Students in the Educational College (ANRAWA-Amman) enrolled in the Practicum. *Student-teachers Journal, 1&2*, 69- 85.

Alabadi, H. (2004). 'Problems of Practicum as Perceived by Student-teachers Specialized as Class Teacher Versus their relation to Student-teachers' Attitudes Towards the Teaching Profession', Dirasat, Educational Studies, 31 (2) 242-253.

Al-Hadeedi, M. (1990). Needs of in-Service Training Programs for Special Education Teachers in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: A Survey Study. *Dirasat, Educational Sciences, 17*(4), 145-172.

Al-Hadeedi, M. (1991). Efficiency of in-Service Training Programs Promoted for Special Education Teachers in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. *Dirasat, Educational Sciences, 20*(2), 170-192.

Aliy, M., & Abed, M. (2005). Student Teaching Problems by the English Language Preservice Teachers. *Curriculum and Instruction, 104*, 3-29.

Aljasar, S., & Altamar, J. (2004). An Evaluation of the Practicum in the School of Education at Kuwait University from student-teachers' Perspective. *Journal of Educational Sciences, 5*, 75-102.

Almageedi, H. (1988). An Evaluation of Practicum in the College of Education at King Faisal University. *Journal of Arab University Union, 33*, 169-222.

AlMikhlafi, M. (2005). A Suggested Program for Developing practicum in the School of Edcuation at Ebb University. *University Researcher, 8*, 133-154.

Alnadaf, A., & abo Zem'i (2003). An Analytical Study of the Most Important Elements in Functional Teaching of Special Education Practical Courses. *Mu'tah for Studies and Research, 18* (1), 281-309.

Alnaji, H. (2000). An Evaluation of Pre-Service Practicum at Mu'tah University from Graduates' perspectives. *M'utah for Studies and Research, 15* (3), 179-205.

Alsa'eed, S. (2006). Practicum and Preparing Future Teachers. *Studies in Curriculum and Instruction, 113*, 13-28.

Alsaid, M. (2001). Efficiency of a Suggested Program for Developing Art Education Student-teachers' Critical Thinking and its influence on the Outcomes of the Teaching Process. *Studies in Curricula and Instruction, 71*, 183-221.

Alshalabi, F. (1988). An Evaluation of English Practicum in College of Education at Kuwait University. *Educational Journal, 5* (17), 75-97.

Ammar, S. (1997). Arabic Practicum and Means of Developing it: Field Study of Diploma Students in the School of Education at Damascus University. *Arabic Journal of Education, 17* (2), 2001-252.

Bishir, Y. (2005). A Suggested Educational Perspective for Teacher Education and Development in the School of Education at University of Ebb. *University Researcher, 8*, 93-124.

Cochran, K., DeRuiter, J., & King, R. (1993). Pedagogical Content Knowing: An Integrative Model for Teacher Preparation. *Journal of Teacher Education, 44* (4), 263-272.

Condon, M., Clyde, J., Kyle, D., & Hovda, R. (1993). A Constructivist Basis for Teaching and Teacher Education: A Framework for Program Development and Research Graduate. *Journal of Teacher Education, 44* (4), 273-278.

Diab, T. (1999). Student-teachers' Attitudes towards Practicum at Jordan University: An Evaluative Study. *Dirrasat, Education Sciences, 26* (1), 142-164.

Jahin, J., & Alexnder (2006). Saudi EFL Student-teachers' Beliefs about Language learning: The Impact of a Pre-service Teacher Education Programme. *Studies in Curriculum and Instruction, 110*, 1-30.

Kamil, M. (2001). Efficiency of Academic and Professional Programs in Equipping Student-teachers with Skills of Teaching Social Studies in the College of Education at Abha University. *Studies in Curricula and Instruction, 68*, 177-211.

Khasawneh, M. (2002). Efficiency of Maths Cooperative Teacher in Developing Student-teachers' performance. *Mu'tah for Studies and Research, 17* (5), 113-138.

Khawaldeh, N. (2003). The Extent to Which Student-teachers Observe Teaching Potentials Necessary for Teaching Islamic courses in the Primary Cycle. *Mu'tah for Studies and Curricula, 18* (1), 91-117.

Mahmood, S. (2001). Identifying Training Needs for Teachers in the Commercial, Technical Institutes. *Studies in Curricula and Instruction, 70*, 113-135.

Ministry of Education. (1988). First Educational Reform Conference, a Special Edition as an Alternative for the Numbers 3 & 4. *Journal of Risalat AMo'alim, 19*. The Whole Volume.

Miz'il, J., & Mohamad, D. (1985). An Evaluation of Performance of Teacher Education Establishments in Qualifying Teacher. *Educational Journal, 5*, 32-52.

Mostafa, N. (2005). Efficiency of a Suggested Program in Enhancing Student-teachers' Performance in the Primary Cycle (Science) in Light of the Latest and trend. *Journal of Science Education, 1*, 131-180.

Naser, A. (1997). Problems Facing Field and Class Teachers in Practicum. *Journal of College of Education, University of Almansourah, 34*, 225-262.

Radwan, E. (2001). Problems in the Practicum versus Student-teachers' teaching-related anxiety. *Studies in Curricula and Instruction, 74*, 149-192.

Salamah, A. (2000). Influence of Some Variables on Equipping Pre-Service Science Teachers the Potential of Writing Behavioral Teaching Purposes by Using Bloom Strategy for Mastering Teaching. *Studies in Curricula and Instruction, 67*, 101-130.

Teel, K., & Minarik, L. (1992). Learning to Teach Aaron: A Beginning Teacher Story of Literacy Instruction in an Urban Classroom. *Journal of Teacher Education, 43*(2), 116-127.

Zeatoon, A., & Obeadat, S. (1984). An Analytical and Evaluative Study of Practicum at Jordan University. *Dirasat, Educational Sciences, 11* (6), 157-175.

Appendix One
An Internet-Based Practicum Model

The purpose of promoting such an Internet based practicum is save supervisor's time, give her/him more chances to follow up trainees and draw on multi-references in assessing them. The training process can also be run more smoothly simply because principals, cooperative teachers and student-teachers can contact and interact with the supervisor and head of the program easily. So, each party will be aware of the training details, targets, activities and stages.

Goals

Practicum program general goals promoted in this model are to give student-teachers the chance to explore the teaching process, get them familiarized to the teaching-related daily duties performed by typical teachers at school and practice what they have learned in a real classroom. Thus, they will be equipped with the skills necessary for running curricula and extra-curricula activities when they practice teaching. The trainees are also expected to e-mail their supervisor daily reports on their experiences and the problems they face at school.

College of Education

College of Education needs to inaugurate an Internet site for the practicum where access will be available for all parties participating in the training process. A training guide including targets, activities, assignments, stages of training, and responsibilities of principals, trainers and trainees can be thoroughly elaborated. Conferencing, for example, can be performed by the supervisor with trainees via the "chat access" discussing their performance and giving them guidance, which can save a lot of time.

Supervisor

The supervisor plays a critical role in the extent to which the training process is fruitful. Therefore, s/he needs to be chosen according to specific academic and professional criteria. A master holder in curricula and instruction with a considerable experience in teaching and supervision can be convenient. The supervisor pays frequent visits to trainees where they will receive feedback orally in addition to reports on their performance via their e-mails. Bearing in mind that the supervisor will be squeezed by so many obligations related to trainees, s/he needs not be assigned more than ten students to follow up at schools.

Cooperative teachers

Cooperative teachers are chosen according to a number of criteria including experience, commitment, qualification and professional performance. A training course is to be designed for cooperative teachers before getting student-teachers enrolled in the training process. It can focus on stages of the training program, skills of teaching targeted, way of assessment and interaction with the trainees. All these details should be available on the web site of the program where cooperative teacher can refer to any time they like.

Guiding student-teachers in all the stages of training (general observation, specific observation, partial teaching and full teaching), attending classes and giving feedback are some of the responsibilities the cooperative teachers are expected to perform. They write the supervisor regular reports via the Internet informing her/him about the progress trainees perform. Simultaneously, the supervisor e-mails them feedback on their reports giving them instructions as how to deal with the trainees and remedy their weaknesses. Frequent contacts with the supervisor are to be performed in order to make him aware of the training targets fulfilled so far and get an idea about those yet to be tackled. The cooperative teachers can always visit site of the practicum to gain a better insight of the stages of training, teaching skills to be acquired and targets that trainees should meet.

Cooperative Schools

Cooperative school staff is expected to respect student-teachers and treat them exactly as typical teachers in terms of their rights as well as obligations. Getting trainees familiarized to school facilities and its administration system is crucial at the beginning of the training course. Principals need to follow them up attending some of the classes they teach and giving them guidance when necessary as how to make do with challenges. The principal needs to e-mail the supervisor reports regularly. He can also make sure that the training process is performed properly by visiting site of the practicum and comparing its agenda to what students do at a particular time.

Student-teachers

Student-teachers are supposed to observe cooperative school system and abide themselves to its regulations. They should also shoulder their responsibilities at school planning, teaching, assessing and participating in the extra-curricula activities. They need to be extremely aware of the importance of using English in the classroom as a means of communication and interaction with students. Moreover, their relations with the principal,

cooperative teachers, and other staff need to be based on good rapport and respect. Daily reports and forms to be filled according to specific dates need to be e-mailed to the supervisor as they will be one of the references of assessment. The supervisor will, of course, e-mail student-teachers feedback on their assignments. No less than three reports to be written by every trainee on classes demonstrated by their colleagues. Such reports will focus on peers' strengths and weaknesses in brainstorming, class management, reinforcement, class atmosphere, discipline, questioning and end of the class. Following discussing the report with the demonstrator, it will be e-mailed to all trainees attached to a covering letter where background information about the demonstrator, observer, class and time and place of demonstration will be thoroughly detailed. Thus, trainees will be aware of their colleagues' pedagogical strengths and weaknesses in different teaching contexts.

Observation

A. General Observation

In this stage, student-teachers get themselves familiarized to facilities available at school such as administration section, staff offices, laboratories, classrooms, yards, playground, library,...etc. A report is to be prepared describing their experiences in this regard using forms designed for this purpose available in the practicum web site. The period needed for this kind of observation is a week.

B. Teaching-Related Observation

Student-teachers observe cooperative teachers for a couple of weeks. In the second week, they are expected to write reports in general on the classes they attend. In the third and forth weeks, they fill in forms available in the practicum web site and e-mail them back to the supervisor. Subjects to be covered may include lesson plan, method of teaching, techniques employed, teaching aids, classroom management, class atmosphere, reinforcement, assignments and assessment.

Micro Teaching

At this stage, student-teachers start teaching a part of the class in the second month for five-twenty minutes. Cooperative teachers observe and give feedback after the class. They e-mail the supervisor reports on the progress the trainee is making.

Macro Teaching

Trainees start teaching no less than ten full classes every week for two months. Cooperative teachers observe them writing comments pointing out their strengths and weaknesses and give them feedback following each class.

They keep the supervisor updated about the trainee's performance by filling in forms prepared for this purpose which is e-mailed to her/him.

Workshop

The workshop is held by the supervisor once a week to discuss student-teachers' training problems and suggest relevant solutions rather than getting students engaged in theoretical issues.

Assessment

Supervisors, cooperative teachers and principals participate actively in assessing student-teachers according to specific references known to all parties participating in the training process. These may include the following student-teachers' professional behavior, communication and interaction with their peers, cooperative teachers, principals, students, reports and assignments. Forms of assessing student-teachers by the supervisor, cooperative teachers and principal are to be available in the practicum web site, which enables supervisors to employ successful, multi-reference assessment.

Appendix Two
Student-teachers' Questionnaire

① agree   ② Extremely agree   ③ Do not know   ④ disagree   ⑤ Extremely disagree

Organization of the Program

	Item					
1.	The university does not provide student-teachers with means of transport to travel to the cooperative schools.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.	Item 2 "Student-teachers did not get a manual for the training course.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3.	The supervisor is allotted many students to follow up.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4.	Teaching skills to be mastered are not outlined for trainees.	①	②	③	④	⑤

Cooperative Teachers

	Item					
1.	Cooperative teachers have not promoted trainees a written training plan.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.	Cooperative teacher needs training on how to deal with student-teachers and run the training program.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3.	Cooperative-teacher did not follow up my lesson plans.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4.	Student-teachers neither attended classes of their peers regularly, nor did they comment on them.	①	②	③	④	⑤
5.	Students-teachers were insufficiently familiarized to essential teaching skills"	①	②	③	④	⑤

Supervisor

	Item					
1.	He did not draw on multi-references in assessing my performance; attendance, lesson planning, reports and class demonstration.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.	The supervisor did not manage to establish a good rapport with them as his relation with them was more likely to be sensitive and tense.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3.	The only visit he paid to school was to assess my performance.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4.	He does not suggest solution to my problems.	①	②	③	④	⑤

Workshop

	Item					
1.	Weekly workshops focus on familiar theoretical pedagogical issues". Item 2 "The supervisor does not specify in advance some aspects Weekly workshops focus on familiar theoretical pedagogical issues.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.	The supervisor does not specify in advance some aspects of the teaching/learning process to be subjects for discussion in the weekly workshops.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3.	Number of workshops at college for discussing key teaching issues is not sufficient.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4.	Workshops do not focus on how to use teaching aids in the classroom.	①	②	③	④	⑤

Cooperative School

	Item					
1.	The principal did not follow up my lesson plan book.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.	Evening teaching is not appropriate for training purposes.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3.	The principal did not allocate an office for student-teachers.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4.	Appointing one cooperative teacher (instead of two or more) minimizes to a great extent the experiences and knowledge that a trainee may gain.	①	②	③	④	⑤

Appendix Three
Cooperative Teachers' Questionnaire

① agree   ② Extremely agree   ③ Do not know   ④ disagree   ⑤ Extremely disagree

Organization of the Program

	Item					
1.	Courses taught at the university do not qualify student-teachers to teach appropriately.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.	Teaching skills to be acquired are not specific.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3.	Cooperative teachers use Arabic to communicate with students in the class.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4.	Cooperative teachers are not prepared theoretically as how to manage the class effectively.	①	②	③	④	⑤

School Students

	Item					
1.	Classes are crowded.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.	Students' performance is poor.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3.	Students neglect preparation and discussion.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4.	Students do not do their daily assignments.	①	②	③	④	⑤

Recast and Its Impact on Second Language Acquisition

Sasan Baleghizadeh, Shahid Beheshti University, G.C. Iran
Heidar Abdi, Shahid Beheshti University, G.C. Iran

This paper is an attempt to provide a brief review of recast and its various types. Recast has been defined by many researchers whose definitions are subtly but significantly different. In most of these definitions, the researchers have focused on correcting learners' implicitly in a communicative context. Although recast has some advantages like facilitating the delivery of complex subject matter, the most outstanding disadvantage of it is its ambiguity, which at times, may not help learners notice their mistakes. Up to now there have been many studies of the role of recast in second and foreign language acquisition. These studies have taken place in classroom contexts and in native speaker (NS)/non-native speaker (NNS) dyadic situations in addition to experimental studies in laboratory contexts. In these studies the greater effectiveness of recasts lies in situations where learners are given additional cues that help them recognize recasts as feedback on error.

1. Introduction

Recast and its role as corrective feedback is a controversial issue among second language acquisition (SLA) researchers. Although simple and straightforward, recasting is a complex activity the interpretation of which is influenced by discourse contexts (Oliver, 1995) and people's intentions. However, studies of recasts set narrow discourse contexts resulting in contradictory findings and limiting our full understanding of the effects of recasts (Nabei & Swain, 2002).

The kind and amount of feedback the students should receive remain an interesting research question because of the pedagogical implications of the issue on foreign language (Fl) learning and teaching. However, there are not enough empirical data to support possible answers to that question, even though it is an issue related to language teaching and learning practice. Most of the research on feedback has dealt with the role of negative feedback in foreign and second language acquisition. Among the studies that have addressed this issue are those that have only described the kind of feedback that occurs between NS and NNS (e.g., Oliver, 1995). In second or foreign

language contexts, researchers have mostly described the kind of feedback that takes place in a second language classroom and the uptake of each (e.g. Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

Studying and analyzing the kind, amount and effect of feedback that students receive during the process of language learning contribute to an appropriate environment for language learning, especially in EFL contexts in which classrooms are the main sources for language learning and the teachers (in some cases) are the only source learners expect to communicate with, and therefore, teachers are bound to correspond to the learners' expectations in terms of questioning and feedback (Farooq, 2007). In this sense as well as language teaching methodology to be used, teachers must decide on the emphasis laid on oral activities (i.e. choosing between form and content) and hence, the kind of feedback to be given.

2. Different kinds of feedback

Recasts are just one of the several possible corrective strategies that teachers employ to deal with learner errors. Lyster and Ranta (1997) identified five corrective strategies other than recasts (i.e. explicit correction, clarification requests, metalinguistic information, elicitation and repetition):

- Explicit correction: teacher supplies the correct form and clearly indicates what the student has said was incorrect.
- Recasts: teacher reformulates all or part of the student's utterance but does not explicitly say that the student's utterance is wrong.
- Clarification requests: teacher uses phrases such as "*Pardon?*" and "*I don't understand.*"
- Metalinguistic information: teacher provides comments, information, or questions related to well-formedness of the student's utterance, such as "*C'est masculine.*"
- Elicitation: teacher directly elicits a reformulation from students by asking questions such as "*How do we say that in French*?" or by pausing to allow students to complete teacher's utterance, or by asking students to reformulate their utterance.
- Repetition: teacher repeats the student's ill-formed utterance, adjusting intonation to highlight the error.

As Figure 1 shows, Long and Robinson (1998) place recasts in the category of implicit negative evidence. In their description of different types of focus-on-form procedures, Long and Robinson (1998) include such explicit activities as writing target forms on the board, underlying the key feature, pronouncing that feature with exaggerated stress, and having students repeat those same words. Unlike recasts, these activities would be characterized as explicit feedback on error. Recasts are distinguished from other kinds of focus-on-

form procedures because they are not explicit, do not isolate the features of language form that are the focus of feedback, and do not interrupt -even briefly- the flow of meaningful interaction.
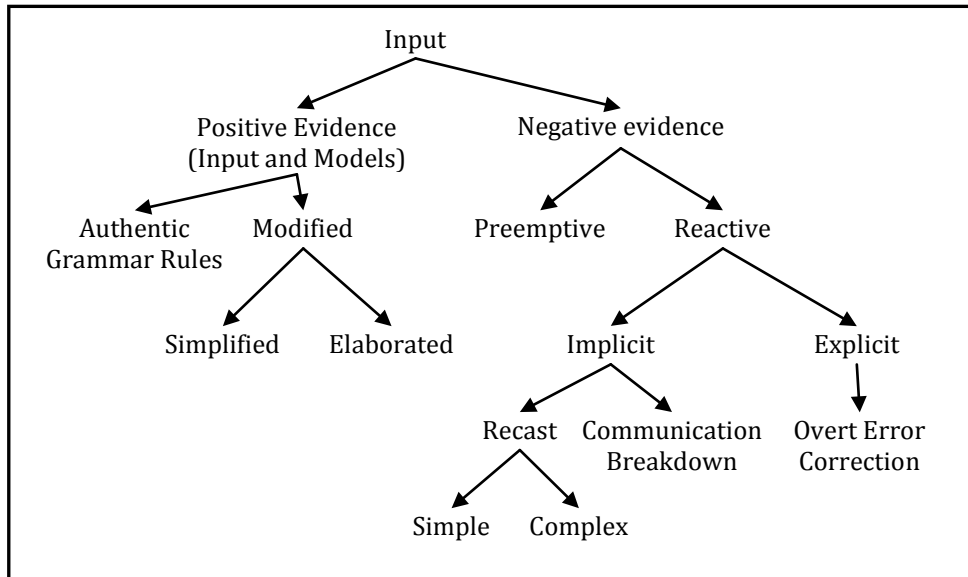

Figure 1. Types of input for second language acquisition (Long & Robinson, 1998)

According to Ellis and Sheen (2006), whether recasts supply positive or negative evidence depends on their characteristics; they can constitute positive evidence alone (i.e. their corrective force is not recognized by the learner) or both positive and negative evidence. Although there is evidence that recasts affording just positive evidence can facilitate acquisition, it remains possible (but not yet demonstrated) that recasts that supply both positive and negative evidence are even more effective.

3. What is a recast?

Researchers operate with a general definition of recasts, though with a few exceptions, they have made no attempt to investigate categories of recasts in accordance with their differentiating characteristics (Ellis & Sheen, 2006). Lyster and Ranta (1997) simply counted recasts, while Lyster (1998), in a further analysis of the same data, distinguished four types of recasts. Even when researchers acknowledge that recasts are variegated, they are likely to generalize their role in the acquisition of an L2 as if they possess a homogeneous identity.

Here are some definitions of recasts by a number of researchers:

- Long (1996, p. 434): Recasts are utterances that rephrase a child's utterance by changing one or more components (subject, verb, object) while still referring to its central meaning.
- Lyster and Ranta (1997, p. 46): Recasts involve the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance minus the error.
- Braidi (2002, p. 20): A response was coded as a recast if it incorporated the content words of the immediately preceding incorrect NNS utterance and also changed and corrected the utterance in some way (e.g. phonological, syntactic, morphological, or lexical).
- Long (2006): A corrective recast may be defined as a reformulation of all or part of a learner's immediately preceding utterance in which one or more nontarget-like (lexical, grammatical, etc.) items are replaced by the corresponding target language form(s), and where, throughout the exchange, the focus of the interlocutors is on meaning not language as an object.
- Sheen (2006): A recast consists of the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance that contains at least one error within the context of a communicative in the classroom.

These definitions are subtly but significantly different. Neither Lyster and Ranta's (1997) nor Braidi's (2002) definitions made reference to the teachers' and learners' orientation to the discourse-that is, whether the primary focus of attention is on language as an object or on message-conveyance. Given the context in which their studies were carried out (immersion classrooms and task-based interaction), it can be assumed that the primary focus was on the message, although it would seem likely that, even in these contexts, some repair sequences occurred that were motivated by form rather than message. Indeed, their definitions of recasts would permit the inclusion of reformulated utterances from interactions that arise in traditional, form-focused lessons. Long's (1996, 2006) definitions seek to exclude such form-focused reformulations. To qualify as recast, the reformulation must occur in the context of message-centered communication. There is, however, an interesting difference between the two definitions offered by Long. Long's (1996) definition states that a recast rephrases an erroneous learner utterance while still referring to its pivotal meaning. In a more recent work, Long's (2006) definition requires that throughout the exchange, the focus of interlocutors is on meaning not on language as an object. The difference is crucial and probably reflects Long's desire to exclude reformulations that focus on the meaning of a learner utterance but are clearly didactic (from the perspective of the person doing the recasting) rather than communicative (i.e., they do not constitute an attempt to solve a communication problem) (Ellis & Sheen, 2006).

Hauser (2005) raised a different objection regarding the way recasts have been defined and coded. He pointed out that definitions such as Long's (1996) make reference to recasts that maintain the meaning of the learner's initial utterance. He suggested this is problematic because meaning, whether viewed as propositional content or action, is not established by the learner's initial utterance but, rather, is "open to negotiation" and "emerges through the interaction" (p. 310); he also illustrated how this takes place. He concluded that coding practices based on the idea of maintaining meaning "obscure what is happening in the interaction" (p. 310). However, Lyster and Ranta's (1997) and Braidi's (2002) definitions make no mention of meaning; they are based on purely formal criteria, namely that a recast (a) reformulates and (b) corrects a preceding learner utterance. Thus, Hauser's critique of the coding practices of recast studies seems misplaced.

