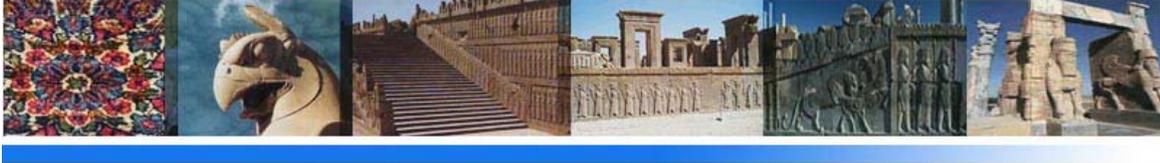


**The Iranian EFL Journal December 2011 Volume 7 Issue 6**  
***Iranian EFL Journal***



**ISSN On-line: 1836-8751**  
**ISSN Print: 1836-8743**

**The Iranian EFL Journal**

**December 2011**

**Volume 7**

**Issue 6**

**Special Edition of 2011**

**Chief Editors:**

**Dr. Paul Robertson**

**Dr. Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh**

The Iranian EFL Journal December 2011 Volume 7 Issue 6  
*Iranian EFL Journal*



**Publisher**

**Dr. Paul Robertson**

**Time Taylor International Ltd.**

**Senior Associate Editor**

**Dr. Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh**

**Ferdowsi University of Mashhad**

**Mashhad, Iran**

Dr. Roger Nunn The Petroleum Institute Abu Dhabi UAE	Dr. John Adamson Shinshu Honan College Japan	Professor Dr. Z.N. Patil Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages Hyderabad, India
	<b>Senior Statesmen</b>	
	Professor Rod Ellis University of Auckland New Zealand	

### Associate Editors

	<b>Associate Editors</b>	
Professor Dr. Dan Douglas Iowa State University USA	Dr. Reza Pishghadam Ferdowsi university of Mashhad Mashhad, Iran	Dr. Behzad Ghonsooly Ferdowsi University of Mashhad Mashhad, Iran
Prof. Dr. Rana Nayar Panjab University India	Dr. Abdolmahdy Riazi Shirza University Iran	Dr. Salmani Nodushan University of Zanjan Iran

### Editorial team

Dr. Pourya Baghahi Azad University of Mashhad Iran	Dr. Zohre Eslami Rasekh Texas A & M University USA	Dr. Azizullah Fatahi Shar-e Kord University Iran
Dr. Mohammad Reza Hashemi Ferdowsi University of Mashhad Mashhad, Iran	Dr. Parvaneh Tavakoli London Metropolitan University England	Dr. Seyyed Ayatollah Razmjou Shiraz University Iran
Dr. Shamala Paramasivam University of Putra Malaysia	Dr. Manizheh Yuhannaee University of Isfahan Iran	Dr. Antony Fenton Soka University Japan
Dr. Esmā'eel Abdollahzadeh Iran University of Science and Technology Iran	Dr. Ingrid Mosquera Gende Bettatur University College of Tourism Tarragona Spain	Dr. Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh Ferdowsi University of Mashhad Mashhad, Iran
Dr. Christopher Alexander University of Nicosia Cyprus	Dr. Robert Kirkpatrick Shinawatra International University, Thailand	Dr. Abbas Zare'ee Kashan University Iran

The Iranian EFL Journal December 2011 Volume 7 Issue 6  
*Iranian EFL Journal*



The Iranian EFL Journal Press  
A Division of Time Taylor Publishers  
QC Pavilion  
Cebu

<http://www.Iranian-efl-journal.com>  
[Iranian.efljournal@yahoo.com](mailto:Iranian.efljournal@yahoo.com)

**This E book is in copyright.**

No reproduction may take place without  
the express written permission of the  
Iranian EFL Journal

**No unauthorized copying**

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored  
in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means  
electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior  
written permission of the Iranian EFL Journal.

**Chief Editor:** Dr. Paul Robertson

**Senior Associate Editor:**  
Dr. Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh,  
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad,  
Mashhad, Iran.

**ISSN On-line: 1836-8751**  
**ISSN Print: 1836-8743**



## Table of Contents

Foreword: Dr. Paul Robertson and Dr. Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh	7
1-The Impact of Glossing on Incidental Vocabulary Learning: A Comparative Study Reza Pishghadam and Shima Ghahari	8 - 29
2-A Survey of Iranian EFL University Students' Motivation and Interest in Intensive Reading Mahboobeh Mahboobi and Sarjit Kaur	30 - 46
3- The Impact of Critical Friends Groups on Teacher Cognition A Sociocultural View of L2 Teacher Education Mehdi Shokouhi Shourmasti	47 - 60
4-On the Relationship between Multiple Intelligences and Performance on Reading Proficiency Item Types Reza Barzegar, Seyed Mahmoud Mirtabatabaie and Hassan Moradi	61 - 78
5- The Effect of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) vs. Content-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on the Iranian Intermediate ESP Learners' Reading Comprehension Ali Malmir, Saied Najafi Sarem and Ayat Ghasemi	79 - 94
6- Use of Myth(s) in Postmodern American Drama Case Study: the Plays of Sam Shepard Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh	95 - 106
7- The Effect of Teaching Etymology on the Comprehension and Retention of English Technical Vocabularies among Vocational School Students of Bandar Abbas Laleh Namdar and Mohammad Sadegh Bagheri	107 - 127
8- The Relationship between First Language Reading Skill and Second Language Reading Skill Javad Zare'	128 - 144
9- Effects of intensive reading on the mastery of Grammar in Iranian junior high school students Mahdi Rajaee Nia	145 - 158

**The Iranian EFL Journal December 2011 Volume 7 Issue 6**  
***Iranian EFL Journal***



- 10- A critical discourse analysis of five English language classes in Iran  
Fatemeh Hemmati and Parisa Nasser karimvand 159 - 178
- 11- A Critical Review of the Current Situation of Teaching ESP in the Iranian Higher Education Institutions  
Samad Mirza Suzani, Lotfollah Yarmohammadi and Mortaza Yamini 179 - 204
- 12- A Contrastive Analysis of English and Persian Sentence Structure  
Asghar Bastami Bandpay 205 - 236
- 13- The Study of the Effectiveness of Focus on Form Instruction on Vocabulary and Grammar Learning  
Farahman Farrokhi and Fattaneh Abbasi Talabari 237 - 252
- 14- On The Translation of Metaphor: A Corpus-based Study of Three Persian Translations of Othello  
Hooshang Khoshima and Salman Rostami Gohari 253 - 267
- 15- Practicing a Change in an Iranian EFL Curriculum: from Ivory Tower to Reality  
Batoul Ghanbari and Saeed Ketabi 268 - 282
- 16- The Big Five Personality Traits: A New Horizon of Research in Language Teaching  
Masood Siyyari 283 - 295
- 17- L1 and L2 Language Stores Dependency and Their Connection Facilitation through Translation  
Amir Reza Asiyaban, Morteza Yamini and Ghaffar Tajalli 296 - 308
- 18- Investigating the Relationship between Peer assessment and Teacher assessment of the Composition Writing among Iranian EFL learners  
Marzie Heydari and Kourosh Akef 309 - 331



## Foreword

Welcome to the especial and sixth edition of the year 2011. The bi-monthly Iranian EFL Journal has attracted many readers from different parts of the world. The journal has also provided an opportunity for our readers to access to more articles. The journal has had strong growth over the last few years with a monthly readership now exceeding 2500 readers. For a journal examining the topic of EFL/ESL, Literature and Translation studies, the growth and readership has been pleasing. Statistically, readers are coming from almost 80 countries. In this edition, our readers can also find articles from the above mentioned domains. In the last issue of volume 7 we present 18 articles for your reading. In the first article, the authors Reza Pishghadam and Shima Ghahari present the impact of glossing on incidental vocabulary learning: a comparative study. In the second article, Mahboobeh Mahboobi and Sarjit Kaur have done a survey of Iranian EFL university students' motivation and interest in intensive reading. In the next article, the impact of critical friends groups on teacher cognition a sociocultural view of L2 teacher education is done by Mehdi Shokouhi Shourmasti. In the fourth article, Reza Barzegar, Seyed Mahmoud Mirtabatabaie and Hassan Moradi have done a research on the relationship between multiple intelligences and performance on reading proficiency item types. In the fifth paper, the effect of task-based language teaching (TBLT) vs. content-based language teaching (TBLT) on the Iranian intermediate ESP learners' reading comprehension is done by Ali Malmir, Saied Najafi Sarem and Ayat Ghasemi. In the next paper, Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh studies the use of myth(s) in postmodern American drama case study: the plays of Sam Shepard. In the seventh article, Laleh Namdar and Mohammad Sadegh Bagheri have studied the effect of teaching etymology on the comprehension and retention of English technical vocabularies among vocational school students of Bandar Abbas. In the next article, Javad Zare' has explored the relationship between first language reading skill and second language reading skill. In the ninth article effects of intensive reading on the mastery of grammar in Iranian junior high school students is presented by Mahdi Rajaei Nia. In the tenth article, a critical discourse analysis of five English language classes in Iran is scrutinized by Fatemeh Hemmati and Parisa Nasser Karimvand. In the next article of the issue, Samad Mirza Suzani, Lotfollah Yarmohammadi and Mortaza Yamini have presented a critical review of the current situation of teaching ESP in the Iranian higher education institutions. In the twelfth article of the issue, a contrastive analysis of English and Persian sentence structure is done by Asghar Bastami Bandpay. In the thirteenth article, Farahman Farrokhi and Fattaneh Abbasi Talabari have presented the study of the effectiveness of focus on form instruction on vocabulary and grammar learning. In the next article, Hooshang Khoshshima and Salman Rostami Gohari have presented a study on the translation of metaphor: a corpus-based study of three Persian translations of Othello. In the next article practicing a change in an Iranian EFL curriculum from ivory tower to reality is done by Batoul Ghanbari and Saeed Ketabi. In the next article of the issue, the big five personality traits: a new horizon of research in language teaching is presented by Masood Siyyari. In the next article of the issue, L1 and L2 language stores dependency and their connection facilitation through translation is done by Amir Reza Asiyaban, Morteza Yamini and Ghaffar Tajalli. And in the last article of the issue, Marzie Heydari and Kourosh Akef have investigated the relationship between peer assessment and teacher assessment of the composition writing among Iranian EFL learners.

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



## Title

# The Impact of Glossing on Incidental Vocabulary Learning: A Comparative Study

## Authors

**Reza Pishghadam (Ph.D.)**  
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

**Shima Ghahari (Ph.D. Candidate)**  
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

## Biodata

**Reza Pishghadam** is associate professor in TEFL in Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran. His research interests are: psychology of language education and sociology of language.

**Shima Ghahari** is a Ph.D candidate in TEFL in Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran. Her main research interest is psycholinguistics.

## Abstract

Having adopted an input-based approach, this study was undertaken to examine the effect of a textual enhancement technique for lexical development of EFL learners. A passage of approximately 500 words was modified in a way that 10 of its target words (TWs) were each repeated twice and for each of them three glosses in English (L2) and three glosses in Persian (L1) were developed. 214 English language learners initially underwent a vocabulary pretest to ensure that the TWs were unfamiliar to them. Afterwards, the participants in each class were divided into five groups: no-gloss, single L1 gloss, single L2 gloss, MC L1 gloss, and MC L2 gloss groups. They were then tested

through immediate and delayed posttests. MANOVA was performed and revealed that gloss groups had markedly outperformed no-gloss group in both testing conditions. Significant effects were also found for single L1 glosses in the immediate posttests. The effectiveness of single L1 glosses, however, dropped in the delayed posttest, where MC L1 and MC L2 proved significantly more effective. Suggestions for further research and implications are also provided.

**Keywords:** Glossing, Incidental vocabulary learning, Lexical inferencing, Lexical retention, Multiple-choice glosses, Single glosses.

## 1. Introduction

In his 1974 book, Wilkins puts that without grammar very little can be conveyed, but without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. Both the importance and difficulty of vocabulary learning in second language acquisition have been well recognized by applied linguistics and SLA researchers. It is generally accepted, however, that a considerable percentage of L2 vocabulary acquisition on the part of learners occurs incidentally, i.e. as a by-product of reading (Davis, 1989; Dongzhi, 2009; Fraser, 1999; Jenkins, Stein & Wysocki, 1984; Nation, 2001; Rieder, 2002). Text comprehension, however, would not necessarily require the kind of word processing that results in long-term retention (Rott & Williams, 2003). Therefore, if the goal is to make new words learned and retained, a variety of textual enhancement techniques such as adjunct aids (Robinson, 1994), increased word frequency, or provision of glosses could be applied.

Glosses, in general, are vocabulary guide during reading; they offer additional information beyond text and thereby assist the learner as a mediator between learner and text (Hulstijn, Hollander & Greidanus, 1996; Jacobs, Dufon & Hong, 1994). Glossing can be situated in the context of recent work on the reading process (Eskey, 1988; Rumelhart, 1980; Stanovich, 1980) and learning strategies (Cohen, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Wenden, 1991). "Glossing strengthens the bottom-up component of the reading process. The use of glossing is one of several possible repair strategies that readers can use when they recognize comprehension breakdowns." (Jacobs, 1994, p. 115)

Due to the importance of glossing in language acquisition, and since there are different types of glossing including: single L1 gloss, single L2 gloss, MC L1 gloss, and MC L2 gloss, in this study we aim at first, determining whether glossing is effective in vocabulary learning, and

second pinpointing the most effective type of glossing in enhancing vocabulary learning in English language learning classes.

## **2. Theoretical background**

In this part, we first provide a definition for incidental vocabulary learning and discuss the advantages it bears upon deliberate learning. Then glossing is introduced and reviewed as one of the leading strategies for facilitating building vocabulary incidentally. As glossing is a meaning-given, as opposed to meaning-inferred, technique which frees learners from arriving at word meaning by making inferences, multiple-choice glossing is then proposed as a potential alternative which is contemporarily gaining more popularity in the field.

### *2.1. Incidental vocabulary learning*

There are two main strands of vocabulary learning: deliberate vocabulary learning, and incidental vocabulary learning (Day, Omura & Hiramatsu, 1991; Ridder, 2002). The main difference between the two lies in the amount of noticing and consciousness involved, in that deliberate learning is more focused and goal-oriented than incidental learning (Schmidt, 1992). Deliberate learning, however, can result in a very quick expansion of vocabulary learning which then needs to be consolidated and enriched by meaning-focused and context-based exposures (i.e., incidental learning). According to Schmitt, deliberate learning by itself may rarely "provide the knowledge of grammar, collocation, associations, reference, and constraints on use that may be best learned through meeting items in context" (2002, p. 42). Schmitt (2002) lists a number of strategies which can be employed while deliberate learning; among them, one can refer to sound-spelling correspondences, word parts (prefixes, stems, suffixes), word form analogy, underlying concepts and extensions, collocational patterns, as well as types of associations.

Second language learning researchers (e.g., Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001) generally think that vocabulary growth often appears incidentally while learners are doing other cognitive tasks: Among cognitive activities 'reading' has aroused much research attention, since it seems to help incidentally enlarge learners' vocabulary as well as to promote their language and communicative competences. While reading, learners focus attention on comprehending meaning of reading passages rather than on the intentional vocabulary learning and thereby

acquire words as a by-product without conscious decision or intention to learn them. In incidental vocabulary learning,

learners' attention is focused on some other feature, usually the message that is conveyed by a speaker or a writer. If the amount of unknown vocabulary is low in such messages, considerable vocabulary learning can occur even though the learners' attention is not directed toward vocabulary learning. (Hong, 2010, p. 57)

Implicit in Hong's (2010) above-mentioned statement is that in order to maximize incidental vocabulary learning and recall, some conditions should be met. Some of the major conditions are enlisted by Schmitt (2002):

- a) Low unknown vocabulary load: unknown words should make a very small proportion of the tokens, preferably, according to Hu and Nation (2000, as cited in Schmitt, 2002), one unknown word in 50.
- b) Large quantity of input: there needs to be a very large quantity of input, preferably one million tokens or more per year.
- c) Deliberate attention: effective learning also requires consciousness-raising of unknown words, for example through glossing, dictionary use or highlighting in the text.
- d) Large number of exposures: as incidental learning is cumulative, each word needs to be met a number of times in order to be strongly learned and retained.

Researchers (Hulstijn, et al., 1996; Jacobs, et al., 1994) have found techniques which fit, more or less, these conditions and can promote vocabulary gains in incidental vocabulary learning; some of these techniques include use of dictionary, guessing from context, and glosses.

## *2.2. Glossing*

Within the scope of second language learning, glosses can be defined as information on important words through definitions or synonyms (Ko, 2005). The two most important functions that glosses may serve are with reading comprehension (Nation 1982, 1990) and vocabulary learning (Holley & King, 1971). There are several advantages in using glosses: Firstly, glosses provide definitions of low-frequency words. According to Parry (1993), "vocabulary teaching takes a good deal of time and it is simply not economic to spend precious minutes on items whose chances of reoccurrence are only ten in a million." (p. 2). Secondly, glosses can get across new words so accurately that prevent incorrect guessing which could result if they were left with

only context to guide them. Several researchers have confirmed the difficulty of deriving meaning from context (e.g., Jenkins & Dixon, 1983; Nation, 1990; Parry 1993). Thirdly, they can minimize interruptions while reading is in process resulting from students looking up words in a dictionary or asking the teacher or other information sources for help. Fourthly, glosses can make a meaningful relation between prior knowledge and new information in text. Fifthly, glosses would allow for greater autonomy and individualization on the part of learner because different students will have problems with different vocabulary items. And finally, glossing can assist vocabulary learning through the rehearsal involved in the process which thereby help students learn the vocabulary: students leave the text to check the gloss of the unknown vocabulary, repeat the word or phrase to themselves in order to hold the meaning in memory until they get back to the original unknown word (Holley & King, 1971; Nation, 1982, 1990).

Twaddell (1973) goes as far as to suggest that selecting comprehensible reading materials for beginning- or intermediate-level learners is very difficult without the use of glosses. He believes that the overwhelming majority of words in a language appear in low frequencies and, thus, remain unknown to learners until they reach high levels of proficiency; for them "anything that would be interesting and worth reading would require a much larger vocabulary than is available, so that tremendous sacrifice in either speed or comprehension would have to be made." (p. 65)

A good number of researchers have investigated the effect of different variables, along with the use of glosses, on vocabulary development. Jacobs (1994), for instance, has examined the recall advantage of glossing by practicing different test conditions (immediate vs. delayed) and demonstrated that glosses can enhance it. Holley and King (1971) also compared different gloss positions in text, i.e., side-of-page, bottom-of-page, vs. glosses on an attached sheet but reported no significant effect for them. Miyasako (2002) too conducted a comprehensive study on the use of glosses and included level of language proficiency as a variable under study. Salem (2006) investigated the impact of different types of electronic glosses on word retention and reading comprehension among second language (L2) Spanish learners, and concluded that the more frequently second language learners consulted electronic glosses, the better they comprehended and acquired new words.

Zhexi (2009) managed to study the effect of input enhancement (i.e. glossing) and output tasks (i.e. blank-filling exercises) on vocabulary development while reading, and found a

significant effect for both. Very recently, Jing-xia (2010) examined the effects of double-glossing, single-glossing, and no-glossing on incidental acquisition and maintenance of new words while reading an English article, and found a significant effect for both double-glossing and single-glossing but not for no-glossing. Xu (2010) sought to find how the three different types of glossing, i.e. glossing in both Chinese and English, glossing in Chinese, glossing in English, exert effects on vocabulary acquisition through reading across immediate retention and delayed retention tests. His study revealed that provision of both Chinese and English glosses yielded the most significant effect on word learning, while English glosses brought about the least. Loucky and Tuzi (2010) further investigated the effectiveness of online glossing as a vocabulary learning tool when using various CALL programs. Yee (2010) examined the effectiveness of L1 and L2 glossing for students of high and low proficiency levels, and concluded that L1 glossing led to better performance of unfamiliar L2 words, specifically among participants of low English language proficiency level.

### *2.3. Multiple-choice glossing*

Glossing, however, has been roundly criticized for it disallows inferred meaning. Laufer and Hulstijn (2001), for example, argue that inferred meanings are more likely to be retained than meanings provided by glosses. Likewise, Nassaji (2004) considers *lexical inferencing* as one of the central cognitive processes involved in reading comprehension and defines it as,

... making informed guesses about the meaning of unknown words based on the available linguistic and non-linguistic cues in the text... Lexical inferencing has also been found to be closely associated with incidental vocabulary learning, that is, learning vocabulary through reading natural texts. (p. 108)

Much lexical development in both L1 and L2 appears, in effect, to occur while learners attempt to comprehend new words they hear or read in context. Nassaji (2004) further enumerates some factors which have the potential to affect success in lexical inferencing; included are the nature of the word and the text that contains the word, the extent of textual information that the text presents, the learner's ability to use extra-textual cues, the importance of the word to comprehension of the text, the degree of cognitive and mental effort the task engages, the learner's attention to the details of the text as well as the preconceptions the learner may have about the possible meaning of the word.

Overall, based on *Mental Effort Hypothesis*, inferring requires effort, and the greater the mental effort the more likely information will be recalled and retained. In this sense, single glosses could be of little use especially for long-term retention of new words (Rott & Williams, 2003).

In his attempts to remove the foregoing disadvantage associated with using single glosses, Hulstijn (1992) suggested the use of multiple-choice glosses, that is, provision of several gloss (or equivalent) options for a target word. Multiple-choice (or MC) glossing, as he argues, combines the advantages of inferring and single glosses. It reduces the difficulties presented by insufficient context as well as the possibility of making incorrect inferences (Rott & Williams, 2003). It also requires some degree of mental effort and attention on the part of the learner in order to infer the correct option and thereby triggers a deeper level of processing which, in turn, could enhance word recall and retention.

Likewise, MC glossing is in line with *Involvement Load Principle*, proposed by Hulstijn and Laufer (2001). The principle, which is claimed to be at the core of lexical acquisition and retention, entails two central components: *search* and *evaluation*. When processing multiple-choice glosses, learners first have to search for meaning by consulting the gloss options. Next, they will evaluate the different meanings and make a decision as to, considering the context, which one fits the target word best. Therefore, the use of MC glosses has the potential to establish form-meaning connections much stronger than single glosses or normal unenhanced reading may do (Rott & Williams, 2003).

To date, it is well revealed that glosses in general are effective for enhancing incidental vocabulary learning. Therefore, the question has shifted from whether glosses are useful for vocabulary learning to which gloss type or gloss condition is most effective (Yoshi, 2006). To this end, a number of studies have been conducted comparing different formats of text glosses. Watanabe (1997), for example, has compared single L2 glosses with MC L2 glosses. Later in 1999, Nagata replicated Watanabe's study comparing single L1 glosses with MC L1 glosses and found that MC glosses were better than single ones. Lin and Huang (2008) examined the effect of what they called meaning-inferred (i.e. MC) glosses and meaning-given (i.e. single) glosses on word learning, and suggested a comparatively greater influence for meaning-inferred ones.

### **3. Purpose of the study**

All the studies conducted to date on glossing, in general, and multiple-choice glossing, in particular, have brought up mixed and inconclusive results. Room is left, therefore, for further analysis of glossing under different conditions. The current research sets out to examine and cross-compare the impact of different gloss types, i.e. single L1, single L2, MC L1, and MC L2 glosses, on word acquisition and retention among Iranian second language learners. Accordingly, two research questions were posed:

- 1) Is there a significant difference between no-gloss condition and gloss condition across immediate and delayed tests?
- 2) Is there a significant difference among the gloss groups (i.e. single L1, single L2, MC L1, and MC L2 groups) across immediate and delayed tests?

### **4. Method**

#### *4.1. Participants and setting*

214 (133 male and 81 female) Iranian English language learners at three private language learning institutes in Tehran, Iran, participated in the study for some course credit. They were spread across 11 mixed classes in which English was taught as a foreign language. Each class consisted of approximately 20 students (Total = 214), which was then randomly divided into 5 gloss groups. The participants were at pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate levels. Language proficiency level, therefore, was not controlled. Their ages ranged from 16 to 31 (The average age was 20.07).

#### *4.2. Instrumentation*

The instruments consisted of a vocabulary pre-test, an English text followed by single and multiple-choice L1 (Persian) and L2 (English) glosses, and finally a production as well as a recognition post-test.

##### *4.2.1. Vocabulary pre-test*

In order to ensure that the target words (TWs) were new and unfamiliar to all the participants, a vocabulary pre-test was administered to them. It included 20 lexical items, including the 10 TWs and 10 distracters. The distracters were selected from the same source as the TWs were elicited

in order to ensure that both the distracters and TWs were of approximately the same difficulty level.

#### 4.2.2. Text and glosses

A passage of 516 words from the textbook *Panorama: Building Perspective through Reading: Student Book 2* (Flynn, Mackey & Trites, 2006) was selected and modified in a way that 10 of its TWs were each repeated twice. This increase in word exposure frequency is consistent with the current belief, (e.g. Ellis, 2006; Gu, 2003), that a single exposure is quite unlikely to lead to word knowledge gain.

The TWs were of three lexical categories: four of them were nouns, three of them verbs and three were adjectives. Each TW was bolded only in its first occurrence in the text. Below, an extract of the passage, in which the word 'renowned' is used twice, is provided:

... An old Irish proverb says, 'Laughter is brightest where food is best'. Good food makes people happier and brings them closer together. This simple truth has inspired many of the world's greatest chefs. One such **renowned** chef was Julia Child... Julia's pots and pans hang in this renowned museum exactly as they did in her kitchen...

The text was then enhanced and followed by multiple-choice (MC) glosses, in the sense that for each TW there appeared, in a separate sheet of paper, three glosses in English (L2) and three glosses in Persian (L1). The three L1 glosses for each TW were the exact equivalents (or translations) of the three ones in L2. Two examples of MC glosses in L1 and in L2 used in this study are provided below:

Legacy (n.):

- a) gift                      b) good situation                      c) idea

Contend (v.):

- a) ابراز نارضایتی کردن                      b) معتقد بودن                      c) ثابت کردن

#### 4.2.3. Tests

##### 3.2.3.1. Production post-test

In this test, all the 10 TWs were listed, and the participants were required firstly to check those words they knew their meanings and then to supply synonyms or explanations to them. Using a Cronbach's Alpha, the reliability coefficient of production test scores was estimated to be 0.710.

#### 3.2.3.2. *Recognition post-test*

Here, each one of the TWs was followed by its gloss options and the participants were required to match the word with its correct meaning. Based on a Cronbach's Alpha, the reliability of recognition test scores was estimated to be 0.721.

### 4.3. *Procedure*

The current study was conducted in three separate class sessions. In the first session, the vocabulary pre-test was administered: the participants were asked to check any of the 20 words they knew and then provide synonyms or explanations for them either in L2 or in their L1. Fortunately, all the TWs turned out to be new (or unknown) to all the participants.

In the second session, the participants were given the text and were briefed that they were required not only to comprehend the text but also to infer (or guess) the meanings of the bolded (target) words from among the given options and learn them. Participants in each class were then divided into five groups (called gloss groups): one group received single L2 (English) glosses, another group single L1 (Persian) glosses, the third group multiple-choice L2 glosses, the fourth one multiple-choice L2 glosses, and the last group received no glosses. After they got through with reading of the text, they returned it and received the production post-test. The reason why the production test preceded the recognition one was that, given the other way around, the recognition test would be very likely to give hints for the production test. These two tests which were administered shortly after the participants studied the materials were called *immediate tests*.

In order to examine the potential retrieval and saving effect of glossing, the same production and recognition tests were administered after a span of two weeks and, this time, they were called *delayed tests*. Note that those who had received texts followed by each gloss type at the first place received, in both testing conditions, the recognition tests which included options with the same gloss types.

The answers the participants provided to the 20-item (recognition and production) immediate posttests were added up, representing their immediate test scores (i.e. Maximum =

20); the same was done for the delayed posttests scores too. To analyze the data and answer the two research questions, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with glossing group as a between-subjects factor and testing condition as a within-subjects factor. Two dependent variables were used: immediate test scores and delayed test scores. The independent variable was gloss groups. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted. Moreover, post hoc Scheffe tests were run to locate the areas of differences.

## 5. Results

The descriptive statistics for the gloss groups and testing conditions is provided in Table 1 below. The participants who took the immediate and delayed tests included: no-gloss, single L1 gloss, single L2 gloss, MC L1 gloss, and MC L2 gloss.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Gloss Groups and Testing Conditions

Gloss Group		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Immediate Test	No gloss	2.19	1.006	43
	Single L1 gloss	8.69	1.866	39
	Single L2 gloss	6.80	1.346	41
	MC L1 gloss	6.49	1.561	45
	MC L2 gloss	6.04	1.932	46
	Total	5.99	2.625	214
Delayed Test	No gloss	.67	.778	43
	Single L1 gloss	2.92	.870	39
	Single L2 gloss	2.68	.907	41
	MC L1 gloss	4.76	1.433	45
	MC L2 gloss	4.48	1.670	46
	Total	3.14	1.907	214

A cursory inspection of Table 1 indicates that in the immediate posttest, the mean score of no-gloss group is the lowest ( $X' = 2.19$ ), whereas that of single L1-gloss group stands as the highest ( $X' = 2.19$ ). In the delayed posttest, no-gloss group has also received the lowest mean score ( $X' = .67$ ), while MC L1 ( $X' = 4.76$ ) and MC L2 ( $X' = 4.48$ ) glosses have brought about the highest mean scores.

Research Question No. 1

The first research question asked whether there is a significant difference between no-gloss condition and gloss condition in general on immediate and delayed tests performance. Table 2 summarizes the results of the MANOVA.

Table 2: Results of Multivariate Tests on the Effect of No-gloss and Gloss Conditions on Immediate and Delayed Tests Performance

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gloss	Immediate Test	778.943	1	778.943	239.662	.000	.531
	Delayed Test	328.424	1	328.424	156.082	.000	.424

As the table suggests, there is a significant difference between no-gloss group and gloss groups across immediate test ( $F = 239.662, p < .05$ ) and delayed tests ( $F = 156.082, p < .05$ ). The table also shows that gloss condition accounts for 53% of the variance in the immediate test scores (partial eta squared = .531) and for 42% of the variance in the delayed test scores (partial eta squared = .424). An inspection of the mean scores provided in Table 3 reveals that, in the immediate tests, gloss groups ( $X' = 6.947$ ) have markedly outperformed the no-gloss group ( $X' = 2.186$ ).

Table 3: Estimated Marginal Means for the Effect of No-gloss and Gloss Conditions on Immediate and Delayed Tests Performance

Dependent Variable	Gloss Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Immediate Test	No-gloss group	2.186	.275	1.644	2.728
	Gloss group	6.947	.138	6.676	7.219
Delayed Test	No-gloss group	.674	.221	.238	1.110
	Gloss group	3.766	.111	3.547	3.985

In the delayed test too, as depicted by Table 3, performance of the gloss groups ( $X' = 3.766$ ) has been dramatically better than that of no-gloss group ( $X' = .674$ ).

Gloss Groups > No-Gloss Group

Research Question No. 2

The second question in the study addresses the difference in the effect of gloss types, (including single L1, single L2, MC L1, and MC L2) on immediate and delayed posttest. Table 4 demonstrates the results of the MANOVA performed to this end.

Table 4: Results of Multivariate Tests on the Effect of Gloss Types on Immediate and Delayed Tests Performance

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gloss	Immediate Test	166.622	3	55.541	19.327	.000	.258
	Delayed Test	143.207	3	47.736	28.734	.000	.340

According to Table 4, there is a significant difference among gloss types in the immediate test ( $F = 19.327, p < .05$ ) and delayed tests ( $F = 28.734, p < .05$ ). Gloss type, the table suggests, accounts for 25% of the variance in the immediate test scores (partial eta squared = .258), and for 34% of the variance in the delayed test scores (partial eta squared = .340).

Since the MANOVA demonstrated a significant difference among the effect of the four gloss types on immediate test performance, a post hoc Scheffe test was carried out to see where exactly the difference lies. Table 5 summarizes the results of the Scheffe.

Table 5: Results of Post Hoc Scheffe Test on the Effect of Gloss Types on Immediate Test Performance

Gloss Group	N	Subset	
		1	2
MC L2 gloss	46	6.04	
MC L1 gloss	45	6.49	
Single L2 gloss	41	6.80	
Single L1 gloss	39		8.69
Sig.		.236	1.000

According to Table 5, single L1-gloss group ( $X' = 8.96$ ) has dramatically outperformed the other three gloss groups on the immediate posttests.

Single L1 Gloss > Single L2 Gloss / MC L1 Gloss / MC L2 Gloss

To further determine where the difference among the effects of gloss types on delayed test performance lies, a post hoc Scheffe was run the results of which follow in Table 6.

Table 6: Results of Post Hoc Scheffe Test on the Effect of Gloss Types on Delayed Test Performance

Gloss Group	N	Subset	
		1	2
Single L2 gloss	41	2.68	
Single L1 gloss	39	2.92	
MC L2 gloss	46		4.48
MC L1 gloss	45		4.76
Sig.		.864	.805

Here in the delayed posttest, Table 4.6 suggests, MC L1-gloss group ( $X' = 4.76$ ) and MC L2-gloss group ( $X' = 4.48$ ) have been dramatically superior to single L1-gloss ( $X' = 2.92$ ) and single L2-gloss ( $X' = 2.68$ ) groups.

MC L1 Gloss / MC L2 Gloss > Single L1 Gloss / Single L2 Gloss

## 6. Discussion

This study aimed at investigating the usefulness of a textual enhancement technique for improving vocabulary acquisition. Different gloss types were incorporated into a text both to draw the learners' attention and raise their consciousness of the to-be-learned words and to encourage them to make informed guesses about which option matches each TW best.

The findings of the study provided strong evidence in support of glossing in general since all gloss groups significantly outperformed the no-gloss group. In this sense, therefore, the results strongly corroborated those, among others, of Eskey (1988), Hulstijn et al. (1996), Jacobs (1994), Jacobs et al. (1994), Jing-xia (2010), Ko (2005), and Zhexi (2009) which advocated the use of glosses for incidental vocabulary learning. There are several factors that can account for this effectiveness: The use of glosses arouses learners' noticing to the target words (Schmidt, 1992). Glosses successfully draw learners' attention and create an ideal word-learning condition

of consciousness-raising and input-enhancement (Lin & Huang 2008). Moreover, glosses can assist learners to immediately connect the word form to its meaning and, thereby, consolidate the form-meaning association, which is a vital component of knowing a word (Rott & William, 2003).

The results of the study further indicated that single L1-gloss groups significantly outperformed other gloss groups in the immediate posttests. In this sense, the study is in line with Yee (2010) and Xu (2010), but it contradicts with Miasako (2002) who concluded that L2 glosses were better than L1 glosses. Similarly, it contradicts with Chen (2002), Jacobs et al. (1994), and Yoshi (2006) who found a non-significant difference between L1 and L2 glosses. This piece of evidence supports the inclusion of L1 glosses when L2 vocabulary learning is intended. One reason for the effectiveness of L1 glosses over and above L2 ones could be that facilitating the form-meaning connection through the use of L1 "allows more cognitive resources to be freed up to focus on the L2 form and even other more contextualized aspects of word knowledge" (Yee, 2010, pp. 61-62). When L1 glosses are provided, the new L2 word form is being attached to a representation of the corresponding L1 word which already exists in learners' memory (Hall, 2002). Secondly, according to Nation (2001), the use of translation provides a much easier means of explaining the meanings of L2 words. Since the L1 meaning already has many rich associations for the learner, when L1 synonyms are used, unfamiliar words will be more easily understood and vocabulary learning will be enhanced. The same phenomenon was observed in the present study, in which Persian translations of the target L2 words seem to have been more easily understood by the participants.

Another finding of the current study was that multiple-choice gloss groups (both L1 and L2) outperformed the single gloss groups in the delayed posttests. In fact, the effectiveness of single-L1 glosses significantly dropped from immediate to delayed testing conditions. It is, therefore, compatible with the cognitive theories of *Mental Effort Hypothesis* and *Involvement Load Principle*, in that both theories stress that a greater mental effort and attention and a deeper level of processing will establish more form-meaning connections and, therefore, will markedly enhance information recall and retention. The evidence provided in this study is, therefore, in line with the findings of Hulstijn (1992), Hulstijn and Laufer (2001), Lin and Huang (2008), Nagata (1999), and Rott and Williams (2003), and which substantiated the retrieval and saving effects of MC glosses as against single ones.

As Hulstijn (1992) rightly claims, MC meaning-inferred glosses serve well as a compromise between meaning-given glosses and wild guessing of word meanings. MC glosses retain the advantages of the inferring method by reducing the possibility of making incorrect inferences when learners lack problem-solving skills or fail to find relevant contextual clues. Thus, they are appropriate for learners with less-developed problem-solving skills. To explore the factors that account for the greater effects of meaning-inferred MC glosses than meaning-given single glosses, the fundamental difference between the two should be explained. The most striking difference between them is the presence of decision-making among learners. According to research in human memory, it is the depth of the encoding process which determines the chance that new lexicon be stored in long-term memory, i.e. Mental Effort Hypothesis. Learners retain a word meaning if they are engaged in deep processing of the word, which involves elaboration of the word form and word meaning as well as exploitation of contextual clues and their previous knowledge (Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001). When learners in the meaning-inferred MC gloss groups are asked to infer word meanings,

They are to exert more mental efforts than when they are given word meanings. They need to assign a proper meaning to a word by elaborating the context and employing their previous knowledge of the context words to make a choice of the word meaning. (Lin & Huang, 2008, p. 103)

In addition to in-depth processing and more mental efforts, Involvement Load Hypothesis also accounts for the greater effects of meaning-inferred gloss. According to the hypothesis, the cognitive search and evaluation activities are essential components in lexical acquisition and retention. When learners are given MC glosses, they are involved in a problem-solving task. The problem-solving task enhances learners' need and motivation to assign a meaning to a particular word; this need leads learners to allocate attention to word processing by searching for meaning in the context and evaluating their hypotheses on the semantic information of the word (Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001; Rott & Williams, 2003). Thus, compared to single glosses, which require less mental effort and involvement of learners, the use of MC meaning-inferred glosses "triggers a deeper processing of words, requires more involvement from learners and thus enhances the subsequent word acquisition and retention." (Lin & Huang, 2008, p. 103)

Overall, the results of the study support the use of glosses in general and imply that teachers, materials developers and text designers can take advantage of them particularly when

the goal is for them to trigger and promote incidental vocabulary learning. Glosses should be available to foreign language learners while they are engaged in reading tasks. The presence of single glosses can arouse learners' consciousness towards target words, remove their burden of dictionary use, minimize the interruption of reading process and avoid learners from making wrong inferences for the unknown words (Jenkins & Dixon, 1983; Nation, 1990; Parry 1993). Some SLA researchers and practitioners, however, may argue that language learners are deprived of the opportunities to develop their inferential skills when the meaning is given directly in the single glosses. If so, they can occasionally implement meaning-inferred MC glosses to elicit their mental processing of the target words. Teachers can invite learners to guess the word meaning and then create an opportunity for them to discuss them in class and to clarify any misunderstandings. In current ELT trends, learners are the centers in a language classroom, while teachers' role is to facilitate learning. Learners, therefore, should be actively involved in the generation of word meanings instead of being passive receptors of information (Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts-Taffe, 2006).

The results of cross-comparisons of gloss types, however, are still few and inconclusive and further investigation is needed to examine which gloss type is more effective in what conditions and for which learners. An area for further studies to pursue is to take language proficiency level into account, so to speak, to explore if the effect of this technique varies among learners of different language proficiency levels.

Nassaji (2004) draws a distinction between *breadth* and *depth* of vocabulary knowledge, where the former represents the quantity or number of vocabulary items learners at a particular language proficiency level know and the latter stands for the quality of lexical knowledge or how well learners know a word. In this study, an input-based approach was adopted towards lexical development, which could at best lead to an increase in breadth of word knowledge. Further studies could be carried out to add an output-based dimension through, for example incorporating reconstruction tasks, and thereby to test if glossing could enhance depth of vocabulary knowledge too. It is predicted that in this way the long-term effect of glossing could also be enhanced to a considerable degree. To date, sufficient research has not been conducted addressing the effectiveness of glossing and different gloss types in computer assisted language learning (CALL), Loucky & Tuzi (2010), Salem (2006), and Silva (2007) and being some exceptions. Thus, interested researchers are invited to seek if provision of online glosses can

make online texts more comprehensible and their vocabulary more accessible to language learners.

### **Acknowledgement**

We gratefully acknowledge the project reported here was supported by a grant-in-aid of research from Ferdowsi University of Mashhad in 2011 (contract code: 17407) without which this research would not have been possible.

### **References**

- Blachowicz, C.L.Z., Fisher, P.J.L., Ogle, D. & Watts-Taffe, S. (2006). Vocabulary: Questions from the classroom. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 41(4), 524-539.
- Chen, H. (2002). Investigating the effects of L1 and L2 glosses on foreign language reading comprehension and vocabulary retention. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Computer-Assisted Language Instruction Consortium, Davis, CA.
- Cohen, A.D. (1990). *Language learning: Insights for learners, teachers, and researchers*. New York: Newbury House.
- Davis, J.N. (1989). Facilitating effects of marginal glosses on foreign language reading. *The Modern Language Journal*, 73 (1), 41-48.
- Day, R., Omura, C. & Hiramatsu, M. (1991). Incidental EFL vocabulary learning and reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 7 (2), 541-551.
- Dongzhi, W. (2009). Assessment on research methods of incidental vocabulary acquisition. *Teaching English in China*, 32(5), 120-127.
- Ellis, N. C. (2006). Selective attention and transfer phenomena in L2 acquisition: contingency, cue competition, salience, interference, overshadowing, blocking, and perceptual learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 27, 164-194.
- Eskey, D.E. (1988). *Holding in the bottom*. In P. L. Carrell, J. Devine, & D. E. Eskey (Eds.). *Interactive approaches to second language reading* (pp. 93-100). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Flynn, K., Mackey, D., & Trites, L. (2006). *Panorama: Building perspective through reading: Student book 2*. Oxford University Press.

- Fraser, C.A. (1999). Lexical processing strategy use and vocabulary learning through reading. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 21, 225-241.
- Gu, P.Y. (2003). Vocabulary learning in a second language: person, task, context and strategies. *TESL Electronic Journal*, 7(2). Available online: <http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ/ej26/a4.html>.
- Hall, C.J. (2002). The automatic cognate form assumption: Evidence for the parasitic model of vocabulary development. *IRAL*, 40, 69-87.
- Ko, M. H. (2005). Glosses, comprehension, and strategy use. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 17(2), 125-143.
- Holley, F.M. & King, J.K. (1971). Vocabulary glosses in foreign language reading materials. *Language Learning*, 21, 213-219.
- Hong, X. (2010). Review of effects of glosses on incidental vocabulary learning and reading comprehension. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguist*, 33(1), 56-73.
- Hulstijn, J.H. (1992). Retention of inferred and given word meanings: Experiments in incidental learning. In P.J.L. Arnaud & H. Béjoint (Eds.), *Vocabulary and applied linguistics* (pp. 113-125). London: Macmillan.
- Hulstijn, J.H., Hollander, M. & Greidanus, T. (1996). Incidental vocabulary learning by advanced foreign language students: The influence of marginal glosses, dictionary use, and reoccurrence of unknown words. *The Modern Language Journal*, 80(3), 327-339.
- Hulstijn, J.H. & Laufer, B. (2001). Some empirical evidence for the Involvement Load Hypothesis in vocabulary acquisition. *Language Learning*, 51, 539-558.
- Jacobs, G.M. (1994). What lurks in the margin: Use of vocabulary glosses as a strategy in second language reading. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 5(1), 115-137.
- Jacobs, G.M., Dufon, P. & Hong, F.C. (1994). L1 and L2 vocabulary glosses in L2 reading passages: Their effectiveness for increasing comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 17, 19-28.
- Jenkins, J.R., Dixon, R. (1983). Vocabulary learning. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 8, 237-260.
- Jenkins, J.R., Stein M.L. & Wysocki, K. (1984). Learning vocabulary through reading. *American Educational Research Journal*, 21, 767-787.

- Jing-xia, S. (2010). Effects of ways of glossing on incidental vocabulary acquisition through reading. *Journal of Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics*, 2, 21-35.
- Kudo, Y. (1999). L2 vocabulary learning strategies. Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center. Retrieved from the World Wide Web: <http://www.nflrc.hawaii.edu/NetWorks/NW14/>
- Laufer, B. & Hulstijn, J. H. (2001). Incidental vocabulary acquisition in a second language: The construct of task-induced involvement. *Applied Linguistics*, 22, 1-26.
- Lin, C. & Huang, H. (2008). Meaning-inferred gloss and meaning-given gloss on incidental vocabulary learning. *Journal of National Taiwan Normal University: Humanities & Social Sciences*, 53(2), 87-116
- Loucky, J. P. & Tuzi, F. (2010). Comparing foreign language learners' use of online glossing programs. *International Journal of Virtual and Personal Learning Environments*, 1(4), 31-51.
- Miyasako, N. (2002). Does text-glossing have any effects on incidental vocabulary learning through reading for Japanese senior high school students? *Language Education & Technology*, 39, 1-20.
- Nagata, N. (1999). The effectiveness of computer-assisted interactive glosses. *Foreign Language Annals*, 32(4), 469-479.
- Nassaji, H. (2004). The relationship between depth of vocabulary knowledge and L2 learners' lexical inferencing strategy use and success. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 1, 107-134.
- Nation, I. S. P. (1982). Beginning to learn foreign vocabulary: A review of the research. *RELC Journal*, 13, 14-36.
- Nation, I. S. P. (1990). *Teaching and learning vocabulary*. Boston, Mass.: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge University Press.
- O'Malley, J. M., & Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Parry, K. (1993). Too many words: Learning the vocabulary of an academic subject. In T. Huckin & M. Haynes & J. Coady (Eds.), *Second language reading and vocabulary learning* (pp. 109-129). Norwood, N.J.: Ablex.
- Rieder, A. (2002). A cognitive view of incidental vocabulary acquisition: from text meaning to word meaning? *Views*, 11(1&2), 53-71.

- Ridder, I. (2002). Visible or invisible links: Does the highlighting of hyperlinks affect incidental vocabulary learning, text comprehension, and the reading process? *Language Learning & Technology*, 6(1), 123-146.
- Robinson, D. H. (1994). Textbook selection: Watch out for 'inconsiderate' texts. In K. Prichard & M. Sawyer (Eds.), *Handbook of college teaching* (pp. 415-422). Westport, CN: Greenwood.
- Rott, S. & Williams, J. (2003). Making form-meaning connections while reading: A qualitative analysis of word processing. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 15(1), 45-75.
- Rumelhart, D.E. (1980). Schemata: The building blocks of cognition. In R. J. Spiro, B. C. Bruce, & W. E. Brewer (Eds), *Theoretical issues in reading comprehension* (pp. 35-58). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Salem, B. (2006). The influence of electronic glosses on word retention and reading comprehension with Spanish language learners. Unpublished dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Education of the University of Kansas.
- Schmidt, R. W. (1992). The role of consciousness in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 11, 439-453.
- Schmitt, N. (2002). *An introduction to applied linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Silva, R. (2007). The role of glossing in second language vocabulary learning. *Estudios Norteamericanos*, 16, 63-74.
- Stanovich, K. (1980). Toward an interactive-compensatory model of individual differences in the development of reading fluency. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 16, 32-71.
- Twaddell, F. (1973). Vocabulary expansion in the TESOL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 7, 61-78.
- Watanabe, Y. (1997). Input, intake, and retention: Effects of increased processing on incidental learning of foreign language vocabulary. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 19(3), 287-307.
- Wenden, A. (1991). *Learner strategies for learner autonomy*. Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Wilkins, D. A. (1974) *Second-language learning and teaching*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Xu, X. (2010). The effects of glosses on incidental vocabulary acquisition in reading. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 1(2), 117-120.
- Yee, S. W. (2010). Short-term and long-term retention of new words: Investigating the role of L1 glossing in vocabulary learning among Hong Kong ESL learners. Unpublished dissertation at the University of Hong Kong.

Yoshi, M. (2006). L1 and L2 glosses: Their effects on incidental vocabulary learning. *Language Learning and Technology*, 10, 85-101.

Zhexi, W. (2009). The role of glossing and the blank-filling exercise in vocabulary learning through reading: An empirical study. *Teaching English in China*, 32(5), 50-57.

## **Title**

### **A Survey of Iranian EFL University Students' Motivation and Interest in Intensive Reading**

## **Authors**

**Mahboobeh Mahboobi (Ph.D. Candidate)**

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, 11800, Penang, Malaysia

**Sarjit Kaur (Ph.D.)**

School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800, Penang, Malaysia

## **Biodata**

**Mahboobeh Mahboobi** was a postgraduate student at the school of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia from 2007 to 2009 and she has a M.A. in Linguistics and English Language Studies. She is currently pursuing her doctoral studies at the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation in Universiti Sains Malaysia.

**Sarjit Kaur** is Associate Professor and Programme Chairperson of the English Language Studies Section at the School of Humanities in Universiti Sains Malaysia. Widely published, her research areas include Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), workplace literacies, postgraduate education and policy research in higher education. She is also an Associate Research Fellow of Malaysia's National Higher Education Research Institute (NaHERI) based at Universiti Sains Malaysia.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of motivation and interest in intensive reading and the relationship between Iranian university students' motivation and interest in intensive reading. In doing so, a modified 54-item reliable survey which was adapted from previous studies was administered to Tehran University students. In this study, 300 sets of questionnaires were distributed among respondents who were university students at the University of Tehran. Based on 213

completed questionnaires, the results showed that both motivation and interest play a very important role in intensive reading among Iranian EFL university students. The results of descriptive analysis showed that motivation plays an important role in the intensive reading of Iranian EFL university students. Among the dimensions of motivation, the importance of reading, reading efficacy and communicative orientation have a significant relationship with perceived interest. The results of descriptive analysis also revealed that sources of interest are the most significant components of interest in intensive reading as situational variables of interest help students in their intensive reading. The constructs of ‘importance of reading’ and ‘communicative orientation’ have a positive relationship with perceived interest but the relationship between reading efficacy and perceived interest is negative. The constructs ‘importance of reading’ and ‘communicative orientation’ also have a significant relationship with sources of interest. The main implication of this study is that EFL teachers in Iran need to motivate their English majors at university to read more materials in English to further improve their reading skills and techniques in intensive reading.

**Keywords:** Motivation, Interest, Intensive reading, Iranian EFL students.

## **1. Introduction**

In today’s era of globalization, reading in second or foreign language settings continues to feature predominantly. Many students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) rarely need to speak the language in their day-to-day lives but may need to read it in order to access the wealth of information which is available predominantly in English. Thus, reading in second or foreign language continues to gain importance because students have little contact with the target language outside the classroom and also because most of the information in English comes through reading. Moreover, it has been mentioned in previous studies that reading is one of the most difficult skills to develop to a high level of proficiency due to the complexity associated with the reading process. Furthermore, Dreyer and Nel (2003) make the observation that many students pursue tertiary education underprepared for the reading demands that are placed upon them.

One of the most important factors contributing to reading comprehension is motivation. A compelling reason for the role motivation and engagement in influencing the development of reading comprehension is that motivated students usually want to understand the content of a text fully and, therefore, process information deeply. This is highlighted in previous studies as well. For example, Guthrie et al. (1999) present evidence that reading motivation predicts learners' amount of reading which, in turn, predicts reading comprehension. Their findings show the important role of reading motivation in reading comprehension.

The other factor contributing to reading comprehension is interest. Interested students focus on gaining meaning, building knowledge and understanding deeply rather than focusing on learning skills or gaining rewards. For example, when fifth graders received content-learning goals for reading, they increased their reading comprehension more than when they received performance goals of scoring well on tests (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987). In addition, based on previous researches when a topic is rated as interesting, the format is appealing to students and materials are relevant to students' purposes in knowledge-development activities interest and motivation increase.

This article focuses on reading in general but with particular focus on intensive reading comprehension and discusses the roles of motivation and interest in developing Iranian university students' intensive reading. A number of studies have been conducted on the effects of factors such as motivation on reading comprehension, but there is no specific study looking at these two factors as a framework and few studies have studied the effects of these factors on intensive reading in the Iranian higher education context. Because Iranian students learn English at a later stage (first year in junior high school), many students continue to face difficulties in reading texts in English at the university. While some research studies on this aspect have been conducted in Iran, insufficient attention has been given to the role of motivation and interest in intensive reading among Iranian university students.

English is formally taught as a foreign language to Iranian students from the first year in junior high school. The students have about three hours of formal instruction in English every week. Teachers use a combination of the grammar-translation method and audio lingual method in most schools. At the university level, students mostly study English for academic purposes (EAP) and therefore, reading is the most emphasized skill. The first course university students have to take is 3 credits of "General English" and following this, they take more specialized

English courses which focus on their discipline-related English texts and learn related terminology (Noora, 2008). Compared to EFL learners in other contexts, Iranian EFL students do not have much exposure to English outside the classroom. Very few English programmes are broadcasted on TV or radio. Of course, through advancements in technology and the more frequent use of the Internet, satellite, and rapid growth of private language institutes in Iran, the opportunities for English language learning have greatly improved (Talebinezhad & Aliakbari, 2002).

## **2. Problem statement**

Reading in English is a source of difficulty for both second language and foreign language learners. The problems they encounter are due to a number of factors including lack of appropriate reading strategies, lack of background knowledge related to the topic of the target language or poor attitude towards reading. Most EFL learners in Iran have basic problems with reading comprehension (Rahimi, 2007). When Iranian university students read a text, they are not able to comprehend it effectively. Since Iranian university students who are majoring in English realize that in future they will work as English teachers either in schools or institutes, they appear to put more emphasis on the other language skills of listening, writing and speaking, thereby neglecting reading. Similarly, many EFL learners have major difficulties with reading comprehension, often even after years of English courses, and this happens in many classes because both teachers and students do not pay sufficient attention to reading thoroughly maybe because of the perceived lack of interest accorded to the reading component in course books (Marzban, 2008). Furthermore, Iranian EFL learners rarely find sufficient opportunities to interact with English speakers and learn about their culture (Ghassemi, 2006). By the same token, most Iranian EFL learners have serious problems in reading and comprehending English texts (Hayati & Shariatifar, 2009).

Because of the fact that Iranian students learn English at a later stage (second year in guidance school), many students continue to face difficulties in reading texts in English at the university. While some research studies on this aspect have been conducted in Iran, not enough attention has been given to the role of motivation and interest in intensive reading among Iranian

university students. Thus, this research analyzes the relationship between motivation and interest in intensive reading among EFL students.

### **3. Objectives of Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of motivation and interest on intensive reading comprehension. Specifically, the objectives of the study are as follows:

- 1) To examine the role of motivation on intensive reading among Iranian EFL university students.
- 2) To examine the role of interest on intensive reading comprehension among Iranian EFL university students.
- 3) To analyze the relationship between students' motivation and interest in intensive reading.

### **4. Review of Literature**

Reading is one of the four main skills in language learning and also one of the most challenging for a foreign language learner. It is a language skill that is often emphasized in foreign language teaching contexts because reading involves readers interacting with the text by utilizing their knowledge of the world in comprehending the writer's message. There is consensus among reading experts that one learns to read by reading. Krashen (cited in Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 38) succinctly makes the point that "reading is the only way we become good readers." Basically, two major approaches have been used for developing reading skills and in the literature of language learning, they are commonly known as intensive reading and extensive reading. Extensive reading can be defined as students' reading of many easy and enjoyable books and "is generally associated with reading large amounts of text with the aim of getting an overall understanding of the material" (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 6). Students can engage in extensive reading (often referred to as "silent reading") in the classroom or at any place students like for the purposes of pleasure, curiosity or professional interests. Intensive reading has traditionally been the more common choice for teaching reading in a classroom situation. In intensive reading, short texts frequently serve the purpose of learning new vocabulary, text organization and reading skills. Nation (2001, p.149) observes that "the procedures involved (in intensive reading) direct a lot of attention to the vocabulary, grammar and discourse of the text" and states that this deliberate attention to language features means that intensive reading fits

within the strand of language-focused learning. EFL reading instruction at college and university level is usually presented in the form of intensive reading. This refers to the careful reading of shorter, more difficult texts with the goal of complete and detailed understanding. Intensive reading is also associated “with the teaching of reading in terms of its component skills” (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 6). Intensive reading focuses learners’ attention on features of the text important for comprehension and critical analysis, such as the following aspects stated by Van Wyk (2003): lexical elements, syntax, cohesive devices, discourse markers, and other features especially important for academic reading such as discriminating and understanding the difference between main ideas and secondary ideas, grasping the relationship between ideas, separating fact from opinion, evaluating claims and detecting weaknesses, drawing inferences and conclusions, and deducing the meaning of unknown words.

The concept of motivation in second or foreign language learning was first introduced by Gardner and Lambert (1959). “Motivation is what activates behavior” (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 406) and can be defined as the cluster of personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading that an individual possesses. This is not the same thing as interest, attitude, or beliefs. One could have an interest in reading, but nevertheless choose not to read. Motivation is the underlying factor that disposes one to read or not (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). It has been mentioned that even the most able or skillful students may not keep on reading if they experience lack of motivation. Motivation has been considered one of the most important factors affecting L2 learning (Gardner et al., 1997).

Language theorists posit a variety of ways to explain reading motivation and how it affects students’ reading engagement and state that motivated readers will often engage more in reading than unmotivated readers (Wigfield et al. 1998). Deci (1992) illustrated motivation in terms of both experiential (focused task engagement, involvement, and the experience of enjoyment, interest, and excitement) and dispositional (the desire to continue doing those activities) components.

In discussing the role of motivation in reading, it is generally stated that good comprehenders are knowledgeable and strategic readers. However, comprehension of challenging text seems to require not only cognition but also motivation (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000) in understanding texts for academic success. In order to understand the significance of what is read, critical readers need to have the ability to check their understanding as they move

through the text to check their comprehension ability. Other reader factors such as motivation, background knowledge, and previous reading experience also affect the reading process significantly. Also Gardner et al. (1997) showed that motivation and attitude affect general L2 learning. Wang and Guthrie (2004) found that reading motivation contributes directly to reading comprehension independent of its influence on children's amount and breadth of reading. In addition, they stated that young children's reading self-concept (assessed as students' perceptions of reading competence, the difficulty of reading, and their attitude towards reading) correlated with word recognition and reading comprehension skills. In another study, it was shown that students with exceptionally high academic intrinsic motivation performed better on various reading measures from the elementary through the high school grades (Gottfried, Cook, Gottfried & Morris, 2005). Students' self-efficacy is said to increase when they feel they have ownership, or a sense of control over what they learn, thereby showcasing the importance of self efficacy as a good predictor of reading achievement (Wigfield et al., 1998).

Interest as a construct in reading achievement relates to the underlying needs or desires of learners and is configured as a favorable attitude with a strong action orientation and occurs when there is an interaction between stimulus and person. The literature on reading posits that the construct of interest is multidimensional; encompassing the cognitive and emotional domain. Emotional interest is stimulated when the topics are universally interesting or appealing concepts, such as sex, war, and death (Schank, 1979; Van Wyk, 2003). On the other hand, cognitive interest is evoked by text style, prior knowledge of the readers, and the level of unexpectedness of the text content. Emotional interest has been named as topic based interest by Schank (1979) who mentions that topic-based interest works for those with a tendency to do something which usually implies a prior knowledge of these subjects, for example, universally appealing content such as danger and sex. Besides that, cognitive interest has been called text-based interest. It is an interest which may also occur from the way the text is written. Text-based interest is created by authors who use qualities such as action, mystery, imagery, and meaningful characters (Schank, 1979).

Other than conceptualizing the concept of interest into the two dimensions of individual and situational, Alexander and Jetton (2000) presented a review of categories of interest. They emphasized situational and personal interest as the two main aspects of interest involved in the reading process. Individual interest is defined as personal predisposition for particular topics, or

a domain of knowledge over others. It develops over time through constant interaction with the particular knowledge. The other kind of interest, situational interest, refers to interest caused by situational variables, such as the text and test; it also refers to the effects of engaging learning task on an individual.

The effect of interest on reading is widely acknowledged by many researchers in terms of the deep processing of content that increases reading comprehension. Interest also stimulates readers to go beyond the text's surface and try to understand its meaning and main ideas. When students have strong interest in what they read, they can increase their reading level. Indeed, many educators and researchers consider interest to be a paramount factor in all learning. Interesting materials also affects reading comprehension adults read interesting sentences faster than less interesting ones and comprehend them better. Generally, there are strong indications to suggest that students' interest in the material they are reading relates to the use of effective learning strategies, their level of attention, and their comprehension of reading materials. Deci (1992) assessed how college students' interest in text materials influenced their comprehension when the students' prior knowledge of the materials and general intelligence were controlled and concluded that college students who were interested in the text materials used in the study processed those materials more deeply and used more elaborate learning strategies while reading than did students less interested in the materials.

Different dimensions of interest are also related to comprehension. Arguably, interest in reading is central in determining the ways in which readers select and process certain types of information. Besides, when readers are interested in a topic, they tend to read and process information better as they gain interest in the reading material, thereby establishing the relationship between topic interest and reading comprehension. Besides topic interest, text-based interest is also related to comprehension.

## **5. Methodology**

### *Participants*

The population of this study comprises third and fourth year Iranian university students located in Tehran. The rationale for selecting third and fourth year English majors is because the researchers felt these students would be more capable of providing mature and accurate

responses to the items posed in the questionnaire. This is because they have already experienced two to three years of university study in the English language at the University of Tehran. First and second year university students were not included in this study because it is felt that they have not undergone sufficient instruction in English while at university. Convenience sampling was used for this study in order to obtain a large number of completed questionnaires in a short time. 300 sets of questionnaires were distributed to respondents who are university students located in Tehran.

### *Instrumentation*

This study used a questionnaire to record the respondents' responses to the items especially constructed to generate authentic responses. The main objective in designing and administering the questionnaire is to gather quantitative data from the respondents on their motivation and interest in intensive reading in their university as questionnaires are valuable tools in education which allow the gathering of reliable and valid data in a short space and time.

The questionnaire design comprised relevant issues discussed in the literature with some modification to accommodate motivation and interest issues into the study's framework. There were three sections in the questionnaire. The first section (section A) comprised three questions requesting personal details on the respondents (age, sex, and marital status of the respondents). In this section, multiple choice questions and single response scale questions were included to collect demographic data. The second section (Section B) contained 28 items to record respondents' responses on their motivation in intensive reading. The third section (Section C) contained 27 items to record students' responses on their interest in intensive reading. Questions related to motivation were adopted from Mori (2002) and items related to interest were adopted from Schraw et al. (1995). Items related to motivation were further used and validated by Nishino (2006). Moreover, the internal consistency and reliability of the items in this section were high. Regarding items related to interest, both the validity and reliability of the instruments have been established in previous studies. In this section, respondent were requested to rate their opinions according to a five point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5.

### *Procedures*

The questionnaires were administered to 300 respondents in the University of Tehran. Prior to this, permission was granted by the course instructors at this university, because regular class hours were used. The appointed representative of the researchers (a colleague who is a lecturer at the faculty of English language and Literature in Tehran University) first explained to students the aim of the study before requesting students to complete the questionnaire. Before receiving the questionnaire, the participants were told that data collection was purely for research purposes. Their scores will not be known to their lecturer and other people and that it would only be known to the researchers.

Data, gathered from the questionnaires, were analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) to analyze the data profile and also the hypotheses testing. SPSS is a computer application that provides statistical analysis of data. It allows for in-depth data access and preparation, analytical reporting, graphics, and modeling. Responses were encoded into the system, using numbers to represent actual data collected. This helped to analyze the data efficiently. Data were entered directly into the SPSS by using data entry interface.

### **6. Results**

A total of 300 sets of questionnaires were distributed to Iranian EFL university students in Tehran University. Out of the total questionnaires distributed, 220 sets of questionnaires were returned, of which only 213 sets of them were usable, which contributed to a response rate of 71 %. The respondents in this study were mostly aged between 21 to 23 years old (39.4%) and 24-26 years old (24.9%). Out of 213 respondents, 124 (58.2 %) of them were females and this is fairly representative of the general student population in Iranian universities. Most of the respondents were single (81.2 %). A detailed demographic profile of the respondents is tabulated in Table 1 below.

**Table 1** Profile of respondents

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Age (Years)</b>		
18 – 20	36	16.9
21 – 23	84	39.4
24 – 26	53	24.9
27 & above	40	18.8
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	89	41.8
Female	124	58.2
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	173	81.2
Married	32	15
Others	8	3.8

Descriptive statistics indicate the central tendencies of dispersion of the responses. Mean and standard variations of the variables are used to analyze the frequency distribution and summation of the data. The responses of the students were converted into scores by a uniform scoring system. Higher scores were intended to express increasing level of the concepts being measured. The mean and standard variation values for the students' motivation in intensive reading and interest in intensive reading were then calculated using the students' total scores in each of the sub-scales.

Descriptive analysis for motivation and interest is presented in Table 2. From the results, it was found that all variables were more on the right scale on the five point Likert scale. The mean value indicates the high value for all variables, ranging from 2.67 to 3.90 respectively from intrinsic value of reading (interest) to importance of reading. From the analysis, it may be concluded that all elements play an important role in intensive reading. The mean value for interest indicates the high value for all variables, ranging from 3.57 to 3.59 respectively from Perceived interest to Sources of interest. From the analysis, it may be concluded that all elements play an important role in intensive reading.

**Table 2** Descriptive analysis for motivation and interest

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Intrinsic value of reading (enjoyment)	3.47	.29
Importance of reading	3.90	.40
Reading efficacy	3.15	.67
Intrinsic value of reading 2 (interest)	2.67	.65
Extrinsic utility value of reading	3.38	.56
Communicative orientation	3.48	1.06
Perceived interest	3.57	.59
Sources of interest	3.59	.39

Regression analysis is a statistical tool for the investigation of relationships between variables. Usually, the investigator seeks to ascertain the causal effect of one variable upon another. Regression analysis will provide the researcher with information about the model as a whole, and the relative contribution of each of the variables that make up the model. Thus, regression analysis was used to test the relationship between motivation and interest in intensive reading. For this purpose, multiple regression was used. A detailed multiple regression results of the relationship between motivation and interest in intensive reading is exhibited in Table 3 below.

**Table 3** Multiple Regression Results

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	
	Perceived interest (Std. Beta)	Sources of interest (Std.Beta)
Intrinsic value of reading (enjoyment)	.002	.002
Importance of reading	.179**	.11
Reading efficacy	-.196***	.324***
Intrinsic value of reading 2 (interest)	.063	-.066
Extrinsic utility value of reading	-.007	.035
Communicative orientation	.158**	.230***

\*p<.10, \*\*p<.05, \*\*\*p<.00

## 7. Discussion

The results of descriptive analysis showed that motivation played an important role in the intensive reading of Iranian EFL university students. Based on the questionnaire adopted from

Mori (2002), there are six components for motivation in reading. These six components are intrinsic value of reading (enjoyment), importance of reading, reading efficacy, intrinsic value of reading (interest), extrinsic utility value of reading, and communicative orientation. These components have also been used by Nishino (2005) in his study on Japanese high school students' L2 reading motivation.

The results of the descriptive analysis also revealed the mean of the motivation components is more on the right side of the five-point Likert scale. The highest mean belongs to importance of reading. This means that importance of reading is the most significant component in intensive reading for Iranian EFL university students. The reason for this could be that Iranian English majors place a lot of importance on reading because they think effective reading skills would help them cope with the effects of internationalization, understand more deeply the culture and lifestyle of other countries, learn various opinions in the world, broaden their view, and be more knowledgeable persons in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The results of the descriptive analysis showed that interest plays an important role in intensive reading of Iranian EFL university students. The results revealed the mean of the interest components was more on the right side of the five-point Likert scale. The highest mean belonged to sources of interest. It means that a source of interest is the most significant component of interest in intensive reading. The reason for this could be that situational variables of interest help the students in their intensive reading. When a reading text has cohesion (for example, it is well organized, is easy to understand and has ideas that are presented clearly), it activates students' prior knowledge. For example, if the topic is familiar or the students know a lot about it, and it also activates students' emotions or makes them happy, the students will be more successful in their reading.

The results of multiple regression showed that motivation has a relationship with interest in intensive reading among Iranian EFL university students. The components of motivation were tested with each of the components of interest separately. Firstly, the components of motivation were tested with perceived interest. The results of this analysis showed that among the components of motivation, three of them have a relationship with perceived interest in intensive reading. These components are importance of reading, reading efficacy, and communicative orientation. The results showed that the importance of reading and communicative orientation have a positive relationship with perceived interest, whereas reading efficacy has a negative

relationship with perceived interest. Among importance of reading and communicative orientation, importance of reading has a more significant relationship with perceived interest. The R-square for these variables were almost 10%, showing that 10% of perceived interest in intensive reading is explained by importance of reading, reading efficacy, and communicative orientation. This shows that the more importance students place on reading, the more they will be interested in intensive reading. The implications are, when they give a lot of importance to reading because they think that they would be able to cope with internationalization, understand more deeply the culture and lifestyle of other countries, learn various opinions in the world and also broaden their view and be more knowledgeable persons, they will be more interested in reading. It is common knowledge that when you give importance to something, you will like it and it will help you in your future undertakings.

The regression results also showed that there is no significant relationship between intrinsic value of reading (enjoyment), intrinsic value of reading (interest), extrinsic utility value of reading and perceived interest. This may be because the students do not enjoy reading or it is a chore for them to read in English or they think it is a waste of time for them to read in English. It could also be that they perceive English as only a required subject and they do not need to put too much effort on it, therefore, they will not be interested in reading materials in English. These are only speculations on the part of the researchers as the questionnaire was not able to capture the students' habits towards intensive reading in English.

