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**Dr. Paul Robertson**

**Dr. Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh**

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### **Foreword**

Welcome to volume eleven and the first edition of 2015. We are happy to announce that our readership is increasing day by day. For a journal examining the topics of EFL/ESL, Literature and Translation studies, the growth and readership has been pleasing. Our bi-monthly Journal has attracted many readers not only from the Middle East but also from different parts of the world. In this first edition, we have presented thirty articles, discussing different issues of EFL/ESL, literature and translation studies. In the first article of the issue, The Relationship Between Self - esteem and Language Learning Strategies of Iranian Female EFL Learners is studied by Marziyeh Alhuei, Shahin Sheikh and Niloofar Mansoori. In the second article of the issue, Tooba Mardani has studied The Effects of Metadiscourse Markers on EFL Learners' Performance in Letter Writing. In the third article of the issue, Genre-based Discourse Analysis of Death Announcements and Obituaries in Iranian Newspapers is presented by Atefeh Elekaei, Sajad Faramarzi and Hossein Heidari Tabrizi. In the next article, Sociocultural Theory in Second Language Acquisition: Tenets and Pedagogical Implications in an EFL Setting is studied by Ferdos Jamali and Nouzar Gheisari. In the fifth article of the issue, Masoumeh Ghorbani Sani has presented EFL Teachers' Beliefs about Iranian High School Students' Language Learning Needs. The next article which is The Viability of M-learning via SMS in Vocabulary Perception of Iranian EFL Learners is done by Fereydoun Jafari Laasaki, Ahmad Morad Jokar and Ali Akbar Arablou. In the seventh article of the issue; Farideh Samadi and Seyyed Ali Ostovar Namaghi have studied An Evaluation of the Spectrum Student Book 2A, A Communicative Course in English, Text book for Adult English Learners in Shokooh Institute Branch of Kashmar. In the eighth article of the issue Developing Listening Comprehension Ability Through an Integrated Task-Based Approach is studied by Farah Shooraki and Dariush Nejadansari. In the next article, Amir Hossein Torabian, Marlyna Maros and Mohd. Subakir Mohd. Yasin have presented Comparing Receptive and Productive Lexical Collocational Knowledge of Iranian EFL Learners. In the tenth article, The Relationship between Translation Competence and Translator's Intelligence is presented by Faegheh Mehrabiyan and Masoud Sharififar.





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



**Title**

**The Relationship Between Self - esteem and Language Learning  
Strategies of Iranian Female EFL Learners**

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**Biodata**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to identify the preferred language learning strategies and examine the relationship between self-esteem and direct/indirect language learning strategies of Iranian female EFL learners. The participants of the study are 40 non-native female EFL learners attending two language institutes in Karaj who were selected based

on the results of the Oxford placement test. Then, they completed two questionnaires of Sorensen self-esteem and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning. The reliability coefficient of the three questionnaires was computed by Cronbach's Alpha and Pearson Correlation. Data analysis indicated that meta-cognitive strategies are the most used ones by the learners. Moreover, it was found that there is a significant positive relationship between level of self-esteem and the use of direct and indirect strategies.

**Keywords:** Self-esteem, Language Learning Strategies, Direct Strategies, Indirect Strategies, EFL Learner

## 1. Introduction

Language teachers sometimes are encountered with some students who fail to perform successfully in language learning. Most of the teachers are interested in finding how to help these students achieve better results (Khajavi, 2013). Therefore, they should consider their learners learning strategies and try to recognize and identify them in order to support less successful learners to achieve progress and master the target language. Teachers can specify these strategies through observations, language diaries, questionnaires, interviews and so on. By doing so, they will be able to assist language learners to recognize and approve the power of language learning strategies in the process of foreign language learning. Through the learning strategies, teachers can also help the learners to maintain their motivation, autonomy, and confidence and keep on going and try to accomplish the goal of learning the target language (Zare, 2012).

Language learning strategies are specific behaviors or thought processes that learners use to enhance their own L2 learning and skilled teachers help their students develop an awareness of learning strategies and allow them to use a wider range of appropriate strategies (Oxford, 2003). In other words, learning strategies are the conscious thoughts and actions taken by learners in order to achieve a learning goal. Strategic learners have metacognitive knowledge about their own thinking and learning approaches, a good understanding of what a task involves, and the ability to contrive the strategies that best meet both the task demands and their own learning strengths (Chamot, 2004). Oxford (1990) classifies strategies into two major groups: direct and indirect. Direct strategies include three groups of strategies: memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies include three groups of strategies: metacognitive,

affective and social (cited in Su & Duo, 2012). Oxford (2003) specifies language learning strategies as follows:

- Memory strategies help learners associate one L2 item or concept with another but do not inevitably involve deep understanding. Various memory-related strategies make it possible for the learners to learn and retrieve information in an orderly string (e.g., acronyms), while other techniques create learning and retrieval via sounds (e.g., rhyming), images (e.g., a mental picture of the word itself or the meaning of the word), a combination of sounds and images (e.g., the keyword method), body movement (e.g., total physical response), mechanical means (e.g., flashcards), or location.
- Cognitive strategies allow the learner to manipulate the language material in direct ways, for example, through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining, reorganizing information to develop stronger schemas (knowledge structures), practicing in naturalistic settings, and practicing structures and sounds formally.
- Compensatory strategies (e.g., guessing from the context in listening and reading; using synonyms and talking around the missing word to assist speaking and writing; and strictly for speaking, using gestures or pause words) help the learners make up for missing knowledge.
- Metacognitive strategies (e.g., identifying one's own learning style preferences and needs, planning for an L2 task, gathering and organizing materials, arranging a study space and a schedule, monitoring mistakes, and evaluating task success, and evaluating the success of any type of learning strategy) are used for managing the learning process overall.
- Affective strategies refers to recognizing one's mood and anxiety level, talking about feelings, rewarding oneself for good performance, and using deep breathing or positive self-talk.
- Social strategies (e.g., asking questions to get verification, asking for clarification of a confusing point, asking for help in doing a language task, talking with a native-speaking conversation partner, and exploring cultural and social norms) aid the learner work with others and understand the target culture as well as the language.

Self-esteem is defined as the extent to which a person believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy (Coopersmith, 1967, cited in Emler, 2001). “Self-esteem and self-confidence are like the foundations of a building, if they are not secure enough, even the best technology will be inadequate to build solid walls over them” (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 120). There is no doubt from all research available that self-esteem is crucial for personal and academic growth (Rubio, 2007). Kazumata (1989) states that in the classroom, teachers should incorporate techniques to raise learners’ self-esteem as a part of their pedagogical philosophy and this can be facilitated by instructing students in self-correcting and self-monitoring skills. Oxford (1990) believes that appropriate language learning strategies can influence learners’ self-confidence in language learning and motivate them to learn the language better (cited in Su & Duo 2012). On the other hand, as Zare and Riasati (2012) claim, research has shown that one’s degree of self-esteem can play a vital role in language learning. In fact, those individuals who enjoy from a high level of self-esteem are expected to experience lower degree of anxiety and consequently, achieve more success in their language learning. Moreover, students’ self-esteem and language learning strategies can help the students to have better English proficiency (Pramita, 2012).

In addition to several factors influencing learning a foreign language, owing to the important role assigned to self-esteem in foreign language learning and the difficulties EFL students experience in their learning, finding a way to determine their preferred language learning strategies and to enhance their understanding about the relationship between self-esteem and language learning strategies is of high importance and this study tried to fill in this gap. The results of the present study can help the language teaching practitioners and material developers in decision making which would in turn lead to the development of a better curriculum.

## **2. Review of Literature**

Having high self-esteem apparently provides benefits to those who possess it, including a good feeling about themselves, ability to cope effectively with challenges and negative feedback, and living in a social world in which they believe that people value and respect themselves. People with low self-esteem see the world through a more negative filter, and their general dislike for themselves colors their perceptions of everything around them (Heatherton & Wyland, n.d.). One



possibility in educational underachievement, as argued by Emler (2001), is that educational failure damages young people's self-esteem. The other principal possibility is that self-esteem itself plays some role in educational attainment. Emler argues that over many years of research, a consistent pattern is clear; self-esteem and educational attainment are linked but they are not strongly related. The strength of the association differs with age, the educational outcome considered, the sex, ethnic origin and socio-economic background of the individuals concerned, and with the measures of self-esteem used. Rubio (2007) claims that the early school years are associated with the most powerful stage for the development of self-esteem and thus fostering adequate early patterns leading to healthy self-esteem is very important. While nurturing within the family is the most important factor in early childhood, school growingly gains importance as a determining impact on the individual's self-esteem.

Children with high self-esteem often demonstrate increased school performance, improved health, and more productive behaviors. However, low-self-esteem in children has been associated with poor academic achievement, depression, smoking and other deleterious social behaviors. Teaching children about self-esteem can improve the way they view themselves, which consequently may help them to make better choices, achieve more, and be better equipped to face life's challenges. Schools and educators are in a unique position to be able to teach children strategies to raise self-esteem, provide guidance and follow up activities, and monitor the impact of self-esteem enhancement education over time (Dalgas-Pelish, 2006).

Results of the study by Naderi, Abdullah, Aizan, Sharir, and Kumar (2009) showed that self-esteem had a strong significant relationship with academic achievement when gender is controlled, However there was no relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. In other words, there was a significant difference between gender and self-esteem.

Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006) investigated the language learning strategy use of 55 ESL students with differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The researchers employed the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) for exploring the relationship between language learning strategy use and second language proficiency, focusing on differences in strategy use across gender and nationality. It was found a curvilinear relationship between strategy use and English proficiency; students in the intermediate level reported more use of learning strategies than beginning and advanced levels. More strategic language learners advance

along the proficiency continuum faster than less strategic ones. In addition, the students preferred to use meta-cognitive strategies most, whereas they showed the least use of affective and memory strategies. Learners' high preference for meta-cognitive strategies helped them in directing, organizing, and planning their language learning. Females tended to use affective and social strategies more frequently than males.

Furthermore, Hayati and Ostadian's (2008) study demonstrated that self-esteem was a psychological factor that had a positive relationship with learners' English language listening comprehension. Their results indicated that self-esteem had a more important role in females' listening comprehension than males. Hayati and Ostadian attributed this to the fact that females were more affected by psychological affairs in language learning than males. Female learners were more capable in English language listening comprehension tasks than male learners.

Su's (2005) study showed that the participants were moderate users of language learning strategies. Her participants used social learning strategies most frequently and memory strategies least frequently than other strategies. Participants with a higher self-perceived English proficiency level used language learning strategies more frequently than those who had a lower self-perceived English proficiency level.

Zare and Riasati (2012) concluded that learning anxiety decreased as self-esteem increased. In fact, the learners who benefited from a high degree of self-esteem experienced lower anxiety. However, those having learning anxiety were considered to have lower self-esteem. They argued that as learners moved to a higher level of education; they developed a higher degree of self-esteem. In other words, seniors experienced a higher level of self-esteem compared to their juniors and sophomores. It is, therefore, suggested that language teachers take measures to make the learners' self-esteem in order to help them be more successful in their language learning.

Fahim and Khojaste Rad's (2012) study indicated that there was a positive relationship between self-esteem and paragraph writing scores. In addition, there was a positive relationship between the scores of English language proficiency and paragraph writing. Moreover, it was found a positive relationship between English language proficiency and the participants' scores of self-esteem accordingly. And finally, there was a positive relationship between English language proficiency, self-esteem, and paragraph writing.

Ha(2008) argues that meta-cognitive strategies are useful to the learning process in the sense that learners will take control over and monitor what and how they learn. Cognitive strategies are more closely associated to the studying of specific language skills, involving the optimal techniques learners can use to cope with language tasks. Social and affective strategies are more related to feelings and self-control, which is thought to have a role in developing self-confidence, cooperativeness, and will. She continues that all the types of learning strategies are helpful and essential in the language learning process. However, if an individual makes the language competence the main focal aim, then the cognitive strategies may be of more significance because these strategies are closely related to the language tasks.

Pramita's (2012) findings demonstrated that there was a positive and significant contribution of self-esteem to the students' English proficiency for second year students. It meant that the higher self-esteem of students, their English proficiency would be increased and also otherwise. It was found that there was a positive and significant contribution of language learning strategies to the students' English proficiency ( i.e. the frequent uses of language learning strategies and their variety would lead the students to have better English proficiency). In addition, there was a positive and significant contribution of self-esteem and language learning strategies to the students' English proficiency. It meant that both students' self-esteem and language learning strategies could help the students to have better English proficiency. Su and Duo (2012) examined the relationship of Taiwanese high school students' language learning strategy use and their self-efficacy beliefs. The results indicated that the participants moderately used language learning strategies and held a medium level of self-efficacy belief. A significant positive correlation was found between language learning strategy use and self-efficacy beliefs.

Currently, the findings of the study by Asadifard and Biria (2013) revealed that Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) correlated significantly with global self-esteem. Among LLS categories, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies indicated the highest correlation with the learners' self-esteem. However, affective strategies were the least correlated category with self-esteem. Furthermore, it was shown that gender was not a determinant factor for being a high or low strategy user, and does not affect self-esteem.

### **3. Purpose**

In short, the aim of this study is to investigate the preferred language learning strategies and the relationship between self-esteem and language learning strategies of Iranian female EFL learners. In this regard, the following research questions to be answered in this study are as follows:

1. What are the preferred language learning strategies of high versus low self esteem Iranian female EFL learners?
2. Is there any relationship between Iranian female EFL learners with high versus low self-esteem in using direct strategies?
3. Is there any relationship between EFL learners with high versus low self-esteem in using indirect strategies?

## **4. Method**

### **4.1. Participants**

The participants of this study were non-native female EFL learners attending language classes of Shakeri and Safir-e- Danesh institutes in Karaj whose first language was Persian. They consisted of forty (40) intermediate learners who were randomly selected based on the results of the Oxford placement test. They aged between 16-20, whose mean age was 18.09

### **4.2. Instruments**

With regard to the research questions, three different instruments used in this study are briefly described below.

1. Oxford placement test developed by Edwards (2007) for determining the participants' proficiency level.
2. Sorensen self-esteem questionnaire (Sorensen, 2006) for measuring the participants' self-esteem.
3. Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (Oxford, 1989) for determining the participants' preferred language learning strategies.

### **4.3. Procedures**

Before data collection procedure the researcher randomly chose 15 participants and distributed Sorensen and SILL questionnaires together with Oxford Placement test, among them. These instruments were pilot tested and their reliability coefficients were computed by Pearson

correlation and Cronbach's Alpha. Then, the researcher asked 90 participants randomly chosen from two language institutes (Shakeri and Safir-e-danesh) in Karaj to answer Oxford placement test (OPT). Forty(40) intermediate EFL learners were selected according to OPT direction in which those respondents who got 31+ in grammar and vocabulary and 8+ in reading section were considered to be at intermediate level of foreign language proficiency and main participants of the study. Then the SILLs were given to the participants and they were asked to respond on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never or almost never) to 5 (Always or almost always). After collecting the SILLs, the Sorensen self-esteem questionnaire was distributed among the same participants. It was a 50-item Self-esteem Scale. The participants were asked to check their self-esteem based on these items. Thus, total scores could range from 19-50(extremely low self-esteem) to 0-4 (high self-esteem). Data obtained from these two questionnaires were analyzed by SPSS in order to investigate the research questions.

## 5. Results and Discussion

### 5.1 The reliability of the Sorensen Self-esteem Test (pilot study)

Test- retest method was used to estimate the reliability of the Sorensen self-esteem test through administering the test of Sorensen self-esteem to the pilot study group twice with one week time interval. The reliability of self-esteem index over time was estimated by computing the correlation coefficient between the two sets of indices obtained from the two administrations of the Sorensen self-esteem test to the same group. The coefficient of correlation which is the reliability estimate is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1** *Correlation Coefficient of Self-esteem Index for Two Different Administrations*

		Second administration
First administration	Pearson Correlation	.960 <sup>**</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	15

<sup>\*\*</sup>. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As seen in Table 1, the correlation between the two administrations of the Sorensen self-esteem test was .960, which was statistically significant.

### 5.2 The reliability of the Strategy Inventory (pilot study)

Cronbach's Alpha statistics was computed for the 50 questionnaire items (Table 2).

**Table 2** *Reliability Statistics of the Strategy Inventory*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.810	50

As shown in Table 2, according to Cronbach's Alpha analysis, there is a high reliability of .810 for the Strategy Inventory, which indicates internal consistency of the items of the inventory.

### 5.3 Reliability analysis of the OPT (pilot study)

The reliability of the OPT was estimated through a pilot study on 15 learners. Cronbach's Alpha statistics was computed for the 60 OPT items (Table 3).

**Table 3** *Reliability Statistics of the OPT*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.740	60

As indicated in Table 3, a reliability of .740 was estimated, which is higher than the minimum required value of 0.70 and shows the internal consistency of the test.

In order to answer the first research question (i.e., what are the preferred language learning strategies of the EFL learners with different levels of self-esteem?), summaries of individual items for direct and indirect strategies of the Oxford Strategy questionnaire provided important information in terms of using strategies by the four groups of self esteem. The results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4** *Use of Each Type of Strategy by the Learners with Different Level of Self esteem*

Levels of self esteem	Sample size	Memory strategies	Cognitive Strategies	Compensation Strategies	Meta-cognitive Strategies	Affective Strategies	Social Strategies
Severely low self-esteem	10	2.07	2.10	<b>1.88</b>	<b>2.23</b>	2.15	1.91
Moderately low self-esteem	12	2.76	2.93	2.52	<b>3.25</b>	<b>2.33</b>	2.38
Mild low self-esteem	6	2.94	2.97	3.69	<b>4.05</b>	<b>2.63</b>	2.97
Fairly good	12	3.79	<b>3.64</b>	3.75	<b>4.18</b>	3.72	3.72



As shown in table 4, based on Oxford's (1990) taxonomy, direct strategies include three groups of memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies and indirect strategies include three groups of meta-cognitive, affective and, social strategies. Therefore, in order to answer the first question, according to their level of self-esteem, the participants were divided into four groups of severely low self-esteem, moderately low self-esteem, mild low self-esteem, and fairly good self-esteem.

In general, with regard to Table 4, it was demonstrated that severely low self-esteem learners appeared to have fewer uses of strategies. On the other hand, those learners classified as having fairly good self-esteem appeared to have the most use of strategies. These findings are similar to those of Su and Duo (2012), whose results indicated that a significant positive correlation was found between language learning strategy use and self-efficacy beliefs. Moreover, it is similar to that of Asadifard and Biria (2013) who found that LLSs correlated significantly with global self-esteem. In addition, participants of the study employed meta-cognitive strategies as the most used ones, which supported Ha' (2008) argument that meta-cognitive strategies are useful to the learning process in the sense that learners will take control over and monitor what and how they learn and is similar to Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006) investigation results in which the students preferred to use meta-cognitive strategies most. However it is different from Su (2005) study in that her participants used social learning strategies as the most frequent ones. In order to answer the second research question, the chi-square test examined the possible relationship between EFL learners' high versus low self-esteem in using direct strategies (see table 5).

**Table 5** *Chi-Square Test for the Relationship between Self-esteem and the Use of Direct Strategies*

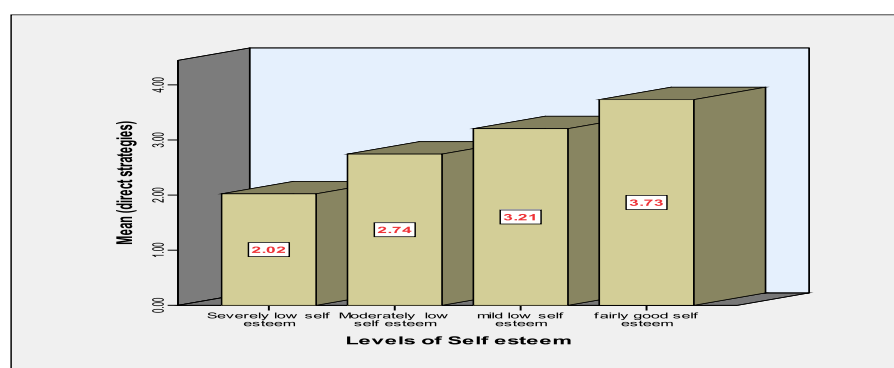
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Linear-by-Linear Association	27.785	1	.000

As shown in Table 5, the two-sided asymptotic significance of the chi-square statistic (.00) was lower than 0.05, so it was safe to say that the relationship was not due to chance variation, which implied that each participant with specific level of self-esteem tended to use certain levels of direct strategies. Eta test was performed to show the strength and direction of this relationship (Table 6).

**Table 6** *Eta test for the Strength of the Relationship between Level of Self-esteem and the Use of Direct Strategies*

			Value
Nominal by Interval	Eta	Direct strategies Dependent	.848

As seen in Table 6, based on the results of Eta test, there appeared to be a significant positive association between level of self-esteem and the use of direct strategies (Eta= .848). The positive relationship implied that the learners with higher level of self-esteem tended to use direct strategies more and the learners with lower level of self-esteem tended to use direct strategies less. It implies that there is a positive relationship between EFL learners' level of self-esteem and the use of direct strategies. Figure 1 visually compared the relative frequencies among the four groups with different levels of self-esteem in terms of their use of direct strategies.



*Figure 1: The Relationship between EFL Learners' Level of Self-esteem and the Use of Direct Strategies*

As shown in Figure 1, the plurality of the use of direct strategies comes from those who reported fairly good self-esteem in Sorensen self-esteem questionnaire. A chi- square test was run to answer the third research question and to investigate the possible relationship between the EFL learners' self-esteem and the use of indirect strategies (see Table 7).

**Table 7** Chi-Square Test for the Relationship between Self-esteem and the Use of Indirect Strategies

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2- sided)
Linear-by-Linear Association	33.106	1	.000

As reported in Table 7, the significance value of the test for participants with different levels of self-esteem is 0.000. Since this value is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that the relationship observed between these two variables (self-esteem and indirect strategies) in the cross tabulation is real and not due to chance. This is suggestive, but not conclusive, evidence of a relationship between level of self-esteem and the use of indirect strategies by the participants. While the chi-square test showed that there was a relationship, it didn't show the strength of the relationship.

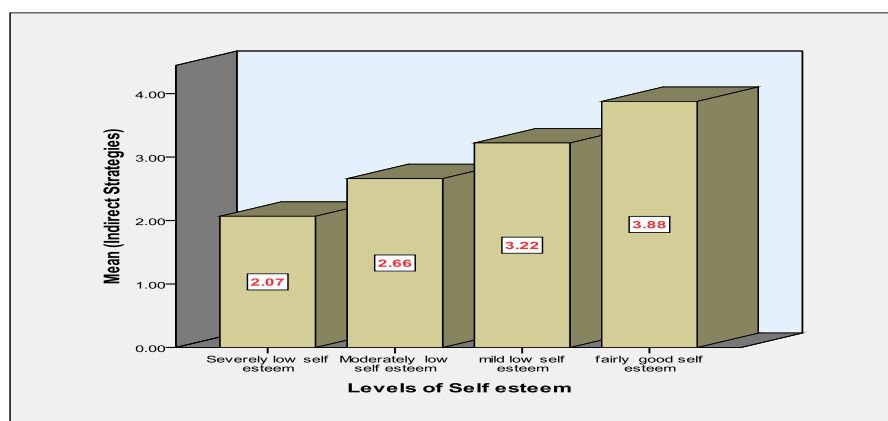
Therefore, Eta Symmetric measure, which was based on the chi-square statistics, was used to quantify this (see Table 8).

**Table 8** *Eta test for the Strength of the Relationship between Level of Self-esteem and the Use of Indirect Strategies*

			Value
Nominal by Interval	Eta	Indirect strategies Dependent	.922

As shown in Table 8, the Eta value is close to 1 indicating a high degree of association between levels of self-esteem and indirect strategy use. In other words, by increasing the level of self-esteem, higher average of indirect strategies would be used, and by decreasing the respondents' level of self-esteem, lower average of indirect strategies would be used. Thus, the findings of Eta

test suggested that there was a meaningful and significant positive relationship between the overall indirect strategy use and the EFL learners' level of self-esteem (Eta =.922,  $p < .05$ ). Moreover, it was found that the relationship between indirect strategies and level of self-esteem was stronger than the relationships between self-esteem and direct strategies. Figure 2 visually compared the relative frequencies among the four groups with different levels of self-esteem in terms of their use of indirect strategies.



*Figure 2: The Relationship between the Overall Indirect Strategy Use and the EFL Learners' Level of Self-esteem*

As shown in Figure 2, the plurality of the use of indirect strategies comes from those who reported fairly good self-esteem in Sorensen self-esteem questionnaire.

## 6. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine the preferred language learning strategies of Iranian female EFL learners and to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and language learning strategies. The results indicated that learners with four different levels of self-esteem employed meta-cognitive strategies as the most ones. Moreover learners with higher level of self-esteem tended to use direct strategies more and the learners with lower level of self-esteem tended to use them less. Furthermore, it was found that by increasing the level of self-esteem, higher average of indirect strategies would be used, and by decreasing the learners' level of self-esteem, lower average of indirect strategies would be used. The relationship between indirect strategies and level of self-esteem was also found to be stronger than the relationship between direct strategies and self-esteem.

Since language learning strategies and high self-esteem have a crucial role in resolving the communication breakdowns and achieving communicative competence, it is up to the learners themselves to take actions to boost and struggle for self-esteem and employ different language learning strategies as the first step to promote their efficiency. Thus, it is quite important for teachers and parents to help learners build up positive self-esteem concepts.

Findings can help teachers spend time working on understanding their students, helping them to have a clear picture of their own strength and weakness, and thus building up a high self-esteem in language learning. Teachers could also help students set concrete and realistic learning goals, and by reaching their goals, students' self-esteem in language learning will be enhanced. They can also encourage learners with low self-esteem to use more suitable language learning strategies. High and yet positive level of self-esteem can support learners in persisting their learning, and cause students invest more effort in learning. Through the findings, teachers and curriculum developers may realize the issues of self-esteem and language learning strategies as the determining factors in developing learners' language proficiency and communicative competence so that they can provide the appropriate support and instruction based on the learners' needs.

Since this study investigated the relationship between language learning strategies and self-esteem in female learners, it is hoped that the future studies focus on both genders in order to compare their learning strategies and level of self-esteem. Moreover, it is suggested to study on

more participants from different contexts of universities and institutes to achieve better and more desired results.

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## **Title**

# **The Effects of Metadiscourse Markers on EFL Learners' Performance in Letter Writing**

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## **Abstract**

Metadiscourse features are those facets of a text which make the organization of the text explicit, provide information about the writer's attitude toward the text content, and engage the reader in the interaction. This study aims to investigate the impact of explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers on qualitative and quantitative aspects of a group of learners' writing performance on a letter-writing task. The participants of this study were 50 undergraduate students majoring in English Language Teaching at the University of Najafabad. To elicit the relevant data, participants were given a pretest of letter writing performance to check their initial knowledge and unprompted use of metadiscourse markers. The participants were divided in two groups, randomly. One of the groups was then exposed to explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers for six successive sessions. Finally, a post test measuring their letter writing performance with metadiscourse markers in focus was administered. The results indicated generally that explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers significantly improves EFL learners' writing performance, especially in the field of letter writing. The findings call practitioners to pay more serious attention to metadiscourse markers in making EFL curricula.

**Keywords:** Explicit Instruction, Language Proficiency, Metadiscourse Markers, Letter Writing

## 1. Introduction

Metadiscourse markers are aspects of a text which exclusively guide readers toward the meanings intended by the author. Metadiscourse markers, also sometimes called 'transitions', are a good way to show the reader how ideas in a sentence are connected to ideas in a previous sentence.

This paper explores the role of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers in improving the writing performance of EFL learners. Metadiscourse will be employed as an analytical framework since it is one of the devices that help a piece of written text to be more effective by directing readers through the text so that the writer's stance and the text are better understood.

Metadiscourse was first defined by Williams (1981) as "writing about writing". Vande Kopple (1985) also referred to metadiscourse as "discourse about discourse or communication about communication". Hyland (2004) maintained that metadiscourse help authors interact with their audience in order to communicate successfully with them. Moreover, Hyland (1998) contended that metadiscourse markers are integral to the text. In other words, they cannot be removed or changed at will. In a quantitative study, Hyland (1998) examined metadiscourse markers in 28 research articles and found 373 instances of metadiscourse in each research article. In another textual analysis, Hyland (1999) explored metadiscourse markers in 21 textbooks and found 405 instances of metadiscourse markers in each text, around one per 15 words. Hyland (1999) has concluded that metadiscourse play an important part in communication. Crismore (1984) has defined metadiscourse as "discoursing about spoken or written discourse" (p.66). She has added that metadiscourse provides readers or listeners with direction rather than information.

As Hyland (2005) states in his book on metadiscourse, "the term metadiscourse was coined by Zelling Harris in 1959 to offer a way of understanding language in use, representing a writer's or reader's attempts to guide a receiver's perception of a text"(3). The concept has been further developed by writers such as Williams (1981), Vande Kopple (1985) and Crismore (1989).

Indubitably, the advantages of metadiscourse are many. For instance, discourse structuring functions of metadiscourse guide readers through a text and help them organize content while reading, thus creating global comprehension (Crismore, 1989). Metadiscourse has been recognized as one of the major rhetorical features and strategies in the production of a text (Hyland, 1998). In fact, it "is not indispensable stylistic device which authors can vary at will. It

is integral to the contexts in which it occurs and is intimately linked to the norms and expectations of particular cultural and professional communities" (Hyland, 1998).

According to Vande Kopple (2002) metadiscourse refers to elements in texts that convey meanings other than those that are primarily referential. As Hyland (2004) states the importance of metadiscourse lies in its underlying rhetorical dynamics which relate it to the contexts in which it occurs.

Hyland (1998), in a study on research articles in four academic disciplines, sought to show how the appropriate use of metadiscourse crucially depends on rhetorical context. The study identified taxonomy of metadiscourse functions and suggested that metadiscourse reflects one way in which context and linguistic meaning are integrated to allow readers to derive intended interpretations, also metadiscourse provided writers with a means of constructing appropriate contexts and alluding to shared disciplinary assumptions.

Olivera et al. (2001) investigated metadiscourse devices used by copywriters to construct their slogans and headlines in selected women's magazines. The results showed that both textual and interpersonal metadiscourse help copywriters to convey a persuasive message under an informative mask.

Dahl (2004) investigated writer manifestation in three languages, English, French and Norwegian, and three disciplines, economics, linguistics and medicine, in research articles, to see whether language or discipline is the most important variable governing the pattern of metatext in academic discourse. The findings suggested that the language variable is the most important one within economics and linguistics, where English and Norwegian show very similar patterns, using much more metatext than French; within medicine, all three languages display a uniform pattern of little metatext.

Afros and Schryer (2009) investigated strategies and exponents of the promotional (Meta) discourse in natural and social science articles. The inquiry demonstrated that the distribution of promotional elements across article sections and moves in the two disciplines differed. On the whole, the study reconfirmed the advantage of specificity in teaching academic literacy advocated by many applied linguists and provided actual patterns that can be incorporated into the writing curriculum.

Dafouz-Milne (2007) explored the role of metadiscourse markers in the construction and attainment of persuasion. 40 opinion columns, 20 in English and 20 in Spanish extracted from two elite newspapers, the British *The Times* and the Spanish *El País*. Findings suggested that both textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers are present in English and Spanish newspaper columns, but that there are variations as to the distribution and composition of such markers, specifically in the case of certain textual categories (i.e. logical markers and code glosses).

Duen (2007) analyzed the use and distribution of self-mentions in 24 English and Spanish business management research articles. The results revealed greater use of self-mentions in English. The different results also suggested that the use of self-mentions in research articles is not only conditioned by the discipline to which the authors belong but also by the specific cultural context in which research articles are produced and distributed.

The analysis of the selected texts was closely based on Dafouz's (2003) taxonomy of interpersonal metadiscourse markers (see Table 1) and interactional metadiscourse markers. It is important to note that metadiscourse instances usually play a multifunctional role; therefore, in this research, metadiscourse markers were analyzed based on the primary function of each element in its particular context (see Dafouz, 2003).

Table1. Dafouz's (2003) classification system for interpersonal metadiscourse

Macro-category	Subcategory	Examples
Hedges: Withhold full commitment to the statements presented by the writer	Epistemic verbs Probability adverbs Epistemic expressions	May / might / it <u>must</u> be two o'clock Probably / perhaps / maybe It is likely
Certainty markers: Express full commitment to the statements presented in the text		Undoubtedly / clearly / certainly

Attributors: Mention explicitly the source of information and use these references with persuasive goals		„X“ states that... / As the Prime Minister claimed
Attitude markers: Express the writer's affective values toward the text and the reader	Deontic verbs Attitudinal adverbs Adjectival constructions Cognitive verbs	Have to / we <u>must</u> understand Unfortunately / remarkably It is absurd / it is surprising I feel/ I think / I believe
Commentaries: Help to establish reader-writer rapport through the text	Rhetorical questions Direct address to reader Inclusive expressions Personalisations Asides	What is the future of Europe...? <u>You</u> must consider, <u>dear</u> reader We <u>all</u> agree that / let <u>us</u> consider I do not want / he is telling <u>me</u> The presidential candidate preached proudly (and <u>falsely</u> ) to his voters

Following what was mentioned above, the present research aimed at investigating the impact of explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers on EFL learners' writing performance, especially in the field of letter writing.

## 2. Research Question and Hypothesis

Q: Does explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers have any significant impact on EFL learners' performance in letter writing?

H0: Explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers doesn't have any significant impact on EFL learners' performance in letter writing.

## 3. Methodology

As I stated above, the current research aimed mainly at investigating the impact of explicit instruction of metadiscourse on EFL learners' performance in letter writing. In this section, therefore, a brief profile of the participants, the instruments used, the procedures and measures applied for eliciting the necessary data will be presented.

### **3.1. Participants**

The participants in this study were 50 translation students, both male and female, and aged between 20 to 23 years. They were majoring in English Language Teaching at the University of Najafabad. They were divided into two groups, randomly. One of these groups was as a control group and the other as an experimental one. The control group was not taught any explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers, but the experimental one was.

### **3.2. Materials**

The materials used in this study comprised a) a pretest to assess their initial knowledge and use of metadiscourse markers, and b) a posttest to measure the participants' performance in letter writing after explicit instruction.

### **3.3. Procedures**

As to the procedures employed in this study, the population was randomly divided into two groups. Then, a pretest on letter writing was given to all participants. In this test, the two groups were asked to write three letters to three different audiences. Each participant was actually required to write three different letters in order to determine the extent of their initial knowledge and their degree of homogeneity in this regard.

One of the groups was then exposed to explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers in six successive sessions. They were initially provided and familiarized with a list of definitions and examples of the two categories of the taxonomy (i.e. textual and interpersonal metadiscourse) proposed by Hyland (2004). They were then repeatedly, and under the instructor's guidance, given opportunity during the instruction sessions to give synonyms for different types of metadiscourse and generate sentences using them and read texts containing metadiscourse markers. Participants were also frequently given sentences with deleted metadiscourse markers and were asked to supply the markers. They were given passages with metadiscourse markers time and again and were required to first identify them and then write down the function of each marker on a sheet of paper. The reinforcement of all such activities formed the "explicit



instruction" meant in this study. Finally, the letter writing posttest (i.e. writing three different letters with three different subjects) was administered to check the participants' achievement in terms of metadiscourse markers after having been exposed to explicit instruction. The participants' scores on the pre-test and post-test were then compared to find the degree of improvement of each group. The analysis and comparison of the test results are presented below.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Results

This section presents the results from the analysis of the obtained data. However, to bridge the results and the hypothesis of the research, below is a restatement of the null hypothesis mentioned earlier: H0: There is no significant relationship between explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers and EFL learners' performance in letter writing.

##### The null hypothesis

The null hypothesis states that explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers doesn't have any impact on EFL learners' performance in letter writing. Regarding this hypothesis, a Paired Sample T-Test was conducted to compare the means of the two sub-test results.

Each group in the study took a pretest and posttest on letter writing. The post-test was taken after the participants went through the necessary explicit instructions. Each student wrote three different letters to three different audiences. The mean score for each test was calculated to see how each learner performed on his/her pretests and after the 6 sessions of explicit instructions on the posttests. The results of the participants' pre-test and post-test were compared through Paired Sample T-Test. Paired Sample T-Test is used to see a group's performance on two different tests. Table 1 below presents the mean score of the pretest and posttest of the experimental group.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the experimental group

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair pre-test	14.0000	25	1.33907	.24448
1 post-test	15.5500	25	1.24810	.22787

Looking at table 1, one can clearly understand that the mean score on the pretest has improved. This obviously shows that explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers has affected the performance of students in letter writing.

By scanning the statistics of the Paired Sample T-Test, we should see whether this difference is considerable or not. Table 2 below clearly illustrates the significance of the resulting difference.

Table 2: Paired Sample T-Test experimental groups performance

						T	df	Sig (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% confidence interval of difference				
				lower	upper			
Pair pretest 1 posttest	-1.55000	.62076	.11334	- 1.7818	- 1.3182	-13.676	29	.000

As was mentioned before, this test was performed to discover the possible impact of explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers on EFL students' performance in letter writing. However, the mean difference between the two tests has come out to be almost noticeably different.

Table 3 presents the results of control group's performance in their posttest.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the control group

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair pretest	8.5625	25	2.47487	.43750
1 posttest	9.515	25	2.7193	.48072

In this table, we can see that the mean difference between the two tests for the control group was equal to -1.86.

Table 4: Paired Sample T-Test, control group's performance

						T	df	Sig(2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the difference				
				lower	upper			
Pair pretest 1	-2.85938	.63797	.11278	-3.08939	-3.62936	-25.354	31	.000

posttest								
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The mean difference between the two tests in the control group is not significant and is mostly for the instruction of the process method mentioned earlier, not metadiscourse markers. However, the mean difference between the two tests in the experimental group is more significant. That is due to the instruction of metadiscourse markers. Altogether, explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers does have an effect on the EFL learners' performance in letter writing. In other words, the performance of the EFL learners in letter writing was significantly related to the explicit instruction they received on metadiscourse markers; thereby the null hypothesis of the research was rejected.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

With regard to the analysis of the data in the previous section and the results thereof, the following significant conclusions can be drawn and discussed: The experimental group's performance in letter writing has improved significantly. The control group did not have any significant improvement in letter writing. The above conclusions for the two groups in the study confirm the major claim of this research that explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers in Iranian EFL courses is quite successful for improving learners' performance in letter writing. This strongly corresponds to Crismore's (1985) point of view that metadiscourse awareness has been very effective in foreign/ second language teaching classrooms and with various parts of language skills and components.

The findings support Simin and Tavangar's (2009) statement that, "metadiscourse instruction has a positive effect on the correct use of metadiscourse markers" (230), although there is no report in their study of explicit teaching of metadiscourse markers to their participants. The findings are also in line with Perez- Llantada (2003), who conducted research on the effect of metadiscourse techniques on learners' communication skills in university courses of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and observed that students became successful communicators with regards to metadiscourse strategies. A final word is that, first of all, this research can be a call to teachers, practitioners and researchers in language teaching and learning to pay more attention to metadiscourse as an important aspect of language. Secondly, the findings can guide teachers for improving EFL learners' performance in letter writing.

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## **Title**

# **Genre-based Discourse Analysis of Death Announcements and Obituaries in Iranian Newspapers**

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## **Abstract**

Obituary and death announcements are two important text genres. Based on multimodality point of view on textual analysis, three case studies have been conducted. First, the present study investigated various expressions of death announcement genre of men and women in Iran in order to find generic and schematic structures, common linguistic features, communicative functions, and generic components. A corpus of 200

death announcements (men=100, women=100) was randomly selected. In spite of some similarities between death announcements of men and women, some significant differences existed. The results revealed seven moves out of which six were obligatory and one was optional. However, there were significant differences between them including the length of the announcements and lexical selection. In second corpus study, first, third, seventh, fortieth days, and anniversary death announcements were compared in order to find available relationships. By analyzing 100 death announcements, the results found one more move. Furthermore, the third corpus study investigated 100 obituaries in newspapers and death announcements on walls in public places. Additionally, the lexico-grammatical features and schematic structure illustrated a series of socio-cultural values as well as Iranian and Islamic norms regarding men and women.

**Keywords:** men's and women's death announcements, obituaries, genre analysis, schematic structures, linguistic features, lexico-grammatical features

## 1. Introduction

Genre is a concept which is used in detailed formal and functional analysis. As Bhatia (2002) believes, genre is "multi-disciplinary" which is not only used in linguistic anthropology and discourse analysis, but also in cognitive science, sociology and even advertisement. It has been defined variously by different scholars. According to Dudley-Evans (1994), genre is a means of attaining a communicative goal in response to special rhetorical needs that will change based on the shifts in those needs. Swales (1990) describes genre as "a class of communicative events" which shares a set of communicative purposes as well as related structures, stylistic characteristics and content. Kress (1987) defines genre as "the term which describes that aspect of the form of the texts which is due to the effect of their production in particular social occasions" (p. 36). Genre analysis, according to Allison and Ruiying (2004), "explores discourse features in the broad context of the communicative event, and attempts to provide the rationale of the discourse features in terms of authors' publicly retrievable intentions and institutional conventions". Moreover, genre analysis explains why and how differently language is used in various cultures and defines the language in smaller constituents called moves. Recently, the significance of language in social life has been increased and there has been a great interest in

the identification of genres in "homely" discourses (Miller, 1984) including birth, wedding and death announcements which are constructed text genres in societies on a daily basis. According to Moses and Marelli (2004), death announcements "are one of the elements out of which literature cultures are built". One important type of genre texts is newspaper in which obituary announcements are published. As Nwoye (1992) points out, obituary announcements comprise particular communicative purpose of "informing the potential audience about deaths, and in some cases, funeral arrangements and other details".

## **2. Literature review**

Fries (1990a) compared English and German obituary announcements in daily newspapers. The results indicated that English and German obituary announcements include information such as the name of the deceased, death announcing, time and place of death, age of the deceased as well as the announcer. According to Fries (1990a), the name of the deceased is the only obligatory part and the other parts are optional.

In another study, Nwoye (1992) considered death notices in Nigerian newspapers which were written in English and compared them with death announcements in English as well as German which were considered by Fries (1990a). Nwoye (1992) reported that an introduction, the name of the deceased, date, place, and manner of death, burial arrangement, survivors and some identification of the announcer or the sender are obligatory elements in Nigeria.

Al-Ali (2005) investigated different characteristics of two types of obituary announcements including normal death and martyr's death in Jordanian newspapers in order to consider what generic structures are common in them. Nine elements such as "opening, heading, announcing the occasion, identifying the deceased, specifying surviving relatives, situating circumstances of death, outlying funeral and burial arrangements, outlying arrangements for receiving condolences, and closing" were common in those two types of death announcements. Al-Ali also reported that martyr's death was different from normal death in that it was noticed as "martyr's wedding" and conveyed "promotion of the deceased". Fernandez (2006/2007) considered the figurative language used in obituary announcements and identified the devices that constituted the figurative language including hyperbole, positively as well as negatively loaded words,

metaphors, mitigating apology expressions, rhetorical questions and second person invocations. He concluded that metaphors were the mostly used literacy devices.

Gorshon (2009) reported that Irish and American obituary announcements have a lot of common linguistic devices. Also, the results revealed that adjectival as well as adverbial phrases were dominated ones. Watson (2008) stated four moves in obituary announcements including introduction, biography, a list of surviving relatives, and place and the time of wake and address of where condolences can be sent. According to Watson (2008), the last mentioned move is "additional information" and therefore it is optional.