3.1. Theoretical value of recast

- Based on claims that children frequently repeat their parents' recasts during L1 acquisition, recasts have been promoted as an effective type of feedback;
- Some researchers hypothesize that recasts help learners to notice the gap between interlanguage forms and target forms, thus serving as "***negative evidence***": (Doughty, 2001; Long, 1996; Long & Robinson, 1998).

3.2. Practical advantages of recast

- Recasts provide supportive *scaffolding* that helps learners participate in lessons when the target forms in question are beyond their current abilities.
- Recasts are ideal for facilitating the delivery of complex subject matter (Lyster, 2002).

3.3. Disadvantages of Recasts

- Recasts do not lead to any self- or peer-repair: when there is repair, the student can only repeat the teacher's reformulation;
- In L2 classrooms, many recasts can be ***ambiguous*** and therefore do not help learners to notice their mistakes (Lyster, 1998).

3.4. Ambiguity of recast

Recasts Compete with Non-Corrective Repetition

> T6: What smells so good? Allen?
> St:*Sap maple*.
> T6: Maple sap. That's good.

Non-corrective repetition:

> *T6: What do we call the baby of a hen? Nicole?*
> *Strategies: Chicks.*
> *T6: Chicks. That's good.*

Recasts Compete with Signs of Approval

Example 1:

> *T5: What are orders? Yes?*
> *St: It's, just like uhh *you say us*, 'do this, do that'*
> *T5: Exactly, it's when someone tells us 'Do that, go there, eat that'.*

Example 2:

> *T6: A hole in which a rabbit lives, Patrick?*
> *St: A *din*.*
> *T6: A den, that's good.* (Examples taken from Lyster, n.d.)

4. Different types of recasts

One general finding is that recasts are more effective when they are intensive (i.e. focused repeatedly on the same linguistic feature) and when the target features are enhanced in some way (e.g. by means of emphatic stress). This is tantamount to saying that recasts work well when they become a technique for delivering planned form-focused instruction. Of greater interest are those characteristics of incidental and extensive recasts that promote acquisition. Such recasts constitute what is natural and normal for most language learners. Understandably, given that these cannot be investigated experimentally but, rather, require careful analysis of data collected naturalistically, there have been very few studies that have investigated recasts in this way to date (Ellis & Sheen, 2006).

According to Ellis and Sheen (2006), there are very few studies that have investigated the relationship between different types of recasts and acquisition. "Loewen and Philp (in press) investigated the relationship between recast characteristics and scores on tailor-made posttests. The characteristics that they examined were linguistic focus, length of recast, segmentation (i.e. whether the recast repeated all or just part of the learner's utterance), number of changes, and complexity (i.e. whether the corrective episodes were simple or complex, involving several turns). Of these, only the feature concerning the number of changes predicted test scores: if the recast made only a single change, the learners were more likely to get the right answer when tested" (p. 593).

In short, while there is clear evidence that recasts can facilitate acquisition, there is still no clear picture of when they will do so. Learner factors, the

nature of the targeted features, and the characteristics of the recasts help to determine, in complex ways, when recasts work for acquisition and when they do not. If recasts are intensive, focused, and individualized (as has been the case in laboratory studies), they are likely to be effective, yet so are other form-focused techniques (Ellis & Sheen, 2006).

5. Recast in second and foreign language acquisition research

As Nicholas, Lightbown, and Spada (2001) rightly observed, "The research findings on recasts in L2 acquisition come from observational studies in classroom contexts and in NS/NNS dyadic situations as well as from experimental studies in laboratory contexts. Explanation for some contradictory interpretations of research findings appear to lie partly in the difference between classroom contexts and dyadic interaction in laboratories, but the evidence in both types of setting seems to point to greater effectiveness of recasts in situations in which learners are given additional cues that help them recognize the recast as feedback on error" (p.735).

For example, Lyster and Ranta (1997) studied the feedback behavior of four teachers in French immersion classes where teachers taught science, social studies, mathematics, and language arts lessons to young students. In these classes, the instructional focus was on subject matter content, not language form. The researchers analyzed transcripts based on over 18 hours of audio-recorded classroom interaction, with detailed examination of teachers' feedback to more than 1100 student utterances containing errors. This enabled them to distinguish six categories of teacher feedback mentioned earlier: explicit correction, recasts, clarification request, metalinguistic information, elicitation, and repetition.

Lyster and Ranta (1997) report that for three of the four teachers, 60% or more of the feedback was in the form of a recast. The fourth teacher, teaching a more advanced class, had a lower percentage (39%) of recasts. Lyster and Ranta concluded that this is because teachers of more advanced students can make use of a greater variety of options to challenge the students. Overall, recasts were the single most frequent feedback type (55%).

Lyster and Ranta (1997) further classified the students' "uptake" in response to the teachers' feedback. They defined uptake as "a student's utterance that immediately follows the teacher's feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some ways to the teacher's intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student's initial utterance" (p.49). Uptake covered a range of learner responses, from a simple "yes" admitting that the student had heard the teacher's utterance to a repetition of the teacher's feedback utterance and "self-repair," in which the student produced a more accurate utterance even though the teacher's correction did not provide the necessary information.

Lyster and Ranta found that the most frequent corrective feedback type, i.e. recasts resulted in least uptake "because the teacher often continued with his/her turn after recasting the student utterance, not waiting for a student response and not appearing to expect the student to provide a reaction to the feedback" (Nicholas et al., 2001, p.739).

Lyster (1998) examined the relationship among error types, feedback types, and immediate learner repair in 4 French immersion classrooms at the elementary level. He coded the 921 learner errors initiating each sequence as grammatical, lexical, or phonological, or as unsolicited uses on L1 (English) and corrective feedback moves as negotiation of form, recasts, or explicit correction. Findings indicate that lexical errors favored the negotiation of form; grammatical and phonological errors invited recasts, but with differential effects in terms of learner repair. Overall, the negotiation of form proved more effective at leading to immediate repair than did recasts or explicit correction, particularly for lexical and grammatical errors, but not for phonological errors. Phonological repairs resulted primarily from recasts.

Ellis, Loewen, and Erlam (2006), cited in McDonough and Mackey (2006), compared the effects of different types of interactional feedback on learners' performance on tests of explicit and implicit knowledge of regular past tense in English. Thirty-four ESL learners in three classes carried out two story narration tasks and several tests over a three week period. One class received interactional feedback in the form of metalinguistic information and opportunity to respond, while the second class received recasts and the third class did not receive any interactional feedback. The results of the explicit knowledge test (a grammatical judgment task) showed that the metalinguistic information group outperformed the no-feedback group and the recast group only on the delayed post-test. The researchers proposed that "interactional feedback in the form of metalinguistic information with learner response might have been more effective than recasts because learners might be more likely to perceive it as overtly corrective" (McDonough & Mackey ,2006, p. 696).

In a dyadic laboratory study, Long, Inagaki, and Ortega (1998) provided different kinds of feedback and input to learners of Japanese and Spanish on different linguistic features. In interaction with native speakers and with taped-recorded cues, learners received either recasts or modeling. The researchers report that recasts were more effective than models in creating short-term changes in the learners' interlanguage. As in the L1 literature, however, the effect of recasts on different features was not uniform. Moreover, In some cases, there were no differences between the performance of learners in either of the two conditions, i.e. modeling versus recast.

Carroll and Swain (1993) investigated the effects of different feedback strategies on adult ESL learners' ability to recognize verbs which do or do not alternate in dative sentences. They measured the effect of different treatment types using the same items as in the treatment in the post-treatment recall test, and found that the group that received recast feedback "performed second best in the short-term recall session next to the group who received metalinguistic explanation feedback, but only the latter maintained a long-term advantage" (Nabei & Swain, 2002, p. 46).

Likewise, through pre- and post-treatment production, Mackey and Philp (1998) indicated that intensive recast treatment had a positive delayed effect on learners' use of target question forms. They compared students' accurate and complex production of questions before and after the treatments. The advanced learners who enjoyed intensive recast feedback during the treatment period produced developmentally higher question forms 78% of the time in the post-test while the other advanced learners who benefited from interactive negotiation treatment produced these only 17% of the time. Meanwhile, no differences were reported for the less advanced groups.

Perdomo (2008) assessed the effectiveness of oral recasts in the EFL classroom. Thirty-eight college students and a female teacher participated in the study in a western state in Venezuela. Students were expected to learn the right use of the auxiliary verb "to have", and the use of past participles in the present perfect tense. They were divided into two groups. Each group was randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions: recast versus explicit negative feedback. Positive feedback was provided for both groups. Pictures were used to elicit conversation and an oral test was administered to collect the data. Results supported the effectiveness of recast compared to explicit negative feedback. On the basis of the results, the use of recasts in college EFL classes is recommended.

6. Conclusion

The issue of negative feedback is highly important in language teaching. Some studies have shown that implicit negative feedback can affect students' attempts to communicate and recommend the use of implicit negative feedback. Among all the choices of implicit negative feedback, recast seems to be one of the best, especially for those students with higher level of language proficiency. It is important to keep in mind there are differences between the findings of laboratory and classroom studies and differences between observational studies and experimental ones. According to Nicholas et al. (2001), recasts can be effective if the learner has already begun to use a particular linguistic feature and is in a position to choose between linguistic alternatives. The effectiveness of recast has been found to differ, depending

on the area of language (e.g. pronunciation or grammar) or on specific linguistic feature (e.g., articles or personal pronouns).

The Authors

Sasan Baleghizadeh (Email: sasanbaleghizadeh@yahoo.com) is an Assistant Professor of TEFL at Shahid Beheshti University, G.C. of Iran, where he teaches applied linguistics, syllabus design, and materials development. He is the author of *Tales from Rumi*, *Tales from Men of Wisdom*, and a number of other simplified readers all published by the Iran Language Institute. His recent research papers have appeared in *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning, Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, *Novitas-ROYAL*, and *ELT Journal*.

Heidar Abdi holds an MA degree in TEFL from Shahid Beheshti University, G.C., of Iran. His research interest lies in exploration of language learning styles and strategies.

References

Braidi, S. (2002). Reexamining the role of recasts in native-speaker/nonnative-speaker interactions. *Language Learning, 52*, 1-42.

Carrol, S., & Swain, M. (1993). Explicit and implicit negative feedback. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 15,* 357-386.

Doughty, C. (2001). Cognitive underpinnings of focus on form. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Cognition and second language instruction* (pp. 206-257). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, R., & Sheen, Y. (2006). Reexamining the role of recasts in second language acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *28*, 575-600.

Farooq, M. (2007). Exploring the effectiveness of spoken English classes of Japanese EFL learners. *The Journal of Liberal Arts, 3*, 35-57.

Hauser, E. (2005). Coding corrective recasts: The maintenance of meaning and more fundamental problems. *Applied Linguistics*, *26*, 293-316.

Loewen, S., & Philp, J. (in press). An indepth analysis of recasts in the adult L2 classroom. *Modern Language Journal*.

Long, M. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie & T. K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of language*

acquisition: Vol. 2. Second language acquisition (pp. 413-468). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Long, M. (2006). *Problems in SLA*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Long, M.H., Inagaki, S., & Ortega, L. (1998). The role of implicit negative feedback in SLA: Models and recasts in Japanese and Spanish. *Modern Language Journal*, *82*, 357-386.

Long, M.H., & Robinson, P. (1998). Focus on form: Theory, research, and practice. In C.J. Doughty & J. William, *focus on form in classroom second language acquisition* (pp. 15-41). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lyster, R. (1998). Negotiation of form, recasts, and explicit correction in relation to error types and learner repair in immersion classroom. *Language learning*, *48*, 183-216.

Lyster, R. (2002). Negotiation in immersion teacher-student interaction. *International Journal of Education Research, 37*, 237-253.

Lyster, R. (n.d.). Does teacher feedback make a difference in second language learning?http://www.rikkyo.ne.jp/grp/sogoken/RikkyoFeedbackTalk.ppt.

Lyster, R., & Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learner uptake: Negotiation of form in communicative classroom. *Studies in Second language Acquisition, 19*, 37-66.

Mackey, A., & Philp, J. (1998). Conversational interaction and second language development: Recasts, response, and red herrings? *Modern Language Journal*, *82*, 338-356.

McDonough, K., & Mackey, A. (2006). Responses to recasts: Repetition, primed, production, and linguistic development. *Language Learning*, *56*, 693- 720.

Nabei, I., & Swain, M. (2002). Learner awareness of recasts in classroom interaction: A case study of an adult EFL student's second language learning. *Language Awareness*, *11*, 43–63.

Nicholas, H., Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2001). Recasts as feedback to language learners. *Language Learning*, *51*, 719-758.

Oliver, R. (1995). Negative feedback in child NS-NNS conversation. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *17*, 459-481.

Perdomo, B. (2008). Effectiveness or recasts in the teaching of EFL. *Asian EFL Journal.* 10(2).

Sheen, Y. (2006). Exploring the relationship between characteristics of recasts and learner uptake. *Language Teaching Research*, *10*, 361–392.

Preference Consequentialism: An Ethical Proposal to Resolve the Writing Error Correction Debate in EFL Classroom

Enayat A. Shabani, University of Tehran, Iran
Seyyed Reza Meraji, University of Tehran, Iran

Inspired by the recent trends in education towards learner autonomy with their emphasis on the interests and desires of the students, and borrowing ideas from philosophy (particularly ethics), the present study is an attempt to investigate the discrepancy in the findings of the studies addressing error correction in L2 writing instruction, and suggest the (oft-neglected) students' beliefs, interests and wants as what can point the way out of confusion. To this end, a questionnaire was developed and 56 advanced adult EFL learners were asked to complete the questionnaire. The opinions of 20 EFL teachers were also collected using another questionnaire. Twenty-three of the students and 13 of the teachers were then interviewed in an attempt to collect explanations for their answers in the questionnaires. The results indicated that *all* the learners wanted the errors in their writings to be corrected. About 90 percent of them believed that *all* the errors in their writings should be corrected and only less than 10 percent of them agreed that there is no need to correct *all* the errors and that only "important" errors should be rectified. On the contrary, of the teachers who participated in the study, only 20 percent believed that *all* the errors in the students' writings should be corrected. While most of the interviewed students attributed their preference of choice to feeling more confident and efficient in learning when they can recognize *all* the errors in their written assignments, most of the teachers believed that by correcting *important* errors (and not *all* errors), learners can get the most of their writings. Given the incongruity between teachers' and (advanced) students' beliefs over writing error correction, and considering advanced students as legitimate decision makers for their own learning, some suggestions are offered for EFL writing teachers.

1. Introduction

Writing error correction in EFL classes has recently piqued the interest of teachers and researchers and to date different proposals have been made as to how errors of EFL learners should be corrected. Not uncommon to

controversial areas of investigation, the new proposals are sometimes found to be incongruent with and even, in some cases, in clear opposition to the existing frameworks. However, what seems to link all these studies is the endeavor to best help the EFL students improve their writing. This can perhaps be deemed as "the most consuming of all dilemmas for L2 writing teachers" (Casanave, 2004, p. 64).

Many studies have been conducted thus far to investigate the effects of error correction in L2 writing, but as Lee (2004) states, "Error correction research has focused mostly on whether teachers should correct errors in student writing and how they should go about it" (p. 285). What seems to be missing in most of these studies is the students' feelings, attitudes and beliefs about error correction. Here, students' proficiency levels can play a decisive role. As adult students become more proficient in language, they can generally assume more responsibility in relation to their instruction and the decisions that need to be made in that connection.

Nor have the teachers' perception and attitudes regarding error feedback received due attention. What adds to the significance of the issue is the discrepancy in the findings of studies which have tried to examine the effect of error correction in L2 writing instruction. While some studies have found this effect to be positive (e.g. Ferris, 2004), there is research to suggest that error correction is ineffective (e.g., Cohen & Robbins, 1976) and even at times harmful (Truscott, 1996). There seems not to be a general consensus among research findings in this area. Although, as Guénette (2007) contends, researchers may construe this uncertainty as an opportunity to refine their studies, it leaves EFL teachers befuddled about the best way to help their students with their writing.

In fact the main motive behind this study was to have a better examination of those aspects which might contribute to a better understanding of the issue under question and which have as yet not been paid serious attention to. This might help clear some of the confusions that prevail in the area of writing error correction and provide EFL teachers with a practical plan of action in their classes. All in all, the present study was conducted first to review the recent findings on the effects of error correction in L2 writing instruction and then have a critical view on both researchers and teachers for their neglect of the other major stakeholders, those who are affected by the findings of researchers and the practice of teachers, namely students.

2. Background

Error correction in L2 writing is one of the contentious areas in EFL instruction. In fact, what makes it so controversial can be readily understood by analyzing the phrase proper: "Writing error correction". The principal

conundrum here lies in working with the writing skill. As a relatively fledgling area of investigation whose specialization is a relatively new area of inquiry, English L2 writing was not simply considered as a language skill to be taught to learners until the late 1970s. L2 writing is an interesting yet immature area of investigation. Taking stock of the immaturity of writing research, Reid (2001) suggests that "many of the concerns now being investigated ... will continue to be refined and revisited" (p. 32), an assumption implicit in Reid's dubbing the final section of his chapter "The Future" which speaks to the fact that although significant changes have transpired and researchers working in this area abound, the point that L2 writing research is lagging behind some other issues in EFL instruction can hardly be denied.

The second problem involves error correction. In general terms, error correction is called for when learners' incomplete competence or incorrect generalizations or hypotheses lead to errors. Research has indicated that students want teachers to correct their errors for them (e.g., Zhang, 1995). Nevertheless, different issues should be factored in when correcting errors in writing, the first, and arguably foremost, of which is whether teachers should correct all the errors or they should select some of the errors to correct (comprehensive vs. selective error correction).

In a study examining the effect of content feedback followed by form feedback on students' composition ability, Ashwell (2000) prefers to be as comprehensive as possible in giving feedback, though he states that authorities generally advise teachers to be selective in their form feedback. He then justifies his preference by explaining that he did so to preclude the common systematic problems that might have otherwise arisen. Lee (2003) also posits that "selective error feedback is a much more viable option" (p. 218). However, the findings of her study (2004) revealed that both teachers and learners preferred comprehensive error feedback and this is what the majority of teachers do in practice. She also presumes that teachers may not know how to provide selective error feedback systematically. As Ashwell (2000) relates, Leki (1991) and Raimes (1983) suggest that teachers should be selective in providing grammar feedback to their students. Although selective error correction is generally advised to teachers, the debate over "what criterion to utilize, when and how" does not seem to be any easier to resolve than the original one between comprehensive and selective error correction.

The second issue which needs to be considered when correcting students' writing errors is the approach that teachers choose to correct the errors. They can either correct the errors in a direct (explicit) manner or they may decide to employ an indirect (implicit) approach. While some researchers found indirect error correction more appropriate and useful for learners (for

instance, Lalande, 1982), there are studies which suggest that direct error correction is favorable (e.g., Chandler, 2003). In indirect correction, errors are identified, but they are not corrected and students are to correct the errors. Different teachers employ different techniques to identify errors in students' writings. For instance, they may prefer to code errors, circle them or underline them or use other innovative ways to identify errors.

A word of caution seems in order here. As Seedhouse (1997) suggests error correction can vary depending on the focus. He believes that the focus of correction can be on either form and accuracy or meaning and fluency. Whatever the focus, teachers can provide feedback comprehensively or selectively. In fact, their focus of correction does not determine whether error correction should be done comprehensively or selectively. The same holds true for implicit/explicit dichotomy. Teachers can decide to correct their students' writing errors in an explicit or explicit manner, but irrespective of the comprehensiveness of error correction.

As intriguing as (and even more fundamental than) the question of the approach of error correction in L2 writing is whether correction should be made at all and whether it is beneficial for the L2 learners to have their errors corrected. In fact, what Ferris (2004) calls the "debate", commenced in 1996 when Truscott (1996) made a big claim – that error correction is harmful for students. The article has provoked heated discussions and different responses have since been published from both parties, those in favor of error correction, and those against error correction, and basically it is the former who according to Polio, Fleck and Leder (1998) are the side responsible to prove their claim.

There is a good body of research to suggest that error correction in L2 writing is propitious for learners. Ferris, the head of the pro-correction camp, maintains that there is some "potentially positive research evidence" on the effects of error correction in L2 writing instruction (2004, p. 50). This chimes well with the findings of Kepner's study (1991) that accuracy improves over time when students receive error feedback. Chandler's study (2003), too, showed significant positive effect for error feedback. Ashwell (2000) and Ferris and Roberts (2001) also found that error correction is favorable over no correction.

One of the difficulties in making any generalization as to whether error feedback in L2 writing is beneficial or destructive is the ethical dimension of conducting studies to compare correction with no-correction control groups as one cannot deny some students what may help them simply because they are the control group of the study. The results of these studies which are few and far between need to be viewed with caution, since there are a set of factors which are usually overlooked when comparing the two groups (for

instance, see Ferris & Roberts, 2001). In addition, it seems that it is not sufficient in such studies simply to have a control group (see Guénette, 2007). The two groups must be comparable in every way which is not usually the case in the research studies conducted so far.

There are, on the other hand, some studies which have found no clear empirical evidence in support of error feedback. Sheppard (1992), for instance, conducted a 10-week longitudinal study and found no positive effect for error feedback. Polio et al. (1998) found that in terms of linguistic accuracy, the performance of the students who were asked to revise their writings and received additional grammar exercises was no better than the control group of the study. The findings of Cohen and Robbins (1976) and Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986) also side with the same view.

At the same time, a number of studies have found detrimental effects for error feedback. Truscott (1996) can be considered as a fervent adherent of this view. Also, there are others who seem to have reached a similar conclusion. For instance in a longitudinal study, Fazio (2001) found that after five months, students, both those who received feedback on form and those who received feedback on content, made more errors in their writings.

As can be inferred from this brief review, the findings and ideas of researchers working in the area of error feedback in L2 writing do not seem to have converged on a clear conclusion, and Ferris (2004) is probably right in asserting that "we have barely gotten started on the question of 'Does error feedback help?' " (p. 55). Students, however, seem to be less confused as to what they want their teachers to do. L2 student writers want their teachers to provide feedback on their errors (Chandler, 2003; Ferris 1995, 2004; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996, to name but a few). According to Lightbown and Spada (1999), "Virtually all learners, particularly, older ones, have strong beliefs and opinions about how their instruction should be delivered" (p. 59). They suggest that these beliefs and opinions are usually derived from learners' previous experiences and the assumptions they develop for themselves as regards the best way of learning and instruction for them.

The present study is an attempt to shed light on one of the challenging aspects of writing instruction in EFL classes. In particular, this is an attempt to seek compromise to the as yet two unresolved disputes in the related literature. First, researchers do not seem to be unanimous in considering error feedback in writing as beneficial. Teachers usually find it difficult to know what they should do, and even if they do not, they have a hard time justifying their practice. As such, teachers may feel confused and their practice with regard to writing error correction can best be described as idiosyncratic if not haphazard.

Second, and probably equally important, is the question of the comprehensiveness of error correction. No matter who provides students with feedback on their errors (i.e., teacher, peer or self), owing to the inconsistencies in the findings of studies conducted so far, teachers are left to decide whether to employ a comprehensive or a selective approach in their writing classes. Again it needs to be pointed out that the approach teachers decide to employ at this point does not determine the one who should correct the errors. Both comprehensive and selective error correction can be done by either the teacher or peers, or even the student writer themselves. In a word, the present study's main objective is to help demystify these disputes by drawing on the ideas of the learners proper, those who hold the largest stakes but seem to have been left out, so to speak, in the cold.

3. METHOD

This study was an attempt to collect the beliefs, opinions, wants, and desires of students about error feedback in L2 writing instruction and compare them with those of teachers'. In fact, this study is an effort to understand typical modus operandi in an EFL classroom and identify the inconsistencies between how teachers think they should teach and how learners think teachers should teach. This might help provide evidence for teachers and even policy makers to account for their inclusion or exclusion of the (oft-neglected) learners' attitudes in the process of making decision as to what is best for them.