Secondly, the components of motivation were tested with sources of interest. The results of this analysis showed that among the components of motivation, two have a significant relationship with sources of interest in intensive reading i.e. importance of reading and communicative orientation. Both of them have a positive relationship with sources of interest. Among importance of reading and communicative orientation, importance of reading has a more significant relationship with sources interest. The R-square for these variables was almost 18%, showing that 18% of sources of interest in intensive reading is explained by importance of reading and communicative orientation. This shows that the more the students give importance to the reading, the more they will be interested in intensive reading. The implications are, when they give more importance on reading, their prior knowledge and emotions will be activated, and their recollection will be easier.

The regression results also showed that there is no significant relationship between intrinsic value of reading (enjoyment), reading efficacy, intrinsic value of reading (interest), extrinsic utility value of reading and sources of interest. This may be because the students think it is a waste of time for them to read in English. It could be that they perceive they are weak in English, do not see English as an enjoyable subject and feel that it is difficult. Therefore, their positive emotions and prior knowledge will not be activated, and this could affect their ability to recall information from the text.

## **8. Conclusion**

Based on responses from 213 respondents, the current study concluded that motivation and interest play a very important role in the intensive reading of Iranian university students. Among the dimensions of motivation, the importance of reading, reading efficacy, and communicative orientation have a significant relationship with perceived interest. The results of descriptive analysis showed that sources of interest are the most significant component of interest in intensive reading as situational variables of interest help students in their intensive reading. Importance of reading and communicative orientation recorded a positive relationship with perceived interest, but the relationship between reading efficacy and perceived interest is negative. The importance of reading and communicative orientation also showed a significant relationship with sources of interest.

The findings of this study indicate that the reading efficiency levels among Iranian university students need to be improved. EFL students need to realize that good reading ability can help them progress in their academic studies and it can help them understand text content better. Although Iranian university educators have a profound impact on reading instruction and student achievement, many students continue to face difficulties in enhancing their reading skills, thereby indicating that new perspectives on reading instruction are needed. Notwithstanding other factors, the constructs of interest and motivation have direct bearing on EFL students' willingness to read in English as these elements can improve reading instruction for all students and bring benefits to teacher content knowledge and methodology.

## References

- Alexander, P., & Jetton, T. (2000). Learning from a text: A multidimensional and developmental perspective. In M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research*, 3, 285-310. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Day, R. R. and Bamford, J. (1998). *Extensive reading in the second language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Deci, E. L. (1992). The relation of interest to the motivation of behavior: A self-determination of theory perspective. In K. A. Renninger, S. Hidi, & A. Krapp (Eds.), *The role of interest in learning and development*, pp. 43-70. Hillsdale, N J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Dreyer, C., & Nel, C. (2003). Teaching reading strategies and reading comprehension within a technology-enhanced learning environment. *System*, 31, 349–365.
- Gardner, R.C., & Lambert, W.E. (1959). Motivational variables in second language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, 13, 266-272.
- Gardner, R. C., Tremblay P. F. & Masgoret, A. (1997). Towards a full model of second language learning: an empirical investigation, *The Modern Language Journal*, 81, 344–362.
- Ghassemi, E. (2006). The effect of anxiety on reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners: A case of gender study. Unpublished manuscript. Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran.
- Gottfried, A. W., Cook, C. R., Gottfried, A. E., & Morris, P. E. (2005). Educational characteristics of adolescents with gifted academic intrinsic motivation: A longitudinal investigation from school entry through early adulthood. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 49, 172-186.
- Grolnick, W. S., & Ryan, R. M. (1987). Autonomy in children's learning: An experimental and individual difference investigation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, 890–898.
- Guthrie, J. T., Wigfield, A., Metsala, J. L. & Cox, K. E. (1999). Motivational and cognitive predictors of text comprehension and reading amount. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 3, 231–25.
- Guthrie, J. T., & Wigfield, A. (2000). Engagement and motivation in reading. In M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research*, 3, 403–420. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

- Hayati, M., & Shariatifar, S. (2009). Mapping Strategies. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*; 39(2), 53.
- Marzban, A. (2008). *Using CALL in EFL Reading Comprehension Classes*. Paper presented at the 1<sup>st</sup> English Language Teaching and Literature Conference, Islamic Azad University, Rudehen Branch.
- Mori, S. (2002). Redefining motivation to read in a foreign language. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 14(2), 91–110. Retrieved October 30, 2002, from <http://njlrc.hawaii.edu/rfl/October2002/mori/mori.html>
- Nation, P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Nishino, T. (2005). Japanese high school students' L2 reading motivation. *Lifelong Learning: Proceedings of the 4th Annual JALT Pan-SIG Conference*. Tokyo, Japan: Tokyo Keizai University.
- Noora, A. (2008). Iranian Undergraduates Non-English Majors' Language Learning Preferences. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 33, 8(2), 1675-8021.
- Rahimi, M. (2007). L2 reading comprehension test in the Persian context: Language of presentation as a test method facet. *The Reading Matrix*, 7(1), 151-165.
- Schank, R.C. (1979). Interestingness: controlling inferences. *Artificial Intelligence*, 12, 273-297.
- Schraw, G., Bruning, R., & Svoboda, C. (1995). Sources of situational interest. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 27, 1–17.
- Talebinezhad, M. R. & Aliakbari, M. (2002). Evaluation and justification of a paradigm shift in the current ELT models in Iran. *Linguistik online*, 10, (1), Retrieved September 20, 2002 from [http://www.linguistikonline.de/10\\_02/talebinezhadaliakbari.html](http://www.linguistikonline.de/10_02/talebinezhadaliakbari.html)
- Van Wyk, A. (2003). Access to higher education in South Africa: Bridging the divide through academic literacy. *TESOL Journal*, 12 (5), 29-34.
- Wang, J. & Guthrie, J. T. (2004). Modeling the effects of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, amount of reading, and past reading achievement on text comprehension between US and Chinese students. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 39(2), 162–186.
- Wigfield, A., Eccles, J. S., & Rodriguez, D. (1998). The development of children's motivation in school contexts. In P. D. Pearson & A. Iran-Nejad (Eds.), *Review of research in education*, pp. 73–118. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

## Title

# The Impact of Critical Friends Groups on Teacher Cognition A Sociocultural View of L2 Teacher Education

## Author

**Mehdi Shokouhi Shourmasti (Ph.D. Candidate)**

Department of English, Science and Research Branch,  
Islamic Azad University, Mazandaran, Iran.

## Bio Data

**Mehdi Shokouhi Shourmasti** is currently a Ph.D. Candidate of TEFL. His research interests include teacher education, Vygotskian sociocultural perspective, and critical pedagogy.

## Abstract

As to the preparation and development of teachers teaching in different organizations, teachers need to engage in continuous professional development. As a result, models of teacher professional development have been developed, among which is the Critical Friends Groups (henceforth CFG) technique. Going through the present literature on CFG, an attempt to explore the effects of CFG on teachers' cognition is as yet undiscovered. Hence, the present study aimed to explore the experiences of a small group of Iranian EFL teachers during their participation in a CFG over one semester. The major goal of the present study was to see how participation in CFG could result in any changes with regard to teachers' cognition. The study was framed through a *sociocultural theory* (Vygotsky, 1963, 1978). Through a qualitative content analysis approach (Dornyei, 2007), the present paper highlights that CFG has great potentiality with regard to providing some positive and constructive changes in teachers' cognition.

**Keywords:** Critical Friends Groups (CFG), Sociocultural theory, Cognition, Mediation, Verbalization, Scaffolding, Higher order thinking.

## 1. Introduction

The field of ELT has always been concerned about finding efficient ways with regard to language instruction. Various attempts have been made to provide methods to equip teachers with the necessary tools for teaching in classroom context. These methods, however, are limited and limiting mainly due to three reasons. First, they are often linked to very specific claims and to prescribed practices and they tend to fall out of favor as these practices become unfashionable or discredited. Second, in trying to apply methods, teachers sometimes forget the starting point in language program design, namely, a careful consideration of the context in which teaching and learning occurs. Third, the role of the teacher is marginalized and the teacher must submit herself or himself to the method (Richards and Rogers, 2002).

Since methods have not had the capability to compensate for the already mentioned shortcomings, there is a shift toward what Kumaravadivelu (1994) has called a “Post method Condition”. The post method condition signifies three interrelated attributes. First and foremost, it signifies a search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Secondly, the post method condition signifies teacher autonomy. It also promotes the ability of teachers to know how to develop a critical approach in order to self-observe, self-analyze, and self-evaluate their own teaching practice with a view to effecting desired changes (*ibid.* p.33). The third attribute of the post method condition is “Principled Pragmatism” which focuses on how classroom learning can be shaped and managed by teachers as a result of informed teaching and critical appraisal (*ibid.* p.33). This can be achieved as Schon (1983, 1987) contends through two types of reflective practice, i.e. reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action.

Reflection-in-action occurs during the teaching act when teachers monitor their ongoing performance, attempting to locate unexpected problems on the spot and then adjusting their teaching instantaneously (Schon, 1983). Reflection-on-action, which plays a more significant role in shaping teachers' cognition, can occur before and after a lesson, as teachers plan for a lesson and then evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching afterward in various, mostly collaborative forms of activities.

By teacher's cognition, it is meant a process of active decision-making informed by teachers' cognitions, i.e. the beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes about all aspects of their work which teachers have. According to Borg (2006) teacher's cognition is constructed as a result of teacher's prior knowledge, teacher's teaching experience, and as well as teacher education.

As to the preparation and development of teachers teaching in different institutes in Iran, the assumption is that they can get prepared by those very short teacher training courses, which will suffice them for their whole career. Though, as Freeman (2001) rightly admits, teacher training courses are necessary for teachers to develop survival skills in the early days of language teaching, they need to complement this with major procedures and activities for their lifetime development. Hence, the present study investigated whether Critical Friends Groups (henceforth CFG), as one of the realizations of the inquiry-based approaches to teacher preparation within the framework of sociocultural perspective, can help teachers teaching in institutes develop their teaching abilities.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Over the past 40 years, the ways in which educational research has conceptualized teacher cognition, which has in turn informed the activity of teacher education, has shifted dramatically. In the mid-1970s, teacher education has been largely based on 'knowledge-transmission view' which emphasized the idea that knowledge about teaching and learning can be transmitted to individual teacher-learners through processes of professional education. "A popular notion was that education is something carried out by one person, a teacher, standing in front of a class and transmitting information to a group of learners"(Williams & Burden, 1997: 5).

Yet, once research began to uncover the complexities of *teachers' mental lives* (Freeman, 2002), teacher educators could no longer ignore the fact that teachers' prior experiences and the contexts within which they work are extremely influential in shaping how and why teachers do what they do. The positivistic paradigm that had long positioned teachers as conduits to students was found to be insufficient for explaining the complexities of teachers' mental lives and the teaching processes that occur in classrooms (Johnson, 2006). Rather, an interpretative or situated paradigm, largely drawn from ethnographic research in sociology and anthropology, came to be

seen as better suited to explaining the complexities of teachers' mental lives and the various dimensions of teachers' professional worlds (Elbaz, 1991, as cited in Johnson, 2006).

The present study was framed within the sociocultural theory of human learning. Sociocultural approaches to learning and development were first organized and applied by L. S. Vygotsky in Russia in the 1920s and 1930s. They are based on the concept that learning can develop effectively when learners use their minds and available tools while engaged in activities. Language is, of course, one of the major tools, but other things like gesture can be included as well. According to Wertsch (1985), the sociocultural perspective encompasses social interaction as contingent upon language and gesture which are appropriated by the individual to form the instrumental tools for thinking and problem solving. A sociocultural perspective also seeks "to explicate the relationship between human mental functioning, on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional, and historical situations in which this functioning occurs, on the other" (Wertsch, 1995, p. 3).

As Lantolf (2000) points out the central and distinguishing concept of sociocultural theory is that higher forms of mental activity are *mediated*. Such a theory seeks to explain how mediated minds are developed out of social activity. Vygotsky (1978) believes that mediation can occur in three ways: through the use of some material tool such as tying a knot in one's handkerchief in order to remember something, through interaction with another person, or through the use of symbols. The most powerful of these symbolic means or 'signs', as Vygotsky (1978) called them, is language.

Mediation can occur externally, as when a novice is given assistance in the performance of some function by an expert, or internally, as when an individual uses his/her own resources to achieve control over a function. The essence of a sociocultural theory is that external mediation serves as the means by which internal mediation is achieved or according to Lantolf (2000), development is about the appropriation by individuals of the mediational means provided by others in their environment in order to improve control over their mental activity.

The phenomenon of an individual being able to perform at a higher level of competence with the assistance of more capable others is referred to in Vygotskian terms as the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) proposed the metaphor of the ZPD to explain the

difference between individual's actual and potential level of development. According to Vygotsky, the ZPD is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1978, p. 86). In other words, the ZPD refers to "those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation" (1978, p. 86); the actual developmental level refers to "functions that have already matured" (1978, p. 86). Thus, the already matured functions provide a basis for the performance of new functions. When these new functions are matured, a new zone is created for the development of further functions.

Relevant to the notion of ZPD is the concept of *scaffolding*. The term 'scaffolding' is used to refer to the linguistic support given by a tutor to a learner (Bruner, 1990). Support is given up to the point where a learner can 'internalize external knowledge and convert it into a tool for conscious control' (ibid., p. 25). According to Donato (1994, p. 41), the process of scaffolding has six main features: recruiting interest in the task; simplifying the task; maintaining pursuit of the goal; marking differences between what has been produced and the ideal solution; controlling frustrations during problem-solving; demonstrating an idealized version of the act to be performed.

Applying a sociocultural theory to the field of teacher education, learning to teach is based on the assumption that "knowing, thinking, and understanding come from participating in the social practices of learning and teaching in specific classroom and school situations" (Johnson, 2009, p.13). Johnson (2009) believes that

If we embrace a sociocultural perspective, the activities of L2 teacher education, whether in the form of workshops or seminars, must have at their core opportunities for dialogic mediation, scaffolded learning and assisted performance as teachers participate in and learn about some relevant aspect of their teaching. (p. 64)

As Johnson writes, Critical Friends Groups is one of the frameworks which its "unique structural arrangements creates the potential for sustained dialogic mediation among teachers and provides assisted performance" (2009, p. 95). The CFG model of reflective practice and

professional development has its roots in three school reform networks: The Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR), and the National School Reform Faculty (NSRF). Dissatisfied with typical forms of professional development, they developed an approach that was focused on teacher practice, was teacher driven, and promoted professional collegiality (Anderson & Hudson, 2002).

### **3. Methodology**

As described by Franzak (2002), there are three types of CFG protocols. The first type involves looking at a student work in which a teacher brings a sample of student work and presents the work along with a focusing question. Members of the group then take turns describing and hypothesizing about the work while the presenting teacher takes notes. The second type of CFG protocol, used for peer observation, involves two teachers using a predetermined format and focus for observing each other's teaching. The third type is problem-solving protocol.

The present study employed the third protocol, i.e., the problem-solving protocol among the three protocols described in Franzak (2002). Reviewing the literature, it was reported that members in CFGs left the group because their personal needs were not met due to the tensions that arose in finding a balance between meeting the learning needs of the group versus the individuals (See Achinstein & Meyer, 1997). As a result, the third type of the protocols will be chosen for the study to give the members the voice to express their problems and dilemmas with regard to their personal needs and teaching practice.

Problem-solving protocol opens with a member of the group asking a question about a specific dilemma or problem with regard to his/her teaching practice. Participants then ask probing questions and discuss the problem among themselves while the presenter takes notes until the discussion is finished. At this point the presenter starts a conversation with the group members to share what he/she heard that was useful or important for her dilemma. The meeting will be closed with a discussion of the new solutions which were provided by the group members with regard to the problem presented by one of the group members (Franzak, 2002). The CFG were held once a week for one hour in a three-month period with a group of four teachers. All of the CFG meetings were documented through video-recording. After each meeting, the group members were assigned to write a report of their experience with regard to participation in CFGs.

### **3.1. Instrument**

Observation, teachers' report of their experience in CFGs, and the transcription of video recording of CFGs' meetings were used as three means of data collection in the study.

### **3.2. Data Collection**

The study was conducted through a qualitative research method. In the study, four sets of data were collected. The first set of data was collected through direct observation of the researcher during the meetings that were held for CFG. The second set of data was collected from the participants' weekly report of their experience in CFG. In this part, it was detected that how participation in CFG could make, if any, changes in teachers' cognition. The third and the major set of data were drawn from video-recordings of CFG meetings. The video-recordings were transcribed for data analysis in the study.

### **3.3. Data Analysis**

The data analysis was done through an "iterative process" where data collection and data analysis are continuously revised and refocused based on the emergent themes (Dornyei, 2007). Then, the sections which were relevant to the study's research question were sorted out for the matter of data analysis and the discussion part.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

As it was mentioned in the methodology section, the study had been carried out through a '*qualitative content analysis*'. After data transcription, initial coding, and growing ideas, the last step in content analysis approach is data interpretation (Dornyei, 2007). What is highly underlined through a content analysis approach is the issue that all of the major processes such as data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation are iterative. As a result, data analysis and data interpretation, i.e. the study's findings, will be presented together in this section.

Capturing the impact of CFG on teachers' cognition, I looked for any particular changes in teachers' cognition resulting from their participation in CFG. In the following parts, first a

change will be introduced and supported by the sociocultural perspective outlined in the theoretical framework of this study.

#### **4.1. Moving from “everyday concepts” to “scientific concepts”**

In the first session of the CFG, the term “in my opinion” was used in most cases. In the second session of the CFG this phrase was mostly replaced by another phrase “I feel that”. The procedure was the same in the third and fourth session. In the fifth session, the participants tried to be more careful expressing their opinions. They showed a state of doubt and tried to be more logical by using the term “I could deduce that” and “I am not sure”. In the sixth session, the participant tried to validate what he said by saying that he got the idea by looking at a teacher manual or “guide”. But in the eighth session, the participant said that in addition to individuals per se, other sources could be used such as “studying”, “searching”. At this stage, it is quite obvious that the participants cannot rely on themselves to tackle with this particular issue. Hence, they feel the necessity of going through the literature. Finally, in the ninth session, in order to find a solution for a particular teaching issue, the participant made use of other available sources than merely reflection i.e., he referred to the literature, i.e. “I saw it in an article”, to see how a particular issue is viewed.

As it is supported by Johnson (2009), the ultimate goal of any teacher education program is to connect individuals to the discourse community of the same field (p.98). Furthermore, from a sociocultural perspective, as Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005, as cited in Johnson, 2009) believe

it is the transformative process of making sense of classroom experience (everyday concepts) through the theoretical constructs of the broader professional discourse community (scientific concepts) and vice versa, which enables teachers to reconceptualize the way they think about teaching and student learning. (p. 98)

Vygotsky (1963) made a distinction between ‘everyday’ and ‘scientific’ concepts. Johnson (2009) wrote that “Scientific concepts contrary to everyday concepts results from theoretical investigation of a specific domain” (p.21).

As it is illustrated, the participants' speech are indicative of how bringing the everyday concepts of classroom into consideration and discussing them with other colleagues can provide the teachers with the impetus to connect to the discourse community of their field. By being connected to discourse community, teachers can view their everyday concepts in the light of the scientific concepts. Furthermore, as Robbins (2003, as cited in Johnson, 2009) pointed out the key concept of development is the extent to which "instruction interrelates everyday and scientific concepts, because it is this relationship that lies at the heart of internalization" (p.21). Additionally, such an action provides them with "psychological tools" (Kozulin, 2003) or true concepts which "are the most power tools because they guide cognitive ability across many situations".

As it was discussed through the preceding paragraphs, CFG could provide a change with regard to teachers' claims and statement form "in my opinion" to "I saw it in an article". CFG could also connect the individual teachers to discourse community of their field and provide them with the opportunity to consider their everyday concepts in the light of the scientific concepts to have better perception, true concepts/psychological tools.

#### **4.2. Moving from "object/other regulation" to "self regulation"**

*"I have also reflected upon issues which were not discussed at the CFG's meetings"* said one of the participants.

Sociocultural theory distinguishes three forms of regulation; object-regulation, other-regulation, and self-regulation. Looking deeply through the above extract, we see that at the very beginning individuals' reflective practice was instigated by the problematic issues that were proposed by other colleagues at the CFG which could be regarded as object-regulation and other regulation respectively. The participant reports that she has also reflected upon issues which were not discussed at CFG whatsoever, i.e. self-regulation since it was not instigated by any other objects (problems) and others (colleagues). Moving from object/other regulation to self-regulation is a process which constitutes "internalization" (see Ellis, 2008). Lantolf (2006) defines internalization as "the process through which members of communities of practice appropriate the symbolic artifacts used in communicative activity and convert them into psychological artifacts that mediate their mental activity" (p.90). Thus, the issue here can be regarded as a

change on teachers' point of cognitive regulation, i.e. from being first object- and other-regulated to self-regulation.

#### **4.3. Moving from “lower order thinking” to “higher order thinking”**

A bird view of the issues which were discussed at the CFG meetings is an indicative of a quite palpable movement toward issues which were pedagogically more valuable. For instance, the topics of the first three sessions were “how to teach the consonant “th”, “the students' laziness”, “how to treat the lazy students respectively. But through the continuation of these meetings issues turned to be pedagogically more valuable. For instance, the group started to discuss and reflect on issues like “how to teach listening spotlighting some grammatical issue”, “how to teach reading focusing on the matter of pronunciation and intonation”.

#### **4.4. Moving from “external locus of control” to “internal locus of control”**

Considering the first three sessions of the CFG, when a problem was stated by one of the group members, all of the participants had a great tendency first, to rationalize the problems in that they had nothing to do with their teaching practice and second, to justify the problems as being related to a sort of incapability on the side of the students. Such presuppositions prevent teachers to reflect upon their teaching practice at the very beginning stage and direct the teacher's pendulum of reflection from their own teaching practice away to solely regarding the students as a source of problem.

Regarding session four, five, and six, most of the participants tried to associate the problems with their own teaching practice and in the eighth session, one of the participants stated that “teachers have to more active in the classes”. Here, the change can be seen in the first session in which the participant associates the problem to her students to the eighth session in which the teacher believes that she should be more active in the class.

As it was mentioned through the preceding paragraphs, the teacher's perception regarding the source of problems was reconceptualized from viewing the source of problems on the side of the students to also considering their own teaching practice. From a sociocultural perspective, one way by which new concepts are developed, changed or restructured is ‘*verbalization*’ (Gal'perin, 1992). What is meant by verbalization is the “act of speaking about one's current

understandings” (Johnson, 2009; p.66). The act of speaking makes ones understanding and perception explicit. Johnson (2009) believes once these understanding or misunderstandings are verbalized and become explicit to others, “they are open to dialogical mediation that can promote reorganization and refinement” (p.66).

As it was discussed previously, first the teacher verbalized what she thought about a particular issue, i.e. regarding the students as a source of problem. Once her perception of the issue was made explicit to her peers, it became open for dialogical negotiation which consequently led to dialogical mediation. As a result of dialogical negotiation through six sessions, she restructured her own perception with regard to source of the problem and considered that her own teaching practice could also be a potential source of problem. Finally, it has to be said that such a change in teachers’ cognition is due to the interactive nature of CFG which provides the participants the opportunity to verbalize what they think about a particular issue and then receive feedback by the means of dialogical negotiation.

## **5. Conclusion**

All the four participants expressed their great pleasure and satisfaction with their CFG experience. It offered them a rare opportunity to exchange their professional ideas, learn from each other, and help each other to professionally develop, all in a relaxed manner. It also helped them to build up good work relationships and a sense of professional community. The evidence also showed that they adjusted their own techniques to improve the teaching of a particular class. They had become more inspired and more creative in enlarging their repertoire of micro-teaching techniques in order to make their lessons more interesting. The participants also said that they had become more motivated in teaching as a result of the CFG process.

More importantly, CFG, as a means of professional development, could provide the participants with four major changes in the state of mind and with regard to their cognition. It has to be noted that the findings of the present study is important considering the issue that a change in teacher’s cognition consequently leads to a change in teachers’ practice. Since the study was framed through a sociocultural theory, it is believed that teachers practice is largely controlled by the existing psychological tools in individuals minds (see Kozulin, 2003). Psychological tools are described as “true concepts”. One way to arrive at true concepts is by providing the individuals

the opportunities to investigate their “everyday concepts” in the light of the “scientific concepts” (Vygotsky, 1963). Such a process of investigation could be realized through what was proposed by Gal’Perin (1992) as “verbalization” by which individuals make their own perceptions explicit to others. Once individuals’ perception is made explicit, they are open to dialogical mediation which can lead to restructuring of the individuals’ perception. Such structuring results in a change in teachers’ cognition, which consequently leads to a change in teachers’ practice. All of the above issues are accessible due to interactive nature of interaction in CFG.

### References

- Anderson, R.K. & Hudson, J. S. (2002). *Critical Friends Groups: Collaborative inquiry for life-long learning*. Seattle: HUD Anderson Enterprises.
- Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher Cognition and Language Education*. London: Continuum.
- Bruner, J.S. (1990). *Acts of Meaning*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (Eds.). (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons.
- Donato, R. (1994). Collective scaffolding in second language learning. In J.P. Lantolf & G. Appel (Eds.), *Vygotskian approaches to second language research* (pp. 33-56). New Jersey: Ablex.
- Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Elbaz, F. (1991). Research on teachers’ knowledge: The evolution of a discourse. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 23, 1-19.
- Freeman, D. (2001). Second language teacher education. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages* (pp. 72-79). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Freeman, D. (2002). The hidden side of the work: Teacher knowledge and learning to teach. *Language Teaching*, 35, 1-13. doi:10.1017/S0261444801001720
- Franzak, J. (2002). Developing a teacher identity: The impact of critical friends practice on the student teacher. *English Education*, 34(4), 258-280.

- Gal'perin, P.Ya. (1992). Linguistic consciousness and some questions of the relationships between language and thought. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, 30 (4), 28-49. doi:10.2753/RPO1061-0405300481
- Johnson, K.E. (2006). The sociocultural turn and its challenges for L2 teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40 (1), 235-257.
- Johnson, K. E. (2009). *Second Language Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Perspective*. New York: Routledge.
- Kozulin, A. (2003). Psychological tools and mediated learning. In A. Kozulin, B. Gindis, V.S. Ageyev, & S.M. Miller (Eds.), *Vygotsky's educational theory in cultural context* (pp. 15-38). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (1994). The postmethod condition: (E)merging strategies for second/foreign language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28 (1), 28-49. doi:10.2307/3587197
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003). *Beyond methods: Macrostrategies for language teaching*. London: Yale University Press.
- Lantolf, J. P. (Ed.). (2000). *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lantolf, J. P. (2006). Sociocultural theory and second language learning: State of the art. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 28, 67-10.
- Richards, J., & Rogers. T. (2002). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Robbins, D. (2003). *Vygotsky's and A.A. Leontiev's semiotics and psycholinguistics: Application for education, second language acquisition, and theories of language*. New York: Praeger.
- Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schon, D. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1963). *Thought and language*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Wertsch, J. V. (1985). *Vygotsky and the social formation of mind*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Wertsch, J. V. (1995). The need for action in sociocultural research. In J.V.Wertsch, P. del Rio, & A. Alvarez (Eds.) *Sociocultural studies of mind* (pp. 237-245). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, M., & Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## Title

# **On the Relationship between Multiple Intelligences and Performance on Reading Proficiency Item Types**

## Authors

### **Reza Barzegar**

Islamic Azad University, Damavand Branch, Damavand, Iran

### **Seyed Mahmoud Mirtabatabaie**

Iran University of Science & Technology

### **Hassan Moradi**

Iran University of Science & Technology

## Biodata

**Reza Barzegar** is currently assistant professor at the Department of Foreign Languages of Islamic Azad University Damavand Branch, Damavand, Iran. His research interests include proficiency testing, alternative assessment, and CALL.

**Seyed Mahmoud Mirtabatabaie** has a Ph.D. in English literature from Istanbul University and he is currently the dean of foreign languages department at the Iran University of Science and Technology.

**Hassan Moradi** received his M.A. in TEFL from the Iran University of Science and Technology. He is currently teaching English to translation students at Payam Noor University. His research interests include language testing and learner variables.

## Abstract

The present study was an attempt to investigate the existence of any possible relationship between Iranian EFL learners' multiple intelligences and the performance on reading proficiency item types. An initial number of 140 participants (83 males, 57 females) took part in this study. In order to operationalize MI which was the independent variable of the study, the Persian translation of Multiple Intelligences Developmental Assessment Scales (MIDAS) was used. To come up with a homogenous sample, a specimen test of IELTS was utilized, on the basis of which 97 students were selected as the final sample, and to

find evidence on the dependent variable of this study, i.e., reading proficiency item types, the reading module of the IELTS specimen test was employed. Based on Pearson product moment correlation, it was found that there is a relatively weak relationship between MI scores and the scores on reading proficiency item types. A further analysis of stepwise multiple regression showed that the performance on reading proficiency item types could hardly be predicted by intelligence types.

**Keywords:** Multiple Intelligences; General Intelligence; Test Takers' Characteristics; Item Types.

## 1. Introduction

The literature on intelligence involves a long history viewing intelligence as a unidimensional construct equal to mathematic plus linguistic abilities. Based on this partial and rather elitist view, IQ tests of various types were designed to measure intelligence. Such tests failed to take into account large areas of human endeavor (Gardner, 2005). For a long time, IQ tests were used as diagnostic tools to select students into educational programs. They restricted human abilities to a set of verbal reasoning and logical problem solving skills. As a result, a great number of students who had skills equally valuable but not present on IQ tests were marked as unintelligent and were denied schooling (Fleetham, 2006).

The renewed attention to intelligence is attributed to Gardner who proposed the theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) in 1983, to conceptualize human intellectual functioning. From this standpoint, intelligence is viewed as being a composite of different abilities or aptitudes. According to this theory, intelligence is defined as “a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or to create fashion products that are of value in a culture” (Gardner, 1999, p. 33). The theory to date includes nine intelligences, which encompass a wide range of human potentials and abilities. These consist of verbal-linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, natural, bodily-kinesthetic, and existential intelligences.

With the advent of humanism in psychology, the focus of attention shifted to variables language learners brought to learning activities and such affective factors as emotions, feelings, anxiety, stress, motivation, and self-esteem came to be viewed as playing important role in learners' success or failure in language classrooms (Williams and Burden, 1997). Although

Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is not a philosophy of language teaching, it relates to methods of language teaching in many ways (Richards, and Rodgers, 2001). MI is a learner variable that relates to different cognitive and affective aspects of language learning. It offers a variety of pathways to approach learning (Mckenzie, 2005).

Foreign language reading is also thought to be affected with such learner variables. Literature suggests little as to how the construct of reading tests relates to a validated theory of cognitive processing and what cognitive characteristics those who succeed in reading test possess. Reading construct is normally operationalized through the use of a variety of item types. Answering these items requires utilizing a variety of test behavior that is well beyond using linguistic and logical skills and it is naive to assume reading to be simply a linguistic or logical undertaking. It was therefore the objective of this study to examine if cognitive differences among test takers represent any variance in the scores on reading tests item types. MI was chosen since as a comprehensive theory of cognitive processing it could enhance our understanding of the nature of cognitive skills that constitute the construct measured by reading tests items and help us determine what type(s) of test takers perform well/ poor on these items. This study, then, sought to investigate whether Gardner's categories of multiple intelligences have any possible impact on the performance on IELTS reading proficiency item types.

## **2. Review of the related literature**

The scientific study of individual differences started by Galton in 1870 (Suen and French, 2003). Galton maintained that talent was more the result of genetics than environment. Based on this biological view, he then laid the foundations of the so called eugenic movement, according to which the children born to talented individuals were to be supported financially and mentally while retarded people who scored lower on intelligence tests were sterilized (Maher and Maher, 2003). Cattell, a Cambridge university lecturer interested in mental abilities, took up Galton's individual differences and published a paper titled 'Mental Tests and Measurements'. This paper proposed for the first time that mental abilities could be measured objectively (Suen and French, 2003).

The most popular measure of general intelligence, however, was developed by Alfred Binet (Henshaw, 2006). Binet's test of IQ focused mainly on measurement and lacked a theoretical foundation. Privateer (2006) argued that Binet's test failed to account for the

mechanisms of intelligence. Gardner (1983, as cited in Henshaw, 2006) pointed out that Binet's intelligence test was blindly empirical in that it was not based on any theory of how the mind works.

It was Charles Spearman who tried to describe intelligence theoretically. The empirical data he collected showed that scores on subtests measuring intelligence are mutually positively correlated. He used his new statistical technique of factor analysis "to determine that there is a significant amount of common variance across all of the tests, with some variance specific to each test" (Kaufman and Sternberg, 2008, p. 72). Privateer (2006) states that factor analysis revealed that an individual's intelligence, as measured by IQ tests, is a function of both task-specific ability (s) and general intelligence (g). Thus, Spearman's theory was accepted as a two-factor theory of intelligence. The general factor (g) influenced all tests of mental abilities, and specific factors (s) influenced a single test (Sternberg, 2003a). Spearman's theoretical model to measure psychological abilities, known as g model, assumed that there is an underlying ability that is responsible for all humans' mental and intellectual functioning. g can be described as a kind of brain power or mental energy the presence of which made a person intelligent. Jensen (1998, as cited in Sternberg, 2003b) defined g "as a distillate of the common source of individual differences in all mental tests" (p. 27).

Spearman's method, though inspired many researchers investigating intelligence, was challenged by other researchers as well. The scores they obtained from various intelligence tests could not be adequately accounted for by Spearman's two-factor hypothesis and it was concluded that more than one type of ability was involved (Bartholomew, 2004). Thus, the inadequacy of g model in describing the totality of human cognitive functioning led psychologists, looking from different perspectives, to propose pluralistic models of intelligence. Below is an elaborate review of one of these theories, namely, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences.

## **2.1. Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences**

The most comprehensive theory of intelligence is the multiple intelligences theory proposed by Gardner in 1983. Intelligence in this new sense is defined as "a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or to create

fashion products that are of value in a culture” (Gardner, 1999, p. 33). Razmjoo (2008) stated that “this definition challenged the traditional psychological view of intelligence as a single capacity that drives logical and mathematical thought” (p. 156). Hoerr (2000) likewise contended that “Gardner’s model is distinguished from other theories by its breadth, its scientific basis, and its educational implications” (p. 3).

According to Gardner (1999), these intelligences exist in all human beings but in varying degrees and each individual has his or her own unique cognitive profile. Which intelligence is activated is a function of the values admired by a particular culture, “the opportunities available in that culture, and the personal decision made by individuals and/or their families, schoolteachers, and others” (p. 34). Each intelligence has been defined briefly below.

**Verbal-linguistic intelligence** is human’s capacity to use language effectively both in writing and speaking. It is the ability to communicate meaning and develop knowledge of language functions.

**Logical-mathematical intelligence** is the numerical gift; the ability to manage long chains of reasoning and involves an awareness of logical and numerical patterns.

**Visual-spatial intelligence** is the ability to perceive the world outside and process it in mental models, visualize mental pictures of three-dimensional objects and geometric entities and notice colors, lines, patterns, spaces and forms, and the relationships between them.

**Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence** is physical agility that comprises the ability to solve problems or form products using all or part of one’s body.

**Musical intelligence** is sensitivity to rhythm, pitch and melody; the ability to perceive, transform, discriminate between and produce musical forms.

**Interpersonal intelligence** is the ability to perceive the feelings of other people, understand their motivations and intentions, and respond appropriately to them.

**Intrapersonal intelligence** is the self-knowledge, the ability to understand oneself, set personal goals and priorities accordingly and go about achieving them.

**Natural intelligence** refers to the extensive knowledge of living world. It has to do with observing, recognizing and classifying objects, plants and animals in the natural environment.

**Existential intelligence** acts as a basis for all human’s efforts. It refers to the way he finds himself in the world, how he sees a connection between himself and universe in general, and how he finds meaning for such terms as life and existence.

Gardner (1999) has put forward eight criteria to distinguish general capabilities from intelligence. In other words, there are eight signs which indicate whether a capability qualifies as an intelligence.

1. Each intelligence has its own symbolic system, for example linguistic intelligence is represented in different languages.
2. Support from psychometric findings.
3. Potential isolation by brain damage which means that damage to one part of the brain seems to influence a particular intelligence while leaving the others intact.
4. The existence of savants and prodigies.
5. Each intelligence has a distinct evolutionary history and plausibility.
6. Support from experimental psychological tasks.
7. Each intelligence has its own set of core operations.
8. A distinctive developmental history and a definable set of expert end-state performances.

As MI theory suggests, people can be smart in other equally important ways even if they do not have high IQs. In other words, as Burnett (2002) asserted, “there is a lot more diversity to intelligence than just being book smart” (p. 104).

## **2.2. Test Bias in Light of Test Takers’ Characteristics**

Recent language testing research investigates factors other than language ability that may be responsible for variance in language test performance. Bachman (2000) summarized the research into factors that influence language test performance into three main areas:

1. Characteristics of the testing procedure, including raters
2. The processes and strategies used by test takers in responding to test tasks; and
3. The characteristics of the test takers themselves

It seems that, as Farhady (1982) asserted test takers’ characteristics have a strong relationship to test performance. Test takers’ characteristics contribute to systematic error variance in a test and need to be evened up across the population for which the test is designed (Bachman, 1990). These factors are permanent attributes of test takers such as “cognitive style and knowledge of particular content areas, and group characteristics such as sex, race, and ethnic

background” (p. 164) and are considered systematic in that they tend to affect test takers’ performance uniformly from one administration of test to the next.

Research into the relationship between test characteristics and test takers characteristics has focused primarily on test format effect as a whole leaving intact how test items individually interact with test takers characteristics. Kobayashi (2002) suggested that different test formats measure different aspect of language ability. It is already known that different aspects of language ability are associated with different test takers’ characteristics. What follows, consequently, is that test format is likely to interact with test takers characteristics. As a result, interpretation of test scores without reference to the characteristics of test method and test takers might be misleading. As an example of test format effect, Stansfield and Hansen (1983) showed that the performance on cloze test seems to be affected by field dependence/ independence. Failure to consider this distinction in interpreting cloze test scores threatens the validity of cloze test as a measure of language proficiency.

One such learner variable is MI which has been assumed to relate to areas of language ability. Hypotheses have been advanced and evidence has been provided to support or reject the idea that language ability is (in)dependent of intelligence. Bagherkazemi (2008) examined the relationship between test takers’ multiple intelligences and their performance on reading sections of TOEFL and IELTS. The results of her study demonstrated varying degrees of correlation between logical/ mathematical, bodily- kinesthetic, linguistic, and interpersonal intelligences and scores on the reading section of TOEFL, whereas visual- spatial and linguistic intelligences moderately correlated with IELTS reading scores. The other intelligence types displayed no correlation with scores on TOEFL and IELTS reading. Zarrati (2004) similarly compared Iranian EFL students’ use of reading strategies and their intellectual preferences. She found that linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and logical/ mathematical intelligences strongly correlated with the use of reading strategies. As it can be seen, these studies provide useful hints as to how reading and multiple intelligences might be related in some general terms. However, the question still remains unanswered that what aspects of reading test in much more detail can be accounted for by a theory of cognitive processing like Gardner’s multiple intelligences theory and what groups of test takers are likely to perform well/ poor on reading tests given different test item types.

Therefore, it can be hypothesized that different MI type test takers have varying chances of success or failure in answering reading test item types which indeed operationalize reading construct. The possibility of such a relationship has not been investigated by language testing researchers. This study, then, sought to investigate whether multiple intelligences have any possible impact on performing on IELTS reading proficiency item types. As such, this study tried to find answers to the following questions.

1. Is there any statistically significant relationship between MI and performance on IELTS reading proficiency item types?
2. Which type of intelligence or a combination of intelligences act as the predictor of performance on IELTS reading proficiency item types?

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Participants**

140 Iranian graduate and undergraduate students (57 females and 83 males) voluntarily took the Persian translation of Multiple Intelligences Developmental Assessment Scales (MIDAS, designed by Shearer in 1996) questionnaire for adults and a Specimen test of IELTS. The majority of examinees were students of mechanical engineering (almost 47 students), 30 were students of computer engineering, 27 were majors of civil engineering, 21 were graduate students of industrial engineering, and the rest were railway engineering students of about 21 to 35 years old. Among the subjects, four were Ph.D. students; fifty three were doing their master's degree, while others were completing a bachelor's degree. All the subjects declared to have received several years of English instruction. The mean years the participants had spent studying English courses was 5.03. None of the participants had taken the MIDAS questionnaire before. However, some (about 13) had tried either a true IELTS exam or a mock test of IELTS. As for the homogeneity of the participants 97 students out of 140, those who fell within  $\pm 1$  SD around the mean on the IELTS test, were considered for the final sample and the remaining were excluded.

#### **3.2. Instrumentation**

To obtain MI scores, the Persian translated version of MIDAS questionnaire was employed. MIDAS is a self or other report (in the case of children) measure of multiple intelligences which

enjoys Gardner's approval. It consists of 119 items constructed on a likert-type scale taking 35 minutes to complete. Every question contains a *Does not apply or I don't know* option so that the respondent is not forced to choose an option that does not match his/her intended response. MIDAS consists of eight scales that represent eight intelligences. Existential intelligence is not included in MIDAS because as Gardner (1999) noted this intelligence is too difficult to operationalize.

Shearer (1997) estimated the reliability of MIDAS in terms of internal item consistency, inter-rater agreement, and cultural bias. For diverse samples, he reported moderate to high Mean internal consistencies of each MIDAS scale, with alpha coefficients ranging from 0.78 to 0.89. Similar alpha coefficients were obtained for all scales in several international studies of MIDAS translations (Shearer, 2005). He calculated Test-retest reliability using one-month and two-month stability coefficients in two separate investigations with the mean values of 0.84 and 0.81 for each investigation respectively. As for the inter-rater reliability, about 240 participants were asked to complete the questionnaires on their own and also have them completed by two informants separately (a primary and a secondary). The pairwise rate of agreement for individual items ranged from 0.75 to 0.85.

The reliability of Persian version of MIDAS has also been measured by Iranian researchers. Mahdavy (2008) reported almost high Cronbach's alpha values for each intelligence as follows: "Musical: 0.70, Kinesthetic: 0.76, Logical-Mathematical: 0.73, Spatial: 0.67, Linguistic: 0.85, Interpersonal: 0.82, Intrapersonal: 0.78, and Naturalist: 0.82". Akbari and Hosseini (2008) also found a 0.81 Cronbach's alpha value for a sample of 35 respondents.

As for the validity of MIDAS, concurrent, predictive and construct validities have been investigated. Shearer (2005) examined concurrent and predictive validities through investigating the relationship of scales to external criterion measures, that is, the performance on skills and abilities associated with each scale. Mathematic scale, for example correlated at the level of 0.55 with a math test. In examining construct validity, Way and Shearer (1990, *ibid*) conducted a factor analysis for 349 cases. The results of their study showed that an eight factor principal component accounted for the 46% percent of the variance. Moradi (2008) reported the same eight factor component in her factor analysis.

To obtain a homogenous sample, a specimen test of IELTS was utilized and to find evidence on the dependent variable of this study, i.e., reading proficiency item types, the reading

module of the IELTS specimen test was employed. The IELTS specimen test consisted of four modules of listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The listening module consisted of four sections with 40 questions. It took around 30 minutes to complete. Reading module, on the other hand, took 60 minutes altogether. The first passage was a long excerpt on a volcano eruption. The next one was about organizational behavior management. The last reading passage was an extract on camera industry. Likewise, the reading module contained 38 questions including a variety of item types. The first two questions required the applicants to find the appropriate paragraphs. The next two questions asked the test takers to locate information in the text. Questions 5 to 8 required the candidates to complete a summary with no more than three words. Questions 9, 10, 34, 35, 36, and 38 required the applicants to complete tables. Question 11 was a multiple choice item. Questions 12 to 16 asked the test takers to choose the best heading for the paragraphs B-E and G. Questions 17 to 22 and 26 to 29 inquired about the writer's views. Questions 23 to 25 asked the applicants to complete a note. Finally, questions 30 to 34 required the test takers to label a diagram.

### **3.3. Procedures**

All participants were introduced to the purpose and procedures of the study prior to administering the instruments. Having the candidates familiarized with MIDAS and providing some guidance on how to complete it, the MIDAS questionnaire was administered to them. The applicants were allowed to answer the questionnaire in 35 minutes. Following this step, the participants took the IELTS specimen test with no time interval in between. The IELTS specimen test comprised three modules of listening, reading and writing. The speaking module, however, was not administered due to practicality problems. In the next phase, based on the results of descriptive statistics 97 students out of 140, those who fell 1 SD above and below the mean, were considered as the final sample of the study. By the time this study was carried out, the scoring software was not available for public use. Therefore, the raw MI database obtained from MIDAS questionnaires was sent through email as an attachment to the U.S. to be scored by the instrument developer.

## 4. Results

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the specimen test of IELTS. With reference to the definitions of IELTS band scores, the participants of this study are considered as moderate users of English.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the IELTS specimen test

Module	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Listening	5	38	20.26	7.68
Reading	5	36	21.14	7.11
Writing	2	7	4.62	1.44

To find the answer to the first question of the study, Pearson product moment correlation was used. The results of correlation analysis are summarized in table 2. As table 2 presents, there is a relatively weak relationship between the two variables of the study.

Table 2. Correlation coefficients between multiple intelligences and reading proficiency item types

Intelligence/ Item Type	paragraph selection	Locating information	summary completion	table completion	multiple choice	choosing heading	writer's views	note completion	diagram labelling
Musical	.147	-.025	.184	.089	-.150	-.092	-.012	.074	.114
Kinesthetic	.187	-.175	-.014	.172	.050	.082	.001	.172	.087
Logical	.208*	.067	-.063	.134	-.103	.262**	.089	-.022	.158
Spatial	.175	.093	.134	.281**	.031	.109	.055	.106	.238*
Linguistic	.214*	.079	.023	.114	-.047	.040	.212*	.136	.112
Interpersonal	.091	.086	-.076	.098	-.010	.070	.223*	.060	.092
Intrapersonal	.173	.108	-.052	.175	-.020	.186	.247*	.125	.173
Natural	.181	.110	-.097	.167	.021	.133	.011	.014	.080

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As table 2 presents, significant but relatively weak positive correlations were found between some of the intelligences and IELTS reading item types. Logical-mathematical intelligence correlated significantly with item types paragraph selection and choosing the best heading for paragraphs. The  $r$  coefficients found were 0.208 (at  $p < 0.05$ ) and 0.262 (at  $p < 0.01$ )

respectively. It also displayed positive correlation with the item types 2, 4, 7, and 9, but these values were not statistically significant. Significant correlations of 0.281 ( $p < 0.01$ ) and 0.238 ( $p < 0.05$ ) were observed between visual spatial scores and the scores on the item types table and diagram completion respectively. Linguistic intelligence showed significantly positive correlations only with the item types paragraph selection and finding the writer's view. The  $r$  values for these correlations stood at 0.214 and 0.212 respectively (at  $p < 0.05$ ). Interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences likewise correlated positively with the item type finding the writer's views. The values of  $r$  observed were 0.223 and 0.247 respectively (at  $p < 0.05$ ). Finally, as the results of table 4.4 show, among all the intelligences, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, and natural intelligences did not correlate at all with any of the item types.

Stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to see if any of the intelligences could predict the performance on reading proficiency item types. The results are summarized in table 3.

Table 3. Stepwise regression coefficients summary for multiple intelligences and reading proficiency item types

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	SE	Beta		
		Linguistic	Paragraph selection	.011		
Logical	choosing heading	.023	.009	.262	2.651	.009
Spatial	table completion	.030	.011	.281	2.855	.005
Spatial	diagram labelling	.022	.010	.228	2.287	.024
Intrapersonal	writer's views	.039	.016	.247	2.489	.015

As the results of stepwise multiple regression analysis suggest, logical-mathematical intelligence turned out to be a positive predictor of the performance on the item type choosing the best heading for paragraphs. The 0.262 value of beta is meaningful at the level of significance set at  $p < 0.05$ . However, the value of adjusted R square suggested that only 5.9 % of total variance can be accounted for by logical intelligence. Linguistic intelligence was found to positively predict only one of the item types, namely, selecting the appropriate paragraph with a beta value of 0.214. Likewise, the value of adjusted R square revealed that it can only account

for 3.6 % of total variance. Visual- spatial intelligence positively predicted the scores on the item types table and diagram completion. Beta values observed stood at the significant levels of 0.281 and 0.228 respectively. The values of adjusted R square, however, indicated that it accounts for only 6.9 % of total variance for the performance on table completion items and 4.2% of variance in diagram completion items. It was expected that interpersonal intelligence could mainly be the predictor of scores on the item type finding the writer's view, but to our surprise, the multiple regression coefficients revealed that intrapersonal intelligence is the major predictor, with a beta of 0.247. The value of adjusted R square showed that only 4.1% of variance is attributed to intrapersonal intelligence.

## **5. Discussion**

The findings of this study should be interpreted bearing certain general points in mind. First, the number of some item types such as multiple choice ones was relatively small. Second, the order in which these item types were presented might have affected eliciting correct responses, as it was found that test takers scored fairly high on the beginning items toward the first quarter of the test (including paragraph selection, Locating exact information, summary completion, and table completion items) and their correct responses decreased as they were struck by fatigue toward the end of the test. Third, the item types on which the performance of MI type test takers was tested were limited to those used in the IELTS specimen test. Fourth, some of the item types utilized reflected general reading skills and strategies while some others such as diagram labelling and table completion simply differed in their physical forms.

Seen in this light, the fact that logical-mathematical intelligence correlated satisfactorily with the item types paragraph selection and choosing heading is an indication of the interface between reading ability and logical thinking skills. Research into the relationship between cognition and reading suggests that problem solving strategies are central to overcoming reading problems and through a logical process of deduction and inference readers can resolve matters of meaning (Alderson, 2000). Along the same lines, Armstrong (2003) argues that readers think critically and logically about what they read.

The significant values of correlation between visual-spatial intelligence and the item types table and diagram completion also indicate that understanding and interpreting linguistic and numerical information from charts, graphs, tables and diagrams might vary as learners with

different levels of visual-spatial intelligence are concerned. The results obtained can also be justified as the participants were engineering students who were likely to be skilled in dealing with tables and diagrams.

The positive correlations between linguistic intelligence and the item types paragraph selection and finding writer's views are warranted on the ground that whatever other skills are involved in reading, linguistic abilities play a significant role. Varying from one reader to another, the process of reading might be facilitated or debilitated if other skills than linguistic (for example, deductive and inductive reasoning which are basically mathematical skills) are applied; Research findings, for example, showed that the reading task was made more complicated when the questions asked for implicit information that needed inference (Alderson, 2000). However, as was mentioned, the low correlations between the other item types and linguistic intelligence could be an implication that reading is not an isolated activity separated from its social context or the characteristics the reader brings to the reading task.

The high correlation between the intrapersonal intelligence and scores on finding the writer's views in the text is a bit of a surprise but this can be argued for in light of the finding that those with high intrapersonal intelligence had also comparably high interpersonal intelligence. The possible argument is that under temporal and contextual constraints of the reading task careful understanding of the ideas presented in the text is achieved when metacognitive strategies as components of intrapersonal intelligence direct our interaction with the writer. As Shearer (2006) points out, "highly skilled readers have high self-other effectiveness and thus are able to achieve their goals while managing their relationships with other people" (p. 27). The positive correlation between the interpersonal intelligence and the performance on the item type finding the writer's views in the text is justifiable, as it was hypothesized to be observed. This finding supports the importance of interpersonal intelligence for understanding the other person's position and attitude. Readers accomplish this goal as they actively consider the thoughts and feelings of the writer.

## **6. Conclusion**

The present study, as its main objective, investigated the possibility of any relationship between a theory of cognitive skills, like the theory of multiple intelligences, and answering reading proficiency item types. As the results of the present study indicate, in addition to linguistic and

logical/mathematical intelligences, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and visual-spatial intelligences also relate to answering reading proficiency item types but this relationship is not very significant. Thus, the researchers are entitled to extend Bachman and Palmer's (1996) contention that in test construction it is essential to collect information on a list of test takers characteristics to suggest that as far as reading is concerned test item types, as was shown in this study, are also likely to influence test performance of different test takers and it is naive to assume that test takers treat different item types in a similar way.

Except for some general speculations such as Armstrong's (2003) ideas, research findings suggest little as to how the construct measured by reading tests can be explained by a more general cognitive processing ability and what cognitive characteristics those who succeed in reading test have. The results of the present study provided evidence to refute the common sense idea that reading is simply a linguistic or logical undertaking and it is argued that with different item types, different test takers are likely to succeed. It was also shown that what is measured by reading tests items is well beyond just the traditional linguistic and logical skills and visual-spatial, interpersonal, as well as intrapersonal skills might play a significant role in this process.

Care is needed, however, in interpreting and applying the findings of this study as the sample size was relatively small and the correlation coefficients obtained were not that high. Furthermore, since this study was conducted on a sample of engineering students who had markedly strong logical/mathematical and spatial visual intelligences, it seems that to generalize the findings, replications of this study are needed with larger samples of students from other fields of study such as humanity, arts, and medical sciences using a larger number of item types. Similar studies could also be conducted to advance our understanding of how MI relates to other areas of language testing such as cloze tests and other measures of language proficiency.

## References

- Akbari, R., & Hosseini, K. (2008). Multiple intelligences and language learning strategies: Investigating possible relations. *System*, 36, 141–155.
- Alderson, J. C. (2000). *Assessing reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Armstrong, T. (2003). *The multiple Intelligences of reading and writing: Making the words come alive*. Washington DC: Association of School Curriculum Development.

- Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bachman L. F. (2000). Modern language testing at the turn of the century: assuring that what we count counts. *Language Testing*, 17(1), 1–42.
- Bachman, L., & Palmer, A. (1996). *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bagherkazemi, M. (2008). *The relationship between test takers' multiple intelligences and their performance on reading sections of TOEFL and IELTS*. Unpublished master's thesis. Allameh Tabatabaei University, Tehran, Iran.
- Bartholomew, D. J. (2004). *Measuring intelligence: Facts and fallacies*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press
- Burnett, G. (2002). *Learning to learn: Making learning work for all students*. Carmarthen: Crown House Publishing Ltd.
- Farhady, H. (1982). Measures of language proficiency from the learner's perspective. *TESOL Quarterly*, 16(1), 43-60.
- Fleetham, M. (2006). *Multiple intelligences in practice: Enhancing self-esteem and learning in the classroom*. Stanford: Network Continuum Education.
- Henshaw, J. M. (2006). *Does measurement measure up? How numbers reveal and conceal the truth*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hoerr, T. R. (2000). *Becoming a multiple intelligences school*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gardner, H.(2005). *Multiple intelligences: New horizons*. . New York: Basic Books.
- Kaufman, S. B., & Sternberg, R. J. (2008). Conceptions of giftedness. In S. Pfeiffer (Ed.), *Handbook of giftedness in children: Psycho-educational theory, research, and best practices* (pp. 71-92). New York: Springer.
- Kobayashi, M. (2002). Method effects on reading comprehension test performance: text organization and response format. *Language Testing*, 19(2), 193–220.

- Mahdavy, B. (2008). The role of multiple intelligences (MI) in listening proficiency: A comparison of TOEFL and IELTS listening tests from an MI perspective. *Asian EFL journal*, 10(3).
- Maher W. B., & Maher B. A. (2003). Abnormal Psychology. In I. B. Weiner (Ed.), *Handbook of psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 303- 336). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Mckenzie, W. (2005). *Multiple intelligences and instructional technology* (2nd ed). Washington DC: International Society for Technology in Education.
- Mikyung, K. (2001). Detecting DIF across the different language groups in a speaking test. *Language Testing*, 18(1), 89–114.
- Murdoch, S. (2007). *IQ: A smart history of a failed idea*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Privateer, P. M. (2006). *Inventing intelligence: A social history of smart*. Victoria: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Razmjoo, S. A. (2008). On the relationship between multiple intelligences and language proficiency. *The Reading Matrix*, 8(2), 155-174.
- Richards, J. C. & Rodgers T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed). Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Shearer, C. B. (1997). Reliability, validity and clinical utility of a multiple intelligences assessment for career planning. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American psychological Association.
- Shearer, C. B. (2005). Large scale factor analysis of the multiple intelligences developmental assessment scales. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.
- Shearer, C. B. (2006). Reading skill and the multiple intelligences: An investigation into the MI profiles of high school students with varying levels of reading skill. Retrieved June, 2009 from [www.miresearch.org/files/Reading\\_MI.doc](http://www.miresearch.org/files/Reading_MI.doc)
- Stansfield, C., & Hansen, J. ( 1983). Field dependence-independence as a variable in second language cloze test performance. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17(1), 30-39.
- Sternberg, J. R. (2003a). Intelligence. In I. B. Weiner (Ed.). *Handbook of psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 135- 156). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. .
- Sternberg, J. R. (2003b). Contemporary theories of intelligence. In I. B. Weiner (Ed.), *Handbook of psychology* (Vol. 7, pp. 23- 45). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Suen, H., & French, J. L. (2003). A history of the development of psychological and educational testing. In C. R. Reynolds and R. W. Kamphaus (Eds.), *Handbook of psychological and educational assessment of children: Intelligence, aptitude, and achievement* (pp. 3-23). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Williams, M., & Burden, R. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zarrati, S., (2004). *The relationship between Iranian EFL learners' multiple intelligences and their use of reading strategies*. Unpublished master's thesis, Islamic Azad University, Science & Research Campus, Tehran.

## **Title**

# **The Effect of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) vs. Content-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on the Iranian Intermediate ESP Learners' Reading Comprehension**

## **Authors**

**Ali Malmir (Ph.D. Candidate of TEFL)**

Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.

**Saied Najafi Sarem (Ph.D. Candidate of TEFL)**

Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Iran.

**Ayat Ghasemi (M.A.)**

Ilam University, Ilam, Iran.

## **Bio Data**

**Ali Malmir** is a Ph.D. candidate of TEFL at Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran. His research interests include Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Discourse Analysis, Interlanguage Pragmatics, Language Assessment.

**Saied Najafi Sarem** is a Ph.D. candidate of TEFL at Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Iran. His research interests include Language Learning Strategies, Critical Pedagogy, and Language Assessment.

**Ayat Qasemy** has received a M.A. in TEFL, Ilam University, Ilam, Iran. His research interests include Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Applied Linguistics, and Critical Pedagogy.

## **Abstract**

The present study has tried to investigate the impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) vs. Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) on the reading comprehension of the intermediate Iranian ESP learners. There were two experimental groups of thirty participants in the current research. They were chosen randomly from the students of Islamic Azad University of Asadabad, Hamedan majoring accounting. The subjects were given a reading comprehension pre-test (reading section of TOEFL) in order to make them homogeneous regarding EFL reading comprehension at the outset. Then, in group

A, reading comprehension was taught to the subjects based on the principles of TBLT. However, in group B, reading comprehension was taught to the students through CBLT. The data analysis using independent T-test revealed that the subjects in TBLT group performed better on the reading comprehension post-test. It means that TBLT has been more effective than CBLT in teaching reading comprehension to Iranian ESP learners.

**Keywords:** Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Reading Comprehension

## 1. Introduction

The ability to communicate with other people from other countries has obsessed man's mind during the history. So, a lot of methods and approaches have been used for foreign language teaching. Until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Grammar-Translation method was dominant. Then due to changes happened in psychology and linguistics a scientific revolution occurred in the language teaching and many different methods like Audiolingualism, Silent Way, Whole Approach were proposed each of which paid attention to different skills. Then, in 1980 the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) claimed that the goal of language teaching is to develop "Communicative Competence" in learners and paid attention to all of the four skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Brown, 2007). Based on Brown (2007, p.241) "CLT is best understood as an approach, not a method" and many other new methods have been derived from it, Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and Competency-Based Language Teaching are three of the most important methodologies which have been derived from CLT. For example, Richards and Rodgers have asserted that "TBLT is a logical development of CLT" (2001, p.223) Tasks are the basic and core units of planning and instruction in TBLT (Ellis, 2000). CBLT is also a subdivision of CLT which focuses on integrating the teaching of language and subject matter simultaneously. One of the most important phenomena of language learning-teaching process is to make students reach the intended language level in a shorter time and in a better way. So, the practice of content-based English language teaching has been gaining importance during the past two decades. In the content-based language teaching, mostly called English for Specific Purposes, (ESP), knowing the English language needs of the students and preparing the curriculum of the course according

to these needs is of vital importance.

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), when it comes to the reading skill in a foreign language, the ample research shows it is gaining increasing importance. Therefore, the instruction in reading in general and in ESP reading is assuming a more crucial role. The present study intends to investigate whether Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) can enhance and improve the Iranian ESP learners' reading comprehension and if so, which of the three methodologies can be more effective in teaching reading skill.

## **2. Review of the Related Literature**

### **2.1. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)**

The revolution of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that has been developed based on the concept of tasks Task-based language teaching (TBLT). Nowadays the concept of task and task-based methodology has been the common orthodoxy in the field of language teaching and it's getting more and more importance in ELT. Richards and Rodgers (2001) assert that "task-based language teaching refers to an approach based on the use of tasks as the core units of planning and instruction in language teaching" (p.223). As it is well-known, task is a central concept both in second language research and in language teaching (Ellis, 2003, p.1; Seedhouse, 2005, p.5).

According to Leaver and Willis (2004) "task-based language teaching (TBLT) helps language learners to make real efforts to communicate as best as they can in the foreign language which they are learning" (p.2). Willis (2004) contends that task-based instruction (TBI) is in fact a meaning-focused approach that reflects real world language use for purposeful communication. The underlying principle of such an approach is that language can be transferable to real-world tasks and activities which can be done in the classroom. In other words TBLT tries to change the classroom into a real-world situation which needs both authentic materials and authentic communication by using the language (Nunan, 2001; 2004). The implementation of task-based instruction has yielded very important results in teaching foreign languages in different countries, because task-based instruction has very interesting characteristics like meaningfulness, interaction, cooperation, peer feedback, natural language use, etc.

With regard to the unique position of the concept of task ,Ellis (2003, p. 150) has asserted that "where tasks result in the scaffolding, collaborating dialogue, and instructional

conversations, opportunities for learners to extend the knowledge of L2 language can be expected to arise". Now the question here is that what are tasks? How can we define them? And what are their characteristics that have made them so much important for language teaching?

Task-Based Instruction (TBI) helps language learners to make real efforts to communicate as best as they can in the foreign language which they are learning. Based on Willis (2004, p.8-9), TBI rests on three main premises. First, language learning is not a linear process, but it is a complex, organic and dynamic process which changes systematically. In fact language learning process obeys the rules of chaotic, complex systems. Second, "language is best learned when the learners pay attention to the meaning not to the form" (Prabhu 1984, cited in Brumfit, 1984, p. 234). Accordingly language learners need a lot of comprehensible input through the exposure to a language in order to get the meaning without focal attention to formal features of language. So it can be concluded that TBI follows the "Input Hypothesis" proposed by Krashen in 1985. Third, real-world and authentic situations should be provided for the learners in order to use the language purposefully that leads to acquiring that language in a natural way. This premise is based on the "output Hypothesis" which was presented by Swain 1985(cited in Ellis, 2003).

Lightbown and Spada (2006) define task-based instruction as "instruction in which classroom activities are tasks similar to those learners might engage in outside the second or foreign language classroom" (p. 205). But Task-Based Approach or Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) are the two names which are used more than the other names.

Johnson (2001) emphasized that TBLT is a cognitive and information processing approach that may determine the future of language teaching. He notes, "It is possible that the late 1990s will be known in applied linguistics as "The Age of the Task" (p. 195). Richards and Schmidt (2002) have emphasized on the peculiar role of TBLT in the current state of language teaching. According to Richards and Schmidt "task-based language teaching is an extension of the principles of communicative language teaching and an attempt by its proponents to apply principles of second language learning to teaching" (p.540).

## **2. 2. Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT)**

Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT), or Content-Based Instruction (CBI), as it is sometimes referred to, is an educational program in English as a second language in which the focus is on teaching students' skills they will need in regular classrooms, i.e. for learning in the

content areas such as accounting, geography, or chemistry. Richards and Rodgers (2001), Larsen-Freeman (2000), and Celce-Murcia (2001) regard Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) as one of the most influential and representative contribution to Foreign language instruction or pedagogy. Stoller (2002) argues that CBLT promotes critical thinking skills and enables learners to learn language more quickly and with more pleasure. Content-based instruction (CBI) is a teaching method that emphasizes learning *about something* rather than learning *about language*. Although CBI is not new, there has been an increased interest in it over the last ten years, particularly in the USA and Canada where it has proven very effective in ESL immersion programs. This interest has now spread to EFL classrooms around the world where teachers are discovering that their students like CBI and are excited to learn English this way. CBLT teaches students the language skills they will need (Brown, 2001; Larsen-Freedman, 2000). Richard and Schmidt (2002) define CBI as: Content-Based Instruction (CBI) refers to an approach to second language teaching in which teaching is organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus (p.204).

Brinton et al. (1989,p.5) states that "CBI is the integration of particular content with language teaching aims, the concurrent teaching of academic subject matter and second language skills". They also add, "CBLT approaches view the target language as a vehicle through which subject matter content is learned rather than as the immediate object of the study"(Brinton et al.1989, p.5). CBI is "an approach to language instruction that integrates the presentation of topics or tasks from subject matter classes (e.g., math, social studies) within the context of teaching a second or foreign language" (Crandall and Tucker, 1990, p. 187). In fact, content-based approaches in language teaching have been widely used in a variety of setting since 1980s. The main concept of CBLT is "content" and all of the definitions of this methodology consider it. For example, Krahnke (1987) has noted that CBLT is "the teaching of content or information in the language being learned with little or no direct or explicit effort to teach the language itself separately from the content being taught"(p.54).

Widdowson (1978) has claimed that in CBLT language that is taught can be used to present the subject matter, and the students would learn the language as a by-product of learning about real-world content, According to Widdowson, CBLT is teaching language as use rather than simply as usage.

Crawford(2001) in his study about how to make teaching meaningful claims that one approach which has gained favour for its focus on meaning is content based Instruction (CBI).Crawford mentions that in CBI, language is regarded as a means of the conveyance of information on a topic or body of language. Genesee (1994) argues that that integration of language and content in instruction, for instance, reading comprehension respects the specificity of functional language use. It recognizes that meaning changes depending on the context.

### **2.3. Statement of the Problem**

During the history of language teaching, different approaches and methods have been developed in order to help learners learn a second/foreign language better. Before the scientific era of language teaching which began with the emergence of Audiolingualism in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the focus was on teaching grammar and on the ability to translate literary texts. However, this teacher-centered method could not resist the new findings of psychology, linguistics, and educational theory and the field of language teaching gradually proceeded towards more learner-centered approaches and methods.

The shifts in the goals of language teaching and the new communicative needs changed the methods and hence the views about the four skills, for instance, reading comprehension, were treated differently in various methods and approaches. Reading was considered a passive skill in some methods and approaches. But, with the emergency of comprehension and communicative approaches, reading gained prominence and came to be known as an active and meaningful process rather than a passive product. Chastain (1988) states that "reading process implies an active cognitive system operating on printed material to arrive at an understanding of the message"(p.217). Of course, it does not mean that we process the printed words. Rather, according to Nunan (1999), our interpretation is based on our schemata. Therefore, the main goal of reading is said to be comprehension. Brown (2001) classifies different types of classroom reading as oral reading, silent reading, extensive and intensive reading. In spite of all of the techniques and procedures which have been used for teaching reading skill, Iranian learners have serious problems in reading and comprehending texts which have been written in English.

The situation becomes worse when it comes to ESP reading. Accordingly, Iranian ESP learners have many problems in comprehending the texts. In ESP courses held in Iran, students are required to read texts, translate them into Persian, and answer comprehension questions. The

problem with traditional approaches is that they do not consider reading as being purpose-driven. Furthermore, the use of new methodologies in teaching ESP reading is rare in Iran. Therefore, the present study determines whether teaching reading to ESP learners through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) can be influential and particularly useful in ESP reading improvement. Accordingly this study tries to answer the following two research questions:

**Q<sub>1</sub>:** Does teaching reading comprehension through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) have a significant effect on the Iranian ESP learners' reading comprehension?

**Q<sub>2</sub>:** Is there any significant difference in the reading comprehension of Iranian intermediate ESP learners taught through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT)?

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Participants**

The participants of the current study were chosen randomly among Asadabad Azad University students who attended the ESP classes. The students were majoring accounting. First 120 participants at this university were chosen on the basis of random sampling. To achieve homogeneity between the two groups, TOEFL was administrated and 60 of the learners were chosen based on their scores. These students were 36 male and 24 female students. Then these selected participants were assigned to two groups of 30 based on random sampling. The age range of the participants was also controlled since all students were 20 to 25 years old. It should also be mentioned that the subjects at the above mentioned university were from different socio-economical and educational strata with different mother tongues.

#### **3.2. Instrumentation**

In order to determine the effect of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) vs. Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) on the reading comprehension of Iranian intermediate ESP learners, students took a TOEFL at the beginning of the study, the purpose of which was to achieve homogeneity between the two groups. The reason for using TOEFL was that based on the participants' scores on previous courses it was concluded that they are intermediate students and

thus TOEFL was used. Then after the treatment, again a version of TOEFL was administered in order to check the effectiveness of the two teaching methodologies on the reading comprehension of Iranian ESP learners.