Later, the result of another study by Harold, Crosby and Alhen (2009) revealed five moves of obituary writings such as announcements (including name of the deceased and cause of death), biographical information, survivor information, scheduled ceremonies, and a note of where people can send donations, gifts or condolences.

In a different study, Momani and Al-Refaei (2010) investigated the generic structures of wedding invitations in Jordanian culture to see the elements of this communicative purpose. Results revealed six obligatory moves including "opening, stating the name of people issuing the invitations, inviting the guest, identifying the groom and bride, ceremonial arrangements and closing" as well as two optional moves including "identifying celebrating families and notification". Afful (2012) considered 636 death announcements. The results revealed that five moves including "caption, a list of key members of the deceased's family and clan as well as organizations to which the deceased might have belonged, a profile of the deceased, the arrangements of the funeral activities, and a second list of family members only" are obligatory and two moves including "prescription of attire and extension of invitation" are optional. Moreover, Afful (2012) stated that schematic structure as well as the lexico-grammatical aspects included a set of socio-cultural values and standards of Ghanaians.

Recently, Barth, van Hoof and Beldad (2014) investigated 240 German and 240 Dutch obituary announcements. Based on the results, German and Dutch obituary announcements were significantly different in that Dutch obituary announcements used lesser illustrations, more general as well as funeral ceremony-related information than German obituary announcements.

### **3. Theoretical Framework and Social Context of the Study**



There is a distinction between an obituary and a death announcement. According to Fernandez (2006), the term "obituary" comes from the Latin word "obitus" meaning departure which refers to death announcements particularly those which are in newspapers. As Campbell (1971) points out, an obituary announcement includes the least information such as the deceased's name, date of birth, place of residence, date of death, and sometimes cause of death. A death announcement, on the other hand, is an advertisement of a person's death which is generally written by a family member or even a close friend. The latter is posted on walls in public places in Iran in order to attract greater attention of the public as well as to increase the public participation in the funeral or burial services of the deceased unlike obituary announcements. There are different types of death announcements especially in Iran. However, they can be classified into two major types including men's death announcements and women's death announcements. The present paper considers various representations as well as expressions regarding men's and women's death announcements in Iran in order to reflect on generic structures including organizational, linguistic and rhetorical structures as well as socio-cultural communicative functions which are presented in these social communicative samples of genre research.

Moreover, the present study focuses on Swalesian genre move analysis approach. Swales (1990) suggested a genre move analysis including three moves in order to scrutinize as well as describe the constituents of introductions in research articles including "establishing a territory, establishing a niche, and occupying the niche" (p.141). He proposed a systematic approach in order to examine genre using different "moves" within a text. According to Swales (1981), moves are segments of a text including a variety of linguistic elements such as syntax, lexicon, as well as illocutionary propositions which give consistency to the segments and indicate the discourse content. Therefore, the functional components of genres are likely to illustrate textual as well as lexico-grammatical aspects in order to simplify the recognition of genres. However, according to Mauranen (1993), these features do not constitute obligatory or definitory criteria for genres" (p.18). Genre move analysis is used in illustrating how the logical sequence of ideas is bound up by a set of writing conventions" (Kong, 1998). Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) present a multimodality approach on textual analysis. Based on what they stated, this approach rejects linguistic items as the only meaning-construction tool and refers to space, position, color, size, and picture as valuable semiotic tools.

According to Martin and Christie (1984) and Ventola (1989), genres consist of a series of moves in order to characterize the purpose of a socio-cultural practice in general. Therefore, death announcements can be analyzed as represented move structure of a text including recognizing generic component moves as well as examining the ways the functional components are utilized. Various moves have different sizes. A move generally "contains at least one proposition" (Connor and Mauranen, 1999). However, moves may contain one sentence, two sentences or more and even a clause or a phrase (Dobios, 1997; Swales, 1990). In Iran, death announcements as well as other announcements illustrate various kinds of genre texts including the generic aspects and also communicative functions.

## 4. Methodology and Corpus Construction

### 4.1 First Case Study: Men's and Women's Death Announcements

A sample of 200 death announcements of men and women (men=100, women=100) was randomly selected. After collecting the data, similarities and differences in generic components within various types of Iranian death announcements were considered. As mentioned earlier, the present study focuses on Swales' (1990) genre move analysis method within which the schematic structures of death announcement genre including communicative goals, sub-rhetorical components (moves), lexico-grammatical features and content were investigated. Moreover, Kress and Van Leeuwen' (1996) perspective on textual analysis was considered.

#### 4.1.1 Generic Component Moves and Linguistic Features

Having analyzed the data, seven component moves were found comprising men's and women's death announcements. These seven component moves are opening, stating the announcer, characterizing the deceased, stating the close relatives, outlining funeral and burial arrangements, outlining arrangements for receiving condolences, and a list of family members. Table 1 presents the average number of analyzed moves for men's and women's death announcements.

**Table 1.** *The Average Number of Analyzed Component Moves for Men's Death Announcements (MDA) and Women's Death Announcements (WDA)*

Component Moves of MDA	Number of Moves	Component Moves of WDA	Number of Moves

1. Opening	100	1. Opening	100
• Type 1	100	• Type 1	100
• Type 2	23	• Type 2	18
• Types 3	97	• Types 3	98
• All Three Types	17	• All Three Types	14
2. Stating the Announcer	56	2. Stating the Announcer	72
3. Characterizing the Deceased	100	3. Characterizing the Deceased	100
4. Stating the Close Relatives	43	4. Stating the Close Relatives	64
5. Outlining Funeral and Burial Arrangements	100	5. Outlining Funeral and Burial Arrangements	100
6. Outlining Arrangements for Receiving Condolences	100	6. Outlining Arrangements for Receiving Condolences	100
7. A List of Family Members	100	7. A List of Family Members	100
• Type 1	41	• Type 1	22
• Type 2	59	• Type 2	78

#### 4.1.1.1 First Move: Opening

The first move found in men's and women's death announcements is opening which can be stated in different linguistic features. Having analyzed the data, it is found that this move has been stated in three types. The first type begins with direct quotations from the Holy Quran including one or two Quranic verses. Instances of the first type include verses such as *bismilaahir-raHmaaniraHiim (In the name of Allah)*, *huvalbaaghi (In the name of who He remains)*, *innalilahiwainnailayhirajiuun (We are from God and to Him we shall return)*. The second type opens with a translation of Quranic verses into Persian or Persian word, phrase, clause or a statement. For example, *Transition, Glory to Allah who gives or takes, Fare thee well, Called to glory*. The third type starts with a poem especially a couplet poem conveying sorrow, grief and sadness. It is worth noting that these three types may be in one death announcements or just two or one of them may be stated. If three or two types are stated, the order of presentation is optional. The openings can be written in bold, italic, indentation or underlining. Also, the size of them varies. However, all of them have a same content of the death announcement genre which is a report of death.

#### 4.1.1.2 Second Move: Stating the Announcer

The second move consists of stating the announcer by which it is meant the person who sets the notice of death who usually is a member of deceased tribe, family, official organizations or even

a close friend. Moreover, it includes most important members like family elders, leader of parties, or heads of clans. However, this move announces the death using declarative sentences and the linguistic feature varies. Instances include the following:

- ... announce the death of ..... regret to announce the sudden death of ...
- ... announce with the deepest of regrets ...

It is observed that the verb "announce" and the noun "death" are appeared in almost every men's and women's death announcements. Therefore, although the linguistic choices vary, some certain elements are always present and the various linguistic choices always convey a same report which is "a sense of loss" (Afful, 2012).

#### **4.1.1.3 Third Move: Characterizing the Deceased**

The third move is characterizing the deceased which includes first and last name and also the title (like doctor, leader, or engineer) of the person who has been died. It may be printed in boldface, or it may be capitalized, indented in a large size font as a separate line or any other visual effect may be made.

Moreover, one more element is included in this move, the photograph of the person who has been died. The photograph illustrates the age as well as the status of the deceased. In addition, in choosing the photograph of men, two types have been found. In the first type, the recent picture of the deceased is selected to show the exact age of the person who has been died. On the other hand, a picture of the person's youthful stage is selected in the second type. The reason may refer to the fact that many people can identify the deceased by the picture that shows the status of when he was young. Therefore, more condolences and sorrow may be received by more people.

#### **4.1.1.4 Forth Move: Stating the Close Relatives**

The forth move refers to stating the close relatives. This move is optional in that some men's and women's death announcements include the close relatives of the deceased especially if they have prestigious positions since the high positions reflect the social status of the deceased and also the relatives. Instances are as follows:

- ... the son of ..... the daughter of ..... the husband of ..... the wife of ...

#### **4.1.1.5 Fifth Move: Outlining Funeral and Burial Arrangements**

The fifth move refers to the arrangements for funeral prayers and burial plans. Therefore, relatives, friends and people are informed and are able to participate in them. The arrangements

include the information such as the date, time as well as the name of the mosque where the burial would take place and the funeral prayers would be presented. Various linguistic expressions with different font type are printed.

Based on the religion of Iranian and Muslims, the burials take place during the daytime for both men and women. Moreover, based on Islamic prescriptions and traditions for Muslims, the deceased is being washed, dried, purified, and then wrapped in a white cloth called *Kafan*. Sometimes, the dead body in *Kafan* is brought to the home of the deceased to say good bye to his/ her home and families before placing to the grave. Then the deceased is taken to a mosque so that the funeral prayers can be offered. While the participants offer the funeral prayers, they ask for God's forgiveness of the person who is died. Then the deceased is buried.

#### **4.1.1.6 Sixth Move: Outlining Arrangements for Receiving Condolences**

The sixth move includes arrangements and invitations for receiving condolences. This move includes the information about the date, the time, and the place where condolences would be received by the people who wish to extend their condolences to the families, relatives and friends of the deceased. The deceased's relatives distribute dates, tea, fruits or sweets. Each city has its own special sweets for this ceremony.

#### **4.1.1.7 Seventh Move: A List of Family Members**

The seventh move is a list of family members starting from the close relatives. This move is the final move and unlike Afful (2012), there is no component move called closing move including some Quranic verses. Two types of this move have been observed. In the first type, this move differs from the fifth move including stating the close relatives in that unlike the fifth move which only comprises heads of the family or elders as Watson (2008) calls "primary family", this component move is a list of the deceased families, relatives and close friends as Watson (2008) called "secondary family". This move includes members such as wife or husband, children, uncles, aunts, grandchildren, great grandchildren, in-laws, cousins, nieces as well as nephews. As it is stated earlier, this list starts from close family members to distant family members. However, in the second type, the name of the close family can only be stated and a short phrase such as *all close relatives*, or *all related families* can be followed.

#### **4.1.2 Socio-cultural Factors Influencing the Structure of Announcement Genres**

Each religion and each society has some factors that should be believed and followed by the people of that religion or society. As Good enough (1984) states, "a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members" (p. 36). Death notices like other homely genres are "social interaction in one's native culture with a rhetorical purpose governing their generic construction" (Al-Ali, 2005).

These social interactions include traditions, conventions, customs, and practices which apply constraints both on content as well as formal organizations of the death announcements. Hence, their interpretations receive an outstanding significance from their relation to the culture to which they belong. In Iran, family is a particular type of society and a basic unit that affects all generic component moves of death announcements. Moreover, communicative and rhetorical choices as well as purposes of genres convey not only the social factors of the participants, but also the religious beliefs of them since in Sapir's (1949) perspective, culture represents both socially inherited factors and religious aspects. Therefore, social as well as religious constituents which have been appeared in the structure of death announcement genres are presented.

Considering all the moves presented above, first significant difference between men's and women's death announcement genres has been found regarding differences in selecting words in these two types of death notices. Words selected for men are mostly Persian words, however; the words which have been chosen for women were mostly Arabic words. The reason can be referred to the fact that Quran is written in Arabic and the openings of the death announcements are also Quranic verses or translation of the verses into Persian. Another significant difference has been found in men's and women's death announcements regarding the photograph. No women's death announcements included a photograph. It refers to the religion as well as the culture of Muslims. The picture of the women should not be seen by men even the deceased. Instead, pictures of flowers, candles, birds or the same things are put. Furthermore, the third difference is that in contrast to Afful (2012) and like what Watson (2008) and Harold et al. (2009) found in their death announcements regarding the presence of features like hobbies as well as challenges confronted by the deceased, such thing have been found in only some Iranian men's death announcement genres.

#### **4.2 Second Case Study: Death Announcements of First, Third, Seventh, Fortieth Days, and Anniversaries**

#### **4.2.1 Socio-cultural Factors Related to First, Third, Seventh, Fortieth Days and Anniversaries**

The social history of human is full of rituals and ceremonies in which man, by their help, has tried to improve their lives. Fears, hopes and dreams can be found behind these rituals. Rituals are important aspects of social identity in different nations and represent us how people look at life and what issues are important for each nation. Death and mourning rituals reflect religious and cultural beliefs and humanity desires. Thus, they are among the most important aspects of social identities of nations. Moreover, belief in the soul and life after death has been existed in various forms across the world including religious Christian and Muslim Communities like Iran. Based on this belief, deceased are put in graves in Iran and in other Muslim countries. Also, the deceased are buried at a depth which does not exceed 20 cm and in a curved shape. The deceased are buried so that the entire body is pulled to the side of the abdomen. Today, rituals and ceremonies are held related to the death of relatives and close friends which are known as mourning and funeral rituals. There exist several particular ceremonies like burial ceremonies, the third night, the seventh night, the fortieth night and the anniversary ceremonies which held on the first day, the third day, the seventh day, the fortieth day and anniversaries, respectively.

##### **4.2.1.1 Ceremonies of the Third, seventh, fortieth, and anniversaries**

The ceremonies of the third day, seventh day, fortieth day and anniversaries are held in order to preserve the memory of the dead, respect them and relieving the survivors. Therefore, third day, seventh day, fortieth day, and anniversary commemorations for the departed come from tradition and it is accepted to be a customary tradition. It is said that the soul sits at the head of its deceased and has a beam until the third day. On the fourth day, if the deceased was a righteous and pious person, the result of his or her actions comes to the deceased as a beautiful, fragrant and beautiful heart person who cannot be found in the entire world and crosses the deceased from the As-Sirat Bridge. However, if the deceased is unrighteous and sinful, his or her acts come to him or her as an ugly and smelly person who cannot be found in the entire world and make him or her fall in the fire of the Hell.

According to Islamic beliefs, the As-Sirat Bridge is a bridge which every person must pass on the Yawn ad-Din (the Day of Doom) in order to enter Paradise. It is thin as a hair and sharp as the sharpest knife and makes the sinners fall into the fire of the Hell which are below this bridge.

It is believed that activities that the family members do after the death of a person can affect the process of evaluating the deceased actions. Therefore, the families of the deceased do whatever they can to sooth the soul of the deceased who has not yet joined the world of souls. In order to do so, they prepare different kinds of foods in the third day, seventh day, and fortieth day funeral ceremonies. Today, those who take part at the funeral of the deceased are considered as the guests of the deceased and are best served.

Moreover, the Holy Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him) has pointed out the importance and high position of the Muslim in the world and he has said that when a Muslim dies, the earth weeps and mourns for his loss for forty days. Holding upthird, seventh, fortieth and also anniversary ceremonies do not conflict with Sharia rules, but it is consistent with the order of Islam to commemorate the dead and send spiritual gifts to them if it is devoid of extravagance, squander and heavy expenditure. Spiritual gifts which are organized in almost all of these ceremonies include praying, reciting Quran, holding charities and holding up the supplies of these ceremonies.

#### **4.2.2 Theoretical Framework**

A sample of 100 death announcements of first day, and 100 death announcements of third, seventh, fortieth, and anniversaries were randomly selected. After collecting the data, similarities and differences in generic components within these types of Iranian death announcements were considered. All seven moves which have been mentioned above for men's and women's death announcements were more or less observed. However, there was one more move which was not presented in first-day death announcement and it was "specifying the passed days of death".

##### **4.2.2.1 Generic Component Moves and Linguistic Features**

###### **4.2.2.1.1 Specifying the Passed Days of Death**

It is common that the family of the deceased held arrangements on third, seventh, fortieth, and anniversaries based on the culture of Iranian and Muslims. Therefore, some phrases or sentences such as *Seven days passed*, *Forty days passed*, or *one year passed* are written on third, seventh, fortieth days and anniversary death announcements. The font and size of this move vary.

#### **4.3Third Case Study: Obituaries**

A sample of 100 obituaries was randomly selected. Then, Swales' (1990) genre move analysis approach regarding announcement genre including communicative goals, sub-rhetorical



components (moves), lexico-grammatical features and content were investigated. In addition, Kress and Van Leeuwen' (1996) perspective on textual analysis was considered.

Obituaries have been found in two types. The first one is printed in newspapers by close family members of the deceased to announce the death and the second type is written by relatives, close friends, heads of offices, organizations or coworkers in order to illustrate their sorrow and grief to the family of the deceased. Moreover, there is another reason. Coworkers, members of offices and organizations publish obituaries in newspapers and also print them on billboards or banners in order to attract the attention of the survivors and in turn to promote their job positions. The existence of the first type is rare nowadays since death announcements have taken its place. Therefore, the focus of the present study is on the second type. However, the adverts are paid for by family members, friends, coworkers and members of offices and organizations or everyone who wants to publish obituaries in newspapers.

#### **4.3.1 Generic Component Moves and Linguistic Features**

##### **4.3.1.1 First Move: Opening**

Having analyzed the obituaries, some similar and different moves have been observed. The first move which has been also found in death announcements is opening. Again, openings can be Quranic verses, translation of them into Persian or a couplet of a poem.

##### **4.3.1.2 Second Move: Addressing the Close Relatives**

Second move (which has not been observed in death announcements) is addressing the close relative of the deceased to whom the obituary is written to illustrate the sorrow of the writer. Moreover, the social position of the person comes after the name.

##### **4.3.1.3 Third Move: Stating Sentences to Show Sincerity**

Third move (which has not been found in death announcements) is stating some sentences to the deceased's family in order to show the sincerity of the writer.

##### **4.3.1.4 Forth Move: Stating the Announcer**

And finally, the fourth move which has been also observed in death announcements is stating the announcer. The full name and the social position of the announcer are printed at the end of the obituaries in order to show the high-ranking prestigious of the deceased family as well as the announcer. The announcer may be one person or a list of people.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study conducted three corpus studies. The first corpus study analyzed various men and women death announcements in Iran to find generic and common schematic structures as well as linguistic features in them and also communicative functions expressed by their generic components. As a result, corpus of 200 death announcements (men=100, women=100) was randomly selected. Based on the results, some similarities in death announcements of men and women were found. However, there were significant differences between them including the length of the announcements and lexical selection. The results revealed seven moves (opening, stating the announcer, characterizing the deceased, outlining funeral and burial arrangements, outlining arrangements for receiving condolences, and a list of family members) out of which six (opening, stating the announcer, characterizing the deceased, stating the close relatives, outlining funeral and burial arrangements, outlining arrangements for receiving condolences, and a list of family members) were obligatory and one (stating the close relatives) optional.

In addition, three significant differences were found. First significant difference between men's and women's death announcement genres has been found in selecting words for these two types of death notices. Words which were selected for men were mostly Persian words. However, the words which have been chosen for women were mostly Arabic words. The reason can be referred to the fact that Quran is written in Arabic and the openings of the death announcements are also Quranic verses or translation of the verses into Persian. Another significant difference which has been found in men's and women's death announcements referred to the photograph. No women's death announcements included a photograph. It refers to the religion as well as the culture of Muslims. The picture of the women should not be seen by men even the deceased. Instead, pictures of flowers, candles, birds or the same things are put. Furthermore, the third difference was that in contrast to Afful (2012) and like what Watson (2008) and Harold et al. (2009) found in their death announcements regarding the presence of features like hobbies as well as challenges confronted by the deceased, such thing have been found in only a few Iranian men's death announcement genres. Moreover, the second corpus study compared first, third, seventh, fortieth days, and anniversary death announcements in order to find relationships among them. Therefore, 100 death announcements have been analyzed.

Base on the results, one more move was found which was not found in first-day death announcement and it was "specifying the passed days of death".

Finally, the third corpus study considered obituaries in newspapers and death announcements on walls in public places in order to find similarities and differences between them. A corpus of 100 obituaries from Iranian newspapers was selected. Opening, addressing the close relatives, stating sentences to show sincerity, and stating the announcer were found as moves regarding obituaries.

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## **Title**

# **Sociocultural Theory in Second Language Acquisition: Tenets and Pedagogical Implications in an EFL Setting**

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## **Abstract**

The rise of sociolinguistic and contextual approaches in L2 research over the past decade reflects a growing recognition that learning a language is a more complex process than merely acquiring linguistic structures. Although a lot of attention has been paid to linguistic and cognitive side of the issue in SLA, language socialization as a newly emerged approach does not seem to have caught the eyes of those involved in the profession of language teaching and pedagogy despite its strong theoretical supports. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory has been widely referred to in the field of second language learning (SLL) research (e.g. Donato, 1994; Haas, 1996; Ohta, 2000; Swain, 2000; Warschauer & Kern, 2000). Learning, from perspective of sociocultural theory of mind, is not information processing carried out by individuals. It is, instead, a form of language socialization between individuals who try to collaboratively co-construct the type of knowledge, here language, through the process of mediation by means of language as a semiotic tool. Adopting the tenets of the theory offers researchers

theoretical perspectives to examine language learning as a social practice, considering students as active participants in constructing learning processes. To this end, the present study, aims at exploring the central concepts of sociocultural theory. Besides, the pedagogical implications of the theory and its tenets in an EFL setting is highlighted.

**Keywords:** Sociocultural Theory, EFL Settings, Vygotsky, Pedagogical Implications

## **1- Introduction**

A substantial progress has been made in developing a model of the sociolinguistic processes that inform second language acquisition. This model is supported by empirical evidence on the relationship between social context and second language use and acquisition, which shows that learners' second language (L2) input and processing of L2 input in social settings are socially mediated, that social and linguistic context affect linguistic use, choice, and development, and that learners intentionally assert social identities through their L2 in communicating in social contexts (Firth & Wagner, 1997). According to sociocultural theory, learning is mediated by cultural artifacts of which language is the most important and of utmost priority. As Anton and Di Camilla (1999) put it, language and thought are bound together, with the language as the key semiotic tool that acts as a mediator for thinking both within the individuals and between individuals, i.e. language is a symbolic tool by which human beings interact with the world around and begin to make sense of it. Vygotsky (1981) emphasizes the interaction between people, their environment, and peers, helps to activate student's learning in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), internalize the learning process, and eventually construct development. Learning is first seen as social than individual, first inter-mental and then intra-mental. That is, learning happens on two planes, social and mental. On the social plane, the learner, by help of experts and other assistant groups including artifacts, especially language, try to first co-construct knowledge in the external world, and then, through verbalization and collaborative dialogue (Swain, 2000) internalizes the socially constructed thought. For this process of external construction of thought and its subsequent transmitting to the mind, language acts as a mediator, as a tool which helps to shape the thought.

The key component of sociocultural theory is mediated learning. In view of Vygotsky and followers Van Lier, (2003); Lantolf (2000); and Wells (1999) among others, learning is a process

of joint constructive interaction mediated by tools such as numbers and arithmetic, art, music, and most important of all, language. Mediation is defined as, "to act as a peace maker between opposing poles" (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2007). In fact, Sociocultural theorists strongly believe the fact that a child can learn and improve his/her own abilities in proximity of mediating tools and without the presence of the tools, it is not possible for humans to act directly on the world (Lantolf & Appel, 1994) and the peace maker or mediator is the prerequisite for acting upon the world. Mind is, in Vygotsky's tradition, mediated and human consciousness is a mediated mental activity. In fact, it is through the mediation of psychological tools (Vygotsky, 1981) that people control their physical and mental behavior. Among those psychological tools, language as the most outstanding one serves as a mediator for individual's mental activity. Here, it is of significance to know that Vygotsky (1981) makes a distinction between language as the most fundamental psychological tool, and other physical tools which support the cognitive development of the human being. Language, unlike physical tools by means of which people act upon the world, is a symbolic tool for both acting upon the world and for development of mental activities (Aljefreh & Lantolf (1994); Lantolf & Appel (1994). It is through the process of mediation of external activities that social thoughts are transformed into mental ones. Lantolf (2000a) refers to three types of mediation: mediation by others in social interaction, mediation by self through private speech, and mediation by artifacts for example tasks and technology, and the essence of sociocultural theory lies in the fact that learners can appropriate mediation (make them adjustable to the potential mental ability of the learners and internalize them) as their symbolic tools through those three mediating means.

In the present paper, the authors first try to shed some light on the key contributing factors to sociocultural theory ( scaffolding, activity theory, ZPD, from other regulation to self-regulation, internalization from inter-psychological to intra-psychological functioning , collaborative dialogue, and contingency among others ), and then, discuss the relevance of those sociocultural tenets to learning especially L2 learning in EFL contexts where exposure to enough required L2 input is rare. Thereafter, the pedagogical implications of the components of sociocultural theory for SLA classes will be brought under the spotlight.

## **2-Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**

Zone of proximal development is one of the key components in the tradition of sociocultural theory. Vygotsky (1978) defines the ZPD as the difference between the child's developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development under the adult guidance or in collaboration with other peers. Here, the concept of collaboration represents the fact that the kind of interaction which is balanced between the two parties could not be within the learner's ZPD, and therefore not to the advantage for any potential development. That is, we cannot talk of collaboration and development unless the tool upon which the two parties are supposed to act upon the world is potentially supporting for the less able party, the learner. In fact, scaffold guidance which is the primary feature of learning process (Vygotsky, 1978) in a parent-child conversational dyad is considered interactional (collaborative in sociocultural SLA terminology), when knowledge imbalance is central to the nature of scaffolding and collaborative assistance as such (Wells, 1999). One partner must necessarily know more than the other and must approach the teaching dynamic with the final goal of having the person receiving scaffolding no longer in need of any assistance or collaboration.

In fact, as one of key concepts in sociocultural theory, ZPD has received a lot of attention, and as a consequence, different terminologies have emerged within three decades. Swain (2000) refers to the kind of dialogue contributing the potential development of the learner as "collaborative dialogue". Wells (1999) has chosen to use the phrase "problem-solving dialogue." Still, Lantolf goes further to define it as a "the difference between what a person can achieve when acting alone and what the same person can accomplish when acting with support from someone else or from a cultural artifact". Wells (1999) emphasizes the fact that ZPD is not just for the less skillful member; it is an opportunity for learning with and from others and applies potentially to all the participants. According to Lantolf and Aljafreh (1994), in the ZPD, a learner performs above his or her level of individual competence with the assistance of another; development occurs as the learner acts with increasing independence.

In a nutshell, the key concept which lies in the words of those who have referred to ZPD is that there is some sort of potential ability within the learner who needs collaboration to trigger off and cause subsequent development, and that is the nature and the implementing process of that assistance which marks the critical steps taken to the benefit of the under-assistance person.



However, related to the concept of ZPD within the sociocultural literature are two more socioculturally-related key terms, namely scaffolding and other regulation which will be next brought under the spotlight.

### **3- ZPD, Scaffolding, and Other regulation**

Scaffolding, in fact, in neo-Vygotskian discussions has been developed as a required step for other regulation within the developer's ZPD which is most helpful for appropriation of new concepts. It is through scaffolding, developmentally appropriate assisted performance in Swain's terms, that the learner is provided with the required ZPD through collaborative dialogue (Swain, 2000). Scaffolding, the provision of developmentally appropriate assistance, is, in fact, not only dependent upon attention to what the peer interlocutor is able to do, but upon the sensitivity to the person's readiness for support, which is communication through subtle interactional cues.

In this regard, one can claim that scaffolding is not that simple when the assistant is going to regulate the person under development. Learning or functioning, which for Vygotsky is a socially situated activity, appears on two planes, first on inter-psychological plane which needs to be skillfully other-regulated through scaffolding, and then on inter psychological plane which needs to be internally self-regulated through private and inner speech.

By far, research on scaffolding in language learning has demonstrated how learners who are working together reach a higher level of performance by providing assistance to one another (Brook, 1992; Donato, 1994). In sum, scaffolding and other regulation are two sides of the same coin called socially appropriate assistance that can push the learner's current ZPD forward so that the learner can appropriate and subsequently internalize the potentially ready-to-catch concepts and functions. When it comes to language learning, especially in EFL contexts, despite the viewpoints of mainstream SLA which target the linguistic elements as processes to be transformed into intake, scaffolding within the ZPD of the under-assistance person contains all socially appropriate variables which in line with linguistic ones become the focus of collaboration.

#### **4-From Appropriation to Internalization**

The essence of sociocultural theory is to appropriate the symbolic tool, language, through the three mediating types clarified by Lantolf (2000a), that is mediation by others, by self, and by artifacts. It is, in fact, through scaffolding the learners by collaborative and problem solving dialogue (Swain, 2000; Wells, 1999) adjusted by those mediation types that internal mediation is brought about. To help the learners make the ZPD appropriate to their own ability level, loads of reformulations of incorrect utterances may take place during the scaffolding process. So, for the input to become intake, terminology taken from mainstream SLA, or in a sociocultural perspective, to become mentally appropriated and internalized, a cyclical process of formulation and reformulation occurs in lieu of collaborative dialogue and scaffolding and within the ZPD of the learner.

As Donato (1998) discusses, the expert or collaborator, through optimized collaborative dialogue, provides the learner with the opportunity to use language and more importantly to reflect on his/her own language. The co-constructed dialogue represents a cognitive activity which serves as a transitional mechanism from the social to the internal plane of functioning. Here, appropriation comes about as a result of collaborative dialogue aimed at problem solving and hence knowledge building and ultimate internalizing. When one of the participants utters something, the saying and what is said, process and product, provide an objective for reflection. The saying is the cognitive activity, attempt to appropriate or absorb, concepts in the learner's terms and the outcome is the ultimate internalized product. By means of constant saying and reflecting on what is said, knowledge is co-constructed and internalization takes place. So, the responsibility of the collaborator is both complicated and sensitive in lieu of the fact the he/she should professionally know how, through physical administrative and symbolic tools, make the social speech, with varying degrees of difficulty, appropriate to the potential mental level of the learner so that it becomes internalized with minimum challenge and illogical effort.

To add more, as far as collaborative assistance and instruction in EFL settings is concerned, since exposure to target language as a symbolic tool is not sufficient, the appropriation of accessible input becomes more critical and hence requires special professionals who are familiar with the tenets of development well-highlighted under the guidelines of sociocultural SLA.

## **5-Collaborative dialogue and contingency**

The notion of collaborative dialogue is of special importance for proponents of sociocultural SLA. According to Vygotsky (1978), in sociocultural learning, individuals are not constrained by their own comprehension. Instead, teachers and learners are afforded opportunities to mediate and assist each other in the creation of the ZPD in which each party learns and develops. That is the focus is not on just linguistic input which is made comprehensible by assistance from the teacher. Rather, both the teacher and the learner are essentially involved in the social practice of the assistance that is shaped, constructed, and influenced within interactional and institutional context (Donato,1988;1994). To this end, collaborative dialogue and contingency are two types of phenomena that come to the fore. Collaborative dialogue, which according to Merrill Swain mediates acquisition, is a dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem solving and knowledge building. Here, learning a language is seen the same as other kinds of learning in which the learner goes to any length to overcome the problem, to be able to comprehend and be comprehended, and to build the required knowledge through interaction, collaboration, participation, and creation of knowledge by means of social and mental tools. In this vein, the notion of "affordance" or ecological social interaction from the Van Lier ( 2002) is of appropriateness stating that comprehensible input or output as feedback (as used in mainstream SLA) just focus on language as a process, whereas , in sociocultural SLA, language is seen as a tool , symbolic, which besides other artifacts causes knowledge building and cognitive development. However, one must not forget the fact that collaborative dialogue as a key contributor to language development in Sociocultural SLA is determining whenever there is enough contingency, moment to moment contribution and reflection between teachers and learners, which in itself, as referred to in the previous topic, is of utmost sensitivity and requires special professionalism so that optimum internalization and knowledge building occur. That is the experts must rephrase and modify their instruction according to the type of feedback they receive from the learners through questions and symbols of misunderstanding, and this kind of rephrasing, modification, feedback adjustment and reactions to symbols of misunderstanding make use of tasks viable in sociocultural SLA.

## **6- Use of Tasks as Social Tools of Mediation and Development**

In Sociocultural SLA, language learning involves both the means for mediating learning; that is, the tools, and the language itself; i.e., the object (Ellis, 2004). As Merrill Swain puts it, language learning is how to use language to mediate learning. The type of mediation which according to Lantolf (2000a), as referred to previously in this article, is highlighted as three kinds, namely mediation by the self, by others, and by artifacts, technology, and tasks among others, as appropriate for internalization and ultimate creation of language knowledge. Of course, the fact that must not be forgotten is that tasks as social tools can play an essential role in all three kinds of mediation which are seen as the essence of sociocultural theory of mind since it is through these kinds of external mediations 'tasks' that internalization, appropriation, and subsequent creation can come about. Here, as (Sfrad, 1998) puts it, sociocultural theorists prefer to use metaphor of "participation" rather than "acquisition" to emphasize the fact that development, rather than learning, is not so much a matter of taking in and the possession of knowledge, but rather of the taking part in social activity. In this regard, and according to Lantolf (2000a), the development is about the appropriation by either individuals or groups of the mediational means 'tasks among others' which are made present in the environment to improve control of the participants over their own mental functioning. In the emerging literature on the new paradigm to mainstream SLA which is labeled sociocultural SLA by Lantolf (2000a), the computational metaphor of SLA, the idea of human mind as a black box containing the knowledge which results from processing linguistic input which will later be accessed for the desired output, is somehow going out of favor. The long history of research and practice within the long-term-surviving period of mainstream SLA, which has been mostly focusing on input, interaction, output, and linguistic forms and mostly target language as an object of investigation seems to be in need of revision, re-conceptualization, and re-application in the domain of newly-emerged sociocultural SLA which emphasizes the fact that language is both knowledge "object of investigation" and use "how to apply that knowledge to create more higher-order knowledge."

To this end, to create more knowledge of higher-order mediated means, tasks can be seen as the vital social tools that come to the help of language which itself is a semiotic tool in need of other contributing tools to improve. In sociocultural theory, such frequently used key terms as intersubjectivity, sharing common motive and goals for performing the task, scaffolding and

collaborative dialogue, and ZPD suggest obligatory use of different kinds of tasks as external means at the service of internalization and appropriation. However, the notion of the task with regard to its complexity, both linguistic and cognitive, is of high sensitivity which, in itself, even becomes more sensitive when the learners and their different linguistic, personal characteristics come to interaction with such setting variables as cultural, social, and contextual ones. Some research, Nassaji and Cumming (2000) "on the nature of scaffolding and how it changes with increase in writing proficiency", Dickey and Anton (1997) "on the variation of type of contribution and scaffolding help that participants, here learners, provide for each other", Donato (1994) "on type of assisted collaboration in oral activity", and Lapkin (1998) "on joint solution to linguistic problems in a jigsaw task" can be seen as illuminating but not conclusive at all, regarding the nature of the task and one hundred and one related variables that come in during the process of development and co-construction of language knowledge.

To sum up, tasks, although proved to be vital for the participatory language development, cannot be linguistically defined and classified in advance, since, in the perspective of sociocultural SLA, it is not the task and external nature which is of value. Instead, the activity that results from a pre-planned task essentially during a moment to moment collaboration, verbalization, appropriation, and final internalization is of top priority, and this in turn, depends on social, cultural, contextual, and personal variables. That is, the same task performed in two different classroom settings will result in two different types of end results since the type of activity, scaffolding and collaboration, ZPD, Proficiency level of learners and teachers among others, make the task-performing conditions quite versatile and vulnerable to moment to moment changing conditions. So, instead of immature sensitivity to the type of input and materials designed for sociocultural instructional contexts, that are the nature of the task, the learning context, and the collaborator of the development which might take precedence in approaching future and with the results of more empirical investigation in the field.

## **7- Use of the L1 as a Collaborating contributor**

Many language teachers today were trained in a philosophy that espouses a learning environment in which the target language (L2) is to be used at all times. This philosophy applies to teachers as well as to students. Communicative approaches to language learning, because of the fear of L1

transfer, encourage students to engage as early as possible in creating meaning and say little about the role that the native language (L1) should play in the L2 classroom. Van de Craats, (2003); Spada and Lightbown, (1999); and Lightbown and Spada (2000) comment on the occurrence of such interference of L1 in second and foreign language learners within a communicative language learning context. On the contrary, collaboration in pair and small group is welcomed both in mainstream and sociocultural SLA. Studies such as (Swain & Lapkin, 1998; Pica, 1994; Storch, 1998 among others) have supported the use of pair and small group in the classroom. Krashen's input hypothesis, and Long's interaction hypothesis put emphasis on the sufficiency and necessity of input through interactive dyads including comprehension check, clarification request, and confirmation check as preconditions for successful language learning. Sociocultural SLA, on the other hand, purports to the type of language development which comes about as a result of contextually appropriate interaction. That is the learner, through socially developmental and contingent dyads, move from his/her own actual level of development to the level of potential development (Vygotsky, 1978). As Wells (1999) puts it, through such collaborative activities as pair and group work among learners within the potential ZPD of the less able member of the collaboratively assistant pair or group, the higher order cognitive development can come about. Yet, the sacred opinion of "no use of L1 in the L2 instructional settings" comes under critical attack when the collaborative assistance is between those who lack threshold L2 competence to hold and develop collaboration through the L2 language. Many studies (Brooks & Donato, 1994; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Upton & Lee-Thompson, 2001, Storch & Wiggleworth, 2003) indicate that L1 use is not detrimental factor to the learning development. According to Anton and Di Camilla (1998), L1 use in L2 instructional settings is a semiotic, psychological tool which enables the participants to perform three important functions: scaffolding, intersubjectivity, and private speech, which are among key sociocultural concepts to cognitive development. It seems that the use of L1 as a collaborative tool for L2 development seems quite necessary in the preliminary processes of L2 development, where the L2 learner lacks the threshold language related elements necessary for mutual comprehension between collaborator and those who are to be collaborated.

## **8-Sociocultural SLA and pedagogical implications for EFL settings**

As it was mentioned in the previous section, the usefulness of L1 as a cognitive and mediating learning tool has been gaining significance for some time already (Anton&DiCamilla, 1998; Cook, 2001; Swain &Lapkin, 2000;Macaro, 2009). Swain and Lapkin (2000) acknowledge that “to insist that no use be made of the L1 in carrying out tasks that are both linguistically and cognitively complex is to deny the use of an important cognitive tool” , and this in reality gains vital significance and credibility when it comes to language instruction in EFL settings. As it is not possible for in-an-EFL- setting instructor to stimulate the scaffolding in L2 within the ZPD of the language learner especially in the preliminary steps of L2 development where the learner lacks the ability to use the L2 as a symbolic tool, the use of the L1 as a contributing tool becomes practical. More importantly, within the perspective of sociocultural SLA, the language being learned is the object of investigation the same as any other kind of cognitive development. With the constant reformulation and reconceptualization of the concept “language proficiency”, language ability in Bachman's term (Bachman,1990), the credibility of near native speaker is losing its dependability, the phenomenon which weakens the position of such concepts of language transfer and interference in the learning process. Within the tenets of sociocultural SLA, it is the social appropriateness of the symbolic tool which comes as a necessity in the service of mutual collaboration and knowledge appropriation not near native competence/performance dichotomy supported by proponents of mainstream SLA. This, in turn, demands changes in attitudes of both instructors and testers, the kind of change which costs a fortune both with regard to time and money to come about, since it is very painstaking to retrain the involved personnel who have lived and gained experience within the pedagogical tenets of communicative competence approach to language teaching, the tenets which in principle relegate any probable use of learner's L1 in the classroom.

Another example of the cognitive mediating role of the symbolic tool L1 comes in the form of the inner speech of the learners (de Guerrero, 2005); as learners' silent monologues occur usually in L1 and constitute essential cognitive activities for both learning and thinking processes. According to sociocultural SLA, learning is mediated by various " cultural artifacts" 'of which language is the primary example. Language, looked at as a symbolic tool within sociocultural SLA, plays the most important part in the learning development, be that L2 development or any

kind of development. With this in mind, in the EFL settings, despite natural or ESL contexts where the learners are flooded with L2 input, the opportunity for providing sufficient required input for the L2 learners is sketchy and contextually situated. More specifically, as far as the functioning by experts within the ZPD of the novices, through scaffolding and application of appropriate tasks in the EFL setting is concerned, it is quite demanding that the L2 as language of collaboration and problem-solving is the most vital tool. So, it seems that in the expert/novice dyads, the L2 use is the key tool for appropriating and follow-up internalization of L2 chunks and routinized expressions, the process which needs support of the L1 as a supporting collaborator than obligatory hindrance.

## **9-Conclusion**

L2 learning has, during the past three decades, undergone different fluctuations. With introduction of psychology and processing constraints, alongside Chomsky's universal grammar, a great role was ascribed to the brain as the central processor of the input. Following the introduction of social dimensions and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mind, factors external to the learner gained significance. Following Vygotsky's terminology, it is suggested that learning, whether language or any other kind of learning, happens on two planes: first it happens on the social plane through interaction and collaboration between learners and collaborators by means of such social tools as scaffolding and assistance within the ZPD of the learner, and then it happens on the mental plane through such collaborating means as private speech and self-regulation. When it comes to L2 learning in EFL settings, due to lack of enough exposure and socially situated proper opportunity compared to ESL or natural settings, the role of collaborator (whether an expert or fellow students) and collaborating materials becomes highly evident. To this end, the notions "collaborative problem-solving" (Wells, 1999) and "Collaborative dialogue" (Swain, 2000) which refer to student's making utterances and responding to each other in a problem-solving contexts are eligible indicators of the fact L2 development in the contexts where use of L2 for the developing process is not practical, the L1 of the learners could come to the fore. And this in turn reveals the fact that the extent to which the L1 can and should be used in the foreign language classroom, particularly by learners, can be treated productively when seen through a sociocultural framework. Since, as was reiterated, language according to this theory is



more than simply a means by which we communicate messages. It is a mediating tool to create knowledge. This function of language as a tool determines to a great extent how we establish a framework for using L1 that minimizes the chance for transfer and negative language-learning results. However, despite rich theoretical underpinnings, sociocultural theories to language development are still in infancy in an empirical point of view. Thus, more research regarding the nature of collaboration, type of tasks, the degree of assistance within the learner's real ZPD and other related variables is required so that the tenets become more illuminating and contributory to the theoretical claims.

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## **Title**

# **EFL Teachers' Beliefs about Iranian High School Students' Language Learning Needs**

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## **Abstract**

The analysis of the needs of the learners is an indispensable part of any curriculum design in an educational setting. The needs can be addressed from different perspectives. This study aims to explore Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes toward the high school students' language learning needs. If there is a match between how they view these needs and what the course designers assume them, more achievement is likely to happen. Eighty six English language teachers who have been selected from different state high schools have been questioned. The items of the questionnaire designed for the teachers constituted the main measuring instrument of the study. The findings of this study show that Iranian high school English language teachers believe in form-focused instruction along with meaning-based instructions in language classrooms. The implications of the study can benefit both learners/teachers as well as course designers to reconsider the issues which are of great challenges to any educational curriculum in different educational setting.

**Keywords:** EFL Teachers' Beliefs, Iranian High School Students, Language Learning Needs

## **1. Introduction**

Firstly let see "what needs analysis" is. Berwick (1989:52) suggests a basic definition of need: a need is a "gap or measurable discrepancy between a current state of affairs and a desired future

state.” Also Richards (2001) defined needs analysis (NA) as a procedure to collect information about learners' needs. Although needs analysis (called needs assessment) is claimed to be a critical part of the process of curriculum planning in second language learning. Accordingly, the term "analysis of needs" was first used. Needs analysis procedure in the field of language teaching was first used by Michael West in a survey report published in 1926 (White, 1999). The term “Need Analysis” re-emerged during the 1970s as a result of intensive studies conducted by the Council of Europe team.