3.1. Participants

The data used in this study were collected from both EFL learners and teachers. The learners were 56 adult EFL learners, 59% female and 41% male. They could be considered as advanced learners of English regarding proficiency since they had all finished studying New Interchange Series (Richards, Hull & Proctor) and at the time of data collection they were participating in, as it were, post-Interchange courses such as "Panel Discussion: A Course for Advanced Students" or preparation courses for IELTS, TOEFL, GRE. All of them were adult learners of English (more than 18 years old) and most of them were university students of different majors.

The teachers were 12 females and 8 males whose years of work experience of teaching ranged from 1.5 to 11 (average 3.5 years). Whereas for the inclusion of the students in the study a certain criterion had to be met (i.e., proficiency), no criterion was used in selecting the teachers for the study. They were teaching classes of different levels of proficiency and were selected randomly.

3.2. Instrumentation

Students' survey: The survey consisted of a 25-item questionnaire which started with personal questions about educational and language background of the students ensued by items about their beliefs, desires and attitudes toward learning. Since the respondents were advanced learners of English and it was assumed that they would have no problem understanding the language, the questionnaire was given in English. In fact, the questionnaire had been originally developed by the first author as a "first session questionnaire" for the purpose of eliciting the needs, wants and desires of learners and had been revised over different administrations. The questionnaire was designed in a way that through the initial questions, the learners were required to have an evaluation of themselves and were thereafter directed towards expressing their beliefs and opinions about their learning. The questionnaire included different topics but items 16, 17 and 18 were particularly embedded in the questionnaire to address our research questions:

16. On a scale of 1 to 5 where "1" means not important at all, "5" means extremely important and "3" means moderately important, how important do you think it is to receive feedback on errors in your writing assignments?

Not important at all   ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤   Extremely important

17. How would you like the errors in your writing to be treated?
    ☐ All the errors should be corrected
    ☐ There is no need to correct all the errors (only important errors should be corrected)

18. Who do you think should correct the errors in your writings?
    ☐ Yourself
    ☐ Teacher
    ☐ Your peers (classmates)

Subsidiary to the items addressing the main purpose of the study, there were some other items in the questionnaire which were used to collect additional, supplementary information. One pertained to whether they revised their papers after receiving feedback. Another asked the learners to evaluate their progress in writing where the learners had to check whether they were making no, some, or good progress in L2 writing. Another item whose results were analyzed and used was the one which asked the learners which skill they considered as their weakest. Six items were designed in a way to cross-

check each other in a pairwise manner. For instance, the answers to item 16 were verified by the answers to item 24:

24. Do you like to receive feedback on the errors in your writings?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

Teachers' survey: A short questionnaire was used to collect teachers' opinions. First, they had to express their opinion as to whether they thought L2 writing error correction should be done at all or not. In order to cross-check their answers to this question, an item was included in the questionnaire which asked whether they thought error correction was harmful and should be abolished. They were also required to state whether they thought they should correct *all* the students' writing errors. The final item sought teachers' opinion as to who is responsible for the correction of errors – teachers, learners or their peers.

Follow-up interviews with the students: Once the students completed the questionnaire, 23 of them were interviewed individually by one of the researchers. The follow-up interview was semi-structured such that similar questions were asked from the students but both the students and the researcher/interviewer were free to deviate from the pre-set plan. The interview enquired the same questions as the ones in the students' questionnaire followed by some questions trying to elicit the reasons that the learners thought would account for their opinions expressed in the survey.

Follow-up interviews with the teacher: Of the teachers who completed the teachers' survey, 13 were asked to participate in an interview with one of the researchers. In practice, the interviews were less structured than the ones with the learners. In effect, the teachers' interviews were friendly conversations in which the researcher/interviewer tried to ask the teachers to tell their approach to error correction, to express their personal beliefs in this regard, to express what they thought about related research findings, and state what they thought should be teachers' classroom practice in relation to error correction. The main pivots on which all the above-mentioned data collection instruments revolved were the pragmatic necessity of error feedback and the discussion of comprehensiveness (or selectiveness) of error correction in L2 writing.

3.3. Procedure

To collect learners' and teachers' ideas, attitudes and opinions about error correction in L2 writing, two sets of instruments (questionnaire and

interview) were used. The students' survey had 25 items and the students were asked to complete it in 20 minutes in the first session of their course. The time limit was not strict and the students were informed that they could take more time if they liked. In practice, it did not take more than 20 minutes for any of the respondents to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was given to four classes of advanced learners. Out of the 56 students, 23 were interviewed. Each interview took about 13 minutes on average (ranging between 10 to 18 minutes), but there were cases when an interview lasted for almost 20 minutes. In fact, the interviews were to form part of the speaking scores of the students and were done on the last session of the courses, 9 weeks after the students answered to the questionnaire.

The teachers completed their questionnaire individually. On average, it did not take more than 10 minutes for the teachers to complete the survey. From the 20 teachers who answered to the questionnaire, 13 were asked to have an interview. The interviews normally took about 15 minutes unless the teachers felt that they wanted to explain certain issues more. The data from the questionnaires and interview recordings were then analyzed to find the recurring patterns of students' and teachers' wants and attitudes.

3.4. Analysis

The students' survey was a 25-item questionnaire which included items that concerned the purposes of the present study. The analysis of the students' questionnaire mostly involved descriptive statistics. The analysis of the teachers' survey was also descriptive. As far as the interviews were concerned, effort was made to find similar patterns in the reasons that the respondents gave to explain their choices in the survey. The interviews with the students were not much complex compared to those with teachers. Of significance at this point was to catalog the reasons they set out, and look for the similarities and recurring patterns in an inductive manner, and try to combine related ideas and render them in several statements. The teachers' interviews were of a more delicate nature since the interviews were unstructured, and the issues raised and discussed were various.

The responses of the teachers were classified under four general headings. The first group concerned the actual practice of teachers in their classrooms in relation to error correction. The second set was about the teachers' personal belief and opinion concerning their practice. Teachers' ideas about the corresponding research findings in the literature were collected under the third set. Finally, their ideas about the best and ideal way of error correction in terms of comprehensiveness were drawn together under the fourth heading. For one thing, this could facilitate the search for recurring patterns

of response. For another, by so doing, the whole ideas of the teachers could be analyzed and subsequently reported in a more systematic manner.

4. Results

The results of the students' survey revealed that, in effect, *all* the learners wanted the errors in their writings to be corrected. Also, all the students interviewed believed that error correction is necessary and that it can help them in the process of learning.

It was also found from the survey that some 90 percent of the learners believed that their errors in a writing task should be corrected comprehensively. The typical snap response to the interviewer's question on the reason of this belief was "*I want/like to know all of my errors*". They usually continued with statements such as "*I feel more confident when I know all my errors*" and "*I can learn more this way*" or some other related explanations for their choice.

Peripheral though as it may be to the main purpose of the study, it was somewhat surprising to learn that while they did not have a negative opinion of their peers and peer-correction in general, all but one of the learners uttered that even when their writings are corrected by their peers, they would like to have it supplemented by their teacher's feedback.

Regarding the revision of papers after receiving feedback, 77 percent of the learners taking the survey selected the option "*I do not revise my writing after it is corrected and handed back to me*". It was amazing to find that about 78 percent of the learners (who were advanced in proficiency of course) considered their writing skill as their weakest among the four language skills. Most of the learners took a dim view of their own progress in writing such that only 43 percent of them believed that "*I'm making good progress in writing*" and 30 percent assumed that "*I'm making 'some' progress in writing*".

Results from the teachers' survey revealed that all of the teachers believe that generally error correction is effective (and not ineffective or harmful). In the interviews, however, most of them (76 percent) believed that the effectiveness of error correction is contingent on the "manner" or "way" of correcting students' errors. The term "affective factors" was used by 6 teachers to explain that in order for error correction to be effective these factors have to be taken into account and that otherwise error correction can become harmful. They could also think of anecdotes when they discouraged or disappointed a student correcting their errors in an inappropriate manner (for instance in front of the whole class).

Considering the comprehensiveness of error correction, 80 percent of the teachers stated that there is no need to correct all the errors in students'

writings and the majority of those interviewed (almost 77 percent) reported that in practice they adopt an approach to error correction tailored to the level of proficiency of their learners. Some of the teachers questioned the possibility of correcting *all* errors in a piece of writing. There were teachers, however, who took sides with comprehensive error correction mostly on the grounds that the students were advanced in proficiency. The reasons they proposed for doing so were various. However, there were some reasons that were more popular among the respondents. Most of the teachers felt that it is their responsibility to tell the students all their errors. Some sent the ball to students' court and uttered that "*Students prefer so*". One teacher believed that this was what she was told to do in her training course (which was not in fact the case, as in a friendly talk with the supervisor, she asserted that there are no regulations imposed on the teachers as to how students' errors in writing should be corrected or what kind of feedback is preferable). A couple of teachers argued that "It is not always easy to tell important errors from unimportant ones" or as one teacher said "*It's not easy to do selective error correction systematically.*"

About one third of the teachers (mostly the more experienced ones) described their approach as selective in the sense that they set criteria for correcting students' errors and the criteria are elucidated to the students in the opening sessions of the course. One teacher, for instance, included organization, word choice and grammatical accuracy in his criteria. What is interesting is that half of the teachers who utilized criteria in selecting errors to be corrected were inconsistent in their practice with regard to the errors which could be related to a certain criterion. As they reported, there were times when considering one criterion they provide feedback on *all* the relevant errors, and yet at other times they simply decide to ignore some errors and leave them as they are.

Three teachers also emphasized the importance of the aim of the course in general, and the focus of each session in particular. They also described this focused approach to error correction as selective. By the same token, this group was also inconsistent in their practice. When asked "With regard to a certain focus, do you correct all the errors related to that focus or you prefer to be selective?" two of them said, "well, it depends" and one said "*Sometimes I think that it is better to select some and other times all errors should be corrected*".

All the teachers interviewed admitted that their knowledge about error correction in writing was insufficient and that they did not know much about research findings in this connection. Only three teachers had studied one or two research articles on error correction/feedback in L2 writing, and 10 teachers had not in fact studied any article on this subject. All but one of the

teachers were uncertain about the best and ideal way of error correction in writing. Yet most of them presumed that their approach to error correction has worked. The only teacher who claimed to know the best and ideal way of error correction described her approach as "*indirect teacher feedback* → *direct peer feedback* → *revision by the student writer*", which seemed to be a personal speculation.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Error correction in L2 writing has become a heated topic of enquiry for ELT researchers which has yet remained unresolved. The main controversy concerns what Ferris (2004) refers to as the "big question" (p. 50): Does error feedback help L2 student writers? The number of studies addressing this question is increasing, but serious reservations can still be expressed nonetheless as to the utility of error feedback in L2 writing. Whereas different studies have sought to find an all-embracing answer to the query, what is critical is their inattentiveness to some issues that can be argued to relate to the enquiry.

In fact, what seems to be missing in most of the studies examining the question is the significance of what *learners* think. The present study was therefore a two-fold effort to address this "lost chain", first in the hope of proposing a dialectical resolution for the dispute between those in favor of error correction and those against it. Second, and equally as important, it tried to address the comprehensive/selective debate, and suggest a "preference utilitarian" compromise which can bring about, as much as possible, the satisfaction of individual preferences of those involved.

In effect, the debates have yet remained unresolved, and meanwhile teachers are left confused as to what to do in their classes. Considering the inconsistent findings of the research studies conducted so far, what the present study took in perspective was the beliefs, ideas, desires and opinions of the main stakeholders. Now that the research base on the "big question" is "inadequate" (Ferris, 2004, p. 50) and even "contradictory" (Guénette, 2007, p. 40), and "We are far from arriving at any conclusions about error correction in L2 writing classes" (Ferris, p. 56), why not ask the question from those for whom the whole research is carried out?

Truscott (1996), however, is correct to suggest that students may not always be the best judges of what they need. Yet, this may be a more reasonable speculation for beginners than for advanced adults. In fact, the logic of the argument that advanced adult learners are proficient enough to know what is best for them can be defied only with great difficulty. Everyone agrees that not *all* students are able to decide what is best for them no matter how old they are. Yet, it is not implausible to assume that regarding adult students, the

more advanced and proficient they are, the more control they can assume on their learning and the more autonomy they should be granted over the instruction they receive.

Autonomy, in harmony with the Self-Determination Theory (Dickinson, 1995), can help facilitate better learning. Noels, Clément, and Pelletier's (2001) contention that teachers can change students' motivation by utilizing ways that foster students' autonomy seems to be in the same line of approach. According to them, the perception of freedom of choice is linked to self-determined forms of motivation. Dickinson, therefore, seems quite persuasive in maintaining that due to internalization of the locus of control, learners who are intrinsically motivated are expected to be "more effective" (p. 73). At the same time, Vandergrift (2005) quite rightly admits that the preference of granting (too much) autonomy to learners "early in the learning process" (p. 85) may be met with some objection. Generally, as might be expected, proficient learners of a foreign language can enjoy more autonomy in making decisions in learning. As Cotterall (2000) suggests, promotion of learner autonomy is predicated upon development of students' learning awareness. In a word, the more proficient learners are, the more autonomy they can enjoy.

Taking the factors for developing autonomy in students as the point of reference (see Lee, 1998), one can hardly deny the importance of learner choice in autonomous learning. As one can argue, and quite plausibly indeed, in order to become autonomous, students should be granted autonomy in making decisions in learning which involves "setting objectives, defining contents and progressions, selecting methods and techniques, monitoring the procedure, and evaluating the outcome of learning" (p. 283). At least with regard to advanced learners of English, until researchers can propose what can be considered more than their "best guesses" (Ferris, 2004, p. 59), teachers should rely on what their students want and believe is best for them. Also, as Guénette (2007) posits, the issue of proficiency levels is one of the parameters that may account for the conflicting results of the written corrective feedback studies. He seems convincing in warning that "the overall proficiency level of the students must be considered before deciding when and how to provide error feedback." (p. 43)

There is now a considerable body of research to reveal that students want error feedback in L2 writing, and they want their errors be corrected (Chandler, 2003; Ferris et al., 2000; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Radecki & Swales, 1988). The findings of the present study also support this and as Ferris (2004) suggests, unless teachers are sure that error feedback does not help students and may in fact harm them, "it is unethical to withhold it from their students" (p. 51), since this is what students want and think

works best for them. Even Ferris, though implicitly, acknowledges that "L2 writing students' strongly stated desires for error feedback could not so easily be dismissed or ignored" (2004, p. 50). In the case of the present study, what is important is that the participants are proficient learners of English and this can lend credibility to their opinion as to what works best for them.

Concerning the comprehensiveness of error correction, by putting the results from the students' and teachers' surveys and interviews together, it can be concluded that overall, proficient L2 learners prefer comprehensive error feedback and believe that they benefit from it and this is what some EFL teachers do in practice. What is interesting about these teachers is that they tend to correct errors comprehensively against, as they claimed, their better judgment. They felt that it is in contrast with research findings and what they have been told to do in teacher training courses.

All in all, with regard to the results of the study, two points need to be taken into account. First, it can be argued that in virtually every classroom, proficiency is an important factor when dividing the shares in decision-making between the teacher and learners. The more proficient the students, the more responsibility they can assume for their instruction, what they learn and how they learn it. Ferris (2004) shares the same idea with Truscott (1996) and Muncie (2002) and notes that "students are not … always the best judges of what they need most" (p. 55). However, as can be inferred from this statement, there are times that students are reliable judges of how and what they should learn. As Cook (2003) argues, one of the criticisms which can be leveled at second language acquisition research and attempts thereof is the generic use of the term "the learner". Ferris's position may come in for the same criticism. Although in an article describing the-state-of-the-art in error correction research in L2 writing, she, quite generally, mentions "subject characteristics" as one of the factors resulting in the inconsistencies in the design of error correction in L2 writing studies which consequently makes the studies in the research base fundamentally incomparable, the fact that the term "students" is used as a general term can give the impression that, at least on the face of it, all students are considered the same in this regard. The idea needs to be revisited.

Second, regardless of whether learners' beliefs, opinions and assumptions are right or wrong about what is best for them, as Lightbown and Spada (1999) state, "the available research indicates that learner beliefs can be strong mediating factors in their experience in the classroom" (p. 59). Ferris (2004) assumes that lack of feedback may lead to anxiety on the part of learners which may decrease motivation. Muncie (2002) also remarks that ignoring learner beliefs could consequently lower motivation which has negative effects on learning. On the whole, as Mori (2002) contends, there are

correlations between learner beliefs and learner performance. This is not unexpected, since students' beliefs about learning form a component of their metacognitive knowledge (Wenden, 1998), and, after all, "There is no clear consensus on the distinctions between knowledge and beliefs" (p. 517).

Research studies investigating learner beliefs are fuzzy. In fact, although learner beliefs about second language acquisition is an extensively researched area, as Tse (2000) notes, "we know almost nothing about student attributions of success or failure in the FL classroom and how these attributions may affect their beliefs about their ability to learn languages" (p. 69). Yet, it is possible to argue that the research findings so far lend support to the specificity of the relationship between learner beliefs and strategy use (Mori, 1999, 2002; Mori, Sato & Shimizu, 2007; and Yang, 1999). In general, learner beliefs will have an impact on the kinds of strategies they choose when/for learning which can eventually make a difference in the linguistic performance of learners. (See Horwitz, 1988; Mori, 1999; and Savignon & Wang, 2003, for a general discussion of learner beliefs, attitudes and perceptions.)

Three words of caution are in order here. First, the available research has not generally examined learners' progress in relation to their beliefs and attitudes regarding what and how they learn. The number of studies that have considered students' ideas, wants and desires in examining the effects of providing feedback on learners' development over time seems inadequate which in turn makes getting to any generalization in this connection difficult. It seems that any proposal at this point should be sensitive to the context of learning (including learners' level of proficiency).

Second, seemingly when it comes to error feedback in L2 writing classes, the idea of learner autonomy sides more with learner-initiated correction than teacher-initiated feedback. Students are expected to become autonomous learners and be able to self-monitor their process of learning. L2 learners' self-monitoring, though compelling as it may seem, entails training on the part of learners. Cresswell (2000) considers this as one of the drawbacks of self-monitoring in student writing and further comments that students in his study suggested that feedback should not be exclusively student-oriented. They wanted their teacher's feedback on the errors they did not ask questions about. Whether they initiate feedback or the teacher, students appear to opt for an approach which assures them that they know their errors. After all, even the best of students may at times have difficulty identifying their errors. Increasing learner autonomy, as it would seem, is by no means at odds with comprehensive error feedback. In simple terms, the fact that who initiates feedback (teacher or student) or who provides feedback on errors (teacher or

peer) does not gainsay comprehensive error correction for advanced learners.

Third, it seems that it is not the kind of feedback that has the major effect on the improvement of students' L2 writing. There are some factors which seem to have more significant impact on learners' L2 writing ability. Ferris (2004) suggests that "the cognitive investment of editing one's text after receiving error feedback" (p. 54) can possibly be considered as a necessary, or at least a helpful, condition for longer term improvement in accuracy. Although error feedback may be a necessary condition for writing improvement, it may not be the sufficient condition in this connection. It seems on the whole that it is difficult to differentiate the effects on the improvement in accuracy of error correction from other factors, particularly in longitudinal studies, and it is not implausible to argue that though researchers may have a hard time demonstrating the efficacy of error feedback in L2 writing over time, it can be an equally thorny problem for them to substantiate its uselessness.

It is important to note that this preference utilitarian approach may seem consistent with the primacy of *the local* in the postmodernist ideology according to which individual voices and visions are promoted in a contextualist interpretation of the term. However, the recognition of individual voices and choices is not meant to result in their unquestionable acceptance. Learners' ideas are cherished insofar as they can be dialogically negotiated in the classroom community of learning created collaboratively by the teacher and students. Dialog is arguably inherent to the evolvement from the classical to the modern to the postmodern. Central as dialog is in this approach, it is primarily intended to be considered as a compromise rather than a polemic in favor of a certain direction of thought.

To conclude, the implications of the studies which have investigated L2 writing feedback are ample and various. On the whole, the present study suggests that students' preferences, perceptions and beliefs about what is best for them cannot be easily tuned out. Borrowing ideas from modern ethicists and philosophers, in a preference utilitarian approach to error correction, it is the individual preferences of learners that are of prime concern. Teachers should realize that students do want feedback. Equally important is that teachers should recognize that their students have preferences, ideas and opinions, and the further they are along the development of their language learning, the more credibility can be assigned to their ideas. Teachers have to negotiate with their students as to how error feedback should be provided.

This is what can also be regarded from the perspective of critical pedagogy. The "guiding principle" in critical pedagogy, according to Benesch (2001), is that what the teacher should do "is an ongoing negotiation based on the

interests, desires, and needs of the students" (p. 66). Students should be allowed to take part in decision making in the classroom, which in turn can create positive effects on their learning and may increase their motivation in learning. Students, consciously or unconsciously, value critical pedagogy. Corroborating evidence is offered by Crookes and Lehner (1998) who reported that the students in their study responded positively to the principles of critical pedagogy such as being able to make decisions. In a similar vein, the present study provides evidence to support the idea that students who are proficient in language want all their errors be corrected for them. This is what *they* feel is important for *their* language learning and success. No matter how inconsistent the research findings are in this area, proficient students know what they want. Unless research can take us ahead along the continuum of certainty, the demotivating denial of what they want does not seem to be among the best of our available options.

In spite of all this, error correction in L2 writing classes, as a means which can lead to the development of students in learning English, is not a simple matter as it may seem. Ferris (1999) is right in suggesting that "Poorly done error correction will not help student writers and may even mislead them" (p. 4). This implies that teachers (and would-be teachers) need more training and practice in error correction.

The findings of the present study can at best be taken as suggestions which are applicable to EFL learners with a certain level of proficiency and are not intended to be generalized to other students. In addition, further research is needed to examine the long-term effects of this negotiated approach to error correction.

Acknowledgments

The Authors

Enayat A. Shabani (Email: shabani@ut.ac.ir) is the director of the *International Journal of Women's Research*. He is currently teaching at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature of University of Tehran and the UT Kish International Campus. His research interests are feedback in second language writing and gender studies especially fairness and ethics in language teaching and testing.

Seyyed Reza Meraji (Email: rmeraji@ut.ac.ir) got his B.A. in English Literature from the University of Tehran. He received his M.A. in TEFL at

the University of Tehran. His areas of interest include feedback and second language writing.

References

Ashwell, T. (2000). Patterns of teacher response to student writing in a multiple-draft composition classroom: Is content feedback followed by form feedback the best method? *Journal of Second Language Writing, 9*, 227-257.

Casanave, C. P. (2004). *Controversies in second language writing: Dilemmas and decisions in research and instruction.* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.)

Chandler, J. (2003). The efficacy of various kinds of error feedback for improvement in the accuracy and fluency of L2 student writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 12,* 267-296.

Cohen, A. & Robbins, M. (1976). Toward assessing interlanguage performance: The relationship between selected errors, learners' characteristics, and learners' explanations. *Language Learning, 26*, 45-66.

Cook, G. (2003). *Applied Linguistics.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Cotterall, S. (2000). Promoting learner autonomy through the curriculum: Principles for designing language courses. *ELT Journal, 54*, 109-117.

Cresswell, A. (2000). Self-monitoring in student writing: Developing learner responsibility. *ELT Journal, 54*, 235-244.

Dickinson, L. (1995). Autonomy and motivation: A literature review. *System, 23*, 165-74.

Fazio, L. (2001). The effect of corrections and commentaries on the journal writing accuracy of minority- and majority language students. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *10*, 235-249.