### **3.3. Procedure**

This study was conducted from March 2009 and was carried on once a week for twelve sessions at Asadabad Azad University. One hundred and twenty participants who were majoring accounting were chosen randomly from the learners at this university. In order to have two homogeneous groups, a pre-test was administered. In fact, the pre-test was a version of TOEFL. Then, 60 homogeneous learners were chosen from the total participants and were assigned into two groups based on random sampling. This way there were two homogeneous groups. The reading skill was taught through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in group A. In group B, the participants were taught reading by using Content-Based Approach (CBA). In class A, a reading passage was taught based on TBLT and the class time was divided into three phases: pre-task, task cycle and post-task. In the pre-task phase, the researcher tried to activate the EFL learners' schemata related to the text and motivated the participants to read the passage. In the during-task phase, the students were engaged in completing different kinds of tasks, and in the post-task phase, they gave a report through, for instance, repeating the tasks and practicing some formal and linguistic features of the text. In the content-based class (class B), the syllabus was organized around themes or topics related to accounting. Here, the students read authentic materials and all the exercises and class activities were designed around the reading text. As much as possible, realia, pictures and technological helps were used to strengthening the learning of the subject matter. The treatment was given for 12 sessions. And after that a reading post-test was given to the two groups to compare their reading improvement.

### **3.4. Design**

There were two groups in the current study and the students were randomly selected and assigned to two groups of equal size. Also, this study used a pre-test before the treatment and a post-test at the end of the study. But there were not any control groups. Generally, the design of the study is experimental; though, it is not a true experimental one.

The schematic representation of the design and the procedures of then present study are also

given here:

Group A: T1 (Random) – TBLT – T2

---

Group B: T1 (Random) – CBLT – T2

#### 4. Results and Discussion

After the data were gathered, descriptive statistics for performance of the groups on the pre-test and post-test was provided using the SPSS program. See table 1 below.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Performance of the Two Groups

Group	Method	N	<i>Pre-test</i>		<i>Post-test</i>	
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD
G1	TBLT	30	52.23	8.21	67.16	8.27
G2	CBLT	30	51.20	7.80	59.80	10.58

Matched T-test was run two times to determine if any improvement in the writing of the two groups. The results are given in the following table:

Table 2: The used Matched T-tests

Pair	df	t	Sig
G1 Pre-test/ Post-test	29	6.76	.000 *
G2 Pre-test/Post-test	29	.16	.000 *

(P < .05 \*)

Figure 4.1. illustrates the difference between the performances of the two groups on the pre-test.

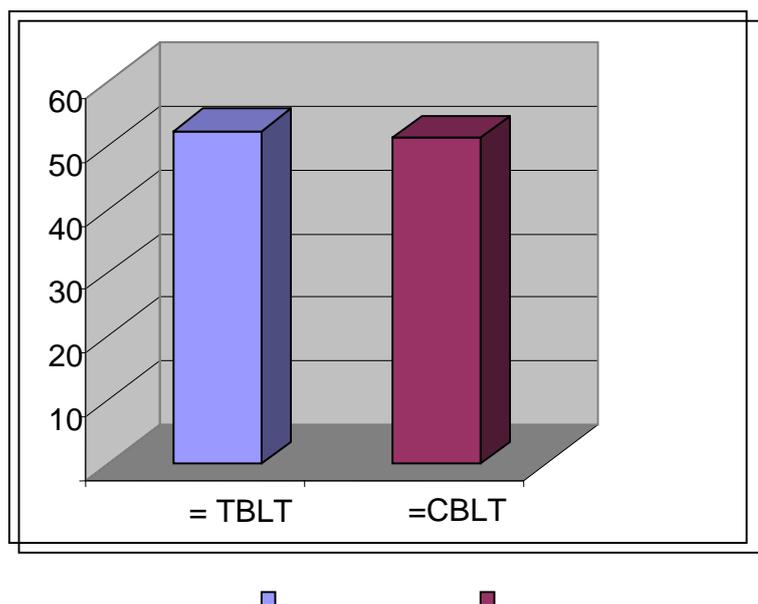


Figure 1. Performance of the two groups on the pre-test

As the above table shows the difference between pre-test scores and post-test scores for each group is significant. It answered the first research question namely be claimed that both TBLT and CBLT have been effective in teaching reading to Iranian ESP learners.

In order to answer the second research question an independent t-test was used. It revealed that difference between G1 and G2 performances is statistically significant. Thus, the TBLT group (G1) outperformed CBLT group (G2) on the post-test due to the mode of teaching reading.

Table 3: The Results of Independent T-Tests for Post-test

	Df	t	Sig(2-tailed)
G1- G2 Post-test	58	4.12	.002*

( $P < .05^*$ )

Figure 4.2 illustrates the difference between the performances of the two groups on the post-test.

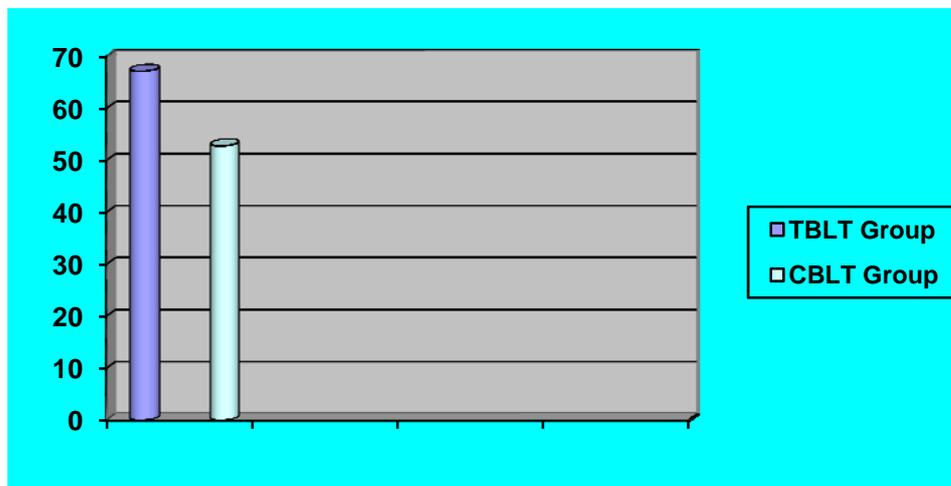


Figure 2. Performance of the two groups on the post-test

## 5. Conclusion

As it was observed in the previous chapter, those Iranian intermediate ESP learners who have been taught reading comprehension through task-based language teaching (TBLT) outperformed those learners who have been taught reading comprehension through Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT). Such a result can be justified by considering some outstanding characteristics about the nature of task-based language teaching and its effectiveness in EFL contexts. First, TBLT is a meaning-centered methodology, i.e. it develops learners' communicative competence by focusing on the meaning. By doing so, TBLT encourages the learner to understand the written text with an unconscious and peripheral focus on the form of the language. According to Ellis (2003), such a meaningfulness in TBLT provides an authentic, purposeful and intentional background for comprehending and using language and it is encouraging for the EFL learners. Second, in TBLT there is a very helpful pre-task phase in which the teacher tries to activate the learners' background knowledge and the related schemata by involving the learners in completing tasks similar to those we should be worked out during the task phase itself. In comparison with other methods for teaching writing including CBLT, TBLT has a more effective, authentic, meaningful and purposeful pre-reading phase. In addition, the pre-reading phase in TBLT is more elaborate and complete. Furthermore, a peculiar feature of the pre-task phase in TBLT which embodies the pre-reading phase in reading comprehension skill is a kind of a task which should be completed by the students.

Third, In CBLT the focus is on the content and the students are only concerned with mere information or the subject matter which has been put on the paper .here the students are not concerned about the language. And what is important for the teacher is the secondary function of the language, which is the transactional function of the language. Nevertheless, in TBLT, both the learning of the language and the manipulation of the language are considered. And the tasks are at the service of the communication of meaning through language. Fourth, yet the fourth superiority of TBLT is the planning and report stages which are done by the students during the task phase. The cooperative nature of planning and report stages help students gets feedback from the members of a Task-Based group. Of course, the students in TBLT groups receive feedback from the teacher. However, in the CBLT group the students work individually on the exercises do not receive any feedback from their peers and the only authority for judging about the accuracy of exercises is the teacher. Therefore, existence of such a feedback can be claimed to provide more relaxing and less threatening and condition for learning a foreign language.

Finally, in TBLT methodology, we have post-task phase or a language –focus phase during which the teacher teaches complicated formal aspects of language such as difficult structures, difficult vocabulary and other problematic of the reading text deductively. Accordingly, the formal instruction of language is also considered by TBLT methodology. The existence and the place and the time of such a language focus phase only belongs to TBLT and such a stage cannot be seen as far as CBLT is concerned. All of these important advantages of TBLT can be relied upon for justifying the out performance of TBLT group in comparison with what these participants have done in the CBLT group.

The findings of this study have various pedagogical implications in TEFL/TESL. In addition, these various implications can be used in different domains of TEFL like language teaching methodology, syllabus design and material development.

As far as the teaching methodology is concerned, task-based language teaching (TBLT) can be very helpful. The findings of this research emphasize that TBLT is one of the newest versions of CLT and is more effective than previous traditional methodologies and the eclectic ones. The current study made this clear that task-based language teaching (TBLT) is definitely more effective than CBLT in teaching reading comprehension in general and in teaching ESP reading in particular. In fact, teaching reading comprehension to EFL learners through task-based approach has all of the advantages of the process approach to reading such as the focus on the

processes involved in the pre-reading, during reading and post-reading phases. Yet, it adds more peculiar aspects to the “top-down theory of reading” by its complete task cycle. It fully considers such processes and helps learners brainstorm and generate more new ideas, activates their previous schemata and background knowledge, motivates the students and encourages them to read fluently without any concern for formal linguistic features. Furthermore, task-based language teaching has a completed task cycle which covers nearly all of the processes which are involved during the reading process. It adopts a dynamic view toward the act of reading and considers all of those changing factors and processes which happened when comprehending a text. It also has a complete post-task phase or “a language focus phase” in which the specific structures and forms of language are focused on. Therefore, it seems that task-based language teaching (TBLT) is very effective in teaching reading comprehension to EFL learners. Surely, task-based approach can be used in teaching reading comprehension to the intermediate students. Task-based approach seems to be the best methodology for teaching cooperative learning and collaborative learning because it is quite interactive and follows the principles of cooperative learning. In fact, cooperative and collaborative learning are part of the task-based language teaching / learning that guide learners toward more meaningful and interactive use of language in a real-world context.

With regard to the syllabus design and writing instructional materials, the findings of the present study offer that each instructional situation is a unique one and it demands its own syllabus and instructional materials. This study recommends that before everything we should do a needs analysis in order to examine what the learners know, what they should learn, what are the available facilities, time, physical space and so on. Especially it emphasizes that if the researcher cannot do a thorough needs analysis, s/he should consider all of the different aspects of the teaching situation and the subjects as much as s/he can. So task-based language teaching (TBLT) develops its own task-based syllabus based on both needs analysis and situation analysis.

Task-based syllabus uses the tasks as the building blocks for classroom teaching and four designing classroom learning experiences and instructional activities. The present study offers that teachers should or select tasks for their own teaching situation. The teachers cannot use a set of fixed tasks or activities for all learners and in all situations because in order to teach real world and authentic language we have to use our situation aspects and the available resources in

devising our tasks and instructional activities. Of course, task-based approach does not say that there is not any need to develop course books but it recommends that teachers should not limit their task resources only to books. They should use a range of various real world and pedagogical tasks. Based on task-based language teaching (TBLT), the course books must be as communicative as possible using tasks as the core units for syllabus design and language instruction.

Task-based approach can be applied to teach other language skills and sub-skills like listening comprehension, vocabulary and grammar. The effect of task-based approach on the Iranian beginner and intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension can be a good topic for further research. Task-based approach can also be used to teach writing to the Iranian ESP learners. The effect of task difficulty vs. linguistic difficulty on reading comprehension of the Iranian EFL /ESP learners suggests very interesting research topics.

## References

- Brinton, D., Snow, M.A., & Wesche, M.B. (1989). *Content-based second language instruction*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Bowen, T. (2004). *Task-based learning*. Retrieved April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008, from <http://www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?docid=146402>.
- Brown, H.D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: an interactive approach language pedagogy*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). New York: Pearson Education.
- Brown, H.D. (2001). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.) New York: Pearson Education.
- Brumfit, C. (1984). *Communicative methodology in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Celce-Murcia, M. (2001). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Chastain, K. (1988). *Developing second-language skills: theory and practice*. (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). Virginia: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.
- Crandall, J. & Tucker, G.R. Content Based Instruction in Second or Foreign Languages. In A. Padilla, H. H. Fairchild, and C. Valadez (Eds.), *Foreign language education: Issues and strategies*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Crawford, M. (2000). *Teaching Linguistics in English. A Preliminary Report on Utilizing Content Based Instruction (CBI)*. For English Teacher Trainees. Hacodate. Takada Publishing Company.
- Ellis, R. (2000). *Task-based research and language pedagogy. language teaching research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Genesee, F. (1994). *Integrating language and content: Lessons from immersion*. Educational Practice Report 11. National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning. <http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/miscpubs/ncrcdssl/epr11.htm>
- Johnson, K. (2001). *An introduction to foreign language learning and teaching*. Longman. Pearson Education LTD.
- Krahnke, K. (1987). *Approaches to Syllabus Design for Foreign Language Teaching*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leaver, B. L., & Kaplan, M. A. (2004). Task-based instruction in the U.S. Government Slavic language programs. In B. L. Leaver and J. Willis (Eds.), *Task-based instruction in foreign language education: Practices and programs*, (pp.47-66). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Lightbown, P.M. & Spada, N. (2006). *How languages are learned* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching and learning*. Boston: Newbury House Publication.
- Nunan, D. (2001). *Second language teaching and learning*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching: A comprehensively revised edition of designing tasks for communicative classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Prabhu, N. S. (1987). *Second language pedagogy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Richards, J. & Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied*

*Linguistics*. (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). Pearson Education Limited.

Seedhouse, P. (2005). Task is a research construct. *Language Learning*, 55 (3), 533-570.

Widdowson, H. (1978). *Teaching language as communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Willis, J. (2004). Perspectives on task-based instruction: Understanding our practices, acknowledging different practitioners. In B. L. Leaver and J. Willis (Ed.), *Task-based instruction in foreign language education: Practices and programs*, (pp. 3-44). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

## **Title**

### **Use of Myth(s) in Postmodern American Drama Case Study: the Plays of Sam Shepard**

## **Author**

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

Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran.

## **Biodata**

**Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh**, holds a Ph.D. in English language and literature. He is a faculty member at department of English, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran. He has published numerous articles in national and international conferences in the areas of English language and literature.

## **Abstract**

Sam Shepard from his early plays onwards, understood the power of myths and used them in his plays. He believed that “myth speaks to everything at once, especially the emotion”. In his early plays, Shepard uses American myth of the Frontier and myth of Old Time Cowboys. He believes there is “more mystery” in this kind of friendship, cowboy characters are the ideal ones. In his other plays, he uses social myths, national myths and ancient Roman and Greek myths. He not only uses all these myths in his plays but also re-invents and transforms them in the notion of post modern myths.

**Keywords:** Myth, Postmodernism, Drama, Sam Shepard.

## **1. Introduction**

Samuel Shepard Rogers was born on November 5, 1943 into a service family in Fort Sheridan, Illinois. His mother was a teacher and his father was an army pilot, who on retirement became a farmer. After graduating from high school in 1961, Shepard began to study Agriculture at Mount San Antonio Junior College, but he dropped out after three semesters as a pre-veterinary student. He worked as a ranch hand and developed firsthand knowledge of the horses. Later, when he saw

an advertisement for an actor with the Bishop's Repertory Company, which was a group of traveling players, got the job and went to New York with them.

In 1963, when the group arrived in New York, Shepard got off the bus and went to live with his high school roommate, Charlie Mingus junior. Shepard could get a job at the Village Gate, which was a nightclub and a leading New York jazz club. Being together, these two friends played crazy "cowboy" games in the middle of New York streets and Shepard identified himself particularly with cowboys, especially in the movies<sup>1</sup>.

In 1960s, a dramatic change was taking place in music, theatre and the arts in general. The centers for this change were cafes, restaurants and churches. Writers, playwrights and performers were declaring their independence from the theatres and movements of the past. Broadway theatres were not used anymore and Off-Broadway theatres had begun to price themselves out of a market, which was itself changing. A new theatre was born in which for many the goal was to remake society. The new movement, the "Off-Off-Broadway" theatre was born. Bigsby (1985) has rightly commented: "It was the coincidence of arriving in New York [...] that created a climate in which [Shepard] could work" (Vol:3, p.222).

Sam Shepard took part in the new movement by writing poems and playing in the Off-Off-Broadway theatres. According to Bigsby (1985), Shepard "began writing in his late teens, with little experience of theatre." (Vol:3, pp.221-22). Charlie Mingus introduced him to Ralph Cook, the artistic director of Theatre Genesis, and Cook asked Shepard to write a play he could produce at his new theatre, which he wanted to open at St. Mark's Church in the Bowery.

In 1964 Shepard wrote two short, one-act plays, entitled *Cowboys* and *The Rock Garden* and began signing his works "Sam Shepard." It was in 1964 that he also changed his name. He later said: "My name, Samuel Shepard Rogers, was too long, so I just dropped the Rogers part of it." He then adds that Samuel Shepard Rogers "had been in the family for seven generations." "Since he could have dropped Shepard rather than Rogers, it seems a deliberate break with his heredity, an attempt to construct his own identity" (qtd. in Oumano,1986, p.22).

*Cowboys* and *The Rock Garden* offended many critics. They believed that the plays were derivative of European dramatists. But others including Michael Smith, the critic of the *Village Voice*, found the plays "genuinely original" and "distinctly American." Smith (1964) acclaimed

---

<sup>1</sup> - This stage was very important in Shepard's life. Later on, it brings the myth of frontier cowboy in his plays.

the plays and declared the young playwright full of promise and energy. He also described Shepard's work as "a gestalt theatre which evokes the existence behind behaviour" (p.13).

Motivated by his first success, Shepard filled a suitcase with manuscripts, knocked on the door of Edward Albee's apartment in "Greenwich Village" and confronted the most famous American playwright of his day. Shepard "presented him [the] plays. Albee read them and selected one, *Up to Thursday* about a boy facing the draft," which was actually based on Shepard's own experience of dodging the draft by claiming to be a heroin addict. The play attracted favourable attention when it appeared in "1965 at the Cherry Lane Theatre" (Oumano,1986, pp. 37-38).

In this way, the career of Sam Shepard as a playwright was launched and he became "one the most stimulating figures in the Off and Off-Off-Broadway theatre" (Simon,1968, p.384). For the next three years, Shepard had a succession of rapidly composed one-act plays. These plays are: *Up to Thursday* (1964), *4-H Club* (1964), *Dog* and *Rocking Chair* (1965), *Icarus's Mother* (1965) *Red Cross* (1966).

In 1965 Shepard's new play, entitled *Chicago*, won an Obie Award from the *Village Voice*, an award given to the year's outstanding plays produced Off-Off-Broadway. Shepard was to be awarded ten more Obies in the next few years. Some of the plays, which won the award, are: *Icarus's Mother* (1965) *Red Cross* (1966), *La Turista* (1967) and *Melodrama Play* (1967). All of these plays brought a growing respect for Shepard from the critics. It was in 1967 that Shepard also wrote *Cowboys#2*.

During these years, critics had different opinions on the young playwright's works. While some critics believed that Shepard's plays are too unconventional, others were on the opinion that his plays are written very fast and never revised<sup>2</sup>. Like the beatnik poets, Shepard wrote fast and rarely revised his plays. This quality of his writing is praised by Vincent Canby (1984) when says: "Shepard is the kind of writer who writes best when he writes fast" (C 26:1).

He then met the director and the actor Joseph Chaikin who had newly established his Open Theatre and Shepard joined the group. As Don Shewey (1985) writes, Chaikin "had a tremendous influence on Shepard" (p.18). He got the idea of transformation of character from

---

<sup>2</sup>- This opinion is actually a true one, mostly about Shepard's early plays, because in this period he was influenced by Beat Generation writers and was drawn to Jack Kerouac and his idea of "first thought is the best thought." In Shepard's later phase of playwriting, he leaves the idea of writing at a high speed.

Open Theatre and developed it in his plays. Shepard's plays in 1969 and 1970 are *The Unseen Hand* and *The Holy Ghostly*. The first play is an early example of Shepard's interests in myth, and the one in which Shepard uses a more complex language.

In 1971, after he wrote *The Mad Dog Blues*, which was "another Off-Off-Broadway success" (Oumano, 1986, p.87). Shepard briefly left his family to live with the rock poetess Patti Smith in Chelsea Hotel. They collaborated and wrote *Cowboy Mouth* in the same year. It was a rock-and-roll play and a documentary account of their time together. They had intended to perform the piece together, but Shepard left the stage after one performance and moved to London with his family to make a fresh and a new start.

The family spent three years in England, "where Shepard hoped to finally fulfill his dream of becoming a rock'n'roll star" (Oumano, 1986, p. 94). But, that was a hope he could never fulfill in England, instead, he wrote some of his best plays there. *The Tooth of Crime* (1972), which is one of the best of Shepard's rock-and-roll plays. *Geography of a Horse Dreamer* (1974), a play in which according to Bigsby, Sam Shepard brings American cowboys to the streets of London. *Little Ocean* (1974) is a play on pregnancy and motherhood. It is Shepard's only play to have an all female cast and *Action* (1974), a "post-apocalyptic play in which the very word community has lost all meaning and in which prison seems an adequate analogy for a life in which there is no escape. For a second" (Bigsby,1985, Vol:3, p.238). The play won Sam Shepard yet another Obie after its American showing the following year. These plays along with *Blue Bitch* (1973) were other plays, which were all written in England.

By 1975 Sam Shepard was homesick and returned to America. In 1976, he directed *Angel City*, a two-act play with music. Sam Shepard in this period "was dealing with his familiar themes of heredity and the increasing fragmentation and alienation of the American family" (Oumano,1986, p.124). He then started writing his realistic family plays which are known as O'Neillian dramaturgy: *Curse of the Starving Class* (1977), *Buried Child* (1978), *True West* (1980), *Fool for Love* (1983) and *A Lie of the Mind* (1985).

From the mid-sixties onwards, Shepard has shown great potential as a dramatist and has written more than forty plays. He is now considered as one of the most prolific and produced authors after Tennessee Williams, and has won a Pulitzer Prize in addition to his Obie Awards for his plays. In addition to writing plays, Shepard has also written *Hawk Moon*, a book of short stories, poems and monologues; *Rolling Thunder Logbook*, a journal chronicling Bob Dylan on

tour and *Cruising Paradise*, a book of tales. For four decades since his first play produced at Theater Genesis, Shepard has been a phenomenon of American theater.

## 2. Discussion

From his early plays onwards, Shepard understood the power of myths and used them in his plays. He believed that “myth speaks to everything at once, especially the emotion” (Language, Visualization and the Inner Library, 1981, p. 217). Before starting our discussion, it is necessary to take a look at definitions of myth. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Abrams writes: “In classical Greek ‘mythos’ signified any story or plot, whether true or false. In its central modern significance, a myth is one story [...] a system of hereditary stories which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group [...] a mythology, we can say, is any religion in which we no longer believe” (p. 102).

In his *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye (1957) distinguishes three organizations of myths. He writes: “undisplaced myth, generally concerned with gods or demons,” “the general tendency” which is “called romantic” and “the tendency of realism” (pp. 139-40). Since Sam Shepard is a post modern writer and is not participating in structuralism; in most of his plays, he depicts a new sense of myth and a clear departure from structuralism. Shepard says: “By myth I mean a sense of mystery and not necessarily a traditional formula” (Language, Visualization and the Inner Library, 1981, p. 217).

As it was earlier mentioned, Shepard’s early plays have been under the influence of Open Theater and are experimental works of art. Like other writers of Off-Off-Broadway, he has also been affected by the different movements existing at that time. *Cowboys #2* and *Geography of a Horse Dreamer* are considered as Shepard’s Cowboy plays. The first play according to Oumano is a rewriting of Shepard’s first play entitled *Cowboys*; and as Shepard himself has said, it “is lost now” (qtd. in Chubb, 1981, p. 190).

In these two early plays, the reader finds that Shepard uses American myth of the Frontier and myth of Old Time Cowboys. For a playwright like Shepard who likes the male bonding friendship, since he believes there is “more mystery” in this kind of friendship, cowboy characters are the ideal ones. Shepard who likes cowboys a great deal, once said: “Cowboys are really interesting to me- these guys, most of them really young, about sixteen to seventeen

decided they didn't want to have anything to do with the East Coast, with that way of life [...] and took on that immense country, and didn't have any real rules" (qtd. in Chubb, 1981, p.190).

Shepard's personal interest in cowboys reveals his youthful identification with this figure, an attraction to their wandering life style and their language. By bringing cowboys in his plays, Shepard chooses to emphasize the mythic qualities of this figure, which he finds to be both personally and culturally important.

In *Cowboys #2*, the protagonists, Chet and Stu are unfriendly at the beginning of the play but become friends during their cowboy games. The characters try to create the cowboy images in their minds. In the world of their imagination, these cowboys fight screaming Indians and try to stop them; and when one of them gets wounded, the other helps him, nurses him and tries to find shade for him. Throughout the play, the characters play imaginary cowboy games, as if they see their ideals in this mythic hero and are seeking this traditional figure.

In *Geography of a Horse Dreamer*, Shepard's protagonist Cody, is a cowboy himself; but a cowboy out of his place. He is trapped in the world of the gangsters who cannot understand his world. He wants to return to the great plains of his homeland but he is trapped in a small hotel room. Finally Shepard brings Cody's cowboy brothers onto the stage to help their cowboy brother and rescue him from his prison.

Shepard's characters in these two plays are either cowboys or transform themselves into mythic cowboy roles. William Savage (1979) believes that the myth of "cowboy represents the particularly American attitudes toward truth, justice, honor, preparedness, righteousness, free enterprise and common sense" (p.45). Shepard tries to present the kind of cowboy who can represent both the values of common, middle class citizens and the idealized stature which only mythic heroes can attain, and these two plays are examples of this.

In Shepard's other play, entitled *Icarus's Mother*, we find that the play is about two young women and three young men who are sitting near a beach and enjoying their Fourth of July picnic. Suddenly the characters' attention turns to a plane which is flying high in the sky. Shepard presents the twentieth century Icarus as an unnamed and an invisible character who flies a plane but like the Greek Icarus high in the sky. The characters of the play begin to talk about the pilot's life. Pat and Jill expose themselves to the pilot, when he flies close enough to see them dancing. Meanwhile men are fanning the barbeque and sending "smoke signals" which actually depicts

the characters' anxiety and their fear of the threat of nuclear holocaust. The pilot then writes "E equals MC squared" above the characters in the sky and finally crashes into the sea.

The play uses lots of symbols and of course, the myth of Greek Icarus. Although the myth of Icarus and his father Daedalus displays creative energy but it also corresponds with failure and suffering. In Greek mythology, Icarus is viewed as the tragic victim, because he has not been able to follow his father's advice. Just as Daedalus rules over Icarus, the male characters threaten the pilot with punishment and take Pat and Jill as captives, who earlier, considered themselves as the pilot's wives. It is an allegory of society's treatment of the individual who does not conform to its standards.

Sam Shepard in *La Turista*, his first full-length play, which is one of the most successful plays of his early phase of play writing, uses the myth of shaman and witch doctors. The first act of the play happens in a Mexican hotel room and the second act happens in an American hotel room. Kent and Salem have traveled to Mexico, which is the land of sun vacation. While in Mexico, Kent has the problem of dysentery, which Mexicans ironically call 'la turista;' and when he was in America, he had sleeping sickness.

The play is an allegory about the protagonists whose names reflect popular cigarette brands and their lack of substance. At the same time the play mirrors Shepard's comment on contemporary American citizens. In the two acts of the play, Shepard compares the treatments of a Mexican witch doctor and an American modern doctor. The Mexican witch doctor and his son perform a ritual ceremony to help cure Kent of his ailment; and the American doctor prescribes Benzedrine as a treatment; which both seem to be ineffective, suspicious and unreliable.

In *Cowboy Mouth* and *The Tooth of Crime*, which are Shepard's rock-and-roll masterpieces, the playwright uses myths available in popular American culture. A rock-and roll star and a myth, who is both an outlaw and a savior. A rock-and-roll star who speaks to the contemporary American youth audience. In *Cowboy Mouth*, a woman named Cavale has kidnapped a man at gunpoint. She wants to transform him into a rock-and-roll savior, a myth who "reach[es] out and grab[s] all the little broken busted up pieces of people's frustration" and "takes all that into [him]self" (Shepard,1976, p.208). Although he expresses his complete deviance of Cavale's hope of turning him into a rock star, Cavale never disappoints and puts all her hopes in the Lobster Man, a delivery boy who has put on a lobster shell.

In *The tooth of Crime*, Shepard depicts the rise to fame of the rock savior who came out of the shell of the Lobster Man. Crow; a young rock-and-roll star has come to defeat Hoss a rock star in his old age. In the different acts of the play and in the various rounds of the characters' fight which is actually a verbal battle between the two rock stars and not a gun battle, Crow, the young newcomer, defeats Hoss, whose time has actually ended, and wins all his "turf."

In these two plays, Shepard tries to redefine modern religious myth. This new religious myth is the rock-and-roll star from within the American society. The playwright attempts to create a new religious myth which is actually a new way of connection to a higher power from within the American popular culture. Shepard's observation of the rock-and-roll star as a new savior suggests that the playwright had found his real-life rock-and-roll Jesus; he is a myth who has "the capacity for changing something inside us, even if it is only for a minute or two" (Shepard, 1977, p.62).

Shepard's Hollywood plays are *The Mad Dog Blues* and *Angel City*. In these plays he uses the myths of American popular culture and satirizes them. He depicts the way these cultural myths and icons of American culture look like. In this way, his plays serve as an indicator of American culture and its society.

In *The Mad Dog Blues*, which has an adventure story and follows the structure of a film; Shepard brings myths and characters from American popular culture. Marlene Dietrich, Mae West, Captain Kidd, Paul Bunyan and Jessie James, all come together by Kosmo's and Yahoodi's different visions. In this play, Shepard shows a clash between these mythic characters. They all start a search for a treasure and when finally find it; it proves to be nothing but "bottle caps."

In *Angel City*, which is a movie about movies, Shepard shows the corrupting power of film industry and its myths. He depicts how a shaman who has come to doctor a film and save it from failing, is drawn into the industry by the power of the celluloid tape and becomes one of the corrupted members of the same industry he had earlier come to save.

Both *The Mad Dog Blues* and *Angel City* locate the corruption of modern American society in its cultural myths; particularly in the myths of the Old West as it has been shown in Hollywood film industry. Unlike the myths of the Old West and cowboy myths, which in Shepard's plays are seen to have been of value in the past, in these two plays, Shepard clearly mentions that the old ways must be driven out to make fresh spaces for the new.

In *Buried Child* and *Fool for Love*, which belong to Shepard's last phase of playwriting, and are called realistic family plays; he uses an old myth; the myth of incest. The theme of incest is not original in these plays and we can suggest that it is based on the traditional notion of an ideal tragic plot.

In *Buried Child*, we see one of the characters named Tilden, the eldest son of the family who has recently come back from Mexico, had an incestuous relationship with his mother Halie, years ago. Dodge<sup>3</sup>, the father of the family, did not let the child grow; he drowned the child and buried him in the backyard. The incestuous relationship between the son and his mother breaks all the hopes in the family and blasts the American dream of a happy family. Into this situation, Vince, the grandson of the family enters. At first, he can not gain recognition from anybody in the house, because he is the reminiscent and the reincarnation of the buried child. But as we move towards the end of the play and as he repeats his grandfather's violence in the house, everybody remembers him. Meantime, lots of peas, potatoes, beans and carrots suddenly grow in the backyard which has been barren for the past thirty years. Vince finally inherits the house and the farm; and Dodge, before he dies, asks Vince to burn his body in a ritual ceremony.

In *Fool for Love*, which is the story of a half brother and a half sister, Shepard makes use of the same myth again, in a way that it ends the hope of these young couple to be together. These half brother and sister have continued their relationship without knowing anything about their past. When Eddie, the protagonist of the play, returns to May and her new life, after his absence for a long time and having an affair with a Countess, the challenge between this young couple begins.

May can neither live with nor without Eddie. She is trapped in her conflicting motivations and contradictory desires. This continues; and finally their father who is standing in the shadows of the stage, reveals the fact of their relationship. At the end of the play, Eddie leaves but promises to come back soon. The incestuous relationship between these half brother and sister and the gradual discovery of their family secret, blasts any hope in them. Although May knows that Eddie will never come back, but she follows him.

In another play entitled *A Lie of the Mind*, the myth of incest is repeated once more. The young couple of the play, Jake and Beth, resemble Romeo and Juliet. But the plot is more like

---

<sup>3</sup> - The names Shepard uses for his characters are always symbolic and significant. Here the father's name is Dodge, the one who has actually dodged his children.

that of Othello. Jake beats his wife and leaves her to die. Beth's brother, Mike, seeks revenge because of his incestuous desire for Beth. Even one can find traces of Oedipus myth in the play.

### **3. Conclusion**

Sam Shepard's plays reflect a continuous expansion of techniques and dramatic forms. What actually separates Shepard from his contemporary playwrights is his ability, capacity and his willingness for growth and examining new dimensions of dramatic techniques and styles. By using myths belonging to all nations and cultures, Shepard takes the spectator beyond the regional and national borders to universal and eternal issues. By employing materials of a mythic order, Shepard also stuns his spectators into awareness of serious concerns. That is the reason he is now considered a canonical author and an iconic figure who as Carol Rosen (1992) says, is "after all the most original and vital playwright of our age" (35).

By working the myth of incest into his plays, Shepard criticizes the iconic American family and points out that the established cultural boundaries in American society have begun to become thin. In some of these plays (mostly *Buried Child* and *The Tooth of Crime*), like the American Indian mythology, when the king becomes old and is not productive any more, he should be burned and the new young king takes his place; or the son comes to kill the father.

### **Acknowledgement**

I gratefully acknowledge the project reported here was supported by a grant-in-aid of research from Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran, in 2011 (contract code: 17900) without which this research would not have been possible.

### **References**

- Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. London: Rinehart Publishers, N.D.
- Albee, Edward. "Icarus's Mother." *Village Voice* (25 November 1965): 19.
- Bigsby, C.W.E. *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama*. 3 Vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Canby, Vincent. "Paris, Texas From Wim Wenders." New York Times 14 October 1984: C 26:1.

- Chubb, Kenneth, et al. "Metaphors, Mad Dogs, and Old Time Cowboys." in *American Dreams: The Imagination of Sam Shepard*. Ed. Bonnie Marranca. New York: Performing Arts journal publication, 1981. 187-209.
- Frye, Nothrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957.
- Oumano Ellen. *Sam Shepard : The life and Work of an American Dreamer*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.
- Rosen Carol. "Silent Tongues: Sam Shepard's Exploration of Emotional Territory." *Village Voice* (4 August 1992): 34-42.
- Savage, William W. *The Cowboy Hero: His Image in American History and Culture*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979.
- Shepard, Sam. *Angel City, Curse of the Starving Class, and Other Plays*. New York: Urizen Books, 1976. Reprinted as *Angel City and Other Plays*. London: Faber and Faber, 1978. Contains: *Angel City, Curse of the Starving Class, Killer's Head, Action, The Mad Dog Blues, Cowboy Mouth with Patti Smith, The Rock Garden, Cowboys # 2*.
- Shepard, Sam. *Big Stakes*. In *Rolling thunder Logbook*. New York: Viking Press, 1977.
- Shepard, Sam. *Buried Child*. in *Buried Child and Seduced and Suicide in B-Flat* : 8-72.
- Shepard, Sam. *Five Plays* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967; London: Faber and Faber, 1969. Reprinted as *Chicago and other Plays*). New York: Urizen Books, 1981; London: Faber and Faber, 1982. Contains: *Chicago, Icarus's Mother, Red Cross, Fourteen Hundred Thousand, Melodrama Play*.
- Shepard, Sam. Fool for Love and The Sad Lament of Pecos Bill on the Eve of Killing His Wife. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1982; London: Faber and Faber, 1984. ---. *Geography of a Horse Dreamer*. in *The Tooth of Crime and Geography of a Horse Dreamer*: 84-125.
- Shepard, Sam. "Language, Visualization and the Inner Library." in *American Dreams: The Imagination of Sam Shepard*. Ed. Bonnie Marranca. New York: Performing Arts journal publication, 1981. 214-19.
- Shepard, Sam. *The Unseen Hand and Other Plays*. New York and Toronto: Bantam Books, 1986. Reprinted New York: Vintage Books. Contain: *The Rock Garden, Chicago, Icarus's Mother, 4-H Club, Fourteen Hundred Thousand, Red Cross, Cowboys #2, Forensic and*

*the Navigator, The Holy Ghostly, Operation Sidewinder, The Mad Dog Blues, Back Bog  
Beast Bait, Killer's Head.*

Shewey, Don. Sam Shepard: The life, the loves Behind the legend of a True American. New York: Del, 1985.

Simon, John.. "The Stage: Red Cross." Commonweal. Vol.LXXXVIII, No. 13 (14 June 1968):380-389.

Smith, Michael. "Theatre: *Cowboys and The Rock Garden.*" Village Voice (22 October 1964): 11-20.

## **Title**

# **The Effect of Teaching Etymology on the Comprehension and Retention of English Technical Vocabularies among Vocational School Students of Bandar Abbas**

## **Authors**

**Laleh Namdar (M.A.)**

Islamic Azad University, Bandar Abbas Branch, Bandar Abbas, Iran

**Mohammad Sadegh Bagheri (Ph.D.)**

Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch, Shiraz, Iran

## **Biodata**

**Laleh Namdar** holds an M.A. from Islamic Azad University, Bandar Abbas Branch, Iran and currently she is teaching English at some language institutes. Her area of research is vocabulary teaching techniques and she has delivered some presentations on this issue.

**Mohammad Sadegh Bagheri** earned his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in TEFL from Shiraz State University, Iran, and is currently an Assistant Professor teaching at Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch, Shiraz, Iran. He has a number of publications on TOEFL and IELTS, and has presented articles at international conferences. Moreover, he is a Cambridge ESOL and IELTS examiner, and runs his own internationally accredited language school which is affiliated with Cambridge University as a sub-center.

## **Abstract**

Many technical terms in English, derived from foreign languages such as Greek and Latin are not easily comprehensible to students. However, knowledge of etymology can possibly remove the often intimidating appearance of technical terms and help students to understand and remember them easily. The present study intended to investigate whether teachers' use of etymological approach has an effect on students' comprehension and retention of English technical vocabularies. To fulfill the purpose, 50 computer science

students who were studying EST in grade three in vocational high school were selected and assigned to two groups of control and experimental. Then, a pre-test was given to both groups in order to assess their general lexical knowledge. After the pre-test was administered, instruction started and each group were taught through different approaches. The control group received no treatment and was taught traditionally through oral repetition and word translation. The experimental group, on the other hand, received treatment and was taught vocabularies through etymological approach. At the end of the course, a post-test was taken from the two groups. This test was of two tasks: a multiple-choice test which measured students' comprehension of the taught vocabularies and a gap-fill test which assessed their retention of the vocabularies. The first one was administered immediately at the end of the course and the second one after a week interval. The results obtained from the *t*-tests and groups mean scores proved the positive effect of etymological approach on both comprehension and retention of technical terms and indicated that the high, mid and low achievers of experimental group performed better than those of the control group.

**Keywords:** Etymology, comprehension, retention, English technical vocabulary

## 1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, the teaching of vocabulary has gained greater importance in the investigation of second language learning. Recent studies have benefited from the development of corpora of spoken and written language and the creation of sophisticated computer-based access tools for such corpora (Dudley-Evans, 2001). As a consequence of this development, vocabulary no longer languishes as the neglected area of applied linguistics. Yet many questions remain unanswered, especially where English for Science and Technology (EST) is concerned. We believe that one factor preventing further research on the instruction of specialised vocabulary lies in the fact that, for many researchers (such as Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Nation, 2001; Read, 2000; Strevens, 1973; Trimble, 1985), it is not the job of the English teacher – not trained in science and technology – to teach specialised vocabulary. As a consequence, EST courses place a major role to the achievement of reading skills to the detriment of explicit instruction of this kind of vocabulary. Usually, specialised vocabulary is approached through the use of dictionaries, where unknown words are merely either translated into the students' first

language (L1) or defined in the target language. In other words, whereas for general service vocabulary – which comprises words of high frequency in most uses of the language – there seems to be a variety of teaching approaches, for specialised vocabulary one approach seems to dominate: translation and definition. As far as the use of translation for vocabulary instruction is concerned, researchers point out that it encourages the idea of exact equivalence between L1 and L2 as well as L1 thinking (Nation, 2001). Another disadvantage of this approach is that when the meaning is quickly given and the learner has no reason to continue processing it, there will not be deeper encoding and, consequently, it is unlikely that such vocabulary will be learnt (Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997). Similar to the use of translation for vocabulary instruction, the use of definition is also criticized. For Nagy & Herman (1987), methods providing only definitional information about unknown vocabulary do not produce a significant effect on comprehension. In sum, the use of translation and definition may promote only superficial levels of lexical processing.

The goals of vocabulary teaching must be more than simply translating and defining certain number of words. There is no aspect of language that is more important than vocabulary building and comprehension. Having a good understanding of technical vocabulary is a requirement of many academic disciplines. Often in the fields of Science and Technology, there will be a need to manipulate technical language with ease and fluency.

We must use teaching techniques that can help realize this global concept of what it means to know a lexical item. And we must also go beyond that, giving learner opportunities to use the items learnt and also helping them to use effective written storage systems. English vocabulary, especially in technical fields, is frequently composed of borrowed roots, most especially from the high-prestige classical languages of learning, Latin and ancient Greek (Irwin, 2000). Despite the difficulty of learning and acquiring technical vocabulary, many of these words have Greek or Latin base forms, and these can be easy to recognize.

In view of the above we aim at investigating the effects teaching etymological approach on the acquisition of specialised vocabulary.

Etymology describes the origin and development of words. For example, what is the etymology of the word *etymology*? It comes from the Greek words *etymon* meaning *true sense* and *logos* meaning *study*. Some words consist of the prefix and the word root or the words root and the suffix such as *remarriage* and *believable*. Understanding the truest sense of words helps

learners communicate accurately. Etymology provides you with a basis to understand the definition of words. Learners gain a deeper understanding of how and where a word develops (Mimic, 2000).

Several researchers such as Angilin, Biemiller and Slonim (2001) argue, in fact, that focusing on acquiring the root of word is an effective way to address the large number of words that students have to learn each year. Etymology gives some information with respect to the root of word and its meaning. It increases the vocabulary level of learners. Information from prefixes, suffixes, and roots can help students learn and remember words.

For the purpose of this report, etymology does not refer to the study of word origins (historical), but refers to the comprehension and retention of technical vocabulary through the knowledge of roots and affixes.

## **2. Review of the Related Literature**

Recently, it is widely accepted that vocabulary teaching should be part of the syllabus, and taught in a well-planned and regular basis. Some authors, led by Lewis (1993) argue that vocabulary should be at the centre of language teaching, because 'language consists of grammaticalised lexis, not lexicalized grammar'.

Teaching technical vocabulary is a problematic issue for teachers. Over the last 30 years many issues in lexicon studies in general and technical vocabulary in particular were overlooked by researchers in comparison to the other language aspects. However, because technical terminology is made up of low frequency words, applicable only for a specific field of knowledge, this deters researchers from exploring the topic and leaves the field with a noticeable gap in the literature (Nation, 2001).

Otterman's (1955) work focused on the use of prefixes and roots among seventh-graders. The samples (experimental and control) consisted of a total of 440 students (220 in each group, with roughly equal numbers based on gender). The only instrument specifically made for the Otterman experiment was the one used to assess delayed recall of the prefixes and roots taught. Analyses of the data revealed a definite superiority of the experimental group over the control group. The conclusion based on the test-specific instrument suggested the viability of word part instruction in promoting long-term (six weeks) recall.

Pierson (1989) in the article, "using etymology in the classroom" argued the instruction in etymology could offer meaningful linguistic information and principles to the intermediate and advanced second language learners. According to this article, the intermediate and advanced second language learners could learn vocabulary through knowing the word root. The article presented a practical illustration of how etymology was integrated into a second language.

Nation (1990) stated that 4% of all English words make up an enormous 120,000+ vocabulary items. These are low-frequency items, which coupled with their extensive number; make it impractical to learn by direct teaching. Instead, various word attack skills should be employed to derive meaning from these unknown words. In fact, foreign students should first concentrate on high frequency vocabulary. Once these words are adequately understood, students are now ready to learn and apply word attack strategies in order to unlock the meaning of unknown, less frequently occurring words.

Barbara McGavin (1990) created an English curriculum organized around LB derivatives. Students were assigned a target list of eighty common Latin roots along with rules governing word analysis, but this study was not specific to the L2 learner; in addition, her sample was a high school class, not adults, and comprised eighteen students. Her report, however, demonstrated a positive correlation between the use of etymology and vocabulary growth.

In the *Classical Journal*, John W. Burke concludes acquiring knowledge of Latin and Greek roots enables students to manipulate word elements and generate words more readily (Burke, 1998).

Sharoon (2000) investigated the impact of knowing word root on Hong Kong college students' vocabulary learning. The results indicated that etymology had an impact on college students' vocabulary improvement. If you prepare for an examination in which questions about English words are as a significant part of your score, you would find that learning the etymologies of words is a much better way to learn most of the English words you would encounter.

In the *Journal of Chemical Education*, Nittala S. Sarma explains that learning the connection between the roots and the chemical meaning of the terms can improve students' understanding of chemistry concepts, making them easier and more enjoyable to master (Sarma, 2004).

Susan Glazer, Director of the Center of Reading and Writing at Rider University supports the teaching of prefixes, suffixes and roots and entertains the notion that the learning process can be more than straight memorization (Glazer, 2004).

Nittala S. Sarama later came to this same conclusion when studying Earth sciences. Sarama (2006) found that knowledge of the root words from which technical terms are formed not only made learning of the concepts represented easier, but also helps to quickly understand new terms that may be encountered.

In the English Journal, Suzanne R. Kail reflects on her successful experience in teaching roots of words in her English class and how the knowledge of roots aided in comprehension in other subject areas particularly the sciences (Kail, 2008).

Behlol & Dad (2010) investigated the effect of structural method of teaching vocabulary on the performance and retention rate of high, average and low students of secondary classes studying English in Federal Government schools of Islamabad District. The results indicated that all categories of experimental group who were taught with the structural method performed better on post test and retention test than the students who were taught with definitional method of teaching vocabulary. They concluded that the students learn more through the structural method of teaching vocabulary because they themselves actively participate in the learning process and build up their vocabulary.

### **3. Research Questions**

1. Does etymology as a learning strategy, contribute to the vocabulary comprehension of students who are studying EST?
2. Can the learners remember vocabularies for a long time if they are taught roots and affixes?
3. Does etymological approach influence students' comprehension and retention of words in each of the high, mid and low groups?

## **4. Method**

### **4.1. Participants**

The participants who took part in this study were 50 computer science students who were studying ESP in grade three in Shahid Jafari vocational high school of Bandar Abbas. Students chosen were female. They were somehow homogeneous in terms of their proficiency in that they had all passed the general English in grade two. The reason for selecting these students was that their syllabus is lexical-based and the main focus of the course is more on vocabulary instruction.

In fact, students' comprehension of the materials is highly dependent on their understanding of the words rather than on that of other components of language like grammar.

#### **4.2. Instruments**

In this study, two multiple-choice tests and a gap fill test which were designed by the researcher were used with the purpose of collecting quantitative data. Since the tests used in this study were not previously tested or validated, it was necessary to check their validity and reliability before administering them. In order to check the validity the researcher consulted one of the members of the thesis committee and a test designer who analyzed them for validity. After assuring their validity, the tests were administered once and the data were put into SPSS. Cronbach's alpha was used to check the reliability. The result showed the reliability of both tests. The pre-test with the reliability of 0.86 and the post test with 0.80 reliability. The tests were also pilot tested in two schools on 60 students of the 10th grade. As a result of pilot testing, a few of the items were modified and deleted. The multiple choice test which was used as the pre-test was developed to assess students' general lexical knowledge and the one which was used as the post-test, on the other hand, was developed to assess students' vocabulary comprehension. The gap fill test was also used to assess students' vocabulary retention.

##### **Multiple-choice test (pre-test)**

The first instrument used in the current study was a multiple choice test. This test which was used as a pre-test includes thirty- five items and its items were taken from students' grade two English book. The purpose of this test was to assess students' general lexical knowledge and to divide them into three levels of high, mid and low, in order to investigate the effectiveness of the etymological approach on each level.

##### **Multiple-choice test (post-test)**

The second instrument used in this study was a multiple-choice test. This test which was used as the post-test includes forty items and was developed to assess students' comprehension of the taught vocabularies. The items in the post-test were developed in a way students' etymological knowledge would be required.

### **Gap-fill test**

This test is the second post-test which was developed to assess students' retention of the learned vocabularies in the long run. It includes forty sentences which should be filled in by the appropriate vocabularies. The vocabularies needed to complete the gaps were the same words evaluated on the previous test.

### **Procedure**

After checking the validity and reliability of the tests, the tests were administered to check for the effectiveness of the proposed strategy.

Two groups of students who were studying ESP in grade three at vocational high school were chosen randomly, one as the control and the other as the experimental group. A pre-test was given to both groups in order to assess their general lexical knowledge and to divide each into three levels of high, mid and low based on the results. After the pre-test was administered, instruction started and each group was taught through different approaches. The control group received no treatment and was taught through the traditional approach in which vocabularies were taught through oral repetition. The experimental group, on the other hand, received treatment and was taught vocabularies through etymological approach. At the end of the course, a post-test was taken from the two groups. This test was of two types: a multiple-choice test which measured students' comprehension of the taught vocabularies and a gap-fill test which assessed their retention of the vocabularies. The first one was administered immediately at the end of the course and the second one after a week interval.

### **Statistical procedures**

After collecting the data (i.e. the scores which the participants in both groups had obtained through the exercises), the mean scores and the standard deviations of experimental and control group, the degree of differences between pre-test and post-tests for each group were calculated. Then three independent samples *t*-tests were conducted, one is run to show the homogeneity of control and experimental groups and the other two are conducted to indicate the effect of etymological approach on learner's comprehension and retention of words. to examine the degree of effectiveness of the proposed strategy on high, mid and low groups of students and to see whether teaching etymology had the same effect on each group three independent samples *t*-

test were conducted. The mean scores of the high, mid and low groups were also calculated independently to see whether each group was equally affected by the proposed strategy or not.

## 5. Results and Findings

The raw scores obtained from the pretest and posttest was analyzed through SPSS. The means, standard deviations and differences of means were computed for each group. Significance of difference between the mean scores of both the experimental and control groups were tested at 0.05 level by applying independent sample t test.

Table 1 reveals the descriptive statistics conducted to compare the mean scores of control group in pre-test and post-test. The results indicate that the minimum average refers to the post-test retention.

**Table 1**

*The descriptive statistics of control group in pre-test and post-test*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	20.32	25	4.497	.899
posttest.Comprehension	26.24	25	5.897	1.179
posttest.retention	17.36	25	8.220	1.644

To find whether there was a significant difference between pre-test and post-test in control group, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted. The results which are presented in table 2 show that there is no statistical difference between pre-test and post-test (comprehension and retention).The significant levels are above the significant value  $p < 0.05$ . They are 0.095 and 0.102 respectively.

**Table 2***Independent samples t-test for pre-test and post-test differences in control group*

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair1 Pretest-posttest.Comprehension	-0.920	1.656	.331	-6.604	-5.236	-17.871	24	.095
Pair2 Pretest - posttest.retention	1.960	3.802	.760	1.391	4.529	3.892	24	.102

Table 3 reveals the descriptive statistics conducted to compare the mean scores of experimental group in pre-test and post-test. The results show that the minimum average refers to the pre-test.

**Table 3***The descriptive statistics of experimental group in pre-test and post-test*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	20.44	25	4.283	.857
posttest.Comprehension	30.48	25	4.273	.855
posttest.retention	25.92	25	5.415	1.083

To find whether there was a significant difference between pre-test and post-test in experimental group, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted. The results which are presented in table 4 show that there is a significant statistical difference between pre-test and post-test (comprehension and retention).The significant levels are below the significant value  $p < 0.05$ . They are 0.00 and 0.00 respectively.

**Table 4***Independent samples t-test for pre-test and post-test differences in experimental group*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair1	Pretest posttest.Comprehension	-10.040	.790	.158	-10.366	-9.714	-63.583	24	.000
Pair2	Pretest - posttest.retention	-5.480	1.388	.278	-6.053	-4.907	-19.740	24	.000

The pre-test of both control and experimental groups is compared through an independent samples *t*-test. The results which are presented in table 5 show that there is no significant difference between these two groups. The significant value ( $p= 0.923$ ) is far above the  $p$ -value  $p<0.05$  which is highly insignificant.

**Table 5***Independent Samples t- test for pre-test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Pretest	Equal variances assumed	.070	.793	-.097	48	.923	-.120	1.242	-2.617	2.377
	Equal variances not assumed			-.097	47.885	.923	-.120	1.242	-2.617	2.377

To find whether there was a significant difference between comprehension post-tests of control and experimental groups, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted. The results which are presented in table 6 show that there is a significant difference between these two groups. The significant level ( $p=0.006$ ) is below the  $p$ -value  $p<0.05$ .

**Table 6***Independent Samples t-test for comprehension test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
posttest. Comprehension	Equal variances assumed	3.955	.052	-2.911	48	.005	-4.240	1.456	-7.168	-1.312
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.911	43.757	.006	-4.240	1.456	-7.176	-1.304

The retention post-tests of both control and experimental groups are compared through an independent samples *t*-test. The results which are presented in table 7 show that there is a significant difference between these two groups. The significant level ( $p=0.00$ ) is below the  $p$ -value  $p<0.05$ .

**Table 7***Independent Samples t-test for retention test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
posttest.retention	Equal variances assumed	6.246	.016	-4.348	48	.000	-8.560	1.969	-12.518	-4.602
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.348	41.530	.000	-8.560	1.969	-12.534	-4.586

Table 8 reveals the results obtained from the performance of high groups in comprehension and retention tests. Comparing the mean scores of the two groups shows the priority of experimental high group in both comprehension and retention tests.

**Table 8***The mean and standard deviation for comprehension and retention test of high groups*

group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
comprehension	control	9	7.2222	.66667	.22222
	Experimental	8	10.2500	.88641	.31339
retention	control	9	1.2222	1.56347	.52116
	Experimental	8	6.0000	1.06904	.37796

To find whether there was a significant difference between the performances of high groups in comprehension and retention tests, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted. The results which are presented in table 9 show that there is a significant difference between these two groups. The significant levels are below the significant value  $p < 0.05$ . They are 0.00 and 0.00 respectively.

**Table 9***Independent Samples t-test for comprehension and retention test of high groups*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
comprehension	Equal variances assumed	1.594	.226	-8.020	15	.000	-3.02778	.37755	-	-
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.881	12.945	.000	-3.02778	.38418	3.83250	2.22306
retention	Equal variances assumed	.826	.378	-8.773	15	.000	-5.77778	.65859	-	-
	Equal variances not assumed			-8.975	14.154	.000	-5.77778	.64379	7.18154	4.37402

Table 10 shows the mean scores of mid groups obtained from the comprehension and retention tests. It indicates that the mean score of the experimental mid group is higher than that of the control mid group which shows a considerable difference between the two groups.

**Table 10**

*The mean and standard deviation for comprehension and retention test of mid groups*

group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
comprehension	control	8	6.5000	1.06904
	Experimental	8	9.5000	.53452
retention	control	8	3.3750	1.59799
	Experimental	8	9.0000	.75593

The comprehension and retention tests of mid groups were compared through an independent *t*-test. The results which are presented in table 11 show that there is a significant difference between these two groups. The significant levels are below the significant value  $p < 0.05$ . They are 0.00 and 0.00 respectively.

**Table 11**

*Independent Samples t-test for comprehension and retention test of mid groups*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
comprehension	Equal variances assumed	4.200	.060	-7.099	14	.000	-3.00000	.42258	-3.90634	-2.09366
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.099	10.294	.000	-3.00000	.42258	-3.93793	-2.06207
retention	Equal variances assumed	9.026	.009	-13.400	14	.000	-8.37500	.62500	-9.71549	-7.03451
	Equal variances not assumed			-13.400	9.983	.000	-8.37500	.62500	-9.76790	-6.98210

Table 12 reveals the results obtained from the performance of low groups in comprehension and retention tests. Comparing the mean scores of the two groups shows the priority of experimental low group in both comprehension and retention tests.

**Table 12***The mean and standard deviation for comprehension and retention test of low groups*

group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
comprehension	control	8	3.8750	.64087	.22658
	Experimental	9	8.3333	.70711	.23570
retention	control	8	1.2500	.70711	.25000
	Experimental	9	9.5556	.88192	.29397

The comprehension and retention tests of low groups were compared through an independent *t*-test. The results which are presented in table 13 indicate that there is a significant difference between these two groups. The significant levels are below the significant value  $p < 0.05$ . They are 0.00 and 0.00 respectively.

**Table 13***Independent Samples t-test for comprehension and retention test of low groups*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
comprehension	Equal variances assumed	.700	.416	-19.632	15	.000	-6.45833	.32896	-7.15950	-5.75716
	Equal variances not assumed			-19.753	14.989	.000	-6.45833	.32695	-7.15525	-5.76142
retention	Equal variances assumed	.581	.458	-30.178	15	.000	-11.80556	.39120	-12.63937	-10.97174
	Equal variances not assumed			-30.592	14.868	.000	-11.80556	.38590	-12.62872	-10.98239

## 6. Discussion

### The effect of teaching etymology on the learner's comprehension and retention

The effect of teaching etymology on the learner's comprehension and retention of English technical vocabularies can be shown by resorting to both mean scores of the experimental group and control group. The first hypothesis of the study is that teaching technical vocabulary through

etymological approach can help the learners to understand the meaning of the words better. To see whether this hypothesis is retained or rejected we must look at the mean scores obtained from the comprehension task (or multiple-choice task). We see that the participants' mean score in the experimental group is 30.48(SD=4.2) while the mean score of control group is 26.24(SD=5.8). This shows that those participants who were taught through etymological approach were more successful in the comprehension of technical vocabulary than those who didn't teach through this approach. So, it can be concluded that the etymological approach can help learners to understand technical words better. The results of the independent samples *t*-test also show that there is a significant difference between these two groups as the significant level ( $p=0.006$ ) is below the  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ . So our conclusion is retained and the beneficial effect of etymological approach is again confirmed. These results also supported the studies conducted by Nittala S. Sarma (2004) who explained that learning the connection between the roots and the chemical meaning of the terms can improve students' understanding of chemistry concepts, making them easier and more enjoyable to master. Sarma (2006) later came to the same conclusion when studying Earth sciences. She found that knowledge of the root words from which technical terms are formed not only made learning of the concepts represented easier, but also helped to quickly understand new terms that may be encountered.

The second hypothesis is that teaching technical vocabulary through etymological approach can help students remember the words for a long time. To retain or reject this hypothesis we have to resort to the mean scores obtained from the retention task (or the gap-filling task). The mean score of the experimental group is 25.92(SD=5.4) while the control group mean score is 17.36 (SD=8.2). As in the case of comprehension task, we see that the mean score of the participants taught through the etymological approach is higher than that of the participants taught through the traditional approach (oral repetition of words). So, it reveals the positive effect of etymological approach on retention of English technical words. The results of the independent samples *t*-test also show that the significant value ( $p=0.00$ ) is below the  $p\text{-value} = <0.05$  and it proves that teaching etymology has had an effect on retention of words. These results also supported the study conducted by Otterman (1955). The only instrument specifically made for the Otterman experiment was the one used to assess delayed recall of the prefixes and roots taught. Analyses of the data revealed a definite superiority of the experimental group over the control group. The conclusion based on the test-specific instrument suggested the viability of

word part instruction in promoting long-term (six weeks) recall. This study however, adds something new to the previous study conducted by Otterman. In fact, it examined the retention effect of etymology training among vocational high school students who had special purposes in language learning while Otterman's work focused on the use of prefixes and roots among junior high school students. The researcher concluded that using etymology in the field of Science and Technology had a positive effect on the comprehension of technical words and helped students retain them in the long-term memory for periods of time.

### **The effect of teaching etymology on the comprehension and retention of high, mid and low groups of students**

To see whether each group of students (high, mid and low) is affected by etymological approach and to examine the degree of effectiveness of the proposed strategy in each group, we must compare their mean scores obtained from the comprehension and retention test in both control and experimental groups.

In high groups, the mean scores obtained from the comprehension and retention tests are as follows: in the comprehension test the mean score of experimental group is 10.25 (SD=0.8) while the mean score of control group is 7.22 (SD=0.6).

In the retention test, the mean score of experimental group is 6.00 (SD=1.06) while the mean score of control group is 1.22 (SD=1.56). The significant values ( $p=0.00$ ) obtained from the independent samples *t*-test for comprehension and retention are below the  $p\text{-value} < 0.5$

In mid groups, the mean scores obtained from the comprehension and retention tests are as follows: in the comprehension test the mean score of experimental group is 9.50 (SD=0.53) while the mean score of control group is 6.50 (SD=1.06).

In the retention test, the mean score of experimental group is 9.00 (SD=0.75) while the mean score of control group is 3.37 (SD=1.59). The significant values ( $p=0.00$ ) obtained from the independent samples *t*-test for comprehension and retention tests are below the  $p\text{-value} < 0.5$

In low groups, the mean scores obtained from the comprehension and retention tests are as follows: in the comprehension test the mean score of experimental group is 8.33 (SD=0.70) while the mean score of control group is 3.87 (SD=0.64).

In the retention test, the mean score of experimental group is 9.55 (SD=0.88) while the mean score of control group is 1.25 (SD=0.70). The significant values ( $p= 0.00$ ) obtained from the independent samples *t*-test for comprehension and retention tests are below the  $p\text{-value} < 0.5$ .

The comparison between high, mid and low levels of students in control and experimental group shows that in both comprehension and retention tests, the three levels of students in experimental group who were taught through etymological approach performed better than those in the control group. The result of the independent samples *t*-test also, confirmed the beneficial effect of etymological approach on the comprehension and retention of high, mid and low levels of students in experimental group. These results also supported the study conducted by Behlol & Dad (2010). They investigated the effect of structural method of teaching vocabulary on the performance and retention rate of high, average and low students of secondary classes studying English in Federal Government schools of Islamabad District. The results indicated that all categories of experimental group who were taught with the structural method performed better on post test and retention test than the students who were taught with definitional method of teaching vocabulary. They concluded that the students learn more through the structural method of teaching vocabulary because they themselves actively participate in the learning process and build up their vocabulary.

## **7. Conclusion**

This study reports a series of experiments regarding the effect of teaching etymology on the learners' comprehension and retention of English technical vocabularies. The findings of the study are encouraging regarding the effect of etymological approach on the comprehension of technical words. Therefore, we can conclude that providing the learners with etymology of words can effectively help them understand their meaning in an interesting and insightful way. Based on this conclusion, we suggest teachers of English use this technique in the classroom contexts where students are studying EST and encourage students to use the etymological approach plus the context to better understand the technical vocabularies' meaning. The learners of English can also enhance their retention of technical words if they are informed about the etymology of them. This suggests that in EST classroom contexts teachers can provide their students with the etymology of words before asking them to memorize the words in a rote-learning fashion. It was also concluded that etymological approach can effectively help learners

in each level of ability to comprehend and remember technical words. The students through this method personalize word learning and they are engaged in active, independent process of vocabulary learning.

This study proves the effectiveness of etymological approach as an effective strategy for teaching technical vocabularies so; the findings will be of value to the English language teachers who teach English for specific purposes, the learners and the curriculum planners on the whole. The researcher expects the findings to be of value and use in the following ways and occasions:

First, as etymological training course helps promoting students lexical knowledge and proves to be an effective strategy in teaching and learning technical vocabularies, it could be incorporated into the curriculum of vocational high school students.

Second, teaching etymology could be advised by vocational high school English teachers as an integral part of any extensive reading process which centers on the acquisition of a considerable number of technical words.

Finally, etymology helps learners to understand technical words in a meaningful way. It functions as a memory aid and facilitates the recall of words in the long run. So, it helps the individuals to become more proficient language learners.

Since vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role in reading comprehension, it is every teacher's responsibility to seek the most effective and practical ways of training good vocabulary learners. Translation, on the other hand, is a process which starts with reading-comprehension. Understanding meaning of words has a very important role in translation process. So, other studies may consider more details and explore the effect etymological approach on promoting students' vocabulary knowledge and consequently on their reading comprehension and translation process.

## References

- Angiline, K., Bienllier, M., & Slonim, S. (2001). Etymology an effective way to learn vocabulary. Retrieved on May 14, 2007 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.Sciencedirect.com>.
- Behlol, M., & Dad, h. (2010). Effectiveness of structural method of teaching vocabulary. *ELT journal*, 3(3), 125-135.

- Burke, J. W. (1998). Foreign language techniques in teaching etymology. *The Classical Journal*, 93 (3). Retrieved September 15, 2008 from JSTOR Arts and Sciences Complement Database.
- Dudley-Evans, T. (2001). English for specific purposes. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dudley- Evans, T., & John, M.J. (1998). *Developments in English for specific purposes: a multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Irwin, M. (2000). It shouldn't have to be trachelodynia: A new pedagogical approach to Greek root based English medical vocabulary. *JACET Bulletin*, 32, 19-36.
- Kail, S.R. (2008). Vocabulary instruction goes "old school". *English Journal*, 97 (4). Retrieved on September 3, 2008 from EBSCO Host Database.
- Lewis, M. (1993). *The lexical approach*. England: Language Teaching Publications.
- McGavin, B. (1990). Augmenting language analysis skills through Graeco/Latin derivatives studies. *TESL-EJ*, 4(2), 16-22.
- Mimic, D. (2000). An introduction to vocabulary learning through knowing roots. Retrieved on November 16, 2006 from the World Wide Web: [http:// www.ericdigest.com](http://www.ericdigest.com).
- Nagy, W.E. & Herman, P.A. (1987). Breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge: Implications for acquisition and instruction. In M.G. McKeown & M.E. Curtis (Eds.), *The nature of vocabulary acquisition* (pp. 19-35). Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning Vocabulary in another Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nation, I. S. P. (1990). *Teaching and learning vocabulary*. Rowley: Newbury House.
- Otterman, L. M. (1955). The value of teaching prefixes and word-roots. *Journal of Educational Research*, 48, 611-616.
- Pierson, R. (1989). Etymology and vocabulary learning in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Retrieved on May 21, 2007 from the World Wide Web: [http:// www.elsevier.com](http://www.elsevier.com).
- Read, J. (2000). *Assessing vocabulary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sarma, N.S. (2006). Forming concepts and strengthening vocabulary in earth sciences through etymology. *Journal of Earth System Science Education*. Retrieved on September 15, 2008 from the World Wide Web: <http://jesse.usra.edu>.

- Sarma, N. S. (2004). Etymology as an aid to understanding chemistry concepts. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 81 (10). Retrieved September on 15, 2008 from Wilson Web Database.
- Schmitt, N. & McCarthy, M. (1997). *Vocabulary: description, acquisition and pedagogy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sharoon, M. (2000). The impact of etymology on the students' vocabulary learning of Hong Kong College. Retrieved on July 12, 2007 from the World Wide Web: sciencedirect.com.
- Stevens, P. (1973). Technical, technological, and scientific English. *ELT Journal*, 27, 223-234.
- Trimble, L. (1985). *English for science and technology: A discourse approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## **Title**

# **The Relationship between First Language Reading Skill and Second Language Reading Skill**

## **Author**

**Javad Zare' (M.A.)**

Iran University of Science and Technology, Tehran, Iran

## **Biodata**

**Javad Zare'** is an M.A. student of TEFL at Iran University of Science and Technology, Tehran, Iran. Teaching EGP and ESP courses at private institutes, he has extended his experience in TEFL. His research areas of interest include Learning Strategies, Cross-linguistic Transfer and Alternative Assessment.

## **Abstract**

The current research aims to investigate the relationship between Persian and English reading comprehension skill that is, whether students with higher proficiency in L2 reading comprehension score higher on L1 reading test than those with lower proficiency in L2 Reading Comprehension. Through the stages of study, 50 subjects of college students were assigned randomly to treatment and control groups. 25 students who scored beyond average on the TOEFL were assigned to the experimental group and the other 25 subjects, who obtained scores below average on the TOEFL test, were assigned to the control group. The control group was supposed to answer Persian reading comprehension tests. The experimental group, mostly studying English at college answered Persian and English reading comprehension tests. Due to the lack of any standard Persian reading comprehension test, a Persian reading comprehension test was designed and administered to the subjects in the experimental and control groups. It is important to note that the experimental group i.e. English students answered Persian tests more quickly and with fewer mistakes. The study suggests that students studying a second language i.e. proficient in an L2 have a better understanding of their L1 than other students.

**Keywords:** Cross Linguistic Transfer, Proficiency Theory, Reading Universal Hypothesis.

## **1. Introduction**

Learners, who have gone through the process of learning a second language, often experience a kind of influence on their first or second language. This kind of influence is called transfer. The influence of one language over another is studied under the term of cross linguistic transfer. The current study focuses on the transfer of the second language to the first one. In fact, it investigates the relationship between Persian reading comprehension skill and English reading comprehension skill. Some believe that there is a kind of general underlying proficiency which enables us to acquire both L1 and L2. If this is the case, it can be suggested that proficiency in both first and second language is equivalent. Regarding this point, a person who is a skilled reader in L1 should be a proficient reader in L2 as well. In other words, there is a kind of relationship between these two skills. From another point of view, proficiency is not equivalent in L1 and L2, but instead, every language exerts certain amount of influence on one another. In this sense, it is said that there is certain amount of transfer from one language to another. Another point to note is the direction of this so called transfer. Traditionally it is believed that L1 affects L2. Numerous studies have been done so far on this issue, showing transfer from L1 to L2.