Research and studies conducted by the Council of Europe team resulted in the emergence of the communicative approach to language learning which replaced the situational approach dominant in language teaching and learning at that time. The Council of Europe team felt that successful language learning resulted not from mastering linguistic elements, but from determining exactly what the learner needed to do with the target language. One of the terms, which the team came up with, was the “Common Core”. The common core suggests that language learners share certain interests despite their different goals in learning foreign languages. The "common core" provides a basis one can rely on in conducting needs analysis in the general English classroom. Needs analysis has been neglected in the general English classroom and emphasized in ESP as Hutchinson and Waters (1987) suggested. Nunan (1988) classified needs analysis under two headings: “Objective” needs and “Subjective” needs. He assigned objective needs to be diagnosed by the teacher on the basis of the personal data of the learners. In the light of this data, the teacher can select or plan a suitable syllabus. Subjective needs are derived from the learners themselves and influence the teaching methodology of the syllabus. According to Alshumaimeri (2009), there are many different positive and negative views in conducting "needs analysis". From his point of view, some supporting views including: may motivate learners, values learner contribution, may help in setting more realistic objectives, very useful where many resources available, may help pupils to assess own needs better, greater awareness plus motivation may lead to develop greater competence; some preventing attitudes are: learners reactions to conducting needs analysis, may raise false expectations in learners, conflicts between expectations of learners, course designers, sponsors and teachers, needs analysis is basically subjective influenced by perceptions of person conducting it, more problematic with lower proficiency/ younger learners, time consuming and finally learner

perceptions of needs may be unrealistic. According to Nunan (1988: p.43), 'during the 1970s, needs analysis procedures made their appearance in language planning' and 'became widespread' in language teaching. In their first days, such procedures were used as "the initial process for the specification of behavioral objectives" which then explored different syllabus elements, such as functions, notions, lexis, in a more detailed manner. Savignon (1997) declares that during 1970s-1980s the impact of learner-centeredness in language teaching was evident with the development of communicative approaches which shifted the attention of the teaching-learning processes from language form to language function, or to language use in accordance with the needs of learners.

Contemporary English language teaching pedagogies have focused on developing learners' communicative competence and on promoting learning strategies and learner autonomy in language classrooms. This change in the approach to language teaching from traditional teacher-centered to more learner-centered (e.g. Nunan, 1988; Tudor, 1996), which according to Nunan's (1988) declaration, is an offspring of communicative language learning requires learners to participate and negotiate actively in meaningful interaction in order to interpret and construct meaning by themselves (Breen & Candlin, 1980). A number of domestic and foreign articles have been published on NA such as those by Jabbarifar and Elhambakhsh (2005), Basturkmen (1998), Berwick (1989), and West (1994).

If possible, it is important to use different research methods and sources to analyze needs. Although there have been a number of studies using student questionnaires to obtain student information, such data has limited depth. How cognizant are most 17 or 18-year-old learners of their own learning needs? How willing are they to state their views openly? In the light of such questions, this study tries to examine students' learning needs from their teachers' point of view. Thus, this study is an attempt to examine high school students' language learning needs, with a particular emphasis on the role of teachers' beliefs.

Virtually all English teachers have certain preconceived ideas or beliefs about how best to approach English teaching. They often come into an English classroom conditioned by their previous educational experiences, cultural backgrounds, and social interaction, which may further shape their beliefs about English teaching (Johnson, 1992; Richards & Lockhart, 1996; Smith, 1996). Since English teachers bring their unique sets of beliefs to bear in situations and decisions related to language teaching, these beliefs are usually recognized as significant

predictors for their actual teaching practices. Thus, understanding teachers' specific beliefs about English teaching can inform researchers and teacher trainers about how teachers are likely to implement their teaching, and how to provide appropriate teacher education programs.

Researchers studies regarding teacher education and development, has shown how teachers' beliefs play a critical role in affecting their teaching and the kinds of thinking and decision making that underlie their classroom practices (Moon, 2000; Richards, 1998; Richards & Lockhart, 1996; Smith, 1996; Trappes-Lomax & McGrath, 1999).

Furthermore, these beliefs are stable sources of teachers' reference, are built up over time, and are related to teachers' theories of language, the nature of language teaching practices, roles of themselves as teachers, and relationships with their students (Johnson, 1992; Richards, 1998).

Recently, there has been a growing interest among both the research and practitioner communities in L2 teachers' mental images, thoughts and processes employed while teaching (Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2006; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Richards (1996) feels a need to listen to teachers' voices in understanding classroom practice. Also Clemente (2001) convincingly argues a holistic approach to teaching a language should include the personal side of teaching; the way teachers feel about various parameters of their practice. Also as Wallace (1991) mentions, it seems that a more technology-oriented approach forgets the fact that almost no teacher starts training for their job with blank minds and neutral attitudes. According to some researchers (Hargreaves, 1994; Freeman, 1990; Prabhu, 1992) teachers' performance in class is shaped by "minds" and "attitudes". Freeman (cited in Clemente, 2001) maintains, attitudes are such important factors that they can be considered the cause of teachers' success or failure. The way teachers see themselves in relation to their work is an attitudinal factor that has been overlooked.

Usually, it is expected that a teacher should be assertive and self-confident. If they are doubtful about their role as teachers, in spite of all the positive attitudes about teaching, logically we should expect that they devalue their counseling roles (Clemente, 2001).

The present study aims to explore EFL teachers' attitudes towards Iranian high school students' language learning needs. A secondary concern of the study is to explore any correlation between the teachers' teaching experience and their attitudes towards the EFL high school students' language needs. Teachers' attitudes have been one of the least scrutinized areas

of EFL instruction literature worldwide (Clemente, 2001). This study is particularly promising because it may provide insights regarding teachers' invaluable ideas as valid sources of improvements in any sort of curriculum renewal. The two research questions to be addressed in this study are as follows:

- (1) What are English teachers' beliefs about the Iranian high school students' language learning needs?
- (2) Is there any coordination between their beliefs and what they do in the classroom?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

The population of this study is 86 English language teachers from different cities of Iran (27 people from Tabriz, 40 people from Marand, 5 people from Urmia, 8 people from Zanzan, 6 people from Bandarabbas) who are teaching in Iranian state high schools. Complete randomization was applied in selecting the population of this study. People taking part in this study were with different age categories and teaching experiences. More information about this population is summarized in figures (1-3).

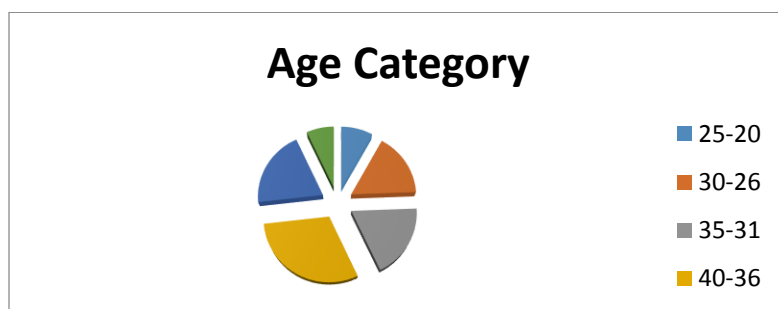


Figure1. The age category percentages of the teachers

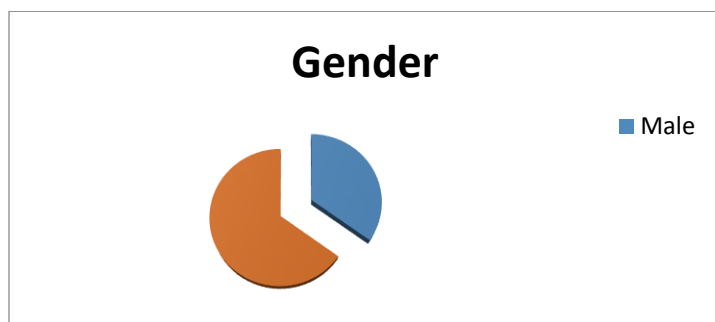


Figure2. The percentages of the participants across the gender



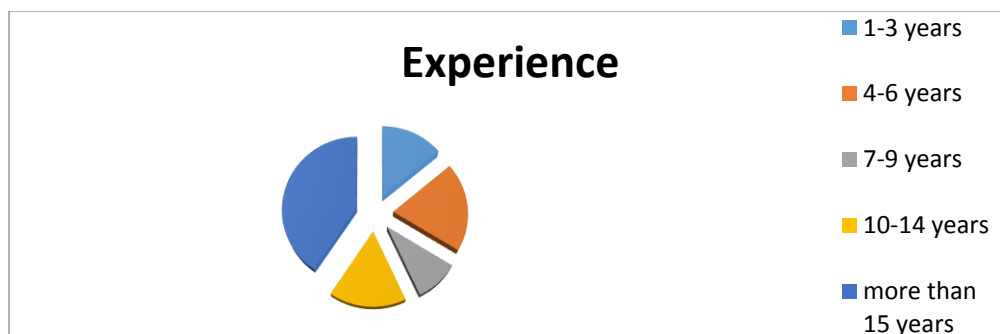


Figure3. The percentages of the teachers' teaching experience

## 2.2. Materials

In order to obtain a satisfying amount of authentic data, this study attempts to employ multiple methods and sources of information about teacher attitudes. Therefore it may make use of some interviews and direct observations (qualitative data) of teachers' teaching classrooms in addition to the quantitative data gained from questionnaires.

The teacher questionnaires consisted of twenty two 5-point Likert scale questions in English. This was adapted from Busch, Elsea, Gruba, & Johnson (1992) that has previously been used in some concerning articles, though a few items from that original study were deleted and three extra background questions were added.

## 2.3. Procedures

After distributing the questionnaires (appearing in Appendix) to 86 English language teachers and gathering data, teaching classrooms of six teachers were observed by the researcher. At the end of each observation, the researcher had interviews with concerning teachers. Sample selection for observing classrooms and giving questions were based on complete randomization. The collected data were organized into different tables to convey the results. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the available data.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Teachers' attitudes toward assessment

Items 1 to 6 of the questionnaire concern teachers' attitudes toward assessment. Table (1) summarizes the descriptive statistics for those questions. Statistics for items one, four and five showed a high mean among the whole population. This means that they believe in usefulness of having a general proficiency test at the end of every academic year. Teachers also preferred short

formative quizzes to single large summative exams for evaluation. From their point of view, if students focus on integration of four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), they will learn better rather than focusing on one or two separate skill.

Almost high frequency of teachers declaimed their agreement toward item two. They believe that students' classroom participation should have an important role in their language learning.

Regarding offering courses with credits applicable towards graduation requirements on behalf of the education department, most of the teachers are undecided. On the contrary, item three showed a rather low mean. This means that most of the teachers don't like students' participation in evaluation decisions.

**Table 1** *The Means of the Scores Given by the Teachers to the Assessment Items (1-6)*

Teachers' attitudes toward assessment		Number	Mean
1.	I think that having a general proficiency test for all of the students at the end of every academic year would motivate students to learn more.	86	4.04
2.	Participation in class activities should be a major part of the grade in English courses.	86	3.87
3.	I like students to participate in decisions about how the will be graded.	86	2.87
4.	I prefer giving a series of quizzes rather than a large test.	86	4
5.	Each year, students should receive four grades of equal weight, one each for listening, speaking, reading and	86	4.13

writing.			
6.	The education department should offer the courses, with credits applicable towards graduation requirements, on how to pass, for example, the TOEFL test.	86	<b>3.29</b>

### 3.2. Teachers' perceptions of their students' English learning and teaching styles

Items 7 to 22 of the teachers' questionnaire pertained to their perceptions of students' preferred English learning and their own teaching styles. Table (2) summarizes descriptive statistics for each question. Notice how items 9, 12, 14, 17, 19 and 21 have high mean scores. English teachers in high schools appreciate learning classrooms accompanied with fun activities. Results of the following table show the teachers' high preference of group work and teachers of the study consider more importance for guess work and students' self-discovery too. The teachers pay more attention to individual help to the students (individual differences are significant). Although teachers believe in using communicative teaching styles in their classrooms but findings show that they don't expect their students to talk freely in language classrooms. As found above, English teachers feel confident while giving homework and test. Teachers of this study prefer integration of visual and aural aids in the classroom. They also were significantly positive about being friendly and flexible and using the mother tongue for explanations in the class.

**Table 2** *The Means of the Scores Given by the Teachers to the Items Concerning English Learning/Teaching Styles (7-22)*

Teachers' attitudes toward English learning and teaching styles	Number	Mean
7. Students don't like to express their opinions in class.	86	3.44
8. Students don't like to talk freely in English during the class.	86	3.47
9. Students learn effectively when classroom learning is fun.	86	4.48

10. I think it is an advantage to use mother tongue when explaining classroom activities and assignments to students.	86	3.67
11. Students learn most effectively when working in same-sex groups.	86	3.70
12. I like students to work in pairs and small groups.	86	4.29
13. Students learn best when the teacher is very strict and controls the lesson.	86	3.75
14. Students learn best when the teacher gives tests and homework.	86	4.51
15. I try to correct all student mistakes promptly, including oral errors.	86	3.46
16. I like teaching grammar and the rules of correct English.	86	3.50
17. My students learn best when I move around the class and help them individually.	86	4.37
18. Translation exercises help develop English proficiency.	86	3.79
19. Students learn best when the teacher lets them discover their own answers.	86	4.17
20. I ask students to correct their own work.	86	3.74
21. I like to use video and television in class.	86	4.41

22. I assign homework, which makes students read English newspapers or listen to English radio programs.	86	3.82
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#### 4. Conclusion and discussion

Successful instructional programs depend upon a clarification of the needs and expectations of teachers and learners. Although the results of this study suggest a consistency between the needs and preferences of English language teachers in Iran and their instructional practice in the class, a mismatch is shown in some cases. Based on 6 classroom observations, instructional practice in high schools is described as generally form-focused in nature. With regard to evaluation part of the questionnaire, there is a mismatch between teachers' beliefs about items (1 to 6) and the real practice in the classroom. High schools don't have a general proficiency test for students at the end of every academic year while teachers strongly agree with this item. In Iranian high schools one large test at the end of every school year makes the major part of the grade in English course rather than giving several quizzes. Also students don't receive four grades of equal weight for four main language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Reading and writing skills weigh heavier. When these mismatches were inquired through informal interviews with the teachers of observed classrooms, they declaimed that the educational ministry decides about the evaluation system of schools and teachers or students don't have any interloping role but being obedient.

Regarding second part of the questionnaire, teachers prefer using fun, group work, using realia, self-discovery, giving homework, considering individual differences through the process of learning for the students' better learning. There is a mismatch between teachers' preference and the classroom practice in items such as using TV in the classroom and giving a kind of homework that let students listen to English radio programs. When the reason of this mismatch questioned, lack of enough facilities such as language laboratory in high schools, weakness of students at English language and existence of a grammar-based book for this course were the most prominent received answers from the teachers. In contrast with the researchers' expectation, the results of this study show that Iranian high school English language teachers believe in form-focused instruction along with meaning-based instructions in language classrooms.

Iranian EFL teachers may be typical of teachers in other EFL contexts in that they are very good at explaining the rules of English but are often unable to use English for communication. With this view, their beliefs about language learning needs of high school students may be discrepant with those of language teachers in ESL contexts. Research has documented the difficulties in adopting a communication-based approach in many EFL contexts. Nonetheless, teaching for communicative competence appears to be the appropriate guiding principle of English pedagogy in settings such as Iran where learners and the society as a whole expect and value communicative skills. Overcoming the many obstacles confronted when implementing a communicative program is, of course, the responsibility of classroom teachers and learners. Successful program implementation requires efforts from administrators, parents and society as a whole (Kleinsasser, 1993).

This study is not without limitations. The sample used in this study was drawn from a large population of English language teachers. Moreover, additional research is needed before any claim can be made. Because, certainly, reports of teachers' perceptions of their classroom language teaching and evaluation experiences cannot be claimed to accurately reflect actual classroom practices.

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Appendix: Questionnaire about Teachers' Beliefs

<i>On a scale of 1 to 5, indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement</i>	Strongly Agree=5	Agree=4	Undecided=3	Disagree=2	Strongly disagree=1
About teacher attitudes towards assessment and evaluation					
1. I think that having a general proficiency test for all of the students at the end of every academic year would motivate students to learn more.					
2. Participation in class activities should be a major part of the grade in English courses.					
3. I like students to participate in decisions about how they will be graded.					
4. I prefer giving a series of quizzes rather than one large test					
5. Each year, students should receive four grades of equal weight, one each for listening, speaking, reading and writing.					
6. The education department should offer courses, with credits applicable towards graduation requirements, on how to pass, for example, the TOEFL test.					
About teacher beliefs and preferred teaching styles:					
7. Students do not like to					



express their opinions in class.					
8. Students do not like to talk freely in English during the class.					
9. Students learn effectively when classroom learning is fun.					
10. I think it is an advantage to use Persian when explaining classroom activities and assignments to students.					
11. Students learn most effectively when working in same-sex groups.					
12. I like students to work in pairs and small groups.					
13. Students learn best when the teacher is very strict and controls the lesson.					
14. Students learn best when the teacher gives tests and homework.					
15. I try to correct all student mistakes promptly, including oral errors.					
16. I like teaching grammar and the rules of correct English.					
17. My students learn best when I move around the class and help them individually.					

18. Translation exercises help develop English proficiency.					
19. Students learn best when the teacher lets them discover their own answers.					
20. I ask students to correct their own work.					
21. I like to use video and television in class.					
22. I assign homework, which makes students read English newspapers or listen to English radio programs.					
Background Information: <i>Please provide the following information about yourself.</i>					
23. What is your gender?	Male			female	
24. How long have you been teaching English language?	1-3 years	4-6 years	7-9 years	10-14 years	
25. Please indicate your age category.	20-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45 46+

## **Title**

# **The Viability of M-learning via SMS in Vocabulary Perception of Iranian EFL Learners**

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## **Abstract**

There is growing increase in the use of wireless technologies in education all over the world. In fact, wireless technologies such as laptop computers, palmtop computers and mobile phones are revolutionizing education, and transforming the traditional classroom-based learning, and teaching into anytime and anywhere education. The ready availability and uptake of devices such as mobile phones, personal digital assistants and SMS, have permeated the manner and means of human communication, socializing and entertainment on a large scale. This paper investigates the use of M- learning with particular reference to the potential of learning new English language words using Short Message Service (SMS) text messaging. The system was investigated recruiting 66 males and female students of an institute in Abhar. The vocabulary perceptions of students

before and after the experiment regarding the primacy and recency effects were measured. It was found out that using SMS as an educational tool noticeably contributes to the success of students.

**Keywords:** M-learning, SMS, Vocabulary Perception, Primacy Effect, Recency Effect

## 1. Introduction

Learning and retrieving vocabulary is one of the most important issues that any learner faces while acquiring another language. Thus, learners have regularly found it necessary to make up for their limited vocabulary (Nyileos & Fan, 2007). Furthermore, teachers strive to be innovative in searching for methods to make their teaching more effective in this respect. These days it seems that mobile phones are employed in every place by each person, which leads to the obvious questions: how can mobile phone technology support learning vocabulary in the second language classroom? The answer is 'in several ways'; because mobile phones come with continually increasing functions that most students are adept at using (Reinders 2010). The word M-learning or "mobile learning" has distinctive meanings for distinctive people, In spite of the fact that related to E-learning and distance learning, M-learning is distinct in its concentrated upon learning across context and learning with mobile devices.

One meaning for mobile learning is every kind of learning that takes place when the learner is not at a steady, preordained location, or learning that takes place when the learner makes benefit of the learning chance presented by mobile technical methods and processes (Reinders 2010).

Lately various academic studies have addressed vocabulary learning through using mobile phones. Several investigations have shown improved retrieval performance when a target vocabulary is rehearsed through a variety of different manners. Thornton and Houser (2003) performed a comparison between the uses of pull (web-based) and push (email) approaches to transferring vocabulary content to mobile phones. Ogata and Yano (2005) showed considerable increases in vocabulary remembrance compared to control when subjects were provided with the CLUE system, which provided a vocabulary concept map over a PDA (Personal Digital Assistant). Kadyte (2003) presented a mobile system for learning Finnish language that includes audio; a "Language Learning Guide" explains Finnish grammar rules to the mobile user. In

addition, a number of commercial products are that give vocabulary content on mobile devices, including AppliLearning, Xap Words, M-Learning and Bite Size Mobile.

The literature and preceding research in this area propose that in L2 vocabulary learning, M-learning interaction can have many utilities over face-to-face interactions. It provides the necessary conditions for interlanguage vocabulary development. Little research, however, has been done to show the effects of mobile interactions in EFL contexts. The purpose of this study is to determine the role of SMS in L2 vocabulary perception.

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

### **2.1. Learning vocabulary via SMS: background studies**

Lu (2008) examined the effectiveness of SMS vocabulary lessons of limited lexical information on the small screens of mobile phones. Students recognized more vocabulary during the posttest after reading the regular and brief SMS lessons than they did after reading the relatively more detailed print material. Levy and Kennedy (2005) created a similar program for Italian learners in Australia, sending vocabulary words and idioms, definitions, and example sentences via SMS in a spaced and scheduled pattern of delivery, and requesting feedback in the form of quizzes and follow up questions.

Yanjie Song (2008) explored the role of SMS in English as Second Language (ESL) vocabulary learning for mobile audiences. In his research, SMS was integrated into web-based vocabulary learning, and ten participants were involved. An online test system was set-up for recorded assessment data collection, and an open-ended questionnaire interview was conducted via e-mail to collect qualitative data. The research findings showed significant improvements in the learner performance and in their attitudes towards using SMS in their vocabulary learning.

Thornton and Houser (2002; 2003; 2005) also developed several innovative projects using mobile phones to teach English at a Japanese university. One focused on providing vocabulary instruction by SMS. Three times a day, they emailed short mini-lessons to students, sent in discrete chunks so as to be easily readable on the tiny screens. Lessons defined five words per week, recycled previous vocabulary, and used the words in various contexts, including episodic stories. Students were tested biweekly and compared to groups that received identical lessons via the Web and on paper. The results indicated that the SMS students learned over twice the

number of vocabulary words as the Web students, and that SMS students improved their scores by nearly twice as much as students who had received their lessons on paper.

In an investigation conducted by Ali Derakhshan & Khodabakhshzadeh (2011) entitled “On the Theory and Practice in Language Studies”, the latest definitions of mobile learning focus on the learner rather than on the technology (see e.g. Winters, 2006; Naismith *et al.*, 2004). An accepted definition of mobile learning is any sort of learning that happens when the learner is not at a fixed, predetermined location, or learning that happens when the learner takes advantage of learning opportunities offered by mobile technologies (O'Malley *et al.*, 2003). Vavoula and Sharples (2002 in Naismith *et al.*, 2004) state that since learning takes place over time and space and in different areas of our lives, mobility is highly regarded as one essential part of learning. Winters (2006) believes that although there is a consensus that mobile technologies are just one of the means through which learning is mediated, they seem to offer unique affordances (Klopfer, Squire & Jenkins, 2002) which could be very useful to facilitate learning. There is no doubt that mobile devices have opened up a vast range of possibilities for learning "in ways that are convenient and suited to the needs of an individual within the context of their lifestyle" (Kukulska-Hulme, 2006, p. 128). Levy and Kennedy (2008) sent Italian words, idioms and example sentences to students' mobile phones as SMS messages. The project proved successful for aiding in language learning and demonstrated that the use of SMS in learning is a pedagogically sound technique.

Since there is a paucity of research in the educational context in Iran in this field especially vocabulary, this study is aimed at analyzing teaching and learning in the context of education via mobile phones. In other words, it seeks to reveal whether Short Message Service has any effect on the retention of vocabulary among learners or not.

Ali Derakhshan & Khodabakhshzadeh (2011) state that vocabulary is considered as one of essential components of a language. Laufer (1998) and Nation (1990) believe that if students of English as a Foreign Language want to understand non-specialized English texts, they need to learn 5000 base words, which are considered just a minimal requirement. This means that learners should purposefully practice or rehearse the words to facilitate long term retention (Genesee, 2000; Hulstijn, 2001). However, in many educational and academic milieus around the world, the amount of class time is limited. In Iranian universities, for example, a typical class

meets once a week for 90 minutes. This problem urges teachers and researchers to make difficult choices about how to use that limited time to promote language learning. Since foreign language students usually have limited opportunities to speak and hear the target language only in the classroom, it makes sense to draw on other kinds of practice and exposure. Given the centrality of lexical knowledge to learning a language, research into the effectiveness of various types of vocabulary learning methods as well as instructional techniques has been of considerable value to second language research and pedagogy. One such way is through an interaction which allows students to use language and teachers to give feedback via text-message.

Vocabulary learning via text-message is one of the emerging areas in communication (Andrews, 2003; Norbrook & Scot, 2003; Thornton & Houser, 2002; 2003; 2005; McNicol, 2005; Levy & Kennedy, 2005; 2008; Collins, 2005; Chinnery, 2006, Pecherzewska & Knot, 2007; Lu, 2008; and Chen & Chung, 2008). Text-messaging can be applied in language teaching and learning as a complementary teaching aid since vocabulary gains can be fostered by its portability, immediacy, novelty, motivation, and the spacing effect it generates (Thornton & Houser, 2005).

The text-messaging vocabulary learning is possible to provide several of the best psychological situations for the impressiveness of any vocabulary activity described by Nation (2001). First, cumulative learning is the most effective way of learning vocabulary; learners are more capable of dealing with a limited amount of information at a time, so too much information may confuse them or de-motivate them. Second, motivation and interest are the important enabling conditions for noticing which is the first step in learning. Nation (2001) states that the third psychological condition for vocabulary learning is that text-message vocabulary learning offers a novel and portable learning experience as well as a relaxing condition; therefore, learners can study the words almost at anytime and anywhere. Also, student-initiated use of language supported by teachers can foster vocabulary learning by increasing the 'Cognitive Involvement Load' (Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001, p. 542) through \_Spacing Effect (Greene, 1989; Wozniak 1995; Dempster, 1996; Seabrook, Brown, & Soly, 2005).

By using the word to make a sentence, sending it at spaced intervals to teachers via text-message, and receiving the feedback learners can build a net of well-connected and well-practiced paths and thus retrieve the target word more easily. Furthermore, constructivism,

learner-centeredness, situated learning, immediacy, flexibility, portability, context sensitivity, social interactivity, connectivity, individuality and informal learning play key roles in learning words via text-messaging (Lu, 2008; Crowe & van't Hooft, 2006; Klopfer, Squire, & Jenkins, 2002; Kukulska-Hulme, 2007).

Over the past two decades, there appears to be a paradigmatic shift away from education and training to learning; from teacher-centered to student-centered education; from rote learning to learning as reflection; and from face-to face to distance and e-learning (Jarvia, Holford, & Griffin, 2003). The dominant features of this shift are the rapid growth of information and communication technologies, the innovative application of technology which enhances the delivery of education.

The effectiveness of using SMS-based mobile learning to support classroom teaching of English phrases to high school students in rural Nigeria was carried out by Vivian Ogochukwu Nwaocha; at National Open University of Nigeria (2009). In order to determine if there were significant differences between students' success rate, pretests were administered to the experimental and control groups, after both received classroom instructions from the same instructor. Subsequently, posttests were administered to both groups, after the experimental and control groups had received SMS-based instruction and extra classroom instructions respectively. The results clearly revealed that after receiving the SMS-based instruction, the experimental group performed better than their counterparts who had received additional classroom instructions.

Cavus and Ibrahim (2009) investigated the use of wireless technologies in education with particular reference to the potential of learning new technical English language words using SMS. The system, developed by the authors and called mobile learning tool (MOLT), was tested with 45 1st-year undergraduate students. During the experiment, new words and their meanings were sent to students throughout the day in half hourly intervals and their learning abilities were assessed by performing on tests before and after the experiment. The results showed that students "enjoyed and learned new words with the help of their mobile phones" (p. 89).

Lu (2008) examined the effectiveness of SMS vocabulary lessons of limited lexical information on the small screens of mobile phones. Students recognized more vocabulary during the posttest after reading the regular and brief SMS lessons than they did after reading the



relatively more detailed print material. Levy and Kennedy (2005) created a similar program for Italian learners in Australia, sending vocabulary words and idioms, definitions, and example sentences via SMS in a spaced and scheduled pattern of delivery, and requesting feedback in the form of quizzes and follow up questions.

Yanjie Song (2008) explored the role of SMS in English as Second Language (ESL) vocabulary learning for mobile audiences. In his research, SMS was integrated into web-based vocabulary learning, and ten participants were involved. An online test system was set-up for recorded assessment data collection, and an open-ended questionnaire interview was conducted via e-mail to collect qualitative data. The research findings showed significant improvements in the learner performance and in their attitudes towards using SMS in their vocabulary learning.

Thornton and Houser (2002; 2003; 2005) also developed several innovative projects using mobile phones to teach English at a Japanese university. One focused on providing vocabulary instruction by SMS. Three times a day, they emailed short mini-lessons to students, sent in discrete chunks so as to be easily readable on the tiny screens. Lessons defined five words per week, recycled previous vocabulary, and used the words in various contexts, including episodic stories. Students were tested biweekly and compared to groups that received identical lessons via the Web and on paper. The results indicated that the SMS students learned over twice the number of vocabulary words as the Web students, and that SMS students improved their scores by nearly twice as much as students who had received their lessons on paper.

Roksana Begum (2011) believes that an important usage of cell phones in L2 classroom is capturing SMS into database that is displayed on a message board. Teachers can use computers to send SMS to students, with particular advantage for administrative purposes. Therefore (2009) presented an underlying technology of using GSM modems to build the SMS based teaching and learning system. The system is capable of supporting administrative, teaching and learning activities such as brainstorming, voting, and assessment via the SMS technology. Li (2009) undertook an action research to investigate how short message (SMS) assisted English as a Second Language (ESL) student' vocabulary learning as well as investigating students' acceptance and usage of it. The study results revealed that SMS based vocabulary learning was able to enhance ESL students learning by adding flexibility and providing a stronger motivation for study.

Groot (2009) examined a set of theories that attempted to address how the mental lexicon is structured and how it operates, and proposes learn best that we when there is gradual acquisition of new words through repeated exposure in a wide range to authentic contexts. Groot points out, normally, there is not enough time for appropriate exposure to new words of the same intensity as in first language acquisition and that there is no easy solution to this difficulty. The most realistic approach is to create an environment that is most conducive to learning new words, by striking a balance between frequency of exposure and a range of contexts offered for the new words.

Brown and Payne (1994) identified five steps in the process of learning vocabulary in a foreign language: (a) having sources for encountering new words, (b) getting a clear image, either visual or auditory or both, of the forms of the new words, (c) learning the meaning of the words, (d) making a strong memory connection between the forms and the meanings of the words, and (e) using the words. As a result, all vocabulary-learning strategies, to a greater or lesser extent, should be related to these five steps (Fan, 2003, p. 223).

It is possible to view a vocabulary learning strategy from at least three different angles. First, a vocabulary learning strategy, very broadly speaking, could be any action taken by the learner to aid the learning process of new vocabulary. Whenever a learner needs to study words, he/she uses strategy/strategies to do it. Second, a vocabulary learning strategy could be related to only such actions which improve the efficiency of vocabulary learning. Hence, there are actions which learners might employ but which do not enhance the learning process – a perfectly possible scenario with poor learners. Third, a vocabulary learning strategy might be connected to conscious (as opposed to unconscious) actions taken by the learner in order to study new words. Ideally, learners should be made aware of ‘good’, efficient strategies, so that they could freely and consciously choose the one(s) suitable for them. It should be borne in mind, though, that a strategy that works well for one student may completely fail with another and that for a concrete learning situation one strategy may work. We believe that the rapidly increasing use of SMS in information systems on the one hand and the relative simplicity with which SMS systems can be developed on the other, provide the opportunity to incorporate this technology into the Information Systems curriculum with profits to the teaching of Information Systems concerns and to the student’s employability.

In the last half a decade, researchers' attention has been drawn to both M-Learning for language study, and to using SMS for learning generally (Li, 2009). Among them some previous studies suggested the feasibility and usability of mobile SMS for learning English. For example, Song & Fox (2005) reported a study that explored the role of mobile Short Message Service (SMS) in English as second language (ESL) vocabulary learning for working adult learners. The study findings suggested that mobile technology improved the learners' performance in their learning.

Markett et al. (2006) explored use of SMS to encourage classroom interactions. In their research, some students sent SMS via their personal cell phones and these SMS were exposed on the screen of a laptop where a modem interfacing with customized software was used to produce SMS file in order to view the sent messages. The teacher then replied verbally and this message with teacher's verbal reply was later posted online to promote interactivity by further comments. An important usage of cell phones in L2 classroom is capturing SMS into database that is displayed on a message board. Teachers can use computers to send SMS to students, with particular advantage for administrative purposes (Meurant, 2007). Simon So (2009) presented an underlying technology of using GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) modems to build the SMS based teaching and learning system. The system is capable of supporting administrative, teaching and learning activities such as brainstorming, voting, and assessment via the SMS technology. Li (2009) undertook an action research to investigate how short message (SMS) assisted English as a Second Language (ESL) student' vocabulary learning as well as investigating students' acceptance and usage of it. The study results revealed that SMS based vocabulary learning was able to enhance ESL students learning by adding flexibility and providing a stronger motivation for study.

One study conducted in Bangladesh by Alam and Islam (2008), who also mentioned SMS technology as one of the promising means of creating a virtual interactive classroom in distance learning. The study focuses on the efficacy and feasibility of virtual classroom by means of integrating perceived broadcast video and SMS technology. On the other hand, findings of some recent studies suggested inconsistency. For example, in the study of Stockwell (2008), exploring the mobile-based intelligent vocabulary learning system, learners completed vocabulary activities through learning system. Learners completed vocabulary activities through either their

mobile phones or personal computers. The findings of the study revealed that students preferred and performed better on computer than mobile phones in vocabulary learning. Again, Lu (2008) has explored the effectiveness of SMS vocabulary lessons of limited lexical information on the small screen of mobile phones. His result indicated that, although students had positive attitude towards learning vocabulary, technological limitations, unfamiliar presentations and learning activities prevented students from reading SMS lesson.

Similarly, in a year-long pilot study conducted by Okunbor and Retta (2008) to investigate the use of mobile phones to enhance student learning, students were able to manage their academic and social lives using customized packages of applications developed by the wireless company for university students and made available to students on the national mobile phone network. The results of the study revealed that most of the students using the mobile-based applications found them insignificant.

The contradictory findings show that the impressiveness of SMS for learning language requires additional exploration and that more empirical studies are needed. Furthermore, such studies are rare in the context of Iran, though few studies have yet been accomplished in other countries in the world. In this respect, the present study was designed to examine the efficacy of SMS as a medium of learning words.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Participants**

The participants of this study included 66 Iranian students from different university majors studying English as a foreign language in a private language institute called Poya Foreign Language Center in Abhar, Zanjan - which offers TOEFL, IELTS, Translation, and ESP courses. These participants were chosen out of 100 students who volunteered to take Michigan Proficiency Test. The scores obtained on Michigan test were gathered and fed into SPSS software. After controlling for normal distribution, those who scored between one Standard Deviation (SD) above and one SD below the mean were chosen as participants of the study. All participants were proficient in spoken and written Persian although some of them spoke Turkish as their regional and first language. Regarding age, participants ranged from 19 to 25 years old ( $M = 21.69$  &  $SD = 1.83$ ). They all were studying in an institute located in the center of Abhar. Of

these participants, 33 had a high school diploma, 12 an associate degree, and 21 a bachelor's degree. As for gender, 24 were male and 42 were female.

### 3.2 Instrumentation

For the purpose of the study and the hypotheses, several instruments were utilized. They were validated through a pilot study before being employed in the project. The instruments applied were:

First, the Michigan Proficiency Test including 64 multiple choice items along with an answer sheet was used to homogenize the subjects.

Secondly, a pre-test and a post-test were employed in the study. The questions were taken from the book, *Longman complete course for the TOEFL test: preparation for the computer and paper tests*. The pre -test and post -test involved 60 items along with an answer sheet. The pre-test and the post -test questions were different in wording but they were equal in the level of difficulty. Scores for both the pre-test and post-test were defined considering the number of correct item. A correct answer was rated 1 and an incorrect answer was rated 0. The next material used in this study was the words, which are extracted from "word surfing" websites, and these words were used in SMS messages.

## 4. Results, Data Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1. Data analysis results

#### 4.2.1 Descriptive statistics

Initially, descriptive statistics were computed for all instruments employed in this thesis. The results of descriptive statistics (i.e., mean, minimum, maximum and standard deviation) for continuous variables, namely, scores on SMS and PPT are displayed in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

**Table 4.1** Descriptive statistics for Michigan test scores on SMS

N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Maximum	Minimum
66	66.55	15.52	90	21

**Table 4.2** Descriptive statistics for Michigan test scores of 66 study participants on PPT

N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Maximum	Minimum
66	74.8	0.93	77	73

#### 4.2.2 Inferential statistics

##### 4.2.2.1 Difference between vocabulary perception via SMS and PPS

The main focus of this study is the examination of the difference between vocabulary perception through sending words via SMS and printed paper test (PPT). In order to determine the strength of difference between these two variables, an Independent -Samples t-test was used. Table 4.3 shows the results of the analysis.

Before investigating the research hypothesis and running any t-test, it was necessary to examine the normal distribution of scores representing the variables under study through Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. A non-significant value (values more than 0.05) indicates that the scores are normally distributed (Pallant, 2007). Table 4.3 presents the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for the SMS and PPT scores.

**Table 4.3** *Tests for Normality of Distribution of Scores on SMS and PPT*

Variables Significant indicators	SMS	PPS
Number	33	33
Mean	11.48	7.87
Standard deviation	3.38	4.07
Kolmogorov-Smirnov test	0.766	0.822
Level of significance	0.601	0.509

As the results of Kolmogorov- Smirnov statistics indicate, the significant level values concerning SMS and PPT are 0.60 and 0.50 respectively showing that the scores for these two variables are normally distributed. Since the scores of SMS and PPT are normally distributed, a t- test can be run to show if learners' vocabulary perception are affected by presenting vocabulary through SMS services or presenting vocabulary via printed paper forms . The results of descriptive and t- test results of the analysis are reported in Tables 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6 below. Table 4.4 demonstrates the descriptive statistics (i.e., mean, minimum, maximum and standard deviation) relating to t- test results for learners' score on PPT and SMS.

**Table 4.4** *Descriptive Statistics of the T-Tests for SMS and PPT score*

Significant indicators	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
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Test				
SMS	33	11.48	3.38	0.42
PPT	33	7.87	4.07	0.50

**Table 4.5**Independent -Samples T-test Results for Scores on SMS and PPT

Significant indicators	t-value	df	Level of significance
SMS and PPT	2.136	32	0.03

As indicated by the results in the tables above, the difference between subjects' mean scores on SMS [ $M_1 = 11.48$ ,  $SD_1 = 3.38$ ] and PPT [ $M_2 = 7.87$ ,  $SD_2 = 4.07$ ;  $t(32) = 2.13$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $p < .05$ ] proved statistically significant. As the level of significance is below .05 level (i.e.,  $\text{sig} = .03$ ) the null hypothesis is rejected. This is indicative of the point that SMS scores' mean is significantly higher than PPT scores' mean. It can be claimed, with relative confidence, that sending vocabulary via SMS leads to improved vocabulary perception for the participants in post-test. Therefore, with due caution it can be concluded that SMS influences L2 vocabulary perception.

Participants' mean performance on SMS test is significantly better than their mean performance on PPT meaning that using SMS has influenced their performance on vocabulary perception test. In other words, presentation of vocabulary via SMS leads to better vocabulary perception in the study participants.

#### 4.2.2.2 Primacy effect and Recency effect

The second hypothesis stated that the primacy effect shows no more durability over recency effect in terms of a better storage of new words learned via SMS. To test this hypothesis, the researcher conducted an Independent-samples t-test analysis to investigate any significant difference between the means of the paired groups scores on primacy learned vocabulary and that of recency learned vocabulary via SMS. The results of the analysis are reported in the Tables 4.6 and 4.7 below. The results revealed a significant difference between subjects' score in this regard [ $M_1 = 36.25$ ,  $SD_1 = 1.34$ ;  $M_2 = 29.46$ ,  $SD_2 = 3.16$ ;  $t(32) = 2.107$ ,  $p = .036$ ,  $P < .05$ ]. Tables 4.6 and 4.7 present the descriptive statistics and t-test results respectively.

As mentioned above participants' mean performance on primary learned vocabulary is significantly better than their mean performance on recently learned vocabulary, in other words, primary learned vocabulary indicate more durability.

**Table 4.6** *Descriptive Statistics for T-test between Primacy and Recency Learned Vocabulary via SMS*

Significant indicators Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Primacy	33	36.25	1.34	0.73
Recency	33	29.46	3.16	0.42

**Table 4.7** *T-test for Independent Samples of Primacy and Recency Learned Vocabulary*

Significant indicators Correlation	t-value	df	Level of significance
Primacy and Recency	2.107	32	0.03

## 5. Discussion

As the findings of this study reveal, EFL learners' vocabulary perception through SMS is significantly higher than their vocabulary perception via PPS. Consequently, the first null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between EFL learners' vocabulary perception through SMS and PPS was rejected. Thus, it can be claimed, with relative confidence, that sending vocabulary via SMS leads to improved vocabulary perception for the participants. Therefore, with due caution it can be concluded that SMS influences L2 vocabulary perception. This finding is in line with findings of previous studies by Song and Fox (2005); Markett et al. (2006); Li (2009) and Vivian Ogochukwu Nwaocha (2009) and Cavus and Ibrahim (2009) who confirmed that utilizing SMS in teaching vocabulary can enhance ESL students learning by adding flexibility and providing a stronger motivation for study. The results also reflected a significant difference between subjects' performance on the primacy learned vocabulary and that of recency learned vocabulary. As a result, the second hypothesis claiming no durability for primacy learned vocabulary over recency learned vocabulary was rejected. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Castel (2006), and Benjamin, Bjork, Schwartz (1998).



The results of this study can lead to a movement in terms of new methods of teaching vocabulary. In order to enhance vocabulary learning and to encourage them, utilizing mobile as an at-hand tool can be an innovative method in teaching English as a foreign language.

Learning a foreign language is stressful and demanding, so new methods and new technique must be used in order to keep language learners motivated (Krashen, 1998). Hence, employing mobile for presenting new vocabulary might be useful in teaching English as foreign language.

In this study two groups was used to answer the second question of the study. Accordingly, it is suggested that similar studies be carried out with one group. It can also suggested that future researchers divide the groups into three sub-groups of participants: low, mid, and high based on the level of proficiency in order to check and see if various levels of proficiency perform differently with regard to the primacy and recency effects or not.

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## **Title**

### **An Evaluation of the Spectrum Student Book 2A, A Communicative Course in English, Text book for Adult English Learners in Shokooh Institute Branch of Kashmar**

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## **Abstract**

ELT materials (textbooks) play a very important role in many language classrooms but in recent years there has been a lot of debate throughout the ELT profession on the actual role of materials in teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language (TESL/TEFL). Arguments have encompassed both the potential and the limitations of materials for 'guiding' students through the learning process and curriculum as well as the needs and preferences of teachers who are using textbooks. Other issues that have arisen in recent years include textbook design and practicality, methodological validity, the role of textbooks in innovation, the authenticity of materials in terms of their representation of language, and the appropriateness of gender representation, subject matter, and cultural components. Whether or not one accepts the value of textbooks, it must surely be with the qualification that they are of an acceptable standard or level of quality and appropriate

to the learners for whom they are being used. It is absolutely essential, therefore, that we establish and apply a wide variety of relevant and contextually appropriate criteria for the evaluation of the textbooks that we use in our language classrooms. The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of an intermediate textbook titled "Spectrum 2A", which was prepared by REGENTS/PRENTICE HALL A Simon & Schuster Company in 1993 and it is written by Sandra Costinett with Donald R.H. Byrd. Spectrum is a complete six-level course for adult and young adult learners of English.