Ferris, D. R. (1999). The case of grammar correction in L2 writing classes: A response to Truscott (1996). *Journal of Second Language Writing, 8*, 1-10.

Ferris, D. R. (2004). The "grammar correction" debate in L2 writing: Where are we, and where do we go from here? (And what do we do in the meantime …?). *Journal of Second Language Writing, 13*, 49-62.

Ferris, D. R., Chaney, S. J., Komura, K., Roberts, B. J. & McKee, S. (2000, March). *Perspectives, problems, and practices in treating written error*. (Colloquium presented at TESOL Convention, Vancouver, BC.)

Ferris, D. & Roberts, B. (2001). Error feedback in L2 writing classes. How explicit does it need to be? *Journal of Second Language Writing, 10*, 161-184.

Frantzen, D. (1995). The effects of grammar supplementation on written accuracy in an intermediate Spanish content course. *Modern Language Journal, 79*, 244-329.

Guénette, D. (2007). Is feedback pedagogically correct? Research design issues in studies of feedback on writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 16,* 40-53.

Hedgcock, J. & Lefkowitz, N. (1994). Feedback on feedback: Assessing learner receptivity to teacher response in L2 composing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 3*, 141-163.

Hedgcock, J., & Lefkowitz, N. (1996). Some input on input: Two analyses of student response to expert feedback on L2 writing. *Modern Language Journal, 80*, 287-308.

Horwitz, E. K. (1988). The beliefs about language learning of beginning university foreign language students. *Modern Language Journal, 72,* 283-294.

Kepner, C. G. (1991). An experiment in the relationship of types of written feedback to the development of second-language writing skills. *Modern Language Journal, 75*, 305-313.

Lalande, J. (1982). Reducing composition errors: An experiment. *The Modern Language Journal, 66*, 140-149.

Lee, I. (1998). Supporting greater autonomy in language learning. *ELT Journal, 52*, 282-290.

Lee, I. (2003). L2 writing teachers' perspectives, practices and problems regarding error feedback. *Assessing Writing, 8*, 216-237.

Lee, I. (2004). Error correction in L2 secondary writing classrooms: The case of Hong Kong. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 13*, 285-312.

Lightbown, P. M. & Spada, N. (1999). *How languages are learned*. (Rev. ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

Mori, Y. (1999). Epistemological beliefs and language learning beliefs: What do language learners believe about their learning? *Language Learning, 49*, 377-415.

Mori, Y. (2002). Individual differences in the integration of information from context and word parts in interpreting unknown kanji words. *Applied Psycholinguistics, 23*, 375-397.

Mori, Y., Sato, K. & Shimizu, H. (2007). Japanese language students' perceptions on Kanji learning and their relationship to novel Kanji word learning ability. *Language Learning, 57*, 57-85.

Muncie, J. (2002). Finding a place for grammar in EFL composition classes. *ELT Journal, 65*, 180-186.

Polio, C., Fleck, C., & Leder, N. (1998). 'If only I had more time': ESL learners' changes in linguistic accuracy on essay revisions. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 7*, 43-68.

Radecki, P. & Swales, J. (1988). ESL student reaction to written comments on their written work. *System,* 16, 355-365.

Reid, J. (2001). Writing. (In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp. 28-33). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Robb, T., Ross, S. & Shortreed, I. (1986). Salience of feedback on error and its effect on EFL writing quality, *TESOL Quarterly, 20*, 83-93.

Savignon, S. J. & Wang, C. (2003). Communicative language teaching in EFL contexts: Learner attitudes and perceptions. *IRAL, 41,* 223-249.

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

Tse, L. (2000). Student perceptions of foreign language study: A qualitative analysis of foreign language autobiographies. *The Modern Language Journal, 84*, 69-84.

Truscott, J. (1996). The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes. *Language Learning, 46*, 327-369.

Vandergrift, L. (2005). Relationships among motivation orientations, metacognitive awareness and proficiency in L2 listening. *Applied Linguistics, 26*, 70-89.

Wenden, A. L. (1998). Metacognitive knowledge and language learning. *Applied Linguistics, 19*, 515-537.

Yang, N. (1999). The relationship between EFL learners' beliefs and learning strategy use. *System, 27*, 515-535.

Zhang, S. (1995). Reexamining the affective advantage of peer feedback in the ESL writing class. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 4*, 209-222.

An Examination of Developmental Dyslexia among Iranian EFL Second Graders

Behzad Ghonsooly, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran
Mehri Javadian, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

Dyslexia is a first language learning impairment which is observed among primary students. Despite quite a few researches done in the L1 context, research to examine its occurrence in L2 context is sparse. The aim of the present study is to investigate whether Iranian Dyslexic students have difficulties learning English as a foreign language. Ten Iranian students of the second grade of the secondary school with developmental dyslexia and ten normal students were assessed on a constructed test battery of reading, spelling, and phonological processing tasks. The findings showed that the dyslexic group performed significantly lower than the control (normal) group in all the English measures. Moreover, phonological processing skills were found to correlate significantly with English reading in the dyslexic group. The results support the view that there is relationship between phonological skills and reading ability in both L1 and L2.

1. Introduction

The expansion of English as an international language has brought about a worldwide tendency for people to learn more than one language. Many English language learners around the world are reported to experience difficulties in learning English. Since the introduction of contrastive analysis (CA) in the 1960's and Error Analysis (EA) in the 1970's, scholars have examined English learning problems from different theoretical perspectives. These approaches have generally embraced a series of examination from the structural analysis of the native and target language (being mainly the focus of CA) to the analysis of errors made in the process of learning a second/foreign language. As of recent, scholars have shown a growing interest to study the effect of dyslexia, a native language learning deficit, in learning another language. Unfortunately, the literature on the effect of dyslexia on L2 learning is not rich and the findings are sporadic (see for instance, Helland & Kaasa, 2005; Ho & Fong, 2005). In this study we have tried to construct a local English dyslexia test battery and have used it against

a native dyslexia test battery to examine the extent to which native language learning deficit is transferable to the acquisition of English as a foreign language.

This research was designed to fulfill certain goals. First, we intended to investigate whether Iranian dyslexic students had more difficulties in learning English as a foreign language in comparison to non-dyslexic ones. Second, it examined the relationship between English phonological processing skills and English reading ability in the dyslexic participants. Accordingly, the following research questions were formed:

Q1: Do Iranian dyslexic students have more difficulties in learning English as a foreign language than non-dyslexic ones?

Q2: Are there any relationships between phonological processing skills and reading ability of the dyslexic students learning English as a foreign language?

We have assumed null hypotheses for the above research questions.

2. Background

Developmental dyslexia is a learning difficulty characterized by specific problems with word recognition, spelling, and reading. Developmental dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty or learning difference which affects many aspects of life and learning. In the most widely accepted current definition of dyslexia proposed by Lyon, Shaywitz, & Shaywitz (2003, p.2), dyslexia as a specific learning disability 'is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities'. The origin of these difficulties stems from a deficit in the phonological component of language. The immediate consequence of dyslexia may include 'problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge' (p. 2).

Historically speaking, the term dyslexia was first coined in 1827 by an ophthalmologist Rudolf Berlin who used the term to refer to a case of a young boy who had a severe impairment in learning to read and write in spite of showing typical intelligence and physical abilities in all other aspects (Thompson & Watkins, 1998). Then in 1896 Morgan, a British physician, published a description of a reading–specific learning disorder in a report titled "congenital word blindness", describing the case of a young boy who showed normal intelligence but had not yet learned to read (Ghonsooly, 2009; Seif-e-Naraghy & Nadery, 2005; Taylor, Duffy & Hughes, 2007; Thompson & Watkins, 1998). As psychologists gained more information about dyslexia, they distinguished between developmental dyslexia and

acquired dyslexia which refers to reading difficulties of brain-injured adults (Ellis, 1984; Miles & Miles, 1990; Tabirzy, 2007; Thompson & Watkins, 1998).

During the 1930s and 1940s the enquiry moved away from the psychological and neurological domains into those of educational and sociological areas, so that during the 1940s and 1950s the Word Blind Institute in Copenhagen was one of the first to begin to investigate the nature of dyslexia and to help the dyslexic with positive teaching (Miles & Miles, 1990; Thompson & Watkins, 1990). The use of neuroimaging techniques to study brain structure and function enhanced the research in the 1980s and 1990s. As of recent, genetic research has provided increasing evidence supporting a genetic origin of dyslexia (Shastry, 2007). During almost two hundred years of research in identifying dyslexia, psychologist have come to a somewhat good understanding of the nature of the impairment, although the extent to which it might affect or transfer to learning a second/foreign language has not been fully addressed in the literature.

It is currently accepted that poor readers with respective weakness in their first language are liable to similar difficulties in their second language. That is second language impairments do not exist separately; rather they happen concomitantly with first language disabilities (DiFino & Lombardino, 2004; Sparks et al., 1998; Oren & Breznitz, 2005). Behind such findings we may find theoretical traces. One of the theories which postulates that cognitive academic language proficiency is transferred from one language to another is the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (LIH) proposed by Cummins (1979). According to this hypothesis, there is a significant relationship between the skills in the two languages and thus, low competence in L_1 results in low competence in L_2. An extension to Cummins' hypothesis was the Central Deficit Hypothesis (CDH) which states that individuals who have reading problems in one language will also show similar difficulties in their second language regardless of the language used (Oren & Breznitz, 2004). These theories were extended to include other aspects of language difficulties. For example, after substantial research conducted by Ganschow and his colleagues (1991) they formed a hypothesis called the Linguistic Coding Difference Hypothesis (LCDH), a theoretical position they obtained from research by Vellutino and Scanlon (1986) on native language reading (cited in Sparks et al., 1998). The LCDH proposes that native language skills serve as the foundation for successful language learning. It further suggests that both foreign language and native language learning rely on basic language skills and that difficulties with one language component (e.g. phonological/orthographic processing) will have a negative effect on other components (e.g. vocabulary) of both native and foreign language acquisition (Sparks et al, 1998). The theory is supported by empirical evidence obtained from a group of normally achieving bilingual children whose phonological

awareness skills were shown to transfer cross-linguistically (Geva & Yaghoub-zadeh, 2005 ;Leij & Morfidi, 2006). This transfer occurs between both alphabetic languages like English-French as well as distinct languages like English and Chinese (alphabetic-logographic). The theory accentuates the importance of native language phonological skills functioning as a foundation for the development of phonological skills in other languages (Ho & Fong, 2005).

In still another theory orthographic characteristics are seen as relevant to learning difficulties. In the Script (Orthographic) Dependent Hypothesis (SDH) the assumption is that the specific characteristics of respective orthographies result in the implementation of different strategies in reading, thus the orthographic features of a particular language and the relationship between graphemes and phonemes cause different learning and reading problems (Chan et al, 2006; Karanth, 2002; Leij & Morfidi, 2006, Oren & Breznitz, 2005). Accordingly, learners can be dyslexic in one language and not in the other; because different languages generate visual, phonological, and semantic disparities which entail different demands on word recognition processes (Oren & Breznitz, 2005).

Wydell and Butterworth (1999) found that grain size (granularity) and orthographic consistency (transparency) are important in developing dyslexia. The theory they proposed was called 'Hypothesis of Granularity and Transparency' and was based on an examination of a 16 year-old English-Japanese bilingual boy, whose reading/writing problems were limited to his native language, English. They claimed that languages which firstly favor consistent orthographies (i.e., their orthography-to-phonology mapping is transparent) and secondly are transparent in their orthography-to-phonology mapping are less prone to developmental phonological dyslexia.

However, Ziegler and Goswami (2005), in their Psycholinguistic Grain Size Theory (PGST) maintain that developmental dyslexia occurs across consistent and inconsistent orthographies. According to the PGST, children with a phonological deficit are at risk of dyslexia in all languages, and children with milder phonological deficits who have especially insufficient exposure to print will also be at risk of dyslexia in most languages

The critical factor for predicting how dyslexia will manifest in a specific language will be the consistency of the orthography (Ziegler & Goswami, 2005). In other words, children learning to read a consistent (transparent) orthography depend on small grain size units of processing such as single letters and phonemes, even when large-unit information is accessible. In contrast, readers of inconsistent orthographies develop multiple grain size mappings (Burani, et al., 2008).

Research evidence appears to coincide around the interpretation that the two theoretical alternatives (Linguistic Interdependence and orthographic dependent hypotheses) need not conflicting but rather complementary. It seems that the mechanism resulting in problems associated with mastering reading is universal and that reading performance in the two languages is highly correlated. Nevertheless, the manifestation of reading difficulties will be different in different languages based on the phonological demands imposed by a given linguistic system. For instance, whereas purely phonological deficits are less manifested in languages with consistent (regular) orthographies, deficits in reading rate are consistently found across languages represented by different orthographies (Oren & Breznitz, 2005).

International literature is still sparse on second language learning in dyslexia and is even sparser on foreign language learning. However, the interest in the issue appears to be increasing (Helland & Kaasa, 2005). In fact, Wydell and Butterworth's (1999) study was an attempt toward examining dyslexia beyond L1 context. In 2005, Helland and Kaasa examined a group of Norwegian dyslexic English language learners and compared them to an age and gender matched control group. They developed a test battery of verbal and written tasks and assessed their participants. They found significant differences between the dyslexia group and the control group. The dyslexia group had especial difficulty with morphology and spelling. Likewise, Ho and Fong (2005) in a study made an attempt to examine whether Chinese dyslexic children had problems learning English as a second language. They tested Chinese primary school children with developmental dyslexia and normally achieving children on a number of English vocabulary reading, and phonological processing tasks. It was revealed that the dyslexic group performed significantly worse than the control group in almost all the English measures. The findings postulated that Chinese dyslexic children also encounter problems in learning English as a second language, and they are almost weak in phonological processing both in Chinese and English. However, phonological skills were found to correlate significantly with English reading but not with Chinese reading in the dyslexic children. They suggested that there are both common and specific causes to reading problems in Chinese and English. Phonological deficit is more specific to reading problems in English, while visual-orthographic deficit appears to be more specific to reading difficulties in Chinese.

The available studies on dyslexia in Iran are not many in comparison to the respective ones in English-speaking countries (Seif-e-Naraghy and Nadery, 2005; Ghonsooly, 2009). All these studies have focused on dyslexia in the native language. In a study carried out by Ahmady et al., (1992), the reading ability of the students in the first and second grade of primary school in a district in Tehran, was assessed. The results of the study demonstrated that

normal children in the first and second grade of the primary school usually encounter difficulties such as adding or missing out letters/words, repeating words, replacing words/letters with other words/letter, and slow rate of reading (cited in Seif-e-Naraghy and Nadery, 2005). Later, Fallahchai (1995) conducted a study which demonstrated that 2% of the students in the sample population (20 primary schools) suffered from reading and writing disability. In another study conducted by Aminy (1998), comparing the reading skill of normal and dyslexic students in the first and second grade of primary school in Tehran, it was revealed that the reading performance of the dyslexic group was considerably weaker in comparison to the normal group (cited in Seife-Naraghy & Nadery, 2005). In a recent study investigating dyslexia among the ordinary students in 3 primary schools in Mashhad, it was found that dyslexia was more prevalent in boys than girls and there was negative correlation between reading scores of the participants and their mathematics and science scores (Ghonsooly 2009).

Despite the aforementioned studies in Iran mainly oriented towards examining dyslexia in L1, there is no report about English reading problems of dyslexic learners. The current study, therefore, aims to investigate whether dyslexic students have reading problems in English as a foreign language and to examine further the role of phonological processing in reading ability of Iranian dyslexic language learners.

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants

There were altogether twenty Iranian students who had finished the second grade of secondary school in the city of Mashhad. The dyslexia group consisted of ten subjects (3 boys and 7 girls) with a mean age of 13.6 years. In Iran, dyslexia is assessed by speech and language therapists or trained special educators. Since the disorder displays itself well during the initial years of the primary school there are numerous educational and consultative centers in addition to Special Education Organization which provide free or low-cost services for the diagnosis or treatment of the dyslexic students. However, if students are not screened initially and moved to the secondary schools, the chance to identify them and give them appropriate services by the governmental section gets weak. Therefore, after an intense review of the symptoms of dyslexia, we decided to spot the dyslexic participants by designing a checklist of the symptoms of dyslexia based on Tabrizy (2007). Having the permission of local educational authorities, we went to different secondary schools located in different areas of the city of Mashhad especially those located in working class areas where the possibility of finding these subjects was assumed to be higher due to the negligence of uneducated

parents, or low income of the family which does not let the process of treatment goes on.

The initial screening was carried out by talking to local teachers to introduce those students whose performance in reading and writing was poor comparing to their peers. The second researcher asked the students who were suspected to be dyslexic to participate in the process of ultimate and reliable identification of dyslexia. Then, they were taken to Special Education Organization where there were skilled special educators and speech therapists to diagnose dyslexic subjects with high certainty. Firstly, the tester interviewed the pupils on their language and literacy development, academic functioning, physical and mental condition, and family background. Secondly, the suspects' hearing and sight were examined to exclude those who might have had sight or hearing impairments. Finally, they were assessed by reading tasks (alphabet and single word reading, context oral reading, and silent reading) and spelling tasks (alphabet, single word, and sentence dictation). The commonly used tests are those developed based on the study carried out by Fallahchai (1995) and the identification process is the one recommended by Tabrizy (2007). Dyslexia was suspected if either reading and/or spelling skills were substantially below what should be expected. On the whole, during six month incessant research in as many as fifteen secondary schools, seven dyslexic students were found. The other three were introduced by a helpful psychologist. It is worth noting that IQ-testing is not usually required for a dyslexia diagnosis in Iran, but is required in suspicion of any syndrome or mental retardation. However, for the precision of the study an expert in a private clinic gave the Raven Intelligence Test (Tavakkoly et.al., 2006) to all dyslexic students except those who had taken the test within the previous six months. Therefore, all the participating dyslexic subjects were proved to be within normal range of IQ (i.e., 85 or above). The control group consisted of ten subjects, mean age (13.8) matching the dyslexia group by chronological age, gender, and school class affiliation. All the participants came from working-class background and attended government mainstream secondary schools.

3.2. Materials and procedures

It was not possible for us to find any assessment tools for measuring spelling, reading and phonological processing skills in English as a foreign language among Iranian dyslexic students. Therefore, for the present study a specific test battery was constructed. In the prepared test battery reading was assessed in terms of the ability to: recognize and determine the meaning of individuals words (word recognition test), read the words out of context (single word reading), read the written text and answer comprehension

questions (reading comprehension), and read the written text accurately and in normal speech (context oral reading).

Phonological processing was assessed in tasks that did not require the reading of text and assessed skills of phonological awareness (rhyme detection and phoneme deletion), phonological retention and manipulation (reverse digit span task) and phonological speeded access (rapid picture naming). Research has identified that these three interrelated phonological abilities are important for reading and writing. Moreover, numerous correlational and longitudinal studies have demonstrated that they are reliable individual predictors of reading achievement (Anthony et al., 2006).

A measure of spelling was also included to measure the ability of subjects to spell English words accurately. All the tasks used were in conformity with those previously mentioned in the literature (e.g., Helland & Kaasa, 2005; Ho & Fong, 2005) and contained high frequent words with different degrees of transparency, targeting familiar and unfamiliar phonemes and orthography relative to Farsi. Therefore, for the purpose of the study the following measures were used in this study:

Word Recognition Test

Word recognition from a picture consisted of ten pictures, each of which was followed by a set of four written words, with only one providing a correct description of the picture. All the words used were selected from the English textbooks prepared by Iranian Ministry of Education for the students of the first and second grade of secondary school. One point was given to each correct answer. Test-retest reliability of the subtest showed a reliability quotient of 0.83.

Single Word Reading Test

Twenty English words were selected from the students' English textbook. The words consisted of one to three syllables. They were arranged in an order with progressive difficulty and were printed in four columns on an A4 paper. The test was administered individually to each participant. They were required to read each word aloud. The number of the words read accurately was used as the measurement criterion. Test-retest reliability coefficient of this subtest was 0.95.

Reading Comprehension Test

This subtest comprised two short reading texts. The texts were designed based on the vocabulary, grammatical structures, and reading texts of the students' English textbook. Each text consisted of about ten sentences,

followed by four multiple-choice questions. The participants were required to read each text silently and answer the questions. One point was given to each correct answer. Test-retest reliability coefficient of this subtest was 0.81.

Context Oral Reading

This subtest was made up of one short text designed based on the vocabulary, grammatical structures, and passages of the students' English textbook. The text contained thirteen words. The test was individually administered to each participant in the study. Each subject was required to read the text orally. The second researcher recorded the decoding errors to obtain a measure of accuracy. Reading time score was determined on the basis of mean reading time of the text. Test-retest reliability of this subtest showed a reliability quotient of 0.75.

Phoneme Deletion

The test contained ten words divided into two equal groups. For the first group of words, participants were required to listen to each word and repeat it without its initial sound. The second groups of words followed a similar procedure except that the subject was required to delete the final sound from each of the second group of words. Instructions and practice ensured understanding of each part of the task. The number of items pronounced correctly by each participant was used as the measure for this task. Test-retest reliability of this subtest showed a reliability quotient of 0.83.

Rhyme Detection

This subtest consisted of 10 sets of three words. Two out of the three words in each set rhymed with each other, while the third did not. The three words in each set were read out aloud twice to the subject, who was required to indicate the word that did not rhyme with the rest. The number of correctly identified words was the measure in this task. Test-retest reliability coefficient of this subtest was 0.93.

Backward Digit Span

This was an individually administered task. Each participant was verbally presented with a sequence of digits and was required to repeat each sequence clearly in the presented order. The sequence started with three digits and increased by one digit every two items up to a total of eight digits. A total of 12 sequences were used in the test. One point was given for each digit correctly produced regardless of its position. Another point was awarded for the digit being produced in a correct sequence. Test-retest reliability coefficient of this subtest was 0.98.

Rapid Picture Naming

The test consisted of 20 pictures of familiar objects, with each picture being repeated once on the test paper to produce 40 items in total. The participants were required to name all the 40 pictures in English from left to right twice and the average time for the two trials was calculated for each participant. Test-retest reliability of this subtest showed a reliability quotient of 0.85.

Spelling

The spelling test was a group administered test that consisted of 15 English words. The words were selected from the students' English textbook. The words were read aloud to the subjects who wrote them down on a sheet of paper provided once the dictation was complete, the sheets were collected and the number of the words spelled correctly determined. This was used as the spelling score in this study. Test-retest reliability of this subtest showed a reliability quotient of 0.79.

4. Results

This study began with two main research questions addressing whether Iranian dyslexic students have more difficulties learning English as a foreign language. It also asked if there existed any relationships between phonological processing skills and reading ability of the Iranian dyslexic students. Table 4.1 shows the descriptive statistics for the dyslexic and control group. Accordingly, all the measures of mean for the variables of the study show that the mean score of the dyslexic group is lower than the mean score of the control group.

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics of the Control and Dyslexic Groups

	Dyslexic		Control	
Test	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Reading comprehension	2.2	1.03	5.9	1.37
Word Recognition	2.5	0.85	8.5	1.17
Context Oral Reading	9.22	3.04	57.35	14.5
Single Word Reading	2.9	1.19	15.4	2.79
Backward Digit span	47.7	5.9	88.2	20.46
Phoneme Deletion	4.4	1.71	9.8	0.42
Rhyme Detection	4.6	1.17	7.7	2
Rapid Picture Naming	7.6	3.5	30.7	4.48
Spelling	1.3	1.41	9.6	2.59

In order to examine whether these differences were significant, all the subtests of the test battery were analyzed for between group differences by Mann-Whitney U test. Table 4.2 shows the results of comparing the two groups. As can be noticed, there are significant differences between the

performance of the dyslexic group and the non-dyslexic one on all the English measures. The results also show that the Iranian dyslexic students performed poorly in reading, spelling, and phonological processing as compared with non-dyslexic students.