What If, there was a reverse transfer from L2 to L1. Many scholars suggest that L2 affects L1 in some ways. However, conflicting results have been reported. Suppose that a student quite proficient in reading comprehension skill is asked to partake in an L1 test of reading comprehension. How well would he score on the test? Is it applicable to implement reading comprehension skills to another language? Answer to these questions demands a comprehensive study of this situation, which also gave insight to conduction of the current research. So it is intriguing to investigate such an important issue in the Iranian context.

Another point to take into consideration is the existence of learning styles and strategies. Learning styles are specific and belong to certain persons. Every person has got his own learning styles which affect the way he learns. In this sense, there should not be so much difference between performances in different languages on the part of the learner, because of the inflexibility of every person's learning styles. Regarding learning strategies, which are not so

rigid in nature, it can be stated that there could be drastic changes in performances in different languages. It is quite interesting to note that every learner can make different choices of his reservoir of learning strategies, making his learning more convenient.

## **2. Review of the Related Literature**

According to Gough (1972), reading is a unidirectional process from letters to sounds to meaning. Like Gough, LaBerge and Samuels (1974) also depict reading as a linear process though they emphasize more the aspect of automaticity in reading functioned through memories. Goodman (1967) views reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game, allowing readers to rely more on their existing syntactic and semantic knowledge structures than on the knowledge of graphic and sounds. Rumelhart (1977) delineates reading as involving flexible processing and multiple information sources, depending upon contextual circumstances. To the early 80s, a fairly general consensus was reached that reading is a complex process in which cognitive and psychological functions of different levels interact with each other in making sense of the meanings of the text. In this process, readers need to utilize all the knowledge they have, including their linguistic knowledge, their background knowledge of the topic being discussed in the text, and their knowledge of the cognitive and meta-cognitive reading strategies.

What is L2 reading? What is the relationship between L1 and L2 readings? Is it a reading problem or a language problem (Alderson, 1984)? Or is it equal to L1 reading plus L2 language proficiency (Carrell, 1991)? An adult second language learner usually has some meta-cognitive knowledge of reading and reading strategies from literacy experiences in learning his/her native language (L1), but his/her linguistic knowledge of the second language (L2) is usually limited. What reading strategies will a second language reader use in L2 reading? Will she be able to transfer L1 reading strategies automatically to L2 reading, regardless of his/her knowledge in L2 (Goodman, Goodman, & Flores, 1979) as believed by the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (LIH)? Or will the limited L2 proficiency 'short circuits' his/her more effective high-level L1 reading method and reduce it to only low level decoding skills (Clarke, 1980) as depicted by the Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis (LTH)?

However, several recent studies show that both the readers' L1 reading ability and L2 language proficiency contribute to L2 reading comprehension (Carrell, 1991; Bosser, 1992) and evidence supports both LIH and LTH (Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995; Bristois, 1995). While this

seems to be common sensical and supported by research, what exactly are the strategies being used in the L2 reading process, what L1 reading knowledge including reading strategies get transferred, and how much L2 knowledge is required in completing a reading task at a certain difficulty level need to be further explored.

To make matters more complicated, the written form of logographic language, such as Chinese, is independent from how it sounds, while alphabetical language, such as English, has certain connection between its written and spoken forms. Does this difference in the two writing systems have any effect on the reading strategies used by the readers? Studies show that this difference in orthography does exert some influence on the lower levels of the cognitive reading processes, such as visual perception and word recognition. Tzeng and Wang (1983) compared Chinese readers with native English readers in their ability to recall the position of nine items in a series. They found that the Chinese were superior with the visually presented than with the auditorially presented list, while no such preference was found with the English speakers. This shows that learning to read in a logographic language like Chinese "imposes a heavier demand on visual discrimination and memory than learning an alphabetic code" (Samuels, 1985, p.273). While different scripts may require different strategies for recall of visual and auditory information, Parry's (1996) comparative study between the Nigerian and the Chinese students found that "whereas the Nigerian students showed a marked preference for top-down methods of solving comprehension problems, the Chinese students reported a strong tendency to use bottom-up ones" (p.665). Parry also tried to explain the difference in terms of the different language backgrounds and their different experiences of literacy. In her view, the analytical feature of the Chinese writing system and the way it is taught may have affected the way the Chinese readers approach reading the English texts, or reading in general. However, the data that she collected for her analysis were students' self reflections on their reading.

### **2.1. Effect of L1 Knowledge on L2 Learning**

There is evidence that knowledge of the structure and function of L1 is a plus for readers in comprehending L2. Cummins (1986) developed a framework for empowering minority students. One of the components in this framework was cultural/linguistic incorporation, including taking into account an individual's previous culturally conditioned learning styles. Cummins believed this component was "additive" rather than "subtractive" (p.25) through enhancing the possibility

of minority students succeeding in school. He based this on "the considerable evidence of interdependence of literacy-related academic skills across such that the better developed children's L1 conceptual foundation is, the more likely they are to develop similarly high levels of conceptual abilities in the L2. The moderate to strong correlation between academic skills in L1 and L2 suggests that L1 and L2 abilities are manifestations of a common underlying proficiency" (Cummins, 1994, p.38).

Cummins suggested that there was an underlying common underlying proficiency that could be applied to both L1 and L2 though the surface aspects (e.g. pronunciation, fluency, etc.) of the languages differ. Some evidence lends support to this assumption. Clarke (1979) studied "good" and "poor" Spanish readers in reading English and found that "good" Spanish readers performed better on English reading tasks than the "poor" ones. Jimenez, Garcia and Pearson (1994) found the same with their study of the strategic reading processes of eight bilingual Latino children. They found that the less proficient Latino readers used fewer strategies and were often less effective in resolving comprehension difficulties in reading English than the proficient readers of Spanish.

## **2.2. The Transfer Hypothesis of Reading**

Esling and Downing (1986), working from a psychological perspective, suggested the possibility that literacy transfer could happen across languages. Based on research on skill acquisition in general, Esling and Downing apply the findings to reading in particular. They argue that reading is a skill that can be developed in any language. They assume that there exists a universal pattern of skill development. Any skill, such as reading, is developed through the universal pattern which consists of three overlapping stages: cognitive, mastering, and automaticity. At the first stage, learners try to figure out what they should do in performing the skill. At the second stage, the learners work to perfect the performance of the skill. Then they practice until they obtain automaticity. "Once automaticity has been achieved, a skill like reading does not atrophy" (Esling & Downing, 1986, p. 56). According to this assumption, Esling and Downing have proposed the transfer hypothesis as follows:

The skill of literacy like the skill of oracy is learned only once in an individual's lifetime though he or she may transfer those skills to other specific languages. However, research on L2 acquisition in general and L2 reading in particular has not yet provided sufficient evidence to

support Esling and Downing's transfer hypothesis. What is notable in research on transfer is that the great majority of studies focuses on such manifestations as the transfer of specific linguistic structures that lead to errors (i.e., negative transfer) and on transfer in language production (Ringbom, 1992). In other words, this kind of research focuses on cross-linguistic similarity or difference rather than on language comprehension processes, that is, the involvement of higher-level cognitive processes, for instance, using cognitive strategies or using previous knowledge in long-term memory to facilitate language comprehension.

Esling and Downing's hypothesis suggested a transfer beyond formal or linguistic similarity and dissimilarity. What they suggested is that once a person acquires reading skill in any language, he or she can apply the skill to any other language. It implies that reading skill includes "knowing how" (Esling & Downing, 1989, p. 57). The "knowing how" is also called "procedural knowledge" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990), or operational knowledge (Bernhardt, 1991). The so-called procedural knowledge includes knowing when-what, that is, when you need to do what to help achieve the goal. This kind of knowledge can only be developed and acquired gradually through plenty of practice. Once the procedural knowledge is obtained, it can possibly be applied to other similar situations. Nonetheless, L2 reading research has not yet provided any persuasive evidence for the transfer hypothesis. Research studies in L2 reading indicate that readers perform reading tasks similarly in LI and L2 (Clarke, 1979, 1980; Benedetto, 1984, among others). Can the transfer hypothesis of reading explain the phenomena that L2 readers performed similarly in LI and L2? Is it possible to test whether a strategy used by a reader was developed in LI reading experience or was acquired in L2 reading practice? The transfer hypothesis of reading might be adequate in theory, but not testable in research. So, further research is needed to explore the nature of transfer when it happens in L2 reading.

### **2.3. Common Underlying Proficiency Theory (The Interdependence Hypothesis)**

Cummins (1981, 1983) makes a strong case for the transfer of literacy skills across languages. He states that an underlying cognitive/academic proficiency exists common to all written languages. This theory of a common underlying proficiency is also called the interdependence hypothesis, and suggests, from a cognitive point of view, that there is a cognitive/academic proficiency that is common for all written languages. Cummins (1983, 1984) explains that there is only so much space or capacity available in our brains for language or literacy. He compares

the space of language or literacy to a balloon. If we divide the space between two languages, blowing into the LI balloon will succeed in inflating LI but not L2. If that is the case, literacy in neither language will develop properly. For the purpose of bilingual education, Cummins argues that we can better inflate the L2 balloon by blowing into the LI balloon because the space for literacy development is not, and should not be separated. L2 learners can thus benefit from proficiency either in LI or in L2, or from both, since literacy skills can be seen as common or interdependent across languages. Providing that a transfer occurs in reading across languages, transfer should also occur in adult L2 readers' reading processes and should not be only unidirectional as Cummins (1991) proposed. The common underlying proficiency model suggests that educated adult bilingual readers who are already literate in their LI may have two channels available to them as they develop literacy skills in their L2. They can draw on their literacy skills and knowledge of literacy practices from their LI and they can also draw on input from the second language. Therefore, research on educated adult bilingual readers might indicate a two-way transfer, that is, from LI to L2 and vice versa, since educated adult bilingual readers have something to transfer both ways. However, there has been no research done to test the Common Underlying Proficiency Hypothesis with educated adult L2 readers.

#### **2.4. The Reading Universal Hypothesis**

The psycholinguistic point of view of L2 reading has been addressed by Goodman (1970, 1971, and 1973) as the Reading Universal Hypothesis which suggests that the primary goal of reading is comprehension. Comprehension uses both sensory and non-sensory sources (Rumelhart, 1977) or seen and unseen information (Bernhardt, 1991) to reconstruct the meaning of a given passage. During reading, readers predict the meaning of a text by relating it to their background knowledge; they use other strategies available along with the incoming sensory data. Then the readers may refine, confirm, or even reject the initial prediction.

Goodman (1973) suggests that the reading process cannot vary to any extent from one language to another, since the key question is how much background knowledge (e.g., linguistic knowledge, content knowledge, strategy knowledge) the reader brings to the specific reading task. He goes further and postulates the reading universal hypothesis. The Reading Universal Hypothesis argues that the reading process will be much the same for all languages, with minor variations to accommodate the specific characteristics of the writing systems and the

grammatical structures of each. Research on orthographic differences in LI and L2 reading (Koda, 1989; 1990, among others) indicates some difference in word recognition processes in different languages. However, word recognition is just one of the primary steps of reading comprehension. Recognizing words is a lower-level and mechanical process compared with the other processes such as relating to previous relevant knowledge stored in the long-term memory.

Rosenblatt (1985) strongly suggests that we need not pause here to deal with the primary level of recognition of the printed signs. As soon as we turn to the matter of their lexical or semantic interpretation as symbols, we find ourselves involved in consideration of "what the reader brings to the text — a fund of past linguistic, literacy, and life experiences". Miller (1988) analyzes the reading comprehension process and contends that reading comprehension includes visual decoding processes, cognitive processes that integrate the information in a text with general knowledge. Of these, only decoding is specific to a certain language. The other two processes may be universal to any language. Hence, reading is thought to be universal in any language since no matter in which language a reader needs to that integrate the information in a text with general knowledge to construct meaning of a passage, and the ultimate purpose of reading is comprehension. Goodman calls for researchers "to test and challenge the hypotheses in terms of languages and orthographies other than English" (Goodman, 1970, p. 103). Unfortunately, no research has been done with educated adult bilingual readers reading in LI and L2 to test this hypothesis. However, previous studies with adult second language readers (Benedetto, 1984; Block, 1986; 1992), no matter what the initial intentions of the studies were, have revealed some similarities in reading comprehension processes across the languages concerned. What is the underlying cause of the similarities? Could we interpret the similarities as being caused by reading universals?

The foregoing theories from three different theoretical standpoints, namely, the cognitive, psychological, and psycholinguistic perspectives, claim that reading is a skill transferable, interdependent, and universal across languages. These three existing theories share some commonalties, and their core features overlap. All these theories emphasize cognitive commonalties in reading comprehension processes across languages. What we need is empirical research to explore the nature of commonalties in LI and L2 reading. To better understand LI and L2 reading comprehension processes, we need information about how the same bilingual readers cope with reading tasks in their LI and L2. We should probe how these readers gather and use

information available to them to construct their understandings. Evidence can only be obtained from empirical experiments on comprehension processes in LI and L2 with the same individual readers.

### **2.5. Cross Language Transfer**

Transfer has long been a major theoretical concept in L2 research. Traditionally, transfer is seen as learners' reliance on L1 linguistic knowledge. Krashen (1983), for example, viewed transfer as the resultant state stemming from learners' falling back on old knowledge, or L1 rules, when new knowledge is not yet sufficiently developed. Similarly, Gass and Selinker (1983) regarded transfer as use of previously acquired linguistic knowledge, which results in interlanguage forms. Odlin (1989) also endorsed the general thrust of the contention that transfer manifests learners' reliance on L1 knowledge. He argued, "Transfer is the influence from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired" (p. 27). These views imply that transfer occurs to compensate for insufficient L2 knowledge, ceases once sufficient L2 linguistic knowledge is achieved; and thereafter, L1 knowledge plays a minimum role in explaining individual differences in L2 learning.

These contentions, however, are no longer uniformly endorsed. Alternative conceptualizations consistently underscore the need for broader definitions of transfer (August & Shanahan, 2006; Riches & Genesee, 2006). As an illustration, transfer is defined as the ability to learn new skills by drawing on previously acquired resources (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006). Similarly, prior learning experience is regarded as a reservoir of knowledge, skills and abilities that is available in learning a new language as well as literacy skills in that language (Riches & Genesee, 2006). Under these newer conceptualizations, the research focus has shifted from characterizing L1 influence as negative, positive, or neutral to identifying the resources available to learners at the outset of L2 learning.

Within the componential view of reading (Carr & Levy, 1990), recent biliteracy studies have explored cross-linguistic relationships in a variety of reading sub-skills, including phonological awareness (Bialystok, McBride-Chang, & Luk, 2005).

## **2.6. Process-oriented and Product-oriented Studies, Investigating the Relationship between L1 and L2 Reading Comprehension**

A distinction is often made in the literature, explicitly or implicitly, between the process and the product of reading. Process refers to various mental activities that readers are engaged in during interaction with a text for the purpose of constructing meaning. The product of reading refers to both quality and quantity of meaning representation that readers have constructed as a result of various mental interactions with the text.

Research into the relationship between L1 and L2 reading is divided into two types according to this distinction: product-oriented studies (Bernhardt and Kamil 1995, Bossers, 1991, 1992, Brisbois 1995, Carrell, 1991, Lee and Shallert 1997, Perkins et al. 1989, Schoonen et al. 1998, Taillefer 1996, Yamashita 1999) and process-oriented studies (Davis and Bistodeau 1993, Sarig 1987, Taillefer and Pugh 1998, Yamashita 1999, Zwaan and Brown 1996). Product-oriented studies are test-based quantitative research. They use test scores as representations of the abilities that researchers intend to investigate. The relationships among the three major variables (L2 reading ability, L1 reading ability and L2 linguistic proficiency) have been mainly examined by correlation and/or multiple regression analysis<sup>1</sup>. Process-oriented studies, on the other hand, are qualitative in nature. Most of these studies use reading strategies inferred from verbal protocols obtained by the think-aloud method (concurrent verbalization of mental activities) as representations of mental operations that readers use during reading<sup>2</sup>. Although they also quantify data, researchers first study the verbal protocols and identify strategies according to the qualitative differences in the content of the verbal protocols. Thus, researchers' interpretations and participants' perspectives are reflected in the results (Bogdan and Biklen 1998). Various strategies, each of which reflects such different aspects of reading as local-level understanding, global-level understanding and meta-cognitive operations are identified in each study. The relationships between L1 and L2 reading strategies have been analyzed by correlational analysis and/or analysis of variance.

There are both similarities and differences in these two types of studies. Both have adopted a within-subjects design and collected various information from the same individuals. Readers have often been divided into groups according to their levels of L2 proficiency, and the strength of the relationships between L1 and L2 reading was compared between the groups in order to test the linguistic threshold hypothesis and the linguistic interdependence hypothesis. Sometimes,

depending on the purpose and the design of each study, L1 and/or L2 reading ability was used as a dividing criterion. The differences include the quality of data, data analysis methods, and the size of the reader population. The product-oriented studies have used tens of or hundreds of participants, while the process-oriented studies have included only a small number of readers (usually around ten). Obviously such small scale studies contain problems in the generalizability of their results. However, this is largely due to inevitable practical constraints. Conducting a process-oriented study is much more time-consuming. In product-oriented studies, tests can be administered to a large number of subjects at one time, while a think-aloud task is normally used on a one by one basis. Scoring tests can be done in a relatively short time if the tests are objective, which is the case in most studies. On the other hand, protocol analysis generally takes a much longer time. The researchers have to first transcribe verbal data, and then carefully read through the protocols a number of times in order to code them. After coding, they have to check the reliability of their analysis with a different coder(s).

#### **2.6.1. Correlation between L1 and L2 Reading Performance**

Correlation analysis is the only method of data analysis applied in both types of studies<sup>3</sup>. In product-oriented studies, scores on L1 and L2 reading comprehension tests have been correlated. Only low to moderate correlations have been obtained: with the range of 0.20 to 0.53 (Bernhardt and Kamil 1995), 0.59 (Bossers 1992), 0.24 to 0.57 (Brisbois 1995), 0.17 to 0.474 (Lee and Shallert 1997), 0.24 to 0.64 (Perkins et al. 1989), 0.23 to 0.37 (Yamashita 1999). The variation of the figures in each study is due to different ways of analyzing data. For example, in some studies readers were divided into groups and correlations were computed for each group, or in other studies researchers used more than one test to measure one trait and entered each test separately for analysis.

In process-oriented studies, frequencies of corresponding L1 and L2 reading strategies have been correlated. Different from the product-oriented studies, moderate to high correlations have been observed: 0.54 to 0.91 (Sarig, 1987), and 0.68 to 0.88 (Yamashita, 1999). These correlations were obtained only from a whole group of readers in each study, because the number of participants was small and it was not appropriate to divide the participants into even smaller groups to calculate correlations. The variation in the figures reflects strategy differences (i.e., correlations were computed for different strategies separately). Among these figures, the ones

obtained by correlating the strategy that reflected successful text level understanding were 0.84 and 0.86 in Sarig and Yamashita respectively<sup>5</sup>; thus the correlations are high. The reason for citing the last two figures in particular is to make a more rigid comparison with the results of product-oriented studies. We assume that overall test scores represent ability to understand overall text meaning.

Therefore, the results of the strategies which reflect text-level understanding can be considered the ones best mirrored in test scores. A simple comparison of this range of correlation coefficients suggests that the relationship between L1 and L2 reading is stronger in process than in product of reading. When the correlations from the strategy which deals with the overall meaning representation of a text are compared with those from test scores, the difference is even clearer.

### **2.7. The Relationship between L1 and L2 Reading Shown by Lower Level Readers**

The linguistic threshold hypothesis predicts that lower level readers show little evidence of transfer of L1 reading ability/strategies to L2 reading. Both product and process-oriented studies have supported this, but the research results have identified some evidence of transfer of L1 reading ability/strategies in the process even at lower levels of L2 proficiency.

The product-oriented studies have generally shown a gradual decrease in the strength of the relationship between L1 and L2 reading when readers' L2 proficiency becomes lower. Correlation coefficients are again cited (from high to low level groups): 0.45, 0.33 (Brisbois 1995), 0.47, 0.43, 0.38, 0.17, 0.22 (Lee and Shallert 1997), 0.64, 0.24, N.S. (Perkins et al. 1989), 0.37, 0.28, N.S. (Yamashita 1999). The low level readers in Perkins et al. (*ibid.*) and Yamashita (*ibid.*) are regarded as being below the level of the linguistic threshold, so they cannot transfer their L1 reading ability. The correlations in the low level groups in Brisbois (*ibid.*) and Lee and Shallert (*ibid.*) were still significant, but we can infer that if these studies had included readers with even lower levels of L2 proficiency, correlations would have been non-significant. We cannot obtain the same kind of correlational results from process-oriented studies due to the small number of participants. There are, however, two kinds of evidence to indicate that some L1 reading strategies transfer even at lower levels of L2 proficiency. First, there was no difference between L1 and L2 reading in the proportion of some strategies. In Davis and Bistodeau (1993), although low level readers used "top-down" and "bottom-up" strategies differently in L1 and L2,

there was not a significant difference in the proportion of “meta-cognitive” strategy use. That is, low level readers transferred their meta-cognitive strategies and used them similarly in L1 and L2. In Yamashita (1999), although “local strategies” and “global strategies” were used differently between L1 and L2, four other strategies identified (“compromising”, “monitoring”, “repetition”, “test taking strategies”) did not reveal a significant difference between L1 and L2 reading<sup>8</sup>. This means that the transfer of these four strategies succeeded in spite of the readers’ low L2 proficiency.

The second evidence of transfer of L1 reading strategies is the facilitative effect of high L1 reading ability shown by readers with low L2 proficiency. In Zwaan and Brown (1996), readers with high L1 reading ability tended to be more accurate in their “paraphrasing” than those with low L1 reading ability. In Yamashita (1999), readers with high L1 reading ability showed a significantly higher proportion of successful rather than unsuccessful “local strategies”, while readers with low L1 reading ability did not show any such facilitative effect. These two strategies for which the facilitation of high L1 reading ability was identified represent only sentence-level understanding; therefore the findings suggest that successful use of these strategies does not necessarily guarantee overall text-level comprehension. However, these two studies have shown that readers with high L1 reading ability can transfer their L1 ability and facilitate their L2 reading comprehension at least to a certain extent.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Subjects**

The 50 students who served as subjects were selected from college students. 25 of them who scored beyond average on the TOEFL were assigned to the experimental group and the other 25 subjects, who obtained scores below average on the TOEFL test, were assigned to the control group. Members of the control group were from different fields other than English. They were to answer Persian semi-academic reading comprehension tests. The other 25 subjects, who were assigned to the experimental group, were students studying English. The experimental group was to answer English and Persian reading comprehension tests. Both control and experimental groups, to some extent, were familiar with the content of Persian reading tests.

### 3.2. Materials

Materials used in this paper for data collection purposes contain:

1. A TOEFL test
2. A Persian Reading Comprehension Test for College Students
3. An English Reading Comprehension Test Aimed at College Students

All materials in this study except for the Persian one were of high degree of reliability and validity. Due to the lack of any standard Persian reading comprehension test, one was designed. The Reliability obtained from this Persian test was high (0.85).

### 4. Results and Discussion

Going through the study these results are witnessed which are presented in four parts, accompanied with tables. To make sure that the null hypothesis is rejected, the performance of the subjects was compared. Statistics gathered, showed that:

**4.1.** Pearson correlation between Fr.f and E.f variables (0.94) is high.

T observed (5.11) > T critical (3.74). Refer to Table 1

**Table 1. Paired Sample Test**

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	FR.F E.F -	2.0500	2.00260	.40052	1.2234	2.8766	5.118	24	.000

**4.2.** Pearson correlation between Fr.e and E.e variables (0.94) is high.

T observed (-8.89) > T critical (3.74). Refer to Table 2

**Table 2. Paired Sample Test**

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	E.E FR.E -	-6.8800	3.86566	.77313	-8.4757	-5.2843	-8.899	24	.000

4.3. Pearson correlation between Fr.e and Fr.f variables (0.97) is high.

T observed (-4.11) > T critical (3.74). Refer to Table 3

**Table 3. Paired Sample Test**

	Paired Differences	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
					Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	FR.F FR.E	-	-2.4000	2.91548	.58310	-3.6034	-1.1966	-4.116	24	.000

4.4. Pearson correlation between E.e and E.f variables (0.91) is high.

T observed (-4.43) > T critical (3.74). Refer to Table 4

**Table 4. Paired Sample Test**

	Paired Differences	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
					Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	E.E E.F	-	-2.4300	2.74006	.54801	-3.5610	-1.2990	-4.434	24	.000

The focus of this research was on Fr.e and Fr.f (Fr.e: A test of Persian (I1) for the students studying English (I2)---Fr.f : A test of Persian for the students of other fields but their L1 is Persian). Since T observed is greater than T critical the null hypothesis is rejected i.e. there is a statistically significant relationship between L1 and L2 Reading Comprehension Skill.

Pearson correlation formula between the fr.f and fr.e variables (Fr.e: A test of Persian (I1) for students studying English (I2)-Fr.f: A test of Persian for the students of other fields but their L1 is Persian) proved that there is a relationship between L1 and L2 Reading Comprehension Skill. Put it another way, statistics showed that Second language Reading Comprehension Skill can affect first language reading skill. This relationship is positive. The results gained from T-test shows that T observed (t=4.116) is greater than T critical (t=3.74, level of significance for two-tailed test was 0.01). As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected. It means that students studying a

second language i.e. proficient in an L2 have a better understanding of their L1 than other students.

## **5. Conclusion**

According to the results of the study, the hypothesis under investigation can be supported. But It should be noted that the generalizability of this hypothesis is under question. As mentioned earlier, during the study a couple of obstacles and limitations were encountered, which could have endangered the validity of the findings. There have been numerous factors affecting the outcome of research, which have not been taken into account in this study. The point to mention here is that learning a second language does have some effects on the first language but conducting a research valid and reliable enough to count on demands more equipment and facilities.

This paper provides considerable amount of information on reading comprehension for those who seek more knowledge on this issue. Starting from reading comprehension, it continues with some hypotheses and theories of reading comprehension and gives some insights about different issues of reading comprehension.

As mentioned earlier, this study investigates the relationship between L1 and L2 reading comprehension convergence, so to speak. It is believed that when there is a kind of transfer between two different languages, It'd be better to predict the nature of that transfer, either positive or negative. If predicted before hand, that particular transfer can be employed or even harnessed for learning purposes. If it is proved that there is this kind of relationship between two languages, it can be concluded that all languages have the same underlying theory. With this conclusion, similar theories can be proposed for different languages. From the purview of this study, conducting similar researches with more participants is necessary due to the important influence, Reading Comprehension Skill exerts on our life.

## **References**

- Alderson, J. C. (1984). Reading: A reading problem or a language problem? In J. C. Alderson & A. H. Urquhart (Eds.), *Reading in a foreign language* (pp. 1-27). London: Longman.
- Bernhardt, E., & Kamil, M. L. (1995). Interpreting relationships between L1 and L2 reading: Consolidating the linguistic threshold and the linguistic interdependence hypotheses. *Applied*

*Linguistics*, 16, 15-34.

- Block, E. L. (1992). See how they read: Comprehension monitoring of L1 and L2 readers. *TESOL Quarterly*, 26, 319–343.
- Brown, R., Pressley, M., Van Meter, P., & Schuder, T. (1996). A quasi-experimental validation of transactional strategy instruction with low-achieving second-grade students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 88, 18–37.
- Carr, T., & Levy, B. (1990). *Reading and its development: Component skills approaches*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Carrell, P. L. (1991). Second language reading: Reading ability or language proficiency. *Applied Linguistics*, 12, 159-179.
- Clarke, M. (1980). The short circuit hypothesis of ESL reading or when language competence interferes with reading performance. *Modern Language Journal*, 64, 203-209.
- Davis, J. N., & Bistodeau, L. (1993). How do L1 and L2 reading differ? Evidence from think aloud protocols. *Modern Language Journal*, 77, 459–472.
- Goodman, K. S. (1967). Reading: A psycholinguistic guessing game. *Journal of the Reading Specialist*, 6, 126–35.
- Koda, K. (1987). Cognitive strategy transfer in second language reading. In J. Devine, P. Carrell, & D. Eskey (Eds.), *Research in reading in English as a second language* (pp. 125-144). Washington, DC: TESOL.
- Miller, P., Nemoianu, A., & DeJong, J. (1986). Early reading at home: Its practice and meanings in a working class community. In B. Schieffelin & P. Gilmore (Eds.), *The acquisition of literacy: Ethnographic perspectives* (pp. 3–15 ). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- O'Malley, J.M., & Chamot, A.U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Parry, K. J. (1996). Gaining access to professional discourse: Chinese teachers of EFL. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Applied Linguistics, Chicago.
- Rumelhart, D. (1977). Toward an interactive model of reading. In S. Dornic (Ed.), *Attention and Performance IV* (pp. 573-603). New York: Academic Press.

## **Title**

# **Effects of Intensive Reading on the Mastery of Grammar in Iranian Junior High School Students**

## **Author**

**Mahdi Rajaei Nia (M.A.)**

University of Science and Technology, Tehran, Iran

## **Biodata**

**Mahdi Rajaei Nia** is an M.A. student in TEFL at Iran University of Science and Technology, Tehran, Iran. His research interests include language learning attitudes, language belief, and SLA.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the kinds of effects that reading in a second language has on the grammatical knowledge and language performance of Iranian junior high school students studying to learn a foreign language. Firstly, two classes were chosen, one of them was considered as the controlled group and the other as the experimental group. At the beginning of the course both groups were given a pretest to see if they are the same level. Then, after exposing the experimental group to specific reading materials, a post-test was run. The findings show that the experimental group outperformed the controlled group. In other words, the group receiving the treatment performed significantly better than the controlled group. The informal interview with the students in the penultimate session also suggested that after the course the students in the experimental group had positive attitudes towards learning grammar.

**Keywords:** grammatical mastery, junior high school students, intensive reading,

## **1. Introduction**

In learning English, language skills and language components cannot be separated. Language components can complete the language skills. In order to learn English, the students should be able to use suitable structures and master grammar and vocabulary. Grammar is an important

language component for forming words and building English sentences. Because grammar is important in communication, the students should master it. But learning grammar is not easy for students; therefore, most of the students believe that learning grammar is a difficult, boring, and tedious task. Consequently, a lot of studies have been conducted and a lot of efforts have been made to combine grammar and other skills, to help English learners master grammar. One of these studies was to combined grammar and reading.

In the past centuries and decades many people used to think of reading as a passive skill in which the reader just receives a great deal of information and does not produce anything. But after the shift of attention towards reading and different studies conducted on this skill, they came to realize that reading is not a passive skill and the reader has a very active role in the comprehension of the presented materials. Also, they came to appreciate the importance and the effects of reading on other skills and language components. As Chastain puts it:” The reading goal is to read for meaning or to recreate the writer’s meaning, reading to improve pronunciation, practice grammatical terms, and by definition, reading involves comprehension. When readers do not comprehend, they are not reading.”

Aly (1992) defines reading comprehension this way: ”Reading comprehension is an interactive process between the reader and the text. The reader interacts with the text and relates ideas from the text to prior experiences to construct meaning.”

From grammar translation and the direct method of the early 1900s to the series and audio-lingual methods, most early language teaching approaches have attempted to help learners to acquire competence in language structures (Nunan, 1999).

Brown (2001) says that the study of the four skills is less effective when they are isolated and focused on individually, at least to the complete exclusion of the others. That is, reading without writing, or speaking without listening is both artificial and hard to do.

### **1.1 Kinds of reading:**

Different theories have been proposed by different scholars to improve readers’ understanding. For instance, intending to read and find the intended material in everyday life, people may spend a lot of time scanning books, novels, magazines, and news papers. *Scanning* serves the important purpose of giving the reader a content preview (Williams, 2002). Interested in the materials they have scanned, the reader may go further and use various techniques. One might *skim* the first few

pages of the novel or the article to ensure if the book or the article is as interesting as its first impression.

During the past two centuries, numerous reading models have been proposed. These models can largely be placed into one of the three main categories: bottom-up, top-down, and interactive.

## **1.2. Bottom-up Models**

In bottom-up theories and models, the reading process is considered a text-driven decoding process wherein the sole role of the reader is to reconstruct meaning embedded in the smallest units of text. It views the text as a “chain of isolated words, each of which is to be deciphered individually” (Martinez-Lang, 1995, p. 70), and the reader as someone who “approaches the text by concentrating exclusively on the combination of letters and words in a purely linear manner” (p. 70). Meaning is understood through analysis of individual parts of the language and the reader processes language in a sequential manner, “combining sounds or letters to form words, then combining words to form phrases, clauses, and sentences of the text.

## **1.3. Top-down Models**

While bottom-up models treat the reading process as a decoding activity with an emphasis placed on the structure of the text, top-down models take the opposite position and consider the reader and his/her interests, world knowledge, and reading skills as the driving force behind reading comprehension (Barnett, 1989). For extremists, the text has little or no meaning in and of itself. Instead, it gives direction to readers concerning how they should retrieve and construct meaning from their own previously acquired knowledge (Rumelhart, 1980). A more moderate top-down position is found in the oft-cited explanation offered by Goodman (1968), who depicts the reading process as a “psycholinguistic guessing game” (p. 126) where the reader reduces his or her dependence upon the text itself by employing strategies such as predicting and sampling. In other words the reader uses “general knowledge of the world or of particular text components to make intelligent guesses about what might come next in the text [and] samples only enough of the text to confirm or reject these guesses” (Barnett, 1989, p. 13). The role played by background

knowledge in the reading process can be explained and formalized in the theoretical model of schema theory (Rumelhart, 1980).

#### **1.4. Interactive Models**

The most recent set of reading models is the interactive group, in which comprehension is considered the result of bottom-up and top-down elements working in concert; an interaction between the reader and the text (Rumelhart, 1980). Although interactive models acknowledge the effect of textual information on the reader's mental activities, many assign slight importance to top-down factors such as meta-cognition, the compensatory capacity of interest and background knowledge, and schemata (Bernhardt, 1986).

Krashen (1980) argues that input must be comprehensible for successful language learning to occur, and Graham (R.Graham, personal interview, May 24, 2004) estimates that for typical L2 reading programs, the comprehensibility of the text should be at or above 90%.

Nunan argues that "reading is an interactive process, in which the reader constantly shuttles between bottom-up and top-down processes"(Nunan, 1999, p. 254) . This leads to a question. How much background knowledge, linguistic or otherwise, does a reader need to have for a text to be helpful? It would seem that much would depend on the individual experience of the learner. It could also depend very much on what deciphering aids are available to him as he reads.

## **2. Review of the Related Literature**

Elley and Mangubhai's (1983) study of 380 Fijian and Hindi-speaking pupils (Grade 4 and 5) in Fiji also revealed the power of extensive reading, especially after two years of its implementation. While the book flood students were superior to the audio-lingual students in only some measures of L2 English ability after one year, by the end of the second year they outperformed the regular students in all measures of language proficiency, including vocabulary, grammar, reading, listening and writing.

Ducy-Perez (1993) conducted a similar study on L2 grammar as affected by sustained silent reading (SSR) in academic setting. Like Rodrigo, Krashen and Gribbons's (2004) finding with

their extensive reading group, data in this study also yielded a noticeable yet insignificant positive relationship between SSR and learner improvement in grammar.

Holden (2002) in his research concluded that extensive reading has the potential to play an important role in English language education in Japan. This paper proposes that the introduction of a systematic and sustained program of extensive reading (ER) as component of English language education could help alleviate many of the problems currently seen in foreign language education in this country.

Rodrigo, Krashen and Gribbons (2004) studied how L2 learner grammar was affected by “extensive reading” and “reading combined with discussions” respectively over one semester. Compared to the control group that received explicit instruction on Spanish grammar, the “reading-discussion” group made significantly greater gains on the grammar test over the treatment period.

Although a plethora of research has been conducted on the effects of other skills and language components on the mastery of grammar, few of the researchers have tried to investigate the effects of reading, extensive or intensive, on the mastery of grammar, and if some of them did, they have mostly focused on college or high school students.

The purpose of this study is to investigate:

- 1) Does exposure to grammatical structures through intensive reading improve learners' mastery of grammar?
- 2) Is there any significant difference between studying grammar traditionally and learning grammar through intensive reading?

## **4. Methods**

### **4.1. Participants**

Sixty junior high school students, most of them 15, participated in this study. The students were previously, based on their last year average, assigned into two different classes of 30 by the school board. Since it was impossible to change the arrangement of the classes, convenient sampling was used. The participants were not paid or rewarded. In order to encourage and urge them to take the tests seriously, they were told that their marks would be a part of their final exam.

#### **4.2. Design**

Since the students were previously placed in different classes, it was impossible to change their arrangement. As a result quasi experimental design was used for this study. One class was considered as the experimental group and the other as the controlled group. At the beginning each group was given a pretest and at the end of the course they were given a post-test.

#### **4.3. Course and Materials**

During a two-month course, each week the experimental group studied the English book 3 as well as one or two units from “American Anecdotes” and “Steps to Understanding”. At the end of the course, the students covered 6 units of American Anecdotes and Steps to Understanding as well as four lessons of their textbook.

#### **4.4. Instrument**

Before the student start to receive the new treatment and in order to determine that both classes are the same level, they were given a pretest. Also at the end of the course, in order to see the effectiveness of the new treatment, they were given a posttest. The pre-test and post-test each contained 40 items. 10 items were devoted to each grammatical structure. The items involved were derived form the National Entrance Examination for schools for gifted students. First, based on the table of contents and the materials the student's study, the number devoted to each part was assigned. Then, some colleagues were asked to look into the items and see if there is anything wrong with them. In order not to let the students find out the pattern and the classification of the items, the items were distributed and scattered throughout the test. For instance, if the first item was to do with simple past, the second item was about determiners. In order to calculate and analyze the collected data Microsoft Office (Excel) was utilized.

### **5. Procedure and results**

At first the participants were assigned into two groups, one was considered as the experimental group and the other as the controlled group. In order to investigate how students felt about grammar, an informal and oral opinion poll was conducted. Surprisingly, nearly all students thought of learning grammar as a boring and Herculean task. Then, in order to see whether the

two groups are the same level or not, a pretest was run, though the participants were not notified of the pre-test.

E group pretest	F E group pretest	C group pretest	F C group pretest	Egroup pretest score	F E group pretest	C group pretest score	F C group pretest
20	2	26	3	36	2	20	1
33	3	24	1	38	2	22	1
31	2	25	4	35	2	33	1
32	3	39	1	37	2	31	2
16	1	30	2	29	1	32	1
24	1	40	2	28	1	38	1
34	3	36	2	27	1	27	2
21	1	35	2	25	1	30	2
30	2	28	2				
Mean E group		30.7		Stdev E group		5.796	
Mean C group		30		Stdev C group		5.433	

**Table1. Frequency, mean, and standard deviation of experimental and controlled group pre-test scores**

The means and standard deviations of the tabulated data (table 1.) suggest that there was no significant difference between the experimental and the controlled groups. As a result, it can be concluded that they were possibly the same level before taking part in the course.

Then for about 60 days, three 75 minutes' sessions each week, the students studied the materials. The author of the present study taught the experimental group and a colleague taught the controlled group. At the beginning of each session, two or three students gave lectures about one unit of the reading books, and then students were to scan the text and were asked some questions by their teacher. Finally the passage was read intensively and the grammatical points were pointed out. These texts contained four grammatical structures: Simple Past, Object Pronoun, Adverbs of Frequency, and Determiners. Then they studied their textbook (English book 3) and did some of the grammatical exercises in their books.

At the end of the course the experimental group covered four lessons of English book 3 as well as 6 units of “American Anecdotes” and 6 units of “Steps To Understanding”. On the other hand, the controlled group studied English book 3 traditionally and a mixture of Grammar Translation and Audio-Lingual Method was used by their teacher. Then in the penultimate session in order to find out what the experimental group thought of learning grammar after finishing the course, they were asked to express how they felt about this task. Most of the students had a positive attitude towards learning grammar and thought, at this point; they can retain grammatical structures for a longer time. At the end of the course, they covered four units of their textbook. Finally, each group was given a forty-item post-test to evaluate students’ mastery of the four grammatical points. In the Post-test, as well as the pre-test, 10 items were devoted to each grammatical structure: 10 items to Simple Past, 10 items to Object Pronoun, 10 items to Adverbs of Frequency, and finally 10 items to Determiners.

E group post test score	F E group Pretest	C group post test score	F C group pretest	E group post test score	F E group pretest	C group post test score	F C group pretest
22	1	29	2	35	1	35	1
34	5	32	2	29	1	33	2
33	5	26	1	23	1	24	1
30	2	30	4	32	1	17	1
37	7	28	3			31	3
36	3	36	3			39	2
39	2	25	1			37	2
38	1	22	1			18	1
Mean E group		33.9666		Stdev E group		4.0384	
Mean C group		30.4		Stdev C group		5.5248	

**Table 2. Frequency of experimental and controlled group post-test scores**

The collected data from the post-test (table 2.) show that: there exists a considerable difference between the means of the experimental and controlled groups. In order to find out if the difference was significant, a T-test was run. The observed value of t, then, equals 2.8762. Based on the table of critical value, the value corresponding to 60 at .5 level 1.67. Thus, the value of the observed t is greater than the value of the critical t, implying that the null

hypothesis is rejected. In other words, the new treatment was effective enough to make significant difference between the experimental and the controlled group.

## **6. Discussion**

The results show that exposing students to grammatical structures through reading can be highly effective. Students included in the experimental group outperformed the students included in the controlled group. Also the survey that the researcher of the present research conducted in the penultimate session showed that students' attitudes towards grammar considerably changed after taking the course, that is to say, they had a much more positive viewpoints towards grammar. Before conducting this research, I thought the difference between the experimental and controlled groups would be more significant than this. This can be attributed to the imposed limitations faced throughout the research. Since the students could not be randomly selected, in each group there were some students taking English classes at English Institutes, some of them had somewhat good command of English that might have influenced the results of the research.

## **7. Conclusion**

Overall, the outcome of the study reported here provides some evidence in support of the effectiveness of intensive reading as a way of improving mastery of grammar. Also it can be concluded that being exposed to grammatical structures and learning them through intensive reading is much more effective than the stand-alone grammar or traditional way of teaching grammar. The fact that the students were all boys, as well as, not choosing students randomly obviously limits the generalizability of the findings, and future studies will need to refine the shortcoming of the present study. Future studies will also need to take into account the gender of the participants.

## **References**

- Aly, A. A. (1992). Teaching EFL/ESL literature. *The Reading Matrix* 3, 38-50.
- Barnett, M. A. (1989). In Rodrigo et. al, The effectiveness of two comprehensible- input approaches to language instruction at the intermediate level. *System* 32, 53-60.
- Bernhardt, E. (1991). *Reading development in a Second Language: theoretical, empirical, and classroom perspectives*. In Aly A. In Rodrigo et. al, The effectiveness of two

- comprehensible-input approaches to foreign language instruction at the intermediate level. *System* 32, 53-60.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language Pedagogy* (2nd ed). San Francisco: San Francisco: Longman.
- Chastain, K. (1988). *Developing second language skills: Theory and practice*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.
- Ducy, E. P. (1993). *Sustained silent reading in university courses in EFL for academic purposes*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Atlanta, GA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 369 264)
- Elley, W. B., & Mangubhai, F. (1983). The impact of reading on second language learning. *Reading Research Quarterly* 19, 53-67.
- Goodman, K.S. (1968). *The Psychological Nature of the Reading Process*. In Kenneth Chastain, *Developing second language skills: Theory and practice*. Harcourt Brace: Jovanovich, Inc.
- Holden, R. W. (2002). A case for extensive reading as a language component in Japan. *ELT Journal*, 49, 329-336.
- Krashen, S. (1980). *The input hypothesis*. In Rodrigo et. al, The effectiveness of two comprehensible- input approaches to foreign language instruction at the intermediate level. *System* 32, 53-60.
- Lee, S. K. (2007). Effects of textual enhancement and topic familiarity on Korean EFL students' reading comprehension and learning of passive form. *Language Learning*, 57, 87-118.
- Martinez-Lang, A. (1995). "Benefits of keeping a reading journal in the development of second language reading ability. *Dimension* 5, 65-79.
- Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching and learning*. In Sara Lee, Effects of textual enhancement and topic familiarity on Korean EFL students' reading comprehension and learning of passive form. *Language Learning*, 57, 87-118.
- Rodrigo, V., Krashen, S., & Gribbons, B. (2004). The effectiveness of two comprehensible-input approaches to foreign language instruction at the intermediate level. *System* 32, 53-60.
- Rumelhart, D. E. (1980). *Schemata: The Building Blocks of Cognition*. In William R. Holden, A case for extensive reading as a language component in Japan. *ELT Journal*, 49, 329-336.



- a.always                      b.almost                      c.sometimes                      d.never
23. How much milk did he drink? He ..... just a small glass.  
a)drinks                      b)drink                      c)drank                      d)drinking
24. She is drinking some ..... now.  
a)bread                      b) butter                      c)milk                      d) meat
25. A:"I can't find my glasses!"                      B: "You are wearing .....!"  
a)Them                      b) There                      c)They                      d)It
26. I never lend money to Ali. He ..... returns my money.  
a.always                      b.usually                      c.sometimes                      d.never
27. A: Did he teach you well?                      B:Yes, he .....me very well.  
a)taught                      b)thought                      c)bought                      d)took
28. I learned ..... new words in the English class last year.  
a)a little                      b) a lot                      c) a lot of                      d)one
29. A:"Why is he always talking about Ronaldo?"                      B: "Perhaps he likes ..... !"  
a) her                      b)him                      c)she                      d)it
30. It always rains in Babol. The sun ..... shines there.  
a.always                      b.usually                      c.sometimes                      d.never
31. Did he ..... breakfast at a restaurant?  
a)has                      b)have                      c)had                      d)having
32. She needs ..... rice today.  
a)several                      b)many                      c)a few                      d)some
33. A: "Why is Mahdi so happy?"                      B: "His friends gave ..... a watch for his birthday!"  
a. him                      b. it                      c. them                      d)her
- 34: Where..... on holiday last summer?  
A.went you did                      b.you went                      c. did you go                      d.you did go
35. We ..... to this seminar since last year.  
a)went                      b)go                      c) to go                      d) goess
36. How many ..... does he see?  
a)man                      b)woman                      c)children                      d)glass
37. A:"Did you meet Tom and Lisa?"                      B: "No, I didn't meet ..... ."  
a) it                      b) he                      c) them                      d)her
38. He is always on time.He ..... comes to school on time.  
a.almost                      b.usually                      c.sometimes                      d.never
39. The picnic was very good, but I ..... to bring my camera..  
a) forget                      b)forgot                      c) forgets                      d)forgetting
40. How many ..... did you see in the street?  
a)men                      b)woman                      c)child                      d)man

## Appendix B

### The questions used in the post-test

1. I see Ali and his brother on the bus. Do you see..... .  
a)me                      b)them                      c)they                      d)him
2. The student ..... plays in the park.  
a)doesn't                      b)don't                      c)never                      d)isn't
3. Did you .....hello to your teacher yesterday ?

- a) said                      b) says                      c) saying                      d) say
4. A: "How much water do you drink every day?"                      B: "I drink....."
- a) a lot of                      b) a lot                      c) a few                      d) several
5. Our teacher taught ..... a new lesson.
- a) your                      b) we                      c) us                      d) they
6. The students ..... at school on the weekend.
- a) are always                      b) always are                      c) aren't always                      d) always aren't
7. They .....do their homework two hours ago
- a) aren't                      b) don't                      c) weren't                      d) did not
8. How much .....do you eat every day?
- a) ball                      b) apple                      c) meat                      d) cups of tea
9. My sister wants a pen. Please give..... this pen.
- a) him                      b) them                      c) her                      d) me
10. Carlos is a very good student. He ..... goes to class on time.
- a. always                      b. almost                      c. sometimes                      d) never
11. Her father did not .....to work last week.
- a) walk                      b) walking                      c) walked                      d) walks
12. There are some .....on the desk.
- a) apple                      b) books                      c) money                      d) bread
13. A: "Did you see the .....last week?"                      B: "Yes, I saw them in the park."
- a) car                      b) man                      c) woman                      d) children
14. Robert goes to the gym only two or three times a year. He..... goes to the gym.
- a. always                      b. never                      c. usually                      d. seldom= به ندرت
15. Where ..... you see the teacher last week?
- a) do                      b) did                      c) are                      d) Were
16. I see a lot of .....on the table.
- a) forks                      b) street                      c) people                      d) cars
17. There are a lot of ..... in the street.
- a) book                      b) car                      c) people                      d) store
18. Ms. Bahrami is always happy. She is..... unhappy.
- a. always                      b. usually                      c. sometimes                      d. never
19. Were you in Kerman last year ? Yes.....
- a) we are                      b) I am                      c) you were                      d) we were
20. There..... some people in the street yesterday.
- a) is                      b) are                      c) was                      d) were
21. A: "Please tell Mrs. Smith to come in."                      B: "Sorry, I don't know ....."
- a) her                      b) him                      c) she                      d) them
22. My sister usually drives to work with a friend. She ..... drives alone.
- a. always                      b. usually                      c. sometimes                      d. never
23. The teacher opened the door and ..... hello to his students.
- a) says                      b) say                      c) said                      d) sayed
24. He drinks some ..... every morning.
- a) cheese                      b) milk                      c) bread                      d) butter
25. A: "Do you like oranges?"                      B: "Yes, I love ....." !"
- a) her                      b) its                      c) them                      d) him

26. A: "Does Mina always eat sandwich for lunch?" B: "Not always, but she ..... eats some sandwich for lunch.  
 a. always                      b. almost                      c. sometimes                      d. never
27. The student came home at 7.....  
 a) now                      b) tomorrow                      c) yesterday                      d) ago
28. Was there some ..... on the table?  
 a) bread                      b) spoon                      c) plates                      d) rulers
29. A: "Where is my book?" B: "Oh, dear! I lost ..... yesterday!" lost: گم کردن  
 a. him                      b. it                      c. its                      d) her
30. I ..... early on Saturdays.  
 a. get up usually                      b. usually get up                      c. get usually up                      d. usually gets up
31. I went to the store and ..... some books.  
 a) buy                      b) buys                      c) bought                      d) buying
32. A: "How many animals are there in the zoo?" B: "There are ....."  
 a) a little                      b) a lot                      c) a lot of                      d) one
33. "Who are your parents? I don't know ..... very well!"  
 a) them                      b) there                      c) her                      d) him
34. .... at home on Fridays?  
 a. He is always                      b. He always is                      c. Is he always                      d. Is always he
35. I ..... to a seminar in Canada last year.  
 a) Go                      b) went                      c) goes                      d) to go
36. A: "..... money did you need?" B: "I needed some."  
 a) How many                      b) How                      c) How much                      d) Who
37. Ms. Mohammadi showed ..... a film. We liked it very much.  
 a. he                      b. him                      c. us                      d. her
38. We should ..... eat food in the classroom when the teacher is teaching.  
 a. often                      b. usually                      c. sometimes                      d. never
39. I saw him at school .....  
 a. tomorrow                      b. next week                      c. the day before yesterday                      d. the day after tomorrow
40. I phoned him ..... times.  
 a) a little                      b) a lot                      c) a lot of                      d) one

## Title

### A Critical Discourse Analysis of Five English Language Classes in Iran

## Authors

**Fatemeh Hemmati (Ph.D.)**

Payam-e-Noor University, Tehran, Iran

**Parisa Nasser karimvand (Ph.D. Candidate)**

Payam-e-Noor University, Tehran, Iran

## Biodata

**Fatemeh Hemmati** is an assistant professor of TEFL at Payam-e-Noor University, Tehran, Iran. Her research interests include teaching methods, writing strategies, discourse analysis and vocabulary learning and teaching.

**Parisa Nasser karimvand** is a Ph.D. Candidate of TEFL at Payam-e- Noor University, Tehran, Iran. Her research interests include Teacher Education, Postmodern studies and Critical Pedagogy.

## Abstract

This study aimed at analyzing the classroom discourse of five reading comprehension classes (BA students majoring in English as a foreign language in Iran). In this regard, five sessions of five different reading language classes were observed, recorded and transcribed. Foucauldian *critical discourse analysis* (CDA) considerations, with special focus on “*discourse as social practice*” was extracted from an indepth literature review and used to analyze the discourse of these classes. Besides, Nunan’s (1989) observation sheet was utilized for triangulation of data. Results of the data analysis provided the researcher with almost clear information about type of the elements of discourse in these language classes. Implications of the study are also put forward.

**Keywords:** Classroom discourse, Critical discourse analysis, Discourse analysis, Social practice of discourse.

## 1. Introduction

Classroom is the crucible where the prime elements of education—ideas and ideologies, policies and plans, materials and methods, teachers and the taught—all mix together to produce exclusive and at times explosive environments that might help or hinder the creation and utilization of learning opportunities (Young, 1992, p. 59).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) emerged in the 1980s as an attempt to synthesize language studies and social theory (Fairclough, 1992). It looks critically at the nexus of language/discourse/speech and social structure, attempting to uncover ways in which social structure impinges on discourse patterns and power relations (Blommaert&Bulcaen, 2000). It thus has the potential to look beyond superficial aspects of classroom language, and to illuminate aspects of agency (Boaler, 2003) and power in the classroom. Fairclough (1992) considers discourse as a mode of action in which people act on the world and each other, in addition to being a mode of representation. He stresses that there is a dialectic relationship between discourse and social structure, with discourse on the one hand being constrained by social structure, and on the other as being socially constitutive. He sketches a three-dimensional framework for conceiving of and analyzing discourse, considering “every discursive event as being simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice and an instance of social practice” (p. 4).

The first dimension is discourse-as-text, i.e. the linguistic features and organization of concrete instances of discourse. Building on the work of, for example, Halliday (1978), Fairclough maintains that text analysis must include a consideration of vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure. Fairclough’s second dimension is discourse-as-discursive-practice, i.e. discourse as something that is produced, distributed and consumed in society. He introduces the concepts of ‘force’ to describe what the text is being used to do socially, ‘coherence’ to describe the extent to which an interpreting subject is able to infer meaningful relationships and to make sense of the text as a whole, and ‘intertextuality’ to describe how texts are related historically to other texts (p. 83). Fairclough’s third dimension, which is of focus in the analysis of data in this study, is discourse-as-social-practice, drawing on the Marxist concepts of ideology

and hegemony with focus on critical aspects of language teaching and learning. It is explained more in the data analysis section.

In post structural and postcolonial discourse perspectives, discourse can be seen as a three-dimensional construct consisting of a (socio) linguistic dimension, a sociocultural dimension, and a sociopolitical dimension which formulate the nature, scope, and method of critical classroom discourse analysis (CCDA) (Fairclough, 1992). Although neither of the two perspectives is unproblematic and although each by itself may not be fully sensitive to classroom L2 learning and teaching, collectively they have developed a rich body of knowledge and skills that help conceptualize and conduct CCDA in meaningful ways.

Adhering to the Foucauldian tenet that no discourse is innocent, critical linguists (also called *critical discourse analysts*) argue that “all representation is mediated, moulded by the value-systems that are ingrained in the medium (language in this case) used for representation; it challenges common sense by pointing out that something could have been represented in some other way, with a very different significance” (Fowler, 1996, p. 4). Saying that the ideology and power that constitute dominant discourses are hidden from ordinary people, critical linguists seek to make these discourses visible by engaging in a type of CDA that “is more issue-oriented than theory-oriented” (van Dijk, 1997, p. 22).

Combining Foucault’s sociological theories and Brazilian educator Paulo Freire’s educational philosophy, critical pedagogists work under the assumption that academic institutions are not simply instructional sites; they are, in fact, “cultural arenas where heterogeneous ideological, discursive, and social forms collide in an unremitting struggle for dominance” (McLaren, 1995, p. 30). Classroom reality is socially constructed, politically motivated, and historically determined. Therefore, critical pedagogy has to empower classroom participants “to critically appropriate forms of knowledge outside of their immediate experience, to envisage versions of a world which is ‘not yet’ in order to alter the grounds on which life is lived” (Simon, 1988, p. 2). Such pedagogy would take seriously the sociopolitical, historical conditions that create the cultural forms and interested knowledge that give meaning to the lives of teachers and learners. “In one sense, this points to the need to develop theories, forms of knowledge, and social practices that *work with* the experiences that people bring to the pedagogical setting” (Giroux, 1988, p. 134).

Asserting along Foucauldian lines that discourse empowers and disempowers, privileges and marginalizes, critical pedagogists call for an “empowering education” that relates “personal growth to public life by developing strong skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry, and critical curiosity about society, power, inequality, and change” (Shor, 1992, p. 15) and help students explore the subject matter in its sociopolitical, historical contexts with critical themes integrated into student language and experience. They consider contemporary language education “as somewhat bizarre in that it legitimates and limits language issues as technical and developmental” and believe that language education must be “viewed as a form of learning that not only instructs students into ways of ‘naming’ the world but also introduces them to particular social relations” (Giroux & Simon, 1988, p. 131).

Similar thoughts are beginning to inform the debate about power and inequality in ESL education as well (see Tollefson, 1995). Arguing that reading the world is not confined to reading race and class but involves reading gender as well, feminist pedagogists attempt to “deconstruct the master narratives of patriarchy and thereby move gender onto the critical agenda even if, in many discourses, it remains institutionally contained at the margins” (Luke, 1992, p. 45). They agree with critical pedagogists that the classroom is one of the powerful ideological sites within which counter hegemonic discourses and practices can be organized. They contend, however, that discourse analysis should be concerned with the deconstruction of the political, social, psychological, and historical formations of gendered discourse because all discourse production is gendered. An appropriately gendered classroom must go beyond employing surface-level pedagogic strategies, such as giving female students equal opportunity to speak in the classroom or giving females equal representation in imagery and language in curricular text. Considering these strategies as a mere add-on tactic of incorporation, they seek critical classroom discourse that legitimizes female voices as well.

The premises and principles also indicate that the primary function of CCDA is fundamentally different from that of the interaction and discourse approaches discussed earlier. If the function of interaction analysis is seen as normative and that of discourse analysis as informative, then the function of CCDA can be seen as transformative. Classroom interaction analysis, with its normative function, seeks to play a directive role, in effect telling practicing teachers what kind of classroom climate would be considered optimal to achieve their instructional purposes and what they need to do in order to create such a climate in their

classroom. Besides, the findings of classroom interaction analysis are supposed to give teachers an idea of the extent to which their own classroom performance approximates to a predetermined model. Classroom discourse analysis, with its informative function, seeks to play a descriptive role, giving practicing teachers a profile of instructional strategies and interactional patterns and possible relationships between the two. It attempts to describe the processes internal to classroom aims and events in order to inform teachers of the possibilities and limitations facing them as teachers and also about information they can use to further their self development. CCDA, with its transformative function, seeks to play a reflective role, enabling practicing teachers to reflect on and cope with sociocultural and sociopolitical structures that directly or indirectly shape the character and content of classroom discourse. It also seeks to equip them with the knowledge and skill necessary to conduct their own CCDA, thus directing them away from knowledge transmission and towards knowledge generation, away from pedagogic dependence and towards pedagogic independence.

## **1.2. Relevant studies on classroom discourse analysis**

One of the earliest L2 classroom observation studies that embraced a discourse analytical approach is Allwright's (1980 & 1988) study on patterns of participation. Mehan's (1979) ethnomethodological work in general education convinced Allwright (1988) that "whatever happened in the classroom was indeed a co-production, and therefore that it no longer made sense to look at classroom interaction as if it was only the teacher's behaviour that mattered" (p. 171). He was thus motivated by the desire to make sense of classroom discourse in general rather than to narrowly study teacher effectiveness. Accordingly, he posited a three-way analysis in his observational scheme: (a) a turn-taking analysis, which relates to several aspects of turn-getting and turn-giving practices; (b) a topic analysis, which relates to the use of language as instances of linguistic samples mostly meant for student imitation and of communicative expressions about the target language itself; and (c) a task analysis, which relates to the managerial as well as the cognitive aspects of classroom tasks. The significance of Allwright's (1980) observational scheme lies in the fact that it departed from the earlier Flandersian tradition in three important ways: (a) It made no a priori distinction between teachers' and learners' roles but instead allowed patterns of participation to emerge from the data, (b) it consisted of high-inference categories that are subject to interpretational variations, and (c) it treated classroom participants as

individuals rather than as a collective mass by attempting to describe and account for their individual behavior. And, although it involved some numerical measurements, the framework was essentially ethnographic, entailing qualitative interpretations of data. Allwright's (1980) emphasis on ethnography finds a strong echo in the work of van Lier (1988), who very effectively uses ethnographic means to understand classroom aims and events. Highlighting the need to contextualize the actions and contributions of participants in the classroom, van Lier "takes the educational environment (with the classroom at its centre) as the crucial data resource and thus strongly emphasizes the social context in which language development takes place" (p. 24). Accordingly, in studying turn taking, for instance, he looks not only at the distribution of turns but also at the available options for turn taking and the extent to which different participants took these up. He also offers a useful classification of activity types and how they might influence patterns of participation. The interpretive nature of classroom discourse analysis advocated by Allwright (1980) and van Lier (1988) also entailed an analysis of multiple perspectives—the teacher's, the learner's, and the observer's (researcher's)—on classroom discourse. In studies that ethnographically analyzed transcripts of video recordings of classroom performance along with post observation interviews with participants (Kumaravadivelu, 1991, 1993, in press), attempt was to show the usefulness of classroom discourse analysis that takes multiple perspectives into serious consideration. In the 1991 study, Kumaravadivelu argued that, to be relevant, any classroom discourse analysis must be based on an analysis of the potential mismatch between intention and interpretation—between the teacher's intention and the learner's interpretation, on the one hand, and between the teacher's and learner's intention and the observer's interpretation, on the other hand. Accordingly, he identified 10 potential sources of mismatch between intention and interpretation. In the 1993 study, he demonstrated how classroom discourse analysis can facilitate an understanding of the degree to which classroom participants are able or unable to create and utilize learning opportunities in class. Finally, in his forthcoming study, he provided guidelines for helping practicing teachers explore their own classrooms so that they can self-observe, self-analyze, and self-evaluate learning and teaching acts and thus, ultimately, develop the capacity to theorize from practice and practice what they theorize.

### **1.3. Statement of the problem and significance of the study**

Dijk (1997) believed that classroom discourse is a practical, social, and cultural phenomenon which shows language use. So, components of discourse, in one way or another, show the way language is used in the classroom. It goes without saying that language use is among the main cornerstones of language learning while sometimes language teachers do not pay enough attention to it. Hence, given the relationship between language use and classroom discourse, poor discourse system in some language classes has relationship, in one way or another, with an inadequate process of language teaching and learning.

Knowing this, researcher of the present study tried to investigate the elements presented in the classroom discourse of 5 reading classes, as a sample of language classes. This way, elements like classroom methodology and teachers' and learners' behaviors were investigated and compared with each other.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Participants**

Participants of this study were 5 language teachers (3 male and 2 female), teaching the course of *Reading* in five different universities. They were TEFL M.A. or Ph.D. holders who had an average experience of 3 years of teaching. They taught the same book to B.A. students of translation, in the first semester of the year 2009. In each class there were 20 students (12 male and 8 female) who enjoyed approximately the same level of proficiency. The students' age range was between 18 and 24.

### **2.2. Instruments**

In order to collect data, two major instruments were used. First, an open observation based on the elements extracted from Foucauldian critical discourse analysis (CDA), with special focus on "discourse as social practice" and, second, validated observation sheet of Nunan (1989). This classroom observation tally sheet is greatly famous for application in classroom observations (for looking at the checklist see appendix 1). Observation procedure was a combination scheme, varied from simple checklists and tallies of behavior to highly complex scheme for judging the meaning or function of particular behavior. An observer marked the frequency of teachers' and students' observed behaviors during the class time (i.e. 2 hours). Moreover, other significant

segments of classroom discourse, in the case they were not presented in Nunan's sheet were considered as well, based on particular discourse of each class. Categories considered in observations were treated as *high-inference* categories. That is they asked for the qualitative judgment of the researcher, in relation to the function or meaning of an observed event.

### **2.3. Procedures**

In order to conduct this study, on the one hand, five language classes, with almost the same language proficiency level, were chosen from five different universities in Isfahan. Then, researcher of the study observed the discourse of one session of each of these language classes. All five language teachers were taught the same reading book. Time of the observation for each class was 120 minutes. All of the observations were taped for further analysis. During the process of observation Nunan (1989) observation sheet was also used for counting the frequency of teachers' and students' behaviors. After that, observations were transcribed and subjected to CDA, with special focus on the third dimension of Fairclough's three dimensional frame work, i.e., "discourse-as-social-practice".

### **2.4. Data analysis**

Data analysis of this study was inclusive of: CDA of the observation of classroom discourses and Nunan's observation sheet.

Fairclough's (1992) third-dimension in his framework, i.e. *discourse-as-social-practice*, was used to analyze the discourse of the five classrooms. In discourse-as-social-practice, Fairclough claimed that ideology is located both in the structure of discourse and in the discourse events themselves. In this regard, based on the literature review, some considerations in discourse events were extracted and then quality of their existence in the classroom discourse were studied and justified. These events were as follows:

- Types of the activities of students and teachers (their roles) and classification of activity types and how they might influence patterns of participation
- Investigation and criticism of the method they followed (if any), in the class
- Estimation of the time devoted to Ss and teacher
- Types of tasks (oral or written etc)
- Social/ psychological factors that force the class discourse and activities

- power relations and (possible) inequality
- distribution (and available options for) turn taking

For example, the researcher suggests that the turn-taking practice of a typical classroom implies particular ideological assumptions about the social identities of and relationships between teacher and pupils. Another example can be study of *Hegemony* concerns power that is achieved through constructing alliances and integrating groups. For example, considerations in the classroom about the dominant groups exercising power through integrating rather than dominating subordinate groups, winning their consent and establishing a ‘precarious equilibrium’.

Generally, two types of observations in this study, i.e. open observation and Nunan’s observation sheet were treated as *high-inference* categories. In this attempt, the researcher judged the elements of discourse qualitatively, in relation to the function or meaning of an observed event.

## 2.5. Results

In this part of the study, first, results of the data collected from analysis of discourse of the classes, based on the observation sheet of Nunan (1989), are summarized in table 1. After that, based on considerations in CDA, extracted from an in depth review of literature, events of the classroom are analyzed and result of the degree of the existence of these considerations are reported.

For the sake of anonymity, classes were labeled with alphabetical letters. For instance, (CL. A) stands for *class A*. The following table shows result of the analysis of discourse of these five classes based on Nunan’s observation sheet. Items that are marked with star are highly in line with considerations of discourse as social practice.

**Table 1***Nunan's observation sheet*

Items of observation sheet Nunan (1989)	Tallies				
	Cl.A	Cl.B	Cl.C	Cl.D	Cl.E
*1. Teacher asks a display question (that is a question to which she knows the answer)	6	6	4	2	8
*2. Teacher asks a referential question (i.e. a question to which she doesn't know the answer)	7	8	8	2	10
3. Teacher explains a grammatical point	6	4	8	9	2
4. Teacher explains meaning of a vocabulary item	7	6	8	10	4
5. Teacher explains functional point	5	5	7	8	3
*6. Teacher explains points relating to the content (theme/topic) of the lesson	3	5	2	1	6
*7. Teacher gives instructions/ directions	2	3	1	1	4
*8. Teacher praises	9	10	9	8	12
*9. Teacher criticizes	9	12	8	4	14
*10. Learner asks a question	13	15	10	7	15
11. Learner answers questions	7	6	9	10	5
*12. Learner talks to another learner	14	15	11	8	19
*13. Period of silence or confusion	7	8	5	5	10

Based on this table, higher considerations of *discourse as social practice* were respectively presented in Cl.E, Cl.B, Cl.A, Cl.C and Cl.D. For instance, Learners' talking to another learner (i.e. item 12) is among the primary principles of discourse as social practice. It has the highest frequency in Cl. E while the same item has the lowest frequency in Cl. D. As another example, number 3, i.e. teacher's explaining a grammatical point, has the lowest frequency in Cl. E and the highest frequency in Cl. D.

The second phase of analysis is done on the discourse of 5 classes, on the seven considerations in CDA which were extracted from an in-depth review of literature mentioned in the data analysis section. In this part of the discourse analysis of each classroom, items that are marked with star are those which were practiced, against the principles of *language teaching as social practice*.

#### Cl. A

\* 1) *Relationship between students, and between the teacher and the students*

There was no friendly relationship. Students mainly considered themselves as inferior and expected their teacher to transfer fixed information to them.

2) *Types of the activities of students and teachers (their roles) and classification of activity types and how they might influence patterns of participation*

Types of activities were too various, from drills to open discussions (with little spice of critical thinking). But the main focus was on the practices and activities at the end of each lesson. Teacher tried to motivate students to self initiate and develop the activities but they were more interested in teachers' initiation and completion of the activities.

\* 3) *Investigation and criticism of the method they followed (if any), in the class*

It was closer to the traditional methods of language teaching like GTM and ALM since components like memorization, repetition, dictation and grammar explanation were highly presented.

4) *Types of tasks (oral or written etc)*

Both written and oral tasks were applied, like: practicing model conversations or writing letters.