**Keywords:** ELT materials, Text Book, Spectrum 2A, Evaluation, Checklist

## 1. Introduction

English language instruction has many important components but the essential constituents to many ESL/EFL classrooms and programs are the textbooks and instruction materials that are often used by language instructors. As Hutchinson and Torres (1994) suggest: "The textbook is an almost universal element of [English language] teaching. Millions of copies are sold every year, and numerous aid projects have been set up to produce them in [various] countries...No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook. "(p.315).

Other theorists such as Sheldon (1988) agree with this observation and suggest that textbooks not only "represent the visible heart of any ELT program" (p.237) but also offer considerable advantages - for both the student and the teacher - when they are being used in the ESL/EFL classroom. Haycroft (1998), for example, suggests that one of the primary advantages of using textbooks is that they are psychologically essential for students since their progress and achievement can be measured concretely when we use them. Second, as Sheldon (1988) has pointed out, students often harbor expectations about using a textbook in their particular language classroom and program and believe that published materials have more credibility than teacher-generated or "in-house" materials. Third, as O'Neill (1982) has indicated, textbooks are generally sensitive to students' needs, even if they are not designed specifically for them, they are efficient in terms of time and money, and they can and should allow for adaptation and improvisation. Fourth, textbooks yield a respectable return on investment, are relatively inexpensive and involve low lesson preparation time, whereas teacher-generated materials can be time, cost and quality defective. In this way, textbooks can reduce potential occupational

overload and allow teachers the opportunity to spend their time undertaking more worthwhile pursuits (O'Neill, 1982; Sheldon, 1988). A fifth advantage identified by Cunningsworth (1995) is the potential which textbooks have for serving several additional roles in the ELT curriculum. He argues that they are an effective resource for self-directed learning, an effective resource for presentation material, a source of ideas and activities, a reference source for students, a syllabus where they reflect pre-determined learning objectives, and support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence. Although some theorists have alluded to the inherent danger of the inexperienced teacher who may use a textbook as a pedagogic crutch, such an overreliance may actually have the opposite effect of saving students from a teacher's deficiencies (O'Neill, 1982; Williams, 1983; Kitao & Kitao, 1997). Finally, Hutchinson and Torres (1994) have pointed out that textbooks may play a pivotal role in innovation. They suggest that textbooks can support teachers through potentially disturbing and threatening change processes, demonstrate new and/or untried methodologies, introduce change gradually, and create scaffolding upon which teachers can build a more creative methodology of their own.

While many of the aforementioned theorists are quick to point out the extensive benefits of using ESL/EFL textbooks, there are many other researchers and practitioners who do not necessarily accept this view and retain some well-founded reservations on the subject. Allwright (1982), for instance, has written a scathing commentary on the use of textbooks in the ELT classroom. He suggests that textbooks are too inflexible and generally reflect the pedagogic, psychological, and linguistic preferences and biases of their authors. Subsequently, the educational methodology that a textbook promotes will influence the classroom setting by indirectly imposing external language objectives and learning constituents on students as well as potentially incongruent instructional paradigms on the teachers who use them. In this fashion, therefore, textbooks essentially determine and control the methods, processes and procedures of language teaching and learning. Moreover, the pedagogic principles that are often displayed in many textbooks may also be conflicting, contradictory or even out-dated depending on the capitalizing interests and exploitations of the sponsoring agent.

More recent authors have criticized textbooks for their inherent social and cultural biases. Researchers such as Porreca (1984), Florent and Walter (1989), Clarke and Clarke (1990), Carrell and Korwitz (1994), and Renner (1997) have demonstrated that many



EFL/ESL textbooks still contain rampant examples of gender bias, sexism, and stereotyping. They describe such gender-related inequities as: the relative invisibility of female characters, the unrealistic and sexist portrayals of both men and women, stereotypes involving social roles, occupations, relationships and actions as well as linguistic biases such as 'gendered' English and sexist language. Findings such as these have led researchers to believe that the continuing prevalence of sexism and gender stereotypes in many EFL/ESL textbooks may reflect the unequal power relationships that still exist between the sexes in many cultures, the prolonged marginalization of females, and the misrepresentations of writers with social attitudes that are incongruent with the present-day realities of the target language culture (Sunderland, 1992; Renner, 1997).

Other theorists such as Prodromou (1988) and Alptekin (1993) have focused on the use of the target language culture as a vehicle for teaching the language in textbooks and suggest that it is not really possible to teach a language without embedding it in its cultural base. They argue that such a process inevitably forces learners to express themselves within a culture of which they have scarcely any experience and this may result in alienation, stereotyping, or even reluctance or resistance to learning. Phillipson (1992) is also wary of the complex relationship between language textbooks and the target language culture but he sees the promotion of 'Western' (British) global textbooks as government-backed enterprises with both an economic as well as an ideological agenda. Gray (2000), on the other hand, has defended the socio-cultural components of many textbooks. He suggests that English language textbooks are actually ambassadorial cultural artifacts and that students should not only critically engage their textbooks but also view them as more than mere linguistic objects. In this way, he argues, learners will improve their language skills by using their textbooks as useful instruments for provoking discussion, cultural debate, and a two-way flow of information. Clearly there is no consensus on this issue at this particular time and this would seem to warrant some degree of caution when using these types of books in certain teaching and learning contexts.

Some proponents of authentic classroom language models have argued that the problems with many textbooks are not necessarily the fact that they are culturally or socially biased but that they are actually too contrived and artificial in their presentation of the target language. They argue that it is crucial to introduce learners to the fundamental characteristics of authentic

real-life examples of both spoken and written discourse. They have demonstrated that many scripted textbook language models and dialogues are unnatural and inappropriate for communicative or cooperative language teaching because they do not adequately prepare students for the types of pronunciation (Brazil, Coulthard, and Johns, 1980; Levis, 1999), language structures, grammar, idioms, vocabulary and conversational rules, routines and strategies that they will have to use in the real-world (Cathcart, 1989; Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1991; Yule et al., 1992). They further contend that the scripted unauthentic language found in many textbooks does not lend itself to communicative practice but instead can lead to an oversimplification of language and unrealistic views of real-life situations. It can also provide additional inaccurate advice about the target language society that can be particularly dangerous for students entering the target language community or those who are expecting to engage in significant amounts of real-life interactions with native speakers.

A final reason for disappointment and skepticism with many ELT textbooks is the fact that they are often regarded as the "...tainted end-product of an author's or a publisher's desire for quick profit" (Sheldon, 1988 p.239). Too many textbooks are often marketed with grand artificial claims by their authors and publishers yet these same books tend to contain serious theoretical problems, design flaws, and practical shortcomings. They also present disjointed material that is either too limited or too generalized in a superficial and flashy manner and the vast array of "...single edition, now defunct [text]books produced during the past ten years testifies to the market consequences of teachers' verdicts on such practices" (Sheldon, 1988 p.239).

## **2. Why do we evaluate a text book?**

Whether one believes that textbooks are too inflexible and biased to be used directly as instructional material or that they actually help teaching and learning, there can be no denying the fact that textbooks still maintain enormous popularity and are most definitely here to stay. It is important to remember, however, that since the 1970's there has been a movement to make learners the center of language instruction and it is probably best to view textbooks as resources in achieving aims and objectives that have already been set in terms of learner needs. Moreover, they should not necessarily determine the aims themselves (components of teaching

and learning) or become the aims but they should always be at the service of the teachers and learners (Brown, 1995). Consequently, we must make every effort to establish and apply a wide variety of relevant and contextually appropriate criteria for the evaluation of the textbooks that we use in our language classrooms. We should also ensure "that careful selection is made, and that the materials selected closely reflect [the needs of the learners and] the aims, methods, and values of the teaching program." (Cunningsworth, 1995 p.7).

Sheldon (1988) has offered several other reasons for textbook evaluation. He suggests that the selection of an ELT textbook often signals an important administrative and educational decision in which there is considerable professional, financial, or even political investment. A thorough evaluation, therefore, would enable the managerial and teaching staff of a specific institution or organization to discriminate between all of the available textbooks on the market. Moreover, it would provide for a sense of familiarity with a book's content thus assisting educators in identifying the particular strengths and weaknesses in textbooks already in use. This would go a long way in ultimately assisting teachers with making optimum use of a book's strong points and recognizing the shortcomings of certain exercises, tasks, and entire texts. One additional reason for textbook evaluation is the fact that it can be very useful in teacher development and professional growth. Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) suggest that textbook evaluation helps teachers move beyond impressionistic assessments and it helps them to acquire useful, accurate, systematic, and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material. Textbook evaluation, therefore, can potentially be a particularly worthwhile means of conducting action research as well as a form of professional empowerment and improvement. Similarly, textbook evaluation can also be a valuable component of teacher training programs for it serves the dual purpose of making student teachers aware of important features to look for in textbooks while familiarizing them with a wide range of published language instruction materials.

### **3. Evaluation scheme**

The materials evaluation scheme used (Appendix 1) was checklist-based, the evaluation assessed the text book in relation to the following areas:

1. General Appearance
2. Layout and Design

3. Methodology
4. Activities
5. Language Skills
6. Language Content
7. Topic Content
8. Teachability and Flexibility
9. Assessment
10. Teacher's Book
11. Supporting Sources
12. Development of Learner Autonomy

#### **4. Materials**

The materials evaluated were the coursebook and additional materials of *Spectrum 2A*. The available materials include a student book (with CD-ROM), workbook, audio CDs.

#### **5. Results of Evaluation**

##### **5.1 General Appearance**

The cover of the text book is suitable for adult learners and the layout of the pages is good and colorful so students can follow the pages easily and encourages the students to do the activities. The art work (pictures) is not up-to-date, but the pictures are helpful to students to have a better understanding of the lesson. In some parts of the text book the font size is small and provides some difficulties for learners. The colors in the text book look attractive.

##### **5.2 Layout and Design**

The layout and design of a textbook refers to its organization and presentation of language items and activities. *Spectrum Student book 2A* consists of seven units, each divided into one- and two-page lessons. The first lesson in each unit presents a series of authentic conversations, providing input for comprehension and language acquisition. A preview activity prepares students to understand the cultural material in the conversations. New functions and structures are then practiced through interactive tasks in several thematic lessons. A two-page, fully illustrated comprehension lesson provides further input in the form of a dialogue, pronunciation activity,

and listening exercise all related to the storyline for the level. This lesson includes a role playing activity as well. The final lesson of the unit presents authentic documents such as historical texts and news articles for reading comprehension practice. Review lessons follow units 1 to 4 and units 5 to 7.

#### **a. Methodology**

*Spectrum* is a “communicative” course in English, based on the idea that communication is not merely an end-product of language study, but rather the very process through which a new language is acquired. *Spectrum* involves students in this process from the very beginning by providing them with useful, natural English along with opportunities to discuss topics of personal interest and to communicate their own thoughts, feelings, and ideas.

#### **b. Activities**

Activities are carefully coordinated with the student book. Workbook lessons provide listening and writing practice on the functions, structures, and vocabulary introduced in the corresponding student book lessons. Units end with a guided composition related to the theme of the reading in the student book. There is an appropriate balance of activity types and sufficient scope for individual, pair and group work. The activities allow for some individual creativity.

#### **c. Language Skills**

The materials provide adequate opportunities for developing the four language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. In *Spectrum*, understanding a new language is considered the starting point for communication. The student books thus emphasize the importance of comprehension, both as a useful skill and as a natural means of acquiring a language. Students begin each unit by listening to and reading conversations that provide rich input for language learning. Accompanying activities enhance comprehension and give students time to absorb new vocabulary and structures. Throughout the unit students encounter readings and dialogues containing structures and expressions not formally introduced until later units or levels. The goal is to provide students with a continuous stream of input that challenge their current knowledge of English, thereby allowing them to progress naturally to a higher level of competence.

### **5.6 Language Content**

The language presented provides generally authentic models of American English and is appropriate for the age and abilities of the intended learners. However, the controlled

grammatical syllabus restricts most of the language presented to shortquestion-and-answer dialogues.

### **5.7 Topic Content**

The *Spectrum* syllabus is organized around functions and structures practiced in thematic lessons. Both functions and structures are carefully graded according to simplicity and usefulness. Structures are presented in clear paradigms with informative usage notes. thematic lessons provide interesting topics for interaction and a meaningful vehicle for introducing vocabulary.

### **5.8 Teachability and Flexibility**

The materials are easy for teachers to use and the teacher's book offers extensive teaching support, providing complete lesson plans and many ideas for activities. However, as discussed, the lesson plans and activities are based on a communicative approach which is compatible with learning- or learner-centered approaches.

### **5.9 Assessment**

The *Spectrum testing package* includes a placement test as well as three quizzes, midterm and final tests for each level which let the teachers to assess their students learning and progress during a course.

### **5.10 Teacher's Book**

Teacher's Edition 2A features full-sized reproductions of each student-book page with teaching suggestions, listening scripts, and answer keys on the facing page. Listening scripts and answer keys for the workbook appear in the appendix.

### **5.11 Supporting Sources**

The *Spectrum* 2A consists of student book, work book, teacher's edition and audio cassette program. The workbook provided sufficient exercises to practice what was learned in the textbook. The workbook provided effective reinforcement for the grammar structures and vocabulary presented in the textbook, and the Audio Cassette program provides good practices to enrich learners listening skill.

### **5.12 Development of Learner Autonomy**

The reading activities and exercises in the *Spectrum* 2A are not being conducive in learner autonomy that is they did not involve opportunities that encouraged creativity, interest and

curiosity. Reading texts and activities did not help the students gain different points of views. This attributed to the fact that the reading passages in the textbook were found above the level of the students. They involved too many unknown vocabulary which were above their level as well.

## **6. Summary**

In summary, the evaluation of *Spectrum 2A* revealed that:

1. The course aims to provide motivating materials that teach students to function in real-life situations
2. To teach only authentic English that stimulates natural conversation both in and outside the classroom
3. To give students a feeling of success and achievement as they learn the language.
4. The text book has a communicative approach to language learning
5. It has a carefully graded syllabus
6. The materials are easy for both teachers and learners to use
7. The language and topic content is generally appropriate, but sometimes needs to be adapted or supplemented for the local context
8. The written tests and quizzes are valid in terms of the language they measure, but are not a valid means of assessing oral language learning.

## **7. Conclusion**

In this paper the researcher has attempted to show that while commercially produced materials can be valuable language learning resources, evaluating and adapting activities found in them can increase their potential for learning. This process has been shown to involve several steps. It has been seen that before evaluating materials it is necessary to have a teaching approach that is based on a set of principles about foreign language learning by adult learners and the needs of the particular learners. By adapting activities found in course books to make them engaging tasks with clear learning goals teachers can provide adult learners with experiences that enhance opportunities for language learning. Despite a few reservations and shortcomings, the Researcher feels that *Spectrum 2A* is relatively compatible with the adult English learner's needs of the institute.

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## Appendix 1: Materials Evaluation Form

(This check list is designed by the researcher out of the combination of two other check lists to evaluate the Spectrum Text Book 2A)

### INSTRUCTIONS

To respond to the statements, please mark (x) the appropriate choice as follows:

**1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 agree 4 strongly agree**

#### A. General Appearance

**1 2 3 4**

1. The textbook cover is informative and attractive to young learners.
2. The font size and type used in the book are appropriate for young learners.



3. The book contents and additional materials look interesting and fun to young learners.

#### **B. Layout and Design**

4. The textbook includes a detailed overview of the functions, structures and vocabulary that will be taught in each unit.

5. The layout and design is appropriate and clear.

6. The textbook is clearly structured and sequenced.

7. Adequate review sections and exercises are included.

8. The learners can see easily what they have to do.

9. The materials provide sufficient opportunities for independent study.

10. The illustrations are varied and attractive.

11. The illustrations stimulate learners to be creative.

#### **C. Methodology**

12. The suggested teaching methodology is based on the latest research.

13. The suggested methodology is learning- or learner-centered.

14. The suggested methodology is appropriate for young learners in my teaching context.

15. The materials can be easily adapted to suit various approaches.

#### **D. Activities**

16. The book includes sufficient activities and tasks which are interesting in themselves, and not just language production activities.

17. The book provides plenty of activities for children who cannot yet read and write with confidence.

18. The book provides plenty of varied practice for any one set of language items.

19. The book provides a balance of activity types (for example, there is an appropriate distribution of input vs. output based tasks).

20. The activities encourage meaningful language use.

21. The activities incorporate individual, pair and group work.

22. The activities promote creative, original and independent responses.

23. The activities are conducive to the internalisation of newly introduced language.

24. The activities can be modified or supplemented easily.

#### **E. Language Skills**

25. The materials provide an appropriate balance of the four language skills.

26. There is sufficient material for integrated skills work.

27. Listening material is well recorded, as authentic as possible, and engages the interest of young learners.

- 28. There is a sufficient range of engaging, level-appropriate reading material.
- 29. There is sufficient material for spoken English incorporating activities that can be personalised and are interesting to young learners.
- 30. Writing activities are suitable in terms of difficulty, interest, and amount of guidance.
- 31. Reading and writing activities are suitable for learners who do not use the Roman script in their first language.

#### **F. Language Content**

- 32. The language used in the book is sufficiently authentic.
- 33. The language used is at the right level for my students' current English ability.
- 34. The language functions exemplify English that my students will be interested in and likely to use.
- 35. The language represents a diverse range of registers and accents.

#### **G. Topic Content**

- 36. The topics of the book are realistic and likely to appeal to young learners.
- 37. The topics are relevant and encourage learners to express themselves.
- 38. The topics encourage independent thinking and active learning.
- 39. The book avoids cultural/racial/sexual stereotypes.

#### **H. Teachability and Flexibility**

- 40. The book provides sufficient support to help teachers exploit the activities to meet learners' needs and expectations.
- 41. The book is suitable for mixed ability classes and classes of different sizes.
- 42. The book provides opportunities to localise and personalise activities.
- 43. The book caters for different preferred learning styles.

#### **I. Assessment**

- 44. The book provides adequate opportunities for learner assessment.
- 45. The book provides periodical revisions for diagnostic purposes.
- 46. Adequate assessment materials such as progress tests are included or easily obtained.
- 47. The tests are valid and contain relevant, meaningful language.

#### **J. Supporting Sources**

- 48. A teacher's book is available and it gives useful and complete guidance, along with alternative activities.
- 49. A workbook is available and it contains appropriate supplementary activities.
- 50. Cassette tapes are of good quality construction.
- 51. Sound quality of tapes is good with no hissing, distortion, background noise, or other problems.

- 52. Tapes have a variety of voices and they are native speakers talking at normal speed.
- 53. If the book is part of a series, other books in the series are also suitable for use in your school.
- 54. The course book, teacher's book, tapes and workbook are not prohibitively expensive for your students/school.

#### **K. Teacher's books**

- 55. Is there adequate guidance for the teachers who will be using the course book and its supporting materials?
- 56. Are the teachers' books comprehensive and supportive?
- 57. Do they adequately cover teaching techniques, language items such as grammar rules and culture-specific information?
- 58. Do the writers set out and justify the basic premises and principles underlying the material?
- 59. Are keys to exercises given?

#### **L. Development of Learner Autonomy**

- 60. The reading texts and activities in the text book help to gain different points of views
- 61. The reading texts and activities in the text book foster creativity.
- 62. The reading texts and activities in the text book raise interest and curiosity.
- 63. The activities in the text book help to evaluate what a learner has learnt.
- 64. The textbook allows me to be more aware of my weaknesses while developing language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking).
- 65. The textbook allows me to be more aware of my strengths while developing language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking).

## **Title**

# **Developing Listening Comprehension Ability Through an Integrated Task-Based Approach**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to introduce a new perspective in improving English listening skill of Iranian EFL learners using an integrated task (listening, reading, and writing) used in TOEFL iBT. The participants were 20 senior EFL academic learners majoring in English Translation. They were further randomly assigned as the control group (n=10 students) who were taught using traditional methods of teaching listening skill and the experimental group (n=10 students) where listening was taught in an integrated approach. The findings suggested that adopting integrated task-based approach in EFL Listening practice persistently could significantly improve EFL learners' listening comprehension ability.

**Keywords:** Integrated skills, Listening Comprehension skill, Task-Based Approach, EFL Students

## **1.Introduction**

Listening comprehension ability has received considerable attention in the fields of applied linguistics, psycholinguistics and second language pedagogy during the last two decades (Anderson & Lynch, 1988). Moreover, as language teaching has moved toward comprehension-based approaches, listening to learn has become an important issue in the adult English as a second language (ESL) classroom (Lund, 1990). Yet it remains one of the least understood processes in language learning despite the recognition of the critical role it plays both in communication and in language acquisition (Morley, 1991). How to achieve better results in English listening instruction and how to develop students' listening competence remain an arduous task for English teachers especially in EFL classes.

In general, the challenge in reference to ESL/EFL learning, especially listening competence in applied linguistics is that the four communicative macro skills, i.e. reading, writing, speaking, and listening are treated separately (segregated-skill approach) in second language learning. In the segregated-skill approach, the mastery of discrete language skills such as reading and speaking is seen as the key to successful learning, and language learning is typically separate from content learning (Mohan, 1986). This is contrary to the integrated way that people use language skills in normal communication, and it clashes with the direction in which language teaching experts have been moving in recent years.

Technically speaking, learning English constitutes foreign language learning [EFL] in Iran. Although in Iran today due to the increasing demand of students opting for higher education in a foreign country, or simply for immigration purposes, learning English has attained special significance, it is not used in most domains and in instances when listening is significantly essential for the objectives of a group or community, it is not comprehended correctly and is flawed.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of task based language teaching in improving English listening ability in Iran using an integrated task as a springboard for the research. This is a small scale study which indicates that EFL Listening comprehension ability is greatly developed when students personally interact with and inculcate interest in language learning goals which are mediated in this case, through the integrated task.

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

Although once labeled a passive skill, listening is very much an active process of selecting and interpreting information from auditory and visual clues (Richards, 1983; Rubin, 1995). Most of what is known about the listening process stems from research on native language development; however, as the importance of teaching listening comprehension has increased, so has the inquiry into second language listening comprehension (Rubin, 1994).

The segregation of the skills is not consistent with the nature of language development in the first language context. In the first language context, all language skills are interrelated. The interrelatedness of the language skills can be deduced from observation of a child's development of oral and written language which follows the sequence of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The recognition of this sequential growth identifies the language skills as being interwoven and interdependent. It also suggests that a problem in one language skill will usually carry over to another skill, while proficiency in one skill facilitates development of another skill (Strang, 1972).

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001) integrated language instruction that engages learners in meaningful communication and enables them to attain their learning objectives can be found in an "unlimited" array of models, teaching materials and techniques. A few examples of such integrated models with a communicative and contextualized focus are: content-based (sometimes also called theme-based), task-based, text-based (also called genre-based), discourse-based, project-based, network-based, technology-based, corpus-based, interaction-based, literature-based, literacy-based, community-based, competency-based, or standards-based.

In many regions around the world, learning English has the objective of enabling learners to gain access to social, vocational, educational, or professional opportunities (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Hinkel (1999; 2001) believes that in common perspectives on contemporary language curricula, teaching reading is typically connected to instruction on writing and vocabulary, teaching writing can be easily tied to reading and grammar, and speaking skills readily lend themselves to teaching listening, pronunciation, and cross-cultural pragmatics. In other words, the simplest and most basic type of integrated teaching incorporates the skills in the same language medium, either spoken to include listening and speaking, or written to include reading and writing. A typical instructional paradigm found in many locations around the world deals

with employing learners' receptive skills to provide input and modeling for productive skills. For instance, in the spoken medium, listening selections are used as models for speaking, interaction, or pronunciation skills, and in the written medium, reading input supplies models for writing.

Nunan (1997) claims that Listening and reading are therefore secondary skills mean to other ends, rather than ends in themselves. During the 1980s, the proponents of listening in a second language were also encouraged by work in first language field. Here, people such as Brown (1990) were able to demonstrate the importance of developing oracy (the ability to listen and speak) as well as literacy in a school. Prior to this, it was taken for granted that first language speaker needed instruction in how to read and write, but not in how to listen and speak, because these skills were automatically bequeathed to them as native speakers (Gorjian, Alipour & Saffarian, 2012).

To sum, few studies have been done on integrated tasks in order to see their effects on developing listening comprehension ability. Early research findings (e.g. Loban, 1963; Ruddell, 1966; Thomas, 1974) indicate that a student's ability to use the listening and speaking skills is closely related to the learner's ability to comprehend written language, and further deploy these skills to reading comprehension. Furthermore, recent literature on the topic (Hefferman, 2006; Faydi, 2003) recommends integrated skill instruction to ameliorate language learning outcomes. In this vein, researchers (for instance, Hinkel, 2006; Shanahan, 2006) again have come to the conclusion that the four skill areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing should not be instructionally approached as distinct and isolated cognitive domains – rather, they need to be presented integratively in each and every learning/teaching task or activity. This study has sought to explore the effects of integrated reading and writing skills on the listening ability.

Arguing for the role of listening in the communicative macroskills, different researchers such as Hunsaker(1990) and Gilbert (2005) demonstrated the prominence of listening in schools. Researchers have found that improvement in listening skill has a positive effect on other language skills: reading, writing, and speaking. For example, Morris and Leavey (2006) focused on preschoolers' phonological development. The study reveals that listening skill instruction improves preschoolers' phonological awareness. Similarly, two other studies found out that listening skill instruction assists students in improving reading comprehension in middle school. In addition, the outcome of Bergman's study (1999) has revealed that listening and reading

stories at the same time contribute to enhance reading comprehension. In addition to the impact of listening skill on reading comprehension, a study reported by Berninger (2000) showed that students in grades 1–6 improve their spelling significantly through aural skill instruction, whereas there is a high correlation between grades 1–3 and the improvement of narrative and expository composition in grades 2 and 3 through listening instruction.

Hartley (2007) examined the citation of recently reviewed articles published in applied linguistics and verified the lack of overlap between references of studies focusing on the four communicative macroskills. One way of promoting such opportunities is to unpack the existing interwoven relationship among the communicative macroskills. This study thus attempts to find out the link among communicative macroskills and the relationship between listening and other skills as Hartley maintains that deciphering reading in first and second language relies on writing, in general, and thinking of speaking and listening, in particular. In this relation, a substantial amount of research has been conducted in reading and writing skills, whilst investigators have underscored the role of listening and speaking skills in human learning and development. The reason for inadequate attention to listening/speaking research is that the instruction of listening and speaking requires teaching pronunciation and cross-cultural pragmatics to understand a speaker's intended message.

The present study aimed at studying the effect of the integrated tasks on the Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension ability and thus finds a convincing answer to the following **research question**: Do integrated tasks affect the development of listening comprehension ability of Iranian EFL learners at the tertiary level?

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Participants**

The participants of this study were senior EFL academic learners majoring in English Translation at Islamic Azad University, Maybod branch. Since the participants formed intact groups, a preliminary English Test (PET) was administered to all students to assess their general proficiency and at last from a total population of 60, 20 students were selected to form the research participants. The participants were further randomly assigned as the control group (n=10 students) who were taught using traditional methods of teaching listening ability and the



experimental group (n=10 students) where listening was taught in an integrated approach of instruction. The participants in the experimental group received listening activities that will be explained in the procedure section. Both groups attended language laboratory.

It should be noted that the participants have covered 16 credit hours of listening, 16 credit hours of Reading, 16 credit hours of Writing. In all the undergraduate students are required to pass 132 credit hours successfully to obtain their B.A. This study was carried out with 20 female students from the eighth semester of English Translation program whose ages ranged between 19 and 23 years old. Independently of what their purpose to learn English was, most of them were motivated to learn the language.

### **3.2 Instruments**

To obtain the research data, the researcher made use of a language proficiency test (PET) to homogenize the prospective students for the study, the listening pre-test, and the listening post-test. In addition, the other instrument used in this project was the integrated task (listening, reading, and writing) used in TOEFL iBT as the main data collection instrument since it was the record of all that the students did. This was a very rich source of data to analyze and also to find particular issues that were later observed in the analysis enriching our knowledge about our students.

### **3.3 Procedures**

In the first step, a language proficiency test (PET) composed of fifty questions (monologues and dialogues) lasting for forty minutes was administered for the purpose of standardization. Sixty senior female and male EFL learners received the test and according to the results of the test twenty learners whose scores fell within one standard deviation below and above the mean were selected to be divided into two groups for the purpose of the study.

During the first week, a standard listening comprehension pre-test was administered to both the control and experiment groups. By the end of the semester, both the control and experiment groups took the listening comprehension post-test to observe the probable impact of the treatment.

During the term, the control group was engaged in the ordinary program of instruction, news-clip listening activity. TV news clips were taken from VOA (Voice of America) news programs. The participants were required to listen carefully and retell the main points in English.

The experimental group, on the other hand, was asked to perform the integrated task (Reading- Listening-Writing), inspired from the writing section of TOEFL (iBT). A section of the book TOEFL iBT is divided into two subsections. The first section contained an integrated task of reading a short text of about 200 to 300 words. Then a speaker discussed the same topic from a different view point. The listening passage too is about the same length as the reading passage and provides additional information. The students were assessed on a summary of important points made in the listening passage and how to relate the passage that has been read. It tests students' ability to listen well to a lecture or a talk, identify key information from reading materials as well as write a piece of prose in English; to collate and combine information from more than one source and communicate effectively. Apart from testing students' listening, reading and writing skills, it also tests their logical and argumentative competence in English, their ability to generate and organize ideas and support them with the details from their observations, personal experiences, general reading and awareness of current issues.

The task was administered in a classroom, free from any interruptions, so that the participants could concentrate on the tasks. As far as the impact of task complexity is concerned, it is assumed that the nature of the task that the EFL student is engaged with will influence his/her listening process. In other words, when EFL students are faced with a cognitively demanding listening task, higher order thinking may consume most of their attentional resources, with insufficient attention left for them to address language problems.

The instructional hours consisted of eight sessions spread out over eight weeks. Each class session was ninety minutes held once in a week. The participants in both groups were taught by the same instructor (the researcher herself). The results of both pre and post tests were analyzed and compared through SPSS 16.

#### ○ **Data Analysis**

The current study used SPSS 16 for windows for the statistical analysis measures: a descriptive statistics (table 2), correlation (table3), and a paired sample t-test (tables4).

## **4.Results**

To answer the research questions, the researcher used the following statistical tests:

First an independent- samples t-test was used to assess the homogeneity of the

groups in terms of their general proficiency as measured by the Preliminary English Test (PET). At the onset of the study ,it was confirmed that there were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of listening skill as measured by a listening comprehension test composed of 50 questions (monologues and dialogues) lasting for 40 minutes ( $\alpha = .82$ ).

**Table 1.** *Individual scores in the Pre-test Post-test ( Maximal Score 50)*

<b>Experimental</b>			<b>Group</b>	
<b>Control Group</b>				
<b>Student</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Posttest</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Pretest</b>
<b>Post test</b>				
1	46	48	1`	47
46				
2	46	47	2`	45
46				
3	44	47	3`	44
45				
4	42	46	4`	42
43				
5	41	45	5`	41
41				
6	40	43	6`	39
40				
7	38	41	7`	37
39				
8	35	41	8`	35
34				
9	33	39	9`	32
33				
10	30	38	10`	31
33				

Test scores obtained from the pre-test and post-test (Table 1) were compared and analyzed according to a number of parameters. The average scores for the

control group (39.4) and experimental group (40.5) on the first test indicates that the listening scores are statistically different between the two groups. Also, the experimental group had higher scores than the control group on the posttest (Table 1&2). The within-group comparison showed that the difference between the pre-test and post-test means was statistically significant in the experimental group, but not in the control group( see tables 2,3&4). This indicates that although both groups performed better on the second test, it is in the experimental group that the gain in scores can be attributed to factors other than chance, that is, in this case to the integration instruction.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for the Pre-test and post-test*

Group		N	Mean	SD	Std. E
Experimental G.	pretest	10	40.500	6.04	1.91
	posttest	10	43.5	3.59	1.13
Control G.	pretest	10	39.40	5.87	1.85
	posttest	10	40.00	5.18	1.63

**Table 3. Paired Samples Statistics.** *Descriptive Statistics of scores from Experimental and Control Group*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 experimental	42.0000	20	5.07833	1.13555
control	39.7000	20	5.40078	1.20765

**Table4. Paired Samples Correlations.**

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 experimental & control	20	.829	.000

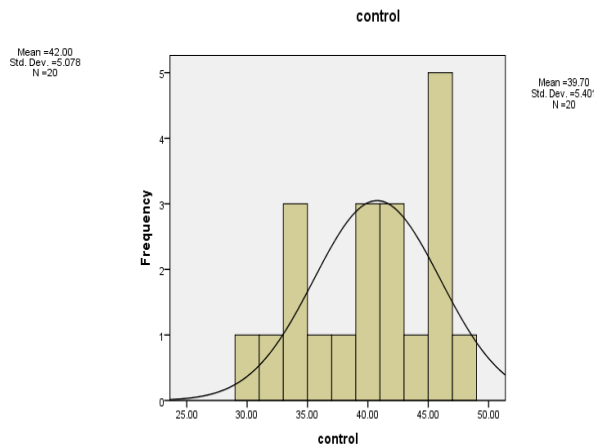
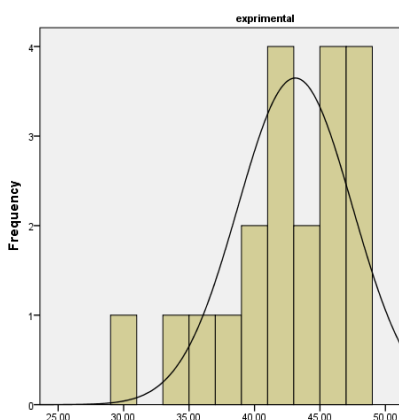
**Table 5. Paired Samples Test of the Groups 'responses**

	Paired Differences				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower	

Pair 1	experiment al - control	2.30000	3.07964	.68863	.85868	
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Histogram1. Experimental group

Histogram2. Control group



The comparison of gains the two groups achieved shows that the experimental group achieved greater progress than the control group ( see Table 4& 5).T-test analysis showed that the difference in the gains between the two groups is statistically significant ( $t = 3.34$ ,  $p < 01$ ), which indicates that the experimental group benefited from the integrated instruction (See the Histograms).

The comparison of the differences between the pre-test and post-test standard deviation shows that the spread of the scores was more even in the group which received the instruction (the standard deviation decreased from 6.041 to 3.59) , whereas in the control group the scores remained equally spread (the standard deviation decreased from 5.874 to 5.18). These data indicate that the program of integrated instruction had an effect on all students' progress, whereas in the absence of such instruction some students achieved better scores while others did not.

## 5.Discussion and Conclusion

Assisting learners in the development of listening comprehension is a challenge. It is a challenge that demands both the teacher's and the learner's attention because of the critical role that listening plays, not only in communication, but also in the

acquisition of language. Knowledge of the listening process and factors that affect listening enable teachers to select or create listening texts and activities that meet the needs of their adult ESL learners. Teachers, then, must weave these listening activities into the curriculum to create a balance that mirrors the real-world integration of listening with speaking, reading, and writing.

Therefore, Few people would question the pedagogical value of employing tasks as a vehicle for promoting communication and authentic language use in second and foreign language classrooms. This approach, however, has its own drawbacks. At present, the main concern of leading researchers is the kinds of tasks and whether at which level task-based learning is effective.

This experimental study showed what effect a one semester integrated listening, reading, and writing program of instruction had on the development of students' listening skills. The hypothesis that listening skills of students will develop to a greater extent as a result of integrated instruction was confirmed. The difference between the pre-test and post-test means in the experimental group was statistically significant, and so was the difference in the gain between the two groups. However, one needs to be cautious in drawing conclusions from the data obtained. It is necessary to bear in mind that the study was conducted with a small sample, over a short period of time and that the program of listening instruction was a small segment of foreign language instruction in general.

Although this study was conducted with a small sample, using one listening test only, the results indicate the value of integrated instruction at tertiary level of teaching English and suggest that listening practice should be an integral part of language development instruction at university level. Further research is necessary in order to determine how such instruction should be incorporated into language development programs at tertiary level in different contexts.

As a result, teachers can potentially diversify methods and forms of classroom teaching and learning, improve learners' overall and specific language competence, introduce learners' to the wider cultural context, and increase learners' motivation with careful reflection and planning, any teacher can integrate the language skills

and strengthen the tapestry of language teaching and learning. When the tapestry is woven well, learners can use English effectively for communication. (Oxford, 2001).

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## **Title**

# **Comparing Receptive and Productive Lexical Collocational Knowledge of Iranian EFL Learners**

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## **Abstract**

This study attempts to establish the significant relationships between vocabulary competence and collocational competence of Iranian EFL learners. And this study adopts the structure-based framework (Gitsaki, 1996 and Zhang, 1993) which states that collocation is influenced by structure of the language being learnt, and that collocations occur in specific patterns. The participants of this study were 110 Iranian undergraduates. Participants took two different tests, first, the vocabulary test was given to gauge the participants' basic knowledge of common word meanings, specifically the extent to which they know meanings of words at different levels. Second, the receptive

collocational test and the productive collocational test were conducted shortly after to find the possible difference between the participants' productive and receptive lexical collocational knowledge. The results show that there is a significant difference between the EFL learners' productive and receptive knowledge on lexical English collocations. And there is a significant relationship between English vocabulary knowledge and collocational knowledge. Therefore, attention should be paid to teaching collocations and vocabulary directly to these learners.

**Keywords:** Lexical collocation, receptive collocation, productive collocation, vocabulary knowledge

## 1. Introduction

The present study attempt to probe into the possible differences between receptive collocational knowledge and productive collocational knowledge of Iranian EFL learners. At the same time, this study wishes to display the differences between vocabulary knowledge and the collocational knowledge of Iranian EFL learners. In this comparison the two indexes of collocational knowledge, that is, the receptive and productive collocatioanl knowledge are treated as on variable. In the field of second language acquisition and English as a Second/Foreign Language (ELS/EFL) education, little attention has been paid to collocations compared with other domains of language, such as vocabulary, grammar, and phonetics/phonology.

As the study of vocabulary has become a mainstream topic from the vantage point of language use and not language structure, many linguists have concentrated not on each word in a sentence but on the combination of words. As a result, collocation has become a particular domain of vocabulary research both theoretically and practically. Benson, Benson and Ilson (1997: ix) underscore the significance of this issue as such:

“Learners of English as a foreign or second language like, learners of anylanguage, have traditionally devoted themselves to mastering words –their pronunciation, forms and meanings. However, if they wish to acquireactive mastery of English, that is, if they wish to be able to express themselvesfluently ad accurately in speech and writing, they must learn to cope with thecombination of words into phrases, sentences and texts.”

The importance of collocations has been stated not only by Benson et al. but also by other researchers such as (Bahns & Eldaw, 1993; Bahns, 1993; Channell, 1981; Lewis, 1993; Willis, 1990). However, Mackin (1978) is somehow sceptical about the possibility of teaching collocations. He claims that it is not possible for ESL/EFL learners to learn such huge number of collocations. The impossibility of acquiring all collocation originates from the lack of collocational competence of ESL/EFL learners (Bahns, 1993). It is also related to their lack of intuition which is defined as the ability of native speakers in confirming rules of the grammar and the usage of language (Crystal, 1992).

It should be noted that so far studies on collocations have not been enough in defining the concept of collocations in a rigorous way (Cowan, 1989). Backlund (1976), Cruse (1986), Halliday (1966), Ridout and Waldo-Clark (1970), and Seaton (1982) have discussed the famous statement that collocation is "the tendency of lexical item to co-occur with one or more other words". This definition has been followed since the definition of collocation first suggested by Firth in 1957. Many linguists have adopted the latter definition in their studies, however, none of these linguists can clearly define the boundary between free combinations, idiom and collocation because these concepts can be presented on a continuum.

## **2. Literature Review**

The term collocation possesses various types of definition and is associated with different terms but it is not yet definitely defined. Basically, there are three approaches to collocations: (1) corpus research approaches, (2) discourse and sentence –building approaches, and (3) linguistic approaches.

Kjellmer (1995) and Benson et al., (1986) present a definition which is based on an operational approach reflecting the procedures which are employed to extract collocations from language corpora data. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992), take a sentence and discourse making approach which investigates the distributional aspect of language and its psychological side as well. Their work presents extensive classification of recurring combinations of words and examines different psychological and distributional phenomena of the English language. For them, the term *lexical phrase* is used for multiword linguistic phenomena such as institutional expressions (*how do you do?*), phrase constraints (*..ago*), and sentence makers (*both...and...*). They imply that lexical

phrases are completely common in both fluent writing and speech, and they constitute a significant source of linguistic data to be analyzed by language users to obtain syntactic and lexical information.

In the linguistic approach, collocation is defined as a completely specific phenomenon. For instance, Wood (1986) proposes an area of language from productivity to frozenness by considering of native speakers. Wood (1986) treats productivity of form for phrases and semantic compositionality as factors constituting a continuum ranging from total frozenness to complete freedom of linguistic combination.

Although various terms are used such as 'phraseological units' (Ginzburg et al., 1979), 'word-combination' (Akhmanova, 1974; Cowie, 1994), and 'phrasal lexeme' (Lipka, 1990), are used, researchers are totally investigating the same phenomenon. They are investigating role of patterning of words and phrases or chunks in language processing, communication, first and second language acquisition, language loss, etc. therefore, in this study the term collocations and the other terms referring to formulaic language are interchangeably.

The connection between words making a formula differs between the poles of continuum between strong – when the presence of one word leads you to strongly expect the other and weak as illustrated in the following chart (Lewis, 2000:74)

### Figure 1

*Lewis' model of continuum (Lewis, 2000:74)*

Friendly dog   strong coffee   sibling rivalry   throw in the towel

**Weaker**←.....→**Stronger**

Old car   heavy smoker   mitigating circumstance   stars and stripes

Native speakers have the ability to produce natural-sounding speech which is part of their collocational knowledge. Moon (1998) states that the frequent co-occurrence of words results from their conventionalization and institutionalization ad expressions. For instance, native speakers say *heavy rain* and *strong wind* but they normally do not say *\*strong rain* or *\*heavy wind*. These last two combinations are syntactically correct but native speakers in writing or speech do not make such combinations (Pawley & Syder, 1983).

Nevertheless, frequency cannot be considered as the only criterion to distinguish between collocations and other syntactic constructions. A number of syntactic constructions recur

frequently due to their referents and their commonality and not due to their institutionalization as expressions. For instance, a *white house* may frequently occur not due to the fact that the phrase has been institutionalized but because the referent is common and as a result this phrase is not treated as a collocation.

It is possible to classify collocations into two subtypes as grammatical and lexical collocations (Benson, 1985). Lexical collocations are composed of two constituent parts such as *verb + noun*, *adjective + noun*. Whereas grammatical collocations are made of either a dominant word such as a verb, a noun or an adjective and dependent word like a preposition. Grammatical collocations are sometimes made of a particular structural pattern, like a dative- movement transformation such as *to+ infinitive + gerund* or they can also be made of *that-clause*.