Table 2.
Mann-Whitney U test for Normal and Dyslexic Group

| | Mean Rank | | |
Variables	Normal	Dyslexic	p-value
Reading Comprehension	15.45	5.55	0.00
Word Recognition	15.50	5.50	0.00
Context Oral Reading	15.50	5.50	0.00
Single Word Reading	15.50	5.50	0.00
Spelling	15.50	5.50	0.00
Non-Word Reading	15.50	5.50	0.00
Backward Digit Span	15.50	5.50	0.00
Phoneme Deletion	15.50	5.50	0.00
Rhyme Deletion	14.45	6.55	0.00
Rapid Picture Naming	15.50	5.50	0.00

Significant at alpha=.01

The second research questions of this study addressed whether there are any relationships between phonological processing skills and reading ability of the dyslexic students. The relationships between the measures of phonological processing and measure of reading ability of the dyslexic group were calculated using the Spearman correlation. These are presented in table 4.3. As can be noticed, statistically significant relationships were found between all the phonological processing measures except phonological memory measure (backward digit span) and reading ability. However, the relationships between all the measures of phonological processing and all the measures of reading were insignificant in some parts.

Table 3.
Correlation Analysis for the Dyslexic Group

	Reading	Reading Comprehension	Word Recognition	Context Oral Reading	Single Word Reading
Phonological	.689*	.472	.834**	.353	.820**
Processing	.028	.168	.003	.318	.004
Backward	.482	.648*	.586	0.244	.341
Digit span	.158	.043	.075	.497	.335
Phoneme	.699*	.327	.763*	.450	.726*
Deletion	.024	.357	.010	.192	.017
Rhyme	.938**	.440	.780**	.447	.759*
detection	.000	.203	.008	.196	.011
Rapid Picture	.806**	.449	.872**	.704*	.696*
Naming	.005	.194	.001	.023	.025

For further analysis, relationships between the measures of phonological processing and measure of reading ability were also computed for the whole cohort (dyslexic and non-dyslexic together). These relationships were calculated using Spearman correlation .The results shown in table 4.4 include correlations between the phonological processing measures and all the reading measures. As can be noticed, there were significant relationships between all the measures of phonological processing and reading ability.

Table 4.
Correlation Analysis for the Whole Cohort

	Reading	Reading Comprehension	Word Recognition	Context oral Reading	Single Word Reading
Phonological Processing	.921** .000	.824** .000	.929** .000	.872** .000	.946** .000
Backward Digit Span	.857** .000	.825** .000	.875** .000	.841** .000	.894** .000
Phoneme Deletion	.906** .000	.824** .000	.936** .000	.874** .000	.912** .000
Rhyme detection	.902** .000	.750** .000	.840** .000	.829** .000	.826** .000
Rapid Picture Naming	.947** .000	.902** .000	.983** .000	.933** .000	.982** .000

5. Discussion

This study began with examining the relationship between L1 reading disability of a group of second graders and the respective problem in learning English as a foreign language. The results indicated that there were significant differences between the non-dyslexic and dyslexic group on all the English measures developed for the purpose of the study. Moreover, significant relationships between phonological skills and reading ability of the dyslexic group were found. Consistent with the results found in previous studies (Ho& Fong, 2005; Helland & Kaasa, 2005; Bonifacci& Snowling, 2008; Oren& Breznitz, 2005) the dyslexic participants scored lower than the normal group on the English measures of reading, spelling, and phonological processing. The results are also in line with the findings of dyslexia in the first language which suggest that dyslexic subjects typically exhibit difficulties in recognizing printed words, and perform poorly on spelling, reading and phonological processing tasks compared to non-dyslexic ones (Elbeheri & Everatt, 2007; Abu-Rabia, 2006). The obtained results are also consistent with the findings of the studies which examined the effect of acquired dyslexia on L2 learning and suggested that acquired dyslexic individuals also encounter difficulty in learning a second language (Belland & Mimouni, 2001; Karanth, 2002; Raman & Weeks, 2005). However, the outcomes of this research are in sharp contrast with that of Wydell and Butterworth's (1999)

which reported the case of a boy who was dyslexic in his first language English but not in Japanese as his second language. This contradiction could be accounted for by considering the fact that in Wydell and Butterworth' study the second language was a logographic language (Japanese) which was totally different from the subject's first language (English). According to Script (Orthographic) Dependence Hypothesis, the orthographic features of a particular language can cause different learning and reading problems, thus, individuals can be dyslexic in one language and not in the other (cited in Oren & Breznitz, 2005). However, both the first and second languages of the participants of this study were alphabetic with deep orthographies (low degree of orthographic consistency), therefore, the incidence of developmental dyslexia in the second language was not something unexpected.

The results of this study also support the 'Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis' (Cummins, 1979), which suggests that cognitive academic language proficiency is transferred from one language to another and therefore, low competence in L1 leads in low competence in L2 (cited in Oren & Breznitz, 2005). The results are also in line with 'Central Deficit Hypothesis' which postulates that individuals who have reading problem in one language will also show similar difficulties in their second language, without regard to the language used (cited in Oren & Breznitz, 2005). The findings of this study also lend support to 'Foreign Language Linguistic Coding Differences Hypothesis' which suggests that native language skills serve as the foundation for successful foreign language learning and that difficulties with foreign language acquisition stem from deficiencies in one or more of linguistic codes in the individual's native language (Sparks et al.,1998).

Consistent with the results found in the first language (Puranik, Lombardino & Altmann, 2007), the dyslexic students of our study made more spelling errors than the control students. Close examination of the dyslexic subjects' performance on the spelling measure revealed that four of them were not able to write even one word correctly. The other six participants were able to identify and write consonants but could not find the proper spelling of the vowels. For example, they wrote 'spik' instead of 'speak' or 'plis' for "please". Persian language has three long vowels (i, u, â) and its short vowels are not usually represented. In contrast, English orthography has at least twenty basic vowel spellings. In other words, vowels in English orthography are part of the alphabet and are evident as letters, however, in Persian orthography the short vowelization is not part of the alphabet and is not normally presented in the texts. Therefore, further research is needed to reveal whether these mistakes are related to L1 interference or to other reasons.

We expected the dyslexic subjects to perform better on word recognition task

since the items of this subtest were pictures of highly familiar concrete objects. In fact, it was not possible for us to include any abstract words due to the difficulty and ambiguity of depicting such words. Therefore, we used the concrete words available in the English textbook used by the second graders of the secondary school. These words were limited in numbers and were highly familiar to the students. However, the dyslexic subjects performed poorly on this subtest, too. The second item of this task depicted a picture of a clock. Since in Persian, one word is generally used for both watch and clock, some of the dyslexic students chose watch as the right answer. They also made the same mistake on item 9 where there was a picture of an arm. In Persian, The word (dast) meaning 'hand' can refer to both hand and arm. Therefore, some of them chose the word hand instead of the right answer, arm. This might be an indication of L1 interference and/or the common traditional English teaching method used in Iran which urges the students to memorize the Persian translation of the words. However, our examination of the dyslexic subjects' performance on the other items showed that some of them knew the related meanings of the word depicted (for example, what it is used for) but could not find the right answer. For instance, some of them chose the word hair for the picture of a comb, or children for the picture of a baby. It seems that they might know the meaning of the depicted word or at least the related words or meanings of it, but were not able to recognize the right word for it.

The poor performance of our dyslexic participants on word reading measure is also in line with the more difficulties these disabled readers have in reading familiar and unfamiliar words than normal readers in their first language (Abu-Rabia, 2007). As a retrospective question, the dyslexic participants were asked if they had any familiarity with traditional English decoding rules (for example the sound of /ʌ/ in 'umbrella', and /ü/ in 'blue'). We found that none of them had bee made conscious of these decoding rules. Sparks, Ganschow, and their colleagues (1991) have suggested that approaches to foreign language education that provide direct instruction in the phonological/orthographic systems of the language would be beneficial to students who have weaknesses in native language learning. Therefore, it appears that although irregularity of some English words might be favorable to a sight-word learning (Leij & Morfidi, 2006), teaching phonological/orthographic rules should be considered as a foreign language instructional strategy, especially to dyslexic students.

Consistent with the results found in the first language (Elbeheri & Everatt, 2007; Anthony et al., 2006) and the studies conducted on dyslexia in English-speaking countries (Vellutino, et al., 2004) dyslexic participants showed poor phonemic awareness and poor phonological processing skills in English comparing to their non-dyslexic peers. Although listening and speaking were

not included in our English dyslexia test battery, we found that the dyslexic subjects could not answer back while they were greeted or were given simple instructions in English. These findings are somehow in keeping with Sparks and Ganschow's results (1998) whose secondary level students who had problems with the phonological/orthographic aspects of their native language did less well not only in reading, writing, and spelling but also in speaking and listening of the foreign language (cited in Sparks & Artzer, 2000).

The significant correlations found between phonological processing measures and reading measures of this study support phonological deficit hypothesis which postulates that phonological deficit is the core cognitive deficit in dyslexics, thus, all individuals with reading difficulties have significantly impaired phonological ability (Elbeheri & Everatt, 2007). These correlations also lend support to the hypothesis that phonological deficit correlates with reading disability in different languages (cited in Elbeheri & Everatt, 2007). However, our findings do not support Stein' view (2004) which states not all individuals with reading difficulty have phonological deficit as well as Smythe & Everatt's (2004) which have reservations for the importance of phonological skills in learning to read in any orthography (cited in Elbeheri & Everatt, 2007). It should be noticed that although it is not clear yet whether this assumption of phonological universality may be applied to all writing systems, it is supported by scientific studies of various languages using the alphabetic system (Leij & Morfidi, 2006).

The aforementioned significant correlations are somehow in line with Downey and Snyder's finding (2000) in which the major cause of difficulty in foreign language learning in dyslexic students is related to some underlying phonological processing problems in their native language.

The results of this study indicate significant correlations between measures of phonological awareness (phoneme deletion and rhyme detection) and reading ability in both dyslexic group and the whole cohort. However, this correlation is not significant for the reading ability subcomponents (i.e., reading comprehension and context oral reading of the dyslexic group, see table 4.3). At this stage we do not know for sure the cause of lack of significant correlation, hence the need for further explanation. On the whole, these results are somehow consistent with phonological awareness being associated with reading skill and predictive of reading acquisition across languages (Geva, et.al., 2000). These results also lend support to the findings that state good phonological awareness skills characterize good readers while poor phonological awareness skills characterize poor readers (Ziegeler & Goswami, 2007).

Similar to the findings that suggest phonological awareness might be a good

predictor of the development of word recognition skills in ESL children and is related to it and in line with the results which indicate poor phonological awareness might be indicative of reading disability among ESL children (Geva, et.al., 2000), we found significant correlations between phonological awareness measures (phoneme deletion and rhyme detection) and word recognition measure in both the dyslexic group and the whole cohort.

The significant correlation found between rapid picture naming and reading measures in both dyslexic (but not for reading comprehension subtest of reading of the dyslexic group) and the whole cohort is in keeping with research findings (see for instance, Compton, DeFries and Olson, 2001; Gholamian and Geva, 1999) in which phonological processes and rapid naming are the underlying prerequisite skills that influence the development of word recognition skills in primary-level ESL children. As Geva, et.al., (2000) maintain, it is possible to use these measures as reliable indicators of potential reading disability among ESL children.

We also found significant correlation between backward digit span as a phonological measure and the reading measure in the whole cohort but not in the dyslexic group. As previous studies endorse, there is no general consensus among researchers as to whether or not phonological memory tasks such as backward digit span have any value in predicting individual differences in reading skills (Geva, et.al., 2000). Moreover, in a series of longitudinal studies Wagner, Torgesen and their colleagues (Torgesen, Wagner & Rashotte, 1994; Wagner et al., 1997) conclude that while both phonological memory and phonological awareness appear to be tapping a common underlying phonological processing component, only phonological awareness explains unique variance in word-level reading. While significant correlations between backward digit span and reading comprehension measures were found in the whole cohort, the correlations between backward digit span measure and word recognition measure was just significant in the whole cohort and not in the dyslexic group. These results somehow support the findings of Gottardo, et. al., (1996 cited in Oren & Breznitz, 2005) who found that phonological memory contributed only a small proportion of variance to word recognition, although it explained a considerable amount in reading comprehension. However a handful of studies examining the role of phonological memory in children learning to read in an L2 suggest that short-term verbal memory measures such as backward digit span can predict individual differences in word recognition. They also suggest that individual differences in phonological memory can predict performance cross-linguistically (Geva & Siegel, 2000).

As it was reported in the previous section, significant correlations were found between context oral reading and all the measures of phonological processing

in the whole cohort but not the dyslexic group. The only significant correlation in the dyslexic group was the correlation between context oral reading and rapid picture naming. It should be noticed that context oral reading was the only reading measure of this study which measured both reading accuracy and speed. In other words, our criterion in scoring the other reading measures was accuracy, while for context oral reading, accuracy as well as speed were taken into consideration. According to Savage & Frederickson (2005 cited in Boets et al., 2007) reading accuracy appears to be more closely related to phonological awareness and reading speed is more associated with rapid naming. Therefore, we may conclude that in the performance of the dyslexic subjects on context oral reading, decoding speed gains more importance than accuracy. However, further analysis using speeded word reading as well as speeded context reading is needed to reveal the exact cause.

Insignificant relationships were found between reading comprehension and phonological processing measures in the dyslexic group. These unexpected results could be accounted for by recalling the fact that most of the dyslexic participants dwelled so much on the first reading text and when we pushed them to move to the next one, most of them tried to answer the questions by chance. We should not forget that reading comprehension activity is a tedious task for the dyslexic and that they may soon become frustrated with reading tasks which are beyond their reading tolerance.

6. Conclusion

In this study almost all the proposed null hypotheses were rejected and we through close experimentation and observation showed that Iranian dyslexic students of this study encounter difficulties in learning English as a foreign language and that they are significantly weak in reading, spelling, and phonological processing compared to normal students. As these students are generally ignored in normal educational settings and as teachers generally relate the slow and inaccurate performance of these learners to their laziness or carelessness, there is a need to explain to English language teachers the effect of dyslexia in the native language on their English performance. In so doing, we should not overlook the importance of developing remedial materials for the dyslexic students as well as employing relevant teaching strategies and developing assessment tools which enhance English learning. Based on the significant correlations found between phonological processing skills and reading ability of the dyslexic participants, it is natural to suggest that the strategies which intend to help dyslexic learners alleviate their reading difficulties in English should address their phonological deficits through enhancing their phonological awareness and phonological access skills.

The conclusions we made in this study need to be qualified according to the limitations of the present study. Most noteworthy is that the present study fell short of providing a longitudinal examination of foreign language development in dyslexic individuals. Accordingly, a longitudinal study which examines the effect of different L2 teaching strategies on dyslexic language learners' performance or the one which investigates the mistakes they make or the strategies they use during the process of language learning can be much more revealing.. Exciting extensions of this work will hopefully compare the performance of Iranian dyslexic students in L1 with the one in L2.

Acknowledgement

The Authors

Behzad Ghonsooly is an Associate professor of Applied Linguistics and is currently a faculty member of the English Department of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad in Iran.

Mehri Javadian is an MA student of TEFL at the English Department of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad in Iran.

References

Abu-Rabia, S. (2007). The role of morphology and short vowelization in reading Arabic among normal and dyslexic readers in grades 3, 6, 9 and 12. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research, 36*, 89-106.

Ahady, H. & Kakavand, A. (2003*). Learning Disabilities*. Tehran: Arasbaran.

Anthony, J. L., Williams, J. M. , McDonald R., Corbitt-Shindler D., Carlson, C. D. & Francis D. J. (2006). Phonological processing and emergent literacy in Spanish-speaking preschool children. *Annals of Dyslexia, 56*, 239-268.

Anthony, L. J., Williams, J. M., McDonald, R. & Francis, D. J. (2007). Phonological processing and emergent literacy in younger and older preschool children. *Annals of Dyslexia, 57*, 113-137.

Babapoor K. J. & Sobhy, G. N. (2002*). Learning Disabilities: A Diagnostic and Remedial Approach*. Tehran: Soroush Press.

Beland, R. & Mimouni, Z. (2001). Deep dyslexia in the two languages of an Arabic/French bilingual patient. *Cognition, 82*, 77-126.

Boets, B., Wouters, J., Wieringen , A. V., Smedt, B. D., & Ghesquiere P. (2008). Modelling relations between sensory processing, speed perception, orthographic and Phonological ability and literacy achievement. [Electronic version]. *Brain and Language, 106*, 29-40.

Bonifacci, P. & Snowling, M. J. (2008). Speed of processing and reading disability: A cross-linguistic investigation of dyslexia and borderline intellectual functioning. *Cognition, 107*, 999- 1017.

Broomfield, H. & Combley, M. (2003). *Overcoming Dyslexia. (2nd Ed.)* London: Whurr Publishers.

Burani, C., Marcolini, S., De Luca, M. & Zoccolotti, P. (2008). Morpheme-based reading aloud: Evidence from dyslexic and skilled Italian readers. *Cognition, 108*, 243-262.

Chan, D. W., Ho, C. S. H., Tsang, S., Lee, S. & Chung, K. K. H. (2006). Exploring the reading-writing connection in Chinese children with dyslexia in Hong Kong. *Reading and writing, 19*, 543- 561.

Davies, R., Cuetos, F. & Glez-Seijas, M. (2007). Reading development and dyslexia in a transparent orthography: a survey of Spanish children. [Electronic version]. *Annals of Dyslexia, 57,* 179-198.

Dietz, J. (2001). *The Impact of Linguistic Factors on Dyslexia: Implications for Foreign Language Learning*. Retrieved, April 12, 2008 from www.hemmecke.de/jeannette/material/ImpactofLinguisticFactorsonDysl exia2002.pdf.

DiFino, S. M. & Lombardino, L. J. (2004). Language learning disabilities: The ultimate foreign language challenge. *Foreign Language Annals, 37,* 390- 400.

Downey, D. M., & snyder, L. E. (2000). College students with LLD: The phonological core at risk for failure in foreign language classes. *Topics in Language Disorders, 21,* 82-92.

Elbeheri, G. & Everatt, J. (2007). Literacy ability and phonological processing skills amongst dyslexic and non-dyslexic speakers of Arabic [Electronic version]. *Reading and writing, 20*, 237-249

Ellis, A. W. (1984). *Reading, Writing and Dyslexia: A cognitive Analysis*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Fallahchai, H. (1995*). An examination of reading and writing disorders among primary school students*. Unpublished MA thesis. University of Tarbiyat Modarres, Tehran.

Fawcett, A. J., Singleton, C. H. & Peer, L. (1998). Advances in early years screening for dyslexia in the United kingdom. *Annals of Dyslexia, 48*, 57-88.

Frith, U., Wimmer, H., Landrel, K. (1998). Differences in phonological recoding in German and English-speaking children. *Scientific studies of Reading, 2,* 31-54.

Ganschow,L., Sparks, R. L., Javorsky, J., Pohlman, J., & Marbury, A. (1991). Identifying native language difficulties among foreign language learners in college: A 'foreign' language learning disability? *Journal of learning Disabilities, 24*, 530-541.

Geva, E. & Ryan, E. B. (1993). Linguistic and cognitive correlations of academic skills in first and second languages. *Language Learning, 43*, 5-42.

Geva, E., & Siegel, L. (2000). Orthographic and cognitive factors in the concurrent development of basic reading skills in two languages. *Reading & Writing, 12,* 1-30.

Geva, E., Yaghoub-Zadeh, Z., & Schuster, B. (2000). Understanding individual differences in word recognition skills of ESL children. *Annals of Dyslexia, 50,* 123-152.

Ghonsooly, B. (2009). Dyslexia in Persian Language. *Journal of Language and Literature of Faculty of Letters and Humanities.*, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, 41(3), 247-264.

Goswami, U. (2002). Phonology, reading development and dyslexia: a cross linguistic perspective. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 52, 141-163.

Goswami, U., Gombert, J. E., & de Barrera, L. F. (1998). Children's orthographic representations and linguistic transparency: Nonsense word reading in English, French, and Spanish. *Applied psycholinguistics,* 19, 19-52.

Gottardo, A., Stanovich, K. E., & Siegel, L. S. (1996). The relationships between phonological sensitivity, syntactic processing and verbal working memory in the reading performance of third-grade children. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 63, 563-582.

Gupta, A. & Jamal, G. (2006). An analysis of reading errors of dyslexic readers in Hindi and English. [Electronic version]. *Asia Pacific Disability Rehabilitation Journal,* 17, 73-86.

Habib, M. (2000). The neurological basis of developmental dyslexia. *Brain* 123, 2373-2399.

Helland, T. & Kaasa, R. (2005). Dyslexia in English as a second language. [Electronic version]*. Dyslexia,* 11, 41-60.

Helmuth, L. (2001). Dyslexia: Same brains, different languages. *Science,* 291, 2064-2065.

Ho, C. & Bryant, P. (1997). Phonological Skills are important in learning to read Chinese. *Developmental Psychology,* 33, 946-951.

Ho, C. & Fong, K. (2005). Do Chinese dyslexic children have difficulties learning English as a second language? [Electronic version]. *Psycholinguistic Research,* 34, 603-616.

Ho, C. S-H., & Bryant, P. (1997). Phonological skills are important in learning to read Chinese. *Developmental Psychology, 33*, 946-951.

Ingram, A., Pianu, E. & Welsh, R. (2007). Supporting dyslexic Scottish university hospitality students: positive actions for the future? [Electronic version]. *Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management,* 19, 606-611.

Karanth, P. (2002). The search for deep dyslexia in syllabic writing systems. [Electronic version]. *Journal of Neurolinguistics*, 15, 143-155.

Leij, A. & Morfidi E. (2006). Core deficits and variable differences in Dutch poor readers learning English. [Electronic version]. *Journal of Learning Disabilities,* 39, 17-74.

Leonard, C., Eckert, M., Given, B., Virginia, B. & Eden, G. (2006). Individual differences in anatomy predict reading and oral language impairments in children. [Electronic version]. *Brain,* 129, 3329-3342*.*

Lundberg, I. (2002). Second language learning and reading with the additional load of dyslexia. [Electronic version]. *Annals of Dyslexia, 52*, 165-187.

Meng, X., Tian, X., Jian, J. & Zhu, X. (2007). Orthographic and phonological processing in Chinese dyslexic children: An ERP study on sentence reading. [Electronic version]. *Brain Research,* 11, 119-130.

Miles, T. R. & Miles E. (1990). Dyslexia: A Hundred Years on. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Nicolson, R., & Fawcett, A. (1995). Dyslexia is more than a phonological disability. *Dyslexia,* 1, 19-36.

Omidvar, A. (2005). *Specific Learning Disabilities.* Mashhad: Sokhan Gostar.

Oren, R. & Breznitz, Z. (2005). Reading processes in L1 and L2 among dyslexic as compared to regular bilingual readers: Behavioral and electrophysiological evidence. [Electronic version]. *Journal of Neurolinguistics,* 18, 127-151.

Puranik, C. S., Lombardino, L. J., Altmann, L. J. (2007). Writing through retelling: An exploratory study of language-impaired and dyslexic populations. [Electronic version]. *Reading and Writing,* 20, 251-272.

Raman, I. & Weeks, B. S. (2005). Acquired dyslexia in a Turkish-English speaker. [Electronic version]. *Annals of Dyslexia, 55*, 79-104.

Ramus, F., 2001. Dyslexia talk of two theories. *Nature* 412, 393-395.

Ramus, F., Rosen, S., Dakin, S. C., Day, B. L., Castellote, J. M., White, S., & Frith, U. (2003). Theories of developmental dyslexia: Insights from a multiple case study of dyslexic adults. [Electronic version]*. Brain,* 126, 841-865.