5) *Social/ psychological factors that force the class discourse and activities*

Due to the traditions of language teaching in Iran, students rarely saw themselves in the position to express themselves and they considered it as something rude. But it seems that teacher tried to break those highly fixed ideas by motivating students to express themselves and challenge ideas presented in the class.

*\*6) Power relations and (possible) inequality*

It was clearly felt that the teacher was the sole power in the class while students did not dare to decide as for what and how of the teaching and learning. It might have various reasons like social, psychological or cultural biases.

*\*7) Distribution (and available options for) turn taking and estimation of the time devoted to Ss and teacher*

There were almost no fair time distribution between teacher' and students' amount of talking. Most of the time was devoted to the teacher to give explanations and answer questions while students used less time to answer or ask questions.

Cl. B

*1) Relationship between students, and between the teacher and the students*

There was a friendly relationship between students and between students and teacher. There was a productive working atmosphere and it seemed that students took the responsibility of learning to a great extent by deciding over the issues like choosing the content or the way of testing.

*2) Types of the activities of students and teachers (their roles) and classification of activity types and how they might influence patterns of participation*

There were some creative activities except the activities offered by the book. Activities were almost of various natures and due to the interesting nature of them, students willingly went through them while teacher just moderated their performance.

*3) Investigation and criticism of the method they followed (if any), in the class*

Regarding the presence of the elements like student's autonomy, cooperation and negotiation in the class, communicative (and somehow transformative) atmosphere of the class, language teaching had elements of post method era. So, it could hardly be labeled by any of the traditional methods of language teaching.

4) *Types of tasks (oral or written etc)*

Both oral and written tasks were used in the class. They were of various natures. And students seemingly liked them.

5) *Social/ psychological factors that force the class discourse and activities*

In spite of the pressure of society regarding the highly accepted ideologies about TEFL (like goodness of the teacher fronted classes), students and teacher of this class willingly went through making changes in those old ideologies. Students willingly tried to develop new perceptions toward themselves and their roles as language learners.

\*6) *Power relations and (possible) inequality*

Although both students and the teacher developed and practiced critical elements of language teaching and learning, still the researcher felt the inequality in distribution of the power in the class. It seemed that both teachers and students did not fully accept (or getfamiliar with) their new roles. So, in most of the cases still the teacher felt that this is herresponsibility to put an end to the discussions and make the final conclusion. In these cases, unfortunately students also accepted it easily and willingly.

\*7) *Distribution (and available options for) turn taking and estimation of the time devoted to Ss and teacher*

There was no fair distribution of turn taking and teacher devoted almost two third of theclass time to herself. As I mentioned, due to various reasons, students and teachers still didnt accustomed to all elements of critical language teaching and learning (as a sample ofpost modern pedagogy) and it could be viewed a reason behind this inadequacy.

Cl. C

\* 1) *Relationship between students, and between the teacher and the students*

In this class very few numbers of students dared to express themselves and the majoritywere waiting for their teacher to decide for what and how of their learning, to ask them and then they answer the questions that was addressed to them.

*\*2) Types of the activities of students and teachers (their roles) and classification of activity types and how they might influence patterns of participation*

Activities were mostly grammar based, limited to the practices of the book. They were fixed and somehow boring for the students since disregarding their motivation and interest, they did not use their creativity in doing the tasks. Students performed the tasks by themselves in a limited time and after that teacher corrected their answers.

*\*3) Investigation and criticism of the method they followed (if any), in the class*

The teacher seemingly, followed traditional methods of language teaching. Focus on dictation of the words and memorization of the new vocabularies, out of the text, were signs that made the methodology closely similar to the GTM.

*4) Types of tasks (oral or written etc)*

Tasks were mainly based on those of the book (which were typically written) but teacher also offered some oral tasks like dramatic conversations between students.

*\*5) Social/ psychological factors that force the class discourse and activities*

In this class also, traditional ideologies of the society about TEFL casted effect on the psychology of the students and teacher and finally on the process of language teaching and learning.

*\*6) Power relations and (possible) inequality*

There was no equal power distribution between teacher and students. Teacher did not allow students to express new ideas outside of the frame work offered by the book. Students themselves also accept it as the only way toward successful language learning and considered any other (even relevant) discussion, outside of the framework of the book, as waste of time and energy!

*7) Distribution (and available options for) turn taking and estimation of the time devoted to Ss and teacher*

Approximately equal (but not necessarily similar) amount of time was devoted to the teacher and students. Available options of turn taking were set by the teacher in prior. Turn takings between teacher and students were done regularly.

#### Cl. D

*\*1) Relationship between students, and between the teacher and the students*

The atmosphere in this class was almost tense. It was a typical of teacher fronted classrooms. There was no much communication and negotiation of ideas between teacher and students or students with each other.

*\*2) Types of the activities of students and teachers (their roles) and classification of activity types and how they might influence patterns of participation*

Activities were limited to the practices of the book. They were often boring, with no creativity, and asked for no criticality on the part of the students. This way, students answer them one by one and teacher checked the answers one by one to see if students' answers were true.

*\*3) Investigation and criticism of the method they followed (if any), in the class*

Based on the elements presented in the discourse of this class, one could clearly come to the conclusion that teaching methodology was closer to traditional methods like ALM. Elements like repetition, immediate correction of errors and long period of working on drills were seen in the class methodology.

*\*4) Types of tasks (oral, written etc)*

There was almost no oral task and teacher offered only written tasks of the book, which were not real life and creative.

*\*5) Social/ psychological factors that force the class discourse and activities*

Students and teacher of the class were highly under the sway of the Social and psychological factors. They behaved as a result of the widespread idea of the society that in a

good language classroom students learn and perform whatever their teacher offers them, disregarding factors like creativity or autonomy in the part of the students.

*\*6) Power relations and (possible) inequality*

There was no fair distribution of power between teacher and students and even between students themselves. Teacher and top students in the class saw themselves in a position to decide for the issue like choosing the topic of discussion or way of testing. And other acceptants followed it with no objection.

*7) Distribution (and available options for) turn taking and estimation of the time devoted to Students and teacher*

Almost similar time was devoted to teacher and students. Turn taking pattern was in a way that, for instance, students answer the questions in the book and then it was teacher's turn to correct them immediately.

Class. E

*1) Relationship between students, and between the teacher and the students*

In this class, the atmosphere was very relaxed and friendly. Students expressed their opinions very clearly and developed their voices in a jointly made critical atmosphere.

*2) Types of the activities of students and teachers (their roles) and classification of activity types and how they might influence patterns of participation*

There were different types of activities like problem posing and problem solving ones. All of them asked for critical thinking on the part of both teacher and students. Students used their creativity in solving the problems and both students and the teacher were jointly involved in the process of transformation.

*3) Investigation and criticism of the method they followed (if any), in the class*

Components of discourse in the class and the role teacher and students played, were indicative of the post method teaching. Elements like learner autonomy, critical thinking, joint negotiation and transformation of ideas were presented in the classroom.

4) *Types of tasks (oral or written etc)*

Both oral and written types of the tasks (except those offered by the book) were practiced in the classroom. The tasks asked for creativity and critical thinking on the part of the students.

5) *Social/ psychological factors that force the class discourse and activities*

Despite the prevalent social and psychological factors in the society, both teacher and students were willingly after breaking old habits. They closely tried to follow principles of CP, disregarding widespread ideologies in the society.

6) *Power relations and (possible) inequality*

There was fair and equal distribution of power between teacher and students. Neither teacher nor students regarded themselves to make the conclusion since they did it together, in the process of cooperation and negotiation. The atmosphere was very democratic and no one saw herself/himself in the position of sole authority.

7) *Distribution (and available options for) turn taking and estimation of the time devoted to Ss and teacher*

Students took the majority of the class time. There was fair turn taking between students and between students and teacher. Students often handle the class and sought language learning by themselves while teacher triggered them or provided them with possible hints, in this regard.

Interestingly, data analysis of open observations also showed the same order of presentation of discourse elements as social practice, i.e. Cl.E, Cl.B, Cl.A, Cl.C and Cl.D.

Considering the results gained from open observation and Nunan's observation sheet it became clear that although all 5 classes were apparently the same, in the case that they were reading classes with the same book as the primary material, they were dramatically distinct in the classroom discourse. Based on Brown (2001) this difference in classroom discourse has direct effect on language use and finally on the quality of language teaching and learning. Discourse elements of Cl. E made it closer to post method pedagogy since almost all elements of classroom discourse as social practice, which is the heart of post method era, were presented in its discourse. But Cl. D was closer to traditional methods of language teaching. Other classes were ranged in between.

### **3. Conclusion**

As it is clear from the title of this paper, it is an attempt to show how components of classroom discourse can end it different language use and, consequently, language teaching and learning.

If we accept that our goal as teachers is essentially to help our learners to become efficient and effective participants in real communicative situations and that this involves more than the knowledge and skills necessary to manipulate the structures of a language, then we must inevitably appeal to the type of classroom discourse that attempts to integrate social, cognitive and linguistic aspects of language together. Results of this study directed us to the finding that classroom discourses of different classes, with almost the same proficiency level and material, is not necessarily the same and it may dramatically differs based on discourse elements as social practice. This difference could be based on various factors that were not of focus of this study. One possible factor, for instance, could be instructors' different viewpoints toward language teaching and learning that casts effect on the discourse of their classes. Future studies may investigate the effect of these factors closely.

Anyway whatever we consider the root of this difference, it goes without saying that various elements of classroom discourse results in different language uses and, in one way or another, affects quality of language teaching and learning. Hence, when the final goal of language learning is transformation and social awareness, increasing instructors' awareness toward principles of language teaching and learning as social practice can make dramatic changes. This awareness can be built and fostered via various methods like holding teacher education programs or conducting open and critically based discussions among language teachers.

Results of the present study are based on the data collected from just five language classes and data collection techniques were limited to the application of open observation and Nunan's observation sheet. Following studies can cover greater scope of participants and use more methods of data collection like tests, interviews etc. This way results will enjoy more validity and reliability and researcher can claim to generalize results of the study with higher confidence.

### References

- Allwright, D. (1988). *Observation in the language classroom*. London: Longman.
- Blommaert, J., & Bulcaen, C. (2000). Critical discourse analysis. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 29, 447-466.
- Boaler, J. (2003). *Studying and capturing the complexity of practice - the case of the 'dance of agency'*. Paper presented at the 2003 Joint Meeting of PME and PMENA, Honolulu, HI.
- Brown, T. (2001). *Mathematics education and language: Interpreting hermeneutics and post-structuralism*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Fowler, R. (1996). On critical linguistics. In C. R. Coulthard & M. Coulthard (Eds.), *Texts and practices* (pp. 3-14). New York: Routledge.
- Giroux, H. A. (1988). *Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning*. Boston: Bergin & Garvey.
- Hollingsworth, H., Lokan, J., & McCrae, B. (2003). *Teaching mathematics in Australia: Results from the TIMSS 1999 video study*. Camberwell, Vic: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (1991). Language learning tasks: Teacher intention and learner interpretation. *ELT Journal*, 45, 98-107.
- McLaren, P. (1995). Collisions with otherness: "Traveling" theory, postcolonial criticism, and the politics of ethnographic practice—the mission of the wounded ethnographer. In P. McLaren & J. Giarelli (Eds.), *Critical theory and educational research* (pp. 271-299). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

- Mehan, H. (1979). *Learning lessons: Social organization in the classroom*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Nunan, D. (1989). *Understanding language classrooms: A guide for instructor's initiated action*. New York: Prentice- Hall.
- Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering education: Critical teaching for social change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Simon, R. (1988). For a pedagogy of possibility. In J. Smyth (Ed.), *The critical pedagogy networker* (Vol. 1, pp. 1–4). Victoria, Australia: Deakin University, School of Education.
- Tollefson, J. W. (Ed.). (1995). *Power and inequality in language education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- vanDijk, T. (1997). The study of discourse. In T. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as structure and process: Discourse studies* (Vol. 1, pp. 1–34). London: Sage.
- vanLier, L. (1988). *The classroom and the language learner*. London: Longman.
- Young, R. (1992). *Critical theory and classroom talk*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

**Appendix** Classroom Observation Tally Sheet of Nunan (1989)

Items	Total
1) Teacher asks a display question (that is a question to which she knows the answer)	
2) Teacher asks a referential question (i.e. a question to which she doesn't know the answer)	
3) Teacher explains a grammatical point	
4) Teacher explains meaning of a vocabulary item	
5) Teacher explains functional point	
6) Teacher explains points relating to the content (theme/topic) of the lesson	
7) Teacher gives instructions/ directions	
8) Teacher praises	
9) Teacher criticizes	
10) Learner asks a question	
11) Learner answers questions	
12) Learner talks to another learner	
13) Period of silence or confusion	

## Title

# A Critical Review of the Current Situation of Teaching ESP in the Iranian Higher Education Institutions

## Authors

**Samad Mirza Suzani (Ph.D. Candidate)**

Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch, Shiraz, Iran

**Lotfollah Yarmohammadi (Ph.D.)**

Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch, Shiraz, Iran

**Mortaza Yamini (Ph.D.)**

Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran

## Biodata

**Samad Mirza Suzani** is a Ph.D candidate of TEFL at the Department of English, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch, Shiraz, Iran. He has presented in several Int'l conferences including SAMT conferences in 2005 and 2006 and IELTI4 and TELLSI8 in 2007 and 2010 and Asia TEFL in 2011. He has published a book on translation and another on ESP (SAMT Publications). He has also published several articles in the *Translation Studies* Journal. His fields of interest are mainly Translation Studies, CDA, ESP, and Curriculum design.

**Lotfollah Yarmohammadi** is a Professor of English language and Linguistics at the Department of English, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch, Shiraz, Iran. He has taught to both native and non-native speakers of Persian in different universities in Iran and abroad. He has published a large number of papers in different int'l journals. He has also published a prolific number of books on linguistics, syntax, discourse, and CDA in both English and Persian.

**Mortaza Yamini** is an active member of the Center of Excellence in L2 Reading & Writing who has taught for over 35 years at Department of Language and Linguistics, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran. He is pursuing his teaching profession, offering some graduate courses at Shiraz University and the Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch. He has also published a good number of articles and books on second language learning and teaching, testing and other areas of applied linguistics in local and int'l journals.

## Abstract

At present, almost all undergraduates in the Iranian higher educational institutions have to go through an obligatory course known as *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP). However, the results of the present qualitative study indicated that the logic behind the ESP is still unknown to most undergraduates. To this end, data were collected from both semi-structured interviews with 115 participants and their "record-of-work" forms via classroom portfolios in the end of the project. Using the Strauss and Corbin's "grounded theory"(1998), analysis of the data revealed that for the time being, a good number of ESP learners of different majors still wonder what ESP means and what rationale is there behind the program. The main aim of the present study was multifaceted: firstly, to present a critical evaluation of the current situation of teaching ESP in Iran, to widen perspectives to the current problems of ESP individual learners; secondly, to examine the current situation of ESP materials in the Iranian post-secondary institutions; and thirdly, to offer some solutions to the dilemma of ESP program for the betterment of the program in the higher education settings. Finally, the study attempted to give suggestive guidelines to minimize the gap between theory and practice in ESP classrooms in Iranian educational settings.

**Keywords:** educational settings, ESP, ESP materials, grounded theory, practice, theory

## 1. Introduction

The main aim of English for specific purposes in our country is to help non-native English speaking students who are going to study for professional qualifications at post-secondary colleges and educational establishments where the medium of English is used. For the most part, the course is appropriate for and offered to the students who study to become qualified or get qualifications as professional experts in their own fields of study. An important point, however, is that the course is a *language* course and therefore there are some useful structures and vocabulary to be learned by working through different reading texts. Furthermore, some knowledge of aspects of words in different departments should be gained.

Due to its wide range, it is necessary first to define what is meant by English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Hutchinson & Waters (1987, p.19) assert that it does not refer to "a product", but rather to "an approach to language learning which is based on learner need". A more specific definition, which can provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the different contexts depicted, is that developed by Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998), which is in turn based on an earlier definition by Strevens (1988), expressed in terms of absolute and variable characteristics. In Table 1 absolute and variable characteristics of ESP are compared:

**Table 1**

*ESP Absolute Characteristics vs. Variable Characteristics (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998, p.4-5)*

<b>Absolute Characteristics</b>	<b>Variable Characteristics</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner;</li> <li>- ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves;</li> <li>- ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;</li> <li>- ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;</li> <li>- ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work institution. It could, however, be used for learners at secondary school level;</li> <li>- ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students. Most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.</li> </ul>

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

Presently, almost all the university students at undergraduate levels—depending on their majors—are supposed to go through some courses as *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP) courses. However, there appear to be numerous vicissitudes in the presentation of ESP courses and achieving the desirable results in our country. For the most part, it seems the logic behind the ESP is still unknown to some undergraduates, so that they may be continuously asking what ESP means and what rationale behind this program could be. Furthermore, they seem to be quite at a loss about what they have been expected to achieve during the course period and what they are supposed to achieve as the ultimate objective. As a qualitative study, following the frameworks of "grounded theory", the present paper, therefore, attempts to find some solutions to the dilemma of ESP program for the betterment of the program, and to minimize the gap between theory and practice in ESP classrooms in Iranian educational settings.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1. Crucial Factors in ESP Programs**

In any language teaching-learning program success depends on giving proper consideration to two groups of elements: first, human elements, such as the role of the teacher, the nature of the learner(s), the interaction among the students, etc. second, non-human elements, such as the textbook and the teaching material(s), teaching aids and props, the syllabus, the number of hours allocated to study, etc. It is obvious that, considering above categorizations, ESP classrooms, in this case, are not exceptions either.

Case and Gunstone (2002, p. 465), in their investigation of some South African students learning Chemical Engineering, reported that meta-cognition operates on three levels. The most basic level is information-based, where the students focus on understanding some facts which might be useful for subsequent assessment; the next level is algorithmic, where the students attempt to incorporate methods for solving relevant problems; and the top level is conceptual, "where the learners' intention is to understand concepts".

In any ESP program the specifications and analysis of students' needs and objectives is definitely one of the major considerations and it should be noted that in each ESP program different learners carry different needs and understanding these differences could help us develop different materials for different learners. In other words, ESP courses, due to the vital role of the learners, mostly tend to be geared towards learner-centeredness. By learner-centeredness we mean that it is the learner for whom we devise a course, and therefore an individual's certain attitudes, motivations, wants and needs should be regarded as important. Furthermore, the language through which the content is conveyed is important too. In addition to the significant role of individual learners in language learning settings, textbooks and teaching materials play an important part in ESP classroom. They serve not only as tool but also as tutor, guidebook and gauge in today's classroom. Teachers all over the world use texts to guide their instruction, so textbooks can greatly influence how content is delivered. The two important factors mentioned above will be further illustrated in the following:

### **2.1.1. The Significance of Learners' Needs Analysis**

This has been well recognized that need analysis should be the starting point for devising syllabuses, courses, materials, and the kind of teaching and learning that takes place (Coffey 1984). Implicit in need analysis is the requirement for fact-finding or the collection of data. The data, for example, about the students, the subject to be studied, etc. can come from a variety of sources and can be collected by various methods. Yarmohammadi (1995, p.19) believes that at university level, language instruction has proved to become more specific, and for some majors English is presented for specific purposes, considering the general approved goals and course syllabi. In these cases, the analysis of general instructional objectives by means of achieving an ability to use specific scientific sources, and adapting them to behavioral objectives is essentially necessary, and henceforth need specification and analysis becomes of more significance by the program developers and syllabus designers.

The significance of needs analysis and specifications in any language teaching programming is almost axiomatic. The data about the students, their needs and the subject to be studied can come from a variety of sources and can be collected by various methods. In ESP classrooms the learner plays a vital role. It is the learner for whom we devise a course; therefore,

the course is mostly geared towards learner-centeredness. In fact, the specification of English instruction at university levels is a movement toward meeting more needs, and hence integrating knowledge of theoretical cognition into objective and scientific researches should be continuously conducted in educational institutes and universities, and this is the reason why the analysis of general instructional objectives and adapting them to behavioral objectives appears to be an essentially integral enterprise.

Nowadays we know that the specification of English instruction at university levels is a movement toward meeting more needs. Integrating knowledge of theoretical cognition into objective and scientific researches should be continuously conducted in educational institutes and universities. Obviously, needs vary in sorts and levels, and an organized educational system should always give priority to the basically urgent needs of the learners.

### **2.1.2. The Significance of Course Books and Teaching Materials**

The main aim for designing the materials to be used by the students of ESP is to help them fill the gap between their general knowledge of English having acquired through the elementary materials and the specific literature to which they will be exposed later on their following studies and professional settings. It goes without saying that the language through which the content is conveyed is important too.

Schmidt, McKnight, and Raizen (1997) identify textbooks as playing an important role in making the leap from intentions and plans to classroom activities. They do so by making content available, organizing it, and setting out learning tasks in a form designed to be appealing to students. Mirza Suzani (2007a, p.1) argues that the significant role of course books and teaching materials in any educational enterprise seems indispensable. On the other hand, Sheldon (1988, p. 273) claims that "the selection of a course book signals an executive educational decision in which there is considerable professional, financial and even political investment." Choosing a course textbook nonetheless seems to be a daunting and occasionally overwhelming prospect for both program administrators and teachers. Nevertheless, it is a prospect that must be respected sufficiently.

In designing and selecting ESP materials and textbooks we have to bear in mind that different learners have different needs and understanding these differences helps us to develop different materials for different learners. Selecting together with developing appropriate course books and materials, in fact, not only has significant impact on the ability of students to meet their learning needs and objectives, but also affects both the processes of how they learn and the outcomes and consequences of their learning.

## **2.2 ESP Programs in the Iranian Higher Education Institutions: The Current Situation**

In the present paper, both theoretical assumptions and practical problems of ESP programs in the present condition of Iranian ESP classrooms will be elucidated.

### **2.2.1 Basic Theoretical Assumptions**

According to Blackey (1987), the main aim of ESP course is to provide a stepping-stone to enable students to cross from an intermediate knowledge of general English to a position where they can handle the sort of textbooks and instruction they will meet at college and professional settings. Yarmohammadi (1995), on the other hand, believes that in order to help the Iranian students, the course should be designed to develop within themes relevant to special studies. Language basic skills such as reading skills, writing skills, communicating skills, and note-taking skills should be emphasized. The aim should also focus on building up the students' vocabulary of special and technical terms. In addition, it is important that by working through the course the students gain a general knowledge of their profession or field of study which they may not already have had.

### **2.2.2. Major Practical Problems**

Regardless of the theoretical assumptions, there are critical problems relevant to the teaching of ESP in practice, almost common to all Iranian higher education institutions, among the most important of which is to minimize the gap between theory and practice in ESP classrooms in Iranian educational settings and outer world. Major practical problems in the present educational system could be categorized into two groups to analyze and evaluate: *problems with learners and their needs in higher education institutions* and *problems with course books and teaching materials*. These problems will be broadly discussed in the present study.

In the present study, it is attempted to find responses to the following questions:

1. What are some of the major current problems of teaching ESP in the Iranian higher education institutions?
2. What significant roles do the individual learners and textbooks and teaching materials play in ESP classrooms?
3. How could we alleviate the problematic situation (to minimize the gap between theory and practice) in ESP classrooms?

Regarding the research questions, the main aim of the present study is multifaceted: to present a critical evaluation of the current situation of teaching ESP in Iran, to widen perspectives to the current problems of ESP individual learners, to examine the current situation of ESP materials in the Iranian post-secondary institutions, and to offer some solutions to the dilemma of ESP program for the betterment of the program in higher education settings. Finally, the study attempts to give evocative suggestions to minimize the gap between theory and practice in ESP classrooms in Iranian educational settings.

### **3. Methodology**

In order to get a wider scope of the current situation of ESP classrooms a qualitative study of ESP situation in some of the Iranian higher education institutions, via oral interview was conducted. For this purpose, an extensive study of different individuals from different fields of study was conducted.

#### **3.1. Participants**

Participants involved in this study were totally 115 undergraduates from six different fields of study, i.e. medicine and paramedical branches, basic sciences, civil engineering, statistics, tourism, and humanities. The participants were purposely selected from diverse higher educational systems (including State, Azad, Payam-e-Noor, Non-beneficiary, and military universities) from Mazandaran and Khouzistan provinces. They were selected from among undergraduate students of different fields of study in the Northern Branch of Shahid Chamran

University of Ahvaz (Jundi-Shapoor) and Payam-e-Noor University of Dezfoul in Khouzistan, and Islamic Azad University of Chaloos, Tabarestan Non-beneficiary higher education institute of Noshahr, and Imam Khomeini Naval University of Noshahr in Mazandaran. The participants consisted of 60 male and 55 female individuals from five different universities who either had passed the ESP course or were having the course from 2007 to 2010.

### **3.2. Materials and Procedures**

In order to augment the generalizability of the results, the participants were selected entirely randomly. Considering the current educational timetable given and the textbook(s) recommended to the students of each specific major (here, typically SAMT ESP textbooks, or Payam-e-Noor ESP books), a series of sporadic but continual semi-structured interviews were conducted at several consecutive sessions (Appendix I). In order to avoid wasting the class' time, it was commonly attempted to conduct the interviews *after* the end of learners' ESP classes. The interviews were conducted at different intervals and the results were taken down and recorded for each separate session. The participants were then encouraged to fill in "record-of-work" forms, which included a space for their classroom learning activities, to be submitted in a portfolio at the end of the project (Appendix II). It allowed the researcher to collect data in an easily accessible form at the end of the study.

### **3.3. Data analysis**

The data were gathered through the participants' retrospective responses regarding their individual experiences and/or feelings in ESP classrooms, and also their opinions about textbooks and teaching materials in the "record-of-work" forms. Then it was attempted to analyze the data gathered qualitatively.

In analyzing the data, an approach based on "grounded theory" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was used. In this theory, it is aimed to generate theory through the systematic review and categorization of data and then categorization and their relationships are elaborated in the process of interpretation.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) believe grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), "grounded theory" is derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process. Besides, they argue in this method, data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another. In this theory, researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind, unless his or her purpose is to elaborate and extend existing theory. Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data. Therefore, theory derived from data is more likely to resemble the "reality" than is theory derived by putting together a series of concepts based on experience or solely through speculation (how one thinks things ought to work).

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Analysis of Learners Responses Regarding Their Needs in Higher Education Institutions**

Regarding learners' needs in higher education institutions, analysis of the responses in the interviews and "record-of-work" forms revealed the following interesting and evocative points:

1. One of the greatest problems with ESP classes was reported to be their inappropriate time of presentation regarding the syllabus. "Sometimes, ESP course is offered in the lower semesters, so that we don't feel sufficiently prepared for the course", some of the interviewees complained.
2. A good number of the participants groaned that ESP classes were held too overcrowded and overpopulated. Thus, neither could the students concentrate on the materials presented sufficiently, nor was the teacher able to cope with the situation properly.
3. Another grumble was concerned with inappropriate class' hours. In some cases, it was claimed that class' hours were usually postponed to the ending hours of the educational timetable, when the students were too tired to participate actively.
4. Offering the course in the summer intensive terms was pointed out as another dispiriting factor. Several interviewees argued that in the summer intensive terms, because of shortage of time and excess of specific materials and extra activities, neither the teacher nor the pupils could find enough time to go through the educational syllabus properly. This could reduce the learners' motivation. As a student reported, he was given ESP course in a summer term in which he had to

attend 6 hour classrooms every week in a short intensive (and of course, boring) program, but he could not ultimately understand anything out of the textbook and teaching materials.

5. Some participants claimed that during and even after their ESP classes, they could find little compatibility between their previous knowledge of English having received through, say, General English courses and the ESP course offered to them later. Therefore, they craved for further compatibility between GE and ESP in the syllabus.

6. Many senior participants criticized that in most of the ESP classes learners are just required to memorize a series of words or terminology without applying them in authentic contexts related to their own fields. In such a situation, after elapsing a short time (e.g., after their ESP classes) the learners typically forget those words soon. Consequently, in the following semesters-when they feel an urgent need to apply their knowledge of language in practice- they may feel perturbed and frustrated.

7. Some other ESP students asserted that for the most part teachers were good at English, but because of some various limitations and/or educational barriers and other restrictions they were unable to cope with unwanted problems of teaching ESP in their educational setting.

The above-mentioned points could be assumed suggestive in nature in a large degree. However, further analysis of the interviews with various participants indicated that unfortunately there were some potentially disparaging factors that could act as critical barriers; hinder the process of development in ESP courses; and consequently, worsen the condition in ESP classrooms. Some of these inhibiting factors are as the following:

1. When the instructor lacks sufficient familiarity with or knowledge of fundamental principles or strategies of EFL teaching;
2. When few authentic, appropriate, and up-to-date materials are used or recommended to the learners to work on;
3. If the undesirable condition of stereotyped education and cliché-learning is prescribed and practiced rather than discovery learning and reflective education;

4. If the main goals and objectives of teaching ESP are completely unknown to the students, i.e. if the learners are not familiar with the philosophy behind ESP course and language learning strategies (LLS) in ESP classroom;
5. If there is no set comprehensive and definite lesson plan, stratagem, scheme and objective for teaching the materials. In other words, when the learners could not achieve fruitful results because of not knowing exactly what to read, how to read, and why to read;
6. If planning of the timetable for offering language courses (General and/or Specific language) to the students of each major is inappropriate and out of place;
7. If the students are extremely exhausted and feel fatigue because of overwork and extra-curricular activities in their educational institutions, or because they have little time for physical and psychological relaxation. Such an appalling condition was readily observed in one of the above-mentioned universities called Imam Khomeini Naval University of Noshahr, where the grievous condition was mainly due to its military identity.

Based on what was mentioned above, the self-evident point would be that in an all-round comprehensive educational program all kinds of physical, psychological and affective filters that may lessen or weaken the educators' motivation and attitudes toward learning should be seriously inhibited and eradicated.

#### **4.2. Analysis of Responses Regarding Course Books and Teaching Materials**

Analysis of the data gathered through interviews and "record-of-work" forms revealed interesting points regarding the learners' problem with textbooks and teaching materials. Here come some key points in this regard:

1. Some participants asserted that during the course either they or their classmates were quite at a loss about what goal(s) they were expected to achieve during the course period, and what they were supposed to be prepared for the final exam. As an instance, I came across a number of students who complained that they had spent a lot of time on practicing the grammatical points of the book the night before the exam, and they were finally given all kinds of questions but the grammatical ones.

2. A number of students groaned that during the ESP course they only read through the texts and translated them from English to Persian. In general, they felt dissatisfied with this method because they believed that all over the educational term, they did not learn anything practical out of the textbook.

3. Providing ESP learners with specific jargon seems to be good in nature. However, there seems to be some shortcomings in their method of presentation. Most participants declared that learners, for the most part, memorize a large number of terminology parrot-like, and roughly in a decontextualized style.

4. The use of appropriate vocabulary has its own significance in ESP materials. Based on the results of the interviews conducted, words and expressions are interesting enough to the students, but occasionally there is some downside in teaching them, so that not sufficient time is allowed to teach them appropriately.

5. Nor could the way of testing vocabulary be satisfactory to the learners. The students, as they frequently acknowledged in their interviews, memorized plenty of terminology parrot-like, without gaining the abilities to imply them as live language or in authentic and spontaneous contexts.

6. Most participants believed it to be an untoward fault that language learners after spending so much time on learning vocabulary, expressions and jargon forget them soon after the final exam.

## **5. Discussion**

What was mentioned provides us with a general perspective of the current intricate situation of teaching ESP in the Iranian higher education institutions, considering two central factors: the individual learners and textbooks and teaching materials. Now the crucial question is raised, "what should we do to alleviate the situation?"

The answer to the above question might not be so straightforward. However, we have to bear in mind that a basic solution to the problem craves for paying close attention to two central issues: meeting learners' urgent needs, and developing appropriate textbooks and teaching materials. In fact, the above issues could not be taken apart; however, they are truly

interconnected and most of the time may overlap together. It seems self-evident that the specification and analysis of the learners' needs has continuously been one of the major discussions in any language teaching programming. Accordingly, we ought to present the materials so that they could "answer students' purposes" and students should "be able to use them."

A quick survey of the recent ESP books in our current educational system reveals that presently a lot of language learners' needs in the formal language teaching have been recognized and a promising trace has been taken on the field of developing materials for different majors in a large degree. Consequently, we clearly find out that some positive steps toward establishing more creativity on the part of students have been taken. For instance, a lot of improvement has been made in the books published by the Organization for Researching and Composing University Textbooks in the Humanities (SAMT) in Iran. In fact, SAMT ESP textbooks, *inter alia*, provide us with typical samples of successful books.

The underlying premise of the SAMT ESP books is mainly based on the belief that almost all the language basic skills and components should be considered as equally important. Furthermore, ESP materials are commonly designed under the notion that reading is an interactive process in which readers combine new information from the text and prior knowledge they bring with them. In other words, reading is considered as a kind of dialogue between the reader and the text, or even between the reader and the author. Likewise, textbooks and materials are designed the way that meet the readers' needs in terms of their linguistic knowledge, *i.e.*, readers should have adequate knowledge of language to deal with the texts they are reading. In this way their schematic knowledge, *i.e.*, activation of prior knowledge can enhance comprehension, and their interest, *i.e.*, readers' interest in the topic of a text can augment comprehension. For this purpose, ESP books are suggested to be designed on the basis of a three-phase procedure of pre-, while-, and post-reading stages to ensure that reading is taught in the sense of helping readers develop increasing abilities to tackle texts. Besides, the books contain various topics, photos, and illustrations to meet readers' interest.

Apart from a wide range of authentic materials and various activities, another characteristic of the SAMT ESP books is that they commonly enjoy a variety of texts of

translation and terminology to ensure learners' development in those areas. Each book usually includes 10-14 units and each unit typically consists of three sections. Each section has its own exercises. In general, basic skills and components in the SAMT ESP books include the following:

#### *-Reading comprehension*

The general aim of reading comprehension is primarily to develop the ability to understand the sort of texts students meet at college. The interactive nature of reading can refer to the interplay among linguistic and schematic knowledge that a reader employs in moving through a text. The approach to comprehension in this book is first to activate any knowledge the students may have of a subject before they read about it. This is done by getting the students to consider questions and topics before they start to read the text. It is assumed that by bringing relevant ideas and raising certain expectations, they will be in a better position to comprehend the overall structure of a passage and to understand the meaning of important words in the context.

#### *-Comprehension Exercises*

The next step of reading comprehension is to examine more closely how words work in order to make a coherent and meaningful piece of the text. After reading the passage, the students are often asked to analyze the ideas and relationships, and interpret words and phrases as a check to comprehension. The attention to the content of passages can also help them express their own ideas. Consequently, exercises are designed on the basis of the words and structures in the reading passages so that students can internalize form and meaning along with use and usage of the material of each unit. Exercises on special expressions are also given to help the students realize how sentences are linked on a grammatical and semantic basis to give a passage coherence and unity. This insight can also help learners with their topic discussion.

#### *-Grammar and Parts of Speech*

The grammatical points in ESP books aim at developing some knowledge of certain aspects of structures that are considered primarily useful for reading and vocabulary and later for writing and speaking skills. They mostly deal with word categories and parts of speech used at the

intermediate and upper-intermediate levels, or the structures to be used as practical aspects of language to improve learners' syntactic knowledge for later use.

#### *-Group Discussion*

This part of ESP book, together with oral questions, aims to integrate reading with speaking, listening, and writing skills. Preferably, it is better to conduct this part verbally in the classroom so that students are encouraged to improve their skills beyond reading comprehension. It is believed that questions at this part of each ESP book stimulate class discussion, foster students' oral abilities and promote a desire among learners for further reading.

#### *-Applied Terminology*

The use of applied terminology in ESP books is believed to build up some of the vocabulary the students need in their particular area of study and later in their careers. Of course, the number of technical terms can be enormous; however, the terms are mostly chosen according to their relevance to the topic and most often based on students' needs and objectives.

#### *-Translation*

Some provocative texts under the rubric of 'Translation' are inserted in ESP books to help learners transcend the framework of classrooms and feel the joy of translating English texts. For this purpose, each unit includes a set of authentic texts of translation that can bridge the gap between what students learn in the classroom and what they can encounter in their everyday lives and professional career.

In brief, the SAMT ESP books are developed as an attempt to provide the Persian speaking university students with a readable, interesting, and scientifically-based book. The main aim is to help them not only improve their reading comprehension ability but also (gradually) prepare them for other important skills of speaking and writing in their special fields. Needless to say, setting objectives of ESP program to foster students' reading ability should not imply, by any means, that other skills are ignored.

In addition to the characteristics mentioned above, there are some other merits to the ESP books published by the SAMT. The books turn out to be less wordy and superfluous, hence less

boring to the students. Units are concise with various exercises on comprehension and translation. Due to governmental supports, they are typically cheaper than the books published by other publishers. Moreover, we put forward that the physical shape of the textbooks, in general, and the presentation of materials and arrangement of activities, in particular, are the two important factors that could positively affect the students' interest and motivation. Cultural norms and aspects are aptly regarded to be important. Besides, sufficient emphasis should be put on four basic skills of language and the exercises on the skills presented should appear as authentic as possible. The style of the book should not clash with the teaching style and it has to allow teachers flexibility in teaching. Likewise, vocabulary presentation and terminology should be given in a neat and compact way so that they make students less confused fumbling for words. The use of cloze tests and fill-in-the-blanks is also another advantage which enhances students' comprehension abilities. Using both transcriptions (phonetic symbols) and different parts of speech for new vocabulary before and after presenting each text can be considered another advantage for any comprehensive up-to-date English textbook. It is suggested that two supplementary sections under the classifications of 'Preface' and 'Appendix' be added to each ESP book for readers to take advantage of. In this case, the readers will be able to attain a generally more convenient overview of the book as well as gain more familiarity with the key concepts and materials in the end of the book.

In general, it should be acknowledged that in recent years great steps have been taken towards the improvement of ESP textbooks. An important point to consider is that in designing any textbook, nobody could claim perfection; however, the main aim of the SAMT ESP books is the amplification of creativity on behalf of the Persian speaking students of different fields of study. It goes without saying that continuous attention is felt necessary to persuade and help learners to learn more effectively and to meet their needs and educational objectives in both the classroom and outer atmospheres.

### **5.1. Pedagogical Implications**

In any educational atmosphere, retention of materials depends on three important factors: the quality of teaching, the interest of learners and the meaningfulness of textbooks and materials (Richard, C.; Platt, J. and Platt, H., 1992). It is suggested that an important characteristic for a

model of ESP classroom is that it should be flexible enough to be used in English contexts all over the world. To make the most effective use of a textbook, teachers must decide which textbooks are appropriate for their needs. They need to determine the extent to which a textbook focuses on a coherent set of significant, age-appropriate student learning goals that the teacher or educational establishment has identified as integral to the understanding of and progress in a particular academic subject. The only way to gain this information is through careful evaluation of textbooks and other curriculum materials. The specification and analysis of the learners' needs is, on the other hand, one of the major discussions in any language teaching programming (Mirza Suzani, 2006). Teachers ought to present the materials so that they could "answer students' purposes" and students should be able to use them. As ESP teachers, we should try to give our students the tools they need to achieve their goals, usually job-related. We should also help our learners achieve their desired changes - mastery of another language, perhaps getting a new or better job. Sometimes, the changes we help to enact may be larger than just the individual. The reason is that, for the most part, ESP is, by its very nature, a kind of study which is likely to attract those who are primarily interested not only in the target language but also in their own professional field and associated areas. The ESP learner may not yet have thought much about how to learn a language, and may therefore proceed using certain default behaviors. For example, the common-sense default for tackling unknown vocabulary among most EFL learners, including Iranian EFL learners, is to use a dictionary or ask someone; indeed, overuse of this habit can even be seen in learners who are specialists in language. However, such a default reading or listening strategy is usually fatal to comprehension. The more one focuses on understanding individual words, it seems, the less one ends up understanding the text message. Li & Munby (1996) reported on two students from China who, when first learning English, had "basically translated each word of the sentence into Chinese and wrote the Chinese words above or below the English sentence" (1996, p.205), a process which seems common to many language learners in most EFL countries, like Iran, but which makes comprehension extremely problematic.

From the perspective of ESP teachers and learners, information technology could also play a key role in developing strategies for effective communication, both in academic and professional settings. In this everchanging and fast-paced world, the demands and skills associated with professional practices need to be integrated into the teaching of academic and

professional communication. As a result, we consider the professional communicator as an information manager, who needs technology as a tool for communication as much as for his or her own professional practice. These communicative practices in the workplace include, for example, accessing computer networks and databases to search for and share information, as well as using the emerging electronic genres that combine features of written and spoken language. In the case of ESP students, in particular, technology becomes the gateway to their future profession as it allows them to get immersed in authentic materials related to their discipline and to communicate with others, thus helping them become familiar with the genres and practices of the discourse community (see Warschauer, 2002b).

## **6. Conclusion**

It seems that one of the implicational problems of teaching ESP classes is the disintegration between theory and practice. The students and graduates must get familiar with strategies to bridge between theory and practice. Fortunately, presently lots of language learners' needs in the formal language teaching have been recognized in our country and consequently a promising trace has been taken on the field of developing materials for different fields in a large degree. Also positive steps toward establishing more creativity on the part of students have been taken. Further, we suggest that the books or teaching materials to be selected should turn out to be less wordy and superfluous, hence less boring to the students. Moreover, it is suggested that the physical shape of the textbooks, in general, and the presentation of materials and arrangement of activities, in particular, be considered two important factors that can directly affect the students' interest and motivation. Besides, sufficient emphasis should be put on four basic skills of language and the exercises on the skills presented should seem as authentic as possible. The style of the book should not clash with the teaching style and it has to allow teachers flexibility in teaching. Likewise, vocabulary presentation and terminology should be given in a neat and compact way so that they make students less confused fumbling for words. Using both transcriptions (phonetic symbols) and different parts of speech for new vocabulary before and after presenting each text can be considered another advantage for any comprehensive up-to-date English textbook. A prominent feature of ESP pedagogy is the fostering of learner autonomy so that many CALL applications have recently attempted to help students become more autonomous, and as Benson (2001) believes there has been a great deal of discussion as to the

role of technology in the development of learner autonomy. By autonomy we do not mean working individually and using stored programs but developing the necessary skills and strategies for selecting information, working with it, and sharing it with other people, which is all the more necessary in such an increasingly networked society with an overload of information. In this way, technology could become an opportunity to the learners' future profession as it allows them to get immersed in authentic materials related to their discipline. Further suggestions to the development of ESP programs are offered as follows:

1. It is extremely important to put emphasis on the participation on behalf of the students. Otherwise, a tape-recorder would be more functional than they because it can record all the details much better than human students.
2. More appropriate class hours should be allocated to teach the specific language. The beginning hours of the day when students are fresher and more energetic to participate are recommended.
3. The students should be informed and convinced to understand the purpose and rationale behind the ESP classes. The syllabus should be to the point and the framework should be more specified and geared to the learners' needs, so that they distinguish between what they know at present and what they will be supposed to know in future. They should also be encouraged to accumulate their store of knowledge by way of combining new information with their old [potential] knowledge of English.
4. It is recommended that some time be spent on the currently-published periodicals and magazines. The significance of using and searching on daily, weekly, and monthly publications and authentic materials has been well demonstrated. Moreover, the use of such sources seems to add to the practicality of the tasks and keeps the students more up-to-date. In this way, the students can keep abreast of new developments in their fields in foreign countries and henceforth make further progress.
5. Developing an all-round comprehensive lesson plan by teachers seems basically indispensable. The students at ESP classrooms should not be at a loss anymore. The decision should be made in advance on the general and/or specific English and the amount to be introduced in the class. The teachers should clarify the strategies and techniques they are

following. They should also assist the students in adopting appropriate language learning strategies.

6. Offering the language learning materials should be geared to the students' educational and/or occupational needs, hence, making a consensus between theory and practice.

7. Increasing learners' motivation can play a key role in the successful learning. Experience has shown that in any field of study when the students have a reason or rationale behind their studies, a positive outcome will be achieved. Adversely, when the students wonder why they are to do some task they beat around the bush and lose their motivation.

8. It is suggested that the number of students be downsized so as the classes not be held overcrowded and overpopulated anymore. It gives allowance to the teacher to handle the class more properly and makes it possible for the students to enjoy the class participation more fruitfully.

9. The emphasis should be on *integrative* language skills. Since English, like any other language, is made up of four basic skills, in ESP classrooms learning all four basic skills (both oral and written skills) should be emphasized. That is, the teacher shouldn't simply suffice to a few skills (e.g., reading comprehension skill).

10. Content-based instruction (CBI) is recommended, since in this way the students will learn the content better together with language skills simultaneously.

11. Further attention should be paid to the learners' physical and psychological or affective conditions. If there are affective filters, they may increase stress and act as hindering factors. Therefore, in a good educational setting, all negative factors need to be recognized and be conquered.

12. Task-based learning is recommended, since it provides a flexible and efficient framework for both finding common ground within ESP and for catering to specific needs in a language learning environment.

13. When possible, ESP classrooms should be jointly conducted by means of employing two teachers, i.e., one who is expert in language and linguistic skills, and another who is specialist in

the students' specialized area(s). In this case, each teacher would be sufficiently knowledgeable of the details of his/her own specialty.

14. The use of technology in ESP research could propel corpus-based studies, which in turn evolve along with technological developments. Also, it allows researchers to compile different types and large amounts of corpora, together with tools for their analysis, and to carry out a large number of studies in both oral and written discourse.

15. The use of *keyness* and *key words* can be useful concepts for ESP teachers as well as for researchers into text. Key words can be used in all four skills. They provide a means of enhancing awareness, helping the student towards conceptual operation. More important, they can provide a less stressful way of working in the ESP classroom.

16. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) could have an important role in ESP classrooms, as it offers students the possibility of planning their writing and paying attention to language use, thus integrating the dimensions of process and product (see e.g., Warschauer, 2002a). Kern et al. (2004) call CMC the "second wave of online language learning". This second wave embraces a broader view of online learning which focuses on cross-cultural concerns, identity, social discourses, and long-distance collaboration, with an emphasis on the interplay between the intervening contextual factors (see Kern et al., 2004).

17. Technology and autonomy have, for a long time, been related, and an interesting aspect that deserves special attention within ESP is how to develop learner autonomy in higher education. Hence, particular emphasis should be placed on the learner making decisions about the process, the opportunities technology offers for developing an autonomous behavior and, at the same time, the skills that are required from learners to integrate technology in the learning process, whether in a classroom-based or distance course.

18. In addition to the above implications, the classroom can be made more instructive by using pictures, photographs, slides, diagrams, and realia to help with vocabulary and supplementary language work. These can be used for their relevance to the topic of each unit. If possible, planning scientific visits and research tours be geared to the content of units in order to underline the practicality of the course and increase general knowledge of ESP areas.

To put it in a nutshell, it has to be acknowledged that, so far, great steps have been taken towards the advancement of both English textbooks and ESP programs in our country, especially in recent years. Such steps deserve to be highly appreciated. Still, further attention on behalf of the policy makers, program organizers and materials developers is required to be paid to encourage and assist students to learn more effectively and to meet their individual needs and educational objectives in both the classroom atmosphere and the outer world.

### References

- Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and Researching Autonomy in Language Learning*. Harlow, Essex: Longman.
- Blackey, T. N. (1987). *English for Maritime Studies*, Second Edition. Prentice-Hall International English Language Teaching.
- Case, J. and R. Gunstone (2002). Metacognitive development as a shift in approach to learning: An in-depth study. *Studies in Higher Education*, 27 (4), 459-470.
- Coffey, B. (1984). ESP- English for Specific Purposes. *Language Teaching*, 17 (1).
- Cunningsworth, A. (1984). *Evaluating and selecting EFL materials*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Dudley-Evans, T. and M. St. John (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Glaser, B.G. and Strauss, A.M. (1967). *The Discovery of General Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine.
- Jordan, R. R. (1997). *English for Academic Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kern, R., P. Ware and M. Warschauer (2004). Crossing frontiers: New directions in online pedagogy and research. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 24, 243-260.
- Khosh Sima, H. (2001). *English for the students of Nautical and Maritime Sciences*. Tehran: SAMT.
- Li, S. and H. Munby (1996). Metacognitive strategies in second language academic reading: A qualitative investigation. *English for Specific Purposes*, 15 (3), 199-216.
- Mirza Suzani, S. & B. Parvaresh (2011). *English for the Students of Anesthesia*. Tehran: SAMT.

- Mirza Suzani, S. (2006). Teaching ESP in the Faculties of Medicine and Related Fields: Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice. In G.R. Kiany & M. Khayamdar (Eds.) *Proceedings of the First National ESP/EAP Conference*. Volume III. Tehran: SAMT.
- Mirza Suzani, S. (2007a). Evaluating English Textbooks. In *University Textbook (2): ICT & Assessment (On the Occasion of the First International Conference on University Textbook)*. Volume II. Tehran: SAMT.
- Mirza Suzani, S. (2007b). Teaching ESP in the Faculties of Maritime Sciences: Problems and Approaches. In *the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference on Marine Science and Technology*. Noshahr: Imam Khomeini University of Maritime Sciences.
- Richards, C. J., J. Platt & H. Platt. (1992). *Dictionary of Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, Second Edition. UK: Longman.
- Schmidt, W. H., C. C. McKnight & S. A. Raizen. (1997). *A splintered vision: An investigation of U.S. science and mathematics education*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Press.
- Sheldon, L.E. (1988). Evaluating ELT Textbooks and Materials. *ELT Journal*. 42 (4), 237-246.
- Strauss, A. L. & Corbin, J. M. (1998). *Techniques and Procedures for developing Grounded theory*. London: Sage Publications.
- Strevens, P. (1988). ESP after twenty years: A re-appraisal. In M. Tickoo (ed.) *ESP: State of the Art*. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre. 1-13.
- Warschauer, M. (2002a). A developmental perspective on technology in language education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36 (3), 453-475.
- Warschauer, M. (2002b). Networking into academic discourse. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 1 (1), 45-58. Retrieved June 21.2009 from <<http://www.gse.uci.edu/markw/networking.html>>
- Yarmohammadi, L. (1995). *On the Problems of ELT in Iran*. Fifteen Articles in Contrastive Linguistics and the Structure of Persian. Tehran: Rahnama Publications.

## **Appendixes**

### **Appendix I: Semi-structured Interview for ESP Course**

1. What was your ESP course like during the whole educational semester?
2. Do you think there was any special problem with the course in the beginning?

3. What do you think about the setting of ESP classroom and the type of activities you were assigned to do?
4. What were some major problems with the activities assigned to you?
5. What is the extent to activities helped you to achieve autonomy within the ESP course?
6. What is the extent to which assignments or do-it-yourself practice helped you to achieve your success within the course in general?
7. Do you frequently read authentic ESP texts in your free time?
8. How much did you learn from your teacher's emphasis on your doing homework?
9. To what extent do you try to use new syntactic structures in your learning?
10. Have you realized any change in your general English skills in general? How and when?
10. Have you realized any change in your ESP in general? How and when?
12. Did your ESP teacher frequently use authentic ESP texts (such as papers, magazines, the Internet extracts, etc.) in your classroom?
13. Did you enjoy ESP lessons in the beginning of the semester more, or after the middle of the semester? Why?
14. To what extent did you enjoy, welcome, and use other skills such as written communication in ESP classroom?
15. In reading ESP texts, did you prefer to use more translation from Persian or produce an outline or plan in English?
16. Do you think you benefited more from your ESP teacher or General English course teacher? Why?
17. Do you think you benefited from your ESP class conducted in oral communication, written communication, or both?
18. How important was the role of textbook(s) and teaching materials in improving your ESP skills?
19. How important was the role of textbook in improving your English oral skills?
20. How do you think your ESP class can affect your knowledge of English in general and your career in particular?

**Appendix II:**

**A "record-of-work" Form Used at the ESP Course at Post-secondary Level**

Learner's level of study.....	Major.....	Period covered.....
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>What learner has done in ESP classroom</b> (Learner describes activities and writes down the title of any materials s/he has used)</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>What learner has learned in ESP classroom</b> (Learner summarizes what s/he thinks s/he has learned in a few sentences)</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Learner's reflections</b> (Learner comments on how useful and enjoyable her/his activities were. Also, if there were any specific problems in ESP classroom or not)</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Future plans</b> (Learner notes down the following activities and whether or when s/he is going to do them. Also s/he notes if there are any changes to his/her goals or plans for improvement of ESP and/or occupational purposes in future)</p>		

## Title

### **A Contrastive Analysis of English and Persian Sentence Structure**

## Author

**Asghar Bastami Bandpay (Ph.D. candidate)**

Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon Branch, Iran

## Biodata

**Asghar Bastami Bandpay** is a candidate of English at the Baku State University, Baku, Azerbaijan Republic. He has an M.A. in TEFL awarded by the Islamic Azad University at Tonekabon, Iran in August 2011. 18 years of teaching experience at different non-governmental schools and especially at different **SEI** (Shokouh's English institute) branches in Mazandaran and Gilan, Iran (all levels teaching experience). He is now the President, Founder and Instructor of **SEI** Rudsar's Branch in Gilan. He is going to be the faculty member of the Islamic Azad University and to teach English in different branches of the Islamic Azad University in Gilan and Mazandaran. His main research interests are contrastive analysis, motivation, discourse analysis, psychology of language learning and teaching (Applied Linguistic). His two articles are being published in international journals and presented three papers in Sanandaj and Tabriz international conferences.

## Abstract

This study is an attempt to provide insights into the extents of why some Persian learners have problems in learning certain structures of English language. The question this study tries to answer is whether there is a relationship between learning a foreign language (English) and Persian by using contrastive analysis or not. To answer this question, a set of certain structures, words, expression, etc. (14 utterances) predicted to be problematic parts of learning, were selected to be translated by a group consisting of 100 female and male students of the same level (second grade of high-school) into English. 42 out of these 100 participants had experienced going to an English institute to promote their English skills. By administering and analyzing the learners' performance based on contrastive analysis separately. It was indicated that the predicted problems existed. The findings showed that through the contrastive analysis of (L1 and L2) some of those problematic structures in learning L2 can be predicted. As a result, by using contrastive

analysis, procedures or techniques that is, description, selection, contrast, and finally prediction based on the third above procedure and focusing the learner's attention to the problematic English structures, the learning can probably be promoted. It was also found out that the teacher who considered those procedures would probably be far successful in his/her teaching and would have more successful students.

**Keywords:** Contrastive analysis, Persian utterances, Translation, Prediction of errors, Certain structures, Problematic structures

## 1. Introduction

In spite of the many theoretical and methodological problems and the criticism expressed against *contrastive analysis*, many classroom teachers still claim that **CA** has been useful to them for instructional purposes Aid (1974). Based on my teaching experience, there are many Persian structures and words different from English ones, which make it more difficult for native Persian speakers to learn English. If a teacher can predict those areas of target language which will cause most difficulty for the learners, then by focusing the learners' attention on those conflicting points, the learning process will be facilitated.

The predictability of **CA** has been discussed by Strevens (1965), Ferguson (1965), Rivers (1970), and Dipietro (1971). They all reached surprising similar conclusion: **CA** can predict certain errors and points of difficulty applicable for foreign language instruction. This predictability of **CA** is convincingly supported by certain experimental studies undertaken by Nickel and Wagner (1968) and Moody (1971). I also came to this conclusion by this experimental study. These linguists found that by means of systematic comparison of two languages we can predict the potential sources of errors or the areas that are going to cause most difficulty for the learners, they examined the potentials and limitations of contrastive analysis and found that it can predict the conflicting points between two languages and can give us insights into the nature of the conflict.

Oller (1972) reviewed a large body of psycholinguistic research which suggested that factor of predictability has the effect of accelerating the learning process. In a report presented to the "Pacific Conference on Contrastive Linguistics and Language Universal" he showed that the importance of predictability of **CA** had been well established in the literature. Although, he

viewed *CA* as a research technique rather than a basis for the development of materials for teaching languages; he maintained that at present *CA* does not have validity as a device for predicting some of the errors that a second language learner will make.

Brown (1994 & 1996), Lee (1968), and Dahlstedt (1972) et al. believe that teachers of English can improve their teaching strategies through the implications of *CA* for their foreign language programs. Krzeszouski (1967) is of the opinion that surface features seem much more important to the language learner than any possible similarities and differences in deep structure. Following this view, purposeful contrastive investigations can only be carried out on the basis of a structural approach.

The examination of the potentials and limitations of pedagogical use of error and contrastive analysis indicated in this investigation will demonstrate that while error analysis can, to some extent, be applicable in an *ESL* course. Contrastive Analysis, if designed with the pedagogical intent, can more appropriately meet the needs of *EFL* programs. Error Analysis in such curricula can only overcome the limitations of contrastive investigations and extend their power of prediction and pedagogical applications.

According to my pedagogical experience, teaching English to Persian native speakers for a few years, a set of structural errors have always occurred which is likely to be due to interference of the learners' first language structural elements; therefore, a number of Persian sentences which were thought (and has previously been observed) to be in conflict with their English equivalents, were chosen, then a group of 100 students were asked to change them into their English semantic equivalents.

## **2. Method**

### **Subject**

The participants of this study consisted of a group of 100 female and male students of the same age and level (17 years old second grade of high school) in Iran, and 42 out of 100 participants had experienced going to an English institute to promote their English skills that were selected to translate a set of certain structures, words, etc. (14 utterances) which were predicted to be problematic parts of English. Due to the importance and applicability of *CA*, this study has been done to facilitate learning English as a target Language.

## Material

The material of this study consisted of 14 Persian utterances, which were predicted to be problematic parts of learning from different categories (words, structures, semantics and expressions in different social situation, etc.), were given to the learners to be translated into English in 30 minutes. In order to have a meticulous research, each sentence has been scrutinized based on difficulties and differences. The respective participants were classified in two groups: 58 males and females who experienced an English institute and the 42 participants did not.

The study intended to predict, describe, explain the details of their problems and evaluate the participants' strengths and weaknesses in learning a foreign language (TL). The comparison which has been done is to show the existing differences between two languages: native (Persian) and target (English) language. There are many differences in Persian and English utterances and culture namely, *tense agreement, prepositions, adjective, discourse, etc.* Thus, learners will surely confront some of the debilitating problems. In order to complete the study, first many errors and mistakes that students will probably make were predicted and the place of errors and mistakes were found and explained sentence by sentence carefully and the reason why they made such mistakes was demonstrated which can lead to a facilitative process of learning. Prator's (1967) hierarchy shows 6 categories in ascending order of difficulty which are listed below:

- Level 0 --- **Transfer:** No difference or contrast is present between two languages. The learner can simply transfer positively and negatively. Transfer (in learning theory) the carrying over of learned behavior from one situation to another. Positive transfer is learning in one situation which helps or facilitates learning in another later situation. Negative transfer is learning in one situation which interferes with learning in another later situation.
- Level 1 --- **Coalescence:** two items in the native language become coalesced into essentially one item in the target language. This requires learners to overlook a distinction they have grown accustomed to.
- Level 2 --- **Underdifferentiation:** an item in the native language is absent in target language.

- Level 3 --- **Reinterpretation:** an item that exists in the native language is given a new shape or distribution.
- Level 4 --- **Overdifferentiation:** a new item entirely, bearing little if any similarity to the native language item, must be learned.
- Level 5 --- **Split:** one item in the native language becomes two or more in the target language, requiring the learner to make a new distinction, and including two other terminology like "*Interference and Interlanguage*". The first one is the use of a native language patten or rule which leads to an ERROR or inappropriate form in the target language and the latter one is the type of language produced by second and foreign language learners who are in the process of learning a language.

After all, the results were presented to participants in order to see where the problems were. Lado (1957) and Selinker (1969) claim that the change that has to take place in the language behavior of foreign language student can be equated with the differences between the structure of the students' native language and culture and that of the target language and culture.

### **Procedure**

First, the translation sheets which contained 14 Persian sentences were handed out and students were asked to translate the sentences into English in 30 minutes. After finishing the translation, each sentence was corrected carefully and the problems which have been predicted in advance were analyzed sentence by sentence and hence, the papers which were translated by the students completely showed that the predictions were true based on the Prator's hierarchy by virtue of the effect of native language on target language called "*cross-linguistic influences*" as well as *the interference of first language system* with the second language system and that a scientific, structural analysis of the second languages yield a *taxonomy* of linguistic contrast between them in turns which enable the linguists and researchers to predict the similarities and difficulties a learner would encounter. To show this, the Persian sentences were written and then the English equivalents brought under them and after that it was clarified that how many students made mistakes or translated the utterances correctly. And then, each sentence will be reported with the obtained explanation separately. In addition, the predicted problems that have been analyzed were highlighted (underlined) that is, *just the highlighted word(s) were the case of study*.

**Sentence no. 1:**

1. آیا قبل از اینکه مهمان ها بیرونند او ظرف ها را شست؟

1. "Aya ghabl az inke mehmanha beravand, Oo zarfha ra shost?"

**The correct English equivalent:**

*Had* he/she *washed* the dishes before the guests *left*?

**Prediction:**

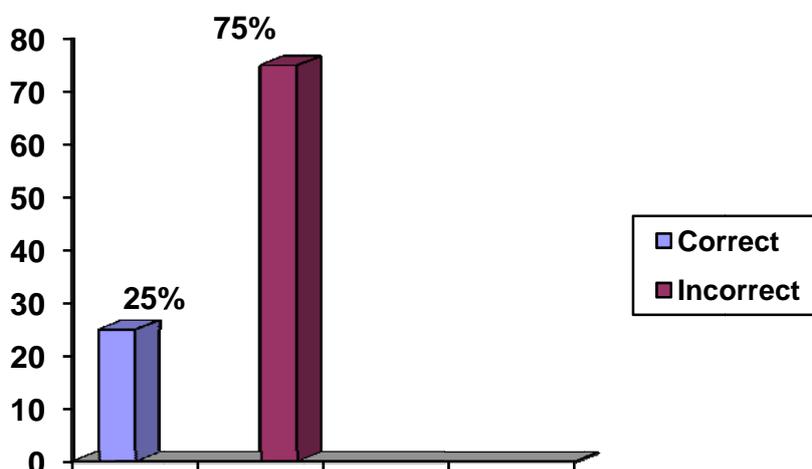
It was predicted that there are many differences between the first language linguistic system L1 (subject, object and verb) with the second language linguistic system L2 (subject, verb and object). So, the participants would have many problems with the above sentences. The causes of predicted problems are as follow:

- a) Because of having Persian structure in their minds, participants could not adapt themselves to the target language.
- b) View of grammar and grammar expectancy of the two languages are different and because there is a contrast between L1 (Sub, Obj , V) and L2 (Sub,V,Obj).
- c) In the linguistic system of writing of an L2 (e.g., English) when two actions take place at the same time in past, the one which happened earlier will be written in past perfect and the latter one will be written in simple past; but it is not so in the linguistic system of writing of an L1 (Persian). Because of having Persian structure in their language system, interference (negative transfer) will happen; and they are not aware of the tense agreement due to the lack of this phenomenon in their mother tongue (L1).

On the other hand, it was predicted that those who translated the utterances correctly had more linguistic competence and language knowledge about the target language. Contrastive Analysis proved that those participants who attended in English institute and learned the second language and its culture, were able to translate the utterances correctly. Knowing the culture of the target language will be very effective and useful in learning. *Learning a new language is like discovering a new world. Thus, a new language is a new culture.*

### Statistics:

Twenty five out of 100 participants translated the sentence correctly.



### Comment

Those who translated the sentence correctly had a good linguistic competence towards the target language (TL) and their language knowledge was promoted due to the fact that going to an English institute and learning the culture of TL helped the participants to translate the sentence correctly.

Thirty out of 100 participants used "Did" instead of "Had" at the beginning and "Leaves or Leave" instead of "Left" at the end.

#### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ *Did* he/she wash the dishes before the guests *leave*?

Twenty one out of 100 participants used "Do or Does" instead of "Had" at the beginning and "Go or Goes" instead of "Left" at the end.

#### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ *Do/Does* he/she wash the dishes before guests *go/goes*.

Eight out of 100 participants used "Has" instead of "Had" at the beginning and "went" instead of "left" at the end.

### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

★ Has he/she washed the dishes before the guests went.

Two out of 100 participants did not translate the sentence at all.

### Comment

The participants, who were not able to translate the sentence at all, had problems with forming their L1 and L2 linguistic competence.

### Sentence no. 2:

2. نیوتون مرد بزرگی بود.

3. "Newton marde bozorgi bood."

### The correct English equivalent:

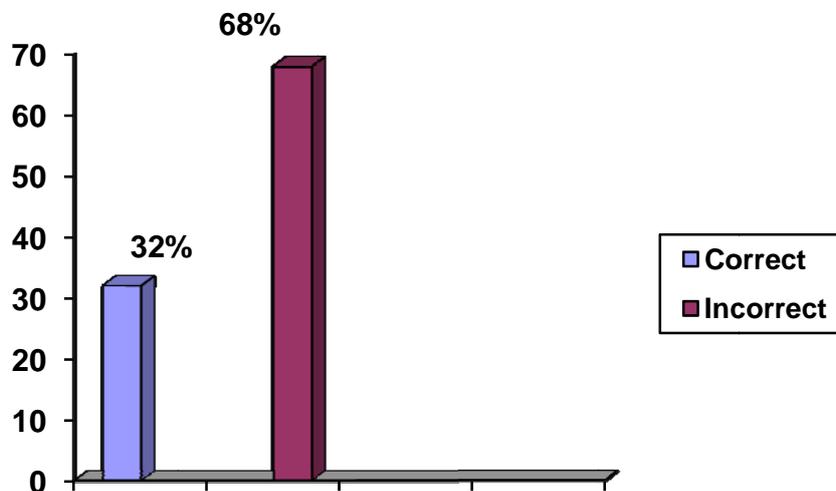
Newton was a great man.

### Comment:

It was predicted that students would have problem with the selection of words. that is, in Persian language considering the linguistic structure and grammar, a noun comes after an adjective, but in English, an adjective comes before a noun to modify it (red flower → "گل قرمز" "gol e ghermez"), and because of "split" (that is, one item in the native language becomes two or more in the target language, requiring the learner to make a new distinction) it was predicted that the Persian word "Bozorg, بزرگ" has one definition and form and is translated as "a great man", but in the target language the equivalent of this word can be words like "large, big, huge, etc." and because each of these words have different meaning and applications, participants will face problems because of "split" as predicted, participants would face problems while translating because of the contrast existing in two languages. Another reason of facing trouble in translation, is lack of linguistic competence towards the target language, that is, the English knowledge of participants were not adequate to understand the context, and the most important cause of this problem is the Persian linguistic structure existing in their mind and causes interference (negative interference) that makes translation more difficult. Another reason which must finally be mentioned is participants' unfamiliarity with the culture; those who have been in an English class and have been familiar with English culture and their linguistic competence have improved their target language structure, were able to find the proper equivalents.

### Statistics:

Thirty two out of 100 participants were able to translate the sentence correctly.



### Comment

That is because they were familiar with the target language culture, and their linguistic competence towards L2 was promoted.

Twenty nine out of 100 participants used "big" and 21 out of 100 participants used "large" instead of "great".

Because there is no separate equivalent for the word "great" in Persian language; in other words, there is just one Persian equivalent for the three English words, i.e. great, large, and big.

#### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ Newton was a big man.

#### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ Newton was a large man.

Sixteen out of 100 participants used "fame/famous" instead of "great".

Due to lack of linguistic competence, learners have used avoidance strategy; that is, they have used an English word semantically near the word "great".

#### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ Newton was a fame man.

Two out of 100 participants did not translate the sentence at all.

### Comment

The participants, who were not able to translate the sentence at all, had problems with forming their L1 and L2 linguistic competence.

### Sentence no. 3:

3. علی افتاد و صفحه ساعتش شکست.

3. Ali oftad va safheye sa'atash shekast.

### The correct English equivalent:

Ali fell and the face of his watch was broken.

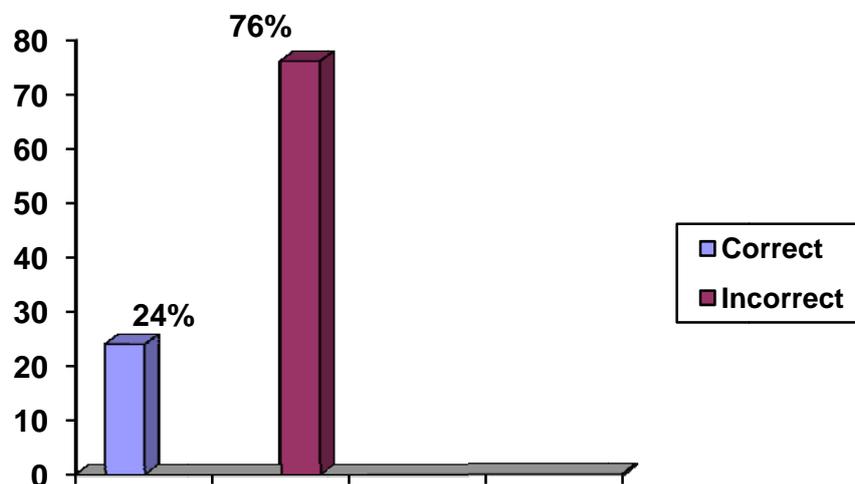
### Comment:

It was predicted that the participants would have problem with the translation of "صفحه ساعت", Safheye sa'at" (face of watch), because the participants would use *page*, *screen*, *clock*, *plate*, *plane*, *disk* and such equivalents in translation, because in their first language structure, the first word or equivalent which is formed and is in their linguistic competence is "page" and they will use it. They use the word "page" for books, notebooks, and "برگه", bargeh", but in second language, "page" is used for books, newspaper, magazines, etc. and "face" is used for watches and human's face and as the verb "encounter". When speaking or writing a second or foreign language's speaker will often try to avoid using a difficult word or structure, and will use a simpler word or structure instead. This is called "*avoidance strategies*". Faerch & Kasper (1983), and Schachter (1974). Thus, it was predicted that because of the contrast between the two languages, the participants will use *avoidance strategies*. The participants did not know the equivalent of face; hence, they coined and brought other equivalents, as a result of native language interference because in L1 ( Farsi), all inanimate things like watch, clock, books and solar panels and so forth have "صفحه safhe", and all human beings have "صورت soorat" meaning face; therefore, in thought of a Persian language learner, the word "face" just belongs to the human beings, and they attribute "page" to a clock erroneously because in Persian language, clock or watch are thought as inanimate things which like books should have page; whereas in English, watch and clock are thought to have face, like human beings. So, in this case, an error happens, due to the cultural and cognitive interference of the first language; i.e. (Farsi)

However, wherever someone is learning a new language, Interlanguage also takes place. One example which was so considerable in this test, was about a participant who used "*disk of clutch*" that is a part of car instead of "face", because his father was a mechanic and he translated the word "safheye sa'at" in this way, this can be due to the lack of linguistic competence and there the learner has used a word "disk" existed in his mind to convey his meaning. Another reason is that "face" has always been taught to the participants as a part of human body (the rhyme "head, shoulder, knees and toes ...") and they can not imagine any other meaning for it.