In spite of the fact that the importance of collocations in EFL and ESL situations has been unanimously acknowledge, only recently have serious studies been experimentally conducted on collocations which helped collocations in particular and formulaic language in general to come into focus for second language learners. For Gitsaki (1996) the more exposure to the targeted collocations may result in the greater frequency of correct responses and the more exposure to certain types of collocations may lead to more frequent use of them in the writing of the students. Al-Zahrani (1998) investigated the relationship between the students' knowledge of English lexical collocations and their overall language frequency. His respondents were Saudi EFL students. The results of his study revealed that the students' knowledge of collocations increased with their academic levels and there was a strong correlation between the students' collocational knowledge and their proficiency level as revealed through giving them the TOEFL tests. In another study, Hsu (2007) examined the use of English collocations and their relation to the online writing of Taiwanese college English majors and non-majors. Hsu's results implied that the variety of lexical collocations compared with the frequency of lexical collocations proved to be better indicator for the participants' writing score. Shokouhi and Mirsalari (2010) examined the correlation between general linguistic knowledge of Iranian EFL learners and their collocational knowledge. The data revealed a significant collocation between proficiency and grammatical collocations.

These studies suffer from serious limitations because most of them focus in the following aspects: developmental patterns of collocational competence, examining the relationship between

the overall language proficiency of the learners and their collocational knowledge, measuring learners' collocational knowledge in general, the types of errors which they make.

### **3. The Study**

This research tries to shed light on the problems of Persian learners of English in the production of English collocations by attempting to highlight the difference between receptive and productive lexical collocational knowledge of undergraduate Iranian EFL learners majoring in English literature at University of Qom. This study is conducted with the following objectives:

1. To find the possible differences between the Iranian undergraduate learners' productive and receptive lexical collocational knowledge.
2. To discover any relationship between the vocabulary knowledge and the English lexical collocational knowledge of Iranian undergraduate EFL students

### **4. Methodology**

#### **4.1. Participants of The study**

The participants in this study were 110 male and female students majoring in English at the Department of Language and Literature at University of Qom. The subjects' mean age was calculated and it was 24 years. Their language proficiency as measured by Oxford Placement Test was upper intermediate. Their GPAs' in reading comprehensions and writing courses exceeded 16 out of 20. These participants were both male and female students. Their L1 background was Persian (Farsi) and had at least four years of second language learning experience. They had passed several courses in English reading comprehension, two courses in second language writing, and one course in English vocabulary and idiomatic expressions. None of the participants had received any specific instruction in English collocation and they were not much aware of collocational competence as a dimension of second language knowledge and competence.

#### **4.2. Instrument**

Several instruments were employed in the processes of data collection. The first instrument was Oxford Placement Test (2004) which was used for measuring the participants' level of language proficiency. The test consists of 200 multiple-choice items, 100 grammar items and 100 listening

items. The grammar items are 3 choice items tapping different components of English grammar knowledge. In this study only the grammar section of the test was used. The listening section was not administered for some practicality reasons. Another instrument the participants took was a receptive test of English lexical collocation (Haqiqi, 2007). The test consisted of 40 multiple-choice items. The items tapped different types of lexical collocations that is, noun+ noun, verb+ noun, etc. The test proved to be highly reliable producing reliability estimate of .92. Another instrument used was a productive English collocation test (Haqiqi, 2007). The test consisted of 40 multiple-choice items measuring different forms of collocations. The test was highly reliable and produced reliability estimate of .89. The third instrument used was a standard vocabulary test; Vocabulary Level Test also known as Vocabulary Size Test (Nation, 1990). This test was designed to estimate test takers' basic knowledge of common word meanings, and, specifically, the extent to which they know the common meanings of words at different levels, that is, the 2,000, 3,000, 5,000, 10,000 and university word levels. Nation's (1990) Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) is a suite of five tests, with the total of 30 items at four different word frequency levels plus the Academic Word List (AWL). The items of the test are relatively straightforward. They are made up of sets of six words and three definitions.

## 5. Data Analysis

### 5.1. Research Question 1

Is there a significant difference between productive and receptive lexical English collocational knowledge of the Iranian undergraduate EFL learners?

A paired-samples t-test was run to compare the EFL learners' mean scores on productive and receptive lexical English collocations. As displayed in Table 1 the EFL learners showed a higher mean score ( $M = 17.70$ ,  $SD = 5.56$ ) on the receptive lexical English collocation than productive lexical English collocation ( $M = 13.84$ ,  $SD = 7.59$ ).

**Table 1** *Descriptive Statistics; Knowledge of Productive and Receptive Collocations*

Tests	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Receptive	17.70	110	5.561	.530
Productive	13.84	110	7.590	.724

The results of the independent t-test ( $t(109) = 5.38$ ,  $P < .05$ ,  $R = .45$  it represented an almost large effect size) (Table 2) indicate that there was a significant difference between the EFL



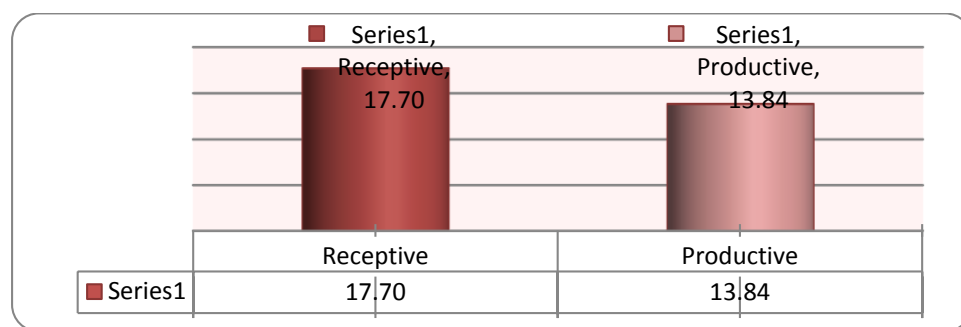
learners' productive and receptive knowledge on lexical English collocations. Thus the first null-hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 2** *Paired-Samples t-test; Knowledge of Productive and Receptive Lexical Collocations*

Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
			Lower	Upper			
3.864	7.519	.717	2.443	5.285	5.389	109	.000

**Figure 2**

*Knowledge of Productive and Receptive Lexical Collocations*



## 5.2. Research Question 2

Is there a significant relationship between foreign language vocabulary knowledge, and foreign language lexical collocational knowledge?

A Pearson correlation was run to probe any significant relationship between foreign language vocabulary knowledge, and foreign language lexical collocational knowledge. The results ( $R(110) = .67$ ,  $P < .05$ , it represented a large effect size) indicate a significant relationship between the two variables. Thus the second null-hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 3** *Pearson Correlation; Foreign Language Vocabulary Knowledge, and Foreign Language Lexical Collocational Knowledge*

		Vocabulary Knowledge
Lexical	Pearson Correlation	.679**
Collocational	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Knowledge	N	110

## **6. Discussion**

Considering the first question of the study whether there is a significant relationship between productive and receptive lexical English collocational knowledge of Iranian undergraduate EFL learners, the results in table 2, indicated the existence of a positive relationship between these two variables. Nonetheless the performance of the subjects on the productive collocation test lagged behind their performance on the receptive test. The mean of the scores for the productive collocational test was 13.84; whereas, the mean for the receptive test was 17.70. The results obtained for this question are compared with the results obtained from studies which dealt with similar questions in the literature. The authors attempt to supply the reasons for their findings as far as they can. They also try to highlight the similarities and differences between the present study and the similar studies.

The findings in the first and the second tables are supported by Al-Amor's (2006) study which assessed the productive and receptive collocational knowledge of Saudi EFL learners but there existed one major difference. The results of Al-Amor's study showed that there was a lack of collocational knowledge among the subjects as manifested by their poor performance on the collocational test. Our findings in this respect are in complete agreement with the findings of Al-Amor's. His data also revealed that there was a relationship between the EFL learners' receptive and productive knowledge of collocations. However, his subjects performed better on the productive test ( $M=32.88$ ) than on the receptive test ( $M=24.64$ ), a finding that is paradoxical considering the evidence that receptive knowledge is typically broader than productive knowledge. This finding is in contrast with the findings of the present study because the mean of our subjects on the productive test ( $M=13.84$ ) was smaller than their receptive test ( $M=17.70$ ). However, Al-Amor attributed this to the fact that the target collocations in his receptive test were of lower frequency than those in the productive test. However, in the present study the frequency in the two tests were almost the same. Nevertheless, almost the same results concerning the poor performance of the learners on the productive test was obtained. Therefore, the results might be attributed to other factors and not just the frequency of collocations on the tests. The authors of the present study attribute the better performance of the subjects on the receptive test to guessing.

A factor which has to be considered when the testees are supposed to choose rather than produce in which the testees have to rely on their active knowledge and not on their passive knowledge which is almost always greater than their active performance.

Shehata (2008) examined the L1 influence on the productive and receptive knowledge of collocations by advanced Arabic –speaking English students. The probe of the study consisted of five instruments: a self-report questionnaire, two fill-in-the-blank productive tests, an appropriateness judgment receptive test, and a vocabulary recognition test. The findings yield significant differences between ESL and EFL participants on both productive and receptive collocational knowledge. According to Shehata, this indicates that the ESL learning context enriches the learner's knowledge of collocations while the EFL context does not. The results of Shehata's (2008) study as observed from the mean of the scores of EFL learners in the productive and receptive tests, the students performed better on the receptive test. Moreover, the EFL group lagged behind ESL group and perhaps the reason why our subjects in the present study performed so poorly might be explained by the EFL environment in which they had to learn English. Overall, Shehata's study corroborates with the previously mentioned studies that Arabic-speaking EFL learners have poor knowledge of collocations. This can be attributed to the influence of the learning environment. This conclusion is consistent with the present study since due to cultural, religious and environmental similarities, The Iranian EFL learners in our study displayed the almost the same results as the Arab EFL learners in Shehata's research. The results in Shehata's study also showed that L1 interference had a strong effect on the participants' collocational performance.

Aghbar(1990) made a study on collocations which proved the poor performance of the learners with regard to collocations. His instrument was a cloze test which consists of 50 items; in each item a collocation was used the verb of which was missing. The participants were asked to fill each blank part with a formal verb, used in written English. The findings indicated that the most appropriate responses were provided by the teachers. Next to them were the native speakers whose responses were better than ESL students. Aghbar states that ESL students who gave the least number of appropriate response performed well in cases where the correct response was the verb 'get'. Aghbar claims that the poor performance of ESL students is not because of a lack in vocabulary acquisition. "Rather, the reason is a lack of acquisition of those language chunks that

make discourse fluent and idiomatic" (Aghbar, 1990: 6). The similarity between the performance of American and ESL students showed that the native undergraduate students did not possess proper knowledge of collocations used in formal written English. Therefore, the author of the present study cannot attribute the poor performance of his subjects on both receptive and productive collocational tests just to their lack of exposure to English since with regard to collocations even the native undergraduate students did not possess proper knowledge and perhaps only those who possess systematic knowledge like the teachers in Aghbar study can truly master collocations and their formal usage.

The second question of the present study attempted to discover whether there was a significant relationship between foreign language vocabulary knowledge and foreign language lexical collocational competence of the Iranian undergraduate EFL learners.

As the results of the present study revealed the mean of the students' scores on the receptive vocabulary was 94.81 while the results for the productive vocabulary test showed the mean of 48.96. A figure which was quite disappointing. Nevertheless, the results indicated that there existed a positive correlation between the receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge of the learners but as with the receptive and productive collocational knowledge, the learners' performance on the productive aspect lagged far behind their performance on the receptive aspect. Table 3 reported the existence of a positive relationship between the students' vocabulary knowledge and their knowledge of collocations. It must also be noted that in general the students performed better on the vocabulary test than on the collocation test although as stated earlier the two components were correlated and those students who had good scores on the collocation test also performed well on the vocabulary test but their general performance on the vocabulary test was better than the collocational test.

It must be noted that a host of factors contribute to the somehow controversial results obtained from the studies which attempt to address the issue of vocabulary development and collocational knowledge. Parts of the difficulties arise from the nature of the variables which according to some scholars are very difficult to separate (Schmitt et al 2001). And parts of the problems originate from both the qualitative aspects of the studies and the methods employed to elicit data.

Schmitt et al (2001) claimed that it is very difficult to distinguish between L2 learners' receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge through empirical research due to various definitions of receptive and productive knowledge and the diversity of measurement methods. Therefore, similar to any studies of this nature, the results obtained from the present study should be taken with care for the sake of generalization of the true receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge of the Iranian EFL learners.

As the results of the present study indicate there is a significant relationship between collocational knowledge and L2 vocabulary these results are consistent with the notions of Laufer (1988) who maintains that the obvious '*rulelessness*' of collocations might make them act as one issue which obstructs vocabulary learning in the development of L2 vocabulary. She asserts that collocations mark a remarkable aspect of L2 learners' vocabulary. In the present study those students who were proficient in collocations scored higher in both receptive and productive vocabulary tests. The Iranian students performed better on the receptive test a fact might be partly explained by the guessing strategy. Laufer (1988) believes that collocations can be very helpful in many levels of vocabulary development and acquisition. Collocations can also boost self-learning strategies like guessing. Likewise; boosting vocabulary knowledge can enhance the possibility of increasing collocational knowledge. Therefore it is not surprising that those students who possessed a better mastery of collocations acted better on the receptive vocabulary test for which the possibility of guessing should be taken into account since in receptive tests the testees' production ability is tapped and therefore the test takers may count on their guessing ability which Laufer believes can be boosted through collocations.

To underscore the importance of collocations in the development of vocabulary acquisitions the ideas of Smith maybe quite revealing. Smith (1983) claims that teaching collocations can facilitate the acquisition of vocabulary for EFL students who are mostly University-bound. The shortcomings of the Iranian university students on the vocabulary tests in the present study might also be explained by what Aghbar (1990) believes to constitute one of the main reasons which is collocations and language chunks. Aghbar (1990) sees the poor performance of EFL students on most vocabulary test not due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge, but rather a result of insufficient attention to mastering language chunks, a feat which can be partly overcome through the proper inclusion of collocation teaching in the university textbooks

of the EFL learners. He maintains that collocations should be an essential part of ESL/EFL curriculum, because collocations can be helpful for the acquisition of L2 vocabulary performance in general. Channel (1981) whose study as cited earlier revealed the poor performance of EFL learners on collocation tests emphasized the importance of collocations in the development EFL vocabulary .In her paper, Channel (1981) claims that a good collocational grid can act as an aid in developing and strengthening the vocabulary knowledge of ESL/EFL learners.

As stated earlier the present study revealed the existence of a positive correlation between collocational knowledge and both indexes of vocabulary that is receptive and productive knowledge. However, a host of studies have shown that collocational knowledge and vocabulary development do not proceed neck by neck. Bahns and Eldaw (1993) see the reason why the students' knowledge of collocation does not go neck by neck with their vocabulary knowledge due to the fact that "collocations have been largely neglected in EFL/ESL instruction and that learners are therefore not aware of collocations as a potential in language learning." (Bahns and Eldaw, 1993: 108). To examine collocational knowledge of 58 German EFL learners, Bahns and Eldaw (1993) employed a cloze test and translation test, 34 EFL German students finished a German-English translation test and 24 students completed a cloze test. The findings of these two authors regarding the role of collocations in the development of EFL vocabulary revealed that the development and expansion of the students' knowledge of collocations did not have the same pace as their general vocabulary knowledge. Bahns and Eldaw (1993) cite 'our analysis of translation reveals that, whereas verbal collocations made up 23.1% of all the lexical words which could occur in the sentences, they made up 84.2% of all errors' (Bahns and Eldaw, 1993: 108). Since Bahns and Eldaw employed a translation task to elicit both vocabulary and collocational knowledge their finding must be considered with care to be compared with present study. At the same time, they treated neither the components of lexical collocational knowledge nor those of the vocabulary competence. However, their study similar to the present study also revealed the existence of a sort of correlation but perhaps due to the diversity of their eliciting procedures their results turned out to be different. A fact which is not surprising given what Schmitt (2001) claimed regarding the diversity of measurement methods in this respect.

Another study which attempted to probe the relationship between collocations and general proficiency in English was conducted in Iran. Shokouhi & Mirsalari (2010) studied correlation between the collocational knowledge and general linguistic knowledge of EFL learners. Based on data, there is overall a moderate correlation between proficiency and grammatical collocation and a significant correlation between proficiency and lexical collocation. The results also showed a moderate correlation between the proficiency test as an index of general English knowledge and collocation knowledge (Shokouhi & Mirsalari, 2010: 8).

Studies like (Shokouhi & Mirsalari, 2010) instead of being revealing will increase the confusion in the already indeterminate realm of collocations, vocabulary and language proficiency. Since it is not yet certain whether collocations are parts of vocabulary or they should be treated as separate indexes of general language proficiency. Even treated as parts of general proficiency in English will not make the point easier and their separation into lexical and grammatical does not improve the matters. In general, we can conclude that the results of (Shokouhi & Mirsalari, 2010) provided that vocabulary be treated as one major index of general proficiency and its role be emphasized, can be consistent with the present study.

## **7. Conclusion and Implication**

The present study tested the following two hypotheses:

First, there is no significant difference between productive and receptive lexical English collocational knowledge of Iranian undergraduate EFL learners. Second, there is no significant relation between English language vocabulary development and English language lexical collocational knowledge. The result of the independent t-test ( $t(109) = 5.38, P < .05, R = .45$  it represented almost large effect size) indicate that there was a significant difference between the EFL learners' productive and receptive knowledge on lexical English collocations. Thus the first null-hypothesis (there is no significant between productive and receptive lexical English collocational knowledge of Iranian undergraduate EFL learners) was rejected. The second question of the present study attempted to discover whether there was a significant relationship between English vocabulary knowledge and English lexical collocational knowledge of the Iranian undergraduate EFL learners. The results ( $R(110) = .67, P < .05$ , it represented a large effect size) indicate a significant relationship between the two variables, thus the second null-

hypothesis (there is no significant relationship between English vocabulary knowledge and English lexical collocational knowledge) was rejected.

Considering lexical collocations, the author of the present study can claim that this study has taken into account the following implications and these implications can be observed in his study. The findings of the present study have implications for teachers and L2 learners. Teachers can realize the problems which students have in the development of their language proficiency which may be due to lack of lexical collocational knowledge in ESL/EFL learning.

In spite of the current supposition that English learners at universities are advanced learners, the studies and tests given to those learners prove the opposite. Therefore, attention should be paid to teaching collocations and vocabulary directly to these learners and since L2 learners' lexical collocational knowledge is positively related to their language production, college English teaching should take into account both teaching individual words and grammatical patterns. Therefore, teaching collocational chunks has the greatest priority.

The present study revealed the existence of a wide gap between the non-linguistic students' receptive and productive vocabulary size. College English instruction used to employ grammar and translation; however, the new college English curriculum emphasizes communicative skills and the capability of exchanging information effectively through both written and spoken made. Therefore, the pedagogical approach to language teaching is shifting towards communicative language teaching. However, through communicative approach, although the learners may become able to recognize a large number of words, they want be able to use them productively. In Iran, most college teaches vocabulary through extensive readings both in and outside classrooms. Therefore, a learner is said to know a word when he or she knows its meaning on a reading text.

To overcome the problem of gap between receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge, learning vocabulary through communicative activities must be combined with explicit vocabulary learning. One strategy for acquisition is learning words from a list. Recent studies show that list learning of English vocabulary can be very efficient. Thornbury (2007) believes that the value of list learning has been underestimated and proposes a number of techniques for effective use of word lists in the classroom. For instance, consider Academic Word List (AWL) by Coxhead (2000) to boost academic vocabulary knowledge. AWL is divided into 10 sublists of



word groups; therefore, teachers may ask their students to work on each sublist for every few weeks. Through learning various aspects of words, like (meaning, form and collocations), the students gradually will be able to use them both receptively and productively. Some vocabulary enhancement activities such as retelling stories, problem solving and transfer of information activities may also be added by teachers. Moreover, the students should become fully aware of the significance of academic vocabulary and design related activities for the practice of learning academic activities.

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## **Title**

# **The Relationship between Translation Competence and Translator's Intelligence**

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## **Abstract**

Among lots of factors that might manipulate translators' mind and their translations, their intelligence might be an important and influential element. The present study was mainly concerned with investigating the relationship between intelligence and translation competence. The researcher tried to discover whether there is any perceptible and significant relationship between translators' intelligence and their translation competence. To this end, 50 senior male and female students of BA of English Translation participated in the study. The participants received a package of two tests: a passage of 220 words for translation and a Gardner IQ test including 69 tests in 7 different areas of intelligence such as linguistic intelligence. The research question was attempted upon the scoring of IQ test and evaluating the translations and the analysis of the data employing a correlational study. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between the level of linguistic intelligence and the translation competence. Translators with better competence were those who enjoyed high level of intelligence.

**Keywords:** Intelligence Quotient, intelligence, multiple intelligences, translation competence

## **1.Introduction**

A thorough study of the history of translation uncovers that it occupies a crucial role in transferring different ideas among different nations. Translation is a phenomenon that has a huge effect on every day life. The translator has his own feeling about language and his translation. This feeling consists of a "sixth sense" (Newmark, 1988) but it includes intelligence and sensitivity as well as knowledge.

Intelligence has always been a controversial issue among learning psychologists. Although there is a rich literature on intelligence and its relationship with language there is no single best way to introduce the relation between intelligence and translation competence. Brown (1994) contended that "success in educational situation and in life in general seems to be correlated with high IQ" (p. 100). Intelligence has a multitude of definitions by various scholars, from intelligence as a unidimensional concept to intelligence as a multiple concept.

One of the most important manifestations of the success of translation studies has been the development of scientific approaches to training translators academically. Among so many factors contributing to the task of translation it seems that intelligence quotient (IQ) plays a critical role in translation. There are lots of questions about why one translator succeeds, but the other does not. Why two people with the same age and academic background are so different in their task of translation.

It seems that since 1983 following the work of Gardner on Multiple Intelligence (MI) theory, new researches have been conducted in language studies. However, to the best knowledge of the researcher, no research up to now has been conducted to determine the relationship between translator's intelligence quotient (IQ) and translation competence. It is evident that so many factors involved in the task of translation and translators differ from each other in many ways. One of the important factors involved in translation is IQ.

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between translators' intelligence and translation competence. By applying Gardner's MI theory, furthermore the research aims at investigating which kind of intelligence is more important in translation competence. Thus the

researcher will use the results of IQ test and translations done by the same translators to determine their relationship.

The specific research questions that guide this study are:

RQ1: To what extent does translator's IQ effect on translation competence?

RQ2: Which types of intelligence are more related to translation competence?

The basic goal of this research is to determine the relationship between translator's IQ and his translation competence. In addition, this research is very important for many reasons: First, the research contributes for training more efficient translators, teachers and professors would better consider the concept of intelligence in their teaching.

Second, the research contributes to literature on how intelligence of students becomes important resources for enhancing student's success and quality in translation.

Third, universities may make changes in approach to preparing, training and evaluating students.

#### **a. Theoretical Framework**

This research used an eclectic model which included Gardner's (1983) model of Multiple Intelligence (MI) and Waddington's (2001) model for Translation Competence. Gardner (ibid) proposed a grouping of seven intelligences more accurately accounts for the diversity of ways in which people acquire and utilize knowledge.

Using the definition of intelligence as “the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural setting” (Gardner & Hatch, 1989, p. 65), Gardner used biological as well as cultural research to develop a list of seven intelligences.

Gardner's seven intelligences are:

- (1) Logical-Mathematical Intelligence: the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically. Most often associated with scientific and mathematical thinking.
- (2) Linguistic Intelligence: the ability to use language masterfully to express oneself rhetorically or poetically.
- (3) Spatial Intelligence: the ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve problems.
- (4) Musical Intelligence: the ability to read, understand, and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms.

(5) Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence: the ability to use one's mind to control one's bodily movements..

(6) Interpersonal Intelligence: the ability to apprehend the feelings and intentions of others.

(7) Intrapersonal Intelligence: the ability to understand one's own feelings and motivations.

Gardner hypothesized that these seven intelligences usually operate together, and rarely operate independently.

Waddington (2001) examined different methods of evaluating students' translation and chose four of them as frame work and can be referred to for evaluating students' -

Translation competence. These four methods are as follows:

#### **a. Method A**

Method A is taken from Hurtado (1995); it is based on error analysis and possible mistakes are grouped under the following headings:

(i) Inappropriate renderings which affect the understanding of the source text.

(ii) Inappropriate renderings which affect expression in the target language.

(iii) Inadequate renderings which affect the transmission of either the main function or secondary functions of the source text.

#### **b. Method B**

Method B is also based on error analysis and was designed to take into account the negative effect of errors on the overall quality of the translations (Cf. Kussmaul 1995:129, and Waddington 2001: chapter 7). In order to judge based on this method, the corrector is given the following table:

table 1 **Typology of errors in Method B**

<i>Negative effect on words in ST:</i>	<i>Penalty for negative effect</i>
On: 1-5 words	2
6-20 words	3
21-40 words	4
41-60 words	5
61-80 words	6
81-100 words	7
100+ words	8

The whole text	12
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The final mark for each translation is calculated in the same way as for Method A.

### c. Method C

Method C is a holistic method of assessment. Instruction for score guidance is given in table below:

table 2

#### Scale for holistic Method C

Level	Accuracy of transfer of ST content	Quality of expression in TL	Degree of task completion	Mark
Level 5	Complete transfer of ST information; only revision needed to reach professional standard.	Almost all the translation reads like a piece originally written in English. There may be minor lexical, grammatical or spelling errors.	successful	9, 10
Level 4	Almost complete transfer; there may be one or two insignificant inaccuracies requires certain amount of revision to reach professional standard	Large sections read like a piece originally written in English. There are a number of lexical, grammatical or spelling errors.	Almost completely successful	7, 8



Level3	Transfer of the general idea(s) but with a number of lapses in accuracy needs considerable revision to reach professional standard.	Certain parts read like a piece originally written in English, but others read like a translation. There are considerable number of lexical, grammatical or spelling errors.	Adequate	5, 6
Level2	Transfer undermined by serious inaccuracies thorough revision to reach professional standard.	Almost the entire text reads like a translation; there are continual lexical, grammatical or spelling errors.	Inadequate	3,4
Level1	Totally inadequate transfer of ST content; the translation is not worth revising.	The candidate reveals a total lack of ability to express himself adequately in English.	Totally inadequate	1, 2

#### **d. Method D**

Method D consists of combining error analysis Method B and holistic Method C in a proportion of 70/30; that is to say, Method B accounts for 70% of the total result and Method C for the remaining 30%.

#### **b. Limitations of the Research**

This research is not without its limitations. However, the following limitations can be considered in this research:

1. Subjects are only 50, Iranian, adult, non-native, so the results should be generalized to individuals who have the same qualities.
2. The subjects are not native of English so their translation competence scores due to different cultures may be not valid.
3. It is not a complete objective research because three different raters will give three different scores so their intentions may be included in their scores and to some extent it will become subjective.

### **c. Definition of Key Terms**

Intelligence Quotient (IQ): A number representing a person's reasoning ability (measured using problem-solving tests) as compared to the statistical norm or average for their age, taken as 100 (The Oxford Dictionary, 2013).

Intelligence: The ability to learn or understand or to deal with new or trying situations: reason; *also*: the skilled use of reason (2): the ability to apply knowledge to manipulate one's environment or to think abstractly as measured by objective criteria (as tests) (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2003).

Multiple Intelligence (MI) Theory: a theory that challenged the dominant definition of intelligence as limited to mathematical and linguistic abilities (verbal and computational intelligences). Gardner theorized that rather than just these two intelligences, a grouping of seven intelligences more accurately accounts for the diversity of ways in which people acquire and utilize knowledge (Gardner, 1983).

Translation Competence: The PACTE Group defines translation competence as the underlying system of knowledge required to translate. We believe that translation competence: (a) is expert knowledge; (b) is predominantly procedural knowledge, i.e. non-declarative; (c) comprises different inter-related sub-competences; and (d) includes a strategic component which is of particular importance ( PACTE. (2002), 'Exploratory tests in a study of translation competence', *Conference Interpretation and Translation*, 4, (2), 41-69).

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **a. Works Done Abroad**

Multiple intelligence was introduced by Gardner (1983) and defined it as "the capacity to solve problems or fashion out products that are valued in one or more cultural setting" (p.81). He said that intelligence was multidimensional and proposed eight intelligences: 1) verbal/linguistic, 2) logic/mathematical, 3) bodily/kinesthetic, 4) musical, 5) visual/spatial, 6) interpersonal, 7) intrapersonal and 8) naturalistic. Later, Gardner(1999) added another intelligence, namely, existential intelligence. To assess learners he focused on learners' intelligence profile i.e. performance strengths and weaknesses in a number of settings. Learners should do problem-solving jobs like portfolios, projects, journals, creative and open-ended tasks.

There are a lot of definitions for intelligence, in traditional view intelligence was defined as "ability to learn" (Weinland, 1975, p.15). Galton 1869 (cited in Kail and Pellegrino 1985, p.9) defined intelligence as: "simple sensory, perceptual and motor processes formed the fundamental elements of human intelligence". Gardner (1983) defined intelligence as "an ability to solve problems or to create products that are valued within one or more cultural setting" (p.81).

Although it is impossible to know every thing about intelligence, due to its complexity, and design different methods to assess it, some researchers have tried to define it and identify its various dimensions. Galton (1869) defined intelligence as the function of people sensory system and concluded that people can inherit it from their parents. Binet (1905) described the intelligence as the capacity to make right judgment in a certain age or the ability to judge well, comprehend well and to reason well. He assessed the learners on the basis of the number of items which they passed with reference to age. Later, Binet and Simon (1905) devised the first intelligence test instrument to identify learners' intelligence.

Terman (1916) who worked at Stanford University introduced the term Intelligence Quotient (IQ) for the first time and tried to revise and standardize Binet's tests and call them Stanford-Binet-Test. After Terman it was Spearman (1927) who concluded that intelligence is a general factor that is involved in all cognitive test performances. He believed that intelligence can not be inherited from parents.

Then, Thurstone (1938) developed the concept of general intelligence and suggested that general intelligence is a combination of special factors like verbal comprehension, word fluency, numerical ability, spatial visualization, rote memory, inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning

and perceptual speed. Another researcher was Wechsler (1939 & 1949) who claimed that intelligence is a collective capacity of a person to think rationally and deal effectively with the environment and devised a series of standardized and individualized tests to measure adult and children's intelligences.

Another research was done by Campbell (1991) who discussed Translation tests to determine the extent to which they assessed translation competence and revealed translation processes rather than comparisons between source and target texts. An outline of a model of translation competence had been suggested, and further developed through a case study, which proposed components of translation competence and a developmental schema. Finally a model of translation competence was proposed, and suggestions are made in the light of the model about translation testing and curriculum design.

A major researcher was Waddington (2001) who examined the criterion-related validity of the results obtained by the application of four different methods of assessment to the correction of a second-year exam of translation into the foreign language (Spanish-English) done by 64 university students. These four methods were based on types currently used by university teachers, and the validation study was based on 17 external criteria taken from six different sources. In spite of this variety, a factor analysis revealed the presence of one main factor which was clearly identifiable as "Translation Competence". The hypotheses regarding differences between the validity of the methods were verified as null, since all the systems, whether based on error analysis or a holistic approach, proved to correlate significantly with this main factor.

Then, McMahon (2004) did a study to explore the relationship among MIs and reading comprehension performance. To collect data, two instruments were used: 1) reading comprehension was measured by Gates MacGinite Test of Reading, and 2) MIs were measured by TIMI (Teele, 1992). 218 students from Chicago and Evanston schools took part in this study. Firstly, the Gates MacGinite Test of Reading comprehension was administered. To examine the relationship between the MI scores and reading comprehension correlation analysis was used. The findings showed the students with higher scores on logical mathematical intelligence had better reading comprehension scores compared with students who scored lower on logical-mathematical intelligence, but other MI components weren't predictive of student achievement.

The last group was composed of Buschick, Shipton, Winner and Wise (2007) who found that lack of students' motivation and reading comprehension strategies and paying no attention to the use of two kinds of intelligences (verbal/linguistic and interpersonal) were the main problems of students. So they did a study on 130 students divided as follows: 26 second graders, 25 fourth graders, 46 six graders and 33 eight graders. In this study, they used Gardner's MI theory to overcome mentioned problems and for collecting data they used a 15-item observation sheet, a 9-question student survey. The study showed that using MI theory had these advantages: (1) increasing the engagement of students in silent reading, (2) reading the tension of the students in approaching the new words, (3) enabling students to enjoy reading as a recreational activity, (4) encouraging students to visit libraries to choose books that are related to their intelligences and (5) increasing the knowledge of teachers to become more tolerant of students' needs and behaviors that are attributed to their dominant intelligences.

#### **b. Works Done in Iran**

Hashemi (2007) studied the relation between MIs and reading comprehension tasks of 150 students of Azad University Roudehen Branch. 122 undergraduate EFL students from Azad University took part in this study and the data were collected through the use of an IELTS test for measuring reading and McKenzie's MIs (2006) questionnaire for measuring students' intelligence. Having analyzed the data, the finding showed that kinesthetic and verbal intelligences had a remarkable influence on predicting reading ability scores.

Then, Mahdavy (2008) examined the relationship among MIs theory and learners' listening proficiency. 151 university students who took part in this study completed an MI questionnaire and listening parts of TOEFL and IELTS. The results showed that interpersonal intelligence gained the highest mean score and naturalist intelligence the lowest. The analysis also showed a positive relationship between MI and TOEFL and IELTS listening scores.

Abolsaba & Shangarffam (2009) are the other group that examined the relation between Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and the quality of translation. 90 senior male and female students of BA and MA of English Translation Studies who participated in this study were given a package of Bar-On (1997) EQ test and a passage of IELTS to translate. Translations were scored by one of the researchers and two other raters based on Waddington's (2001) model of translation assessment. This analysis showed that taking into account the fact that EQ is important in

cognitive task performance, It was worth to consider it as one of the elements towards which the attention of translators should be turned.

Then at 2012 Javanmard investigated the relationship among MIs and vocabulary test formats among 100 students in Khoramabad Azad University majoring in English. To collect data, MIDAS questionnaire developed by Shearer (1996) and four different formats of vocabulary test, namely, antonym, gap filling at sentence level, gap filling at context level and matching formats were used. The results of this study showed that there is no significant relationship among intelligence performance of participants of this study and their scores on different formats of vocabulary tests. It was found that only musical and bodily intelligences from eight intelligences were better predictors of the participants' performance on vocabulary tests.

At last Modirghamene and Bagherian Azhiri (2012) carried out a study on the effects of MI-based reading tasks on EFL learners' reading comprehension among 70 participants including 40 male and 30 female Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The findings revealed the positive effect of MI-based reading tasks on both EFL male and female learners' reading comprehension and they did the same on reading comprehension.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **a. Design of the Study**

This is a descriptive study based on a survey research that aimed at finding out how does MI affect the translation competence of female and male translation students of Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman. In this study quantitative data collected through a questionnaire that included MI tests and a passage of 220 words from IELTS 7 test.

#### **b. Participants**

The subjects in this study were students of translation studies in English Language Department at Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman. They were at sixth semester and it is considered that they knew the rules and basics of translation task in order to have a good and acceptable translation.

#### **3.3. Instrumentation**

Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Test includes 69 tests in which 10 tests belong to linguistic intelligence, 10 tests to logical-mathematical intelligence, 10 tests to musical intelligence, 10 tests to bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, 9 tests to spatial-visual intelligence, 10 tests to

interpersonal intelligence and 10 tests to intrapersonal intelligence. Then according to the guideline they have been calculated for each student to understand which type of intelligence is more dominant.

To obtain translating ability of the participants a passage of 220 words from IELTS 7 was given to 30 students of BA English translation at Shahid Bahonar university of Kerman to translate from English into Persian. Then, three professors of English translation scored them based on Waddington model of translation competence.

#### ○ **Data Collection Procedure**

The following steps were taken to accomplish the purpose of the study during the research process. IQ questionnaires were scored based on the guidelines provided by Gardner, (1983), and then the total IQ scores and the score of each seven major intelligences was computed. The rendering and transferring test were carried out in the classroom environment, and the participants were not allowed to use dictionaries. The translation task has been scored by three raters who are translation professors, based on Waddington's (2001) C model of translation assessment. He proposed an objectified scoring based on error analysis and possible mistakes. The model proposed has three parts under the following headings:

1. Inappropriate renderings which affect understanding of the source text; these are divided into eight categories: cotresens, fauxsens, nonsense, addition, omission, unresolved extra linguistic references, loss of meaning, and inappropriate linguistic variation.
2. Inappropriate renderings which affect expression in the target language; these are divided into five categories: spelling, grammar, lexical items, text and style
3. Inadequate renderings which affect the transmission of either the main function or secondary functions of source text.

(Adapted from Waddington, 2001, p. 313)

In the model, in each of the categories a distinction is made between serious errors and minor errors. Furthermore, it also proposes a fourth category which describes the plus point to be awarded for good or exceptionally good solutions to translation problems.

#### ○ **Data Analysis**

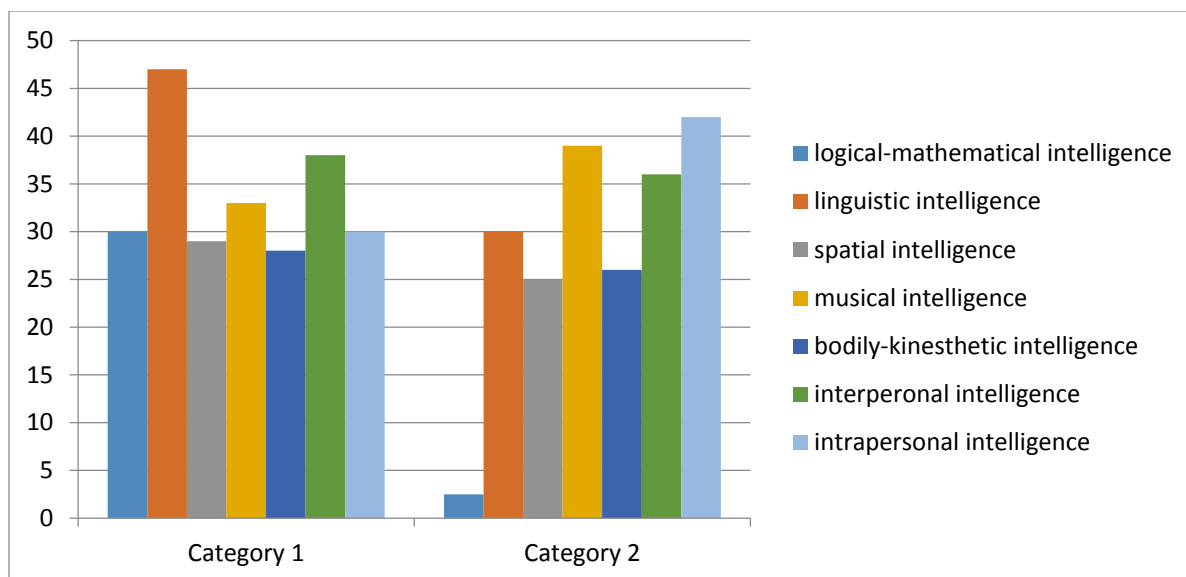
To find the answer to the research questions and investigate the accuracy of the hypothesis, the researcher analyzed the collected data. IQ questionnaires first have been scored based on the guidelines provided by Gardner (1983), and then the total intelligences scores and the score of each seven intelligences has been calculated for each translator. The translation task was scored by three raters who are translation professors based on Waddington's model of translation assessment. In order to obtain the best and most reliable answers from scoring of the translations, the average of all three raters' scores was calculated. With the translation and intelligence score's in hand, the researcher calculated the correlation between these two factors to find whether there was any significant relationship between the translators' intelligence and the quality of their translations.

#### **4.Result and Discussion**

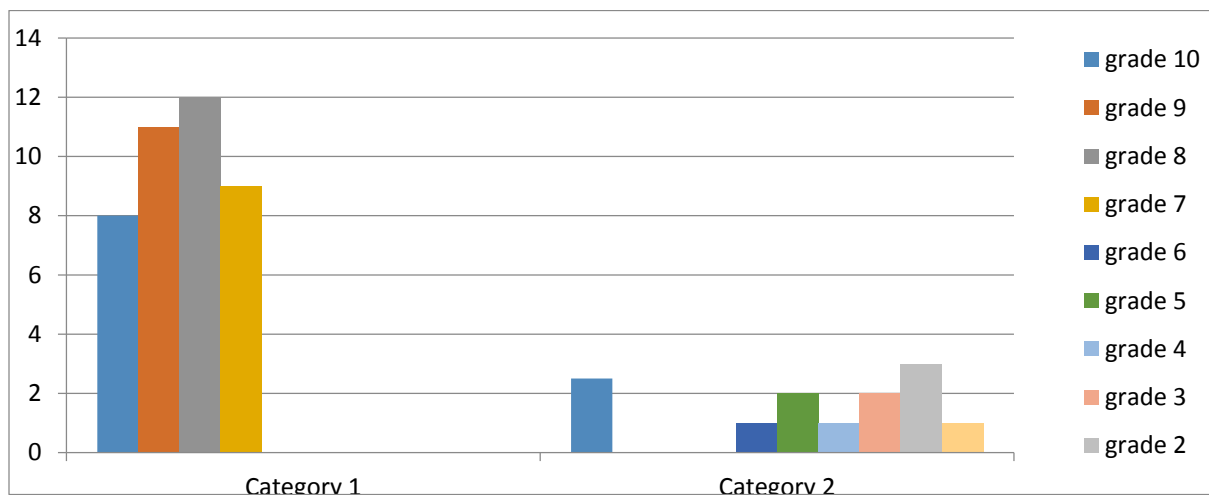
50 students in English language department of Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman at sixth semester were selected. The procedure and guideline have shortly been explained to them. They were given time to complete the test and translate the passage. Then, their translations were scored by three English translation professors based on Waddington guideline of method C and their scores were averaged. Method C was chosen because it is holistic and more applicable. On the other hand, intelligence tests were scored by the researcher based on the Gardner's guideline. The students were divided to two groups and their scores were shown on the column graphs. , the first group in which students' grades were 10, 9, 8, and 7. And the second group in which students have grades under 7. Then the intelligences of these two groups are shown on column graphs, too.

*Graph 1. Different Intelligences of Students*





Graph 2. Translation scores



Surprisingly it was seen that the first group members have high level of linguistic and interpersonal intelligences, which are two important intelligences that are needed for being a good translator and having acceptable translations. From the above results, the researcher concluded that first, translators' IQ had a significant effect on their translation and second, linguistic and interpersonal intelligences were related to translation competence.

## 5. Conclusion

It is evident that so many factors involved in the task of translation and translators differ from each other in many ways. Being intelligent is an important factor in an individual. Therefore,

researchers and teachers in the field of translation are expected to do more research into the concept of intelligence and apply the notion to the field to see how much it accounts for success in translating. The findings of this study showed that intelligence is related to the translation competence, here it is suggested that to train better and more aware translators, instructors can benefit from considering the concept of intelligence in their teaching of translation materials. It can also be beneficial for students to know more about intelligence.

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## Title

# Critical Pedagogy: A Key Factor to Improvement of Language Proficiency

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## Abstract

Critical pedagogy, by all means, is an attitude which serves the world through the word (Freire, 1970) and leads to self-worth. Students in a critical pedagogical language classroom learn not only how to deal with studying and learning what is meaningful to their life, but also how to know and overcome their deficiencies and lacks which eventually brings on self-esteem. This paper works out to feature in how critical pedagogy consolidates students' language learning. For this reason, two sets of instruments including a language proficiency test (Cambridge, 2005) among 90 participants and a teacher-made language proficiency test as pre-test and posttest among 40 were administered. The findings through t-test acutely demonstrated that the mean performances of language proficiency (0.016) in experimental group are higher than control group and expresses significant difference ( $P \leq 0.05$ ).

**Keywords:** Critical Pedagogy, Language Proficiency, Language classroom, Students' language learning.

## 1. Introduction

Once the schools had been targeted at education, teachers were signified as the supplier of knowledge warehouse. Educators, on the other hand, were totally responsible for providing their teachers with materials and supplementary according to their own would-be perfect perspectives. Alternatively, students were to be grateful for all these ready-made facilities and resources. This condition even worsened when no educator doubted his performance to spend time on revision and to criticize it. Society where students are the first and most sensitive group could find no room to be involved in the process of curriculum designing. The final product would be collections of human, so-called literate and illiterate live together without even a little nuance of mutual respect, understanding, nobleness, and esteem.