Savage, R., & Frederickson, N. (2005). Evidence of highly specific relationships between rapid automatic naming of digits and text reading speed. *Brain and Language,* 93, 152-159.

Schulz, E., Maurer, Mark, S., Bucher, K., Brem, S., Martin, E. & Brandeis, D. (2008). [Electronic version]. Impaired semantic processing during sentence reading in children with dyslexia: Combined FMRI and ERP evidence. *NeuroImage,* 41, 153-168.

Seif-e-naraghy, M. & Nadery, E. (2005). *Specific Learning Disabilities: Stages of Diagnosis and Rehabilitational Methods. (3rd Ed).* Tehran: Makial.

Shastry, S. (2007). Developmental dyslexia: An update. [Electronic version]. *J Hum Genet,* 52, 104-109.

Snowlimg, M. (1980). The development of grapheme–phoneme correspondence in normal and dyslexic readers. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology,* 24, 294-305.

Sparks, R. L. & Artzer, M. (2000). Foreign language learning, hyperlexia, and early word recognition. *Annals of Dyslexia,* 50, 189-211.

Sparks, R. L., Artzer, M., Patton, J., Ganschow, L., Miller, K., Hordubay, D. J. & Walsh, G. (1998). Benefits of multisensory structured language instruction for at risk foreign language learners: A comparison study of high school Spanish students. [Electronic version]. *Annals of dyslexia,* 48, 239-269.

Sparks, R., Ganschow, L., Kenneweg, S., & Miles, M. (1991). Using Orton-Gillingham methodologies to teach foreign language to learning disabled/dyslexic students: explicit teaching of phonology in a second language. *Annals of Dyslexia,* 41, 96-118.

Stanovich, K., & Siegel, L. (1994). The phenotypic performance profile of reading-difference model. *Journal of Educational Psychology,* 86, 24-53.

Tabrizy, M. (2007). *Reading Disability: Diagnosis & Treatment.* Tehran: Fararavan.

Taylor, M., Duffy S. & Hughes G. (2007). The use of animation in higher education teaching to support students with dyslexia. [Electronic version]. *Education + Training,* 49, 25-35.

Thompson, M. & Watkins B. (1998). *Dyslexia: A Teaching Handbook.* (2nd Ed). London: Whurr Publishers.

Torgesen, J. K., Wagner, R. K. , & Rashotte, C. A. (1994). Longitudinal studies of Phonological processing and reading. *Journal of Learning Disabilities,* 27, 276-286.

Vellutino, F. R., Fletcher, J. M., Snowling, M. J., & Scanlon, D. M. (2004). Specific reading disability (dyslexia): what have we learned in the past four decades? *Journal of Child Psychology and psychiatry and Allied Disciplines,* 45, 2-40.

Wagner, R. K., & Torgesen, J. K. (1987). The nature of phonological processing and its causal role in the acquisition of reading skills. *Psychological Bulletin,* 101, 192-212.

Wagner, R. K.,Torgesen, J. K., Rashotte, C. A., hecht, S. A., Barker, T. A., Burgess, S. R., Donahue , J. , and Gron, T. (1997). Changing relations between phonological processing abilities and word-level reading as children develop from beginning to skilled readers: A 5-year longitudinal study. *Developmental Psychology,* 33, 468-479.

Wolf, M., & Obergon, M. (1992). Early naming deficits, developmental dyslexia, and a specific deficit hypothesis. *Brain and Language*, 42, 219-247.

Wydell, T. N. & Butterworth, B. C. (1999). A case study of English- Japanese Bilingual with monolingual dyslexia. [Electronic version]. *Cognition,* 70, 273-305.

Ziegler J. C. & Goswami U. (2005). Reading Acquisition, developmental dyslexia, and skilled reading across languages: A psycholinguistic grain size theory. *Psychological Bulletin,* 131, 3-29.

The impact of formal schemata on L3 reading recall

Mohammad Ali Salmani Nodoushan, Iran Encyclopedia Foundation, Iran

Rhetorical structure refers to a complex network of relationships and the way the underlying ideas are organized within a text. This study was conducted to see whether explicit instruction of descriptive and causative text organization positively affected L3 reading recall. 240 Turkish students of EFL who had Persian as their second language were assigned to two groups (experimental and control) controlled for language proficiency with only the former receiving instruction in rhetorical organization. Comparison of pre-test and post-test written recall data showed that explicit instruction had a positive effect on L3 reading recall. It was also noted that the amount of L3 reading recall was a function of the type of rhetorical organization of reading texts.

1. Introduction

Reading comprehension can be seen as a process that depends for success on the interaction of text and reader characteristics. An important, but often neglected, aspect of this process concerns the effects of rhetorical organization of texts on readers' comprehension and recall (sharp, 2002). Tracing the rhetorical development of a text has to do with the process whereby the writer, given the raw material, has selected from it, organized it and given it coherence, until it suits his purpose. As such, it seems useful for readers to be able to analyze text structure; if they can identify the principle by which the text has been organized and see how the ideas within the text hang together, it is easier to interpret difficult sentences. Readers who cannot do this may find the text is very much like a jigsaw puzzle in which the parts can be identified but the way they fit together is fuzzy, is never organized (Nuttall, 1996). It was hypothesized in this study that explicit rhetorical organization instruction positively affects reading recall.

2. Background

Etymologically, a rhetor is a public speaker whose characteristic art is that of addressing courts of law and popular assemblies (Dixon, 1971). Rhetoric was traditionally defined as the art of public oratory (O'sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery, and Fiske, 1994). What has been given in many

sources as the definition of rhetoric almost supports this classical notion of rhetoric. For example, in Asher and Crystal (1992), and O'Sullivan, et al. (1994), rhetoric is defined as the art of oratory or persuasive speaking. A new look at rhetoric in the post-audiolingual era of the 20th century resulted in a redefinition of the term. For instance, Flower (1993) considered new rhetoric as not just a tool for communication or persuasion but as a process of social individual meaning-making.

The emergence of the new rhetoric was most probably due to the problems of written discourse which had been overlooked in the 1950's and early 1960's when two main trends in the study of rhetoric gained force: generative rhetoric and contrastive rhetoric. Generative rhetoric developed under the influence of Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) as a reaction against the organicist position that claimed that a difference in form always entailed a difference in meaning (Malmkjar, 1991). Conversely, TGG argued that one common deep structure, for example, was shared by an active sentence and its passive version. Later, generative rhetoric lost its significance and gradually developed into a new branch of linguistics called text linguistics which gave birth to what is now known as contrastive rhetoric. Contrastive rhetoric emerged from the hypothesis that different languages reflect differences in the habitual patterns of thought of their speakers (Malmkjar, 1990). Kaplan (1966) (cited in Maftoon, 1979, p. 13) believed:

> Each language and each culture has a paragraph order unique to itself and . . . part of the learning of a particular language is the mastering of its logical system . . . in the teaching of paragraph structure to foreign students, whether in terms of reading or in terms of composition, the teacher must be himself aware of these differences and he must make these differences overtly apparent to his students.

This indicates that explicit instruction can help foreign language learners to master reading and writing. Since 1966, several studies sought to investigate the probable effects of rhetorical organization on L2 readers' comprehension. Smith (1994), for example, noticed that readers resorted to a number of strategies or deliberate conscious plans to process textual information. Along the same lines, Feng (1998) noticed that these strategies (e.g., previewing text, using headings and sub-headings, reading, evaluating, and understanding) enabled L2 readers to interpret printed information more quickly and efficiently. In yet another study, Sharp (2002) noticed that readers' social and cultural values also influenced comprehension; as a result, a text might be interpreted differently by different people.

One of the earliest studies of the effect of rhetorical organization on reading comprehension was conducted by Mann and Thompson (1988). They

concluded that recognition of rhetorical relation of a text which is the basis of its coherence was essential to understanding the text. The rhetorical relations that Mann and Thompson (1988) introduced embodied the writer's intention in the text and the effect that the writer expected of the readers. Mann and Thompson (1988) clearly demonstrate readers' crucial task in interacting with the text to comprehend it.

Later in 1997, Caverly recommended that foreign language teachers should teach the specific reading techniques based on the principles of text organization to aid readers' comprehension of text (Caverly, 1997). Along the same lines, Richards and Renandya (2002) argued that efficient reading required the reading teacher to raise students' awareness of main ideas in a text as well as their ability to explore the organization of text. They noticed that formal aspects of language and genre structure contribute to reader's developing comprehension and inferencing abilities. Richards and Renandya concluded that awareness of text structure is a critical aspect of reading comprehension and that learners who are aware of text structure have better comprehension abilities.

According to McCarthy (1991) readers' awareness of text structure could help them discern text content in shorter time. McCarthy's study was conducted in the context of schema theory which claims that new knowledge can only be processed in relation to existing knowledge frameworks or schemata. McCarthy noted the existence of two kinds of schemata: (a) content schemata, and (b) formal schemata. Put another way, content schemata refer to background knowledge of the content area of the text, and formal schemata refer to background knowledge of the rhetorical organizational structure of the text (Carrell, 1988). According to Carrell, a reader's failure to activate the needed schemata may be either due to the lack of appropriate schemata as anticipated by the writer, or due to the lack of enough cues in the text to be used in activating those schemata. One of the reasons for the former case is that "the schemata are specific to a given culture and are not part of a particular reader's background knowledge" (Carrell, 1988, p. 240). The latter case leads, however, to the conclusion that readers' should at least possess some level of language proficiency to be able to use the cues in the text to activate the relevant schemata.

Carrell (1987) argued that it was possible to test for the effects of formal schemata by keeping the content of a text constant, varying the rhetorical organization, and having comparable groups of subjects process each different rhetorical pattern. At least two such studies have been conducted in ESL reading, one with narrative text and one with expository text. Carrell (1984b) investigated the effects of a simple narrative formal schema on reading in ESL and found differences among ESL readers in the quantity and

temporal sequence of their recall between standard and interleaved versions of simple stories. Quantity of recall was enhanced when the story's rhetorical organization conformed to a simple story schema—one well-structured episode followed by another. When stories violated the story schema, the temporal sequencing of readers' recall tended to reflect the story schematic order of presentation in the story. With expository prose, Carrell (1984a) investigated the effect of four different English rhetorical patterns on the reading recall of ESL readers of various native language backgrounds. Using text in which identical content information was structured in four different expository patterns, that study showed that the more tightly organized patterns of comparison, causation, and problem/solution generally facilitated the recall of specific ideas from a text more than a more loosely organized pattern called collection of descriptions.

It should be noted that no study has, to the researchers' knowledhe, addressed the effect of formal schemata on L3 reading recall. As such, the current was conducted to determine if formal schemata had any facilitative or debilitative effect on L3 reading recall.

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants

It was hypothesized in this study that explicit rhetorical organization instruction positively affects reading recall. To test this hypothesis, the researcher compared two subject groups' (i.e., a control and an experimental group) recall of a descriptive and a causative text.

Based on their scores on the PET proficiency test, two homogenous groups of subjects (i.e., experimental and control) were sampled from a population of Turkish EFL students who had Persian as their second language. Each group consisted of 120 participants. Their scores on the proficiency test were submitted to an independent samples t-test with an alpha level of .01. The results indicated the experimental group (*M*=61.50, *SD*=10.80) did not differ from the control group [*M*=62.70, *SD*=12.58; *t*(238)=0.792, *p*=.4291]. The magnitude of the difference in the mean was not noticeable (Eta squared=.002).

Each group, then, received a recall test as the pre-test. The experimental group (EG) received two weeks of instruction, and the control group (CG) received no instruction. Finally, the same recall test was administered to both groups as the post-test. The design of the study can be schematically represented as follows:

	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-Test
Experimental Group (EG)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Group (CG)	Yes	No	Yes

The passages for recall were typical of reading materials generally found in Carrell's experiment of rhetorical organization. In order to control the structure and content of the information while investigating the effects of discourse type, two versions of a single passage were selected for recall. The text was "the loss of body water" taken from Carrell (1984a). The researcher did not present the topic of the text to the participants because the effect of text structure varies depending on the extent of readers' knowledge of the topic of the text. Each version contained identical content information. Both texts had clear organizational patterns. The texts were written according to two general semantic relations between propositions: A collection of description and causation (See the Appendix).

3.2. Instrumentation

The main instrument used for data collection was an intermediate recall test (i.e., reproduction of information test); this was used as both the pre-tests and the post-test. It should be noted that both participant groups were given the same recall texts (i.e., causative and descriptive texts presented in the Appendix).

For the pretest, both groups were given the passages, were given enough time to read each passage, and were then asked to recall the passages. After the pre-test, only the experimental group received two weeks of explicit instruction on rhetorical organization. To this end, units 8 and 10 from *Advanced Writing* (Birjandi, Alavi, and Salmani Nodoushan, 2003) which focus on descriptive and causative rhetorical organization respectively were used. Moreover, the descriptive and causative rhetorical patterns of a few articles such as Carrell (1987), and Sharp (2002) were analyzed and discussed in the classroom. The control group, however, did not receive any instruction. The same passages (see the Appendix) were again used for the post-test. Both EG and CG received the post-test.

3.3. Procedures

The groups were told to read the texts they were given, in the order in which the texts had been stapled together, taking as much time as they needed to understand and remember the texts. The texts had been stapled together in such a way as to make sure that in each of the EG and CG groups, half of the participants read text A before text B and the other half read text B before

text A. This was done as a counter-balancing strategy to control for carry-over effect across texts. The participants were told that they would be asked to write what they could remember of the texts of recall immediately. They were not allowed to make any written notes. The texts of recall were collected from them individually as they finished reading. Although reading time was individually controlled by each subject, as a group they took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to read each text. After the texts were collected, regular classroom procedures of recalling started without referring back to the contents of the texts. In eliciting their recall, participants were given recall booklets consisting of two stapled sheets of paper. At the top of each page was the number of each text intended as a recall cue. Subjects were asked to write their recall of each text, writing as much idea units and as exactly as they could remember of each text. They were told to write as well as they could, but not to be overly concerned with their writing. It was emphasized that the researcher was interested in how well they understood and remembered the texts as they read them, not in how well they could write them down. As with reading time, writing time was subject-controlled. They were asked to write a recall of each text in English, paying attention to the semantic content as well as the order of propositions in each text. However, as a group, they spent approximately 20 to 30 minutes writing their recalls of the two texts. The same procedure was repeated for the post-test.

The subjects were asked to write down everything they could remember from the text, using their own words. They were asked to only write in complete sentences and not just to list isolated words or ideas. They were to try to show in their own writing how the ideas from the text were related to each other. The identical information in two text versions was reduced to a total of 21 idea units—based on Carrell (1984). Each recall was scored for presence or absence of the 21 idea units. In other words, the participants' recall protocols were coded on a 0-21 basis--based on the 21 idea units identified Carrell's study.

The use 'recall protocols' was justified on the grounds that they indicate something about the readers' assimilation and reconstruction of text information and therefore reflected comprehension (Gambrel, Pefeiffer and Wilson, 1985). This requires that the text be divided into idea units. An idea unit is the smallest number of words necessary to express a thought idea. The participant reads the text and his/her recall is measured and compared with the number of units in the original text. Comprehension is therefore measured by the amount of information in the recall. Recall scoring requires the presence or absence of the gist of the text content.

The researcher examined the overall rhetorical organization of the recall and classified it as either meeting the definition of the two original text types

(collection of descriptions and causation) or not. The requirement of a collection of description type was a group of descriptions about a topic, where the descriptions were collectively organized. Recalls were classified as causation if the structure consisted of an antecedent and a result. In order to score the result of the comprehension test, the researcher scored each recall in terms of whether it showed the reader had understood the passage or not, using the following scale to measure the overall comprehension of the passage.

0 point:	The subject does not understand the passage
.5point:	The subject understands the passage in general. He/She, however, does not understand the whole passage
1 points:	perfect comprehension of the passage

Recall protocols of the subjects were scored by making use of a loose criterion of recall. According to this criterion EFL readers would not be penalized for their vocabulary and grammatical shortcomings. Sentences in each protocol were matched with sentences in the original text that conveyed the same idea. For each subject, each sentence in the original text was then assigned one point. All sentences in the text that were not assigned one point were then assigned 0 point. Nor did the researcher assign any points in cases where information in the protocol was incorrect or too vague to be identified with any one sentence in the text.

4. Results

4.1. SPANOVA results for recall of descriptive texts

A Mixed Between-Within Subjects Analysis of Variance (also known as SPANOVA) (See Pallant, 2001) was conducted to analyze the effect of two different types of treatment (i.e., implicit instruction vs. no instruction) on participants' recall of texts with descriptive rhetorical organization. This was done to see if there were main effects for each of the independent variables (i.e., main effect for subject groups and main effect for time), and also for their interaction—to tell if the change in recall over time was different for the two groups.

It was necessary to check for *Homogeneity of intercorrelations*—to see if for each of the levels of the between-subjects variable (i.e., treatment) the pattern of intercorrelations among the levels of within-subjects variable (i.e., time) were the same. To test this assumption, Box's M statistic with the more conservative *alpha* level of .01 was used with the hope that the statistic would not be significant (i.e., that the *p* level would be greater than 0.01). In other words, Box's M statistic tests the null hypothesis that the observed covariance

matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups Table 1 displays the result and indicates that this assumption was met (*Sig.*=0.152).

Table 1.
Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices

Box's M	5.329
F	1.760
df1	3
df2	10195920.000
Sig.	.152

Design: Intercept+Treatment
Within Subjects Design: Time

A look at the Multivariate Tests table also indicated that there was a change in participants' recall of descriptive texts across time. The main effect for time was significant. There was also an indication that the two groups were different in terms of recall across time. The main effect for the interaction between time and type of treatment was also significant. These findings are indicated by Wilks' Lambda values and the associated probability values given in the column labeled *Sig.* in Table 2.

Table 2.
Multivariate Tests

Effect		Value	F	Sig.	Partial Eta²
Time	Pillai's Trace	.414	168.296(b)	.000	.414
	Wilks' Lambda	.586	168.296(b)	.000*	.414(*)
	Hotelling's Trace	.707	168.296(b)	.000	.414
	Roy's Largest Root	.707	168.296(b)	.000	.414
Time * Treatment	Pillai's Trace	.494	232.100(b)	.000	.494
	Wilks' Lambda	.506	232.100(b)	.000*	.494(*)
	Hotelling's Trace	.975	232.100(b)	.000	.494
	Roy's Largest Root	.975	232.100(b)	.000	.494

Computed using alpha = .01 (Exact statistic, Design: Intercept+Treatment, Within Subjects Design: Time)

Based on the values in the Wilks' Lambda's part of the "Multivariate Tests" table (See table 2 above) it was found that there was a statistically significant change in descriptive recall as a result of treatment. The value for Wilks' Lambda for time was 0.586, with a *Sig.* value of .000 (which means $p<.0001$). Because the p value was less than .01, it was concluded that there was a statistically significant effect for time. This suggested that there was a change in descriptive recall across time; technically speaking, it showed the effect of treatment on recall of texts with descriptive rhetorical organization. The value for partial Eta squared for time was 0.414. Using the commonly used

guidelines proposed by Cohen's (1988) (0.01=small effect, 0.06=moderate effect, and 0.14=large effect), this result suggested a very large effect size for time.
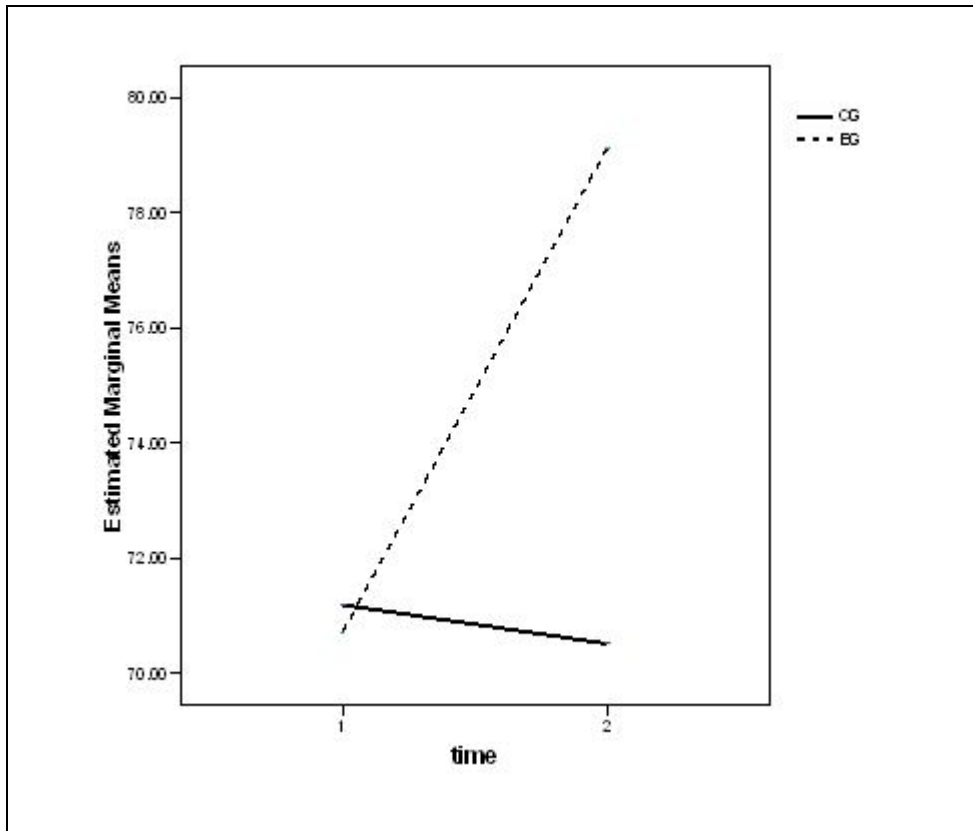

Figure 1. Comparison of gains in mean descriptive recall across subject groups.

Furthermore, the value for Wilks' Lambda for time-treatment interaction was 0.506, with a *Sig.* value of .000 (which means *p*<.0001). Because the *p* value was less than .01, it was concluded that there was a statistically significant effect for time-treatment interaction. The partial Eta squared value for the interaction effect was 0.494. This suggests a very large effect for time-treatment interaction. This means that there was not the same change in participants' recall of texts with descriptive rhetorical organization over time for the experimental versus control groups. In other words, gain in recall score for the EG group was not statistically the same as that for the CG group. Figure 1 visualizes this difference in gains in descriptive recall across subject groups. As figure 1 indicates, the EG group showed a much greater gain in recall score than the CG group. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for the two treatment groups across time.

As table 3 indicates, the pre-test mean for CG was 71.19 while the post test mean was 70.51; the pre-test mean for EG was 70.71 whereas the post test mean was 79.12. The mean change was mathematically small but it was checked for statistical significance; to this end, it was vital to take look at the data displayed in Table 4 below.

Table 3.
Descriptive Statistics for Treatment Groups across Time

	Type of Treatment	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-test Score	Control Group	71.1905	10.74326	120
	Experimental Group	70.7143	10.77514	120
Post-test Score	Control Group	70.5159	11.27034	120
	Experimental Group	79.1270	10.60640	120

Table 4.
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type II Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta^2
Intercept	2550000.425	1	2550000.425	11341.143	.000	.979
Treatment	1985.308	1	1985.308	8.830	.003	.036
Error	53513.133	238	224.845			

Transformed Variable: Average; Computed using alpha = .01

As table 4 indicates, the Sig. value for treatment was statistically significant (*Sig.*=0.003). The Sig. value was less than the alpha level of 0.01. It was, therefore, concluded that the main effect for group was significant. That is, there was a significant difference in gains in recall for the two groups (those who received explicit instruction and those who received no instruction). The effect size of the between-subject effect also supported this finding; the Eta-squared value for treatment (or group) was 0.036. This indicates a moderate effect size.