### Statistics:

Twenty four out of 100 participants were able to translate it correctly.



### Comment

That is because they were familiar with the target language culture, and their linguistic competence towards L2 was promoted.

Forty four out of 100 participants used "page" and "clock" instead of "face".

#### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ Ali fell and *page of his* clock was broken.

Twenty nine out of 100 participants used "plate" and "plane" instead of "face".

#### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ Ali fell and broke the *plate/plane* of his watch.

One out of 100 participants used "disk of clutch" instead of "face".

**The written sentence:**

- ★ Ali fell and broke the disk of his watch (clutch).

**Comment:**

Because of his father being a mechanic and using the words which related to car all the time at home, in his linguistic competence he thought "safheye sa'at" could be an equivalent of "face".

Two out of 100 participants did not translate the sentence at all.

**Comment**

The participants, who were not able to translate the sentence at all, had problems with forming their L1 and L2 linguistic competence.

**Sentence no. 4:**

4. من عادت دارم قبل از صبحانه مسواک بزنم.

4. man *a'adat daram* ghabl az sobhane mesvak bezanam.

**The correct English equivalent:**

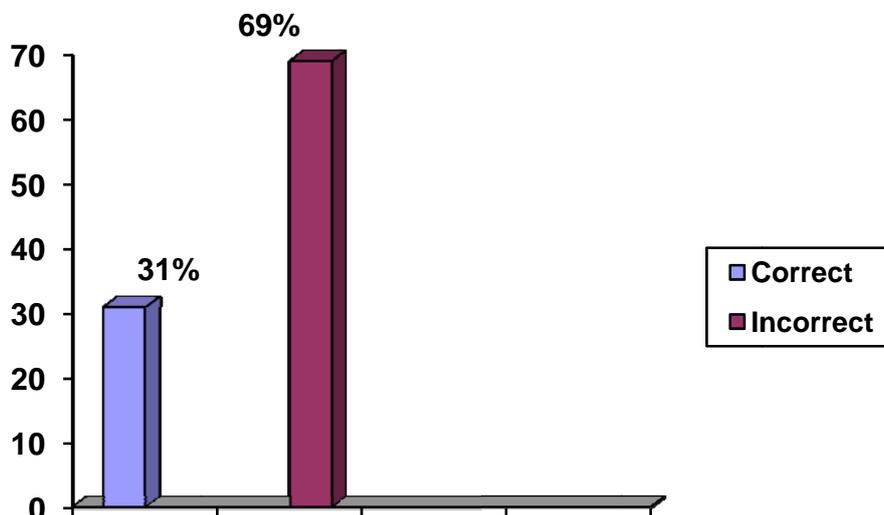
I *am used to brushing* before breakfast.

**Predictions:**

It was predicted that the participants would have problem with the word "a'adat dashtan, عادت داشتن" and will use "habit" and "used to" because in participants' linguistic structural system and linguistic competence "habit" is formed first instead of "to be used to", and due to existing a contrast between first and second language linguistic competence, they also used "wash" instead of "brush". That is the participants were not aware of the equivalent of "brush" and immediately use their first language structure and linguistic competence and use "wash". that is, the participants implemented *avoidance*. In addition, "*overgeneralization*" has been used because the participants use "a'adat" in their first language to explain the habitual actions, but in English, they use "to be used to" as a special linguistic structure for "a'adat dastan" "عادت داشتن". Thus, they will certainly make mistakes and have problem with such sentences unless they become familiar with the TL culture and social situation.

### Statistics:

Thirty one out of 100 participants were able to translate the sentence correctly.



Twenty five out of 100 participants used "habit" instead of "to be used to"

#### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ I have habit to brush my teeth before breakfast.

Thirty one out of 100 participants used "use to" instead of "to be used to"

#### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ I use to brushing before breakfast.

Ten out of 100 participants used "used to" instead of "to be used to"

#### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ I used to brushing before breakfast.

Two out of 100 participants did not translate the sentence at all.

### Comment

The participants, who were not able to translate the sentence at all, had problems with forming their L1 and L2 linguistic competence.

#### Sentence no. 5:

5. فکر نمی‌کردم که او چنین آدمی باشد.

5. fekr nemikardam ke oo chenin a'adami bashad.

### The correct English equivalent:

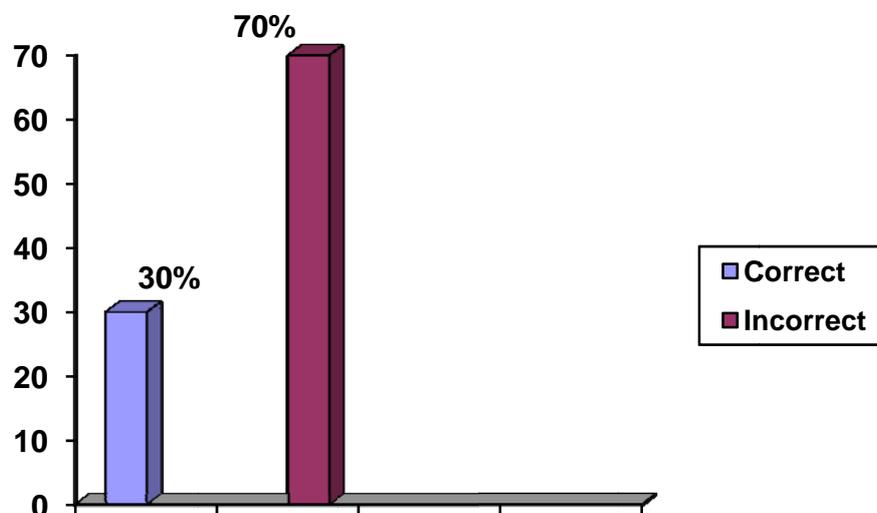
I did not think that he was such a man.

### Predictions:

It was predicted that the participants would have problems with the *tense* of this sentence because of having Persian linguistic structure and linguistic competence, that is in Persian the word "bashad, باشد" is *present tense*.so, the participants would probably use "is" whereas the participants must use *past tense* of "to be", i.e. because of the structure of second part of the sentence must be based on the structure of the first part, i.e. simple past (*tense agreement*). This translation was brought to distinguish and evaluate whether the participants (native learners) are familiar with the tense agreement or not and by virtue of "ba'shad", the equivalent of "to be" is present tense and "I didn't think" is past tense.

### Statistics:

Thirty out of 100 participants were able to translate the sentence correctly.



Thirty eight out of 100 participants used "is" instead of "was".

### An example of predicted problem:

★ I did not think he is such a man.

Twenty two out of 100 participants used "likes/be like" instead of "was".

### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

★ I didn't think he be like a man.

Eight out of 100 participants used "had to" instead of "was".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

★ I didn't think he had to be such a man.

Two out of 100 participants did not translate the sentence at all. .

**Comment**

The participants, who were not able to translate the sentence at all, had problems with forming their L1 and L2 linguistic competence.

**Sentence no. 6:**

6. پدر و مادر علی به مسافرت می روند، اما او نمی رود.

6. pedar va madar e ali be mosaferrat *miravand*, amma oo *nemiravad*.

**The correct English equivalent:**

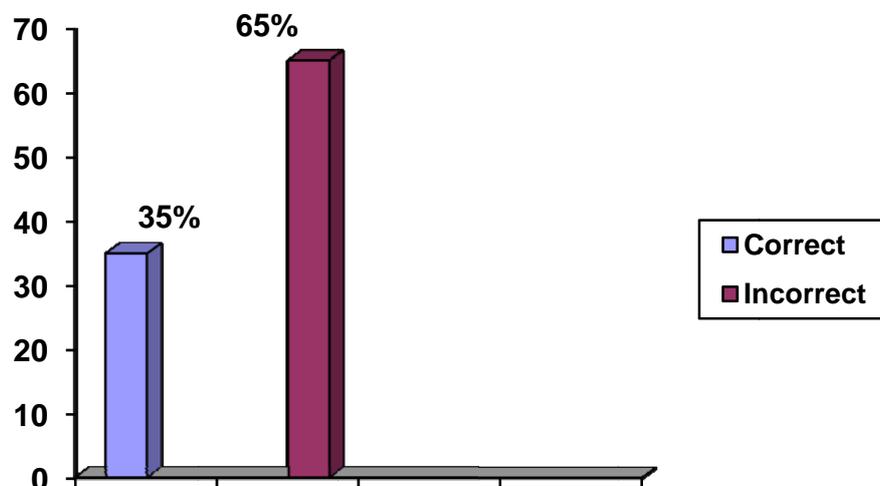
Ali's parents *are going to go* on a trip, but *he isn't*.

**Prediction:**

It was predicted that the participants would have problem with the structure of "ghasd dashtan, "قصد داشتن" in Persian and its equivalent (to be going to) in English. that is, "miravand, می روند" is a tense common to the present and the future in Farsi and in Persian does not show that it refers to near future. So, in case of the existence of contrast between L1 and L2, they would probably translate the sentence incorrectly and also in Persian, the participants would use "amma oo nemiravad, اما او نمی رود" the English equivalent "he is not going to go", that is, in Persian the main verb will be repeated for the second time, but in English the main verb will be omitted (omission). Only the auxiliary will be used, not the whole sentence, due to the omission. Thus, the main verb is omitted and the auxiliary verb used to make sentence negative after a complete sentence.

**Statistics:**

Thirty five out of 100 participants were able to translate the sentence correctly.



Thirty two out of 100 participants used "go" instead of "to be going to" and "doesn't go" instead of "he isn't".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

★ Ali's parents go on a trip, but he doesn't.

Nineteen out of 100 participants used "travel" instead of "to be going to" and "doesn't goes there" instead of "he isn't".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

★ Ali's parents travel, but he doesn't goes there.

Twelve out of 100 participants used "go" instead of "to be going to" and "isn't go" instead of "he isn't".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

★ Ali's parents go to travel, but he isn't go.

Two out of 100 participants did not translate the sentence at all. .

**Comment**

The participants, who were not able to translate the sentence at all, had problems with forming their L1 and L2 linguistic competence.

**Sentence no. 7:**

7. من نمی دانستم که او کجا زندگی می کند.

7. man nemidanestam ke oo koja zendegi mikonad.

### **The correct English equivalent:**

I did not know where he lives.

It was predicted that the participants by virtue of "where" the Persian equivalent of "کجا ke" in Persian think that it must be changed into a question form because of "wh question word". And this is because of L 1 linguistic construct and lack of adequate linguistic competence about TL. that is, the correct translation will be "I did not know where he lives" the under line parts of the statement is called "noun clause". That is, the clause is doing the same work as the noun. So, it is called a noun clause. More specifically, in noun clause the question word where in English is an interrogative word and in this pattern of noun clause it became a conjunction which connects two sentences. And also "inversion" happened (inverted subject and verb) subject and verb are inverted in variety of situation in English. Inverted subjects and verbs occur most often in the information of question. To form a question with a helping verb (be, have, can, could, will, would, etc.). The subject and helping verb are inverted .e.g. "he can not go to the movies." and "Can he go to the movies?" To form a question sentence, when there is no helping verb in the sentence, the helping verb "do" is used." he goes to the movies." "Does he go to the movies?" there are many other situations in English when subjects and verbs are inverted. But if you must remember this method of inverting subject and verbs, you will be able to handle the other situation. The most common problems with inverted subjects and verbs on the test are as follow:

1. With question words such as "what, when, where, why and how"
2. after some place expression
3. after negative expression
4. in some conditions
5. after some comparisons

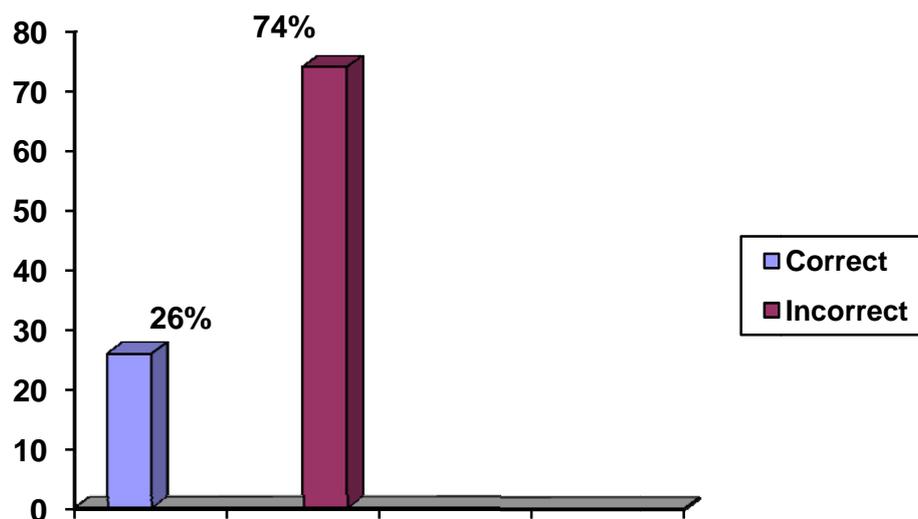
And also there is some confusion about when to invert the subject and verb after question words such as "what when, why, how." these words can have two very different functions in the sentence. First, they can introduce a question, and in this "When can I live?" and also these words can join together two clauses, in this case, the subject and verb that follow are not inverted. e.g." I do not know what the home work is." when I can leave, I will take the fist train." in each of these examples there are two clauses joined by a question word. And they are not inverted in this case a result, 1) when the question word introduces a question, the subject and verb is inverted. 2) When the question word connects two clauses, the subject and verb that

follow are not inverted. In order to have better understanding let us have another example: " او کجا؟ من نمیدانم oo koja zendegi mikonad? " the English equivalent: "where does he live?" " که او کجا زندگی میکند؟ Man nemidanam ke oo koja zendegi mikonad?" The English equivalent: I do not know where he lives.

In case of having interrogative word in L1 (Farsi) the above example " کجا koja " "where". This sentence is interrogative. But the second one is not the interrogative sentence but the second sentence has been written like the first structure without any changing in form and meaning. But in English, the interrogative sentence will follow the question pattern at the beginning when it changed into noun clause. Again it will turn into positive form but in Persian there is not such a pattern. General speaking, over generalization took place. That is, an item is in L1 absent in L2.

### Statistics:

Twenty six out of 100 participants translated the sentence correctly.



Thirty nine out of 100 participants used " did", "leaves" instead "lives".

### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ I didn't know where did he leaves.

Twenty eight out of 100 participants used "does"," live" instead of "lives".

### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ I didn't know where does he live?

Thirty one out of 100 participants used "lives he" instead of "lives".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

★ I didn't know where he live.

Two out of 100 participants did not translate the sentence at all.

**Comment**

The participants, who were not able to translate the sentence at all, had problems with forming their L1 and L2 linguistic competence.

**Sentence no 8:**

8. من از تماشای برنامه 90 لذت میبرم.

8. man az tamashaye barname navad lezzat mibaram.

**The correct English equivalent:**

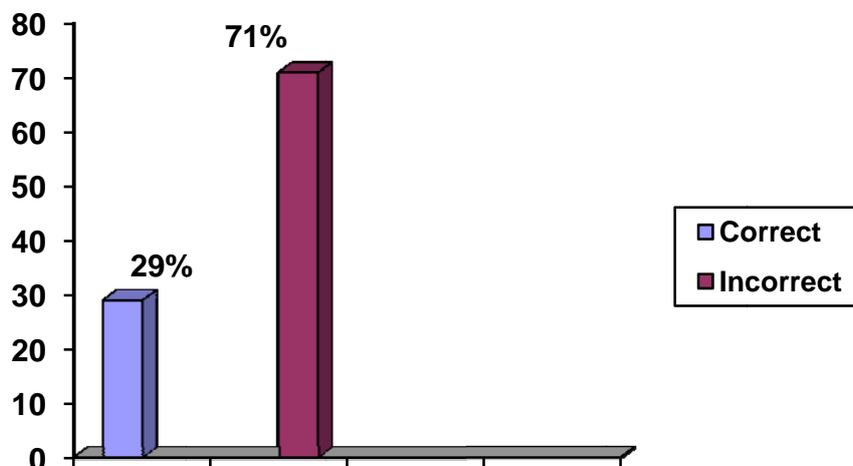
I enjoy watching the 90 program.

**Prediction**

It was predicted that the participants would have problem with the preposition of "از" "from" in Persian that is under differentiation happened, and in case of learners' L1 linguistic structure and linguistic competence, and because in Persian "لذت بردن" "lezzat bordan" has the English equivalent "enjoy" and it is not necessary to use "از" "from" after enjoy. Thus in L1 the preposition exists but in L2 it is silent in the verb of "enjoy".

**Statistics**

Twenty nine out of 100 participants translated the sentence correctly.



Thirty six out of 100 participants used "enjoy from" instead of "enjoy".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

- \* I enjoy from watching the 90 program.

Twenty out of 100 participants used "of" instead of "enjoy".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

- \* I enjoy of watching the 90 program.

Thirteen out of 100 participants used "to watch" instead of "enjoy watching".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

- \* I enjoy to watch the 90 program.

Two out of 100 participants did not translate the sentence at all.

**Comment**

The participants, who were not able to translate the sentence at all, had problems with forming their L1 and L2 linguistic competence.

**Sentence no 9:**

9. من و علی باید به او کمک کنیم.

9. man va Ali bayad be oo komak konim.

**The correct English equivalent:**

Ali and I should help him.

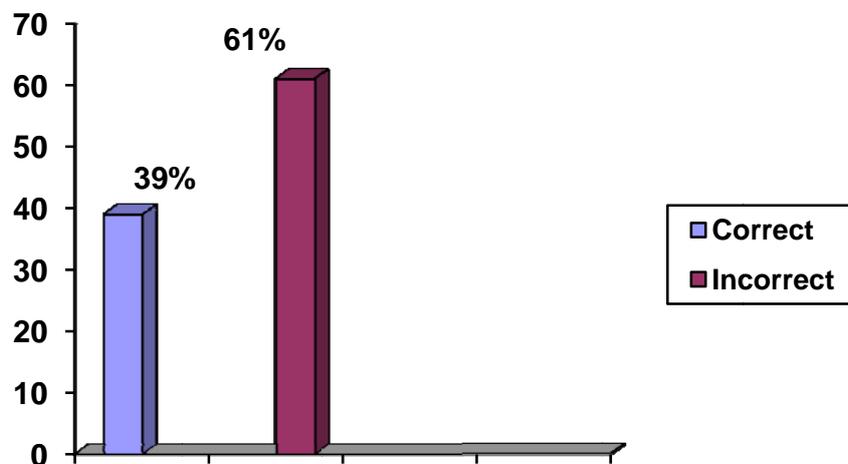
## Prediction

It was predicted that the participants would have problem with the translation of this sentence because of interference, and having no good linguistic competence and construct knowledge about English and discourse. that is, in English culture the second person will first be introduced then the first speaker (agent) but in Persian it is vice versa, and by virtue of this contrast between two languages (L1 and L2) it will be a problematic issue, and also the Persian and English noun phrases are different in their "internal structures" thus the internal structure refers to the relations between the elements inside that structure. e.g "من و همسر من شما را به سینما دعوت میکنیم." - *My wife and I invite you to cinema*". The English sentence is made of two major groups of words (constituents and predicate) this noun phrase is made of three parts "my wife", "and", and finally "I".

The noun phrase in Persian sentence "من و همسر من man va hamsaram" is made of three parts, too. Now we see that the English NP is different from the Persian NP in the sentences in their word order. In English "my wife" is before "I" but in Persian "من" "man" is before "همسر من" "hamsaram". We can conclude that the Persian and English noun phrases are different in their "*internal structures*" thus internal in structure refers to the relation between the elements inside that structure. Another reason is "*Collocation*" like "شب و روز", shab o rooz, "زن و شوهر", zan o shohar, "من و تو", man o to" that is, we can not put words in any combination we like, either in Persian or any other language. The study which words appear together in a language. That is, combination into which given item can appear. This is called "*Collocation*".

## Statistics:

Thirty nine out of 100 participants translated the sentence correctly.



Thirty four out of 100 participants used "I and Ali" instead of "Ali and I".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

- ★ I and Ali should help him.

Sixteen out of 100 participants used "Ali and we" instead of "Ali and I".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

- ★ Ali and we should help him.

Nine out of 100 participants used "Ali and with I "instead of "Ali and I".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

- ★ Ali and with I should help him.

Two out of 100 participants did not translate the sentence at all. .

**Comment**

The participants, who were not able to translate the sentence at all, had problems with forming their L1 and L2 linguistic competence.

**Sentence no 10:**

10. آیا دیروز برنامه کودک تماشا کردید؟

10. aya dirooz barname koodak *tamasha kardid?*

**The correct English equivalent:**

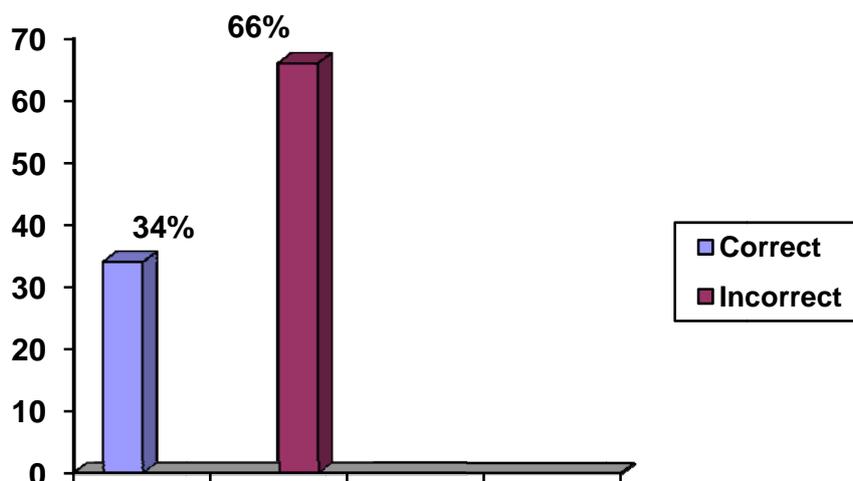
*Did you watch* cartoon yesterday?

### Prediction

It was predicted that the participants would have problem with translation of this sentence because of L1 linguistic structure and his/her mother tongue has not any auxiliary for making a sentence question and having low linguistic competence toward TL and knowing to this extent the question mark "?" means make the sentence question and the participants will use (do, does...) and by virtue of having low linguistic competence towards L2 could not translate the sentence correctly. And more specifically, over differentiation also took place. In Persian, there is not any past form that started with "did" for making question that is, the structure of "میکنی تماشا", "tamashamikoni" "do you watch?" and "تماشا کردی؟", "tamasha kardi?" "did you watch?" that is, the structure of tense verb is changed and there is not any auxiliary verb to be added.

### Statistics:

Thirty four out of 100 participants translated the sentence correctly.



Thirty seven out of 100 participants used "does" instead of "did".

#### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ Does you watch cartoon yesterday?

Twenty two out of 100 participants used "do" instead of "did".

#### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ Do you watch cartoon yesterday?

Five out of 100 participants used "are you watched" instead of "did".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

★ Are you watched cartoon yesterday?

Two out of 100 participants did not translate the sentence at all. .

**Comment**

The participants, who were not able to translate the sentence at all, had problems with forming their L1 and L2 linguistic competence.

**Sentence no 11:**

11. وقتی در اتوبوس هستید موضوعات صحبت کوتاه چیست؟

11. vaghti *dar* otoboos hastid mozoate sohbate kotah chist?

**The correct English equivalent:**

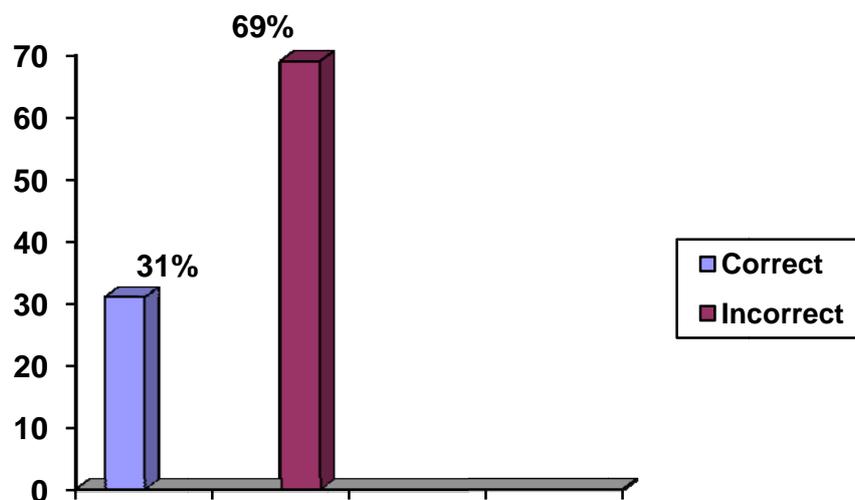
What is the small talk when you are *on* bus?

**Prediction**

It was predicted that the participants would use the preposition "in" which is the equivalent of " در " " dar " by virtue of Persian linguistic competence and also Persian structure. " در " " dar " in Persian culture means inside of something, and in English the learners will use "in" e.g. "the book is *in* the bag." Whereas the learners must be familiar with the culture and linguistic structure of L2 in order to be able to write the correct equivalent of the sentence. In case of exiting contrast between L1 and L2 the participants will encounter with problem.

**Statistics:**

Thirty one out of 100 participants translated the sentence correctly.



Forty two out of 100 participants used "in" instead of "on".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

- ★ What is the small talk when you are in bus?

Sixteen out of 100 participants used "at "instead of "on".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

- ★ What is the small talk when you are at bus?

Nine out of 100 participants used "inside "instead of "on".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

- ★ What is the small talk when you are inside bus?

Two out of 100 participants did not translate the sentence at all.

**Comment**

The participants, who were not able to translate the sentence at all, had problems with forming their L1 and L2 linguistic competence.

**Sentence no 12:**

12. گربه سیاهه موشها را دنبال کرد.

12. gorbah siyaha *moushha* ra donball kard.

**The correct English equivalent:**

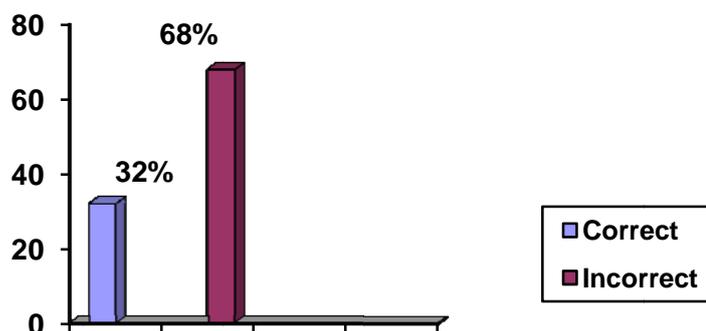
The black cat chased *the mice*.

## Prediction

It was predicted that the participants would have problem with the translation of this sentence because there is contrast between linguistic competence of L1 and L2. That is, by comparing the plural system in Persian and English. In Persian, there are two basic sounds (phonetic representation) to show plural as explained above. on the other hand, there are three basic phonetic representations in English [s],[z] and [e z]. when you want to make a plural form, you will add "ها" and "ان" for living things and only "ها" "ha" for non-living things (animate and inanimate) e.g "کتابها" "ketabha" "books". "ان" "an" "مادران" "madaran" "مادرها" "madarha" "mothers" e.g "آنان" "anan" "they". in general speaking, in English they will use (s,es) based on phonological rules like "books, chairs, boxes, churches,...). so, they are similar to references to the fact that both in Persian and English they are suffixes and still they are different due to the is up to here on "form". Another difference between L1 and L2 is "distribution". As in the above example shown, but it is not so all the time. e.g. "علی چهار خواهر دارد." "ali chahar khahar darad." "Ali has four sisters." despite the fact that, the plural morphemes are not used similarly in two languages, that is, they are different in distribution. more specifically, the participants are not familiar also with the exceptions "موش" "mosh" "mouse" and "موشها" "moshha" "mice" in English and because of having low linguistic competence and in the case of overgeneralization would probably translate the sentence wrongly.

## Statistics

Thirty two out of 100 participants translated the sentence correctly.



Thirty six out of 100 used "mouses" instead of "mice".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

★ The black cat chased the mouses.

Sixteen out of 100 used "rats" instead of "mice".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

★ The black cat chased the rats.

Fourteen out of 100 used "mices" instead of "mice".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

★ The black cat chased the mices.

Two out of 100 participants did not translate the sentence at all. .

**Comment**

The participants, who were not able to translate the sentence at all, had problems with forming their L1 and L2 linguistic competence.

**Sentence no 13:**

13. این کتاب بهتر از آن کتاب به نظر میرسد.

13. "in ketab behtar az an ketab benazae miresad."

**The correct English equivalent:**

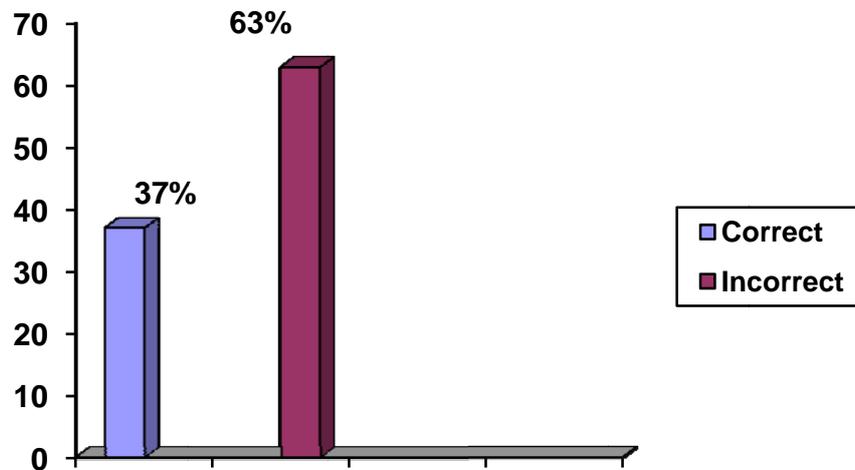
This book looks better than that book.

**Prediction**

It was predicted that the participants would have problem with the translation of this sentence due to 1) overgeneralization and 2) low linguistic competence. They think that in comparative adjective, they should put "er" for all one syllable adjectives. Thus, they would write "gooder" or "more good". So, they do not pay attention to exceptions. in this case, they generalize all adjectives in comparative form will get "er". The use of inflection is not always the same in different languages. The form and distribution are not the same in Persian and English. And eventually, "er" and "est" are used with one syllable and a number of two-syllable words.

**Statistics:**

Thirty seven out of 100 participants translated correctly.



Forty two out of 100 participants used "gooder" instead of "better".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

- ★ This book looks gooder that book.

Twelve out of 100 participants used "more good" instead of "better".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

- ★ This book looks more good than that book.

Seven out of 100 participants used "gooder than" instead of "better".

**A sample of the incorrect sentence:**

- ★ This book looks gooder than that book.

Two out of 100 participants did not translate the sentence at all.

**Comment**

The participants, who were not able to translate the sentence at all, had problems with forming their L1 and L2 linguistic competence.

**Sentence no 14:**

14. چون خسته بودم، زود خوابیدم.

14. chon khasteh bodam, zood *khabidam*.

**The correct English equivalent:**

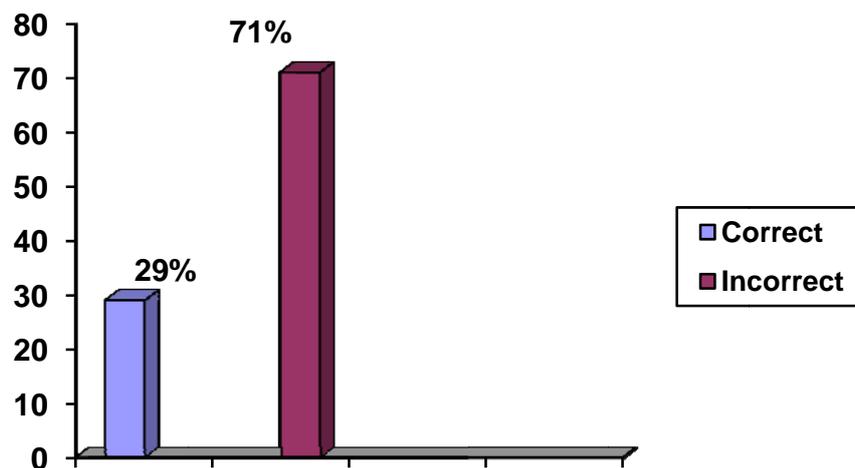
Feeling tired, I *went to bed* early.

### Prediction

It was predicted that the participants would have problem with participle phrase and the verb to sleep "خوابیدن" "khabidan". In English, when two actions take place at the same time, one action will be progressive form which is named "participle phrase" and the other action will be written past form, and because of participant's low linguistic competence and having Persian structure in their mind they would have problem with tense agreement and would write both sides simple past and another problem is "*interpretation*". that is, the word "خوابیدن" "khabidan" in Persian culture means "to sleep" but in English "to go to bed" means "to sleep" .so, by virtue of this, participants would probably make this mistake.

### Statistics:

Twenty nine out of 100 participants translated the sentence correctly.



Thirty four out of 100 participants used "sleep" instead of "went to be

#### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ Feeling tired, I sleep early.

Nineteen out of 100 participants used "go sleep" instead of "went to bed".

#### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ Feeling tired, I go sleep early.

Sixteen out of 100 participants used "sleped" instead of "went to bed".

#### A sample of the incorrect sentence:

- ★ Feeling tired, I slept early.

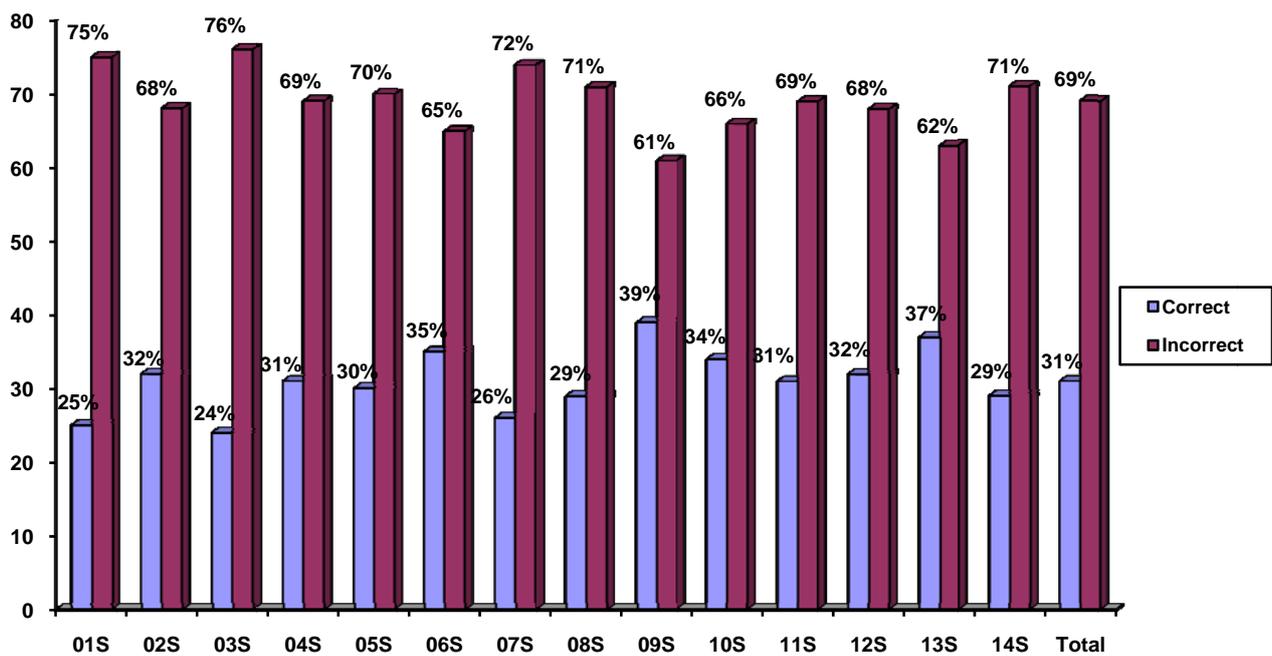
Two out of 100 participants did not translate the sentence at all.

### Comment

The participants, who were not able to translate the sentence at all, had problems with forming their L1 and L2 linguistic competence.

### Total statistical chart:

The following chart shows the whole percentage of correct and incorrect sentences and the total percentage of the correct and incorrect translations is also provided.



### 3. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the role of *CA* on facilitating learning of the target language by finding those subtle differences between the two languages. A set of certain Persian structures and words (14 utterances), predicted to be problematic parts of learning, were selected to be

translated into English by Persian native speakers. Then by using *CA* procedures or techniques that is, "description, selection, contrast and prediction" those meticulous differences causing problems were verified and by focusing the learner's attention on those problematic structures, learning of English can probably be promoted and it was shown that those participants who were able to translate the utterances correctly were among those participants who had experienced an English institute. Consequently, they could promote their English linguistic and cultural competence and it was found out that the teacher who consider those above procedures would probably be far successful in his/her teaching field and have more successful students. Due to the fact that, this investigation was concerned with the comparison between Persian and English language, and it is also predicted that a French or an Italian and so forth would have *more or less problem* during his/ her L2 learning and this can be by virtue of *the nature of two languages*. Thus, more studies and investigations must be done on French or Italian, etc in order to find and denote the percentage of *Similarities and Differences* till a *comprehensive view* be extracted.

## References

- Aid, F. M, (1974). Semantic universals in instructional materials, TESOL Quart 8
- Brown, H. D. (1994). Principles of Language Learning and Teaching (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Brown, H. D. (1996). Contrastive Analysis and the language classroom. In Ronlinett (Ed.), On teaching English to speakers of other languages: Paper Read at the TESOL Conference, N.YCity, Washington, D.C. 1967, PP. 80-87
- Dahlstedt K.H. (1972). Mother tongue and the second language; A Swedish view-point, TRAL, 1972, 10, PP.333-349
- Di pietro, R. J. (1971). Language structures in contrast, Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury. House Publishers.
- Ferguson, C.A.,(1965). General introduction to the contrastive studies. In stockwell et al, The Grammatical Structure of English and Spanish, Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
- Krezeszowski, T., (1962). Fundamental Principles of Structural Contrastive Studies, Glottodidactica, 2, 33-39
- Lado, R. (1957). Linguistics across cultures: University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor

- Lee, W. R. (1968). Thoughts on Contrastive Linguistic in the Context of Foreign Language Teaching. In J. E. Alatis (EDS.), *Contrastive Linguistics and its Pedagogical Implication: The Report of the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Round Table on Contrastive Linguistic* (pp. 185-194). Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Nickel, G. & Wagner, K.H.(1988). Contrastive linguistics and language teaching, IRAL.
- Moody, K.W.(1971). Pendulum swinging, RELC Journal (Regional English language Center),
- Oller, J. W. (1972). Contrastive analysis, difficulty, and predictability, *Foreign Language Annals*, 6, pp. 95-105.
- Prator, C. H. (1967). "Hierarchy of Difficulty" quoted in Brown, H. D. (1987).
- Rivers, W M, (1970). Contrastive linguistics in textbook and classroom, *Contrastive linguistics and its pedagogical implications*, ed J Alatis, Washington DC, 1970.
- Selinker, L. (1969). "Language transfer." *General Linguistics*9, 2:67-92.

## **Title**

# **The Study of the Effectiveness of Focus on Form Instruction on Vocabulary and Grammar Learning**

## **Authors**

**Dr. Farahman Farrokhi**  
Tabriz University, Tabriz, Iran

**Fattaneh Abbasi Talabari**  
Tabriz University, Tabriz, Iran

## **Biodata**

**Farahman Farrokhi** received his Ph.D. in English Language Teaching from Leeds University, England. Currently, he is an assistant professor at Tabriz University. His research interests include classroom discourse analysis, EFL teachers' perceptions of different feedback types, and negative and positive evidence in EFL classroom context.

**Fattaneh Abbasi Talabari** is an M.A. graduate from Tabriz University. Her research interest is related to focus on form instruction. She had published one article on focus on form in 2011. Currently she is teaching English at Iran Language Institute.

## **Abstract**

The acquisition of vocabulary and grammar has long been an area of dispute in the field of second language acquisition (Brown, 2001). This study investigated the effect of focus on form instruction on vocabulary and grammar learning through the medium of visually-enhanced reading texts. Sixty four Intermediate EFL learners were assigned to two experimental groups (vocabulary and grammar groups) and a control group. After taking a pretest based on the enhanced forms, the learners received ten reading texts with visually enhanced lexical items (for the vocabulary group) and grammatical structures (for the grammar group). In order to investigate the effect of visual enhancement of forms on participants' vocabulary and grammar learning, they took a posttest based on the enhanced forms. T-test was used for the analysis of the data, gathered from the learners' performance on the pretest and the posttest. The results revealed positive effects of visual enhancement of forms on vocabulary and grammar learning. It was also found that visual

enhancement of vocabulary is more effective, leading to a higher rate of learning in comparison to the enhancement of grammatical forms. This research can provide L<sub>2</sub> teachers and syllabus designers with useful information about the effectiveness of visual input enhancement as a technique for vocabulary and grammar teaching and learning.

**Keywords:** Focus on form instruction, Visual input enhancement, Noticing

## 1. Introduction

Vocabulary and grammar acquisition has always been an important issue in the field of second language acquisition.

For a long time, language was taught explicitly because it was believed that explicit instruction was the basis of all second language learning. However, this view changed to a great extent by the emergence of the behavioristic view which claimed that the acquisition of language is possible through the formation of habits. Later this approach had gone under criticisms by Chomsky (1966), an American linguist, who introduced the Universal Grammar. He emphasized the acquisition of syntax and proposed that language be taught according to the first language acquisitional sequence (Richards & Rogers, 2001).

None of these approaches received enough satisfaction and support as teachers always complained about the usefulness of the instructional practices, reflected in methods, applied in their classrooms. They also criticized the teaching of syntax to the exclusion of other areas of language.

There came a big change when Krashen (1981) proposed his 'Comprehensible Input Hypothesis,' suggesting that language is acquired via comprehensible input and not by the way of explicit instruction because it doesn't aid in spontaneous production of language. According to Krashen, for language to be acquired, it is only enough to understand the language. But Krashen's theory, despite its appeal, did not go unopposed. It had been mentioned that those learners who do not have the advantage of language instruction, though fluent, developed wild grammars and produced untarget-like output (Poole & Sheorey, 2002).

Due to the criticisms directed toward Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis, Schmidt (1990) introduced the term 'noticing,' a conscious awareness of a previously unlearned L<sub>2</sub> grammatical form, as the necessary and sufficient condition for language acquisition to take place. General findings of most SLA investigators (Dekeyser, 1998; Ellis, 2002, Ellis,

Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001a, 2001b; Fotos, 1993; Nassaji, 2000) also indicate that for language learning to take place, it is necessary for learners to notice the target form in input in order to be able to process and acquire them. That is, they think that people learn about things that they attend to and don't learn about things that they don't attend to. So second language learners need to attend to form rather than to be simply engaged in communicative language use (Farrokhi 2005; 2007).

Moreover, Schmidt (1990) believes that one of the most important factors which affect noticing is language instruction. According to him, instruction provides structured, differentiated input that assists noticing by focusing attention on and enhancing awareness of language features. He also proposed that, since there is a limit to what humans can pay attention to at any one time, and since attending to features of language may be necessary for learning them, language instruction may enhance learners' ability to notice aspects of language that might otherwise escape their attention while engaged in communication. Following this view, Ellis (1990) introduced formal instruction as a view of language instruction which helps learners to develop awareness of target language features. According to Ellis, once consciousness of a particular feature has been raised through formal instruction, learners remain aware of the target language feature and notice it in subsequent communicative input events which are considered to be crucial for further language processing, leading to the acquisition of the feature.

One of the pedagogically sound and empirically grounded types of language instruction is focus on form instruction. Focus on form instruction does not only pay attention to the importance of the communicative language teaching, but it also maintains the value of occasional and overt study of L2 grammatical forms (Poole, 2005). It is considered a more promising pedagogical choice than focus on forms and focus on meaning because of its communicatively-need oriented attention to form and its saliency in the language acquisition process (Huang, 2008). Focus on form may be essential to push learners beyond communicatively effective language toward target-like second language ability. It may also be part of a more efficient language learning experience in that it can speed up natural acquisition processes (Doughty and Williams, 1998). It also tries to maintain a balance between focus on forms and focus on meaning through motivating teachers and learners to attend to form when necessary, yet within a communicative classroom environment. It has a dual, simultaneous focus on form and accuracy as well as meaning and fluency. It is also seen as a psycholinguistically plausible approach as it

emphasizes the kind of attention to form that occurs in real-world situation, as it addresses learners' linguistic problems and as it motivates noticing which is considered necessary for acquisition (Seedhouse, 1997).

One specific pedagogical approach to draw the learner's attention to form which received considerable attention in recent SLA research is input enhancement which has its basic premise on focus on form instruction. Sharwood Smith (1993) found out that L<sub>2</sub> learners usually lack sensitivity to grammatical features of target language input, as the result they might not benefit much from the available input. He further acknowledged that certain grammatical features in the input to which the learners are exposed are inherently non-salient, and therefore learners usually fail to notice them (Sharwood Smith, 1993).

He further concluded that failure to benefit from the input may be the result of a combination of the lack of noticing ability on the learner's part and poor input characteristics such as lack of perceptual salience. Accordingly, Sharwood Smith (1993) hypothesized that a way to stimulate input processing for form as well as meaning is through improving the quality of input. He, further, proposes input enhancement, an operation whereby the saliency of linguistic features is increased.

Input enhancement can come in many different forms. Color coding or boldfacing would be an unelaborated form of salience, with no appeal to metalinguistic knowledge. The oral equivalents to this would be special stress and intonation and use of gesture. Pointing out and explaining a construction using metalinguistic terminology would also be a highly elaborate form of enhancing the input (Han, Park, Combs, 2008; Sharwood Smith, 1993).

## **2. Experimental studies on Focus on Form Instruction**

The empirical evidence presented below provides a rationale for proposing that learners need to attend to form, rather than to be simply engaged in communicative language use.

Harley (1998) presented evidence from a classroom experiment showing the long lasting impact of instructional focus on form on second language proficiency of learners as young as 7 or 8 years of age.

Doughty and Varela (1998) investigated the feasibility and effectiveness of focus on form technique in a communicative classroom. Students were asked to complete their science class reports which encourage them to use past time reference. Then the teacher interviewed each

student individually, audio-taping their responses to the same questions asked in the written reports. Analysis of the written and oral data showed significant gains in the target-like use of past time reference.

White (1998) in his study tried to draw students' attention to forms through visual enhancement. The study was carried out over five month period in a French elementary school near Montreal. The findings suggested that drawing learners' attention to a specific linguistic form through visual enhancement would speed up acquisition of that specific form.

Williams and Evan (1998) studied the effects of input enhancement (in the form of input flooding and explicit instruction) on the acquisition of participial adjectives and passive voice among thirty three university students of Illinois. For the participial adjectives, the input flooding helped students notice the forms but explicit instruction led to greater gains. For the passive voice, both treatments had similar effects and produced similar performances.

Williams (1999) in her study investigated the effectiveness of learner-generated focus on form. The results suggested that learners attend to form relatively infrequently, but the learners' generated attention to form increased considerably with rising proficiency, leading to less reliance on teachers' help. It was also found that most of the episodes containing learner-generated attention revolved around lexis.

Izumi (2002) examined the effect of internal and external attention-drawing devices-output and visual enhancement- on learners' noticing and acquisition of English relativization by EFL adult learners. Though the positive effect of both devices on noticing, no support was found for the hypothesis that the effect of input enhancement was comprehensible to that of output. That is, output was found to be more effective on learners' acquisition of relativization in comparison to visual input enhancement.

Jensen and Vinther (2003) investigated the effect of input enhancement (i.e. exact repetition and speech rate reduction) on learners' listening comprehension, acquisition of listening decoding strategies, and linguistic features. The input consisted of video recording of native speakers' quasi-spontaneous dialogues. Comparisons of pretest and posttest scores showed significant effects for all three parameters.

Although various differences in these studies make direct comparison among them difficult, an examination of several factors is instrumental in identifying the directions for future research. Previous studies on the effect of focus on form on language learning mostly used short

term treatment with rather limited exposure to the input (Williams, 1999; Leow, 2001), mostly applied in well-funded countries, such as New Zealand and United States, with classrooms adequately-supplied with teaching and learning materials (Poole and Sheorey, 2002), using participants at advanced level of language proficiency (Poole, 2005). The present study takes these considerations into account by investigating the effectiveness of visual input enhancement on the vocabulary and grammar learning of sixty four Iranian Intermediate EFL learners during two months.

### **3. Methodology**

Many foreign language students consider vocabulary and grammar learning as two of their most important goals. To help them meet these goals, language teachers usually face issues regarding the most effective methods of teaching. Teaching vocabulary and grammar to nonnative speakers of English involves certain problems and challenges at all levels of instruction. With the introduction of focus on form instruction (Long, 1991) and the advent of visual input enhancement technique (Sharwood Smith, 1993) and the good deal of theoretical and empirical research done on the subject (Jensen & Vinther, 2003; White, 1998; Williams, 1999), one may wonder how and why formal instruction incorporated into communicative language teaching promotes interlanguage development (Muranoi, 2000). To obtain significant data for this issue, the present study is intended to examine whether visual input enhancement of forms in reading texts affects vocabulary and grammar learning at intermediate level in Iranian EFL classrooms.

*Question 1:* Does visual input enhancement in reading texts have any statistically significant effect on vocabulary learning?

*Question2:* Does visual input enhancement in reading texts have any statistically significant effect on grammar learning?

*Question3:* Does visual input enhancement in reading texts lead to statistically different effects in terms of vocabulary and grammar learning?

### **4. Procedures**

Typically, focus on form instruction consists of a pretest, exposure to the L<sub>2</sub> form to be learned, and a posttest, designed to see whether learners attend to the L<sub>2</sub> form or not (Leow, 2001). In this

study, too, in order to accomplish the objectives of this study and also increase the validity of it, the use of randomization, pretest/posttest administration and treatment was essential. The following steps were taken to carry out the study:

In this study effort was made to select the samples randomly. For the samples to be homogeneous, a homogeneity test had been taken, comprising of four parts (listening, vocabulary, grammar and reading). After the homogeneity test determined the level of participants' language proficiency, attempts were made to assign the participants in the three groups randomly. Then 64 students from 3 classes were assigned to three groups, 22 learners in vocabulary group, 22 learners in grammar group, and 20 learners in control group. But before the administration of the pretest, the treatment, and the posttest, all of them were piloted with five intermediate students to detect any problems. Some misspellings and wrong structural forms were found and corrected before the main administration. Then a pretest was administered to provide the researcher with the necessary information about the participants' at the time knowledge of the enhanced forms before they were exposed to the enhanced forms in the treatment reading texts. After the pretest, they received the treatment. During the treatment phase, the participants in three groups were exposed to the visually-enhanced lexical items and grammatical structures in ten reading texts during five weeks, two sessions each week, each session one text. For the last phase of this study, the three groups took a 100-multiple choice item posttest, including the lexical and grammatical forms enhanced in the treatment texts. This posttest was designed to examine the effectiveness of the visual enhancement of forms on participants' vocabulary and grammar learning.

## **5. Data Analysis**

To analyze the data, t-test was used. There are two types of t-tests. One is used when the groups are independent (i.e. t-test) and the other, known as paired t-test, is used when the groups are not independent, as in a pretest/posttest situation when the focus is within a group (Mackey and Gass, 2005).

Therefore, based on the research questions and the design of the study, both types of t-test were used to analyze the data and also to answer the following research questions:

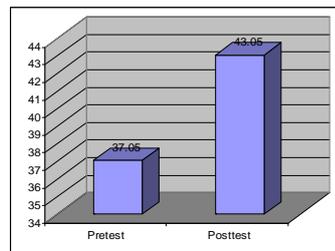
**Question 1:** Does visual input enhancement have any statistically significant effect on vocabulary learning?

Regarding the vocabulary performance of vocabulary group in the pretest ( $M = 37.05$ ) and the posttest ( $M = 43.05$ ), we can see that vocabulary group displays a much bigger mean score in their posttest than their pretest.

**Table 1: Performance of Vocabulary Group in Pretest and Posttest**

Vocabulary	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	22	37.05	4.157	0.886
Posttest	22	43.05	4.259	0.908

The key question is whether this difference reaches statistical significance. Because the probability figure is smaller than 0.05 (it is 0.000), the difference can be considered statistically significant.



**Figure 1: Performance of Vocabulary Group in Pretest and Posttest**

Comparing the mean score of vocabulary and control group is another strategy that can be used to judge about the effectiveness of the lexical visual enhancement. The findings from this research show that the mean score for the vocabulary group was 43.05 while this figure for the control group is 42.35. This means that learners in vocabulary group performed better in their vocabulary posttest.

Comparing the performance of vocabulary and control group at 0.05 level of probability showed that this difference does not reach a statistical significance.

Therefore, the first null hypothesis was rejected based on the within group but not between groups performance. That is, the visual enhancement of vocabulary was effective on vocabulary group's learning. But it wasn't found effective when a comparison was made between vocabulary and control groups.

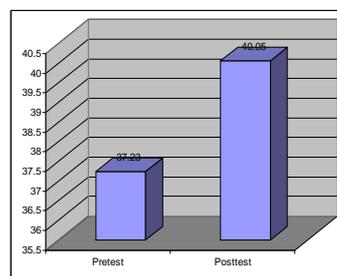
**Question 2:** Does visual input enhancement have any statistically significant effect on grammar learning?

In the first table, we can see that grammar group displays a much bigger mean score in their posttest (M = 40.05) than their pretest (M = 37.05), indicating that visual input enhancement of grammar improve learners' performance during the posttest.

**Table2: Performance of Grammar Group in Pretest and Posttest**

Grammar	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	22	37.05	4.309	0.919
Posttest	22	40.05	4.157	0.886

It was also found that this difference is regarded as statistically significant.



**Figure 2: Performance of Grammar Group in Pretest and Posttest**

In order to further investigate the effectiveness of the grammatical visual enhancement, a comparison had been made between the grammar and the control groups, regarding their grammar performance in the posttest. The findings from this research show that the mean score for the grammar group was 40.05 while this figure for the control group is 40.20. This means that learners in control group performed better in their grammar posttest. But it was found that the difference between the performance of grammar and control group at 0.05 level of probability wasn't statistically significant.

Therefore, the second null hypothesis was rejected based on the within group but not between groups performances, that is, visual enhancement of grammatical structures led to better grammar learning among grammar group participants. This positive effect was not found when a comparison was made between grammar group and the control group's grammar performances.

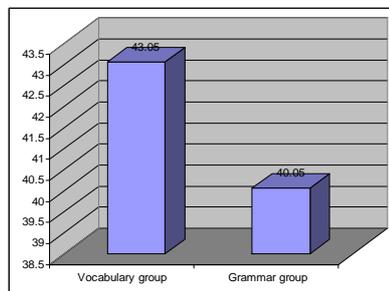
**Question 3:** Does visual input enhancement in reading texts produce any statistically significance difference in terms of vocabulary and grammar learning?

The mean number of vocabulary questions answered correctly by the vocabulary group (i.e. 43.05) was higher than the mean number of grammar questions answered correctly by the grammar group (i.e. 40.05).

**Table 3: Comparison between Vocabulary and Grammar Performances of Experimental Groups**

Vocabulary & Grammar	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocabulary group	22	43.05	4.25	0.908
Grammar group	22	40.05	4.15	0.886

A tabulation of t-test results at 0.05 level of probability based on the above information, extracted from SPSS program shows that this difference is statistically meaningful. So visual enhancement of forms was more effective for the vocabulary group, resulting in better vocabulary learning in comparison to grammar learning.



**Figure 3: Comparison between Vocabulary and Grammar Performances of Experimental Groups**

## 6. Discussion

It is believed that integrating attention to form into communicative activities increases the probability that learners will attend, notice, detect and be able to use the information (Lightbown, 1998). On the basis of the findings, visual enhancement of forms was found to be effective for both vocabulary and grammar learning. They also show that learners in vocabulary and grammar groups made considerable developmental progress over the study period, that is, typographical input enhancement increased the likelihood that learners detect the target lexical and grammatical structures in the input, for some learners a necessary condition for the conversion of input to intake.

Regarding the last null hypothesis, results also revealed that enhancement of vocabulary led to better vocabulary learning in comparison to grammar learning. That is, comparing the vocabulary and grammar performance of vocabulary and grammar groups, visual enhancement of vocabulary was found to be more effective for vocabulary group.

It is believed that an input has dual relevance. In the first stage, the learner's main aim is to extract meaning and survive or succeed in given interchange of messages. In this sense, the learner will interpret for meaning. But at the second stage, there will be linguistic input which is relevant to the current state of the learner's competence. It may contribute to the substantiation or reflection of some current hypotheses about the target language system (Sharwood Smith, 1986).

Focus on form instruction seems to have a better chance of success if it is directed at morphological features than syntactic structures (Ellis, 2002). This might be because of the fact that learners have preference for semantic processing over morphological processing; that is, they prefer to extract semantic information from lexical items rather than grammatical items. This could be the reason behind the better performance of vocabulary group in comparison to grammar group (Mitchell and Myles, 2004).

Even though the findings of the study support the first two hypotheses of this study, that is, all participants in the two experimental groups improved in their ability to use the lexical items and grammatical structures correctly, the following section examines the factors that may have contributed to reducing the between groups differences in this study.

In spite of the general agreement on the key role of attention in the conversion of input to intake, the level of attention and awareness needed for L<sub>2</sub> acquisition is still open to debate. According to Schmidt (1990), noticing (i.e. awareness of the linguistic form) is the necessary and sufficient prerequisite for acquisition to take place. So he believes that for acquisition to occur, it's only enough to direct the learners' attention to the language form so as to increase the learners' awareness of the form, leading to form noticing, and consequently, this would lead to acquisition.

But this view was countered by introducing the fact that though awareness may play a role in facilitating acquisition, it isn't enough for acquisition to occur (Poole and Sheorey, 2002; Tomline and Villa, 1994). In this study, too, though visual input enhancement of forms might increase the learners' ability to notice the forms, it's not sufficient for acquisition to take place. Therefore, differences among the experimental groups and the control group, regarding the impact of visual input enhancement on vocabulary and grammar learning, were reduced.

The administration of pretest and posttest which were both based on the same enhanced forms in the treatment reading texts (i.e. fifty lexical items and ten grammatical structures), though each containing different sets of questions, would also decrease the between groups

differences as it emulates the participants to choose the correct item in the posttest just because they had the same item as the correct item in the pretest. So this would enable the control group to gain nearly similar results to the experimental groups.

Individual characteristics differences may also account for the reduced differences among groups. Some learners in all three groups may have been more comfortable with explicit instruction and less able than other individuals to figure out the patterns in the input on their own. This finding, along with the quantitative analyses, indicates that many of the learners in this study might have benefited more from a more explicit type of enhancement. For example, a different typographical technique involving the use of arrows or color-coding could have increased the between groups differences. An even more explicit pedagogical technique would have included a brief rule explanation, either at the beginning of the input enhancement period or part of the way through it, to help learners structure the input.

Finally, in order to ensure that enhancement was at the implicit end of focus on form continuum (Doughty and Williams, 1998; White, 1998), care was taken not to focus the participants' attention on the target forms in more explicit ways, such as rule presentation, corrective feedback, or discussion of the typographical enhancement. It may seem, however, that the typographically enhanced input might look more similar to unenhanced input as it may not provide to the learners about the enhanced forms. It is also possible that many learners were uncertain about the purpose of the typographical enhancement and that it wouldn't be useful in helping them figure out the enhanced forms usage.

Therefore, it would appear that a number of factors, including multiple test administrations, individual characteristic differences and characteristics of the enhanced/unenhanced input may contribute to reducing the differences between the groups. The findings suggest that, although drawing the learners' attention to a linguistic feature may be sufficient to speed up acquisition of that feature, implicit focus on form techniques such as visual input enhancement may not be adequate for acquisition to occur. Visual input enhancement alone is not often enough to prompt the learners to go beyond the simple detection of forms, and additional assistance of some sort may be required to trigger further cognitive processing (Izumi, 2002). Thus, while noticing may be the necessary condition for acquisition, it is not the only condition. If learners want to learn language forms effectively, they have to act on it, building it into their working hypothesis about how language forms are structured. The basic philosophy

behind this is that, according to Van Patten (1990), individuals can process two types of information (i.e. form and meaning) simultaneously and effectively only if the processing of one of the information types is automatized and requires little, if any, conscious attention. He also argues that simultaneous processing of two types of information which are not automatized can lead to inadequate processing of either or both of information. This may not happen unless the learners are exposed to continued and sustained noticing activities as well as ample opportunities for producing the target form in order to ensure that learners are not engaged only in semantic processing but also in syntactic processing. In such cases, learners may also need some more explicit information about the forms to be able to acquire them (Fotos, 1993).

## **7. Conclusion**

However, before wide-reaching conclusions about focus on form instruction can be made, more of such studies need to be done using learners in different instructional settings, investigating the cultural, affective, and proficiency-related factors that contribute to learner's decision to focus or not to focus on form. Further investigations in this line of research are still needed to shed more light on the issues addressed in this study. For instance, future studies involving larger samples and both male and female learners of various L<sub>2</sub> proficiency levels would allow for the findings of the current study to be more generalized. This way, researchers and teachers may be better able to develop conditions under which learners will focus more on form. They should also investigate whether or not more focus on form leads to more language acquisition. This seems crucial, since no matter how often students are exposed to form during a focus on form instruction, the true value of it lies in its ability to increase the quantity and quality of second language acquisition.

## **References**

- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An integrative approach to language pedagogy* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). New York: Pearson Education
- Dekeyser, R. (1998). *Beyond Focus on Form: Cognitive Perspectives on Learning and Practicing Second Language Grammar*. In *Focus on Form in Classroom L<sub>2</sub> Acquisition*, C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), pp. 42-63. New York: Cambridge.

- Doughty, c. & Varela, E. (1998). Communicative focus on form, *In focus on form in classroom L<sub>2</sub> acquisition*, C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), pp.114-138. New York: Cambridge.
- Doughty, c. & Williams, J. (1998). Issues and terminology. *In focus on form in classroom L<sub>2</sub> acquisition*, C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), pp.1-11. New York: Cambridge.
- Ellis, R. (1990). *Instructed second language acquisition: Learning in the classroom*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ellis, R. (2002). Does form-focused instruction affect the acquisition of implicit knowledge? *Studies in second language acquisition*, 24, pp. 223-236.
- Ellis, R., Basturkmen, H., & Loewen, Sh. (2001a). Learner Uptake in Communicative ESL Lessons. *Language Learning*, Vol. 51 (2), pp. 281-318
- Ellis, R., Basturkmen, H., & Loewen, Sh. (2001b). Preemptive Focus on Form in the ESL Classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 35 (3), pp. 407-432
- Farrokhi, F. (2005). A practical step towards combining focus on form and focus on meaning. *Journal of Faculty of Letters and Humanities*, Year 49, No. 198, pp. 99-148.
- Farrokhi, F. (2007). Teacher's stated beliefs about corrective feedback in relation to their practices in EFL classes. *Research on Foreign Languages journal of Faculty of Letters and Humanities*. Year 49, No. 200, pp. 91-131.
- Fotos, S. (1993). Consciousness raising and noticing through focus on form: Grammar task performance versus formal instruction. *Applied Linguistics*, Vol.14, No.4, pp. 385-407.
- Han, Z., Park, E. S., Combs, Ch. (2008). Textual enhancement of input: Issues and possibilities. *Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 29, No. 4, pp. 597-618.
- Harley, B. (1998). *The Role of focus on form tasks in promoting child L<sub>2</sub> acquisition*. *In focus on form in classroom L<sub>2</sub> acquisition*, C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), pp. 156-174. New York: Cambridge.
- Huang, S.C. (2008). Raising learner-initiated attention to the formal

- aspects of their oral production through transcription and stimulated reflection. *IRAL*, 46, pp. 375-392
- Izumi, S. (2002). Output, input enhancement, and the noticing hypothesis. *Studies in Second Lanaguage Acquisition*, Vol. 24, pp. 541-577.
- Jensen, E. D. & Vinther, Th. (2003). Exact repetition as input enhancement in second language acquisition. *Language Learning*, Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 373-428.
- Krashen, S. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Leow, R. P. (2001). Attention, awareness, and foreign language behavior. *Language Learning*, 51, pp. 113-155.
- Lightbown, P. M. (1998). *The importance of timing in focus on form*. In *focus on form in classroom L<sub>2</sub> acquisition*, C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), pp. 177-196. New York: Cambridge.
- Long, M. (1991). *Focus on form: A design feature in language methodology*. In K. de Bot, R. Ginsberg, & Kramersch (Eds.). *Foreign language research in Cross-cultural perspective*, pp. 39-52. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Macky, A. & Gass, S. M. (2005). *Second Language Research: Methodology and Design*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Mitchell, R. & Myles, F. (2004). *Second language learning theories* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). UK: Arnold
- Muranoi, H. (2000). Focus on form through interaction enhancement: Integrating formal instruction into a communicative task in EFL classrooms. *Language Learning*, Vol. 50 (4), pp. 617-673
- Nassaji, H. (2000). Toward Integrating Form-Focused Instruction And Communicative Interaction in the Second Language Classroom: Some Pedagogical Possibilities. *The Modern Language Journal* Vol. 84 (2), pp. 241-250
- Poole, A. (2005). Focus on form instruction: Foundations, applications, and criticisms. *The Reading Matrix*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 47-56.
- Poole, A. B. & Sheorey, R. (2002). Sophisticated noticing: Examination of an

- indian professional's use of English. *Indian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 121-136.
- Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). UK: Cambridge University Press
- Schmidt, R. W. (1990). The role of consciousness in second learning. *Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 11 (2), pp. 129-158
- Seedhouse, P. (1997). Combining form and meaning. *ELT Journal* Vol. 51 (4), pp. 336-344
- Sharwood Smith, M. (1986). Comprehension vs. acquisition: Two ways of processing input. *Applied Linguistics*, 7(3), 239-256
- Sharwood Smith, M. (1993). Input enhancement in instructed SLA: Theoretical bases. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 15, pp. 165-179.
- Tomline, R. S. & Villa, V. (1994). Attention in cognitive science and second language acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 16, pp. 183-202.
- Van Patten, B. (1990). Attending to content and form in the input: An experiment in consciousness. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 12, pp. 286-301.
- White, J. (1998). *Getting the learners' attention: A typographical input enhancement study*. In *focus on form in classroom L<sub>2</sub> acquisition*, C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), pp. 85-114. New York: Cambridge.
- Williams, J. (1999). Learner-generated attention to form. *Language Learning* Vol. 49 (4), pp. 583-625
- Williams, J. & Evans, J. (1998). *What kind of focus and on which forms?* In *focus on form in classroom L<sub>2</sub> acquisition*, C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), pp. 64-82. New York: Cambridge.

## Title

# On The Translation of Metaphor: A Corpus-based Study of Three Persian Translations of Othello

## Authors

**Hooshang Khoshima (Ph.D.)**

Chabahar Maritime University, Chabahar, Iran.

**Salman Rostami Gohari (M.A.)**

Chabahar Maritime University, Chabahar, Iran.

## Biodata

**Dr. Hooshang khoshima** is an associate professor at Language Department, Chabahar Maritime University. He has published a number textbooks and research papers in journals and conferences. His area of interests are research in applied linguistics, teaching methodologies, assessment and testing.

**Salman Rostami Gohari** holds an M.A. from Chabahar Maritime University, Chabahar, Iran.

## Abstract

Many English words have both literal and metaphorical or figurative meanings. The literal meaning of a word is its most widely used sense. The metaphorical meaning is figurative - it expresses an idea by referring to something else in a non-literal way. Metaphors help us to express our understanding of the world around us. They add color, vivid imagery and perhaps emotion to a sentence. Like other language adorning literary elements, metaphors are not easy to translate and it is mostly because of presence of differences between source and target languages. Linguistic and cultural differences between two languages act as obstacles on the way of translators who recognize a metaphor and try to render that into another language. It is clear that not all source language metaphors can be translated into the same metaphors in the target language from the point of views of form and content; therefore, some translation scholars have proposed a number of procedures in order to help translators to cope with these literary

figures more successfully. This study attempted to go through the Persian translation of English metaphors in order to find the most applied metaphor translation procedure by Persian translators of English texts and simultaneously find the most fruitful procedure from the point of view of accuracy and fidelity to the source text metaphor.