In my society, classrooms look like shops filled with apparently attractive containers to satisfy the fleeting feeling of students seeking for a tension free environment where they would be able to overlook outdoor disasters. The disease spreading fast in such a society is not race or color but bold inequality where one will not be worth other's while to respect their rigid right of human dignity. In order to apply a giant change towards a strong foundation, classrooms can turn into a place for enacting the statement of collaboration for executing social justice. This way, critical pedagogy is an emergent need for the improvement of educational environment where students are involved in decision making process in order to guarantee the future society.

Critical pedagogy in education refers to a connection between classroom environment and the society and is after social transformation (Akbari, 2008). Its emphasis is on heightening student's view of the facts outside the classroom. Participants in a critical pedagogical classroom not only know the world outside and learn how to engage class time with their life realities, but also they are able to know themselves and practice their abilities. In this classroom, there is not even a white lie. No participant is compelling to tell others that he or she commits no mistake, no students' deficiency is going to be hidden from them and no life reality and society fact is going to be ignored. Students, free from authority governs their decision making, play the main role in bringing their life to the learning environment and it is the teacher who provides opportunities for them to understand proper ways of reflecting world through critical pedagogy. Hence students in a critical pedagogical classroom can be assiduously after reciprocal interaction between themselves and the world around them and eventually explore their own lack of abilities

in language learning and begin their utmost endeavor to overcome it. As the result of a true attempt, they enjoy themselves and develop their self-worth and self-esteem.

## **2. Review of literature**

Critical pedagogy was first introduced by Paulo Freire in a zealous attempt for constructing a better learning environment in order to improve the world. Freire (1970) in his first famous book, “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” , opposed his time education through dividing it into two concepts of “depositories” and “depositors” where he believed students as the ‘depositories’ were only receivers of what ‘depositors’, teachers, provide for them. On the contrary, he (2003, p. 65) proposed problem-posing education in which the students are free to “develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves”.\

### **2.1. Criticality and Creativity**

Although the concept of critical pedagogy is old enough to bear a package of experience, it is during the recent years that some scholars (Canagaraja, 2002, Kincheloe, 2008, 2001; Shor, 1996, 1997) make a true endeavor to actualize its concepts and principles. They concentrate on developing a collaborative milieu through applying critical pedagogy in education and classroom contexts for improving understanding among students and showing a wide range of critical pedagogical practice in language classrooms. Likewise, different authors (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2006; Norton & Toohey, 2004) adorn critical pedagogy with innovative idea of post method pedagogy to merge theoretical and practical aspects within the framework of classroom implication. They try to provide some hints for students, teachers, and teacher educators to consolidate collaborative community which in one way or another pave the way for these ELT practitioners and exploit 'dynamic learning'.

This implication of critical pedagogy perceived to be a concept which aroused different pros and cons. Different scholars (Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1999) tried to widen its principles in favor of their own ideas of critical approaches to ELT, and share their standpoints to involve whole groups of educators concerning in one way or another with critical aspects of pedagogy. Also, a true endeavor towards illustrating critical pedagogy in different aspects of a language classroom is being followed by worldly well-known followers of Freire. Ira Shor

(1996; 1997), as one of the famous proponents of the application of critical pedagogy in classroom settings, offers a contract based on which students are engaged in their own assessment process and score their own final works. Norton and Toohey (2004) in a collection of topics including 'gender, ethnicity and language background' attempt to concentrate on the practical aspects of critical pedagogy in a wide range of contexts in order to shed light on critical pedagogical application regardless of restrictions exist in educational environment through different parts of the world.

Few scholars, nevertheless, detected some meaningful relationship between critical theory and practice and developing self-esteem among students (Kanno, 1999; Moreno-Lopez, 2005). They, indirectly, point out that self-esteem is a necessary means for language learning as it helps students clarify the amount of knowledge they actually perceived and by which they are able to help others and make them feel cooperation rather than competition. In order to provide students with achieving this elegant target, teachers and educators, through critical pedagogy, can extend their students' view towards a better world.

Furthermore, critical pedagogy does not limit itself to the teaching concept. It, also, influenced testing assumption as well. Keesing-Styles (2003) in her article concerning "the relationship between critical pedagogy and assessment", attempts to elaborate "the overt links between the literature of critical pedagogy and orientation to assessment" and particularly self-assessment. She declared that both teacher and students' voice should be validated through the entire process of assessment. That is, whatever erects students' background knowledge should be taken into consideration for the purpose of optimal negotiation instead of oppression. Shohamy (2001) identifies testing through democratic perspective where she believes it should minimize the powerful effect of force. According to the aims of her book, test users and test takers should reconsider the fields that tests use and increase awareness of "cultural, social, political, educational, and ideological agendas that shape the lives of individual participants, teachers and learners" (p. 131). Miller (2008), in a study and in an accurate seek for applying "liberatory assessment", emphasizes the valuable process of active and continuous negotiation between teacher and students in order to establish a sense of judgment over their performance and set a "more equitable dynamic" in the learning environment. He considers national assessment as a device for bringing awareness for a successful school efficacy and states that:

While there are outcomes that teachers and instructors have no control over, teaching students about what exams mean as part of an agenda promoting meritocracy can help them think critically about what it is they want to learn.

From the critical cultural consciousness viewpoint, Kumaravadivelu (2003) endorses community culture as a radical resource for learners. In fact, as he states bringing home-issues to the classroom environment as a means of comparing native and target culture arouses awareness towards differentiations between the two and provides learners with a new reflection on their own culture which eventually leads into a real self-diagnosis. Besides, Akbari (2008) emphasizes that students and teacher should pay thorough attention to the culture of first language in order to prevent self-inferiority and enhance self-worth and respect. He states that in the widespread world of English, two interlocutors may not need to know the target culture for communication since both may come from nonnative communities of English. Therefore, each should manage to transform his or her cultural background and preserve the cultural identity.

Critical pedagogy in classroom generates a rhetorical collocation of critical involvement, creation, and consciousness for prevailing further hatred towards injustice differentiations and ill-learned prejudices. These concepts, raised by some studies (Glenn, 2002; Gruenewald, 2003; Morgan, 2004), are viewed to define an educational condition under which a collaborative milieu is meant to be formed in order to decrease the sense of powerlessness and helplessness. Creativity, the significant product of a critical pedagogical classroom, provides students with increasing awareness of their capabilities and persuades them to seek the power of change among themselves. This would lead into the "opportunities for self-reflection, self-improvement, and self-liberation" (Zompetti, 2006) to which whole participants plan for gaining frank acceptance of criticizing the surrounding area and being criticized for their own lacks and deficiencies while simultaneously taking their giant steps towards refreshment and improvement.

Among all advocates of critical pedagogy, there are presenting some critiques of it which consolidate its principles. From Gore's (1993, cited in Keesing-Styles, 2003) perspective, the main critique is hidden in the concept itself. She believes critical pedagogy is dominated by two distinct strands of concrete and abstract each with its proponents. She claims Giroux and McLaren looked for philosophical aspects of critical pedagogy, while Freire and Shor offered its practical application base on their experiences in educational environment. Also, Johnston



(1999), in a personal reflection on the role critical pedagogy had played in his profession, points out political aspect of critical pedagogy is not enough for the teaching with all complexity and primacy.

To sum up, these are the proponents and opponents of critical pedagogy that strengthen its principles. Each scholar with his or her perspective attempts to highlight either creativity or criticality of critical pedagogy. In other word, the concept of critical pedagogy requires more investment on the part of student-teacher negotiation in the process of learning, whether its personal, socio-cultural, or knowledge dimension.

## **2.2. Pedagogy of Rapport**

Through practical implication of critical pedagogy in the classroom environment, students are able to relate this milieu to the society outdoor, they can also find out realities about their abilities or lack of abilities and work towards improving them. These all lead to what actually is called self-esteem.

Dweck (2000) provides a different view of self-esteem through dividing its sense into “entity theory” and “incremental theory”. Entity theory, in his opinion, purchases students continuous success to feel smart so that deficiencies are hidden from them. On the other hand, incremental theory demonstrates difficulties to the participants in the process of learning and encourages experiencing feel smart and good when trying to use their “resources” properly in order to resolve them. Hence he emphasizes telling the truth to the students in order to make them aware of their needs and equip them with strategies for the optimal learning as the result of continuous success. Additionally, this will make students share their knowledge with others to help them involve in the process of “challenge and effort”. And as Moreno-Lopez (2005) mentions, this is the true means for providing a critical pedagogical classroom with a sense of rapport and collaboration that eventually leads to the achievement of self-esteem.

Critical pedagogy in language teaching provides an active environment for both students and teacher. Instead of only being consumers of knowledge, Moreno-Lopez (2005) states that authority and responsibility are shared between teacher and students. They are all participants in language environment to decide on the materials most related to the world. In critical pedagogical classroom, no one sits quiet and calm to dream on how smart she/he is on perceiving ready-made knowledge without experiencing difficulties of studying and understanding. Instead,

everyone is in charge of effort to find out what are his lacks, or most importantly, world's deficiencies. All class members are active to learn and help each other reject the negative forces which prevent progress in learning L2 (Akbari, 2008). In fact, learning language through luxurious part of life, what nowadays constitutes the main body of course books from their commercial point of view, like vacation, restaurants, and fashionable clothes leads students to ignore life destruction.

Through critical pedagogy, students will magnify and know more about the other negative aspects of life (for example, charity, joblessness, drugs, and so forth) and let these issues enter into the class, as well as discuss panels about them and try to find solutions. These leads students' conscious awareness and worry towards the world they are going to live in. Accordingly, as they increase their knowledge about the subjects they find most related to their surrounding society, they begin to occupy their minds with processes for a better world and unconsciously involve in progression and develop self and other's worth and value.

The implementation of critical pedagogy in Iranian situation and among intermediate English learners is a quite new concept. Some university professors (Akbari, 2008) have concentrated their area of interests on different aspects of critical pedagogy. Also, some EFL students attempt to base their master and doctoral thesis upon the various dimensions of language learning and its application through critical pedagogy. Apprehending the pertinent demand of applying critical pedagogy in the real classrooms in every place and with every situation, the following statistical procedures were employed in order to investigate whether there is a relationship between critical pedagogy and the development of students' self-esteem and language ability.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research hypotheses**

In order to find out whether critical pedagogy in language teaching classrooms brings in self-esteem among Iranian students, the hypotheses of the impact of implementing critical pedagogy in the learning milieu and in developing and enhancing students' language learning were proposed.

The focus of critical pedagogy in language teaching is on relating classroom environment to the society which exists in each student's real life. They are going to attend language classrooms to receive and present their own perceptions of producing knowledge. Through a critical pedagogical milieu, participants are up and about to improve the huge world outside and the small world inside. In other words, critical pedagogy shows the facts to the participants to achieve self-worth and value and as a result of it make a better world through a better self by means of education.

### **3.2. Subjects**

For the purpose of implementing this study, a group of staff members in a Health Center of a small township near Torbat-e-Heidarieh, registered and took English classes previously in different institutes, participated on a proficiency test in an institute. Among 90 participants, 40 obtained the optimal score (between 24- 30, equal to Interchange Third Edition, level 2). This is the book which is taught in this and the other institutes in Torbat-e-Heidarieh. Health Center is usually the place where staffs of adult population and both sexes participate in classes. Because of this, the English course is aimed at the 20–35 age group and both male and female were considered in order to clear up sex roles in this study.

### **3.3. Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection in this study was followed through descriptive statistics in order to describe different aspects of the data. A criterion-referenced test, objective placement test adopted from Interchange/Passages Placement and Evaluation Package by Tay Lesley et al. (2005) was administered among 90 staff of the Health Center based on which two homogeneous groups of control and experimental were selected.

40 students were randomly divided into two classes of 20 which by tossing a coin, one class was determined as control and the other as experimental group. Before treatment, both groups were given the pretest including a teacher-made proficiency test. There were conducted a teacher-made proficiency test following a standardized proficiency test, Interchange/Passages Objective Placement Test developed by Tay Lesley et al. (2005) which its reliability was calculated through Cronbach's alpha coefficient and estimated as 0.821. This test includes three sections of listening, reading, and language use. Also, both tests were administered over again at

the end of fifteen-session course as posttest for comparing the results of mean performances of two groups before and after the treatment.

Scoring process for the term in both groups differed as in control group there held a midterm and a final exam according to the syllabus offered by the institute. In experimental group, on the other hand, instead of final test, all members of the class agreed on a contract developed by Shor (1996) on the first session. The general agreement was making a portfolio in which students' assignment and their diary journals were gathered in a folder for final decision due the course act by the students themselves. The procedure of assembling assignment was introduced by teacher as facilitator and followed by students in form of reaction paper after each part including: recording students' favorite part of a radio program, bringing their favorite text to the class for reading, selecting their optimal extract from an English newspaper and its equivalent in Persian for debates, finding a proper subject for writing or presenting a lecture, and keeping an easily accessible guideline for continuous reflection on the amount of progress students achieved.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Discussion

Having collected the required data based on the mentioned data collection procedures, the researchers conducted the analysis of data and tested the hypothesis formulated for the present study. After matching process for the purpose of homogeneity, students were divided into two classes of 20. A teacher-made proficiency test was administered to both groups of control and experimental once as pretest in order for comparing mean performances of the two prior to the treatment and also as posttest after the treatment. Data obtained from this research were generally analyzed with the aid of descriptive statistics. Concentration index and dispersion index estimated for language proficiency quantitative variables in pretest for both groups of control and experimental were shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics in Pretest*

Pretest		N of items	Mean	SD
Control	Language	20	25.3000	3.64331

group	ability			
Experimental group	Language ability	20	24.9500	2.58488

As the quantities clearly show, there is no significant difference between mean performances of language ability in the two groups in pretest. Meanwhile, quantitative variables in posttest quite differ, table 2.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics in Posttest*

Posttest		N of items	Mean	SD
Control group	Language ability	20	28.3000	2.10513
Experimental group	Language ability	20	30.1500	2.49789

As the above table (table 2) indicates, a language ability test performance in posttests in experimental group is greater than the test performance in control group. Obviously, the results express a great impact of applying critical pedagogy in the learning environment in order to enhance students' language ability.

Likewise, statistical significance of the difference between mean performances of the two sets of scores, t-test, vividly showed that there is no significant difference between the mean performances of both groups in the test before treatment.

Table 3. *T-test for Mean Performance of Language Ability in Pretest*

		t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Pretest	Language ability	.350	38	.728

The results showed that P-Value in language ability tests in pretest is greater than  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Therefore, both groups are homogeneous in this regard.

(Language ability)  $P\text{-Value} = 0.728 > \alpha = 0.05 \rightarrow \text{Accept } H_0$

After the fifteen-session duration, the same set language ability test was administered over again as posttest, table 4.

Table 4. *T-test for Mean Performance of Language Ability in Posttest*

		t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Posttest	Language ability	-2.533	38	.016

Table 4 shows that the probability value of t-test (P-Value) in language ability test is not statistically significant and less enough than  $\alpha = 0.05$ ;

(Language ability)  $P\text{-Value} = 0.016 < \alpha = 0.05 \rightarrow \text{Reject } H_0$

According to the findings of this study, the illustration of numerical values in posttest represents that average scores in experimental group is higher than control group and expresses significant difference. In other word, experimental group enjoys a high degree of language ability in comparison to control group. All these evidences comment that critical pedagogy influences students' language ability and alongside promotes self-assessment among learners.

Although statistical analysis is considered as a valuable means of assessing a hypothesis, it is not enough for reliance. Students' reflection is in fact an actual means for calculation. When critical pedagogy provides students with a sense of comfort and makes them regard language learning as ease as a piece of cake, statistical procedures just play the role of reinforcement for others who may not believe the effect of friendly language learning atmosphere.

#### **4.1. Critical Pedagogical Implications**

In order for making a better world, first it should be started with a better learning environment. Students in critical pedagogy are involved in the process of learning progress. They can decide on what is useful for and related to their abilities, needs, interests, and, most importantly, society. Through grading contract (Shor, 1996) right from the first session, they came to know that there was no scoring process and decided to apply some changes after a class debates over some of its items. Also, the established syllabus by the institute (Short et al. 1997) was brought to the class to let students change it according to their needs and interests. The first reactions witnessed were the faces full of both senses of doubt and concern over the decisions made for the whole semester. The former rooted in uncertainty on holding a course they were quite uninformed about and the latter was resulted from worry to lack of ability to deal with a course they were in need of and registered for on the part of the teacher. This situation soon afterwards faded away when those who quitted participating after the first session, enthusiastically joined the class later and played an active role even in guiding others and sharing their findings.

For the second session, students were supposed to provide a portfolio to collect their assignment and diaries in it. Self-assessment process happened through a questionnaire adapted from Harris (1997). Every often, they tried to consider the amount of changes they received and experienced and wrote a reflection journal about it. The final product represented their general abilities and endeavors towards the learning process. As one student once wrote:

“I have learn[t] many structure[s] for speaking. Also, I learned grammar and too many words and also how [to] apply all of them in sentences....”

‘Saeed, last journal entry, 22nd Jan’

Another student who chose pseudonym “morning” wrote:

“I have learnt if you want to learn English [,] you have to use it in your daily life....”

‘Morning, last journal entry, 25<sup>th</sup> Jan’

What was found most interesting at the end of the treatment was the participants’ reflection towards their lack of abilities. They could elaborate and talk about their deficiencies as well as their progression in learning some aspects of English language and the strategies they strived for expending study. Besides, all class members challenged to overcome their lacks and attempted to find proper solutions for problematic issues they chose to bring to the class for discussion in order for a better world which resulted in their self-esteem enhancement.

The most problematic aspect of applying critical pedagogy in an ELT classroom is the students’ lack of knowledge about it. They almost perceived nothing about what would be on their consciousness and value. Obviously, critical pedagogy might not be applicable through only one semester and during class-time. It requires more time and effort upon both groups of participants (i.e. teacher and students) to get to become familiar with and practice critical pedagogy in language learning milieu. It is not sufficient to devise one class or course subject in a school or institute to this concept. Critical pedagogy needs more hands to tie together and put into practice its implications.

In addition, this project was conducted among a group of staff in a Health Center who were too busy for the rest of the day to spend some useful hours on doing their assignment. They succeeded in bringing negative aspects of life into the classroom for discussion and take their own suggested solutions out of the class, but they were always nagging about a lot of writing

they were supposed to do, although they all agreed on confessing it as a helpful means for progress.

## **5. Conclusion**

In a traditional language classroom, students face with the books instructors offer and they pretend to learn vocabulary, grammar, speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Nobody asks if there is any relation between these subject matters and their life issues. At the end of each semester, there is a final test which score is added up with some other figures decided by the teacher over the amount of abilities she/he believes students to acquire during the English semester. Students and teacher believe the final score tells them all about students' general abilities and capacities for starting a new semester.

Critical pedagogical classroom is far from it. In this class, it is not only the teacher who decides on participants' score and ability. Students are also going to determine the amount of progress they acquired themselves. Self-assessment is an actual means for evaluating acquired knowledge through a critical pedagogical course.

Critical pedagogy is after a true relation between the world and the word (Freire, 1970). This way, teacher is eager to explore their students' "genuine innovations" in reasoning out their needs and in considering "the themes that are most meaningful and most relevant to their own lives and the contexts in which they work" (Heffernan, 2005). Therefore, through critical pedagogy, all members of a language classroom are to know the society and create a new environment in order to participate actively in their process of achievement and self-esteem. They would be able to wash hands over a sense of selfishness about their haves and they are to remember have-nots.

Application of critical pedagogy in ELT classrooms opens new windows towards a brighter future filled with hope and respect to each other's rights. Students will be able to use their abilities to themselves and others in the process of efficient learning and find out their own and other's needs and interests for the sake of utmost endeavor in order to enhance world's self-esteem.



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## **Title**

# **The Effectiveness of Visually Supported Vocabulary Instruction and Contextual Clues on Vocabulary Learning of Iranian Vocational Students**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of the present study was to examine the effectiveness of visual aids on vocabulary learning of technical and vocational students. To achieve the above aim, ninety six students taking General English in a technical and vocational college were selected through Nelson English Test, and were divided into three groups. In the first experimental group, vocabularies were instructed through using visual aids and in the second experimental group, vocabularies were presented in context. The students in the control group were taught through providing L1 equivalents of vocabulary items. At the end of the treatment, the students were evaluated on their recognition and recall of vocabulary items through an achievement test. The results indicated that the first experimental group in which visual aids were used, outperformed the other groups in learning vocabulary items.

**Keywords:** Visual aids, Contextual clues, Vocabulary items, L1 equivalents

## **1. Introduction**

One of the most difficult aspects of learning a foreign language, particularly in an EFL context, is the retention of vocabulary (Holden, 2001). Vocabulary has always been one of the most important issues related both with teachers and learners of foreign languages to such an extent

that it is believed that without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed (Uzun, 2009) and speakers cannot communicate with each other in a particular language.

Vocabulary learning, unlike learning grammar, is an unending task partly because lexical errors are usually more disruptive for communication and comprehension than grammatical ones. Thornbury (2002) considers words as the building blocks of a language because they label objects, actions, and ideas. Chastain (1988) also states that vocabulary plays a greater role in communication than the other components of language. The lack of needed vocabulary is the most common cause of students' inability to say what they want to say during communication activities.

Therefore, there is an increased interest in vocabulary as the most fundamental component of every language which was once a neglected domain of second language acquisition. In view of this, vocabulary acquisition is currently receiving attention in second language pedagogy and research and consequently the most effective techniques to promote the command of vocabulary among learners are still contentious issues (Hedge, 2008).

There are varieties of techniques to teach and present vocabulary in a course such as verbal explanation, providing the students with synonyms and antonyms, translation, using visual aids, physical demonstration, asking learners to check the meaning in the dictionary, exemplification and presenting a word in the context (Hedge, 2008; Nash & Snowling, 2006).

In countries like Iran where English is taught as a foreign language and is not the mother tongue language of the students, they always complain that they do not know how to learn vocabularies and why they forget them very soon. Therefore, language teachers should plan to introduce vocabulary items through a useful method so that students can learn the words more easily. Among the various techniques of teaching vocabulary items, the most usual ones at least in Iran are translation, rote rehearsal, use of visual aids, use of context and synonyms.

This research was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of three techniques, i.e. teaching vocabulary through using context and visual aids in comparison with the most common method among teachers that is introducing the synonyms of the words or their Persian equivalents and asking students to memorize them.

## 2. Review of the Related Literature

People who have experience in learning a foreign language know that vocabulary is always one of the major problems in language learning no matter one is at the beginning or at the end of language learning. But, unfortunately it seems that teaching and learning vocabulary is confined only to long lists of words with their L1 equivalents to be memorized by the learners. Memorizing new vocabulary items is very difficult for students of technical and vocational colleges. Because most of the students who choose to attend technical and vocational colleges tend to be those who do not perform well in academic subjects, including English. It seems that students in this system possess low confidence and motivation in learning. Many of them even suffer low self-esteem because they think they are inferior to those in the universities. From this point of view, EFL teachers in technical and vocational colleges should try to find the most effective technique to teach vocabulary items, and raise the students' interest and motivation in learning English as a foreign language. Teachers have always used pictures or graphics – whether drawn, taken from books, newspapers and magazines, or photographs – to facilitate learning. They also draw pictures on the board to help with explanation and language work (Harmer, 2001).

According to Klinger (2000), "pictures are more complex than the words that label the pictures, so more time and attention is needed to identify, or "name," a picture. We spend more time looking at pictures (or real-life objects) before we can name them, so we remember pictures better. We spend less time looking at words in sentences, so we don't remember the sentences exactly-though we remember the gist. Pictures are also more distinctive and more unique than the words that label them, which further makes pictures more memorable" (Klinger, 2000, p. 5).

Previous researches on L2 vocabulary acquisition (Kellogg & Howe, 1971) has suggested that foreign words associated with actual objects or imagery techniques are learned more easily than words without. Wilkins (1972) also claims that, according to psychology of language, people learn and retain better words which have been presented to them with a range of visual and other associations (p.131). Chun's (1996) study of American university students learning German found that unfamiliar words were most efficiently learned when both pictures and text were available for students. According to Karahoca et al. (2010), since visual expressions should

be used while teaching technical issues, the use of images and animations will be needed more while teaching vocabulary to technical and vocational college students.

On the other hand the word can be used in some model sentences and by means of contextual cues the students infer what the meaning of each word is. Guessing from context is a complex and often difficult strategy to carry out successfully. To guess successfully from context learners need to know about 19 out of every 20 words (95%) of a text, which requires knowing the 3000 most common words (Liu & Nation, 1985; Nation 1990).

Guessing words in context can develop fluency and reinforce learning by intentional means. Laufer (1998) concluded that guessing is not a perfect solution to understanding new vocabulary. Guessing is often hindered by a lack of clues, unusable clues, and/or misleading or partial clues. But, knowing more vocabulary will make guessing from context more successful and can free up cognitive capacity for higher level processing. As mentioned by Barani et al. (2010), Davies and Pears (2003) believe that new words should not be presented in isolation and should not be learned by simple rote memorization. It is important that new vocabulary items be presented in contexts rich enough to provide clues to meaning and that students be given multiple exposure to items they should learn. The context and context clues often lead to the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Researchers in the field of L2 word acquisition generally agree that, in order to facilitate embedding in various networks, new words should be learned in contexts that illustrate their meaning and use, provide optimal associative potential and prevent superficial processing. (Horst, 2002).

Another way of teaching vocabulary items, can be the use of L1 equivalents and synonyms. According to Coady (1997) a beginner student should know about 3000 most frequent words in order to extend his reading ability. The first stage in teaching these 3000 words commonly begins with word-pairs in which an L2 word is matched with an L1 equivalent. L1 equivalent or translation has a necessary and useful role for L2 learning, but it can hinder learners' progress if it is used to the exclusion of L2-based techniques. Prince (1996) found that both “advanced” and “weaker” learners could recall more newly learned words using L1 translations than using L2 context. However, “weaker” learners were less able to transfer knowledge learned from translation into an L2 context. Prince (1996) claims that weaker learners require more time when

using an L2 as they have less developed L2 networks and are slower to use syntactic information. To discourage the learners from over-relying on translation, he advises that teachers talk with them about their expectations of language learning and “the pitfalls of low-effort strategies like translation”. Vocabulary lists can be an effective way to quickly learn word-pair translations (Nation, 1990).

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Subjects**

The subjects of this study were 96 female students taking General English in a technical and vocational college in Yazd. They were selected from 146 students. Their age range was 18-23. The selected subjects were divided into three groups of thirty two students each.

First, Nelson English Test (pretest) was administered to 146 subjects. Out of these students those whose grades were between one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected. To confirm the homogeneity of the groups, the statistical technique of one-way ANOVA was used.

In one of the experimental groups the words were used in some model sentences, and by means of contextual cues the students inferred what the meaning of each word was. In the other experimental group, the teacher used visual aids and pictures to teach the vocabulary items. In the third group (control group), the new words were presented through Persian equivalents and synonyms. The teacher was the same for all the groups.

#### **3.2. Instrumentation**

The first instrument used in this study was Nelson English Test. This test was used as a pretest to assure the homogeneity of the participants. It consisted of 40 multiple choice items. The second instrument was a teacher made achievement vocabulary test based on the vocabularies of the adopted textbook which was “Basic English Readings for University Students”. It also consisted of 40 multiple choice items. This test was administered as the posttest to check which group had achieved the best in vocabulary acquisition. The reliability and validity of the test was determined through a pilot study.

#### **3.3. Procedure**

The following procedures were followed to compare vocabulary acquisition through using visual aids, contextualization and word lists. First of all, the Nelson English Test was given to 146 students who were taking General English in a technical vocational college in Yazd to select three homogeneous groups. Table 1 reveals the descriptive statistics of it.

**Table 1** *Descriptive statistics of the Nelson English Test*

Group	No.	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
A	32	10.00	40.00	25.0938	8.11355
B	32	10.00	40.00	25.7500	8.48148
C	32	11.00	40.00	24.4063	9.03348

The students whose grades were between one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected and were divided randomly into three groups. To confirm the homogeneity of the groups, the statistical technique of one-way ANOVA was used. The researcher set her acceptance level at .05. (see Table 2 for the results of the ANOVA).

**Table 2** *The Results of the one – way ANOVA of the pretest*

Source	D.F.	SS	MS	F ratio	Sig.	F critical.
Between Groups	2	28.896	14.448	.198	.821	3.09
Within Groups	93	6800.438	73.123			

As it can be seen in the above table, Fratio (Fobserved) did not exceed Fcritical (3.09) and there was no significant difference between the three groups and we could safely claim that the three groups were highly homogeneous. Then the treatment which was given to the subjects in the three groups was different. The students in group A were taught the vocabulary items through the use of visual aids and pictures and the students in group B were taught through the use of contextualization of new words. The students in CG were taught through the presentation of Persian equivalents and synonyms of vocabularies. At the end of the term, an achievement vocabulary test (posttest) was administered to investigate the learners' vocabulary knowledge and the efficacy of the three methods of vocabulary teaching. The posttest consisted of 40 multiple choice items and was constructed by the researcher herself and was piloted to determine its validity and reliability. The reliability of the test was calculated by using KR-21 formula at this stage. The results showed a reliability index of .90. To make the test valid, the researcher made a correlation between the students grades on the proficiency test and the grades on the teacher



made test in the pilot study. It was done by using Karl Pearson's formula. The correlation index was 0.82.

## 4. Results

In this study the investigator decided to find out whether there is any significant difference between vocabulary learning through using visual aids, contextualization and word lists. Accordingly, the three groups, after undergoing the treatment, took a multiple-choice posttest. Their scores were gathered and the descriptive statistics for the three groups was computed. Table 3 shows the results.

**Table 3** *The Descriptive Statistics for the Final Achievement Test*

Group	No.	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
visual aids Group	32	15	40	32.69	8.038
Context Group	32	10	40	26.59	10.118
Word list Group	32	11	40	24.5	10.731

To find out whether the difference between the means is significant or not, a one-way ANOVA was applied to the scores of these three groups. The Fratio was 6.156. Table 4 depicts the result of the ANOVA computation.

**Table 4** *The Results of the one-way ANOVA on the performance of the three Groups*

Source	D.F.	SS	MS	F ratio	Sig.	F critical
Between Groups	2	1157.896	578.948	6.156	.003	3.09
Within Groups	93	8746.594	94.049			

As the results of the one-way ANOVA in the above table show, F ratio (6.156) exceeds the F critical value (3.09) implying that there was a difference among subjects performances on different methods of teaching vocabulary items. To find where this difference is located, a Scheffe Test was carried out, and the results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5** *Scheffe Test with Significance level of .05 for performance on the posttest*

Group	Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
A	B	6.09*	2.424	.047
	C	8.19*	2.424	.005

B	C	2.09	2.424	.690
	A	-6.09*	2.424	.047
C	B	-2.09	2.424	.690
	A	-8.19*	2.424	.005

\* Indicates significant differences among the groups at the .05 level.

\* A = visual aids Group , B = Context Group , C = Control Group

Table 5 shows that these differences lay between group A (visual aids group) and group C (control group), and group A and group B (context group). In other words, group A performed better than group B and group C.

The findings of the Scheffe Test shows that the visual aids group performed better than other groups. Consequently, the researcher can claim that visual aids and pictures are more useful and can play an important role in teaching vocabulary items to Iranian technical and vocational students. It is also concluded that learning vocabulary in isolation (as it is practiced in word lists), may not really lead to creative acquisition of vocabulary items.

As mentioned by Ausubel (1968, p. 23) and as supported by the data obtained here, it is perceived that for learning to become meaningful, the new knowledge must have the potential to be linked in some manner to the students' cognitive structure. It also emphasizes Zimmerman's (1997) theory which encourages the contextualization of vocabulary items.

## 5. Conclusions and Implications

At the first glance, it may be concluded that the importance of pictures is already known. However, Mayer (1994) asserted: "although the potential advantages of visuals have been extolled by instructional designers, research on illustrations and animations is far from complete" (p. 135). The present study may provide some support for the idea that visual aids can have powerful effects on learning under certain circumstances. As Arikan (2009: p.90) states, the teacher can contextualize vocabulary items through numerous methods like using pictures, audio or visual materials, bringing in realia and props, storytelling, problem solving, giving examples, playing games, and teaching explicitly or implicitly.

From this point of view, Felder(1990) claims that in most of the college classes, very little visual information is presented and most of the students do not get nearly as much as they would if more visual presentation was used in class. Also, most of the English textbooks taught in the

technical and vocational colleges are heavily content-based and their lack of flexibility make it difficult to address the individual interests and talents of students. Accordingly, illustrations can boost the students' interest and help them construct mental models for the concrete words in question. This study also shows that teaching vocabulary in a context which indicates the use and function of the word is more effective than teaching vocabulary by providing only the dictionary definitions or L1 equivalents of words. Knowing learning techniques and strategies may be regarded crucially essential for the language teachers, for a special strategy should be applied for each element of language. So familiarity with these techniques and strategies will facilitate both the teaching and learning tasks.

The learners' errors in case of vocabulary may be mostly due to rote-learning of pre-fabricated patterns or isolated word lists which, when realized by the teacher, can be prevented. And it can ease the process of learning and lead to an effective meaningful learning of vocabulary items.

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## Title

# Higher-Order Thinking and Individualized Learning: Metacognitive Awareness and Self-Efficacy Among EFL Learners

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## Abstract

This study examined the relationship between EFL learners' metacognitive awareness and self-efficacy. 150 EFL learners majoring in English Translation and English Literature at Karaj and Sari Islamic Azad Universities were randomly selected and were given two questionnaires of Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI) by Schraw and Dennison (1994) and General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1996). 143 acceptable cases were used in statistical analyses. Preliminary analyses were performed

to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. The relationship between MAI and GSES scores was investigated using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient. Statistical analyses indicated that a significant relationship exists between EFL learners' self-efficacy and metacognitive awareness ( $r = .91$ ,  $n = 143$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Moreover, among the subcomponents of metacognitive awareness, Compensation Monitoring demonstrated the highest degree of correlation with self-efficacy. Drawing upon the findings, some pedagogical implications are presented, and some avenues for future research are highlighted.

**Keywords:** Higher-order thinking, Individual differences, Metacognitive awareness, Self-efficacy

## 1. Introduction

Different learning theories seem to be attempts to describe universal human traits which are influential in the process of learning (Brown, 2007). Among these universal traits, the mental factors and personal peculiarities are believed to play a major role (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). During the past decades, there has been a gradual and significant shift among English language educators from "teacher-centered to more learner-centered approaches" (Riazi, 2007, p. 433). Accordingly, many attempts have been made to investigate the effect of different socio-cultural, psychological, cognitive, and affective factors on the process of learning, especially L2 learning (Brown, 2000; Nunan, 1988). There is a unanimous consensus on the fact that every individual learner has his/her specific learning procedure which has a determining role in learning success or failure (Fewell, 2010; Zare & Noordin, 2011). Therefore, a gradual shift of focus from teaching paradigms to exploring individual characteristics is being observed (Carson & Longhini, 2002; Oxford & Anderson, 1995), and individual learner variables have been studied through many studies.

Applied linguistics researchers believe that individual variables are responsible for many of the dissimilarities among L2 learners (Dörnyei, 2009). Accordingly, many studies have attempted to inspect different individual factors and the way they are associated to success in L2 learning (Green & Oxford, 1995; Griffiths & Parr, 2000; Hsiao & Oxford, 2002). An important cognitive factor which helps learners become more effective and, more importantly, autonomous is

metacognitive awareness (Winne&Hadwin, 1998). Metacognitive awareness is generally defined as knowing how you think. In an ELT context, it stands for being aware of the way of acquiring the knowledge of language. If learners are conscious of how they learn, then they can identify the most effective ways of doing so. Metacognitive knowledge is regarded as the high order executive skills that employ the knowledge of cognitive processes and the attempts to control and adjust ones' own learning process through planning, monitoring, and evaluating (Livingstone, 2003). Students who know better regarding the way of studying and learning (i.e., those who possess a higher degree of metacognitive knowledge) learn better (Winne&Hadwin, 1998). Moreover, Chamot (2004) stated that "Strategic language learners possess metacognitive knowledge about their own thinking and learning approaches, a good understanding of what a task entails, and the ability to orchestrate the strategies that best meet both the task demands and their own strengths" (p. 14). In order for learners to use metacognitive strategies to enhance their learning, they need to be aware of their own learning tendencies and control their learning (Conner, 2006; White & Frederiksen, 1998; Winne, 1995).

Another important and influential factor which helps learners gain enough confidence in order to be autonomous and successful is self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989; Bouffard-Bouchard, Parent, & Larivée, 1991; Coutinho, 2007). The concept of self-efficacy is rooted in the socio-cognitive theory (Jalaluddin, 2013). It was proposed for the first time by Bandura (as cited in Su and Due, 2012). Bandura (1986) states that self-efficacy is learners' judgment of their capacities to identify and carry out something to master some specific functions. According to Çubukçu (2008) "Self-efficacy deals with cognitively perceived capability of the self" (p. 150). Whether or not a person can do what leads to the desired success is the focus of efficacy. Put another way, self-efficacy is linked to learners' beliefs about their abilities of completing and undertaking a task. It can be regarded as the question students ask themselves, asking "if I can do it?" It is widely accepted that learners who possess a stronger sense of self-confidence and/or self-efficacy can organize their own learning process better and are more prepared for expending their efforts, whereas learners with lower degree of self-efficacy are less motivated and usually do not exhibit enough interest in learning which causes encountering academic failure (Elias, Mahyuddin, Noordin, Abdullah, & Roslan, 2009).

Different studies have reported a significant and positive correlation between self-efficacy and learner's academic performance (Chou, 2007; Ho, 2005; Lin, 2002; Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2007). Moreover, some other groups of studies have explored the association between self-efficacy and use of learning strategies. For instance, Zimmerman (1990) indicated that individual's self-efficacy has a significant relationship with the effective use of learning strategies. In this respect, Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary and Robbins (as cited in Ho, 2005) argued that the difference between more and less effective learners lies in the quantity and range of employed strategies, in the way the strategies are applied to the task, and in the appropriateness of tasks.

Considering the important role of metacognitive awareness as the bridge between areas such as thinking and memory, learning and motivation, and learning and cognitive development (Metcalf & Shimamura, as cited in Heidari & Bahrami, 2012), on the one hand, and the existence of a positive relationship between learning success and self-efficacy (Magogwe, Mokuedi, & Oliver, 2007; Elias et al., 2009) on the other hand, this study focused on the relationship between metacognitive awareness and self-efficacy. In this regard, the following research questions were formulated:

Q1: Is there any significant relationship between EFL learners' metacognitive awareness and self-efficacy?

Q2: Is there any significant relationship between EFL learners' different types of metacognitive awareness and their self-efficacy?

## **2. Method**

### **2.1 Participants**

The participants of this study were 143 sophomore, junior, and senior students (109 females, 76%, and 34 males, 24%) with the age range of 18-25, studying English Translation and English Literature at Karaj and Sari Islamic Azad Universities. It should be mentioned that the preliminary number of participants was 150 (112 females, 38 males), but 7 of them were excluded from data analysis due to careless coding, incomplete answers, and subject mortality, bringing the final number to 143 participants.

### **2.2 Instrumentation**



### 2.2.1 Metacognitive Awareness Questionnaire

The Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI), developed by Schraw and Dennison (1994) was utilized to assess metacognitive awareness of the participants. It includes 52 items which assesses various facets of metacognition. Items of MAI are under two categories: "Knowledge of Cognition" and "Regulation of Cognition". Seventeen items of the MAI measure knowledge of cognition, and the remaining thirty five items assess regulation of cognition. Table1 demonstrates the eight components of MAI and the related items.

Table 1 *Components and Items of MAI*

Components	Number of Items in Each Component	Total Number of Items
<b>Knowledge about Cognition</b>		
Declarative Knowledge	5, 10, 12, 16, 17, 20, 32, 46	8
Procedural Knowledge	3, 14, 27, 33	4
Conditional Knowledge	15, 18, 26, 29, 35	5
<b>Regulation of Cognition</b>		
Planning	4, 6, 8, 22, 23, 42, 45	7
Information Management Strategies	9, 13, 30, 31, 37, 39, 41, 43, 47, 48	10
Debugging Strategy	25, 40, 44, 51, 52	5
Comprehension Monitoring	1, 2, 11, 21, 28, 34, 49	7
Evaluation	7, 18, 24, 36, 38, 49	6

The responses are based on true and false scale. The participants are supposed to answer the items in 30 minutes. Different studies have supported the satisfactory reliability and validity of the instrument. The internal consistency (reliability) for the knowledge of cognition scale has varied from the low 0.70s to the high 0.80s and for the regulation of cognition scale has varied from the low 0.80s to the high 0.90s. For the entire inventory, the internal reliability has been reported to be 0.90 (Schraw & Dennison, 1994; Sperling, Howard, Staley, & DuBois, 2004; Zhang, 2010). The validity of this instrument has been inspected and substantiated by Schraw and Dennison (1994) who performed a two-factor solution on the data. The results supported two factors accounting for 65% of the sample variance.

Since the questionnaire is designed for the native speakers, to avoid any misunderstanding in part of cultural differences and not having enough knowledge of some of the participants in

vocabulary and grammar, the researchers used the Persian translated version of the questionnaire. Its reliability was ensured in different studies through Cronbach's alpha which ranged from 0.74 to 0.96 (Delavarpour, 2008; Marzough & Safari, 2009; Shahniyeilagh, Boostani, Alipoor, & Hajiyakhchali, 2012).

The reliability of MAI questionnaire, in this study, was estimated to be 0.95 using the K-R21 formula, which demonstrated a fair degree of reliability. Table 2 shows the reliability of MAI and its components.

Table 2 *Reliability Index of MAI and Its Components*

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>		
	K-R21	N of Items
<b>MAI</b>	.95	52
Declarative Knowledge	.70	8
Procedural Knowledge	.68	4
Conditional Knowledge	.52	5
Planning	.66	7
Information Management Strategies	.72	10
Debugging Strategy	.76	5
Comprehension Monitoring	.89	7
Evaluation	.77	6

### 2.2.2 Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

To assess learners' level of self-efficacy, a questionnaire of General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) including 10 items designed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1996) was employed. It requires 5 minutes on average to answer the questions. Responses are made on a four-point Likert scale. Responses to all 10 items are summed up to yield the final score, with a range from 10 to 40.

Regarding the reliability of this questionnaire, Cronbach's alphas ranged from 0.76 to 0.90 based on the results of studies which gathered from 23 nations. Moreover, related validity is documented in many descriptive studies where positive coefficients have been observed with favorable emotions, dispositional optimism, and work satisfaction. Negative coefficients have been found with depression, anxiety, stress, burnout, and health complaints (Schwarzer, Bäßler, Kwiatek, Schröder, & Zhang, 1997; Schwarzer, Born, Iwawaki, Lee, Saito, & Yue, 1997).

In the present study, the Persian version of the instrument, translated by Nezami (2000), was administered. The reliability of the Persian version had been measured in Iranian studies, and the obtained Cronbach's alphas ranged from 0.79 to 0.88 (Bastani, 2012; Dehdari, Heidarnia, Ramezankhani, Sadeghian, & Ghofranipour, 2008). In the present study, its reliability was computed through K-R21 formula which turned out to be 0.78.