4.2. SPANOVA results for recall of causative texts

Another Mixed Between-Within Subjects Analysis of Variance was conducted to analyze the effect of two different types of treatment (i.e., implicit instruction vs. no instruction) on participants' recall of texts with causative rhetorical organization. This was done to see if there were main effects for each of the independent variables (i.e., main effect for subject groups and main effect for time), and also for their interaction—to tell if the change in recall over time was different for the two groups.

Table 5.
Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices

Box's M	103.475
F	34.178
df1	3
df2	10195920.000
Sig.	.015

Design: Intercept+Treatment
Within Subjects Design: Time

Here again, it was necessary to check for *Homogeneity of intercorrelation*s—to see if for each of the levels of the between-subjects variable (i.e., treatment) the pattern of intercorrelations among the levels of within-subjects variable (i.e., time) were the same. To test this assumption, Box's M statistic with the more conservative *alpha* level of .01 was used with the hope that the statistic would not be significant (i.e., that the *p* level would be greater than 0.01). Table 5 above displays the result and indicates that this assumption was met (*Sig.*=0.015).

Table 6.
Multivariate Tests

Effect		Value	F	Sig.	Partial Eta^2
Time	Pillai's Trace	.295	99.675(b)	.000	.295
	Wilks' Lambda	.705	99.675(b)	.000*	.295(*)
	Hotelling's Trace	.419	99.675(b)	.000	.295
	Roy's Largest Root	.419	99.675(b)	.000	.295
Time * Treatment	Pillai's Trace	.229	70.643(b)	.000	.229
	Wilks' Lambda	.771	70.643(b)	.000*	.229(*)
	Hotelling's Trace	.297	70.643(b)	.000	.229
	Roy's Largest Root	.297	70.643(b)	.000	.229

Computed using alpha = .01 (Exact statistic, Design: Intercept+Treatment, Within Subjects Design: Time)

A look at the Multivariate Tests table also indicated that there was a change in participants' recall of causative texts across time. The main effect for time was significant. There was also an indication that the two groups were different in terms of recall across time. The main effect for the interaction between time and type of treatment was also significant. These findings are indicated by Wilks' Lambda values and the associated probability values given in the column labeled *Sig.* in Table 6.

Based on the values in the Wilks' Lambda's part of the "Multivariate Tests" table (See table 6) it was found that there was a statistically significant change in descriptive recall as a result of treatment. The value for Wilks' Lambda for time was 0.705, with a *Sig.* value of .000 (which means *p*<.0001).

Because the *p* value was less than .01, it was concluded that there was a statistically significant effect for time. This suggested that there was a change in causative recall across time; technically speaking, it showed the effect of treatment on recall of texts with causative rhetorical organization. The value for partial Eta squared for time was 0.295 which suggested a very large effect size for time.
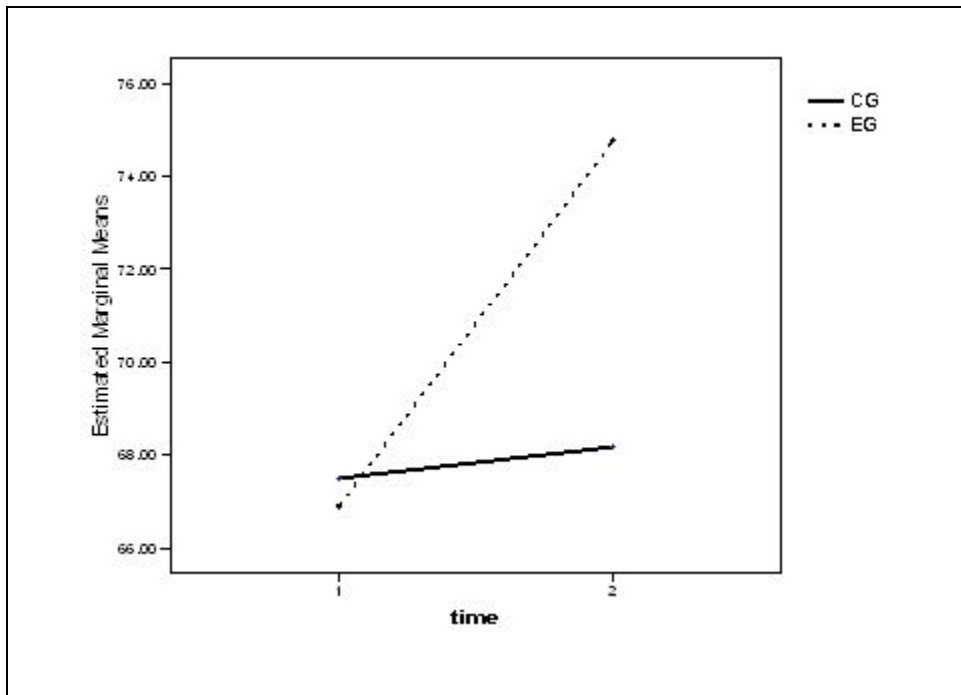

Figure 2. Comparison of gains in mean causative recall across subject groups.

Furthermore, the value for Wilks' Lambda for time-treatment interaction was 0.771, with a *Sig.* value of .000 (which means *p*<.0001). Because the *p* value was less than .01, it was concluded that there was a statistically significant effect for time-treatment interaction. The partial Eta squared value for the interaction effect was 0.229. This suggested a very large effect for time-treatment interaction. This means that there was not the same change in participants' recall of texts with causative rhetorical organization over time for the experimental versus control groups. In other words, gain in recall score for the EG group was not statistically the same as that for the CG group. Figure 2 visualizes this difference in gains in descriptive recall across subject groups.

As figure 2 indicates, the EG group showed a much greater gain in recall score than the CG group. Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics for the two treatment groups across time.

Table 7.
Descriptive Statistics for Treatment Groups across Time

	Type of Treatment	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-test Score	Control Group	67.5000	11.90136	120
	Experimental Group	66.9048	10.84916	120
Post-test Score	Control Group	68.1746	13.41175	120
	Experimental Group	74.7619	10.48746	120

As table 7 indicates, the pre-test mean for CG was 67.50 while the post test mean was 68.17; the pre-test mean for EG was 66.90 whereas the post test mean was 74.76. The mean change was mathematically small but it was checked for statistical significance; to this end, it was vital to take look at the data displayed in Table 8.

Table 8.
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type II Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta²
Intercept	2307545.399	1	2307545.399	9131.708	.000	.975
Treatment	1077.145	1	1077.145	4.263	.040	.018
Error	60141.629	238	252.696			

Transformed Variable: Average; Computed using alpha = .01

As table 8 indicates, the Sig. value for treatment was not statistically significant (*Sig.*=0.04). The Sig. value was bigger than the alpha level of 0.01. It was, therefore, concluded that the main effect for group was not significant. That is, there was not a significant difference in gains in recall for the two groups (those who received explicit instruction and those who received no instruction). The difference was, however, significant at the less stringent alpha level of 0.05. This means that explicit instruction positively affects recall of causative texts. The effect size of the between-subject effect also supported this finding; the Eta-squared value for treatment (or group) was 0.018. This indicates a small effect size.

5. Discussion and recommendations

Analyses of the data revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the recall of both descriptive and causative texts because the experimental group underwent detailed instruction in rhetorical organization. This finding has certain implications for language teaching as well as materials development.

Teachers and university instructors will benefit from the results of this and other similar studies. They can present their content materials based on the results of such studies to facilitate the comprehension and recall of the idea units covered; in other words, if it happened that the outcome of this research revealed any significant difference between the amounts of idea units recalled from passages with different rhetorical organizations, text preparation and content presentation should follow the findings by providing readers with texts in such orders of rhetorical organization which enhance later retrieval of the idea units. Moreover, the difference observed in the recall of descriptive vs. causative texts has implications for how they should be sequenced in reading classes. Description texts which were found to be significantly easier for recall can be placed before causative texts in reading text books.

6. Conclusions

Language is such a complex phenomenon that nobody is able to cover its every aspect. Specifically, in the case of recall in relation to rhetorical organization there is still a dearth of research. Further research into this topic should, therefore, consider using larger samples and rhetorical organizations beyond the two patterns studied here. Moreover, this study did not account for whether male readers are more talented in recall or females; this can, therefore, be another line of research. A similar study can even be carried out to investigate the effect of rhetorical organization on ESP or high school students. Finally, since the present study was limited to reading recall, it would be interesting to conduct a similar experiment with other skills, such as writing and listening.

The Author

Mohammad Ali Salmani Nodoushan (salmani.nodoushan@yahoo.com) is an assistant professor of TEFL at Iran Encyclopedia Foundation, Iran. His research interests include language testing in general, and testing English for Specific Purposes in particular.

References

Birjandi, P., Alavi, M., & Salmani-Nodushan, M. A. (2003). *Advanced writing.* Tehran: Zabankadeh Publication.

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Carrell, P. L. (1984a). The effect of rhetorical organization on ESL readers. *TESOL Quarterly, 18,* 441-469.

Carrell, P.L. (1984b). Evidence of a formal schema in second language comprehension. *Language Learning, 34*, 78-112.

Carrell, P. L. (1987). Content and formal schemata in ESL reading. *TESOL Quarterly, 21*, 3, 461-481.

Carrell, P. L. (1988). Introduction: Interactive approaches to second language reading. In P. Carrell, J. Devine, & D. Eskey (Eds.), *Interactive approaches to second language reading* (pp. 1-7). Cambridge: Cambridge University press.

Caverly, D. C. (1997). Teaching reading in a learning assistance center. Paper presented at the 19th annual conference of the Winter Institute for learning assistance professionals, Tucson, AZ, Retrieved, 26 January, 2001.

Crystal, D. (1992). *An encyclopedic dictionary of language and linguistics.* London: Blackwell Publishers.

Dixon, P. (1971*). The writer in performance.* New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Feng, X. (1998). Reading essay and difficult texts in English and Chinese. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching, 8,* 19-40.

Flower, L. (1993). Cognitive rhetoric inquiry into the art of inquiry. In T. Enos, & S. C. Brown (Eds.), *Defining the new rhetoric.* (pp. 171-190). London: Sage Publications, Inc.

Gambrell, L. B., Peffeifer, W. R., & Wilson, R. M. (1985). The effects of retelling upon reading comprehension and recall of text information. *Journal of Educational Research, 78*(4), 216-220.

Kaplan, R. B. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education. *Language Learning, 16*, 1-20.

Maftoon, P. (1979). *A contrastive study of the rhetorical organization of American-English and Persian expository paragraphs.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. New York: New York University.

Malmkjar, K. (1991). *The linguistic encyclopedia.* London: Routledge.

Mann, W. C., & Thomoson, S. A. (1988). Rhetorical structure theory: Toward a function theory of text organization. *Text, 8*(3), 243—281.

McCarthy, M. (1991). *Discourse analysis for language teachers.* Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada.

Nuttall, C. (1996). *Teaching reading skills in a foreign language.* Oxford: Macmillan Heinemann.

O'Sullivan, T., Hartley, J., Saunders, D., Montgomery, M., & Fiske, J. (1994). *Key concepts in communication and cultural studies* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Pallant, J. (2001). *SPSS survival manual: A step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS for Windows (Version 10).* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Richards, J., C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). *Methodology in language teaching. An anthology of current practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sharp, A. (2002). Chinese L1 schoolchildren reading in English: The effects of rhetorical patterns. *Reading in a Foreign Language.* Retrieved February 15, 2006 from the world wide web: http://www.nflrc.hawaii.edu/rfl.

APPENDIX

Text A: Collection of descriptions

Several aspects of the body loss water will be discussed. First, athletic coaches frequently require wrestlers, boxers, judo contestants, and football team members to lose body water so that they will attain specified body weights. These specified weights are considerably below the athletes' usual weights

Second, the loss of body water sustained by a 150-pound individual each day is three pints of water.

Third, the loss of body water cause damage to cardio-vascular functioning, which limits work capacity. More specifically, a loss of 3% of body water damages physical performance and a loss of 5% results in heat exhaustion. Moreover, a loss of 7% of body water cause hallucinations. Losses of 10% or more of body water result in heart stroke, deep coma, and convulsions; if not treated, death will result.

Text B: Causation

It is true that athletic coaches frequently require wrestlers, boxers, judo contestants, and football team members to lose body water so that they will attain specified body weights.

As result, tragedies are unwittingly caused by the coaches who require this loss of body weight in these situations. These tragedies occur due to the fact that the loss of body water cause damage to cardio-vascular functioning, which limits work capacity. More specifically, a loss of 3% of body water damages physical performance and a loss of 5% results in heat exhaustion. Moreover, a loss of 7% of body water cause hallucinations. Losses of 10% or more of body water result in heart stroke, deep coma, and convulsions; if not treated, death will result.

Communication Strategies and Topics in E-mail Interactions between Iranian EFL Students and Their Instructors

Azizeh Chalak, Islamic Azad University, Khorasgan Branch, Iran
Zohreh Eslami Rasekh, Texas A&M University College Station, USA
Abbas Eslami Rasekh, University of Isfahan, Iran

This paper investigated the communicative strategies and topics addressed by Iranian EFL non-native English speaking students (NNESSs) at both undergraduate and graduate levels in their natural, authentic e-mail interactions with their instructors at two universities in Isfahan, Iran during 2006 to 2009. Following the literature, the communicative strategies were analyzed as a) requesting, b) reporting, and c) negotiating. The communicative topics were also categorized as a) facilitative, b) substantive, and c) relational. The subcategories of each group were also analyzed in terms of descriptive statistics, calculating frequencies/percentages, and inferential statistics by employing the Chi-square. The findings of the study revealed that there were significant differences among the percentage of the communicative strategies employed, requesting being the favored strategy. The study showed that at both levels, students send e-mails to make different kinds of requests. The results also indicated that there were significant differences among the percentage of the communicative topics and the choice of the topics were different at the two levels.

1. Introduction

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) has gained huge importance throughout the world during the past decades. The development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) along with the widespread use of the internet has made e-mail a common mode of personal and institutional communication and has made it as "an ideal tool for building or maintaining social relationship" (Baron, 1998, p. 157). Communication via e-mail has revolutionized business, academic, and personal communication.

The advantages of e-mail including breaking down the limitations on space and time (Bloch, 2002), facilitating personal reflection (Warschauer, 1999), speedy delivery, ease of communication, cost effectiveness, geographical

independence, and the portability of mailboxes (Gupta, Mazumdar & Rao, 2004) have made this medium of communication very popular for every purpose. On the other hand, its uniqueness has made it more like a different genre with its own rules (Baron, 2000; Sawngboonsatic, 2006; Bulut & Rababah, 2007) and has attracted considerable attention among researchers.

At universities, student-instructor interactions via e-mail have been accepted as one of the most frequently used ways for students to consult with their instructors and is replacing, to some extent, the more traditional face-to-face office meetings (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005). In academic contexts and at universities, e-mail presumes many functions including obtaining clarification (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007), asking for help (Gee, 2002), building relationship and dissolving traditional barriers between teachers and students (Bloch, 2002), soliciting face-to-face appointments or arrangements of meetings and getting input on projects (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005; Payne, 1997), showing interest in and understanding of course materials, (Marbach-Ad & Sokolove, 2001; Poling, 1994), making excuses for missing classes and late work (Martin, Myers & Mottet, 1999; Poling 1994), attracting instructors' attention and leaving good impression on them, or challenging grades (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007) and providing opportunity to interact and negotiate meaning with an authentic audience (Gaer, 1999). Even in L2 classes, the primary focus for e-mail use has been on fluency development (Li, 2000; Warschauer, 1999) and facilitating teacher-student interactions (Crystal, 2001).

However, as Biesenbach-Lucas (2005) claims, there are advantages and difficulties which students and instructors face in online interaction. During the recent decades, these advantages and challenges in student-faculty online interactions have received great consideration and many research projects have been conducted on e-mails, pragmatics of e-mail communication, or politeness in intercultural e-mail communication (Bloch, 2002, Chen, 2006; Duthler, 2006; Swangboonsatic, 2006; Murphy, 2006; Bulut & Rababah, 2007; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005, 2006, 2007; Al-Ali & Sahawneh, 2008).

The use of the internet and e-mail has developed a lot during the past decade but due to some problems such as speed, facility, and technical problems, it is not being used widely in every academic setting. Although there are some limitations in some countries or academic settings for widespread use of e-mail, it is rapidly replacing other means of communication. Considering the importance of this new means of communication in the academic settings of Iran, and the slow increase of student-faculty interaction via e-mail, the focus of the present study was to examine the English e-mail messages sent by Iranian EFL NNES graduate and undergraduate students to their Iranian NNES instructors at different universities in Isfahan, Iran, in order to find out the communicative strategies and topics that they use while addressing their

instructors and examine the differences that there may be in them with regard to different levels.

2. Background

E-mail as an asynchronous medium has received a great deal of attention over the past decades. Research on e-mail can be classified as the studies of investigating the effect of using e-mail in foreign language teaching (Gonglewski, 2001, Manteghi, 1995), language of e-mail (Li, 2000; Baron, 1998, 2002; 2003; Crystal, 2001, 2006), and those studies that have analyzed students' actual e-mail messages (Payne, 1997; Marabach-Ad & Sokolove, 2001; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005, 2006, 2007; Chen, 2001, 2006; Bloch, 2002). Different studies have examined the e-politeness, strategies and discourse choices employed by students in their e-mails (Chen, 2001; Lee, 2004; Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2000; Wong, 2000, Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2002; Bou-Franch 2004; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006, 2007; Duthler, 2006). Some studies have discussed the student-faculty interactions via e-mail and surveyed the topics for which students send e-mails to their faculty (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005; Martin et al. 1999; Chen, 2006), but due to ethical issues and concerns, research on e-mail interaction between students and faculty has been rare (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006).

One of the earliest studies on e-mail interaction in the academic domain is Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig's (1996) study which investigated the effect of e-mail on faculty members. The most extensive of these surveys was that of Martin et al. (1999). They introduced a measure of motives students use when interacting with the faculty and identified 5 main communicative reasons: *relational*— to develop a relationship with their instructors; *functional*— to get information about assignments and course materials; *excuse-making*— to explain late work or project or challenge grades; *participation*— to show interest in class and understanding the course material; and *sycophancy*— to make a favourable impression and get the instructor's attention and create a positive picture of themselves.

Poling (1994) classified different categories for examining actual student e-mail messages known as: *a) asking questions about course content, b) making excuses for missing classes, c) asking for homework, d) upcoming quizzes or tests,* and *e) asking for advice*. Bloch (2002), created 4 categories for grouping the e-mail messages. The categories were: 1) *phatic communication*—to create and maintain personal relationships by exchange of words; 2) *asking for help*— in particular assignment; 3) *making excuses*—to give excuse for not coming to class or not handing in homework; and, 4) *making formal requests*— to request formally when the parties do not know one another.

Payne (1997) identified 2 categories: 1) *facilitative*— to schedule appointment and meeting or conference calls, submission of work and study plans and evaluation of work; 2) *academic*— to inquire about resources, organization and formats for written work and developing points of views or insights. Marabach-Ad and Sokolove's classification was based on two main categories: *a) procedural questions* and *b) question/comments about class content*. A study by Ronau and Stoble (1999) examined topics of communication in e-mail interactions between students and teachers. They identified 10 topics for the e-mails used by the students.

In their study, Duran, Kelly and Keaten (2005) examined the motives that faculty perceive to be students' motives for initiating e-mail contacts and classified them as *a) excuse on late or missing work*, *b) concern for grades*, *c) excuses on missed classes,* and d) *clarification of course content.* Biesenbach-Lucas (2005) compared communication strategies in e-mail consultation of American and international university students. She classified communication topics as *a) facilitative, b) substantive,* and *c) relational*. She also categorized communicative strategies as *a) requesting, b) negotiating* and *c) reporting*. Following Biesenbach-Lucas (2005), Bulut and Rababah (2007) analyzed pragmatics of e-mail communication with regard to strategies and topics between Saudi female students and their male professors.

Although the coding categories differed in these studies, they mostly shared one shortcoming. The frequency of usage for each category was not made clear. Moreover, most of the studies in this area focused on e-mail requests sent by NNS from different language backgrounds and compared them with native speakers' e-mails. Few attempts such as Bulut and Rababah (2007) focused on English learners who come from the same language background to investigate the purposes for which students communicate with their instructors via e-mail. On the other hand, most of these studies have focused on one level and primarily on graduate students.

While all around the world some research projects have investigated the purposes for which university students communicate with their professors via e-mail, to the best knowledge of the researcher, a very limited number of studies have been conducted in Iran on e-mails or CMC studies (Abbasian, 2002; Amirian, 2002; Shakeri, 2004; Eslami-Rasekh & Eslami-Rasekh, 2007; Janghorban, 2008). Chalak and Eslami-Rasekh (2009) classified e-mails sent by undergraduate students into two general categories of *non-requestive* and *requestive* e-mails. Requestive e-mails included *a) request for appointment, b) request for explanation, c) request for extension on due date, d) request for feedback, e) request for grade, f) request for help, g) request for information, h) request for something such as a CD or book, i) request for translation*; and non-requestive e-mail messages included *a) apology, b) congratulation, c) creation*

of interpersonal relationship, d) submission of assignment, e) suggestion, and *f) thank.* Except the latter, none of the Iranian studies have examined communication topics, purposes, or strategies for which Iranian NNS communicate with their instructors via this electronic channel.

The present study focused on the students who come from the same linguistic backgrounds (Iranian EFL non-native English speaking students; NNESSs) and examined the motives and purposes for which Iranian EFL NNESSs send e-mails to their instructors. It also concentrated on both graduate and undergraduate students and compared the differences between the e-mails produced by the two groups, because as Biesenbach-Lucas (2005) suggested, "undergraduate students' experience with computers and e-mail interaction has most likely begun at a much earlier age than that of graduate students" (p.102). Finally, it focused on the communication strategies used by Iranian EFL students and attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What communication strategies do Iranian EFL NNESSs use in their e-mail interactions with their instructors?

2. Are there any differences between graduate and undergraduate students with regard to the use of communication strategies?

3. For what communication topics, do Iranian EFL NNESSs use e-mail with their instructors?

4. Are there any differences between graduate and undergraduate students with regard to the use of communication topics?

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants

The target population of the study was Iranian undergraduate university students majoring in English Translation, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), and English Language and Literature. From the accessible population including Iranian EFL NNESSs in Isfahan, a convenient sample was chosen to participate in the study. The participants were 300 (224 BA and 76 MA students) Iranian EFL NNESSs studying at different universities in Isfahan, Iran during 2006 to 2009 over 6 semesters. The students who sent e-mails to their instructors were not freshmen and were all familiar with sending and receiving e-mails. To observe the ethical issues, all participants were informed that their data would be used in the research and were guaranteed that their names, addresses, and any identifying features would be kept confidential and used only for the purposes of this research.

Table 1.
Demographic Background of the Participants

No. of Students	300 (224 BA & 76 MA)
Gender	Both Male & Female
Mother Tongue	Persian
Major	English Translation, TEFL, & English Language and Literature
Academic Years	2006-2009
Instructors	Middle-aged, both Male & Female
Universities	Islamic Azad University, Khorasgan Branch (IAUKB) & University of Isfahan (UI)

The instructors to whom e-mails were sent were Iranian NNE speakers, middle-aged (with the average age of 38 years) both male and female university instructors with the average of 11.5 years of teaching experience at university level as EFL teacher.

3.2. Data Collection

The data for this study were comprised of 518 (276 BA and 242 MA) e-mail messages sent to the instructors by Iranian EFL NNESSs studying in different English majors at two universities in Isfahan, Iran during the academic years of 2006- 2009.