**Keywords:** Metaphor, Translation Procedure , Simile , Sense , Summary , accuracy.

## 1. Introduction

Broeck (1981) states that the biggest stumbling block on the way of translators to render metaphors is their inability to recognize them. Even if they recognize the metaphor, they “must be lucky” to put down a metaphor from the target language that corresponds the source metaphor fully (ibid. p.73). Regarding Broeck’s (ibid) idea, the researcher assumes that the first problem for the Persian translators who translate from English is their inability to recognize the English metaphors. Most probably, its reasons lie behind the translators’ incomplete knowledge of different forms of metaphors in the source language because in case of out dated or dead metaphors, a translator encounters a string of words, mostly a short string of words, which is not like an expression from the point of view of form and complexity. Furthermore, numerous cultural and linguistic differences, respectively, between English and Persian audiences and languages make the translator unable to translate the recognized English metaphor properly into the target language. It is clear for everybody that a translator, in many cases, faces a metaphorical expression, better to say a metaphor to keep it close to our discussion, and recognizes that, but can’t recreate that fully in the target language. From a more scholarly point of view, we can say that sometimes the translator chooses the right procedure to render that metaphor and his translation may lack fidelity to the original text.

Recently, some translation scholars (Newmark, 1981 and 1988; Larson, 1984/1998; Abu Libdeh, 1991; Campbell, 1993) have written some papers and chapters of books on metaphor translation and proposed some procedures to render these literary expressions. From the point of views of accuracy and number of proposed procedures, Newmark (1988) offers the most comprehensive package for the very job, which includes seven procedures. This research will examine a great deal of English metaphors which are taken from a very rich literary corpus and their Persian equivalents to find if they have been translated accurately from the point of views of form, concept and fidelity to the original expression. Among the proposed translations for

each metaphor, the researcher chooses the translation which is the nearest to the original expression from different point of views. Finally, as it is assumed that not all these six procedures are used with equal frequencies in Persian translation, the study will statistically show the ratio of Persian translators' tendencies toward any of these proposed procedures.

The study tries to answer the following questions:

1. Regarding Newmark's (1988) proposed package of procedures for metaphor translation, what is the most commonly applied procedure in translating metaphors by Persian translators of Shakespeare's Othello?
2. Regarding Newmark's (1988) proposed package of procedures for metaphor translation, which procedure results in a more accurate Persian translation of English metaphors in Shakespeare's Othello?

Based on the above research questions, the following hypotheses are set forth for approval/rejection by the study:

1. Translating an English metaphor into a Persian simile plus a clarifying sense is the most frequently applied translation procedure used by Persian translators.
2. Translating an English metaphor into a similar metaphor is the most fruitful procedure from the point of view of accuracy and fidelity.

### **1-1. Objectives of the Study**

This study aims to go through the different metaphor-related problems that a Persian translator might encounter while coping with English literary texts and specify the most frequently applied metaphor translation procedures used by Persian translators in order to render the source text( ST )metaphor into Persian. As mentioned in the previous section, it is assumed that the most common applied procedure in this case is rendering ST metaphor into a simile plus a clarifying sense in the target language.

Later on, the researcher peruses Newmark's (1988) proposed procedures for metaphor translation and seeks for the most fruitful one for Persian translation. As mentioned before, it is assumed that translating an English metaphor into a similar metaphor is the best hired technique to transfer an English metaphor into Persian.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2-1. A Basic Definition of Metaphor**

Metaphor is defined, fairly traditionally, as a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is used in a non-basic sense, this non-basic sense suggesting a likeness or analogy, whether real or not, with another more basic sense of the same word or phrase. An example is provided by the first two senses of “rat” give in Collins English Dictionary (2006) (i) “any of numerous long-tailed murine rodents, esp. of the genus *Rattus*, that are similar to but larger than mice and are now distributed all over the world”, and (ii) “a person who deserts his friends or associates, esp. in times of trouble”. Each sense may call to mind the other phenomenon sometimes called reflected meaning (Leech, 1981. P. 19).

However, in line with the general principle that physical objects are perceived as more basic than non-physical attributes, sense (i) is psychologically basic and sense (ii) non-basic. Accordingly, sense (i) would only weakly call to mind sense (ii) (Dickins, Hervey, & Higgins, 2002). The combination of suggested likeness between “rat” in sense (i) and rat in sense (ii) together with psychologically more basic sense (i) gives rise to the perception of “rat” in sense (ii) as metaphorical.

### **2-2. Types of Metaphor Specified by Newmark**

Newmark(1988) proposes a typology of metaphors which can be presented as follows (the significance of the dotted line is explained later in this section):

Dead - Cliché - Stock-Recent - Adapted - Original

These are defined and exemplified as follows:

#### **2-2-1. Dead Metaphor**

Metaphors where one is hardly conscious of the image, [they] frequently relate to universal terms of space and time, the main part of the body, general ecological features and the main human activities: for English, words such as: 'space' , 'field' , 'line' , 'top' , "bottom", 'foot', 'mouth', 'arm', 'circle', 'drop', 'fall', 'rise' (Newmark ,1988. p. 106).

### **2-2-2. Cliché Metaphor**

Metaphors that have perhaps temporarily outlived their usefulness, that are used as a substitute for clear thought, often emotively, but without corresponding to the facts of the matter. Take the passage: 'The County school will in effect become not a *backwater*, but a *breakthrough* in educational development which will *set trends* for the future. In this its *traditions* will help and it *may well* become a *jewel in the crown* of the county's education.' This is an extract from a specious editorial ... (Newmark, 1988. P.107).

### **2-2-3. Stock Metaphor**

An established metaphor which in an informal context is an efficient and concise method of covering a physical and/or mental situation both referentially and pragmatically - a stock metaphor has certain emotional warmth - and which is not deadened by overuse. ([...] I personally dislike stock metaphors, stock collocations and phaticisms, but I have to admit that they keep the world and society going - they 'oil the wheels' (Newmark, 1988. P.108).

### **2-2-4. Recent Metaphor**

A metaphorical neologism, often 'anonymously' coined, which has spread rapidly in the SL. [...] it may be a metaphor designating one of a number of 'prototypical' qualities that constantly 'renew' themselves in language, e.g. fashionable ('in', 'with it', *dans le vent*), good ('groovy', *sensas, Jab*); without money ('skint', *dans le rond*)' (Newmark, 1988. P.110).

### **2-2-5. Adapted Metaphor**

Metaphors which involve an adaptation of an existing (stock) metaphor. Newmark gives the example 'the ball is a little in their court' (Ronald Reagan), adapted from the stock metaphorical idiom 'the ball is in their court' (Newmark, 1988. P.110).

### **2-2-6. Original Metaphor**

Metaphors which are non-lexicalized and non-adapted are Original (Newmark, 1988. pp.112-113). The example which we discussed earlier, 'The past is another country' is an example of an original metaphor.

### **3. Method**

The present survey is descriptive and analytical in that it deals with the metaphor translation procedures the Persian translators adopted in rendering the metaphors in Shakespeare's Othello. Furthermore, this study attempts to find the most accurate and the most commonly used metaphor translation procedure by Persian translators of the aforementioned play from among Newmark's (1988) batch of metaphor translation procedures.

#### **3-1. Materials**

The current research aims at surveying the metaphor translation strategies applied by the Persian translators in translating metaphors of Shakespeare's Othello (1603). This tragedy has been translated into Persian by three translators who are Abolqassem Khan Nasseral Molk, Abdolhossein Nooshin, and M. A. Behazin.

The Materials for this study are Othello (1603) by William Shakespeare and its three Persian translations by Abolqassem Khan Qaragozlu, Nasseral-Molk (2005), Abdolhossein Nooshin (2009) and M. A. Behazin (2008).

#### **3-2. Procedure and Data Collection**

In order to provide an answer to the questions posed by the researcher, first, the metaphors used by, Iago, one of the main characters of Othello the Shakespearean tragedy, will be identified and counted. Then, referring to the translated versions of this play, the translation proposed by each Persian translator for each source text metaphor will be identified. As for categorizing the metaphor translation strategies employed in each case, the researcher is going to adopt Newmark's (1988) batch of proposed metaphor translation procedures. Then, each of the metaphors along with the context in which it occurs and some explanations to clarify its meaning

will be written down and the proposed translation of each translator for that will be inserted there under. Later, according to the accurate meaning of the English metaphors taken from *A Routledge Literary Sourcebook on William Shakespeare's Othello* (Hadfield, 2003), the researcher specifies the Persian translation nearest to the meaning, or better to say, to the connotative meaning of the English metaphors.

After specifying the procedures applied by each translator as well as the procedures corresponding to the nearest translations, the same data will be inserted in two separate tables along with the translators' names. After that, number of the times that each procedure has been applied by the translators and the times that a procedure has been selected as the most accurate by the researcher, will be counted and their percentage will be calculated and depicted in the form of a separate table. After that the results of the analysis are going to be provided in the form of some charts.

### **3-3. Data Analysis**

In order to analyze the data, first the English metaphors will be identified and counted. Then, referring to the translated versions of each play, the Persian translations corresponding to each English metaphor will be identified. Later, based on the exact meaning of the metaphor extracted from *A Routledge Literary Sourcebook on William Shakespeare's Othello* (Hadfield, 2003), the most accurate translation along with its corresponding procedure will be selected by the researcher. After that, the percentage each translation procedure was adopted by the Persian translators as well as the procedures chosen as the most accurate by the researcher will be counted and inserted in a number of separate tables and used in discussing the results of the study.

### **4. Exploration of Iago's Metaphors and Their Translations**

1-Call up her father,

Rouse him: make after him, *poison his delight*,

Proclaim him in the streets; incense her kinsmen,

**Meaning:** Iago tells Roderigo to ruin Othello's marital bliss.

**Connotations:** Iago is evil; he will transform something that is good to something that is evil; he will cause what pleases Othello most (Desdemona) to be hateful; he will make Othello's relationship with Desdemona poisonous or fatal for Othello.

I) Translation of Nasser al-Molk:

پدر دختر را آواز کن، او را از خواب برانگیز، اتلو را دنبال و در کوچه ها رسوا کن، خویشان دختر را بشوران،

The sentence *poison his delight* was not translated.

Adopted procedure: Deletion (No: 7)

II) Translation of Nooshin:

پدرش را صدا بزن. او را از خواب بیدار کن. عیش و خوشی را به کام این سیاه تلخ کن. در کوچه ها رسوا و بدنامش کن. کسان و خویشان دختر را به او بشوران.

Adopted procedure: Replacing source text metaphor with a similar target text metaphor (No: 2)

III) Translation of Behazin:

پدر دختر را صدا بزنید؛ بیدارش کنید و به سر وقت او بروید؛ خوشی را در کامش زهر گردانید، نامش را در کوچه ها فریاد بکشید، خویشان دختر را بشورانید،

Adapted procedure: Replacing ST metaphor with a similar TT metaphor (No: 2)

The nearest translation(s): Pointing to the words like bitterness and poison, translations number 2 and 3 are near to the connotative meaning of the English metaphor.

**2- Plague him with flies:** though that his joy be joy

**Meaning:** Annoy Othello, vex him.

**Connotations:** Endlessly badger Othello. Make him sick; don't let him rest.

I) Translation of Nasser al-Molk:

هرچند در هوای خوشی زیست می کند باری مگسها به جانش ببنداز،

Adopted procedure: According to the fact that "مگس به جان کسی انداختن" is the word for word translation of the English metaphor which has a metaphorical sense in Persian as well, this translation is considered as replacing the ST metaphor with a TT similar metaphor (No: 2).

II) Translation of Nooshin:

حشرات گزنده به جانش ببنداز و در عین خوشی زجر کشش کن.

Adopted procedure: Here, we have a metaphor (حشرات گزنده به جان کسی انداختن) and a clarifying sense (زجرکش کردن), so the translator has adopted procedure no: 6; replacing ST metaphor with a metaphor plus a clarifying sense in the TT.

III) Translation of Behazin:

با آنکه در چنین آب و هوای خوشی به سر می برد، با هزاران مگس معذب دارید...

Adopted procedure: The translator has translated the metaphorical expression in a word for word basis to a sense (no: 5) because "با مگس معذب داشتن" is not a Persian metaphor.

The nearest translation(s): Regarding the transferred sense of English metaphor in the second translation, Nooshin's translation is selected as the nearest translation to the source text metaphor from the point of view of its connotative meaning.

**3- An old black ram / Is tugging your white ewe.**

**Meaning:** Othello and Desdemona are making love.

**Connotations:** Othello's and Desdemona's love-making is beastly; they're snorting, grunting, and slobbering like a couple of animals; they're incompatible, for they are of two races and Othello is old. Iago is using Brabantio's prejudices and his tender feelings for his daughter to incite rage against Othello.

I) Translation of Nasser al-Molk:

هم اکنون قوچ سیاه پیری سر به میش سفید شما گذاشته.

Adopted procedure: The translator has rendered the ST metaphor into a similar Persian metaphor (no: 2).

II) Translation of Nooshin:

هم اینک قوچ سیاه پیری به جان میش شما افتاده است.

Adopted procedure: "به جان کسی افتادن" is a common Persian metaphor, therefore, the translator, here, has translated the ST metaphor into the same Persian metaphor (no: 1)

III) Translation of Behazin:

همین حالا، قوچ پیر سیاهی در میش سفیدتان در افتاده است.

Adopted procedure: Like Nasser-al-Molk, again the translator has rendered the ST metaphor into a similar Persian metaphor (no: 2).

The nearest translation(s): Rendering the metaphor into the same Persian metaphor, Nooshin's translation is the nearest option to the ST expression.

4- Or else *the devil will make a grandsire of you.*

**Meaning:** Desdemona will become pregnant with Othello's child.

**Connotations:** Othello is evil; he has corrupted your innocent daughter; you will have evil grandchildren. Iago is inciting hatred against Othello within Brabantio.

I) Translation of Nasseral-Molk

وگر نه شیطان شما را پدر بزرگ خواهد کرد.

Adopted procedure: Replacing the ST metaphor with its sense in Persian (no: 5).

II) Translation of Nooshin

وگر نه شیطان همین امشب شما را پدر بزرگ خواهد کرد.

Adopted procedure: Replacing the ST metaphor with its sense in Persian (no: 5).

III) Translation of Behazin:

وگر نه دست ابلیس در کار است تا شما را به مقام پدر بزرگی برساند.

Adopted metaphor: دست ابلیس is a metonym and در کار بودن is a metaphor in Persian, so the translator has tried to render the ST metaphor into a similar metaphor in TT (no: 2)

The nearest translation(s): Regarding the key elements of the third translation, it is selected as the nearest equivalent.

This way the researchers continued to explore the strategies adapted for the twenty one metaphors used in the corpse; then , data was analyzed.

#### 4-1. Exploration of the Data

In this section, in order to reach to a better recognition, the above mentioned information is inserted in some tables. The tables are based on the translators' names and the applied procedures. There is also a separate table for the nearest translations.

The first table in this section shows the number of times that each procedure has been applied by the each Persian translator of Othello. Translators' names find place in the horizontal row and the corresponding number for each of the seven metaphor translation procedures proposed by Newmark (1988) lies in the vertical row. The following numbers are used instead of its corresponding metaphor translation procedure in order for brevity.

*Replacing ST metaphor with the same metaphor in the TT = Number 1*

*Replacing ST metaphor with a similar metaphor in the TT = Number 2*

*Replacing ST metaphor with a simile in the TT = Number 3*

*Replacing ST metaphor with a simile plus sense in the TT = Number 4*

*Replacing ST metaphor with its sense in the TT = Number 5*

*Replacing ST metaphor with a metaphor plus sense in the TT = Number 6*

*Deleting the ST metaphor in translation = Number 7*

Table 4-1: Frequency of metaphor translation procedures applied by each Persian translator

	Nasser al-Molk	Nooshin	Behazin
Number 1	3	2	9
Number 2	11	7	7
Number 3	0	0	0
Number 4	0	0	0
Number 5	3	3	2
Number 6	3	5	3
Number 7	1	4	0
Total	21	21	21

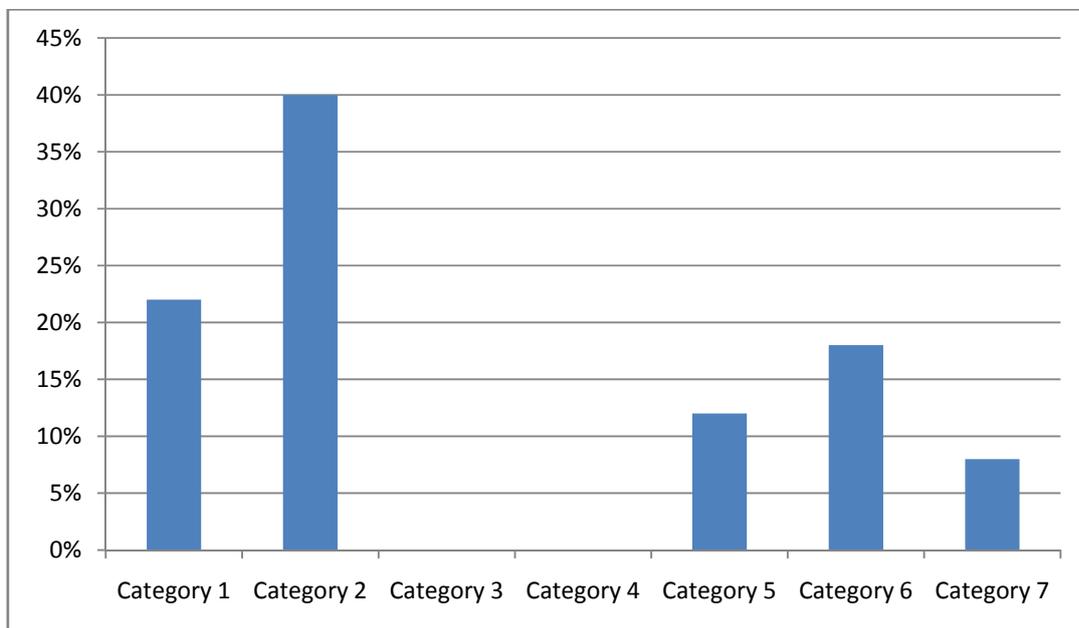
This table shows the number of times that each Persian translator has applied any of the Newmark's proposed metaphor translation procedures. The table below shows the number of times that each procedure has been applied by all translators.

Table 4-2: Frequency of metaphor translation procedures applied by all Persian translators

	Number 1	Number 2	Number 3	Number 4	Number 5	Number 6	Number 7
Frequency	14	25	0	0	8	11	5
Total	63						

The data given in the above table shows that replacing an English metaphor with a similar Persian metaphor has had the most frequency with a very distant gap to the second most frequent procedure; replacing an English metaphor with the same Persian metaphor. Furthermore, metaphor translation procedures number 3 and 4 have been never applied by Persian translators of Othello in translating Iago’s metaphorical expressions. This chart shows the frequency of metaphor translation procedures applied by the Persian translators of Othello on a percentage basis.

Figure 4-1: Frequency of metaphor translation procedures applied by Persian translators



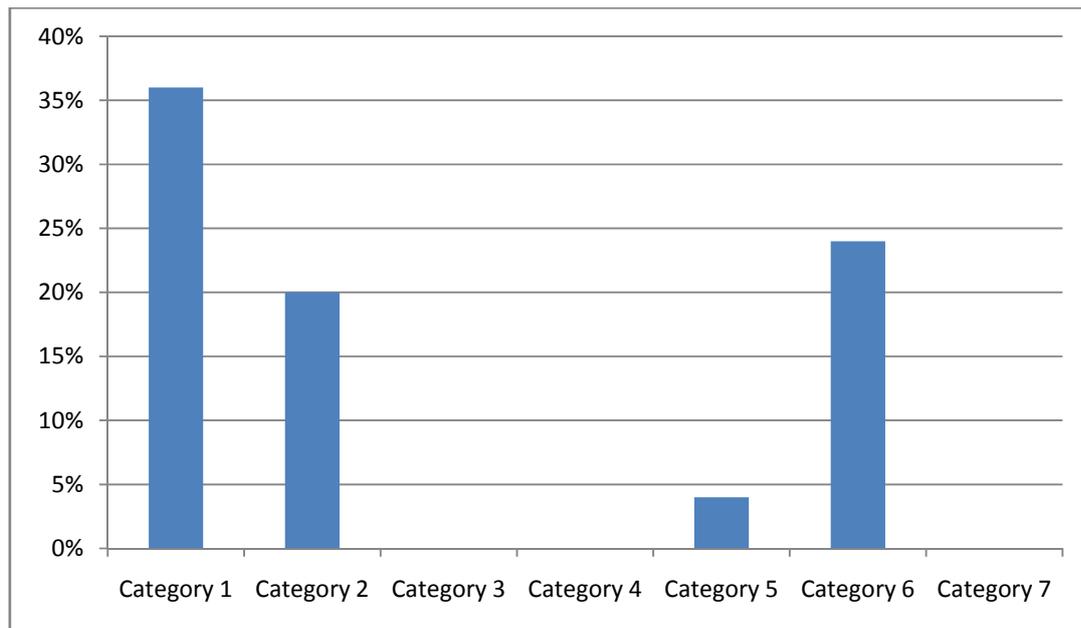
The second question of this research is about the procedure which results in the most fruitful Persian translation. In other words, this question seeks to specify the procedure which results in the nearest translation to the connotative meaning of the source text metaphor from the point of view of frequency of use.

Table 4-3: Frequency of translation procedures corresponding to the selected nearest translations

	Number 1	Number 2	Number 3	Number 4	Number 5	Number 6	Number 7
Frequency	9	5	0	0	1	6	0
Total	21						

The data given in the above table shows that replacing an English metaphor with the same Persian metaphor (procedure number 1) has had the most frequency of application among the procedures being selected as correspondents to the nearest translations. The chart below shows the data of table 4-3 on a percentage basis.

Figure 4-2: Frequency of translation procedures corresponding to the selected nearest translations



It clearly shows that adopting procedure number 1 results in the most fruitful translation while procedures number 3, 4 and 7 have never been chosen as the procedures corresponding to the nearest translations.

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of previous chapter was to discuss the results obtained from the study, in an attempt to arrive at a conclusion about the findings and contributions of the study. First, the details of the selected data were presented. Second, it was followed by a detailed account of how the data was analyzed to yield these results. Tables and charts were also included within the discussion to illustrate the results visually.

In summary, the findings of this study did answer the research question: this study showed that regarding Newmark's (1988) proposed package of procedures for metaphor translation, replacing ST metaphor with a similar metaphor in the TT (procedure number 2) is the

most commonly applied procedure in translating metaphors by Persian translators of Shakespeare's Othello. Furthermore, the researcher found that replacing ST metaphor with the same metaphor in the TT (procedure number 1) results in a more accurate Persian translation of English metaphors in Shakespeare's Othello.

## References

- Ackroyd, P. (2006). *Shakespeare: The Biography*. London: Vintage.
- Adewuni, S. (2008). Linguists and Culture Experts at a Crossroad: Limitations in Formulating an Experimental Translation Theory. *Translation Journal* .
- Alvarez, A. (1993). On Translating Metaphor. *META* , 479-490.
- Baker, M. (2001). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Barcelona, A. (2000). *Metaphor and Metonym at the Crossroads: A Cognitive*. Berlin: Gruyter.
- Bassnett, S. (1980). *Translation Studies*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Bennett, W. (1968). *Aspects of Language and Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Broeck, R. v. (1981). *The Concept of Equivalence in Translation Theory: Some Critical Reflections*. Leuven: Academic.
- Chapelle, C. (1983). The relationship between ambiguity tolerance and success in acquiring English as a second language in adult learners. *Unpublished doctoral dissertation* . University of Illinois.
- Classe, O. (2000). *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English (Vol. 2)*. London and New York: Fitzroy Dearborn Publisher.
- Cooper, D. E. (1986). *Metaphor*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Dagut, M. B. (1971). *A linguistic Analysis of Some Semantic Problems of Hebrew-English Translation*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University.
- Dickins, J. (1998). *Extended Axiomatic Linguistics*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Dickins, J., Hervey, S., & Higgins, I. (2002). *Thinking Arabic Translation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Dobrzynska, T. (1995). Translating Metaphor: Problems of Meaning. *Journal of Pragmatics* , 595-604.

- Ely, C. M. (1989). Tolerance of ambiguity and use of second language strategies. *Foreign Language Annals* (22), 437-445.
- Gibbs, R. W. (1992). When is metaphor? The idea of understanding in theories of metaphor. *Poetics Today*, 575-606.
- Gibbs, R., & Steen, G. (1999). *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Goatly, A. (1997). *The Language of Metaphor*. London: Routledge.
- Hadfield, A. (2003). *A Routledge Literary Sourcebook on Shakespeare's Othello*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kovecses, Z. (2002). *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Larson, M. L. (1984/1998). *Meaning-Based Translation: A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence*. New York: University Press of America.
- Mooij, J. J. (1976). *A Study of Metaphor*. Amsterdam: Noord Holland.
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A textbook of translation*. Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall International (UK) Ltd.
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. London and New York: Prentice Hall.
- Newmark, P. (1981). *Approaches to Translation*. London and New York: Pergamon.
- Nida, E. A. (2003). *Language and Culture: Two Similar Symbolic Systems*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.
- Vinay, J. P., & Darbelnet, J. (1958/1995). *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.

#### **Persian sources: منابع فارسی:**

به آذین، م.ا. (اعتمادزاده، م.) (1387). اتللو. تهران: نشر دات.

Beh Azin, M.A. (1387). *Othello*. Tehran: Dot Publication

ناصر الملک، ا. (1375). اتلو. تهران: نشر نیلوفر.

Naseral Molk, A. (1375). *Othello*. Tehran: Nilofar publication.

نوشین، ع. (1388). اتللو. تهران: نشر قطره.

Nooshin, A. (1388). *Othello*. Tehran: Qatre Publication

## Title

# Practicing a Change in an Iranian EFL Curriculum: from Ivory Tower to Reality

**Batoul Ghanbari (Ph.D. Candidate)**

University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

**Saeed Ketabi (Ph.D.)**

University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

## Biodata

**Batoul Ghanbari** is a Ph.D. Candidate in TEFL at English Department, Faculty of Foreign Languages, university of Isfahan, Iran. Her research interests include EFL writing, testing and assessment and sociolinguistics.

**Saeed Ketabi** is an associate professor in TEFL at English Department, Faculty of Foreign Languages, university of Isfahan, Iran. His main areas of research are teaching methodology and curriculum development.

## Abstract

The process of curriculum innovation and change has been cited in the literature as a difficult and complex one. Through involving educational, political, national, institutional and personal issues, it challenges the very fabric of our society, and our roles not only as professionals, but as people (Lamie, 2004). This article investigates the practice of a curriculum innovation introduced to an Iranian EFL program some years ago. Drawing on a model of change developed by Lamie (2004), the study aims to evaluate the extent the change has been successful. For this aim, a group of four experienced pre-university teachers were interviewed and their perceptions regarding the different components of the curriculum, i.e. attitude, methodology, practice, etc. were studied. The findings demonstrated that teachers and learners as major stakeholders in the process of change, have understood and accepted the curriculum innovation, but an analysis of the wider context showed that there are some stumbling blocks that seriously affect the aims of curriculum innovation to be fulfilled. These critical factors are investigated in their theoretical and professional contexts to unveil the dead ends in the process.

It is hoped that the robust evaluation presented here would aid to alleviate the situation.

**Key words:** Curriculum innovation, Change, EFL curriculum, Pre-university English course.

## **1. Introduction**

In the words of Richards (1984), the field of curriculum development encompasses the processes of needs analysis, goal setting, syllabus design, methodology and evaluation. The aim of any language curriculum development processes is to produce relevant, effective and efficient language teaching programs. However, at present no single model of curriculum development program can claim to have satisfactorily resolved the question of how these criteria can be efficiently put in to practice.

The need for innovation and change in curriculum is in line with the far-reaching aims of education. However, few of the numerous studies of innovation in the field of education report on innovations that have been successful. For example, after an extensive study of educational change programs, Parish and Arrends (1983) concluded that educational innovations had approximately a twenty per cent success rate (Iemjinda, 2007). The hard process of curriculum innovation is not surprising when considering the forces operating both outside and within the organization implementing the change and also the situations of those who are most affected by the change.

Despite the thorny process of curriculum innovation, the need to infuse change in the program is an indispensable part. In fact, recently, the management of change has become the focus for researchers interested in curriculum implementation. Following this line of inquiry, present study investigates one case of curriculum innovation in a particular Iranian EFL context.

In the year 2003, Iranian pre-university English course underwent a reform. The principal goal was to propose a shift away from the long-established grammar-translation curriculum practice towards teaching for communicative competence. The change began with the sudden introduction of the new text-book to the program. In the same line, some work shops were held in order to make teachers familiar with the on-going curriculum innovation in their in-service training courses.

The change was planned and supported by the Iranian Ministry of Education. The stated goal was to make pre-university English language instruction more communicative. Many

stakeholders welcomed the 2003 innovation. The major justification was that English should be used communicatively by the learners preparing themselves for university entrance and not just learned about.

The innovation was warmly received but since then there have been no robust research findings that have acknowledged the success of the program. Therefore, present research was launched to examine the impact of the curriculum. It was designed to gather information regarding the professional and educational status of Iranian pre-university English teachers, methodology ensued by the teachers, attitudes towards the change and the classroom practice as witnessed by the researchers. In the wider context, the aim of present study was to highlight key aspects, or impact areas (Lamie, 2004), in the process of change within the Iranian context. The findings would provide officials in charge of the innovation in the Ministry of Education with realities that seriously would challenge the change and its prospects.

## **2. English in Iranian pre-university context**

### **2.1. Background**

Prior to 2003 innovation, English in pre-university was treated the same as other three years of high school. Grammar-translation instilled the “what” and “how” of the course. Teachers especially those who were recent graduates of the university resisted at their first years of teaching but gradually they surrendered to the situation. Communicative competence had no place in English classes’ expected goals since the curriculum defined goals in a way that necessitated no communicative use of the language upon the pre-university graduation.

Back in 2001, the English Group authorized by the Department of Producing and Compiling of Secondary School Text-books ( DPCST) released a document that pointed to a number of factors that in its view had impeded the success of English language teaching in Iranian pre-university centers. The factors mentioned in the document were the collective views of country-wide pre-university teachers of English. Some of the points were as follows: a lack of exposure to spoken English, a lack of confidence in communicating in English, learners’ lack of motivation, difficult teaching materials, and adherence to traditional teaching methods.

Although not mentioned in the DPCST document, the structure of University Entrance Exam (UEE) that valued grammatical learning above language knowledge and communication

negatively affected the English course. In fact, UEE had a determining role in the whole program. Many teachers highlighted the impact of the Exam structure:

*One impetus for the change in the program was the UEE. In fact, students studied English just to pass the Exam. It really dictated learners what to seek for in the text-book and what to expect their teachers. I wanted to emphasize speaking and listening ability of English in the class, but the most important thing in high school education was to help students pass the University Entrance Exam. So, we were obliged to emphasize grammatical and reading skills. I was really sorry about it<sup>4</sup>.*

(Abshirini, Teacher- respondent, no.1)

DPCST announced its own view of the basic principles that should lie at the heart of English teaching: to listen to as much authentic English as possible; to read as much living English as possible; to have as many chances to use English in everyday life as possible and to extend cultural background knowledge.

In 2002, DPCST proposed a curriculum innovation in teaching of English in the pre-university that embodied both the sets of factors and principles listed above. Apparently, the revised course of study aimed to improve the communicative use of language among Iranian EFL learners.

The innovation plan became operational in 2003. It began through introducing a totally new text-book which was designed similar to the successful and famous English language books on the market, e.g. New Interchange or American Headway. In order to prepare teachers for the new curriculum, workshops and in-service training courses were held. These were aimed to back the innovation to bring about the change in the shortest time possible.

## **2.2. Communicative language teaching and the innovation**

DPCST appeared to know that an emphasis over communicative language teaching in pre-university centers strongly demanded a “revision in teaching approach”. Therefore, the approach they asked teachers to adopt was communicative approach.

The communicative approach aims to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and develops procedures for teaching the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Apparently, it is incompatible with the language teaching approach prevalent in Iran which emphasizes the teaching of grammar and isolated list of vocabularies in each lesson. But looking more closely, it

---

<sup>4</sup>It's worth mentioning that teachers' extracts were in Persian and the researcher translated them to English.

is not the case. Many scholars (e.g. Canale & Swain, 1980) believe that in communicative approach, grammar is neither derided nor ignored. Holliday (1994, p.165) claims that:

*The forms which the communicative approach presents, rather than being restricted to group activities in which oral communication is practiced, are very varied and can incorporate among other things the cognitive teaching of grammar.*

The point here is not how communicative approach has been perceived and developed in the West, but how it is, and has been, used and referred to in English language teaching in the country it is adopted (Lamie, 2004). As an example, LoCastro (1996, p.45) in an application of communicative approach to Japanese context and the impact of socio-cultural context says:

*Communication itself may not be a universally shared concept; that is, it may have different meanings in different cultures. In a hierarchical society such as Japan, social variables such as status, age and gender must be taken into consideration when one interacts with others.*

### **3. Diffusing the innovation**

What was followed in the innovation was a belief that communicative competence is fostered through a positive attitude towards communication on the part of the students. So, in order to develop and sustain the positive attitude toward the communication, teachers should dynamically assess the ability of the learners in doing the tasks. They have to refrain from correcting grammatical or other errors too strictly, which might discourage the students from communicating positively, and instead praise positive attitudes for efforts to communicate.

In this line and in order to prepare the ground for change and give theoretical background and practical hints to the innovation in move, a series of conferences and workshops were held throughout the country. It was believed that they would make innovation find greater acceptance in case goals were clearly defined. However, these conferences were not well attended. Long, boring theoretical explanations presented in the sessions which mostly drew on the published works of western scholars did not help to clarify, but made the issues more complex for the grammar-translation-oriented teachers.

The point here is that the very tradition of innovation and change in educational literature should be considered. A number of change theorists have attempted to identify factors which have a bearing upon the eventual adoption and application of an innovation. Rogers and Everett (1971) suggest that the first questions likely to be raised by those whom the innovation most

affects would concern its relevance and its feasibility. Hull *et al.* (1973) refer to the size of the proposed innovation. Rogers and Everett (1971) also point to additional likely outcome indicators, such as the 'triability' of the innovation, the extent to which it can be tested on a limited basis, and its compatibility. Innovation, they claim, has a far better chance of being accepted if it can be seen to be compatible with existing values and practices (Lamie, 2004).

As an example, an innovation effort which failed was the English Language Exploratory Committee in Japan (1956) who aimed to change ELT curriculum. Henrichsen (1989) believed that the failure of the project was largely because the new innovations were not in accord with the then current policies and practices and, specifically, the traditional teaching method was *an impediment*.

Iranian particular context of change in the present study (i.e. pre-university centers) was also far from incompatible with the innovative attempts. Teachers taught the learners using a traditional, teacher-centered approach based on a uniform curriculum, text and evaluation formula.

Another factor is seriously involved. The literature of change theory abounds with the assumption that change is a painful process (Fullan, 1991; Pinar, 1999). The resentment and resistance that teachers feel towards external attempts to impose change (Goh, 1999) must be compounded when no discussion or collaboration takes place (Fullan, 1991; Hadley, 1999). Easen (1985, p.71) comments that imposed change itself will not be successful, unless the process of personal change is also considered. Even those teachers who are willing to change, however, must be given the support to do so, as Li (2001) suggests and Carless (1999, p.23) confirms: 'Without sufficient retraining, even teachers initially enthusiastic about an innovation can become frustrated by problems in implementation and eventually turn against the project'.

Therefore, in the words of Lamie (2004) important factors in the innovation process are as follows: relevance and feasibility; compatibility; knowledge; awareness of the impact of external factors; discussion and collaboration; and adequate support and training. The importance of the role of the teachers is crucial. The link with personal change and the process of change itself is also clear.

The present study examined four pre-university teachers (two males and two females) who had experienced the change and had also extensively taught prior to the innovation. They actively attended the in-service training courses. They had the experience of six years of teaching in the

new curriculum. Actually, as experienced insiders in to the profession, their ideas were quite representative of the extent the change to the curriculum worked successfully.

The researchers conducted semi-structure interviews with the teacher-participants (Table1). They also developed an observation checklist to examine how the innovation has affected the methodology of teachers in the classes. In other words, to what degree teachers become communicative owing to the in-service training courses and seminars. Observations took place upon the interviews with each of the teachers. Data gathered from the interviews were used to judge the success of the innovation program as well.

**Table 1**  
*Information about Pre-university English Teachers as Participants of the Study*

Teacher	Gender	Teacher experience (years)	Pre-university experience	Degree	Teaching upon innovation
Abshirini	M	28	11	BA (ELT)	7
Samsami	M	30	9	BA (ELT)	6
Kafaie	F	19	10	BA (ELT)	7
Ziaie	F	27	11	BA (ELT)	7

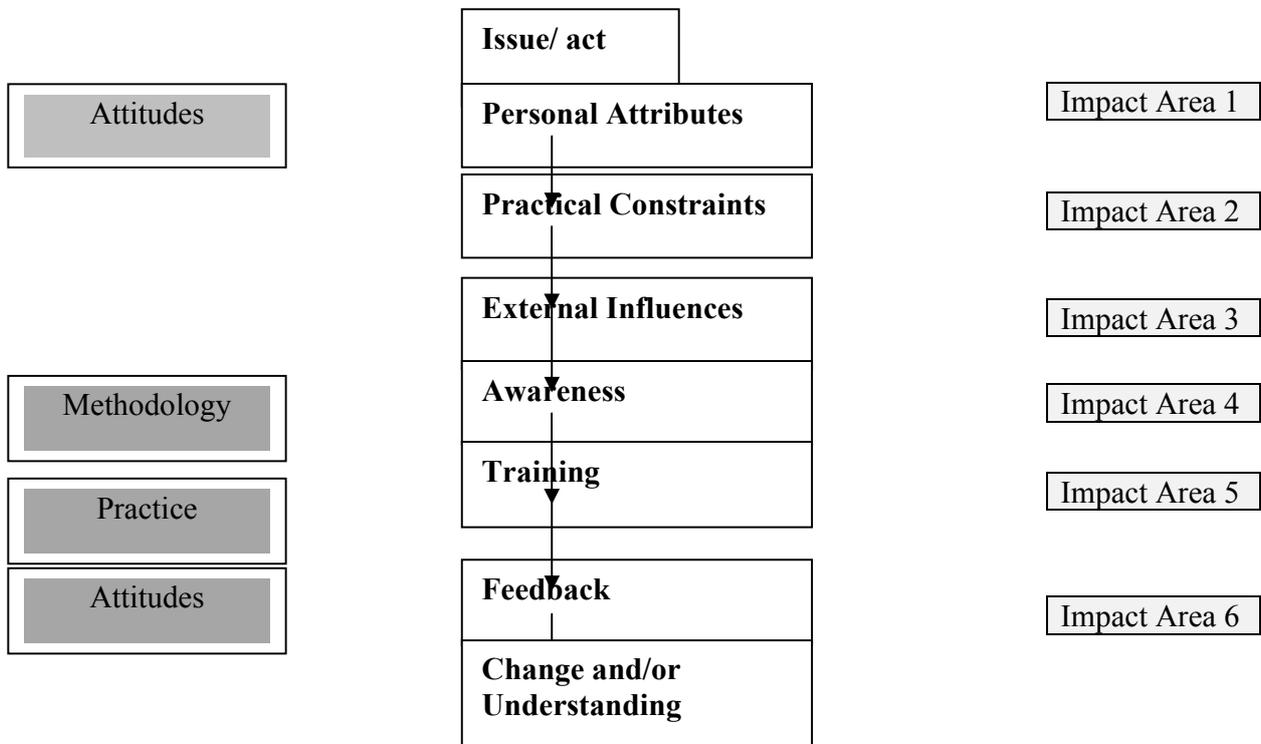
#### 4. Innovation under the test of time

##### 4.1. Model of change as an evaluation criterion

Fullan (1991) presents a simplified view of change through introducing three elements: initiation, implementation and continuation. It seems that the process of change ends with the outcome but Fullan (1991) believes that change is not linear, but there exists complex interconnectedness within the model. Depending upon the effectiveness of each stage, the act or issue undergoing the process will move forwards or backwards along the continuum before reaching the desired outcome (Lamie, 2004).

The process of change is affected by many internal and external factors. Lamie (2004) listed six factors that affect not only the observable situational change, or practice, but also attitudes and methodology. These issues are referred to in Lamie's model as impact areas. (Figure1).

**Figure 1**  
*Model of Change adapted from Lamie (2004)*



The researchers used the model as a criterion for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the change infused in the English curriculum in Iranian pre-university centers. The impact areas were carefully investigated through long interviews with the teachers. Moreover, teachers' responses were triangulated via observation checklists developed by the researchers. The impact areas are discussed below to find the degree the curriculum innovation improved the situation regarding English language teaching and learning.

#### **4.2. Personal attributes**

Confidence and attitude form the personal attributes (Lamie, 2004). It goes without saying that both affect the learning and teaching process. In discussing the success and dominance of the structural or audio-lingual approach, involving 'presentation, practice, repetition and drills' in language teaching, Williams and Burden (1997) raise a number of issues, in particular, training, knowledge and confidence to show the effects of important aspects involved.

Data obtained from two of the teachers in the present study- Samsami and Ziaie- indicated that how a lack of confidence could negatively affect their practice and their attitude to some extent.

Teachers, who were professionals in the traditional methodology of Grammar-translation, had suddenly faced with the communicative apparatus and were asked to implement it in their routine classroom activities. Such an abrupt transition dramatically affected their confidence and subsequently led to the adoption of some conservative attitude in their teaching.

Samsami believed that in-service training courses and related conferences couldn't develop the necessary confidence among teachers. Therefore, they stopped in a "no man land" of the teaching approach. This situation stopped moving in the right direction according to the plan of the innovation. The other two participants believed that they relied on their experiences of teaching to make for their low confidence in the new approach. Also they reasoned that lack of a supervision system over the newly introduced curriculum made it easy for teachers to authorize their teaching.

Overall, confidence, self-worth and attitude strongly affect the practice. In fact, the success of teachers is not a matter of ability, rather how much confidence and positive attitude are injected in to the participants. Although further investigation would be required to provide firm conclusions with regard to the link between attitudes and behavior, in this study attitude was influential in directing the implementation of acts by the teachers. They had positive attitudes toward the old approach. Subsequently, they organized their practice around that.

#### **4.3. Practical constraints**

Textbooks, class size, school type and examination structures are four practical constraints (Lamie, 2004). Teaching materials in new or revised form can be an invaluable tool in any curriculum innovation effort. In the same line, Carless (1999) in an evaluation of the Target-Oriented Curriculum in Hong Kong emphasized the importance of adequate manpower and resources. However, even the most effective text-book, produced in line with a curriculum may not lead to change. Their use as an agent of change, if produced to support a top-down national reform, may also meet resistance in the classroom (Goh, 1999). The same problem existed in the present study. The former pre-university text-book was substituted by a newly-authored one. The book which is claimed to develop the learners' communicative competence turned to be an avalanche of texts. All interviewees lamented on the book and the influencing forces involved. The problem is posed in Abshirini's words eloquently:

*Newly-authorized pre-university text-book is claimed to be based on CLT, but it turns to be a new version of the old GTM-based text-book. This is a major constraint. Of course, I think there are other practical constraints involved. As an example, University Entrance Exam has greatly undermined the role of the text-book. Majority of the students don't read the texts carefully and they spend most of their time on some extra curricula activities outside the appointed program. They don't pay attention to the pronunciation, dictation. Over here I should say that UEE has drastically destroyed the methodology of the teachers.*

UEE, as it influences the future career paths of students also play a crucial role in determining the practices of the classroom. If the tests are perceived by the teachers to have significant effects on their students' lives, then they can see it as part of their duty to make sure that their pupils have the best possible chance they can to succeed. The teachers may, therefore, have a positive or negative attitude to the procedure taking place, but the impact of the perceived examination effect is potentially great enough to end the process. The impact of UEE as a practical constraint was voiced by all four participants:

*UEE indirectly controls teachers and system of education. Suppose that if there weren't any Exam at all, what would happen? Can you actually imagine that beautiful world?*  
(Samsami, Teacher respondent, no.2)

*I think the text-book is not in line with CLT. It is more aligned with UEE since it emphasizes reading activities more than listening and speaking activities.*

(Ziaie, Teacher respondent, no.4)

Apparently the above-mentioned pressures affected the new curriculum from its full actualization.

#### **4.4. External influences**

Any large or small-scale social innovation should be grounded in the context. The process of implementation strongly requires a deep awareness of multiple social parties involved. Curriculum innovation is undoubtedly affected by the nation, community, school, individual teachers and learners. Therefore, it demands the change initiators to mediate the methodologies derived from the western societies and philosophical paradigms according to the realities of the context they aim to create change.

Iranian culture supports an individualist, product-oriented social fabric which possesses a large power-distance (hierarchical) dimension. This is virtually the opposite of the Western construct, which developed the theory of communicative competence on which current curricular reforms

in Iran are based. Therefore, the national Iranian culture negatively affects the success of innovation. It seems that the traditional grammar-translation approach though highly deterministic fits well with the current system in use.

Another important factor in the complex network of factors involved is the school culture. It is a complex make-up of occupational, institutional and personal influences. It can be influenced by teacher cultures and career experiences and by the occupational culture of teaching, which represents attributes of the teaching profession as a whole (Lamie, 2004). Students are looked upon as no more than passive recipients of knowledge.

The influence of a school culture was emphasized by all four participants in this study. The concern voiced by the participants was an unsupportive school environment that had kept its traditional view towards English. It was a potential barrier towards the innovation in the program.

#### **4.5. Awareness**

In an effort to underscore the importance of awareness in the process of change, McGraw (1999, p. 109) says: 'If you are unwilling to acknowledge a thought, circumstance, problem, condition, behavior or emotion - if you won't take ownership of your role in a situation- then you cannot and will not change it'.

Awareness raising is an important issue in any process of change or innovation. Teacher training courses have an important role in creating situations to facilitate reflection and contemplation for the teachers as important agents of change (Lamie, 2004). In-service teacher-training courses along with conferences, workshops and seminars were effective in promoting the awareness of pre-university teachers in the present study. Through involving teachers in teaching practice activities, they could learn the realities directly from the context.

Four participants of the study believed that in-service training courses were quite useful and helped them to become aware of the innovation program introduced in pre-university English course. The problem was that these in-service training courses were few in number. Moreover, the theory-transmitting nature of the courses prevented teachers to practically experience teaching in the new program:

*In-service training courses bombarded the teachers with theories mostly adopted from western status quo knowledge of the practice. They did not come down to the realities of the Iranian context. I personally felt exhausted most of the time...*

(Kafaie, Teacher respondent, no.3)

*I think teachers should have more opportunities for training. The 'useful' training courses are few!*

(Samsami, Teacher respondent, no.2)

#### **4.6. Training**

Teachers are the most influencing parties in any successful implementation of innovations. Therefore, teacher development is central in order to facilitate any change process. According to Fullan (1991), successful educational change in practice involves learning how to do something new and that in order to learn something new, teachers required motivation and input.

Teachers have a constructive role in the development of better curricula. The precondition for this effective participation is to have dynamic teacher training courses which would help teachers learn the 'how' of change in progress.

Upon the introduction of the change in to the pre-university program, in-service training courses with the aim of teachers' professional development were held. Although the courses couldn't attract the full consent of all teachers, they were successful in preparing the teachers to implement the changes in the right course. All teachers interviewed in the present study unanimously reported that changes had taken place in their methodology, attitudes and practice following the in-service training courses. It reinforces the merits of the professional development programs for the education of teachers who aim to move towards the communicative approach in teaching English.

#### **4.7. Feedback**

Any changes in the classroom practice have some concomitant reacts by those involved in the educational arena. The feedback process strongly affects the change. In case of negative reactions to the classroom practices, the innovation process might come to an end. Positive evaluation of the changes can encourage the continuation of the change process.

The feedback can come from colleagues, school officials, students, state evaluation centers, etc. In addition, within the model of change proposed by Lamie (2004), feedback as one impact area is interactively affected by different components involved in the change. For example,

practical constraints can become involved in the feedback process as examination results and textbook usage are drawn on to evaluate the class activity:

*Unfortunately, in the pre-university center that I teach, there is not enough facilities. There is no video projector and I can hardly borrow a tape-recorder from the vice-principal. You know, school officials are doubtful towards communicative English. Their mind is occupied with the long-established traditional approach. They think that English course is not that much important!*

(Kafaie, Teacher respondent, no.3)

## **5. Conclusion**

The present study adopted a multi-faceted model of change by Lamie( 2004) in Japan. Having the model component factors as criteria in mind, the researcher evaluated the data obtained from four teacher participants. The evaluation of six impact factors showed the ups and mostly downs in the successful implementation of the change in English curriculum of Iranian pre-university centers. In fact, the variety of interpersonal relationships and cultural ramifications, combined with the intricacies of curriculum developments, clearly present the change process as a journey that is far from straightforward.

Each factor was investigated drawing on certain features that it involved. To some degree, all the factors analyzed were in need of support and reformulation by the initiators of curriculum innovation, but two areas that were serious drawbacks to the fulfillment of the innovation were UEE and teacher training.

Studying UEE as a practical constraint, it was found that washback existed and occurred mainly in negative form to the extent it had become common practice to replicate UEE-like tests at school level. The main problem was that it became uncertain whether students, who could enter the higher education institutions, had ultimately achieved a satisfactory level of English proficiency or had they become test-wise. Also the gap between the innovative efforts to change the curriculum and those of top testing authorities in the country widened. With regard to the teaching methodology, the methodology of grammar- translation dominated.

Teacher training (initial or in-service) was found to be of pivotal importance. Findings showed that in any innovation attempt, there should be rigorous training courses in order to provide teachers with hands-on experiences of what they want to practically teach. The self-awareness and personal growth achieved through the courses, would pave the ground for a smooth implementation of the change.

The present study broadly investigated the curriculum innovation on the basis of six factors. A study can be deemed to analyze deeply one or two factors. Also the researchers used the interview and observation as data-collecting instruments in the study. In subsequent studies, questionnaires can also be used to raise awareness, and therefore, encourage the teacher to take an active part in personal classroom research, and thereby increase the likelihood of change and understanding. In addition, the study reported here was carried out on a relatively small scale and it would not be fair to make any broad generalizations based on what we found. We would like to suggest, however, that it may have implications on curriculum innovation within the context in which the research was carried out and, possibly, more widely.

## References

- Canale, M. & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1, 1-47.
- Carless, D.R. (1999). Large-scale curriculum change in Hong Kong. In C. Kennedy, P. Doyle, & C. Goh, (Eds.), *Exploring change in English language teaching* (pp.19-29). Oxford: Macmillan Heinemann English Language Teaching.
- Easen, P. (1985). Making school-centered INSET work. In M. J. Lamie, (2004). *Presenting a model of change* (pp. 115-142). Sage Publications: Language Teaching Research.
- Fullan, M.G. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change*. London: Cassell.
- Goh, C. (1999). Nationwide curriculum innovation: how do we manage change? In C. Kennedy, P. Doyle, and C. Goh, (Eds.), *Exploring change in English language teaching* (pp.5-19). Oxford: Macmillan Heinemann English Language Teaching.
- Hadley, G. (1999). Innovative curricula in tertiary ELT: a Japanese case study. *The Japanese Learner*, 19 October, pp. 2-11.
- Henrichsen, L.E. (1989). *Diffusion of innovation in English language teaching: the ELEC effort in Japan, 1956-1968*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Holliday, A. (1994). *Appropriate methodology and social context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hull, W., Kester, R., & Martin, W. (1973). *A conceptual framework for the diffusion of*

- innovation*. Ohio: Ohio State University Press.
- Iemjinda, M. (2007). Curriculum innovation and English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher development. *Educational Journal of Thailand*. 1, 9-20.
- Lamie, M. J. (2004). Presenting a model of change. *Language Teaching Research*. 8, 115-142.
- Li, D. (2001). Teachers' perceived difficulties in introducing the communicative approach in South Korea. In D. Hall, and A. Hewings, (Eds.), *Innovation in English language teaching* (pp. 149-69). London: Routledge,.
- LoCastro, V. (1996). English language education in Japan. In H. Coleman, (Eds.), *Society and the language classroom* (pp.40-58). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McGraw, P. (1999). Life strategies. In M. J. Lamie, (2004). *Presenting a model of change* (pp. 115-142). Sage Publications: Language Teaching Research.
- Parish, R., & Arrends, R. (1983). Why innovative programs are discontinued. *Educational Leadership*. 40, 62-65.
- Pinar, K. (1999). Introducing new course materials. In C. Kennedy, P. Dayle, and C. Goh (Eds.), *Exploring change in English language teaching*. Oxford: Macmillan Heinemann English Language Teaching.
- Richards, J. C. (1984). Language curriculum development. *RELC Journal*, 15, 1-30.
- Richards, J.C., & Rodgers, T.S. (1986). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rogers, E., & Everett, M. (1971). *Communication of innovation: a cross-cultural approach*. London: Collier-Macmillan.
- Williams, M., & Burden, R.L. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## Title

# **The Big Five Personality Traits: A New Horizon of Research in Language Teaching**

## Author

**Masood Siyyari (Ph.D.)**

Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Tehran, Iran

## Biodata

**Masood Siyyari** holds a Ph.D. in TEFL from Allameh Tabataba'i University. He is currently an assistant professor at Tehran's Science and Research Branch of IAU, and teaches TEFL courses at BA and MA levels. He has presented and published papers on topics related to SLA and language testing/assessment in (inter)national conferences and journals.

## Abstract

Personality traits are evidently an important factor in language learning since any cognitive operation is by nature integrated with emotions and personalities. Among several approaches to the study of personality, *the dispositional approach* assumes relatively enduring personality characteristics called traits leading to consistent behavior across situations. Based on this approach, several personality inventories have been designed including Costa and McCrae's NEO-PR-I and NEO-FFI based on the five-factor personality theory aka the Big Five. Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness are the personality traits in the Big Five whose roles have rarely been investigated in language learning; therefore, this paper aims at introducing the Big Five and attempts to enumerate the reasons why the Big Five should be more often employed in language learning/teaching research. Moreover, a synopsis of the extensive use of the Big Five in different fields is provided, and some research potentials to study the Big Five in language learning/teaching are recommended. This paper closes with a mention of the need for validating the Big Five in

different languages and cultures, and some guidelines for doing so are cited from the originators of the Big Five inventories.

**Keywords:** NEO-FFI, NEO-PR-I, Personality traits, The dispositional approach, The Big Five, Validation.

## 1. Introduction

The affective side of human being, and personality factors in particular, is one of the very abstract areas of psychology which has been found very cumbersome by psychologists to be operationally defined. That is why many definitions and classifications of this domain have come into vogue, and they might later be rejected or discarded for better ones (Brown, 2007). Be that as it may, it is no denying the fact that personality factors are an important factor in language learning since the concept of language is very much integrated with our emotions and feelings which have direct bearing on our personalities (Arnold, 1999). A myriad of studies in psychology and the related areas have dealt with the nature of personality factors and learning, including language learning, and so many relationships have been found between them; however, this area has not come to a point of certainty, and further research and investigations are due in this regard. The uncertainty in this area is clear from a comprehensive review of the studies on the relationship between personality factors, including self-esteem, self-efficacy, inhibition, risk taking, anxiety, empathy, extroversion, and motivation, and different aspects of language learning by Brown (2007).

One of the major aspects of personality factors is personality itself which is defined as “an individual’s unique, relatively consistent pattern of thinking, feeling, and behaving” (Sdorow, 1998, p. 442). There are different approaches to personality namely the *psychoanalytic approach*, the *behavioral approach*, the *cognitive approach*, the *humanistic approach*, the *biopsychological approach*, and the *dispositional approach*.

The psychoanalytic approach to personality has its roots in Sigmund Freud’s psychosexual theory, in which human beings are believed to move through several psychosexual stages of development, thereby forming their personalities. Based on this theory, biology is the basis of psychological processes. The division of mind into conscious, preconscious, and unconscious levels, distinguishing between the personality structures, namely the id, the ego, and

the superego, and the defense mechanisms are the other key issues in this approach to personality.

In the behavioral approach to personality, no use was seen by B. F. Skinner for concepts such as biological predispositions and personality traits. He believed that what is called personality is nothing but a person's unique pattern of behavior bound by the situation the person is in and by similar situations he has been in.

The cognitive approach to personality, influenced by figures such as George Kelly, has a constructivist nature, in which the influence of thoughts on behavior and personality is recognized. In this approach, human beings are considered as lay scientists who test hypotheses or personal constructs about the social reality, and the formation of a person's characteristic pattern of personal constructs determines the person's personality.

The humanistic approach is mainly influenced by Abraham Maslow and Carl Roger's theories. According to Maslow's self-actualization theory, personality is formed to the extent that one develops all his/her potentials and meets the hierarchy of needs. Roger also believed that the extent to which there is a congruence between one's self and one's experience determines one's well-being. This view was later modified to the notion that this congruence should exist between the actual self-, the ideal self, and the ought self.

In the biopsychological approach to personality, individuals are believed to be of a temperament or a most characteristic emotional state which is inherited genetically. In addition, Sheldon's constitutional theory holds that different physiques or somatotypes generate different temperaments in individuals by calling for particular behaviors from the person and from others to the person, depending on the attractiveness level of a particular physique.

Among these approaches to personality, the dispositional approach has received most attention among psychologists for the reason that this approach assumes relatively enduring personality characteristics called traits and types which lead to consistent behavior and feelings across situations (Sdorow, 1998). The dispositional approach has led to the construction of many famous personality tests which have been most employed by psychologists to investigate the relationship between personality and other psychological constructs. Examples of these tests are Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), 16 Personality Factor questionnaire, Eysenck's three-factor personality theory, and finally Costa and McCrae's five-factor theory, also known as the Big Five.

## 2. Costa & McCrae's Big Five

All the above-mentioned personality tests with their underlying theories are with their shortcomings as the nature of personality is so abstract; however, most personality psychologists have voted for Costa and McCrae's five-factor theory since cross-cultural support and stability over time have been observed for their theory and test (Feist & Feist, 2006). Traits, such as Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992) could be mentioned as some of those personality traits the roles of which have less than often been investigated in language learning. Costa and McCrae have done the most recent research in the area of personality traits by utilizing every major personality theory, and their work has resulted in a five factor theory of personality, also known as the Big Five, which comprises the abovementioned traits. Their theory of personality has undergone different validation studies and has been found to incorporate traits in other theories of personality especially the 16 factors in Cattell's model and the three factors in Eysenck's (Giordano, 2008).

### 2.1. The Big Five in Detail

The personality dimensions or domains of the Big Five include: (1) Neuroticism (2) Extraversion, (3) Openness to experience, (4) Agreeableness, and (5) Conscientiousness. Each of these factors measures six subordinate facets, a detailed list of which could be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*The Big Five Dimensions and Facets*

Dimensions	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
Facets	Anxiety	Warmth	Fantasy	Trust	Competence
	Hostility	Gregariousness	Aesthetics	Straightforwardness	Order
	Depression	Assertiveness	Feelings	Altruism	Dutifulness
	Self-Consciousness	Activity	Actions	Compliance	Achievement Striving
	Impulsiveness	Excitement Seeking	Ideas	Modesty	Self-Discipline
	Vulnerability to Stress	Positive Emotion	Values	Tender mindedness	Deliberation

To understand personality at the broadest level, it is important to know in detail what each domain entails in its construct. As regards Neuroticism, while warning that in the Big Five it should not be viewed as a psychopathological measure, Costa and McCrae (1992) associate negative feelings and disruptive emotions such as fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, guilt, and disgust with the N domain. This is to say that those high in N are susceptible to psychological distress, and as a result, they have the inclination to show irrationality and less ability to control impulses and deal with stressful situations. In contrast, it is maintained, "Individuals who score low on Neuroticism are emotionally stable. They are usually calm, even-tempered, and relaxed, and they are able to face stressful situations without becoming upset or rattled" (P. 13).

Next in the Big Five is Extraversion which is believed to have more to do with sociability. As Costa and McCrae (1992) explain, extraverts tend to like people and prefer large groups and gatherings. However, there is more to Extraversion than sociability. In this regard, Costa and McCrae explain, "extraverts are also assertive, active, and talkative. They like excitement and stimulation and tend to be cheerful in disposition. They are upbeat, energetic, and optimistic" (p. 15). Extraversion is one of those personality traits the opposing extreme of which on the Big Five scales does not mean its real opposite but rather its absence. By referring to the well-supported evidence in the literature, Costa and McCrae assert that a conceptual advancement on the five-factor model of personality is that contrary to expectations, introverts are not the polar opposite of extroverts who are typically characterized as energetic and high-spirited. It is not at all the case that introverts are not unhappy, pessimistic, followers, sluggish, and shy, but rather reserved, independent, even-paced, and just preferring to be alone.

Another theoretical characterization of Extraversion that can be considered supplementary to the above definition is the one by Matthews (1997) who believes that extraverts are superior to introverts as far as some cognitive patterning aspects are concerned. These aspects are divided attention, resistance to distraction, and retrieval from short-term memory.

Openness as measured by the NEO-PI-R is the most widely-researched trait among its other measures. Costa and McCrae (1992) name some dispositions which are believed to exist typically in open individuals. These dispositions include curiosity about both inner and outer worlds, having experientially richer lives, attraction to novel ideas and unconventional values in ethics, politics, and society, keener experiencing of positive and negative emotions in

comparison to closed individuals, and willingness to question authority. The above tendencies may hint at some unprincipledness in individuals high in Openness; however, Costa and McCrae warn that

These tendencies, however, do not mean that they are unprincipled. Openness may sound healthier or more mature to many psychologists, but the value of openness or closedness depends on the requirements of the situation, and both open and closed individuals perform useful functions in society. (p. 15)

Moreover, McCrae (1987, cited in Costa & McCrae, 1992) found that Openness is specially related to divergent thinking as an aspect of intelligence which contributes to creativity.

If closedness is to be considered as the opposite of Openness, Costa and McCrae believe that closed individuals or those who score low on Openness have conventional behavior and conservative outlook; however, they hasten to add that “although they tend to be socially and politically conservative, closed people should not be viewed as authoritarians. Closedness does not impose hostile intolerance or authoritarian aggression. (Costa & McCrae, 1992, p. 15). It is further commented that although the form of psychological defense may depend on the level of openness and closedness, no evidence suggests that closedness itself is a defensive psychological reaction. Closed individuals are, in fact, only of narrower scope and less intense interests.

Agreeableness, which is to do with the interpersonal tendencies as is the case with Extraversion, is defined as altruism, that is to say, sympathy and eagerness to help others but in the hope that others are reciprocally helpful too. On the other hand, disagreeableness is believed to be associated with antagonism, egocentricity, and skepticism about others’ intentions (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Although Agreeableness may sound to be both socially and psychologically more favorable and result in more popularity, Costa and McCrae explain that willingness to fight for one’s rights and interests, which is necessary in situations such as courtroom or battlefield, may be quite a virtue which is not frequently seen by agreeable individuals but rather disagreeable ones

Conscientiousness, which is mainly concerned with the ability to control impulses and desires, entails some characteristics which are asserted by Costa and McCrae (1992) to be necessary for academic and occupational achievement. They even emphasize that outstanding musicians and athletes’ success is most probably due to dispositions resulting from Conscientiousness. These dispositions include scrupulous punctuality and reliability, which, if

taken to extremes, can lead to excessive fastidiousness, too much neatness, and workaholic behavior. On the other hand, low levels of this trait may predispose one to being less exacting in applying moral principles. Given this point, Costa and McCrae, however, warn that low Conscientiousness should not necessarily be associated with lack of moral principles in individuals since in general low Conscientiousness people “are more relaxed in working towards their goals” (Costa & McCrae, 1992, p. 16).

Detailed explanations of all the 30 facets of the Big Five are also provided in Costa and McCrae’s (1992) manual to NEO-PI-R and NEO-FFI, the reading of which is worthwhile for its giving insight into the exact interpretation of the scores obtained from the use of the questionnaires.

## **2.2. The Big Five Inventories**

There are two inventories for measuring the Big Five, one called The Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R), and the other called The NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI). Both of these inventories are scored on a Likert scale of 1 to 5. The difference between the two lies in the fact that the NEO-PI-R consists of 240 items which allows a comprehensive assessment of adult personality on all the above-mentioned personality dimensions and relevant facets; however, the NEO-FFI consists of 60 items, 12 items for each of the personality dimensions, useful when time is an issue, and global information about personality is required. Both of these two inventories are of two forms: form S for self-rating and form R for observer-rating (i.e. ratings by peer and spouse) to validate the results of S form. The NEO-FFI was later derived from the very NEO-PI-R via the validimax method (a factor analysis variant) and correlation, which turned out to be acceptably valid, taking into account that shorter scales usually tend to trade precision for time and convenience (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Comprehensive technical information and statistics about the validity of the NEO-PI-R and NEO-FFI are available in the manual of the inventories (Costa & McCrae, 1992), an account of which is out of the scope of this paper.

## **2.3. Related Studies on Personality Traits**

In different fields such as counseling, clinical psychology, psychiatry, behavioral medicine, health psychology, vocational counseling, industrial/organizational psychology, and more importantly in personality research itself, many studies have investigated the relationship

between the dimensions of the Big Five and different variables as diverse as academic achievement (O'Connor & Paunonen, 2007), career assessment (Costa, McCrae, & Kay, 1995), information seeking behavior (Tidwell & Sias, 2005), nationalities (Schmitt, Allik, McCrae, & Benet-Martínez, 2007; Allik & McCrae, 2004), management behaviors (Johnson, Francis, & Burns, 2007), life satisfaction (Schimmack, Oishi, Furr, & Funder, 2004), scientific and artistic creativity (Feist, 1998), and bullying in childhood (Tani, Greenman, Schneider, Fregoso, 2003).

Specifically, in the field of educational psychology, Openness and Conscientiousness have been of particular interest. As mentioned before, McCrae (1987, cited in Costa & McCrae, 1992) has found Openness strongly related with divergent thinking which is by itself a contributor to creativity. Moreover, Gough (1987, cited in Costa & McCrae, 1992) has found Openness to be correlated with Achievement via Independence which is itself a predictor of college-level achievement as found by McCrae, Costa and Piedmont (1991, cited in Costa & McCrae, 1992); however, Griffin and Hesketh (2004), after a review of recent studies on the relationship between personality and job performance, claim that Openness to experience is the least predictor of job performance among other personality traits in the Big Five. As regards, Conscientiousness, research evidence suggests that this domain of personality leads to higher academic achievement (Digman & Takemoto-Chock, 1991, cited in Costa & McCrae, 1992).

In spite of the increasing investigation of the Big Five in the above-mentioned fields and areas, the field of language studies, and specifically second language learning/acquisition, teaching, and assessment seem not to have seen many studies involving the use of the Big Five. To name a very few studies in this regard, one can name MacIntyre and Charos (1996, cited in Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, & Daley, 2000) who found that all of the Big Five's dimensions were significant predictors of language-related attitudes. These attitudes are also found to be predictors of motivation and willingness to communicate, which are themselves directly related to foreign language learning achievement and success. On the other hand, Bailey et al. (2000) cite Ehrman (1994), Oxford (1995), and Daley et al. (1997) as reporting that learning style and/or personality variables, of course measured by tests other than the Big Five, are weakly or indirectly related to foreign language achievement. More recently, Ockey (2009) conducted a study to investigate the effect of only one of the facets of the Big Five, that is assertiveness, on an oral language exam scores. More specifically, the purpose was to investigate the extent to which assertive and non-assertive testees' scores on an oral exam were affected by the levels of

assertiveness of their group members. From the analyses, it was found that assertive test takers were given higher scores than expected when grouped with only non-assertive test takers and lower scores than expected when grouped with only assertive test takers. The reason for this was clearly as a result of a sort of comparison between the proficiencies of group members which were themselves under the influence of assertiveness and non-assertiveness.

Finally, as regards Neuroticism, Tamir (2005) found that those high in Neuroticism can choose to increase their level of worry when they are expecting to perform demanding tasks. Moreover, he found that this preferred increase in worry level may be also beneficial to performance.

### **2.3.1. An Example of Language-Related Study on the Big Five**

The personality traits are in general studied in terms of what other behaviors or degrees of performance could be predicted from individuals with different degrees of traits. Therefore, the first step in conducting studies on the Big Five and language learning /teaching is to have a full understanding of the Big Five personality traits and the behaviors expected to be caused by these traits. The next step is to hypothesize about a particular language learning/teaching behavior or performance that could result from a person with some degrees of the traits. Clearly, a comprehensive review of the literature can be very illuminating in this step. Finally, the actual data needs to be collected to test the hypotheses.

To have a better grasp of these steps, one recent study (Siyyari, 2011) on the Big Five and language learning and assessment is referred to in the following. This study aimed to investigate the Big Five and how they might influence the accuracy of language learners' self- and peer-assessment, and finally how they might influence the extent to which learners might improve in writing performance and accuracy of self-rating and peer-rating after the practice of self- and peer-assessment.

Beside the need for further research in the area of language learning/assessment and the Big Five personality traits, this study was motivated by observing the fact that the definitions of the Big Five personality traits and the resultant liabilities and characteristics seemed to suggest that these personality traits are very probable to affect the accuracy of self-assessment and peer-assessment. For instance, Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness in Costa and McCrae's theory of personality are believed to be associated

with several instances of behavior. For instance, reliability has been argued to be the result of Conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992). If so, it seems that this characteristic could be hypothesized to play a role in the extent to which one is subjective or objective in self- and peer-assessment. Therefore, the empirical investigation of the effect of these personality traits on self- and peer-assessment accuracy was found intriguing enough to let this study go under way. It should be noted that this study involved a translation review and factor analysis of the NEO-FFI a full report of which as well as the final results of the study will be presented in the upcoming works.