### **2.3 Procedure**

In order to achieve the purpose of the study, the following procedure was followed. All participants of the study were randomly selected from among both male and female sophomore, junior and senior students majoring in English Translation and English Literature at Karaj and Sari Islamic Azad Universities. Before administering the questionnaires, the participants were fully briefed on the process of completing the questionnaires; this briefing was given in Persian through explaining and exemplifying the process of choosing answers. Then, a package of two distinct questionnaires was given in one session in order to collect the required data of this study. It should be mentioned that, the researchers intentionally randomized the order of the questionnaires in each package to control for the impact of order upon the completion process and validity of the data.

The initial package included the English version of the questionnaires, but in the course of administration, it was found that many of the participants could not answer many of the items. Therefore, to overcome this problem which was due to misunderstanding, not having enough knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, and cultural differences, the researchers administered the Persian version of the questionnaires, and the English questionnaires were excluded from the data. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaires approximately in 35 minutes. Moreover, the researchers randomly observed the process of filling out for some individuals to make sure they were capable to fully understand the questions and responses.

Out of 150 students who took part in the administration, seven of them were excluded from data analysis due to careless coding and incomplete answers, bringing the final number to 143 participants among which 109 (76%) were females and 34 (24%) males. The justification for the lower number of males in the context of this study is that female candidates usually outnumber males in selecting English as their major in university entrance exam.

### 3. Results

In order to answer the research questions of the study, the descriptive statistics were obtained and the assumptions of linear correlation were checked, the results of which are presented below.

#### 3.1 Testing the Basic Assumptions

Since the present data were analyzed through Pearson's correlation, five assumptions of interval data, independence of subjects, normality, homoscedasticity and linearity should be met. The data should be measured on an interval scale. The subjects should be independent, that is to say their performance on the test is not affected by the performance of other students. The data should enjoy normal distribution, the relationships between the variables should be linear, and finally, the residuals should have homogeneous variances (homoscedasticity).

The present data were measured on an interval scale. The subjects performed independently on the questionnaires. The assumption of normality is met; the values of skewness and kurtosis are within the ranges of  $\pm 1.96$  as shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of MAI and GSES

	N	Mean	Variance	K-R21
MAI	143	35.83	152.173	0.95
GSES	143	30.72	29.780	0.78

Table 4 Testing Normality Assumptions of MAI and GSES

	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
		Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
MAI	143	-.473	.203	-.567	.403
GSES	143	-.549	.203	-.045	.403
Declarative Knowledge	143	-.609	.203	-.568	.403
Procedural Knowledge	143	-.533	.203	-.660	.403
Conditional Knowledge	143	-.446	.203	-.642	.403
Planning	143	-.377	.203	-.750	.403
Information Management Strategies	143	-.452	.203	.076	.403
Debugging Strategies	143	-.928	.203	.262	.403
Comprehension Monitoring	143	-.479	.203	-.509	.403
Evaluation	143	-.284	.203	-.726	.403

The assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity are discussed when reporting the results of correlations, although in this case the assumptions are violated; therefore, one can make inferences only for the immediate population from which the sample was selected (Little, 2004).

### 3.2 The First Research Question

The Pearson's correlation was run to probe any significant relationship between EFL learners' self-efficacy and metacognitive awareness. Based on the results displayed in Table 5, it can be concluded that there was a significant relationship between metacognitive awareness and general self-efficacy [ $r(143) = .91, p < .05$ , it represented a large effect size].

Table 5 *Pearson Correlation between MAI and GSES*

MAI	Pearson Correlation	.915**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	143
	N	GSES

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

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

As displayed in Figure 1, despite minor outliers, the relationships between the two variables was linear.

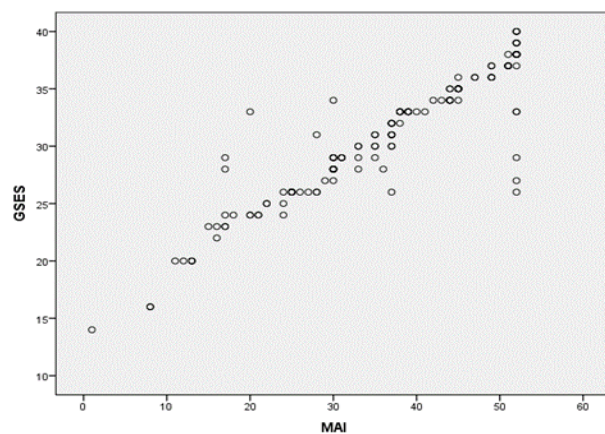


Figure 1 Scatter plot of the assumption of linearity

### 3.3 The Second Research Question

Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was run to probe any significant relationships between the components of metacognitive awareness and general self-efficacy. Based on the

results displayed in Table 6, it can be concluded that general self-efficacy scale shows significant relationships with:

- A. Declarative Knowledge [ $r(143) = .87, p < .05$ , it represented a large effect size].
- B. Procedural Knowledge [ $r(143) = .86, p < .05$ , it represented a large effect size].
- C. Conditional Knowledge [ $r(143) = .87, p < .05$ , it represented a large effect size].
- D. Planning [ $r(143) = .89, p < .05$ , it represented a large effect size].
- E. Information Management [ $r(143) = .88, p < .05$ , it represented a large effect size].
- F. Debugging Strategy [ $r(143) = .88, p < .05$ , it represented a large effect size].
- G. Compensation Monitoring [ $r(143) = .92, p < .05$ , it represented a large effect size]. &
- H. Evaluation [ $r(143) = .89, p < .05$ , it represented a large effect size].

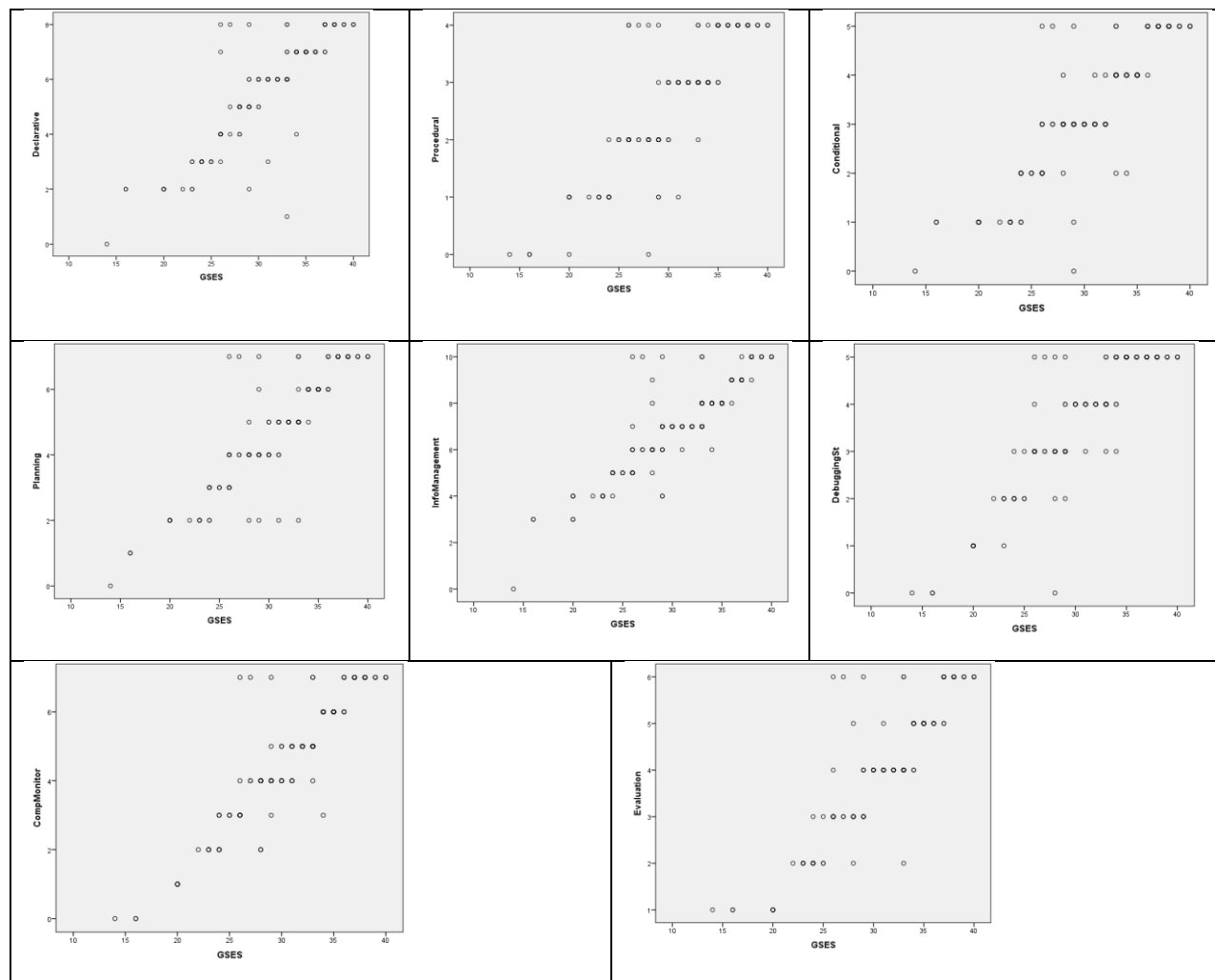
Table 6 *Pearson Correlation; GSES with Components of Metacognitive Awareness Inventory*

		GSES
Declarative Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.876**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	143
Procedural Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.866**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	143
Conditional Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.874**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	143
Planning	Pearson Correlation	.892**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	143
Information Management	Pearson Correlation	.888**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	143
Debugging Strategy	Pearson Correlation	.889**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	143
Compensation	Pearson Correlation	.921**

Monitoring	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	143
Evaluation	Pearson Correlation	.893**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	143

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

As displayed in Figure 2, despite minor outliers, the relationships between the variables were linear.



**Figure 2** Scatter plot of the assumption of linearity; GSES with components of MAI

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the current study show that there is a significant relationship between metacognitive awareness and self-efficacy. Therefore, it can be interpreted that learners with a

high degree of metacognitive awareness possess a higher degree of self-efficacy and a higher perception of their capabilities (Çubukçu, 2008). A number of studies indicate that metacognitive awareness determines students' success in second language learning (e.g. Anderson, 1991; Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinnary, & Rubbins, 1999; Oxford, 2001; Wenden, 1991). This result is also consistent with Mevarech & Kramarski's (2003) idea that metacognition should be embedded in the learning process, and supports Rasekh & Ranjbary's (2003) conclusion that metacognitive awareness contribute to improvements in students' vocabulary learning. Moreover, learners who have greater metacognitive awareness comprehend the similarity between a new learning task and previous ones, recognize those strategies required, and predict that using these strategies will bring about success (Paris & Winograd, 1990).

Zimmerman and Pons (1986) and Zimmerman (1990) claim that employing language learning strategies is linked to a sense of self-efficacy which leads to anticipation of good learning. Therefore, based on the results, it can be argued that metacognitive awareness would have a significant, though indirect, impact on learners' strategy use. Pajares (2003) asserted that most difficulties of students originate from students' self-beliefs. In many situations students' low self-beliefs are the reason for low motivation, participation, performance and achievement rather than their lack of abilities and skills. Therefore, it can be argued that if learners are conscious of how they learn, possess the executive skills that employ the knowledge of cognitive processes, and attempt to control and adjust their own learning process through planning, monitoring, and evaluating (Livingstone, 2003), they would have a higher chance of overcoming low motivation, unsatisfactory participation, and poor performance.

Heidari, Izadi, & Vahed Ahmadian (2012) have explored the relationship between Iranian EFL learners' self-efficacy beliefs and their use of vocabulary learning strategies. They report that learners' self-efficacy is positively associated with their use of the four subcategories of vocabulary learning strategies in general and the use of memory strategies in particular. Those learners who are highly self-efficacious use vocabulary strategies much more than those with low self-efficacy. This result is supported by the findings of Magogwe, Mokuedi, & Oliver (2007) who found a significant relationship between use of language learning strategies and self-efficacy beliefs. Therefore, this can be considered as another potential way through which metacognitive awareness can assist learners in acquiring L2 competence.



It should be mentioned that the above-mentioned results are opposed to the findings of Bonyadi, RimaniNikou, &Shahbaz (2012) who investigated the relationship between EFL learners' self-efficacy and use of language learning strategies. They found that there is no significant relationship between self-efficacy and language learning strategy use. The reason for the difference between the finding of this study and Bonyadi et al.'s study is probably due to the difference in proficiency levels of participants in these two studies. The Bonyadi et al.'s participants were a group of 130 freshmen, while the participants of this study were among sophomore, junior, and senior students.

The confirmation of the significant relationship between metacognitive awareness and general self-efficacy in this study shows that students' with high sense of self-efficacy are likely to have high metacognitive awareness. This result is somehow in line with the findings of Savia (2008) who found that the relationship between metacognitive awareness and performance was deeply influenced by self-efficacy. This means that learners with reasonable metacognitive awareness also have strong belief in their own capabilities to successfully undertaking a task. This finding was in line with the findings obtained by Coutinho (2007); Kruger and Dunning (1999); and Multon, Brown, and Lent, (1991). Their studies in self-efficacy and metacognitive awareness have already shown that both self-efficacy and metacognitive awareness are essential to successful learning. Students should be persuaded to analyze and inspect their own learning processes to improve their degree of metacognitive awareness, which may reinforce their sense of self-efficacy. Sinclair (2000) suggested that when there is not an explicit awareness of the processes involved in learning, learners will not be able to make informed decisions about their own learning.

It is recommended that the teachers, by considering the findings of this study, not contribute the failure of the students completely to their weak knowledge or inadequate skills but to different individual characteristics of the learners in the process of learning such as self-efficacy and metacognitive awareness. Therefore, they are expected to attempt to develop learners' metacognitive awareness and self-efficacy. When learners believe in their abilities to perform tasks, they would create deeper interest in learning and developing their confidence in order to overcome difficulties of learning. Highly self-efficacious learners also exhibit higher engagement in the classroom and better academic performance. Accordingly, instructors should improve the

sense of self-efficacy in their students which would be beneficial to their achievement. Cotterall (1999) has stated that it is crucial to provide teachers with a means of identifying and supporting individual learners who need to develop their sense of self-efficacy. If this can be done before they engage in learning tasks, the ensuing intervention in their language learning experience should result in superior performance.

Based on the results of this study, a positive significant correlation was found between EFL learners' self-efficacy and their metacognitive awareness, which means that promoting metacognitive awareness may enhance student self-efficacy. In the process of learning, if teachers design tasks to help the students increase their self-efficacy and metacognitive awareness, this increase might have positive effect on their academic performance. Due to the fact that language learning is a multidimensional phenomenon, not only language teachers, but also language learners themselves are required to play their role properly in order to facilitate and optimize this complicated process. Therefore, the results of the current study have implications for language learners, encouraging them to become more conscious and autonomous. The findings provide information for language learners by indicating that self-beliefs of language ability can affect their language achievement depending on the strength of their efficacy beliefs. Pajares (2000) states that many, if not most, academic crises are confidence crises.

Syllabus designers as providers of a great portion of the language learning setting, have a fundamental role to make the learning process easier. They are required to know that incorporation of learning techniques and metacognition processes in their courses can result in intellectual analytical learners that can overcome their learning difficulties. When relevant training hints or motivation are inserted in appropriate parts of a course book with different tasks, teachers are provided with a powerful device to optimize language learning activities, which may result in promoting the learners' metacognitive awareness and self-efficacy.

Due to the nature of the research, especially in the field of education, the present study encountered a number of limitations in the process of research which can pose inevitable restrictions on the interpretation and generalization of its findings. Firstly, the researchers did not administer the questionnaires in different sessions due to practicality problem and the high probability of losing some of the participants due to their absence in different sessions.

Therefore, doing the questionnaires consecutively might have influenced the participants' responses to the questionnaires. Secondly, during the data gathering phase of the study, it was observed that the number of male and female participants in this study were not equal. So, the effect of gender on self-efficacy and metacognitive awareness was not controlled. As a result, gender may act as an intervening variable.

The present study focused on the relationship between EFL learners' self-efficacy and metacognitive awareness. Further researches can be carried out to find out the probable relationship between the variables of this study and other domains of language learning. Moreover, since different age groups have different cognitive variables, the same study can be carried out among other age groups. The effect of gender in this research was not controlled; therefore, this study can be replicated while taking gender into account. Finally, the participants who took part in this study were adult students at university level; the same research can be conducted to other levels of language proficiency.

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## **Title**

# **The Relationship between Language Learning Strategies and Foreign Language Anxiety Among Iranian EFL Students**

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## **Abstract**

This study intended to investigate the relationship between Language Learning Strategies and Foreign Language Anxiety among EFL students. A population of 114 EFL students atShahidBahonar University of Kerman participated in this study.The data were gathered through Oxford's (1994) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) andForeign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, and Cope (1986). The results indicated a negative relationship between foreign language anxiety and the frequency and type of language learning strategies. An independent sample t-test revealed that the male students had lower level of foreign language anxiety than females and used more language learning strategies except for memory strategies. A Friedman Test revealed that the males' most preferred strategies were metacognitive strategies and memory strategies were the least frequently used ones. The females' most preferred strategies were metacognitive strategies and affective strategies were the leastfrequently used ones.



**Keywords:** Language learning strategies, Foreign language anxiety, Metacognitive strategies, Affective strategies, Memory strategies

## **1. Introduction**

As Nyikos and Oxford (1993, p. 11) said, “learning begins with the learner”, so even with the best teachers and methods, students are the only ones who can actually do the learning. Moreover, Stern (1983) argued “the affective component contributes at least as much and often more to language learning than the cognitive skills” (p. 386). It is noted that within the field of education during the last two decades, a gradual significant shift has taken place, resulting in less stress on teachers and teaching and greater emphasis on learners and learning (Nunan, 1988). Bearing this realization in mind, an effort has emerged to improve language teaching methodology by shifting the domain of language teaching to focus on the learner.

One of the affective factors which may negatively affect language learning, is Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). Horwitz and Young (1991, p. xiv) expressed, “We have been truly surprised at the number of students who experience anxiety and distress in their language classes”. The cognitive variable which was considered in this study, was Language Learning Strategies. According to Reid (1996) “Language teachers should provide a wealth of information to students in order to raise their awareness about learning styles, and strategies, ... and finally to work with students’ learning strengths” (p. 3).

This study tried to find the possible relationship between language learning strategies and foreign language anxiety. The results might help curriculum developers and material designers to provide curriculums and materials that best suit different preferences of LLSs and also might help the teachers to get the students to familiarize themselves with LLSs. The teachers should be aware and try to decrease students’ anxiety by making the classroom environment less stressful especially by making the students aware of language learning strategies and helping them to apply these strategies in learning English with the hope that someday they become autonomous language learners.

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

### **2.1. Language Learning Strategies**

According to Oxford (1990) “learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (p. 8). O’Malley and Chamot (1990) viewed learning strategies as “the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information” (p. 1). Nunan (1990) described learning strategies as cognitive strategies and processes for internalizing and automatizing L2 knowledge. The fact that learners can choose strategies led Cohen (1998) to argue for the addition of a further dimension to the definition of language learning strategies: that of consciousness. Cohen asserted that the conscious choice factor is important to the language learning strategy concept because “the element of consciousness is what distinguishes strategies from those processes that are not strategic” (Cohen, 1998, p. 4). He offered a specific definition: “language learning strategies include strategies for identifying the material that needs to be learned, distinguishing it from other material if need be, grouping it for easier learning (e.g. grouping vocabulary by category into nouns, verbs,...), having repeated contact with the material... and formally committing the material to memory when it does not seem to be acquired naturally” (p. 5). In addition to facilitating second language acquisition and improving student performance, strategy use promotes greater learner autonomy because “the use or adoption of appropriate strategies allows learners to take more responsibility for their own learning” (Dickinson, 1987).

There are various classifications by different authors. Among them, Oxford’s (1994) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) is “perhaps the most comprehensive classification of learning strategies to date” (p. 539). She divided LLSs into two major categories, the direct and indirect ones. The first group of strategies, that is direct strategies, consists of three subcategories: memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies, consists of three subcategories: metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

## **2.2. International Studies on the Variables which Affect Strategy Use**

Various factors may influence learners’ choice of learning strategies. Oxford (1990, 1994) posited that factors influencing the choice of language learning strategies are (1) motivation, (2) gender, (3) cultural background, (4) attitudes and beliefs, (5) type of task, (6) age and stage of second language learning (such as beginner or advanced learners), (7) learning style (general approach to language learning), and (8) tolerance of ambiguity.

Oxford (1990) emphasized that “Nationality or ethnicity influences strategy use” (p. 13). For example, Politzer and McGroarty (1985) found that students from Hispanic and Asian backgrounds differed significantly in their choice of learning behaviors (communicative and social vs. reliance on rote memorization), reflecting the differences between their cultural and educational backgrounds.

A number of studies have been conducted worldwide – most reporting higher strategy use among females. Studies reporting greater strategy use by female participants include observations from the US (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Zoubir-Shaw & Oxford, 1995, cited in Klee, 1994), from Japan (Watanabe, 1990), from China (Sy, 1994). In recent years, a number of SILL-based studies have also surprisingly revealed no significant gender differences in strategy use. For example, a study conducted in Malaysia (Hashim & Sahil, 1994) showed no significant differences between male and female students in overall strategy use.

Research in learning strategy instruction showed that the explicitness of instruction affects the degree to which students retain and transfer strategies (El-Dinary, 1993 as cited in Oxford, 1996a, p. 159). There is consensus that through overt strategy instruction, learners can be helped in four ways: (1) to become aware of the strategies they already use; (2) to apply task-specific strategies that can make learning more efficient and allow them to compensate for nervousness, inability to remember, and lack of wait time; (3) to monitor for strategy effectiveness; and (4) to create new strategies or weed out ineffective ones via metacognitive (consciousness, critical) control. (Wenden, 1985a, 1985b; Chamot and Küpper, 1989; Nyikos, 1991, cited in Oxford, 1996b, p. 114).

### **2.3. Foreign Language Anxiety**

Foreign Language Anxiety, or more precisely, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) is considered by Gardener and MacIntyre (1993) as “the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a foreign language with which the individual is not fully proficient” (p.5). MacIntyre (1998) observed that language anxiety is a form of situation-specific anxiety. Horwitz, et al., (1986) stated that there are three performance related anxieties: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

Young (1991) noted that language anxiety may have many sources, “some are associated with the learner” (p. 427), including low self-esteem and specious beliefs regarding the learning of language, and “some with the teacher” (p. 427). Many instructors disfavor a too friendly relationship with their students, seeing their role to be more that as “drill sergeant’s than a facilitator’s” (young, 1991, p. 428), constantly correcting students’ errors.

#### **2.4. Foreign Language Anxiety and Four Skillsof Language Learning**

Different studies have been carried out to find the relationship between anxiety and four skills of language learning. Horwitz, et al. (1986) found that in the listening and the speaking skills “difficulty in speaking in class [being] probably the most frequently cited concern of the anxious foreign language students” (p. 126). They noted that students who are apprehensive about making mistakes in front of others “seem to feel constantly tested and to perceive every correction as a failure” (p. 130).

In a study by Vogely (1998), four principal sources of anxiety emerged: “(a) Listening Comprehension anxiety associated with characteristics of FL [foreign language] input; (b) LC anxiety associated with processing-related aspects of FL; (c) LC anxiety associated with attributes of the teacher or learner” (p.70). In Elkhafaifi’s study (2005), the results showed that listening anxiety was positively related to, but distinguished from, language anxiety.

Saito, Horwitz and Garza (1999) examined anxiety in the reading skill in relation to three foreign languages. The results showed that students who had higher levels of foreign language anxiety were also more reading-anxious. In another study by Sellers (2000), the results showed that students with high levels of reading anxiety also had high levels of foreign language anxiety. Abu-Rabia and Argaman (2002) investigated the role of language anxiety in the English writing achievement. They found that students with higher language anxiety were inclined to have lower writing achievement. Abdel Latif (2007, p. 60) in his study reached the conclusion that writing apprehension is an effect; It is the result of the lack of linguistic competence and writing skill.

#### **2.5. Reducing Anxiety**

An extensive body of research has suggested a variety of strategies to cope with language anxiety in academic settings. Horwitz, et al. (1986) stated: “In general, educators have two options when dealing with anxious students: (1) they can help them learn to cope with the existing anxiety provoking situation; or (2) they can make the learning context less stressful” (p.

131). Young (1990) noted that students felt less stressful and anxious when the teacher's style of correction was "gentle and when the teacher did not overreact to mistakes" (p. 9) and when instructors "create warm social environment" (p. 550).

Based on the above categorization, this study posited the following research questions:

- 1- Are there any significant relationships between the level of FLCA and the frequency of LLSs Iranian EFL learners' use?
- 2- Are there any significant relationships between the level of FLCA and the type of LLSs Iranian EFL learners' use?
- 3- Are there any significant differences between males and females regarding the use of LLSs?
- 4- Are there any significant differences between males and females regarding the level of FLCA?

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Participants**

The participants in this study were 114 university students, majoring in English Translation and English Literature at ShahidBahonar University of Kerman, Iran. Their ages ranged between 20 and 26. They were selected randomly. The sample consisted of 82 females (71.9%) and 32 males (28.1%). The number of the females was higher than the males in the study, because there were more female students in classes and the questionnaires were distributed to the whole class without considering the male/female ratio.

#### **3.2. Instrumentation**

In order to obtain the required data, two questionnaires were utilized in this study:

1. The students' strategy use was measured by Oxford's (1994) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 7 which is used for learners of English as a second or foreign language. It is a 50-item Likert-type questionnaire with five-scale responses regarding the six major strategy groups (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies).

The SILL was chosen for this study because it is "perhaps the most comprehensive classification of learning strategies to date" (Ellis, 1994, p. 539) and has been (as of 1995) the key instrument in more than 40 studies, including 12 dissertations and theses. "These studies have involved approximately 8000 students around the world" (Green & Oxford, 1995, p.264).

From that date on, many more studies have appeared using SILL as the main research instrument. Defending the validity of the SILL, Oxford (1996b) considers the construct validity (how well the theoretical construct is measured), the criterion-related validity (demonstrated in the relationship between the SILL and performance), and the content validity (the degree to which the content is appropriate). On all of these, validity is argued to be “very high” (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995, p. 7-8).

2. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, and Cope (1986). The FLCAS consists of 33 items following a 5-point Likert scales ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The total possible score on the scale ranges from 33 to 165. Higher scores on the FLCAS indicate higher levels of anxiety.

Horwitz et al. (1986) reported that the FLCAS has demonstrated internal reliability, achieving the alpha coefficient of 0.93 with all items producing significant, corrected item-total scale correlations. “Test – retest reliability over eight weeks yielded an  $r = 0.83$  ( $p < 0.001$ )” (p. 129). This scale has been used in many studies and found to be highly reliable, for example (Aida, 1994; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Young, 1986).

### **3.3. Data collection**

The present study was carried out during the class time in the second semester of the academic year 1389-1390. The questionnaires were distributed in four classrooms. The researcher spent about five minutes at the beginning of the class time to explain about LLSs and FLCA to the students and also spoke to them about the purpose of the study. Then they were given the necessary instructions as how to answer each questionnaire. The two questionnaires were stapled together and given to students as one set so that the students weren’t asked to write their names in order for them to be relaxed and sincere. Most of the students completed the questionnaires in about 20 minutes.

### **3.4. Data analysis**

After collecting the data, SPSS version 15.0 was utilized to analyze the data. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was carried out to seek any meaningful relationship between the level of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety and the type and frequency of Language Learning Strategies that learners use. Independent Sample T-Test was used to find any significant differences between males and females regarding the frequency of LLSs and the level of FLCA.

To find the mean rank of six categories of LLSs for males and females a Friedman Test was applied.

## 4. Results and Discussion

In order to determine the descriptive statistics of the variables (frequencies and percentages) the descriptive analysis was carried out. These results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics of the variables (frequencies and percentages)

### Descriptive Statistics

<i>N</i>	<i>Range Minimum Maximum Mean Std. Deviation Variance</i>						
<i>Memory Ss</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>25.00</i>	<i>15.00</i>	<i>40.00</i>	<i>26.9649</i>	<i>6.19010</i>	<i>38.317</i>
<i>Compensation Ss</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>14.00</i>	<i>14.00</i>	<i>28.00</i>	<i>19.9298</i>	<i>3.75044</i>	<i>14.066</i>
<i>Cognitive Ss</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>43.00</i>	<i>26.00</i>	<i>69.00</i>	<i>47.4123</i>	<i>9.22080</i>	<i>85.023</i>
<i>Social Ss</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>18.00</i>	<i>12.00</i>	<i>30.00</i>	<i>19.8596</i>	<i>4.32297</i>	<i>18.688</i>
<i>Metacognitive Ss</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>31.00</i>	<i>19.00</i>	<i>50.00</i>	<i>36.3158</i>	<i>7.53084</i>	<i>56.714</i>
<i>Affective Ss</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>18.00</i>	<i>9.00</i>	<i>27.00</i>	<i>18.5351</i>	<i>4.42675</i>	<i>19.596</i>
<i>Overall Ss</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>107.00</i>	<i>114.00</i>	<i>221.00</i>	<i>168.2368</i>	<i>26.14944</i>	<i>683.793</i>
<i>FLCA</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>88.00</i>	<i>44.00</i>	<i>132.00</i>	<i>90.8596</i>	<i>19.61347</i>	<i>384.388</i>

### 4.1. The Relationship between FLCA and the Frequency of Language Learning Strategies

Table 2 shows that Pearson Product-Moment correlation between FLCA and LLSs is -.552 at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). So, there is a negative correlation between the level of foreign language anxiety and the frequency of language learning strategies. Table 2 shows this relationship.

**Table 2** Pearson Product-Moment correlation between FLCA and LLSs

<i>Correlation</i>			
<i>FLCA</i>	<i>Language Learning Strategies</i>		
<i>FLCA</i>	<i>Pearson correlation</i>	1	-.552 **
<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	.000		
<i>N</i>	114	114	
<i>LLSs</i>	<i>Pearson correlation</i>	-.552 **	1
<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	.000		
<i>N</i>	114	114	

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

### 4.2. The Relationship between FLCA and the Type of Language Learning Strategies

Table 3 shows that Pearson Product-Moment correlation between FLCA and six subscales of LLSs is as follows: Correlation between FLCA and memory strategies is -.194, correlation between FLCA and compensation strategies is -.350, correlation between FLCA and cognitive strategies is -.451, correlation between FLCA and social strategies is -.420, correlation between FLCA and metacognitive strategies is -.645, correlation between FLCA and affective strategies is -.444. at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). So, there is a negative correlation between the level of foreign language anxiety and six subscales of LLSs. Table 3 shows these relationships.

**Table 3** *Pearson Product-Moment correlation between FLCA and LLSs*

		memory Ss	compensation Ss	cognitive Ss	Social Ss	metacognitive Ss	affective Ss
FLCA	Pearson Correlation	-.194*	-.350**	-.451**	-.420**	-.645**	-.444**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.038	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	114	114	114	114	114	114

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

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

### 4.3. Gender and Language Learning Strategies

The results of this study indicated that males reported using overall language learning strategies (mean=180.3438) more frequently than females (mean=164.5976). Females reported using memory strategies (mean=27.902) more frequently than males (mean=24.562). In other strategies males surpassed females. Table 4 shows group statistics for the male and female participants for LLSs.

**Table 4** *Group statistics of the Male and Female Participants for LLSs*

#### Group Statistics

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
memory strategies	females	82	27.9024	6.18363	.68287
	males	32	24.5625	5.61069	.99184



compensation strategies	females	82	19.0366	3.27522	.36169
	males	32	22.2188	3.96545	.70100
cognitive strategies	females	82	45.6341	8.65599	.95589
	males	32	51.9688	9.18443	1.62359
social strategies	females	82	19.4390	4.71954	.52119
	males	32	20.9375	2.87298	.50788
metacognitive strategies	females	82	34.8293	7.50276	.82854
	males	32	40.1250	6.23078	1.10146
affective strategies	females	82	17.7561	4.64163	.51258
	males	32	20.5312	3.06893	.54252
overall strategies	females	82	163.27E2	27.63610	3.05190
	males	32	180.97E2	16.25698	2.87385

#### 4.4. Gender and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

The results of this study indicated that females reported higher level of foreign language anxiety than males. Table 5 shows group statistics for the male and female participants for FLCA.

**Table 5** Group statistics of the Male and Female Participants for FLCA

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
FLCA	females	82	93.3049	20.66648	2.28223
	males	32	84.5938	15.16332	2.68052

#### 4.5. The Rank Order of Six Subscales of LLSs for Males and Females

To find the mean rank of six subscales of LLSs for males and females a Friedman Test was applied. The males' most preferred strategies were metacognitive strategies ( $M=5.06$ ), followed by compensation strategies ( $M=4.31$ ), cognitive strategies ( $M=3.63$ ), affective strategies ( $M=3.31$ ), and social strategies ( $M=3.13$ ). Memory strategies were the least frequently used category ( $M=1.56$ ). Tables 6 and 7 show these results.

Table 6 Friedman Test for specifying Rank Order of strategies for males

# Test Statistics

N	32
Chi-square	65.126
df	5
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Table 7 Rank order of favored Strategies for males

Strategies	Mean	Rank
Metacognitive	5.06	1
Compensation	4.31	2
Cognitive	3.63	3
Affective	3.31	4
Social	3.13	5
Memory	1.56	6

The females' most preferred strategies were metacognitive strategies ( $M = 5.16$ ), followed by cognitive strategies ( $M = 3.49$ ), social strategies ( $M = 3.38$ ), compensation strategies ( $M = 3.35$ ), and memory strategies ( $M = 3.01$ ). Affective strategies were the least frequently used category ( $M = 2.61$ ). Tables 8 and 9 show these results.

Table 8 Friedman Test for specifying Rank Order of strategies for females

# Test Statistics

N	82
Chi-square	91.385
df	5
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Table 9 Rank order of favored Strategies for females

Strategies	Mean	Rank
Metacognitive	5.16	1
Cognitive	3.49	2
Social	3.38	3
Compensation	3.35	4
Memory	3.01	5
Affective	2.61	6

Reader's attention is called to the research questions. The first and second research questions were about the relationships between the level of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety and the frequency and type of Language Learning Strategies EFL learner's use. The findings revealed

that students' level of FLCA was negatively correlated with the overall use of language learning strategies and also with six subscales of LLSs. MacIntyre and Noels (1996) conducted a similar study. A positive and statistically significant correlation was found between anxiety and the Strategy Model Element but no statistically significant correlation was observed between affective variables and the frequency of use for each type of strategy.

The third research question asked whether males and females used the same frequency and type of language learning strategies. Male students used LLSs slightly more frequently than females. Most studies, including Green and Oxford (1995), Sy (1994), etc., found different results to the current study. However, there are some other research studies that found the opposite. In his study, Tran (1988) discovered that Vietnamese women use fewer language learning strategies than men. Tercanlioğlu (2004) also found that Turkish male students used more language learning strategies.

The data set was further analyzed according to the subscales of the language learning strategies. The findings revealed that only in memory strategies females were superior to males, which indicated a different result compared to the previous studies. The precedents generally stated the female superiority; yet some study found male superiority in some of the domains of the subscales, each time a different one though. Green and Oxford (1995), for example, found that females used more strategies in most of the domains but males were slightly better in cognitive strategies. Tercanlioğlu (2004) on the other hand found female superiority in the affective domain.

The last research question was about the differences between males and females regarding the level of FLCA. The results showed that the female students in this study were significantly more anxious than the males. This result echoed similar findings reported in the literature. Padilla, Cervantes, Maldonado, and García (1988) submitted that female language students were more apt to be language-anxious than their male counterparts.

Analyzing and considering the results of this study, there are three suggestions for future research. 1) A great deal of research remains to be done to discover effective ways of training students to use language learning strategies effectively. 2) Other factors such as age, motivation, attitude, learning styles, social background, previous educational experiences, learning goals, and big five characteristics that create a difference between genders should be involved in further

research. 3) Future studies might also benefit from larger numbers of participants in order to increase the reliability of the results

## **5. Conclusion**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the EFL students' foreign language anxiety and their use of language learning strategies. The findings indicated that such a relationship does exist. These findings seemed to corroborate other studies in suggesting that anxiety can negatively affect the language learning experience in numerous ways and that reducing anxiety seems to increase using language learning strategies. Therefore, awareness of the problem of foreign language anxiety should be heightened and taken seriously. Within this generalization, however, it is possible that not only the overall reported frequency, but also the type of language learning strategies chosen may be important.

One significant conclusion that can be drawn from the findings of the study is the need to stimulate the use of the less frequent strategies by the learners. The less frequent strategies in this study (affective, memory and social) can contribute to the success of a program of classroom strategy instruction. Male students may be encouraged to learn that, according to the results of this study, their female classmates do not appear to be significantly more active in using strategies, as commonly believed.

Although the existing research has provided a valuable insight into language anxiety, the phenomenon, because of its complicated and multi-faceted nature, requires further exploration from a variety of perspectives and approaches. There do not seem to be any specific remedies for language anxiety. Using LLSs can be one remedy. To reduce students' anxiety in learning, Richards and Rodgers (1986) suggested teachers design comprehensive, interesting, and meaningful activities. Oxford (1999, p. 67) proposed a schedule of suggestions for diminishing language anxiety, including: "Encourage moderate risk-taking and tolerance of ambiguity in a comfortable, non-threatening environment" and "Give students permission to use the language with less than perfect performance". Tsui (1996, p. 164) urged teachers to establish good relationships and have private consultations with individual students. A good learning atmosphere, she said, "allows students to have time to think, to check with each other or even admit publicly that they don't know the answer, without fear ..." (p. 165). The findings of the

study must be treated with caution. The sample size of the study will mean that a replication of the study is needed to determine the generalizability of the findings.

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## **Title**

# **Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used by Poor Iranian High School Students**

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## **Abstract**

Words are the basic building blocks of a language, the units of meaning from which larger structures such as sentences, paragraphs and the whole texts are formed. Vocabulary is central to language and language learning and vocabulary learning is vital to the language learners. One subcategory of language learning strategies is vocabulary learning strategies and defined as what the learners do to reach the meaning of new words, hold these words in long-term memory, recall them when comprehension is used and use them in producing language. The aim of this study was to find out to what extent poor Iranian high school students use metacognitive, cognitive, social, and affective vocabulary learning strategies and which vocabulary learning strategies has the highest and lowest use among the participants. To conduct the study, a total of 45 high school female students in a high-school in Tabriz, Iran, participated in this survey. A vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire was administered to the participants. The results of the



descriptive statistics revealed that among the four categories investigated, cognitive strategies were the most frequently used strategy, followed by social, affective and metacognitive, strategies, respectively. The implications and recommendations are also presented.

**Keywords:** Poor language learner, Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Metacognitive vocabulary learning strategies, Cognitive vocabulary learning strategies, Social vocabulary learning strategies, Affective vocabulary learning strategies

## 1. Introduction

It's a crucial issue to know what exactly the term "word" means. Linguists such as Carter (1987) and Jackson (1991) believe that words are ambiguous and difficult to define. According to Moon (1997), a word is "a string of characters, or a sequence of one or more morphemes, which is bounded at either end by a space or by punctuation (p. 40). Bloomfield (1933, as cited in Jackson & Ze Amvela (2007 p. 58)) defines a word as "a form which can occur in isolation and have meaning but which cannot be analyzed into elements which can all occur alone and also have meaning." Considering these definitions, vocabulary learning seems to be an integral and important area of language teaching as Read (2000) defines "words are the basic building blocks of language, the units of meaning from which larger structures such as sentences, paragraphs and whole texts are formed" (p. 1). Because of the importance of vocabulary in language learning, there are many studies that deal with vocabulary learning strategies.

According to (Ruutemets, 2005), one subcategory of language learning strategies is vocabulary learning strategies and defined as what the learners do to reach the meaning of new words, hold these words in long-term memory, recall them when comprehension is used and use them in producing language. Several experts such as (Oxford 1990, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) believe, that vocabulary learning strategies should be taught to foreign language learners as tools to help them to become independent and efficient language learners.

According to Richards and Lockhart (1995), language learners have their own beliefs, goals, attitudes and decisions, which influence the way language is learnt (p. 52). Some researchers such as (Ellis, 1995; Horwitz, 1987; Wenden, 1987) believe that foreign language learners develop some beliefs about language learning in the process of experiencing and using a new

language. Research done by Peacock (2001) proves that the quality of the learning is influenced by students' beliefs about language learning. Rubin (1975), studied what it was that "good" language learners do to be successful in language learning that poor language learners does not do.

Therefore, the aim of the present study was to find out what vocabulary learning strategies are used by poor Iranian high school students. In this regard, the following research questions were posed:

1. To what extent poor Iranian high school students use Metacognitive vocabulary learning strategies (MVLS)?
2. To what extent poor Iranian high school students use Cognitive vocabulary learning strategies (CVLS)?
3. To what extent poor Iranian high school students use Social vocabulary learning strategies (SVLS)?
4. To what extent poor Iranian high school students use Affective vocabulary learning strategies (AVLS)?

## **2. Literature Review**

Gu (1994) believes that the whole language ability of a learner is predicted by the size of the vocabularies one knows. According to Ahmed (1989), the learners' success in learning a foreign language and his flexibility in using language is determined, to a large extent, by the ways a learner learns vocabulary. Conventionally, when we talk about knowing a word, we mean knowing its definition (Cook, 2001, pp.60-61). However, knowing a word by sight and sound and knowing a word's definition are not the same as knowing how to use the word correctly, as well as being able to use that word in speech and writing, and understanding it when it is heard or seen in various contexts (Miller & Gildea, 1987). It also involves teachers' helping them to model how to use a variety of strategies. There are two types of knowledge that become convenient when discussing how a language learner understands the meaning of words and their use and how one is able to manipulate this knowledge. The two sets of knowledge are called the *receptive or passive knowledge* and the *productive or active knowledge*. Knowing a word, then,

depends on what kind of knowledge is meant and what kind of knowing is considered to be adequate for the learning purpose (Nation 1990, p. 31).

Schmitt (1997) define different strategies as following: *Cognitive strategies* are the strategies which accomplish the process of using or converting the language material. *Social strategies* develop interaction either amongst students or teacher and students. *Memory strategies* are recalling the meaning word based on its decoding and connection with the student's background knowledge. Metacognitive strategies help students to monitor and evaluate their process of learning and to use consciously certain techniques that improve performance in the target language.

Alhaisoni (2012) used SILL with 701 Saudi EFL undergraduates to examine the relationship between type and frequency of language learning strategies and gender and proficiency level. The results showed that cognitive and metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used and affective strategies and memory strategies were the least frequently used. Bialystok (1978) provides a foreign language learning model which put an emphasis on the learners' beliefs as a complementary component of language learning. Oxford (1990) suggests specifically eight factors influencing VLSs use of language learners: (1) motivation; (2) gender; (3) culture background; (4) attitudes and beliefs; (5) types of task; (6) age and L2 stage; (7) learning style; and (8) tolerance of ambiguity. Definitely, the present study is also connecting with the above factors to a particular extent. Considering the above mentioned factors and As Wenden (1987) suggests, "there is almost no mention in the literature of second language learners' reflections on the assumptions or beliefs underlying their choice of strategies" (p. 103) This study considers what vocabulary learning strategies are used by poor Iranian high school students.

The similar weakness is also stressed by Horwitz (1987) by highlighting the relationship between the beliefs that students hold, and their language learning strategies. It is recognized by (Rubin, 1975) and Stern (1975) that the good language learner differs in his/her approach, study habits, preference, persistence and language behavior from the poor learner. However, Oxford has a different opinion (1992, p. 126). She claims that many of the poor L2 learners are indeed aware of the strategies they use, can clearly describe them, and employ just as many strategies as good L2 learners. However, poor learners apply these strategies in a random, even desperate manner, without careful organization and without assigning specific strategies to specific tasks.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Design**

As the present study aimed to determine the use of vocabulary learning strategies used by poor Iranian high school students using a questionnaire, the descriptive survey research was selected as the most appropriate design.