The e-mails sent in Persian or with English script in Persian were excluded from the process of data collection. The forwarded e-mail messages with no text were also excluded from the data. Therefore, following Condon and Cech (1996) and Biesenbach-Lucas (2005), the data were student-initiated messages and not chained or teacher initiated ones because chain e-mails exhibit a variety of discourse and features such as copying and pasting the part of the e-mail that is replied and may be different from student-initiated messages.

3.3. Data Analysis Procedure

The coding scheme adapted to categorize and analyze the data was the one employed by Biesenbach-Lucas (2005) and Bulut and Rababah (2007). First, the contents of the e-mails were categorized for *communication strategies* and *topics* by two coders independently. Communication strategies included *requesting, reporting, and negotiating.* Following Chalak and Eslami-Rasekh, (2009), *requests* were subdivided into the following requests, with some modifications. The followings are examples of the requests from the data:

1. Request for appointment:
   "If you have enough time can I meet you for these papers"

2. Request for explanation
   "Can you explain what the difference between teaching activities and instructional materials is?"

3. Request for extension of due date
   "I'm wonder if you'd let me to send my own part later."

4. Request for feedback
   "The story that I am going to translate is attached to this letter. Kindly, have a look at it and keep
   me informed about your feedback."

5. Request for grade
   "Would you please correct my exam sheet one more time?"

6. Request for help
   "I was just wondering if you could give me a hand with this mystery!"

7. Request for information
   "How can I find a person whose major in BA and MA is English translation?"

8. Request for translation
   "Can we translate the following sentence in this way."

9. Request for something (a book, paper or CD, etc.)
   "Would you please bring that CD for me, I will make a copy out of it and bring it to you as soon as possible."

The *reporting* strategy was mostly based on declarative sentences such as:

- *"I made the needed changes based on our last contact."*
- *"I made the changes to the paper and added some parts which were missing including…"*

The *negotiating* strategy usually was followed by a request for approval or permission to continue the project, research, or plan. For example,

- *"I omitted the second question but I like to discuss the details with you. It will be very nice to know your comments."*
- *"Due to changes that I made on my research questions, these two questions have not been posed appropriately and I need your suggestions. I have changed the proposal a lot and I think many of the*

problems have been removed. Please give me your feedback. I highlighted these parts then you can track them easily."

For *communication topics* e-mails were classified based on *a) facilitative, b) substantive,* and *c) relational* topics. *Facilitative* topics included *scheduling appointment, submission of works, class attendance, self identification, and message confirmations*. For example,

- *"The assignment has been attached to this mail in a word format document."*(submission)
- *"I'll be grateful to be informed of the time that we can meet each other"* (scheduling appointment)

Substantive topics related to *content of work, resources, clarification of assignment, and evaluation of projects or works* such as:

- *"I have attached the paper; can I use it for the course of individual translation?"* (clarification of assignment).
- *"Would you just tell me about the books for vocabulary and grammar of MA tests this year?"* (available or usable resources)

Relational topics related to *maintaining social* and *interpersonal relationship* between the students and their professors. Biesenbach-Lucas (2005) divided the relational topics to *course-related matters* and *social relationships*. For example,

- *"I feel words fail me to thank you. I am very proud of having such kind of university teacher like you and let say not only a patient teacher but also a kind friend very effective psychologist and thousand good attributes that I think no need to say on the part of me because I know you have heard them thousands and thousands."*(interpersonal)
- *"Thanks for applying new method of teaching reading course…. It is a very helpful method to improve our comprehension skills."*(course-related)

The coders included one of the authors and an experienced colleague of her. It is worth mentioning that when the two coders did not agree, each case was discussed until agreement was reached. In addition, Chi-square tests were applied to find out if the results were significant. It should be mentioned that some e-mail messages included more than one communication strategy or topic. Therefore, the e-mail messages were not considered the units of counting. For example, the following e-mail had 4 purposes:

<< dear mrs chalak,

*although it is very sad to bide farewell to your classes , i thank dearly god that we **can keep in touch in this way**.* (interpersonal relationship)

*i would also like to **ask you for the sources** you told me previous secsion.* (sources)

*i reviwed my translation and of course there were some mistypings but not that much . it is the last version with **this e-mail i am sending u**.* (Submission of assignment)

it is to say that i am very happy with my translation an keeping the style of the writer as i did .

*please **send me your comments on it**.* (Request for feedback)

i'm looking forward to know your comments.

Sincerely yours
XX >>

4. Findings and Discussions

The students' e-mail messages were analyzed in terms of descriptive and inferential statistics. The data were basically nominal and based on frequencies; therefore, percentages were calculated. The raw data were fed into the test of Chi-square to know whether the distribution was different from what one would expect by chance. In other words, it was done to determine whether the observed frequencies had statistically significant difference with the expected ones or whether they had just occurred by mere chance.

The analysis of e-mail messages sent by Iranian EFL NNESSs revealed that the participants used all the communicative topics including *a) facilitative, b) substantive,* and *c) relational topics*. Frequency and percentage of usage have been reported in the following table.

Table 2.
Communicative Topics in Students' E-mail Interactions

	BA DATA		MA DATA	
Communicative Topic	Frequency (F)	Percentage (P)	Frequency (F)	Percentage (P)
Facilitative	112	31.2	124	70.05
Substantive	136	37.88	26	14.7
Relational	111	30.92	27	15.25
Total	359	100	177	100
(X^2)	11.36		107.42	

As shown in Table 2, for BA students, *substantive* communication topics including *clarification of assignments, format/organization issues, content/development of viewpoint in assignments, available sources,* and *evaluation of work previously submitted* received the highest percentage (P= 37.88%), followed by *facilitative* topics including *scheduling an appointment, submission of assignments, message clarification, self-identification,* and *class attendance* received the percentage of (P= 31.2%), and finally *relational* topics including *course-related topics (sycophancy)* and *person-related (phatic)* (P= 30.92 %). It appeared that for BA students *relational* and *facilitative* topics received almost the same importance of usage.

For MA students, *facilitative* topics received the highest percentage (P= 70.05%), followed by *relational* topics (P= 15.25%), and then *substantive* topics (P= 14.7%). MA students used almost the same percentage of *relational* topics compared to *substantive* ones.

The raw data were also fed into a non-parametric test of Chi-square for each case to determine whether the observed frequencies had statistically significant difference with the expected ones or they had just occurred by mere chance. The difference was found to be statistically significant at ρ= 0.005 level for BA level (X^2= 11.36) and for MA (X^2= 107.42).

Table 3 summarizes the distribution of *facilitative* topics in students' e-mail interactions with their instructors according to which, *submission of work* received the highest percentage for the both levels (33.93% for BA and 58.87% for MA students); almost one-third of the e-mail messages sent by BA students contained *submission of assignments or projects* while for MA students it was more than half of the messages.

Table 3.
Distribution of Facilitative Topics in Students' E-mail Interactions

Facilitative topics	BA DATA		MA DATA	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Scheduling	15	13.39	5	4.03
Submission of work	38	33.93	73	58.87
Class attendance	11	9.82	2	1.61
Self-identification	14	12.5	4	3.23
Message confirmation	5	4.46	7	5.65
Other	29	25.9	33	26.61
Total	112	100	124	100
(X^2)	40.78		191.06	

It seems that at BA level students prefer to submit the hard copy of their assignments while at MA level, students use the both options; they either submit the hard copy or e-mail it to their instructors and in some cases use both of them. The lowest percentages of usage for these two levels were not

the same. For BA students *message confirmation* (4.46%) and for MA *class attendance* (1.61%) received the lowest percentage.

The frequency and percentage of all the 6 categories of *facilitative topics* were also found to be significant at ρ= 0.001 level (X²= 40.78 and X²= 1914.06 for BA data and MA respectively).

Table 4 refers to the distribution of *substantive* topics in students' e-mail interactions with their instructors. *Substantive* topics were classified into *clarification of assignments, format/ organization issues, content/development of viewpoints in assignments, available or usable sources*, and *evaluation of work previously submitted*. For BA students, the highest percentages referred to *resources* (36.76%), followed by *content/development of viewp*oints (34.56%), and the lowest percentages were *format/organization* (2.2%) and *Evaluation* (5.8%). For MA students, the highest percentage referred to *content/development of viewpoints* (46.15%) and *resources* received (19.24%), but *format/organization* and *evaluation* received the same percentage (15.38%). The lowest percentage of usage for MA students was *clarification of assignment* (3.85%).

Table 4.
Distribution of Substantive Topics in Students' E-mail Interactions

Facilitative topics	BA DATA		MA DATA	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Clarification of assignment	28	20.6	1	3.85
Format & organization	3	2.2	4	15.38
Content & Development of viewpoints	47	34.56	12	46.15
Resources	50	36.76	5	19.24
Evaluation	8	5.88	4	15.38
Total	136	100	26	100
(X²)	68.62		12.83	

The frequency and percentage of all the 5 categories of *substantive topics* were also found to be significant at ρ= 0.025 level (X²= 68.62 and X²=12.83 for BA data and MA respectively).

Distribution of *relational* topics in students' e-mail interactions with their instructors are also reported in Table 5. *Relational* topics were categorized in two classes: *a) course-related topics called sycophancy* by Martin et al. (1999), and b) *social or person-related* topics labeled as *phatic* by Bloch (2002).

As Table 5 demonstrates, both BA and MA students used *phatic relational* topics more (81.98% and 85.19% for BA and MA students respectively) than *course-related* ones (18.02% and 14.81% for BA and MA students respectively).

Table 5.
Distribution of Relational Topics in Students' E-mail Interactions

Facilitative topics	BA DATA		MA DATA	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Course-related	20	18.02	4	14.81
Social relations	91	81.98	23	85.19
Total	111	100	27	100
(X^2)	45.4		13.38	

The frequency and percentage of all these 2 categories of *relational topics* were also found to be significant at $\rho= 0.001$ level ($X^2= 45.4$ for BA students and $X^2=13.38$ for MA).

The analysis of the e-mails sent by students to their instructors with regard to the use of communicative *strategies* revealed that the participants used *communicative topics* for *a) requesting, b) reporting, and c) negotiation*. The frequency and percentage of the usage of each strategy by both BA and MA students have been reported in the following table:

Table 6.
Communication Strategies in Students' E-mail Interactions

Facilitative topics	BA DATA		MA DATA	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Requesting	140	77.78	95	46.57
Reporting	22	12.22	55	26.96
Negotiating	18	10	54	26.47
Total	180	100	204	100
(X^2)	160.14		16.08	

As shown in Table 6, the pattern of usage of communicative *strategies* for both BA and MA students seemed to be similar. For both levels the highest percentage referred to *requesting* (77.78% for BA and 46.57% for MA students) and *negotiating* received the lowest percentage in both groups (only 10% of the messages for BA and 26.47% for MA students).

The raw data were also fed into a non-parametric test of Chi-square. The difference was found to be statistically significant at $\rho= 0.001$ level for BA level ($X^2= 160.14$) and for MA ($X^2= 16.08$).

Table 7 summarizes the distribution of *requesting* as the most frequently used communicative *strategy* by both BA and MA students. At BA level, most of the requests made by students were related to *request for explanation/ translation* or *request for information* mostly for MA entrance references and exams (30.71%) while for MA students, *request for articles, papers, books, etc* from their instructors received the highest percentage (37.89%) followed by *request for information* on a topic, subject, or project (26.32%). The lowest

percentage referred to *extension of due date* (2.14%) for BA students; no instances of such kind of request was found among the e-mails sent by MA students).

Table 7.
Distribution of Requesting Topics in Students' E-mail Interactions

Facilitative topics	BA DATA		MA DATA	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Appointment	16	11.43	15	15.79
Explanation/ Translation	43	30.71	17	17.9
Grade	8	5.72	2	2.1
Information	43	30.71	25	26.32
Extension on due date	3	2.14	0	0
Request for CD, book, etc.	27	19.29	36	37.89
Total	140	100	95	100
(X^2)	101.93		59.04	

The frequency and percentage of these 6 categories of *requesting* strategies were also found to be significant at $\rho= 0.001$ level ($X^2= 101.93$ for BA and $X^2= 59.04$ for MA students).

5. Conclusion and Implications

The aim of the present study was to examine the e-mail messages sent by Iranian EFL NNESSs to find out which communication *strategies* and *topics* were used to address the instructors. The study was conducted with both graduate and undergraduate students. It was observed that at both levels students addressed particular *communication topics* and *strategies* with their instructors. The communicative *strategies* used by the students were: *a) requesting, b) reporting,* and *c) negotiating.* Requestive strategies employed by the students were: *a) request for appointment, b) request for explanation/translation, c) request for grade, d) request for information, e) request for* something (a book, paper, CD, etc.), *f) request for exte*nsion *of due date.*

Among the strateg*ies* used, *requestive strategies* received the highest percentage in both groups while *reporting* and *negotiating* were almost the same for both levels. At BA level, students used almost two-third of the strategies to *request for information* on a subject or to *receive explanation or translation,* while at MA level, *request for something such as a book/paper* followed by *request for information* were used more than the other strategies. *Request for explanation* were used less frequently by MA students than the BA group and *extension on due date* was not used at all by MA students while some BA students did use this strategy.

It was also found that students addressed facilitative, substantive, and relational communicative topics in their e-mail interactions with their instructors. The data suggested that level of education had an effect in their choice of topics. BA students used different topics almost equally while two-thirds of the topics used by MA students were *facilitative topics*. Among *substantive topics*, BA students mostly asked for *available or usable sources* while MA students mostly used *development of viewpoints or contents*. For both groups, *submission of work*, as the facilitative topic received the highest percentage. For relational topics divided by *sycophancy and phatic*, the pattern of usage was almost the same for both levels; more than 80% of the topics referred to *phatic* and less than 20% to *course-rela*ted ones.

The findings of the study may have pedagogical implication for both syllabus designers and teachers. Since more and more students use e-mails to interact with their instructors and due to the relative newness of e-mail in academic setting of Iran, syllabus designers and material developers can include the EFL courses to teach the students how to write appropriate e-mails to their instructors to avoid any misunderstanding, lower the level of imposition, and use appropriate strategies or topics. Iranian EFL NNESSs need to be trained on linguistic flexibility to manipulate language to mitigate their requests and e-mails. As Biesenbach-Lucas (2006) claimed, "NNSs need opportunities to become attuned to developing conventions in student-faculty e-mail interaction as well as accompanying internal modification pattern" (p. 101).

Teachers and practitioners in the field can provide tasks and activities for the students to submit their assignments and obtain information or clarification. They can also encourage the students to use e-mail as a viable channel for communication and replace it with the traditional face-to face office meetings. Through e-mails, instructors can send notes and materials to their students and students can submit the assignments and develop reflective writings.

The findings of the present study can help Iranian EFL instructors, graduate students, supervisors, and program coordinators understand students' academic and future needs, areas that need to be taken into consideration in curriculum design, teaching methodology, research methodology training, and student advising.

One limitation of the study is that only e-mail messages sent by students studying English majors at two universities in Isfahan were examined. Analyzing e-mails sent by students from other fields of study and at different universities in Iran would be more useful in generalizing the findings of the paper. One can assume that the format, language, and appearance of e-mails sent in Persian or by English script in Persian (the type of the message that can be found in SMS and e-mails of many Iranian people) differ from those written in English but any generalization needs further research.

It would be useful to analyze e-mail messages sent by different genders, and examine the effect of age, gender, personality, and distance between the students and instructors. For example, the e-mails sent by male students to female instructors may be different from the messages sent by female students to male instructors or e-mail messages sent to older faculty members may be different from those sent to the younger instructors.

On the other hand, studying other aspects of e-mail messages such as level of directness, supportive moves, internal modifiers, perspectives, politeness, addressing terms, and social protocols used in e-mails can reveal the pragmatics of e-mail communications in student-faculty e-mail interactions. Finally, comparing these results with the findings on e-mail interactions between native students and their instructors can shed light on cross-cultural studies.

The Authors

Azizeh Chalak (Email: azizeh_chalak@yahoo.com) is a PhD candidate at the University of Isfahan, Iran. She is also a faculty member of Islamic Azad University, Khorasgan Branch, Isfahan, Iran.

Zohreh Eslami Rasekh (Email: zeslami@tamu.edu) is currently working as a faculty member at Texas A&M University-College Station in USA.

Abbas Eslami Rasekh (Email: Abbaseslamirasekh@yahoo.com) has a PhD in applied linguistics and is currently working as a faculty member at the University of Isfahan, Iran.

References

Abbasian, F. (2002). *A discoursal and formal analysis of e-mail genre: A schematic contrastive genre analysis of English (TEFL) and biology professionals' e-mail messages.* Unpublished master's thesis, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

Al-Ali, M.N., & Sahawneh, M. B. (2008). An investigation into the generic features of English requestive e-mail messages. *LSP & Professional Communication, 8*(2), 40-69.

Amirian, Z. (2002). *Analysis of e-mail genre: A new perspective to EAP writing (The case of formal academic messages corresponded among EFL practitioners).* Unpublished master's thesis, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

Baron, N. (1998). Letters by phone or speech by any other means: The linguistic of e-mail. *Language & Communication, 18*, 133-170.

Baron, N. S. (2002). Who sets e-mail style? Prescriptivism, coping strategies, and democratizing communication access. *The Information Society, 18,* 403-413.

Baron, N. S. (2003). Why email looks like speech: Proofreading, pedagogy and public face. In J. Aitchison & D. M. Lewis (Eds.), *New media language* (pp. 85-94). New York: Routledge.

Biesenbach-Lucas, S. (2005). Communication topics and strategies in e-mail consultation: comparison between American and international university students. *Language Learning & Technology, 9*(2), 24-46.

Biesenbach-Lucas, S. (2006). Making requests in e-mail: Do cyber-consultations entail directness? Toward conventions in a new medium. In K. Bardovi-Harlig, J. C. Félix-Brasdefer & A. Omar (Eds.), *Pragmatics and language learning* (pp. 81-108). Honolulu, HI: Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center, University of Hawai'i.

Biesenbach-Lucas, S. (2007). Students writing e-mails to faculty: An examination of epoliteness among native and non-native speakers English. *Language Learning & Technology, 11*, 59-81.

Biesenbach-Lucas, S., & Weasenforth, D. (2000). *"Please help me": L1/L2 variations in Solicitations in electronic conferences.* Paper presented at the 20th Annual Second Language Research Forum (SLRF), Madison, WI.

Bloch, J. (2002). Student/teacher interaction via e-mail: the social context of Internet discourse. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 11*, 117-134.

Bou-Franch, P. (2004). *Power and negotiation of politeness in a virtual academia community of practice.* Paper presented at International Conference on Language, Politeness and Gender: The Pragmatic Roots. Helsinki, Finland.

Bulut, D., & Rababah, G. (2007). Pragmatics of e-mail communication between Saudi female students and male professors. *The JALT CALL Journal, 3,* 49-73.

Chalak, A., & Eslami Rasekh, A. (2009). Communicative purposes in student-faculty e-mail interactions: The case of Iranian nonnative speakers of English. Paper presented at the Annual Research Week, IAUKB, Isfahan, Iran.

Chen, C-F. E. (2001). *Making e-mail requests to professors: Taiwanese vs. American students.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for Applied Linguistics, St-Louis, MO.

Chen, C-F. E. (2006). The development of e-mail literacy: From writing to peers to writing to authority figures. *Language Learning & Technology, 10*(2), 35-55.

Condon, S. L., & Cech, C. G. (1996). Functional comparison of face-to-face and computer-mediated decision making interactions. In S. C. Herring (Ed.). *Computer-mediated communication: Linguistic, social, and cross-cultural perspectives* (pp. 65-80). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.

Crystal, D. (2001). *Language and the internet.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (2006). *Language and the internet* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Duran, R. L., Kelly, L., & Keaten, J. A. (2005). College faculty use and perceptions of electronic mail to communicate with students. *Communication Quarterly, 53*(2), 159-176.

Duthler, K. W. (2006). The politeness requests made via email and voicemail: support for the hyperpersonal model. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 11(2). Retrieved December 28, 2009 from http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol11/issue2/duthler.html.

Economidou-Kogetsidis, M. (2002). Request strategies in English and Greek: Observations from an airline's call centre. *Nottingham linguistic circular.* 17.

Eslami-Rasekh, Z., & Eslami-Rasekh, A. (2007, July). *E-mail discourse of native English speaking (NES) and Iranian nonnative English speaking (NNES) TESOL graduate students: Openings and closings.* Paper presented at the IELTI 4, Tehran, Iran.

Gaer, S. (1999). Classroom practice: An introduction to email and World Wide Web projects. In J. Egbert & E. Hanson-Smith (Eds.), *Call environments: Research, practice and critical issues* (pp. 65-78). Alexanderia, VA: TESOL.

Gee, J. P. (2002). Literacies, identities, and discourses. In M.J. Schleppegrell & M. C. Colombia (Eds.), *Developing advanced literacy in first and second languages: Meaning with power* (pp. 159-175). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gonglewski, M., Meloni, C., & Brant, J. (2001). Using e-mail in foreign language teaching: Rationale and suggestions. *The Internet TESL Journal, 7*. 1-16

Gupta, G., Mazumdar, C., & Rao, M.S. (2004). Digital analysis of emails: A trusted email protocol. *International Journal of Digital Evidence, 2*(4).

Hartford, B. S., & Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1996). At your earliest convenience: A study of written student requests to faculty. In L. F. Bouton (Ed.), P*ragmatics and language learning: Vol. 7* (pp. 55-71). Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois.

Janghorban, S. (2008). *An investigation of e-mail writing style in Persian Learners of English: The effects of social distance and closeness on the formality of the written e-mails.* Unpublished master's thesis, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

Lee, C. F. K. (2004). Written requests in e-mails sent by adult Chinese learners of English. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, *17*, 58-72.

Li, Y. (2000). Linguistic characteristics of ESL writing in task-based e-mail activities. *System, 28*, 229- 245.

Manteghi, C. (1995). The collaborative fairy tale*.* In M. Warschauer (Ed.), *Virtual connections: Online activities & projects for networking language learners* (pp. 20-21). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Marbach-Ad, G., & Sokolove, P. (2001). Creating direct channels of communication: Fostering interaction with e-mail and in-class notes. *Journal of College Science Teaching, 31*(3), 178-182.

Martin, M. M., Myers, S. A., & Mottet, T. P. (1999). Students' motives for communicating with their instructors. *Communication Education, 48,* 157-164.

Murphy, M. (2006). Politeness in intercultural email communications: Australian and Korean perspectives. *Journal of Intercultural Communication, 12,* 1-12.

Payne, C. (1997). *Opening the door with e-mail: From no tech to low-tech*. Retrieved June 16, 2009, from http://tcc.kcc.hawaii.edu/previous/TCC%201997/payne.html.

Poling, D. J. (1994). Email as an effective teaching supplement. *Educational Technology, 34* (5), 53-55.

Ronau, R. N., & Stroble, B. (1999). Student teacher electronic network: experience or investment? *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education, 7* (1), 33-55.

Shekari, M. (2004). *Negotiation of meaning and noticing in cyberspace: The role of text-based online chat in the development of SLA*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

Swangboonsatic, C. (2006). Different requestive styles on e-mail between Australians and Thais. *NIDA Language and Communication Journal*, 62-84.

Warschauer, M. (1999). *Electronic literacies: Language, culture, and power in online education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Wong, S. M. L. (2000). *Cross cultural communication*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

DESCRIPTION:

International Journal of Language Studies (IJLS) is devoted to all areas of language and linguistics. Its aim is to present work of current interest in all areas of language study. No particular linguistic theories or scientific trends are favored: scientific quality and scholarly standing are the only criteria applied in the selection of papers accepted for publication. *IJLS* publishes papers of any length, if justified, as well as review articles surveying developments in the various fields of language study (including