#### **2.4. The Big Five Validation**

The review above shows that the Big Five has not been studied extensively in language learning/teaching. One main reason for this matter lies in the fact that this theory is still going under validation studies which day by day result in new findings. One aspect of validation which is of great significance especially in personality traits tests is cross-cultural validation. Several studies have provided enough evidence on the stability and robustness of the Big Five across different cultures such as Chinese (McCrae, Costa, & Yik, 1996; Yik & Bond, 1993), Estonian & Finnish (Pulver, Allik, Pulkkinen, & Hämäläinen, 1995), Filipino and French (McCrae, Costa, del Pilar, Rolland, & Parker, 1998), India (Lodhi, Deo, & Belhekar, 2002), Portuguese (Lima, 2002), Russian (Martin, Oryol, Rukavishnikov, & Senin, 2000), South Korean (Piedmont & Chae, 1997), Turkish (Gülgöz, 2002), Vietnamese (Leininger, 2002), sub-Saharan cultures like Zimbabwe (Piedmont, Bain, McCrae, & Costa, 2002), etc. (Revised NEO Personality Inventory, n.d.). However, there is not much evidence on the robustness of the Big Five in many other cultures including the Iranian culture. It can be predicted that if such evidence is found for other countries and cultures, there will be more and more studies in different fields including language teaching /learning involving the Big Five.

Evidently, an integral part of every cross-cultural validation of a psychological test such as personality tests is its translation into the target language. To do so to the NEO-FFI or NEO-PI-R, some guidelines have been suggested by the developers of these tests, a recap of which can be illuminating for those interested to undertake the translation of these tests. These guidelines are as follows:

1. The first point to note in translating the Big Five inventories is that initiation of any formal translation or research activity regarding the Big Five inventories calls for a signed agreement with Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc. (PAR) since they own the copyright to the instruments. Hence, contacting them through their website is a must.
2. In translating the items of the questionnaires, retaining the psychological sense of the items is highly important; therefore, literal, word-for-word translation of the items should not be a priority. To do so, it is recommended that one facet be considered at a time, then enough insight be gained into the definition of the construct, and finally all the items related to the facet be examined and translated as a set.
3. A second individual, unfamiliar with the instrument, should then be found to have a back-translation of the items into English. This process accompanied by revisions should be repeated as far as satisfactory back-translations are gained.
4. A useful (but not essential) intermediate step is a check on the internal consistency of the translated items. The translation can be administered to a group of about 100 subjects and item-total correlations can also be calculated for each facet. Any items which do not correlate significantly in the keyed direction with the facet to which they are assigned should be carefully re-examined, and the translation may need to be revised.
5. The translation must then be validated on a sufficiently large sample to provide normative data (minimum N = 100 males, 100 females) in an adult or college-age sample. Validity information might include (a) correlations with established local instruments or previously-validated translations of other instruments; (b) correlations with observer ratings on a third-person version of the translation (a Form R translation); (c) if the subjects are bilingual, correlations on the same subjects given the English and translated versions a week or more apart; or (d) other forms of construct validation. Obviously, the more information obtained, the better.

(McCrae, personal communication, November 14, 2008)

### **3. Conclusion**

In this article, it was tried to raise call for more Big Five-related empirical research in the broad area of language specifically language learning/teaching. This was done in view of the fact that recent developments in the field of psychology have led to increased validity evidence for the five-factor theory of personality, and as a result, the past decade has seen frequent employment of this theory and resultant inventories in different fields other than language learning/teaching.

Specifically, Big Five-related studies have not been often conducted in some cultures including the Iranian culture and context since validation studies involving construct validation of this theory and valid translation of the relevant inventories are rare. It is, therefore, recommended that researchers, especially those who have access to large groups of participants, embark on studies to validate the Big Five in different languages and cultures. Not only will this contribute to the science of psychology, but also it will pave the way for conducting more Big Five-focused studies in the field of language learning/teaching. If the validation and translation steps are accomplished, then researchers should scrutinize the construct of the Big Five to gain insightful knowledge about behaviors expected from these personality traits. Then different language learning/teaching behaviors such as the ones mentioned in the above study could be studied to see if they have any relationship with the Big Five, and how the Big Five might affect them.

## References

- Allik, J., & McCrae, R.R. (2004). Towards a geography of personality traits: patterns of profiles across 36 cultures. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 35*, 13-28.
- Arnold, J. (Ed.). (1999). *Affect in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. New York: Pearson Longman.
- Bailey, P., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Daley, Ch. E. (2000). Correlates of anxiety at three stages of the foreign language learning process. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 19*, 474–490.
- Costa, P. T., & McCrae, R. (1992). *Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) and NEO Five-factor Inventory (NEO-FFI): Professional manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources Inc.
- Costa, P. T., McCrae, R. R., Jr., & Kay, G. G. (1995). Persons, places, and personality: Career assessment using the revised NEO Personality Inventory. *Journal of Career Assessment, 3*, 123-139.
- Feist, G. J. (1998). A meta-analysis of the impact of personality on scientific and artistic creativity. *Personality and Social Psychological Review, 2*, 290-309.
- Feist, J., & Feist, G. J. (2006). *Theories of personality (6<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Giordano, P. J. (2008). Personality psychology. In S. F. Davis, & W. Buskist (eds.), *21st century*

- psychology: A reference handbook* (pp. 402-412). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Griffin, B., & Hesketh, B. (2004). Why openness to experience is not a good predictor of job performance. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 12*, 243-251.
- Johnson, T. W., Francis, S. K., & Burns, L. D. (2007). Appearance management behavior and the five-factor model of personality. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal, 25*(3), 230-43.
- Matthews, G. (1997) Extraversion, emotion and performance: A cognitive-adaptive model. In G. Matthews (Ed.), *Cognitive science perspectives on personality and emotion* (pp. 339-442). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Ockey, G. J. (2009). *The effects of group members' personalities on a test taker's L2 group oral discussion test scores. Language Testing, 26*(2), 161-186.
- O'Connor, M. C., & Paunonen, S. V. (2007). Big Five personality predictors of post-secondary academic performance. *Personality and Individual Differences, 43*, 971-990.
- Revised NEO Personality Inventory (n.d.). In *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved April 10, 2007, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revised\\_NEO\\_Personality\\_Inventory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revised_NEO_Personality_Inventory)
- Schimmack, U., Oishi, S., Furr, F. M., & Funder, D. C. (2004). Personality and life satisfaction: A facet level analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 30*, 1062-1075.
- Schmitt, D. P., Allik, J., McCrae, R.R., & Benet-Martínez, V. (2007). The geographic distribution of Big Five personality traits: Patterns and profiles of human self-description across 56 nations. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 38*, 173-212
- Siydari, M. (2011). On the cross relationship between self/peer-assessment rating accuracy and personality traits, and the contribution to writing performance (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Allame Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.
- Sdorow, L. M. (1998). *Psychology (4<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Tamir, M. (2005). Don't worry, be happy? Neuroticism, trait-consistent affect regulation, and performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 89*, 449-461.
- Tani, F., Greenman, P. S., Schneider, B. H., & Fregoso, M. (2003). Bullying and the Big Five: A study of childhood personality and participant roles in bullying incidents. *School Psychology International, 24*, 131-146.
- Tidwell, M., & Sias, P. (2005). Personality and employee information-seeking: Understanding how traits influence information-seeking behaviors. *Journal of Business Communication, 42*, 51-78.

## Title

# L1 and L2 Language Stores Dependency and Their Connection Facilitation through Translation

## Authors

**Amir Reza Asiyaban (M.A)**

Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch, Shiraz, Iran

**Morteza Yamini (Ph.D.)**

Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran

**Ghaffar Tajalli (M.A)**

Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch, Shiraz,, Iran

## Biodata

**Amir Reza Asiyaban** holds an M.A in TEFL teaching preparatory courses for M.A examinations and working as an English instructor in different institutes in Shiraz. He has published and presented some articles and books. His main areas of interest are translation, educational psychology, teaching strategies, learning strategies and motivation.

**Mortaza Yamini** is an assistant professor who taught for 35 years at Shiraz University before he retired a few years ago. He is still pursuing his teaching profession, offering some graduate courses at Shiraz University and the Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch. He has also published a good number of articles and books on second language learning and teaching, testing and other areas of applied linguistics in local and international journals. Dr Yamini is now an active member of the Center of Excellence in L2 Reading and Writing, Shiraz University.

**Ghaffar Tajalli** holds an M.A in TEFL and is retired now. He is presently a lecturer at Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch. He is the author of several textbooks and has published some papers nationally and internationally. His main areas of interest are phonetics, phonology and translation.

## Abstract

Mental processes in retrieving words in diverse languages are quite complicated. Finding out if storage of languages in mind is done separately, in related forms, or in an overlapping manner has been a matter of controversy. This study was an effort to substantiate the connectivity of language stores in mind in general and mitigating

their mutual relationship in particular. To this end, eighty-eight intermediate EFL students (44 males and 44 females) were asked to participate in the study. They were divided into control and experimental groups. Twenty words were taught to the students and for the experimental group only translations of the words and for the control group L2 definitions of the words were provided. The data were gathered through a written test and an interview. A two-way ANOVA run on the data revealed that the experimental groups were more adroit at both the test and the interview. This means that translation facilitated vocabulary learning. Thus, the dependency of the language stores in mind can be confirmed.

**Keywords:** Vocabulary learning, Translation, L1 and L2 connection, Language store dependency, L1 and L2 interface

## 1. Introduction

Vocabulary learning is central to language acquisition, whether the language is first (L1), second (L2), or foreign (FL). The mental processes involved in vocabulary learning, such as memory, storage, and retrieval are but complicated processes and have attracted the attention of many researchers.

For a long time it has been a matter of controversy to find out how a second language learner learns a language, that is, how a learner stores two or more language systems and their subsystems such as grammar, vocabulary, phonology, etc, in his or her mind (Cook, 2001). Various alternatives have been suggested and those related to vocabulary are reviewed below.

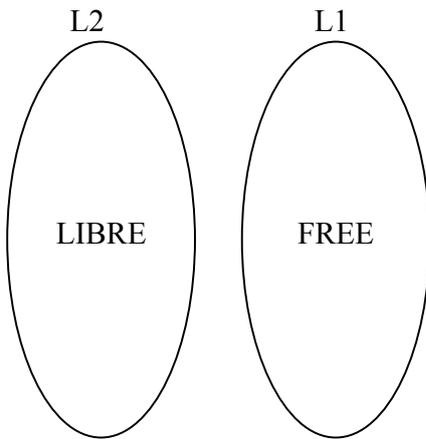
**1.1 SEPARATE STORE:** The vocabulary of the second language is kept entirely separate from that of the first. For example, an English person learning the word "libre" in French keeps it completely separate from the English word "free".

**1.2 L2 STORE DEPENDENT ON L1 STORE:** The two word-stores are tightly linked so that L2 words are always related to L1 words. In other words, to think of the French word "libre", one first thinks of the English word "free". It is this alternative that is under study focus in the present study.

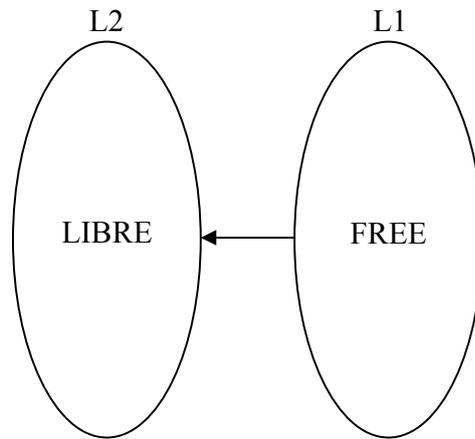
**1.3 OVERLAPPING STORES:** There is an overlapping system so that some words are shared, some not; "libre" in French might be associated with English "liberty" or "liberal".

**1.4 SINGLE STORE:** There is a single overall word-store for both languages; French "libre" and English "free" are stored together.

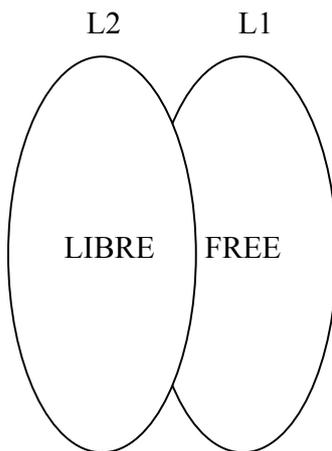
**Storing the vocabulary of two languages in mind**



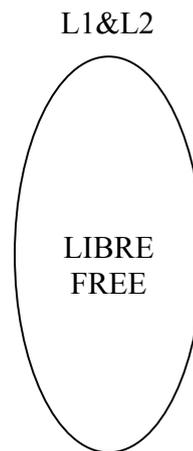
Separate L1 & L2 Stores



L2 Store dependent on L1 store



Overlapping L1&L2 Stores



Single L1 & L2 stores

The storage of a particular word can be pertinent to one of the above-mentioned categories.

The main concern of the present study is to see how much L2 depends on L1; in other words, in

learning a new vocabulary item, how much does one think in one's mother tongue in order to match the L2 meaning with its L1 counterpart.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

This study is an attempt at finding out if exposure to L1 meanings of words bolsters L1 and L2 language store connection. In other words, since pupils mostly try to translate the L2 words into their L1 equivalents, does giving L1 translation of the words expedite and facilitate vocabulary learning by strengthening the link between L1 and L2 storage systems? As such, the study is concerned with the following research questions:

*RQ 1:* Does translation strengthen the link between L1 and L2 storage systems?

*RQ 2:* Does gender difference influence L2 language store and L1 store dependence?

## **3. Review of the Related Literature**

A central question in research on bilingualism concerns the extent to which the processing of lexical representations in the two languages occurs independently or interactively. In the case of interactive processing, a further concern is whether the interaction occurs bidirectionally (i.e., processing of representations in the first language (L1) affects processing of representations in the second language (L2) and vice versa). Furthermore, the lexical representations in the two languages are stored together or separately.

The contrasting views have been tested predominately with tasks that measure the speed of bilinguals' recognition or translation of individual L2 and L1 words. For example, studies employing translation tasks have shown that, during the early stages of L2 learning, translation of L2 words into L1 words is faster than translation of L1 words into L2 words. However, as proficiency in L2 increases, translation in both directions becomes equally fast.

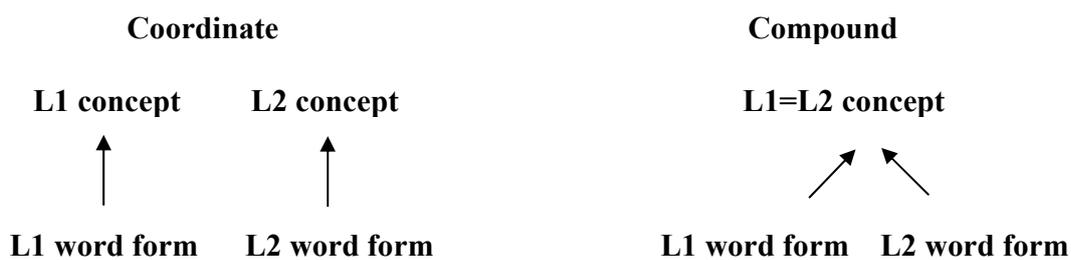
Kroll and colleagues (e.g., Dufour & Kroll, 1995; Kroll & Stewart, 1994) propose that the initially faster translation from L2 to L1 is due to strong associative links between lexical representations in the two lexicons, which arise from an early emphasis on retrieving the meanings of L2 words by translating them into their L1 equivalents. However, as experience with L2 increases, direct associative connections between L2 lexical representations and their

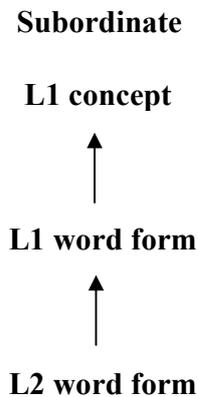
concepts become stronger, resulting in independence of processing in L2 lexicon (e.g., Altarriba & Mathis, 1997; Frenck Mestre & Prince, 1997).

Most models of bilingual memory/ organization (Weinreich, 1963, Potter et al. 1984) assume two types of bilingual word processing: a lexically mediated "route" exploiting direct word-form links between the two languages and a conceptually mediated "route", in which word processing is effected through a common conceptual representation.

The issues that have been addressed in the research about bilingual lexicon and translation processing foster the extent of interface between L1 and L2 in lexical processing what has been termed co-ordinate vs. compound organization, or concept mediation vs. word association hypothesis ( de Groot, 1993:31, Weinreich, 1963, Potter et al, 1984). The above models of bilingual memory/organization assume two levels of presentation, one lexical and one conceptual. The lexical level is assumed to reflect word-form recognition processes, whereas the conceptual level reflects semantic processes ( Korll & de Groot, 1997; Lee, 1997).

Weinreich (1963), in the light of Saussurian tradition, outlines three possible organizations in the bilingual lexicon as compound, coordinate, and subordinate (see Fig. 1 below). The basic differences among the three configurations can be envisaged as the differences in the number of conceptual systems, and the way that the system is accessed (de Groot, 1993: 27).





**Figure 1. Weinreich's tripartition of lexical knowledge in Bilinguals**

The subordinate type according to Weinreich (1963) develops when one language is mastered and the second is in the process of being learned. For this type Weinreich (1963, p.70) maintains: "the referents of the signs in the language being learned may then not be actual "things" but "equivalent" signs of the language already known". Thus, to an English speaker learning Russian, the signified of the form may at first not be the object but the English word. Weinreich sketchily discusses the possibility that a bilingual's lexical structure need not be completely coordinate, compound, or subordinate.

**Coordinate bilingual:** have separate, language-specific meanings associated with L1 & L2 (2 sets of meaning + 2 linguistic systems) L1 & L2 used separately in childhood e.g., "Mommy/Daddy language", home/ school language etc.

**Compound bilinguals:** have one meaning system for L1 & L2 (fused representations) but 2 different means of expression (1 meaning set + 2 linguistic systems) mixing L1 & L2, using them in the same environment/with the same person.

**Subordinate bilinguals:** low-proficiency: the weaker language is interpreted through the stronger language.

**Something bilinguals commonly do:** a) they usually mix L1 & L2 b) they keep L1 & L2 separate c) they translate d) they experience interference in many cases.

## **4. Methodology**

In recent years, vocabulary has received a lot of emphasis in different areas of linguistics, with corpus linguistics being one of them. Due to the advances in these fields, it was possible to develop quantitative approaches to the study of lexis with direct relevance to foreign language teaching. Frequency lists and lexical analyses of written and spoken corpora established clear and precise lexical goals for foreign language training. These approaches also gave rise to a new generation of tests estimating the vocabulary size of foreign language learners.

At the same time, psycholinguistic insights into the nature of vocabulary knowledge have enriched the depth of lexical command. They indicate that knowing a word in a foreign language is not an all or nothing phenomenon. The lexical command goes through several stages from the recognition of a word's form to the ability to use it in an uncontrolled productive task.

In brief, the goal of this current study is to explore the relationship between L1 translation of particular words and L1 and L2 language stores in mind in general and mitigating the process of lexical access in particular.

### **4.1 Participants**

The participants of this study included intermediate students of English. Since the intended words were checked to be intermediate, the participants were thus selected so that they would be able to perform in a satisfactory way.

This study was carried out on males and females. Each group consisted of 44 pupils who, in turn, were divided into two "experimental" and "control" groups. Thus there were four groups as follows:

- female experimental group consisting of 22 students
- female control group consisting of 22 students
- male experimental group consisting of 22 students
- male control group consisting of 22 students

### **4.2 Instruments**

The measurement devices used in this study consisted of one written test and one interview. Since the goal of this study was to find out whether L1 translation of the words bolsters the relationship between L1 and L2 stores in mind, it was obligatory to have a test of "free active

vocabulary" in the first place. Following the vocabulary test, there came the interview which aimed at understanding the proportion and level of dependency of the L1 and L2 stores in terms of providing L1 equivalents of the words. Thus a researcher-made test of "free active vocabulary" was made.

### **4.3 Procedures**

Twenty words, under certain phases, were selected to be taught to students. In teaching the selected words, experimental groups were taught the English items along with their L1 translation (only translation), whereas, the control groups were taught the intended vocabulary items in the target language. The reason for administering the test prior to the interview was to find out whether giving L1 equivalents of the words contributes to their retrieving from L1 to L2. It is worth mentioning that in teaching the control and experimental groups, the same teaching framework was implemented; that is, a consistent set of procedures was utilized to teach the words. This concordance was of great importance to alter teaching variability caused by different methods into identical ones. Moreover, the teaching of the words was done in the first 5 to 10 minutes of each class when the pupils were fresh and ready without any distracters to be included. It is necessary to say that since 20 items were chosen to be taught, teaching 5 of them in each session would suffice.

After four sessions of instruction, in the fifth one, students were given the corresponding tests. In the first test, "uncontrolled productive vocabulary", an overhead projector was used. In this phase learners, in all of the four groups, were shown the pictures on the screen one by one. They were given enough time to write down the name of what they saw on separate pieces of papers with certain blanks that had been prepared in advance. In this test, spelling did not have an effect on scoring.

In the next step, those two tests were followed by a personal interview. The interviewee was provided with the English word he/she had correctly responded in the "uncontrolled productive" test, and was asked to utter the meaning of the word in his/her native language. By paying a little heed in this phase, one would understand that the procedure followed in the interview was almost the opposite of that followed in the first test. To put it differently, in the first test the students were required to produce the English words after being exposed to the corresponding illustration, whereas, in the interview, they were asked to produce the L1 equivalents of the words. Note that

in the "free active vocabulary" test of the experimental group the instruction of the words was through L1 translation. That is why the production of the words in the test differs from that in the interview. The principle behind this was to scrutinize the relationship between word storage in L1 and L2 as was mentioned in the first chapter. In this case, we would, to some extent, find out whether L1 and L2 depend on one another or overlap partially.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis software utilized for the corresponding data gathered in the test and interview was SPSS package. Due to having both genders (males and females) and two categories of groups (experimental and control) as independent variables, a two-way ANOVA was run.

#### 4.5 Results and Discussion

After running a Two-way ANOVA the following results were obtained:

**Table 1. ANOVA results on the Interview scores**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Corrected Model</b>	272.843(a)	3	90.948	3.302	.024
<b>Intercept</b>	28208.253	1	28208.253	1024.032	.000
<b>Group</b>	131.223	1	131.223	4.764	<b>.032</b>
<b>Gender</b>	38.544	1	38.544	1.399	.240
<b>group* gender</b>	103.076	1	103.076	3.742	.056
<b>Error</b>	2313.886	84	27.546		
<b>Total</b>	30794.983	88			
<b>Corrected Total</b>	2586.729	87			

#### **Dependent Variable: Interview**

By paying heed to the significance value corresponding to the independent variables "gender" and "group", one can understand that for the variable "group" the significance magnitude is .032 which is smaller than .05 ( $p < .05$ ). Moreover, for the variable "gender" the difference is not significant due to the value of .240 which is greater than .05 ( $P > .05$ ). To understand which group performed better, we can refer to the descriptive statistics in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Group Statistics for the Interview scores**

	<b>group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Std. Error Mean</b>
<b>IN</b>	control	44	<b>16.6827</b>	6.86573	1.03505
	experimental	44	<b>19.1250</b>	3.15699	.47593

As Table 2 indicates, the mean of the "control" group has been calculated as 16.68 and the mean in the other group (experimental) is 19.12. Based on the ANOVA results that indicated that there was a significant difference between the groups, one can conclude that the experimental group outperformed the control group.

As was already mentioned, for some learners of English, L2 use depends on L1 language store. That is, if one is about to use a word in one's conversation, one should first think of that word in one's mother tongue. This can substantiate the foundation of translation strategy in teaching/learning tasks.

By referring to data obtained from the two-way ANOVA in Table 1 and paying heed to the independent variables, one understands that the difference is not significant for the independent variable "gender" ( $p > .05$ ). That is to say, different performances of participants of the study were not attributed to their genders. Therefore, the null hypothesis of "gender influence" is retained.

On the contrary, for the independent variable "group" the difference is significant due to the p-value of .032 which is smaller than .05 ( $p < .05$ ). This indicates that one of the groups of the study performed better than the other one. By referring to Table 2 and considering mean scores of both "experimental" and "control" groups, one finds out that the "experimental" group with the mean score of 19.12 performed more successfully on the interview than the "control" group with the mean score of 16.68. The above explanation provides a positive answer to our first research question.

Moreover, the above findings suggest that the "experimental" group whose instruction was through L1 translation was more able in retrieving the L1 meanings of the words. Comparatively, the "control" group could not retrieve L1 equivalents of the words so well as the "experimental" group did. This point illustrates that, in spite of the fact that L2 learners *commonly* use their L1 language stores in making use of L2, translation strategy can encourage, reinforce and facilitate this phenomenon. That is to say, if translation is used in vocabulary instruction tasks, the

percentage of L1 and L2 dependency increases. In other words, if L1 equivalents of words are provided, then learners will have more access to them in their lexicon in order to translate them into their L2 counterparts to be used in their communications. In this respect, L2 language store is *more* dependent on L1 store than when the mother tongue is not used in teaching vocabulary.

It is worth mentioning that if one takes a more careful look at Table 2, they will find out that in both groups (experimental and control), pupils could retrieve the L1 equivalents of the words. To put it differently, in both groups retrieving took place, but with different performances. This point indicates that normally the process of thinking in mother tongue (L1 and L2 dependence) is being done in, EFL contexts. However, this phenomenon can be facilitated, encouraged and enhanced by exposing the learners to L1 equivalents of the words.

## **5. Conclusion**

According to the results of the study it can be concluded that not only translation of the words would not be a pitfall in one's instruction but can also be an upside of a teacher's teaching. By paying keen heed to the teaching process one might find out that in teaching vocabulary phase of the class pupils plea indirectly for the meaning of the words in their native language. On the other hand, *most* of the time, to be conservative, students translate the words being taught into their L1 in their minds. Thus it would not be out of proportion to help students match the meaning of the words being taught to their L1 equivalents which in turn would save time and consolidate the relationship between L1 and L2 language stores. This consolidation would assist students to have much faster access to the words in a communication task or any other participation in a second language use. To put it differently, one of the most important reasons that students cannot reach optimum fluency and proficiency even in some advanced classes resides in the fact that they lack the equivalents of the sentences or words which they are translating from L1 to L2.

Hence, it is proved that the two stores are interdependent. Giving translation of the words fosters access to lexis in terms of lexical retrieving. Thus, it can be conclude that the use of L1 translation is to the learners' benefit. This in turn substantiates the L1 and L2 language stores dependency.

Now, we can come to this conclusion that, although pupils commonly and naturally use their L1 stores, an instructor could help them do so by providing L1 translations of the words which in turn, lubricates the path for moving the words between storages.

As the last words, it is worth mentioning that going to extremes in either using L1 or L2 would be harmful. That is, the incorporation of L1 in learning a second language, despite all ostensible benefits, has the potential for endangering accuracy, if students rely *too much* on L1 and if teachers choose wrong implementations as unprincipled use of L1 can have long-lasting negative effects on the learners' awareness and production of the target language.

### References

- Altarriba, J & Mathis, K.M. (1997). Conceptual and Lexical Development in Second Language Acquisition. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 36, 4, pp.550-68.
- Carter, R. & McCarthy, M. (Eds.) (1988). Developments in the teaching of vocabulary. In *Vocabulary and Language Teaching Foreign Language* edited by R. Carter and M. McCarthy. Landon: Longman
- Cook, V.J. (2001). Using the First Language in the Classroom: Canadian *Modern Language Review*. Vol. 57 No. 3 pp. 402-423 [on line] <http://www.Utpjournals.com/jour.html?Lp-product/Cmlr/573/-cookhtml>
- De Groot, A.M.B. (1993). Word-Type Effects in Bilingual Processing Tasks: Support for a Mixed-Representational System. In R. Researcher & B. Weltens (Eds.) *The Bilingual Lexicon* (pp.27-51) Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Dufour, R. & Kroll, J.F. (1995). Matching Words to Concepts in Two Languages: A Test of Concept Mediation Model of Bilingual Representation . *Memory and Cognition*, 25 pp. 166-180.
- Frenck-Mestre, C. & Prince, P. (1997). Second Language Autonomy. *Journal of Memory and Language*. 37, pp.481-501.
- Kroll, J.F. & de Groot A.M.B. (1997). Lexical and Conceptual Memory in Bilingualism: Mapping Form to Meaning in Two Languages. In A.M.B. de Groot & J.F. Nas (Eds.) *Tutorials in Bilingualism*.

- Kroll, J.F. & Stewart, E. (1994). Category Interference in Translation and Picture Naming: Evidence for Asymmetric Connection between Bilingual Memory Representation. *Journal of Memory and Language* (33) pp.149-174.
- Lee, M.W. (1997). *Aspects of Bilingual Lexical Processing*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge.
- McCarthy, M (1990). Spoken language and applied linguistics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nation, I.S.P. (1990). *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary*. Boston,MA: Heinle & Heinle.
- Potter, M.C.; S.K.F. Van Eckardt, B. & Fieldman, L.B. (1984). Lexical and Conceptual in Beginning and More Proficient Bilinguals. *Journal of Verbal Behavior* (23) pp.23-38.
- Wallace, M. (1982). *teaching vocabulary*, London: Heinemann
- Weinreich, U. (1963). *Language in Contact: Findings and Problems*. The Hague. Mouton.

## **Title**

**Investigating the Relationship between Peer assessment and Teacher assessment of the Composition Writing among Iranian EFL learners**

## **Authors**

**Marzie Heydari (M.A.)**

Islamic Azad University, Bandar Abbas Branch, Bandar Abbas, Iran

**Kourosh Akef (Ph.D.)**

Islamic Azad University, Central Branch

## **Biodata**

**Marzieh Heydari** holds an M.A. in TEFL from the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics of Islamic Azad University, Bandar Abbas branch, Iran. She is mainly interested in testing, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics.

**Dr. Kourosh Akef** is working as an assistant professor in Islamic Azad University of Central Tehran, Iran, responsible for teaching M.A. courses in TEFL and Translation Studies. His primary research interests concern EFL writing, second/foreign language teaching and learning, and translation studies.

## **Abstract**

The present study attempts to find the relationship between peer assessment and teacher assessment of the students' compositions. Language proficiency is another point of consideration in this study. Fifty- nine learners who were selected through the TWE test divided to two groups of low and high based on the TOEFL test. Necessary actions were taken by researcher to train students to assess their peers' compositions. Students were required to write a composition which was evaluated by the instructor and their peers. Then their assessments were correlated with teacher assessment in both groups and the significance of the difference between two correlations was calculated. The results indicated a significant relationship between

peer assessment and teacher assessment of the students' compositions, at all and in each group of low and high proficient scorer students. Moreover, it shows that the difference between relationships in two groups were not statistically significant.

**Keywords:** Peer assessment, Teacher assessment, Low/High proficiency group, Composition.

## **1. Introduction**

"The skill of writing enjoys special status, it is via writing that a person can communicate a variety of messages....Such communication is extremely important in the modern world, whether the interaction takes the form of traditional paper-and-pencil writing or the most technologically advanced electronic mail". (Olshtain 2001, p. 206) Despite the importance attached to writing and special attention of papers, articles, dissertations, books, and even separate professional journals exclusively devoted to writing in a second language, teaching writing is still regarded as a complex and difficult work for some teachers. English teachers occasionally suffer from the tedious chore of assessment of students' writings. This is partially due to the high number of students in each class which is prevalent in Iran. This can yield to increase the marker errors possibility, contributing to decrease the reliability of the scores. Farhadi, Jafarpur, & Birjandi suggest "writing assessment can be accomplished reliability once the factors that contribute to unreliability are taken into consideration. Establishment of a criterion is the first requirement. Moreover, more than one rater- preferably three- should participate in scoring each composition" (2006, p. 268). One way to increase the number of raters is peer assessment. Due to the problem with the conventional testing as well as the merits of alternative assessments, different types of alternative assessment such as peer assessment had been used by language researchers as an element to enhance learning and testing quality. Peer-assessment offers several advantages for teachers and learners. It can be said that in peer assessment, the responsibility for evaluation shifts away from the teacher to the learners themselves as they review and appraise the work or performance of other students. There have been some studies which have investigated possible relationship between peer assessment as an alternative assessment and some aspects of English learning. Following is a brief review on these studies.

## **2. Review of the Related Literature**

## 2.1. Effectiveness of Peer Assessment

“Peer assessment is a process in which a group of individuals grading their peers. They may or may not involve an agreed upon criteria among teachers and students” (Falchikov, 1995, p. 280). Peer assessment has been increasingly utilized in higher education since studies such as those by Falchikov (1986) and Boud (1988) report benefits in terms of enhancing student learning (Holroyd, 2002). The other researchers like Cheng & Warren (1993) and Brown & Dove (1991) confirm their idea and conclude that peer assessment appears to yield outcomes at least as effective, and occasionally better than, teacher assessment. Hoseyngholi (2005) in his unpublished M.A. thesis compared the effect of peer, teacher and self assessment of students’ portfolios on their language proficiency. The analysis of the data indicated peer assessment more successful than the others. Peer assessment has also been implemented in a technology application course for teacher education students (Lan, Xiongyi, Steckelberg, 2010). The results indicated a significant relationship between the quality of peer feedback that students provided for others and the quality of the students' own final projects. However, no significant relationship was found between the quality of peer feedback that students received and the quality of their own final projects. This finding supported a claim that active engagement in reviewing peers' projects may facilitate student learning.

Peer assessment often takes place in groups. So, Brown (2004) identifies cooperative learning as a most significant advantage of peer assessment. Additionally, Williams’ (1992) study showed that most of the students found self and peer assessment useful, interesting, and amusing. Habeshaw *et al.*, (1993) also recommended peer assessment to the teachers and students to enhance students’ autonomy and critical thinking.

Researches on the effectiveness of the peer assessment sometimes have provided mixed results and students’ acceptance varies from high to low. For example, Pain (1997) used self and peer assessment to improve students' essay writing. Surveys of her students had shown that student feedback from the first two years was mostly very positive. Although many were uncomfortable about peer assessment and find it difficult, they tended to feel that the whole experience taught them a lot and helped them develop skills. Hughes (1995) also compared teacher, peer and self-assessment of writing up of pharmacology practicals, he found them equally effective. Mangelsdorf (1992) in his study examined ESL students’ perceptions of peer response effectiveness. The result of his study indicated that, about 50% knew peer assessment

helpful; 15% recognized it unhelpful; and 30% provided expressed ambivalence about it. Rollinson (2005) found that the students found it easier to assess technical aspects of the essays or compositions when compared to aspects related to content. Zhang (1995) & Linden-Martin (1997) asked students' ideas about the most effective form of assessment. In both studies, students preferred teacher assessment over peer assessment. The majority of the students were mistrust of peers' feedback and fear of being ridiculed by their peers. Topping (1998) set out a comprehensive review of peer assessment in higher education. He concluded that while the practice has been adopted in a wide variety of contexts, evidence for such enhancements remains limited.

## **2.2. Validity and Reliability of the Peer Assessment**

The validity and reliability of peer assessment are the other concerns of language researchers (Falchikov & Magin, 1997; Freeman, 1995; Lin & Liu, 2000; Orsmond et al., 1996; Topping et al., 1998). "Comparing the similarities between peer and teacher assessment is to check validity of peer assessment, whereas comparing peer assessment with different groups or the same group over time is to examine the reliability of peer assessment" (Topping, 1998). Evidence of this kind has been conflicting, sometimes within the same study, for example, Oldfield and MacAlpine (1995) reported correlations between teacher and peer assessment varying between  $r=0.16$  and  $r=0.91$  for engineering students. Some other studies have shown that peer assessment is highly correlated with instructor assessment (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Jafarpur, 1991; Fletcher & Baldry, 1999; Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000; Patri, 2002; Saito & Fujita, 2004; Şahun, 2008; L'hadi Bouzidi & Alain Jaillet, 2009). Mika (2006) analyzed the validity of the peer assessment between the students with different proficiency levels. The results indicated that the ratings of upper intermediate students correlate most closely with the instructors' ratings, lower intermediate the next and advanced the least. Further, both lower intermediate and advanced gave higher scores than the instructor. One possible explanation is that lower intermediate students had difficulty assessing and gave higher grades, while advanced were confident in their English and respected their peers without differentiating among them. Although, the result of his study was not consistent with what Heilenmann (1990), Stefani (1994) and Kwan and Leung (1996) claimed. They said that low achievers overestimate and high achievers underestimate. Amouzadeh (2002) in his unpublished M.A. thesis found completely

opposite results. His study showed that there was no significant relationship between proficiency levels of the student and their judges on their peers.

In a study of reliability, Orpen (1982) found that marks given by students can be as accurate and reliable as those given by lecturers as long as the marking criteria are clearly explained. However, Swanson *et al.* (1991) have argued that individual peer marks are too unreliable to be used in summative assessments. Goldman (1994) and Liow (2008) also found that interrater reliability of peer assessment is quite limited and needs improvement.

### **2.3. Some Guidelines to Apply Peer Assessment in EFL Classrooms**

Peer-assessment is among best possible formative types of assessment and possibly the most rewarding, but it must be carefully designed and administered for students to reach their potential. Brown (2004, p.277) suggests four guidelines to help teachers bring this intrinsically motivating task into the classroom successfully: 1) Tell students the purpose of the assessment. 2) Define the task(s) clearly. 3) Encourage impartial evaluation of performance or ability. 4) Ensure beneficial washback through follow-up task. Teachers are frequently worried about students colluding with each other to avoid making fair judgments, giving their friends high marks or unfairly penalizing unpopular students. Paulus (1999) and Stanley (1992) in spite of its merits, assert that peer assessment is limited by corrections made based on friendship and decibel marking. Brown (2004) identified subjectivity as the primary weakness of peer assessment which needs to be resolved. Falchikov (2005) recognized two possible situations. One is that students may either be too critical on themselves or too lenient. The other is that they simply do not know how to make an adequate assessment. It is also possible that students may feel anxious and resistant (at least in the beginning) toward peer assessment. In order to minimize these problems in peer assessment, Sluijsmans (2006) recommend the teachers provide students criteria explicitly defined for their use during peer assessment. Since criteria are used to correspond with students to create a common understanding, the success of peer assessment mostly depends on how much students use criteria in the peer assessment process. He also suggests the tutors only use peer assessment for formative assignments. Falchikov (2001) suggest hiding the names or using more than one peer evaluation for one study as another ways to ensure about validity. The same concerns about students' capacity to discern peer performance and the need for training were raised in recent guidelines on peer review in L2 writing (Hu, 2005; Liu & Hansen, 2002).

Several research studies on peer assessment have investigated the capacity issue by looking at training effects and have found benefits of training for the revision process. In these studies, researchers compared trained and untrained groups by categorizing and counting the frequency of peer comments. Stanley (1992) found that the trained group produced more specific responses than the untrained group, and the trained students were more responsive to comments in revision relative to untrained students. The effects of training on the improvement of the final product were found in Berg's study (1999) but were absent in a study by McGroarty and Zhu (1997). Overall, Falchikov (2005) advised teachers to be patient and persistent in developing peer assessment. Because, there are huge gains to be had from involving students in their own assessment, so it's better to analyze and remedy problems in local context rather than assume 'it won't work here'.

In conclusion it can be said that researchers were interested about peer assessment for a long time. Contradictory findings about peer assessment can also be explained in part by differences in conditions, the proficiency level of the students, the training and support provided, the anonymity of the students, the subject being evaluated, the criteria which set out and the number of peer evaluation.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Participants**

The subjects who participated in this study were 65 students who were studying EFL in Shokooh institution in Bandar Abbas. They were chosen from females and all were between 15-27 years old so as to minimize the effect of age. The students were selected through a Test of Written English (TWE). Moreover, the students were divided to two groups of low and high based on the TOEFL test. The 59 learners were selected after excluding 6 cases from the study because of low scores of 0 & 1 from TWE test. In this study, sampling was based on the convenience sampling procedure.

#### **3.2. Instrumentation**

The students took four composition tests, the topic of which were taken from TOEFL-TWE online site. The TWE has gained a reputation as a well- respected measure of written English, and a number of research articles support its validity (Fraser et al., 1999; Hale et al., 1996;

Longford, 1996; Myford et al., 1996). The first composition written by the students was scored by the use of TWE scoring guide. The scoring guide for the TWE (see appendix1) follows a widely accepted set of specifications for a holistic evaluation of written expression. The compositions were scored by two independent raters. Both raters had M.A degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. The inter-rater reliability of the raters was calculated by Cronbach's Alpha. It turns up to be 0.88 that proved the consistency of two raters. The final score assigned was the mean of the two independent ratings. As Brown (2004) pointed out, holistic scoring provides little washback into the writer's further stages of learning. So, the well-accepted analytic scale designed by Brown and Bailey (1984, pp. 39-41) (see appendix2) is used for the rest of the compositions in order to enable learners to work at home on their weakness and to capitalize their strengths. To reduce the marker errors contributed to the reliability and validity of the scores given to each paper in this study, the researcher employed this analytic scoring for both teachers and students who scored the paper. The original version of this rubric has a mathematical assignment of the 100- point scale and gives equal weight (a maximum of 20 points) to each of the five major categories. But in this study 100-point scale converted to 20-point scale to minimize the difference between scores. The proficiency test used in the present study is an adopted TOEFL proficiency test. This test originally includes 100 items, however due to the practicality problems the researcher faced; it was reduced to 60 items. It consists of three sections of structure, vocabulary, and reading comprehension respectively. Each section consists of 20 items. An approximate time of 20 minutes is allotted to each section. The reduced version of TOEFL test was piloted with 18 students with the similar characteristics of the main subjects of the study in Bahar Institute in Shiraz. The reliability of the test was calculated through the use of KR-21 formula following the test performance. It was 0.7 which shows the internal consistency of the test.

### **3.3. Data Collection Procedure**

To gather data, 65 students who were studying EFL at Shokooh institute in Bandar-Abbas were asked to take the TOEFL proficiency test. After a short break they wrote a composition on a given topic in 30 minutes. From among 65 students collected, 6 cases were excluded from the study due to low scores of 0 & 1 from TWE test, although they were taking part in treatment procedure. The students enrolled in four classes in the fall semester of 2010 in Shokooh institute.

The researcher held a briefing session for both teacher and students before the course started and provided them with enough information regarding procedure and marking the papers. The researcher explained about analytic composition rating scale (Brown & Bailey, 1984) and marked 2 sample compositions for them. To learn more about peer-assessment, students also wrote three compositions during the term. They had one week interval for every composition which was written in two copies. One was assessed by the teacher and the other by their peer. These assessments were regarded as exercises for fourth composition assessment. When they were so trained to assess their peers' composition, they wrote main composition in their regular class session which its result was analyzed for this study. The students also were divided to two groups of low and high based on the TOEFL test. 30 students who scored 6 to 32, from 60 item TOEFL test were classified as low proficiency group and 29 students who scored 32 to 54 fell into high group. Then peer assessment and teacher assessment were studied in both groups separately.

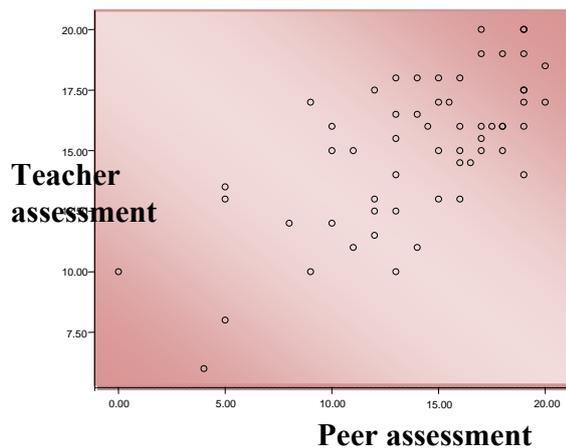
### **3.4. Data analysis**

The collected data was analyzed statically. To find how peer-assessment correlated with teacher assessment, scatterplots was generated and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was calculated. The correlation coefficient can range from  $-1.00$  to  $1.00$ . This value will indicate the strength of the relationship between two variables. Different authors suggest different interpretations for ( $r$ ) value; however, Cohen (1988) suggests the following guidelines: ( $r=.10$  to  $.29$  or  $r=-.10$  to  $-.29$  small), ( $r=.30$  to  $.49$  or  $r=-.30$  to  $-.49$  medium), ( $r=.50$  to  $1.0$  or  $r=-.50$  to  $-1.0$  large). The negative sign refers only to the direction of the relationship, this means there is a negative correlation between the two variables (i.e. high scores on one are associated with low scores on the other). The level of significance for the data analysis was set at  $0.01$ . The correlations between their assessment and teacher assessment were also calculated separately for both groups. Because of the observed differences between assessments of two groups two different correlation coefficients was expected. In order to compare two correlations,  $r$  to  $z$  Fisher transformation equation was used. If the  $z_{obs}$  value is between  $-1.96$  and  $+1.96$  then it cannot be said that there is a statistically significant difference between the two correlation coefficients.

## 4. Results

Before performing a correlation analysis it is a good idea to generate a scatterplot to get a better idea of the nature of the relationship between variables. Figure1 displays the relationship between peer and teacher assessment.

**Figure1.** *Relationship between Peer and Teacher Assessment*



If a line was drawn through the main cluster of points, the direction would be upward from left to right. An upward trend indicates a positive relationship that is, high scores on peer assessment associated with high scores on teacher assessment. The distribution of scores on the scatterplot is linear, and the scores are evenly spread in a cigar shape, so the Preliminary analyses for correlation shows that there is a positive, high correlation between peer assessment and teacher assessment of the students' last composition.

The computed magnitudes of Pearson product moment correlation ( $r$ ) concerning the investigation of the relationship between peer assessment and teacher assessment of the students' compositions equals to .690 that is significant at the 0.01 level. This analysis represents that statistically speaking; there is high positive correlation between peer assessment and teacher assessment (see table 1).

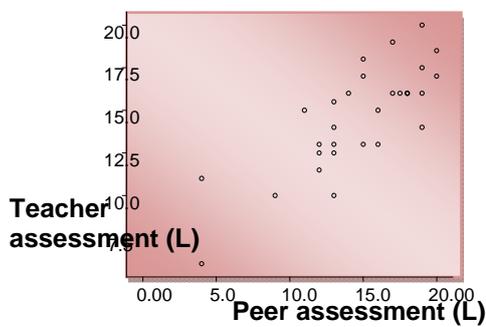
**Table1.** *Correlation between Peer Assessment and Teacher assessment*

		Teacher assessment	Peer assessment
Teacher assessment	Pearson Correlation	1	.690(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	59	59
Peer assessment	Pearson Correlation	.690(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	59	59

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 2.1 displays scatterplot showing the distribution of data obtained from peer assessment and teacher assessment of the compositions for low group. The distribution of the peer assessment and teacher assessment of the compositions for high group are also showed by scatterplot in figure 2.2. Both scatterplots indicates a positive, high correlation between variables.

**Figure2.1.** *Relationship between the Assessments of Low Proficient Students and Teacher Assessment*



**Figure2.2.** *Relationship between the assessments of high proficient students and teacher assessment*

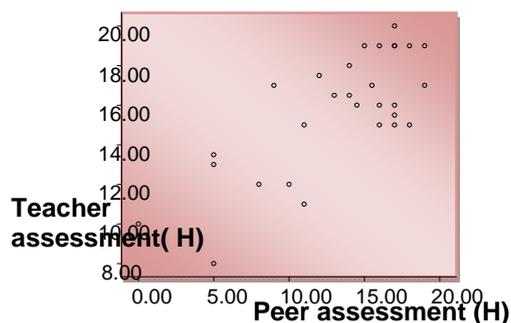


Table 2 indicates the computed magnitudes of correlation coefficient regarding the relationship between the peer assessment and teacher assessments in low and high group which equal to .793 and .752 respectively which are significant at the 0.01 level. This represents that there are significant relationships between peer assessment and teacher assessment in both groups of scorer students with low and high language proficiency.

**Table2.** Correlations between peer assessment and teacher assessments in low and high group

Proficiency			Teacher assessment	Peer assessment
Low	Teacher assessment	Pearson Correlation	1	.793(**)
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	30	30
	Peer assessment	Pearson Correlation	.793(**)	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	30	30
High	Teacher assessment	Pearson Correlation	1	.752(**)
		Sig.(2-tailed)		.000
		N	29	29
	Peer assessment	Pearson Correlation	.752(**)	1
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	
		N	29	29

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The computed correlations show that the assessments of low proficient students are a little (.041) more correlated with teacher assessment than the assessments of high proficient students. Although these two values seem different, is this difference big enough to be considered significant? *r* to *z* Fisher transformation equation is one way to find out whether the correlations for the two groups are significantly different is described. Unfortunately, SPSS cannot do this step, so it is back to the trusty calculator. First the *r* values were converted into *z* scores Using *r* to *z* transformational Table (see appendix3), and then an equation was used to calculate the observed value of *z* (*z* obs. value). The value obtained was assessed using some set decision rules to determine the likelihood that the difference in the correlation noted between the two groups could have been due to chance.

The *z* value for *r*=.793 is .860, and for *r*=.752 is .840. The *z* values were put into the equation to calculate *z* obs.

$$Z_{obs} = \frac{z_1 - z_2}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{n_1 - 3} + \frac{1}{n_2 - 3}}}, Z_{obs} = \frac{.860 - .840}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{30 - 3} + \frac{1}{29 - 3}}} = \frac{.020}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{27} + \frac{1}{26}}} = \frac{.020}{0.27477} = 0.0727881$$

The *z*<sub>obs</sub> value obtained for low and high proficient students is 0.0727881 that is between -1.96 and +1.96. Then there is not a statistically significant difference between the two correlation coefficients.

## 5. Conclusion

In view of the role writing plays in people's academic, vocational, social, and personal lives, and because of the great potential of peer assessment to becoming a prominent tool in various subject areas, this study attempts to focus on relationship between peer assessment and teacher assessment of students' composition writing among the Iranian EFL learners. On the other hand, language proficiency which can be a crucial factor in peer assessment was somehow neglected in the previous studies. This study also analyzes two groups of students with different proficiency levels and examines whether peer assessment is correlated with teacher assessment in both groups and whether there is significant difference between the two. The following results drawn from the research: i) there was a statistically significant relationship between peer assessment and teacher assessment of the students' compositions in Bandar Abbas, Shokooh institute. ii) There were statistically significant relationships between peer assessment and teacher assessment in both groups of scorer students with low and high language proficiency. iii) There wasn't

significant difference between the relationships of peer assessment and teacher assessment in low and high groups.

## **6. Discussion**

This study shows high positive correlation between peer assessment and teacher assessment. These results supported the studies conducted by (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Jafarpur, 1991; Fletcher & Baldry, 1999; Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000; Patri, 2002; Saito & Fujita, 2004; Şahin, 2008; L'hadi Bouzidi & Alain Jaillet, 2009) which have shown that peer assessment is highly correlated with instructor assessment. As Topping(1998) said “Comparing the similarities between peer and teacher assessment is to check validity of peer assessment”. So it can be concluded from the results of this study that peer assessment is a valid instrument for assessing students' compositions.

The second conclusion is that peer assessment can be used in each level of language proficiency. This finding can illuminate the issue Peng (2009) puts forward concerning usability of peer assessment for students with different proficiency levels. As he says even though the high proficient students have relatively better English ability, the low proficient students are more serious about the teacher's instructions. So, both groups have potentials to do well in assessing their peers.

Contrary to what the researcher expected based on the observed differences between assessment of two groups, correlations in low and high groups had not statistically significant differences. Although in previous researches which is mentioned in this study, the significance of the difference between correlations is not calculated by fisher's z transformation equation, but some researchers like Peng (2009) find approximately the same difference between correlations as the researcher. This amount in his study was .05 which is near to that of this study (.041).

At all, this study concludes that peer assessment is a viable alternative to involve students with different language proficiency in the assessment process and serve as a way to diversify the assessment culture in Iran.

## **7. Suggestions for Further Research**

1. Due to the problems the researcher encountered with regards to the arrangements for the data collection procedure, the factor of gender was not taken into account in the research. Doing

further studies on the peer assessment of the female and male EFL Iranian learners is the researcher's preoccupation.

2. In terms of peer grading, this research did not discovered language proficiency differences in peer assessment. Further studies are recommended to conduct a similar study with more groups of different proficiency levels as well as with a bigger sample size.

3. Comparing the correlations between peer assessment and teacher assessment of whole group including the students with mixed language proficiency and that of each group with low or high proficient students in this study give the idea of significance of the homogeneity of students in terms of language proficiency. So, researchers could examine the effect of this aspect in peer assessment.

4. In this study, fourth experience of peer assessment was analyzed, because it was supposed that correlation of peer and teacher assessment constantly increases when students do it more. But, more study is needed to test this idea.

5. Another subject which has worth to attention in peer assessment is friendship. Future studies could explore to what extent friendship influence peer assessment and how would its effect be reduced or eliminated.

## References

- Amouzande, M. (2002). *On the relationship between students' assessment of their peers and their grammar ability at pre university level*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Central Branch.
- Berg, E. C. (1999). The effects of trained peer response on ESL students' revision types and writing quality. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 8, 225–241.
- Boud, D (ed.) (1988). *Developing Student Autonomy in Learning*. London: Kogan Page.
- Bouzidi, L. & Jaillet, A. (2009). Can online peer assessment be trusted? *Educational Technology & Society*. Retrieved May, 21, 2010, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.eric.ed.gov>.
- Brown, D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practice*. New York: Longman.
- Brown, S. & Dove, P. (1991). Opening mouths to change feet: some views on self and

- peer assessment. In S. Brown & P. Dove (Eds.), *Self and peer assessment, Standing Conference on Educational Development* (p. 63). Birmingham: SCED.
- Brown, J. D. & Bailey, K. M. (1984). *A categorical instrument for scoring second language writing skills*. Boston: Pearson Education Inc.
- Cheng, W. & Warren, M. (1993). Having second thoughts: before and after a peer assessment exercise. *Studies in Higher Education*, 22, 233-239.
- Cohn, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd edition). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Edwards, A. L. (1967). *Statistical methods*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Falchikov, N. (2005). *Improving Assessment through student involvement: Practical solution for aiding learning in higher and further education*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Falchikov, N. (1986). Product comparisons and process benefits of peer group and self assessments. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 11, 146-166.
- Falchikov, N. (1995). Group process analysis: self and peer assessment of working together in a group. *Educational and Training Technology International*, 30, 275-284.
- Falchikov, N. (2001). *Improving Assessment through student involvement: Practical solution for aiding learning in higher and further education*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Falchikov, N., & Goldfinch, J. (2000). Student peer assessment in higher education: A meta-analysis comparing peer and teacher marks. *Review of Educational Research*, 70, 287-322.
- Falchikov, N., & Magin, D. (1997). Detecting gender bias in peer marking of students' group process work. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 30, 385-396.
- Farhady, H., Jafarpour, A., & Birjandi, P. (2006). *Testing Language Skills from Theory to Practice*. Tehran: SAMT Publications.
- Fletcher, C., & Baldry, C. (1999). Multi-source feedback systems: A research perspective. *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 14, 149-193.
- Frase, R., Faleti, J., Ginther, A., & Grant, L.A. (1999). *Computer analysis of the TOEFL*

- Test of Written English*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- Freeman, M. (1995). Peer assessment by groups of group work. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 20, 289-300.
- Goldman, R. L. (1994). The Reliability of Peer Assessments: A Meta-Analysis. *Veterans Administration*, 17, 3-21.
- Habeshaw, S., Gibbs, G. & Habeshaw, T. (1993). *53 Interesting Ways to Assess your Students*. Bristol: Technical and Educational Services Ltd.
- Hale, G., Taylor, C., Bridgeman, B., Carson, J., Kroll, B., & Kantor, R. (1996). *A study of writing tasks assigned in academic degree programs*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- Harris, M. M., & Schaubroeck, J. (1988). A meta-analysis of self-supervisor, self-peer, and peer-supervisor ratings. *Personnel Psychology*, 41, 43–62.
- Heilenmann, K.L. (1990). Self-assessment of second language ability: The role of response effects. *Language Testing*, 7, 174-201.
- Holroyd, C. (2002). Are assessors professional? Student assessment and the professionalism of academics, *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 1, 28–44.
- Hoseyngholi, H. (2005). *The relationship between peer, teacher and self assessment of Iranian students' portfolios and their language proficiency*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Central Branch.
- Hu, G. (2005). Using peer review with Chinese ESL student writers. *Language Teaching Research*, 9, 321–342.
- Hughes, I. E. (1995). *Peer assessment*. New York: Random House.
- Jafarpur, A. (1991). Can naive EFL learners estimate their own proficiency? *Evaluation and Research in Education*, 5, 145–157.
- Kwan, K. & Leung, R. (1996). Tutor versus peer group assessment of student performance in a stimulation training exercise. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 21, 239-249.
- Lin, S. S. J. & Liu, E. Z. F. (2000). The Learning Effects of Web-based Peer Assessment for Various Thinking Styles Students. *Educational Leadership*. Retrieved August 13, 2010 from the World Wide Web: <http://PAREonline.net>
- Linden-Martin, M. (March, 1997). Hesitancy working with a peer: Comparison of two

- studies, 1995 and 1996. *Canadian Center of Science and Education*: (Online) 2(2). Retrieved October, 16, 2010 from the World Wide Web: [www.ccsenet.org/elt](http://www.ccsenet.org/elt)
- Liow, J. (2008). Peer assessment in thesis oral presentation. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, 33(5), 525-537.
- Liu, J., & Hansen, J. G. (2002). *Peer response in second language writing classrooms*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.
- Longford, N. T. (1996). *Adjustment for rating behavior in the Test of Written English*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- McGroarty, M. E., & Zhu, W. (1997). Triangulation in classroom research: A study of peer revision. *Language Learning*, 47, 1-43.
- Mangelsdorf, K. (1992). Peer reviews in the ESL composition classroom: What do students think? *ELT Journal*, 46, 274-284.
- Mika, S. (2006). Peer- and Instructor Assessment of Oral Presentations in Japanese University EFL classrooms: A Pilot Study. *Waseda Global*. Retrieved August 1, 2010, from World Wide Web: [www.jalt.org/pansig/2003/HTML/Shimura.htm](http://www.jalt.org/pansig/2003/HTML/Shimura.htm)
- Myford, C. M., Marr, D. B., & Linacre, J. M. (1996). *Reader calibration and its potential role in equating for the Test of Written English*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- Oldfield, K. A., & Macalpine, J. M. K. (1995). Peer and self assessment at tertiary level – an experiential report, *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 20, 125-32.
- Olshtain, E. (2001). *Functional tasks for mastering the mechanics of writing and going just beyond*. Hartford, CT: Capital Press.
- Orpen, C. (1982) Student versus lecturer assessment of learning: a research note. *Higher Education*, 11, 567-72.
- Orsmond, P., Merry, S., & Reiling, K. (1996). The importance of marking criteria in the use of peer assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 21, 239-249.
- Pain, R. (1997). Using Self and Peer Assessment to Improve Students' Essay Writing: a Case Study from Geography, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*: (online), 20 (1). Available: <http://www2.glos.ac.uk/gdn/abstracts/a14.htm>

- Patri, M. (2002). The influence of peer feedback on self- and peer-assessment of oral skills, *Language Testing*, 19, 109–131.
- Peng, J. C. (2009). Peer Assessment in an EFL Context: Attitudes and Correlations. *Linguists' Reference*. Retrieved August 12, 2010 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.lingref.com/cpp/slrf/2008/paper2387.pdf>
- Paulus, T.M. (1999). The effect of peer and teacher feedback on student writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 8, 265-289.
- Rollinson, P. (2005). Using peer feedback in the ESL writing class. *ELT Journal*, 59(1), 23-30.
- Saito, H., & Fujita, T. (2004). Characteristics and user acceptance of peer rating in EFL writing classrooms. *Language Teaching Research*, 8, 31–54.
- Şahin, S. (2008). An Application of Peer Assessment In Higher Education. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology – TOJET*, (7). Retrieved May, 24, 2010, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.eric.ed.gov>.
- Sluijsmans, D. (2006). A conceptual framework for integrating peer assessment in teacher education. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 32(1). Retrieved August, 14, 2010, from the World Wide Web: [http://www.itdl.org/Journal/Apr\\_10/article05.htm#Top](http://www.itdl.org/Journal/Apr_10/article05.htm#Top)
- Stanley, J. (1992). Coaching student writers to be effective peer evaluators. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 1, 217–233.
- Stefani, L. A. (1992). Comparison of collaborative self, peer and tutor assessment in a biochemistry practical. *Biochemical Education*, 20, 148–151.
- Swanson, D., Case, S., & van der Vleuten, C. (1991). Strategies for student assessment. In D. Boud, & G. Feletti, (Eds.), *The Challenge of Problem Based Learning* (pp.99-135). Hartfor: Capital Press.
- Topping, K.J. (1998). Peer assessment between students in college and university. *Review of Educational Research*, 3, 249-267.
- Willaims, E. (1992). Students' attitudes towards approaches to learning and assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 17(1), 45–58.
- Zhang, S. (1995). Reexamining the affective advantage of peer feedback in the ESL writing class. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 4, 209-222.

## **Appendix1: Test of Written English Scoring Guide**

**6. Demonstrates clear competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels, though it may have occasional errors.**

A paper in this category

- Effectively addresses the writing task.
- Is well organized and well developed.
- Uses clearly appropriate details to support a thesis or illustrate ideas.
- Displays consistent facility in the use of language.
- Demonstrates syntactic variety and appropriate word choice.

**5. Demonstrates competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels, though it will probably have occasional errors.**

A paper in this category

- May address some parts of the task more effectively than others.
- Is generally well organized and developed.
- Uses details to support a thesis or illustrate an idea.
- Displays facility in the use of language.
- Demonstrates some syntactic variety and range of vocabulary.

**4. Demonstrates minimal competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels.**

A paper in this category

- Addresses the writing topic adequately but may slight parts of the task.
- Is adequately organized and developed.
- Uses some details to support a thesis or illustrate an idea.
- Demonstrates adequate but possibly inconsistent facility with syntax and usage.
- May contain some errors that occasionally obscure meaning.

**3. Demonstrates some developing competence in writing, but it remains flawed on either the rhetorical or syntactic level, or both.**

A paper in this category may reveal one or more of the following weaknesses:

- Inadequate organization or development
- Inappropriate or insufficient details to support or illustrate generalizations

- A noticeably inappropriate choice of words or word forms
- An accumulation of errors in sentence structure and/or usage.

**2. Suggests incompetence in writing.**

A paper in this category is seriously flawed by one or more of the following weaknesses:

- Serious disorganization or underdevelopment
- Little or no detail, or irrelevant specifics
- Serious and frequent errors in sentence structure or usage
- Serious problems with focus.

**1. Demonstrates incompetence in writing.**

A paper in this category

- May be incoherent.
- May be undeveloped.
- May contain severe and persistent writing errors.

**0.** A paper is rated 0 if it contains no response, merely copies the topic, is off-topic, is written in a foreign language, language, or consists only of keystroke characters.

**Appendix 2: Analytic scale for rating composition**

**Table 3.4 Analytic scale for rating composition tasks**

	20-19 Excellent to Good	17-15 Good to Adequate	14-12 Adequate to Fair	11-9 Unacceptable	5-1 Not College-level Work
<b>I. Organization: Introduction, Body &amp; Conclusion:</b>	Appropriate title, effective introductory paragraph, topic is stated, leads to body; transitional expressions used; arrangement of material shows plan (could be outlined by reader); supporting evidence given for generalizations; conclusion logical & complete	Adequate title, introduction, & conclusion; body of essay is acceptable but some evidence may be lacking, some ideas aren't fully developed; sequence is logical but transitional expressions may be absent or misused	Mediocre or scant introduction or conclusion; problems with the order of ideas in body; the generalizations may not be fully supported by the evidence given; problems of organization interfere	Shaky or minimally recognizable introduction; organization can barely be seen; severe problems with ordering of ideas; lack of supporting evidence; conclusion weak or illogical; inadequate effort at organization	Absence of introduction or conclusion; no apparent organization of body; severe lack of supporting evidence; writer has not made any effort to organize the composition (could not be outlined by reader)
<b>II. Logical Development of Ideas: Content</b>	Essay addresses the assigned topic; the ideas are concrete and thoroughly developed; no extraneous material; essay reflects thought	Essay addresses the issues but misses some points; ideas could be more fully developed; some extraneous material is present	Development of ideas not complete or essay is somewhat off the topic; paragraphs aren't divided exactly right	Ideas incomplete; essay does not reflect careful thinking or was hurriedly written; inadequate effort in area of content	Essay is completely inadequate and does not reflect college-level work; no apparent effort to consider the topic carefully
<b>III. Grammar</b>	Native-like fluency in English grammar; correct use of relative clauses, prepositions, modals, articles, verb forms, and tense sequencing; no fragments or run-on sentences	Advanced proficiency in English grammar; some grammar problems don't influence communication, although the reader is aware of them; no fragments or run-on sentences	Ideas getting through to the reader, but grammar problems are apparent and have a negative effect on communication; run-on sentences or fragments present	Numerous serious grammar problems interfere with communication of the writer's ideas; grammar review of some areas clearly needed; difficult to read sentences	Severe grammar problems interfere greatly with the message; reader can't understand what the writer is trying to say; unintelligible sentence structure
<b>IV. Punctuation, Spelling, &amp; Mechanics</b>	Correct use of English; writing conventions; left & right margins, all needed capitals, paragraphs indented, punctuation & spelling; very neat	Some problems with writing conventions or punctuation; occasional spelling errors; left margin correct; paper is neat and legible	Uses general writing conventions but has errors; spelling problems distract reader; punctuation errors interfere with ideas	Serious problems with format of paper; parts of essay not legible; errors in punctuation; unacceptable to educated readers	Complete disregard for English writing conventions; paper illegible; obvious capitals missing; no margins, severe spelling problems
<b>IV. Style &amp; Quality of Expression</b>	Precise vocabulary usage; use of parallel structures; concise; register good	Attempts variety; good vocabulary; not wordy; register OK; style fairly concise	Some vocabulary misused; lacks awareness of register; may be too wordy	Poor expression of ideas; problems in vocabulary; lacks variety of structure	Inappropriate use of vocabulary; no concept of register or sentence variety

Brown, J.D. (2005). Testing in Language Programs. (p:56)

### Appendix 3: Transformation of r to z

r	zr	r	zr	r	zr	r	zr	r	zr
.000	.000	.200	.203	.400	.424	.600	.693	.800	1.099
.005	.005	.205	.208	.405	.430	.605	.701	.805	1.113
.010	.010	.210	.213	.410	.436	.610	.709	.810	1.127
.015	.015	.215	.218	.415	.442	.615	.717	.815	1.142
.020	.020	.220	.224	.420	.448	.620	.725	.820	1.157
.025	.025	.225	.229	.425	.454	.625	.733	.825	1.172
.030	.030	.230	.234	.430	.460	.630	.741	.830	1.188
.035	.035	.235	.239	.435	.466	.636	.750	.835	1.204
.040	.040	.240	.245	.440	.472	.640	.758	.840	1.221
.045	.045	.245	.250	.445	.478	.645	.767	.845	1.238
.050	.050	.250	.255	.450	.485	.650	.775	.850	1.256
.055	.055	.255	.261	.455	.491	.655	.784	.855	1.274
.060	.060	.260	.266	.460	.497	.660	.793	.860	1.293
.065	.065	.265	.271	.465	.504	.665	.802	.865	1.313
.070	.070	.270	.277	.470	.510	.670	.811	.870	1.333
.075	.075	.275	.282	.475	.517	.675	.820	.875	1.354
.080	.080	.280	.288	.480	.523	.680	.829	.880	1.376
.085	.085	.285	.293	.485	.530	.685	.838	.885	1.398
.090	.090	.290	.299	.490	.536	.690	.848	.890	1.422
.095	.095	.295	.304	.495	.543	.695	.858	.895	1.447
.100	.100	.300	.310	.500	.549	.700	.867	.900	1.472
.105	.105	.305	.315	.505	.556	.705	.877	.905	1.499
.110	.110	.310	.321	.510	.563	.710	.887	.910	1.528
.115	.116	.315	.326	.515	.570	.715	.897	.915	1.557
.120	.121	.320	.332	.520	.576	.720	.908	.920	1.589
.125	.126	.325	.337	.525	.583	.725	.918	.925	1.623
.130	.131	.330	.343	.530	.590	.730	.929	.930	1.658
.135	.136	.335	.348	.535	.597	.735	.940	.935	1.697
.140	.141	.340	.354	.540	.604	.740	.950	.940	1.738
.145	.146	.345	.360	.545	.611	.745	.962	.945	1.783
.150	.151	.350	.365	.550	.618	.750	.973	.950	1.832
.155	.156	.355	.371	.555	.626	.755	.984	.955	1.886
.160	.161	.360	.377	.560	.633	.760	.996	.960	1.946
.165	.167	.365	.383	.565	.640	.765	1.008	.965	2.014
.170	.172	.370	.388	.570	.648	.770	1.020	.970	2.092
.175	.177	.375	.394	.575	.655	.775	1.033	.975	2.185
.180	.182	.380	.400	.580	.662	.780	1.045	.980	2.298
.185	.187	.385	.406	.585	.670	.785	1.058	.985	2.443
.190	.192	.390	.412	.590	.678	.790	1.071	.990	2.647

.195 .198 .395 .418 .595 .685 .795 1.085 .995 2.994

Edwards, (1967)