#### **3.2 Participants**

The participants of the study were 45 female high school students in Tabriz, Iran. The students of four classes whose English grades were less than 15 which considered as poor language learners participated in this study. Their age range was 15-17. All of the students were required to pass the English course as one of their main courses in school. The required book for them to study in school is the one designed by Iran educational system. Their books are divided into four parts including: reading, vocabulary and grammar, and pronunciation. Their teachers taught them new vocabularies through reading. The lessons started by explaining the topic and continued the process of teaching by reading the text. Once she wrote new words on the board, she explained them and wrote English meaning of the words next to them. Then, it was the time the students were required to read the text one more time. In the end, students did the exercises of the related reading (or text). In addition to English, students also studied Arabic as a foreign language; the latter reflected the Islamic curriculum in the school. The participants' first language is either Persian or Turkish. They study English for about 4 hours per week in school. Teachers in schools teach vocabularies by translating words, and some students attend English classes out of school in institutes 3 days a week (6 hours per week).

#### **3.3 Instruments**

A questionnaire taken from Gu and Johnson (1996) was employed in the study included a vocabulary learning strategy. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section one involved the instructions on the questionnaire and the required demographic information including the class, name and age. The participants were required to respond truthfully since their answers would not influence their course grade. Section two which is the main body of the questionnaire consisted of 49 items with 4 categories including Metacognitive VLS, cognitive VLS, social VLS, Affective VLS. This questionnaire is a likert-type scale with five responses, from 1 to 5

(1= never, 2= seldom, 3= sometimes, 4= often, and 5= always) for each item. The participants were asked to choose the number that indicates how often they use the given strategy.

The items of each strategy category are grouped as:

- 1) Metacognitive vocabulary learning strategy (MVLS): items 1-8
- 2) Cognitive vocabulary learning strategy (CVLS): items 9-44
- 3) Social vocabulary learning strategy (SVLS): items 45-47
- 4) Affective vocabulary learning strategy (AVLS): items 48-49

The questionnaire was translated into the Persian and the Persian version was used in the data collection to avoid misunderstanding that the English version might cause. This version was also piloted for any ambiguous items before the actual data collection.

### **3.4 Procedure**

The study was conducted in 2014 within a week. The aim of the study was clarified to the students and they agreed to participate in the study. The Persian version of the questionnaire was used and it was handed out during the participants' normal class times under the permission of their respective teachers. To make sure that each participant will get a question sheet, the questionnaires were first numbered before distribution. At the beginning of each questionnaire, there was an instruction in Persian, which gave students enough information about how to answer the items. Instruction was repeated orally and two points were stressed: (1) their performance on the questionnaires would not have any influence on their course grade. So, they were required to offer their responses as truly as possible, (2) the participants were told not to discuss with others when filling in the questionnaire. They were allowed to ask any questions concerning the questionnaire. The collected data were entered into the SPSS 16.0 for further analysis. For each research question, descriptive statistics of means and standard deviations for main categories of the questionnaire and each item were obtained.

## **4. Data Analysis and Discussion**

In order to analyze the data, descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations are used to find out vocabulary learning strategies preferred by the participants.

### **4.1 Results of the research question one:**

### **To what extent poor Iranian high school students use Metacognitive vocabulary learning strategies?**

To answer the first research question and determine to what extent learners use the Metacognitive vocabulary learning strategies, the mean score and standard deviation for MVLS were calculated (see Table 4.1).

Table 1

*Means and standard deviation for the use of Metacognitive Vocabulary Learning Strategies*

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
<i>Metacognitive VLS</i>	1.79	1.02

According to the results shown in Table 4.1 among four Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Metacognitive strategy has with  $M=1.79$  and  $SD=1.02$  is the least used strategy among the participants.

#### **4.2 Results of the research question two:**

### **To what extent poor Iranian high school students use Cognitive vocabulary learning strategies?**

To answer the second research question and determine to what extent learners use the Cognitive vocabulary learning strategies, the mean score and standard deviation for CVLS was calculated (see Table 4.2).

Table 2

*Means and standard deviation for the use of cognitive Vocabulary Learning Strategy*

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
<i>Cognitive VLS</i>	3.76	1.36

According to the results shown in Table 4.2 among four Vocabulary Learning Strategies, cognitive strategy with  $M=3.76$  and  $SD=1.36$  is the least used strategy among the participants.

#### **4.3 Results of the research question three:**

### **To what extent poor Iranian high school students use Social vocabulary learning strategies?**

To answer the third research question and determine to what extent learners use the social vocabulary learning strategies, the mean score and standard deviation for SVLS was calculated (see Table 4.3).

Table 3

*Means and standard deviation for the use of social Vocabulary Learning Strategy*

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
<i>Social VLS</i>	2.59	1.21

According to the results shown in Table 4.3 among four Vocabulary Learning Strategies, social strategy with M=2.88 and SD=1.25 is the least used strategy among the participants....

#### ***4.4 Results of the research question four:***

**To what extent poor Iranian high school students use Affective vocabulary learning strategies?**

To answer the fourth research question and determine to what extent learners use the affective vocabulary learning strategies, the mean score and standard deviation for AVLS was calculated (see Table 4.4).

Table 4

*Mans and standard deviation for the use of affective Vocabulary Learning Strategy*

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
<i>Affective VLS</i>	2.88	1.25

According to the results shown in Table 4.2 among four Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Affective strategy with M=2.88 and SD=1.25 is the least used strategy among the participants.

**Table 5**Frequency use of Vocabulary learning strategies

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>No. of items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
<i>Metacognitive VLS</i>	8	1.79	1.02

<i>Cognitive VLS</i>	36	3.76	1.36
<i>Social VLS</i>	3	2.59	1.21
<i>Affective VLS</i>	2	2.88	1.25

Note. VLS=vocabulary learning strategy

It can be seen from the above table that the category of Cognitive strategies receives the highest mean score ( $M=3.76$ ,  $SD=1.36$ ) among all the categories, which implies that it is the most frequently used category among four categories. The second highest mean score is the category of Affective strategies ( $M=2.88$ ,  $SD=1.25$ ), followed by the category of Social strategies ( $M=2.59$ ,  $SD=1.21$ ) and finally Metacognitive strategies ( $M=1.79$ ,  $SD=1.02$ ), respectively.

In other words, the participants adopted more Cognitive strategies than other strategies. According to O'malley and Chamot (1990), it means that they directly focus on the material to be learned and also Oxford (1990) believed it makes language learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations.

## 5. Conclusion

This study aimed to find out the vocabulary learning strategies used by poor Iranian high school students including metacognitive, cognitive, social, and affective strategies. The results of the survey revealed that cognitive strategy is the most frequently used strategy among participants. Social strategy is the second frequently used strategies. The third frequently used strategy is affective strategy and the least frequently used strategy is metacognitive strategy it means that metacognitive strategy is not actively used by the participants.

Regarding the result of this study, teachers can take into account the most and least frequently used strategies by poor students. The results can help the teachers to find ways of increasing the least used strategy which is metacognitive strategy. This means help students to monitor and evaluate their process of learning and to use consciously certain techniques that improve performance in the target language and also to be aware of their own learning process (Flavell, 1970).

This study focused on the vls used by poor female Iranian high school students. Therefore, the results may not be generalized to whole community of EFL or ESL students at different levels or



in different countries. Further research is recommended in the case of finding about the vls used by other EFL and ESL settings and comparing the findings with the results of the present study.

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## **Appendix**

### **Vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire**

#### **Direction (in English) 1) Metacognitive VLS:**

##### ***Selective attention:***

1. I look up words that I'm interested in.      1 2 3 4 5
2. When I meet a new word, I have a clear sense of whether I need to remember it.      1 2 3 4 5
3. I know what cues I should use in guessing the meaning of a particular word.      1 2 3 4 5
4. I make a note of words that seem important to me.      1 2 3 4 5

##### ***Self-initiation:***

5. Besides textbooks, I look for other readings that fall under my interest.      1 2 3 4 5
6. I learn what my English teacher doesn't tell us to learn.      1 2 3 4 5
7. I do not only focus on things that are directly related to exams.      1 2 3 4 5
8. I care about vocabulary items that teacher doesn't explain in class.      1 2 3 4 5

#### **2) Cognitive VLS:**

##### ***Guessing strategies: Contextual guessing***

9. I used alternative cues and try again if I fail to guess the meaning of a word. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I make use of the logical development in the context. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I make use of my common sense and knowledge of the world when I guess the meaning of a word. 1 2 3 4 5
12. I search for the examples in the context when I guess the meaning of a word. 1 2 3 4 5

***Dictionary strategies: Dictionary strategy for comprehension***

13. When I see an unfamiliar word again and again, I look it up. 1 2 3 4 5
14. When not knowing a word prevents me from understanding a whole sentence or even paragraph, I look it up. 1 2 3 4 5
15. I look up words that are crucial to the understanding of the sentence or even paragraph in which it appears. 1 2 3 4 5

***Dictionary strategies: Extended dictionary strategy***

16. I pay attention to the examples of use when I look up a word in a dictionary. 1 2 3 4 5
17. I look for expressions or set phrases that go with the word. 1 2 3 4 5
18. When looking up a word in a dictionary, I read sample sentence illustrating various meaning of the word. 1 2 3 4 5
19. If the unknown appeared to be an irregularly inflected form or a spelling variant, I will scan nearby entries. 1 2 3 4 5

***Note-taking strategies: Meaning-orientated note-taking***

20. I write down the English synonyms or explanations of the word I look up. 1 2 3 4 5
21. I write down both Chinese equivalent and English synonyms of the word I look up. 1 2 3 4 5

***Usage-orientated note-taking strategy***

22. I make a note when I see a useful phrase or expression. 1 2 3 4 5
23. I take down the collocations of a word I look up. 1 2 3 4 5
24. I note down the examples showing the usages of the word I look up. 1 2 3 4 5

***Memory strategy: rehearsal***

***Using word list***

25. I make vocabulary cards and take them with me wherever I go. 1 2 3 4 5
26. I make regular and structured reviews of new words I have memorized. 1 2 3 4 5

***Repetition***

27. When I try to remember a word, I repeat it aloud to myself. 1 2 3 4 5
28. I write down both the new words and their Chinese equivalent repeatedly in order to remember them. 1 2 3 4 5

***Memory strategy: Encoding***

***Association/elaboration:***

29. I remember a group of new words that share a similar part in spelling. 1 2 3 4 5
30. I associate a group of new words that share a similar part in spelling with a known word that look or sound similar to the shared part. 1 2 3 4 5

***Imagery:***

31. I create a mental image of the new word to help me to remember it. 1 2 3 4 5
32. I associate one or more letters in a word with the word meaning to help me to remember it. 1 2 3 4 5

***Auditory encoding***

33. I remember together words that sound similar. 1 2 3 4 5
34. I remember together words that are spelled similarly. 1 2 3 4 5
35. I associate a new word with a known English word that sounds similar. 1 2 3 4 5

***Word structure***

36. I analyze words in terms of prefixes, stems, and suffixes. 1 2 3 4 5
37. I deliberately study word-formation rules in order to remember more words. 1 2 3 4 5
38. I memorize the commonly used stems and affixes. 1 2 3 4 5

***Contextual encoding***

39. When I try to remember a word, I try to remember the sentence in which the word is used. 1 2 3 4 5
40. I deliberately read books in my area of interest so that I can find out and remember the special terminology that I know in Chinese. 1 2 3 4 5
41. I remember the words together with its context, and pay attention to the extend of its collocation, part of speech and meanings. 1 2 3 4 5

***Activation strategies:***

42. I try to read as much as possible so that I can use the words I try to remember. 1 2 3 4 5
43. I make up my own sentence suing the words I just learned. 1 2 3 4 5
44. I try to use newly learned words in real situations. 1 2 3 4 5

**3)Social VLS:**

***Communication and cooperation:***

45. When I encounter a new word, I would turn to a teacher for its meaning. 1 2 3 4 5
46. I review mew words with my friends/classmates. We play games like crossword puzzles, or one says an English word, the other translates it into Chinese, or define it in simpler English. 1 2 3 4 5
47. I share my experience and feelings in vocabulary learning with others. 1 2 3 4 5

#### **4)Affective VLS:**

##### **Emotion adjustment:**

48. When I encounter difficulty in vocabulary learning, I encourage myself to overcome it and fulfill the learning task. For example: I say to myself that vocabulary learning is not that difficult, I can learn it well.

1 2 3 4 5

49. When in a negative mood while learning vocabulary, such as boring, I will control or adjust my emotion, then go on with study. 1 2 3 4 5 (Adapted from Gu & Johnson, 1996)

## **Title**

### **A More Scrupulous Look on the Concept of Reflective Practice More Factors to consider**

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## **Abstract**

Regarding the current body of literature dealing with L2 teacher education, copious references are made to the concept of reflective teaching for teachers to have better understanding of their careers. In most of the reflective practices, it is widely accepted that reflective practice should be started from a sort of difficulty, a state of doubt, uncertainty and puzzlement or let's say a problem which the teachers face during their teaching practice (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983, 1987; Wallace, 1991). However, in general, reflective movement has been severely criticized for introducing reflection and reflective practice as an introspective process (Day, 1993; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Lortie,

1975; Solomon, 1987; Valli, 1997; Wells, 1994; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Besides, the present paper argues that starting a reflective practice regarding a problem as the departure point is quite limited and limiting due to a variety of reasons. Based on logical reasoning, the paper introduces the limitations under the following five rubrics: 1. Context uniqueness; 2. Unwarranted repetition; 3. Insignificant results; 4. Inefficient instrument; 5. Ideological barriers. In conclusion, the present paper suggests a more careful analysis of reflective teaching in teacher education.

**Keywords:** Teacher Education, Reflective practice, Reflective teaching, Introspection

## **1. Introduction**

Inadequacy of methods paved the way for ELT to find itself in what Kumaravadivelu (1994) has called the post-method condition. The three principles of particularity, practicality, and possibility outlined by the post-method condition (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) also failed to address the inefficiency of the methods. As a remedy, the field of ELT found the reflective movement originally proposed by John Dewey and expanded by Donald Schon quite responsive and effective to the needs of the teachers in classroom.

## **2. The Concept of Reflective Practice**

Reflective practice was originally proposed by educational philosopher John Dewey in the early twentieth century. Dewey (1933) makes a distinction between action that is routine and action that is reflective. Routine action is guided primarily by an uncritical belief in tradition, and an unflinching obedience to authority, whereas reflective action is prompted by a conscious and cautious “consideration of any belief or practice in light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads” (p.4). In the Deweyan view, teaching is seen not just as a series of predetermined and presequenced procedures but as a context-sensitive action grounded in intellectual thought. Teachers are seen not as passive transmitters of received knowledge but as problem-solvers possessing “the ability to look back critically and imaginatively, to do cause-effect thinking, to derive explanatory principles, to do task analysis, also to look forward, and to do anticipatory planning” (Dewey, 1933, p. 13).

In addition, Dewey (1933) believed three attitudes are important to reflective action:

### ➤ **Open mindedness**

Open mindedness is an active desire to listen to more sides than one, to give full attention to alternative possibilities, and to recognize the possibility of error even in beliefs that are dear to us. Teachers who are open minded are continually examining the rationales that underlie what is taken as natural and right, and take pains to seek out conflicting evidence. Reflective teachers are continually asking themselves why they are doing what they are doing.

1. Vulgar believers have no interest in listening to opposing arguments or in analyzing their own beliefs and operate only according to slogans and stereotypes.
2. Sophisticated believers are interested in knowing opposing points of view, but only for the purpose of refuting them. Sophisticated believers are still not open to the possibility that their own belief system might be flawed.
3. Critical believers are willing to enter sympathetically into opposing points of view because they realize that all belief systems have weaknesses and can be strengthened by the confrontation with different beliefs.

### ➤ **Responsibility**

An attitude of responsibility involves careful consideration of the consequences to which an action leads. Responsible teachers ask themselves why they are doing what they are doing in a way that goes beyond questions of immediate utility (i.e., does it work) to consider the ways in which it is working, why it is working, and for whom it is working. Three kinds of consequences of one's teaching can lead to this attitude of responsibility:

1. Personal consequences - the effects of one's teaching on pupil self-concepts.
2. Academic consequences - the effects of one's teaching on pupils' intellectual development.
3. Social and political consequences - the projected effects of one's teaching on the life chances of various pupils.

Responsibility has to involve reflection about the unexpected outcomes of teaching, beyond goals and objectives, because teaching always involves unintended as well as intended outcomes. One should ask "are the results good, for whom and in what ways," not merely "have my objectives been met?"

### ➤ **Wholeheartedness**



By wholeheartedness, Dewey meant that open mindedness and responsibility must be central components in the professional life of the reflective teacher. Teachers who are wholehearted regularly examine their own assumptions and beliefs and the results of their actions and approach all situations with the attitude that they can learn something new. Reflective teachers are fallible teachers. Reflective teachers are not superwomen or supermen. Reflective teachers are simply committed to the education of all their students and to their own education as teachers. Dewey was not suggesting that reflective teachers reflect about everything all of the time. What Dewey was talking about is a balance between reflection and routine, between thought and action. For Dewey, it is blindness to act without questioning our received truths and it is arrogance to question everything all of the time.

Exactly half a century after the publication of Dewey's book, Donald Schon (1983) published a book titled *The Reflective Practitioner* in which he expands Dewey's concept of reflection. Schon shows how teachers, through their informed involvement in the principles, practices, and processes of classroom instruction, can bring about fresh and fruitful perspectives to the complexities of teaching that cannot be matched by experts who are far removed from classroom realities. He distinguishes between two frames of reflection: reflection-on- action and reflection-in-action. Reflection-on-action can occur before and after a lesson, as teachers plan for a lesson and then evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching afterward. Reflection-in-action, on the other hand, 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) argues that it is the teachers' own reflection-in/on-action, and not an undue reliance on professional experts, that will help them identify and meet the challenges they face in their everyday practice of teaching.

### **3. Reflection: Process and Utility**

Additionally, reflection or critical reflection refers to an activity or process in which an experience is recalled, considered and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of experience as a basis for evaluation and action, Bartlett (1991) points out that becoming a reflective teacher involves moving beyond a primary concern with instructional techniques and "how to" questions

and asking "what" and "why" questions that regard instructions and managerial techniques not as ends in themselves, but as a part of broader educational purposes. Asking "what" and "why" questions give us a certain power over our teaching. Moreover, Bartlett (1990) believes

We could claim that the degree of autonomy and responsibility we have in our work as teachers is determined by the level of control we can exercise over our teaching and actions. In reflection on the above kind of questions, we begin to exercise control and open up the possibility of transforming our everyday class room life (p. 267). Longhorn an educational theorist who draws heavily on the word of Dewey, defines reflection as "the deliberate and purpose full act of thinking which centers on ways of responding to problem situations" (Loughram, 1996, cited in Leitch and Day, 2000, p. 180). Accordingly, reflection involves cognitive processes teachers use to sort out the problems they face in their day to day professional practice.

Hatton and Smith (1995) identified four essential issues concerning reflection:

1. We should learn to frame and reframe complex or ambiguous problems, test out various interpretations, and then modify our actions consequently.
2. Our thoughts should be extended and systematic by looking back upon our actions some time after they have taken place.
3. Certain activities labelled as reflective, such as the use of journals or group discussions following practical experiences, are often not directed towards the solution of specific problems.
4. We should consciously account for the wider historic, cultural, and political values or beliefs in framing practical problems to arrive at a solution. This is often identified as critical reflection. However, the term critical reflection, like reflection itself, appears to be used loosely, some taking it to mean no more than constructive self-criticism of one's actions with a view to improvement.

Moreover, Hatton and Smith (1995) observed students undertaking a four- year secondary Bachelor of Education degree. They were required to complete several activities designed to encourage reflection. The activities included peer interviews in "critical friend" dyads and written reports where they reflected upon the factors that had influenced their thinking and action. Their research indicated that engaging with another person in a way that encourages

talking with, questioning, or confronting, helped the reflective process by placing the learner in a safe environment in which self-revelation can take place. In addition, students were able to distance themselves from their actions, ideas, and beliefs, by holding them up for scrutiny in the company of a peer with whom they are willing to take such risks.

Furthermore, Surbeck, Han, and Moyer (1991) identified three levels of reflection:

1. Reacting - commenting on feelings towards the learning experience, such as reacting with a personal concern about an event.
2. Elaborating - comparing reactions with other experiences, such as referring to a general principle, a theory, or a moral or philosophical position.
3. Contemplating - focusing on constructive personal insights or on problems or difficulties, such as focusing on education issues, training methods, future goals, attitudes, ethical matters, or moral concerns. The nature of the stimulus or directions initially provided to the learners, as well as the feedback they receive after the initial reflection, will determine the extent to which they reach the contemplation level of reflection.

According to Brookfield (1988), four activities are central to critical reflection:

1. Assumption analysis - This is the first step in the critical reflection process. It involves thinking in such a manner that it challenges our beliefs, values, cultural practices, and social structures in order to assess their impact on our daily proceedings. Assumptions are our way of seeing reality and to aid us in describing how the order of relationships.
2. Contextual awareness - Realizing that our assumptions are socially and personally created in a specific historical and cultural context.
3. Imaginative speculation - Imagining alternative ways of thinking about phenomena in order to provide an opportunity to challenge our prevailing ways of knowing and acting.
4. Reflective skepticism - Questioning of universal truth claims or unexpected patterns of interaction through the prior three activities - assumption analysis, contextual awareness, and imaginative speculation. It is the ability to think about a subject so that the available evidence from that subject's field is suspended or temporarily rejected in order to establish the truth or viability of a proposition or action.

Regarding how reflection takes place, York-Barr et al. (2001) identified the following elements and steps in a reflective practice in their book "Reflective Practice to Improve Schools".

➤ ***Deliberate Pause***

Reflective practice requires a deliberate pause, a purposeful slowing down of life to find time for reflection. To deliberately pause creates the psychological space and attention in which an open perspective can be held. Kahn (1992) emphasizes the importance of psychological presence as a requisite for individual learning and high – quality performance. In between a stimulus and a response is a moment of choice, a pause during which options for actions can be considered. Human beings have the capacity to choose their responses to life's experiences (Frankl, 1959). When reflecting, people choose deliberately to pause as a precursor to considering appropriate responses.

➤ ***Open Perspective***

An open perspective or open – mindedness (Dewey, 1933; Zeichner & Liston, 1996) means being open to other points of view. It means recognizing that represented with in a group are many ways to view particular circumstances or events. It means being open to changing view points and letting go of needing to be right or wanting to win. Rather, the purpose is to understand. Openness to other perspectives requires a mindful and flexible orientation. Mindful people are awake and conscious of thought and actions. Being awake includes having an awareness of others and extending learning beyond the immediate instructional circumstances to caring about democratic foundations and encouraging socially responsible actions (Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993). Doubt, perplexity and tentativeness are part of openness (Dewey, 1933; Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993). An open perspective creates the possibility for the emergence of new understandings and increasingly more effective responses.

➤ ***Thinking Processes***

Reflection involves active and conscious processing of thoughts. Thinking processes such as inquiry, meta-cognition, analysis, integration and synthesis, may all be used in reflective process. Reflection, for example, may take the form of self observation and analysis of one's own behaviors and the perceived consequences. It may involve group member's being aware of their thoughts during a decision making process for determining differentiated instructional objectives and strategies (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Higher – level thinking processes provide the means to move beyond a focus on isolated facts, events, or data to perceive a broader context for understanding.

➤ ***Examination of beliefs, goals and practices***

The focus of reflection involves examination of beliefs, goals, and practices. Beliefs include people's values, visions, biases and paradigms. Beliefs stem largely from one's experiences and significantly influence ways of thinking and are having. Beliefs create the lens through which we view our worlds. Goals encompass desired aims, outcomes or intentions. They can be very general or specific in nature. General goals may address such desires as creating a learning community for students. Specific goals may address more concrete and immediate aims, such as teaching children how to learn effectively in groups during social studies. Practice refers to one's repertoire of dispositions, behaviors and skills in specific areas of performance, such as designing instruction and assessment strategies, interacting with students, developing relationships with families, collaborating with colleagues, and implementing school aide reforms.

➤ ***New insights and understanding***

A desirable outgrowth of reflection is new or deeper understanding and insights. Such understanding provides the basis for considering new forms of action. Awareness and understanding are critical elements for initiating and sustaining change in practice. New understandings without changes in behavior, however, will not make differences in the lives of students. Application of knowledge is essential (Dewey 1933). Reflective practice leads to improvement only when deepened understandings lead to action.

#### **4. Reflective Teaching and Some General Criticisms**

What has to be underlined is the issue that the concept of teachers as reflective practitioners is clearly a vast improvement over the limited and limiting concept of teachers as passive technicians, where teachers have to submit themselves to the principles of methods. However, reflective teaching is not without its shortcoming. In general, reflective movement has been severely criticized for introducing reflection and reflective practice as an introspective process. Solomon (1987) makes a powerful case for reflection as a social practice, in which the articulation of ideas to others is central to the development of a critical perspective. Reflective movement has also been criticized for its lack of attention to the discursive or dialogical dimension of teacher learning (Day, 1993). Moreover, Zeichner and Liston (1996) believe that

reflective movement has portrayed reflection as largely a solitary and individualistic process involving a teacher and his or her situation and not as a social process. Finally, Kumaravadivelu (2003) stresses that by focusing on the role of the teacher and the teacher alone, the reflective movement tends to treat reflection as an introspective process involving a teacher and his or her reflective capacity, and not as an interactive process.

Additionally, the consequence of such a shortcoming has also been highlighted by Valli (1997) stating that If left unsocialized, individual reflection can close in on itself, producing detached, idiosyncratic teachers. Because reflection is not an end in itself, but for the purpose of action, communal dialogue is essential. Many different voices are necessary. (p. 86)

Elsewhere, Lortie (1975) refers to teaching as the *egg carton profession* because the walls of classrooms become boundaries that separate teachers as they each occupy their own insulated niche. Consequently, engaging reflective practice aiming at teacher development in such isolation can lead to what Wells (1994) has called “the loneliness of the long-distance reflector” (p. 11).

## **5. Reflective Teaching: More Factors to Consider**

There are also some other important issues which have to be meticulously brought into consideration regarding the issue of reflective teaching. The major significant issue is that what triggers the reflective process in most of the frameworks is *a state of doubt and uncertainty or facing difficulties or problems* on the part of teachers during the class period; but such a trigger is quite limited and limiting due to certain reasons. Below come a number of major limitations and shortcomings.

### **5.1. Context Uniqueness**

The first problem is the issue of uniqueness of teaching contexts and situations which is more often neglected during making a reflective process. If the starting point of reflective process is the emergence of a problem or a problematic situation and the aim is to fix the situation and solve the problem, reflective practice is of no help since the same problem presents itself in different ways in other teaching contexts for the same practitioners. In other words, reflective practitioners are making a repertoire of teaching experience which is of no use due to context variation and situation uniqueness in teaching practice. Moreover, as Richards and Lockhart

(1994) point out, “Much of what happens in teaching is unknown to the teacher and experience is insufficient as a basis for development” (pp. 3-4).

## **5.2. Unwarranted Repetition**

The second issue regarding choosing a problem as the starting point of reflective practice is that it only sheds light on what teachers do inappropriately. This could be due to their ignorance and lack of attention. In other words, it investigates what is known by the teachers but not practiced due to a variety of reasons. As Argyris and Schon (1974, 1978) have argued, there is a gap between what teachers say they believe (their “Espoused Theories”) and the ways in which they act (their “Theories-in-action”). But what about those issues that are neither known nor practiced by the teachers at all? Those for which there are no “Espoused Theories”, let alone to consider and reflect upon their realities in one’s teaching practice. In the first case, the practitioners try to make a balance between what they believe and what they do. In other words, they investigate their teaching practice in the light of what they believe; but considering the second case, it seems unreasonable to expect them to have the same result as in the former case, especially using a problem as the starting point of reflective practice since there is no belief or prior knowledge to be detected in practicality for further adjustments.

## **5.3. Insignificant Results**

The third problem with a reflective process using a problem as the departure point is the end product of this view. The first point in this part is the identification of a situation as a problem. Sometimes the process of reflection is directed toward issues which are not pedagogically valuable since there is no one fixed single-shot qualified criterion for identification of a situation as a problem. The next point is whether practitioners come to right solutions or not! It cannot be taken for granted that whatever practitioners arrive at as solutions due to reflection could be considered as the right and appropriate decision regarding how to tackle the problem. Consequently, such a procedure would make a problematic situation even worse and practitioners might reach solutions and make decisions that are neither theoretically justifiable nor practically feasible which would cause further problems by themselves.

## **5.4. Inefficient Instrument**

The fourth problem is that all the issues which require deep reflection do not necessarily present themselves as problems during the class time period and even if they do, they are not eye-

catching enough to be noticed but at the same time are of paramount importance. It is logical to conclude that individuals do not necessarily have to be in a state of doubt, uncertainty or facing problems during their teaching practice to start a reflective process.

### **5.5. Ideological Barriers**

The fifth issue with starting a reflective process by looking at a problem or even one's practice during the class time period is that correction or appropriation is made only at the level of practice through adjustment in accordance with one's belief. But the question is that "Have teachers already established the right and proper belief prior to starting the reflective practice?" In the first case one's practice is investigated in case of whether it matches to one's belief or not; but the investigation is not made at the level of belief to see whether the practitioners have the proper and correct beliefs before starting a reflective practice or not.

## **6. Conclusion**

As it was highlighted, starting a reflective practice, having a problem in one's teaching practice seems to be limited and limiting in many ways such underlined by Richards and Lockhart (1994), "Much of what happens in teaching is unknown to the teacher and experience is insufficient as a basis for development" (pp. 3-4). Additionally,

As a result, based on the aforementioned issues highlighting the limitations of a reflective process considering a problem or a problematic situation as the starting point, the present paper argues that such a procedure is quite inefficient and not responsive to the needs of the teachers. Moreover, the present paper argues that teachers have to make use of reflective practice to avoid the occurrence of problems in the classroom and not as a post-strategy to overcome problems.

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## **Title**

### **Common Errors in the Translations of Sociology Thesis Abstracts**

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## **Biodata**

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## **Abstract**

The present study dealt with translation evaluation and error analysis. It aimed at detecting translation errors that M.A. students committed in the process of translation of their thesis abstracts from Persian to English. The framework adopted in this study was Waddington's "Translation Quality Assessment Model" (2001). The researcher used the theoretical framework to answer the research questions of the study and also to offer some solutions to such errors. The corpus of the study was 504 sentences that were collected from 30 theses abstracts all of which were in the field of sociology. Findings of the study reveal that different types of errors have occurred in translation process. It also shows that the most common errors in translating these abstracts is the category of "Inappropriate Renderings" with the frequency of 34.4%, and the least common error was related to the "Unresolved Extra linguistic reference" with the frequency of 0.2%. It also shows that "grammar" is the most problematic domain in the translation of abstracts for M.A students.

**Keywords:** Abstract, Translation Error, Translation Evaluation, Unit of Translation, Translation quality assessment

## **1. Introduction**

English is the international language of science, business, law and many other domains. Translation is not an easy task, especially when translating special texts containing features not commonly found in English texts; a good example is sociology thesis abstracts, which this study concentrates on. Translation of jargons like sociology is not like other translations; it goes beyond just rendering words from one language into another. It is rather considered a tool that helps people around the world develop and progress in the field of related sciences. Thus, a translator needs to ensure an accurate delivery of information and show faithfulness and commitment to the source and the target language, so that the translated information can be used easily and help in developing other countries.

Some Iranian Students whose major is not English usually transfer Persian structures to their English abstracts. Moreover, it seems that most students are not aware of writing features according to the standards existing for writing articles and theses.

This study has approached translation phenomenon regarding common errors in translation of sociology thesis abstracts, has evaluated the accomplishment of the English translation of sociology thesis abstracts and has identified the common errors in translating the thesis abstracts from Persian to English according to Waddington's model (2001) for quality assessment. In addition, the researcher intends to investigate the most and the least frequent errors in the translation of the abstracts. In other words, this study has intended to determine the accuracy of each translation. In this article, first a general review of literature on translation evaluation is introduced, then, it is proceeded with an analysis and discussion of error types of the abstract's translations.

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

The growing importance of translation in the world has turned translation quality assessment into an important topic. Translators are responsible for better and more accurate transfer of this art. In the modern world the vast geographical distances are extremely decreased through

communication facilities and the need to exchange thoughts and opinions among different nations is strongly felt. Being aware of other people's experiences, knowledge, and technical achievements helps man in improving the standard of life.

Holms (1998: cited in Munday, 2001, p.12) has taken up the issue of translation quality assessment as part of translation criticism, a branch of applied translation studies. Like some other scholars (e.g. Reiss, Wills, Toury), Holms saw improving what perceived to be generally arbitrary and subjective evaluation practice as the main task of translation criticism. He divides the more general translation studies into two subcategories of pure and applied studies. The applied branch of Holms' map consists of: 1- Translator Training, 2- Translation Aids, and 3- Translation Criticism. According to Munday(2001, p.14), the latter means "the evaluation of translations, including the marking of student translations or published translations".

### **2.1 House's Model of Translation Quality Assessment**

According to House (1981, pp.23-30), translating is a linguistic procedure aiming at the replacement of a text in the SL by a semantically and pragmatically equivalent text in the TL, i.e. at functional equivalence on the text level. For the purpose of translation quality assessment, House (1971) subdivided function in two categories: 1- primary level function which means that TT function should be the same as ST function, and 2- secondary function of the original. Further House related these two functions to two translation strategies, covert and overt translation. She has explained (p.36)these strategies as follows:

In covert translation, the translator reproduces the ST function by using an empirically established cultural filter to adopt the TT to the TT to the communicative preferences of the target audience. In overt translation, however, the translator tries to reproduce to function of the ST by staying close to the ST.

House (1981) has believed that functional equivalence serves as the yardstick for a good or appropriate translation. House made functional equivalence, operational by two parameters, genre and register, which are designed to capture the linguistic situational characteristics of the ST. She has defined genre a pre-scientific, socially established category; she subdivided register into field, tenor and mode, and then correlated it with lexical, syntactical and textual elements.

### **2.2 Nord's Model of Translation Quality Assessment**

Nord's model of text analysis in translation consists of extratextual and intratextual factors which should be analyzed both in the ST and the TT and, consequently, compared. At the very core of the analysis, there lies the idea that a translator and subsequently a reviewer should, firstly, create a ST profile, secondly a TT profile, and finally compare both. Her model is not restricted to any specific text type, it does not contain any references to specific characteristics of source or target languages, it is independent of the translator level of competence, and it is valid for both directions. The translator's task is then to "place a cultural filter between ST and TT" (Nord 1991, p.16). As simple as it may sound, the model is highly sophisticated and it can also be summarized as follows: "In a translation-oriented analysis, we will first analyze these factors [the communicative situation and the participants in the communicative act] and their function in the ST situation and then compare them with the corresponding factors in the (prospective) TT situation [...]"(Nord 1991, p.15).

Nord's model can be divided into several steps:

1. TT skopos analysis
2. Source text analysis:
  - a. Determining whether the source text is compatible with the requirements for the prospective target text
  - b. Detailed analysis focused on the elements of particular importance for TT production
3. Final structuring of the target text

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Waddington's Model**

This study has used the model introduced by Waddington (2001) for assessing the translation quality of the thesis abstracts rendered from Persian into English. The model consists of four elements as follows:

(a) method A is taken from Hurtado (1995) which is based on error analysis, (b) method B which is also based on error analysis and takes into account the negative effect of errors, (c) method C is a holistic method of assessment, and (d) method D is a combination of method B and method C.

In this study, the researcher decided to use the Hurtado (1995, cited in Waddington, 2001) model to assess the students' translations. She draws up a list of possible errors which are divided into three categories:

(1) Inappropriate renderings which affect the understanding of the source text; these are divided into eight categories: contresens, faux sens, non-sens, addition, omission, unresolved extralinguistic references, loss of meaning, and inappropriate linguistic variation (register, style, dialect, etc.).

(2) Inappropriate renderings, which affect expression in the target language; these are divided into five categories: spelling, grammar, lexical items, text, and style.

(3) Inadequate renderings, which affect the transmission of either the main function or secondary functions of the source text, in each of the categories a distinction is made between serious errors and minor errors.

### **3.2 The Corpus**

The researcher has chosen thirty pieces of Persian and English abstracts of Sociology as samples for studying common errors of their translations. The data were collected from thirtytheses'abstracts of Sociology MA students. The theses were chosen from "Science and Research University of Tehran".

The rationale behind selecting the Sociology theses as the major for this study was that Sociology has some verbal and nonverbal features; verbal features refer to those characteristics which are universal and understandable in all languages. Moreover, nonverbal features refer to those related to culture and traditions of each society and linguistic elements that do not have equivalent in another language. Therefore, it calls for great attention and evaluation of translations in this field.

### **3.3Procedure**

Since the aim of the study was to find common errors in translation of sociology abstracts, first thirty of theses were chosen randomly from the theses carried out in Tehran Science and Research University. In order to analyze, first the original texts and their translations was presented, then "sentence" was selected as the unit of translation assessment for the present study. At this stage the translations production were scored based on method A of Waddington model (2001).Then the identified errors were separately explored and the frequency and

percentage of each error category was calculated and demonstrated in tables. Finally, the most and least frequent errors were determined.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1 Applied Model**

The researcher will use a comparative approach for evaluating translation quality of thirty abstracts of sociology theses. In fact, the errors were analyzed according to categorization of Waddington.

Of the thirty abstracts selected for this study, the total number of 504 sentences containing 559 errors was detected. The mentioned classification of errors that was used as the framework of this study contained three sets each with sub-items as follows:

1. Inappropriate rendering which affects the understanding of the source text, which are divided into eight categories: non-sens (lack of sense), faux sens (substantial change of meaning of source text), contresens (changes to the contrary), addition, omission, unresolved extralinguistic references, loss of meaning, and inappropriate linguistic variation (register, style, dialect, etc.).
2. Inappropriate rendering which affects expression in the target language, which are divided into five categories: spelling, grammar, lexical items, text, and style.
3. Inappropriate rendering which affects the transmission of either the main function or secondary functions of the ST.

### **4.2 Data Analysis**

In order to analyze, first the original texts and their translations were collected, then the above mentioned categories of errors were investigated for each paragraph separately. It should be added that some of these instances have fuzzy and vague boundaries, thus just mentioned errors would be considered in each section. Regarding the problem of space, all the paragraphs will not be presented, but all of the collected data would be presented in the appendix. Finally, the researcher demonstrates the results obtained from all paragraphs in a single table. To clarify the above mentioned points, the following paragraphs and their translations seem to be appropriate.

#### **4.2.1 Error Types and Some Instances**



- **Non-Sens:** Non-Sens is a translation error that implies the use of a TL formulation that is a completely meaningless or absurd rendering of the SL. (Delisle, 1993, p.37)

رابطه ی معکوس بین حضور گروه های فشار در محیط دانشگاه و میزان گرایش دانشجویان به مشارکت سیاسی. **ST.** (سنمار 1385)

**TT.** There is a reverse relationship between the presence of feshor groups in university and students' toward political participation.

- In this case the translator used feshor groups that is a worthless rendering. Feshor groups is completely meaningless in the TL. It seems "radical groups" would be a proper equivalent for this expression.

و کادر آموزشی و تربیتی مدرسه صورت گرفته است. ( ... در دو پروژه دانش آموزان (که نظرات خانواده خود را ابراز داشته **ST.** (آقایور فرکوش 1385)

**TT.** ...between two groups, namely, students and school teaching and educational stars...

- As mentioned previously, absurd rendering of the SL notions is known as Non-sens. The translator used educational stars which is not correct because it is completely nonsense in English.

- **Faux Sens:** Faux Sens is a translation error resulting from the erroneous interpretation of a word, words or an utterance in context. The resulting shift in meaning does not, however, result in misinterpretation or absence of meaningful. (Delisle, 1993, p. 32)

متغیرهای سطح تحصیلات، کلیشه های جنسیتی، میزان مطالعه، میزان استفاده از اینترنت (توکل 1389) **ST.**

**TT.** Study level, gender stereotypes, the amount of reading and using internet.

- In English, reading is not a proper equivalent for مطالعه. Furthermore study in English has not the same meaning of تحصیلات in Persian. The best equivalent for سطح تحصیلات is educational level; and for the second error the best equivalent is study.

- **Contresens:** Contresens is a translation error that attributes a wrong meaning to a word or words, more in general, betrays the ST author's thoughts. (Delisle 1993, p.25)

... در سه دانشگاه آزاد واحد علوم تحقیقات، تهران مرکزی و واحد قیام دشت، تهران شرق مورد ارزیابی قرار گرفته **ST** شد. (گودآسیایی 1391)

**TT.** Into three universities (Open University (science and research section), Tehran central and ghiyamdasht) and Tehran West estimated.

- The translator translated شرق as west while it means غرب so it would have been translated as East. The translator rendered it completely contrary and could not take the ST's intention correctly.

- **Addition:** addition occurs when the translator introduces superfluous information or stylistic effects but this shift would result in wrong meaning in the TT.

(Translation Terminology, p.139)

**ST.** کاری که شاید در آینده خیلی از سرفصلهای اصلجامعه شناسی را تغییر دهد. (حقی 1385)

**TT.** This movement which may change many of the main topics headlines of the sociology in the future.

- In this case to convey the ST the translator used three synonym words simultaneously, but it was enough to bring just one synonym for a notion.

- **Omission:** An omission error occurs when an element of information in the ST is left out of the TT. This covers not only textual information but also the author's intention (irony, outrage). Missing titles, headings, or sentences within a passage may be marked as one or more errors of omission, depending on how much is omitted. (Translation Terminology, 293)

به همین جهت و با توجه به وضعیت خاص کشورمان، لزوم پرداختن به مقوله مشارکت سیاسی دانشجویان بیش از **ST.** بیش خود نمایی میکند. (سنمار 1385)

**TT.** Considering current situation in our country, we should take this problem into account.

- The translator dropped some parts of the ST, and did not render them to the TT. Usually translators omit the words that do not have equivalents in the TT, but in this case the omission should be consider as an error not as a proper of strategy for translation.

- **Unresolved Extra linguistic References:** this type of error consists of idioms, proverbs, slangs and dialects and has two main categories, the first one is labeled source language oriented which includes retention, specification and direct translation, whereas the second category, labeled target language oriented, includes generalization, substitution (Pedersen,2005). Since this type of error is related to cultural matters and in this type and register of text there are a few numbers of cultural elements, there is just one instance for this kind of error in all the data.

قلمرو موضوعی این تحقیق عبارت است از نگرش دو نسل نسبت به ضرورت ادامه تحصیل دختران،... رابطه دختر و ST. بسر نامحرم قبل از ازدواج، حجاب و تاثیر فاصله سنی .... (یعقوبی 1387)

TT. Subject field of this research is the view of two generations as to necessity for continuation of education of girls... relations of alien girls and boys before marriage, Hijab (veil) and effect of age distance.

- Since there is no proper equivalent for نامحرم in western culture, and belongs to the Islamic culture, therefore the translator used "alien" which does not convey the meaning and true concept as well as the SL word.

- **Loss of Meaning:** loss of meaning is the absence of a total, univocal correspondence between the elements of any given pair of languages. It would be losses with regard to contents or losses, affecting linguistic form.

از جمله مقوله های مطرح در بازگشت مجدد مددجویان به گسستگی خانواده، ... انحراف یکی از اعضای خانواده ST. (آقابور 1384) ...، پیوند عاطفی میان اعضای خانواده

TT. Disorder of one member of the family, emotional relation of the personal family, are the main factors that have been distinguished in this study.

- The translator totally lost the meaning and intention of the ST in the TT and could not convey the author's intention to the TT, as it is obvious, the translator lost the actual meaning of گسستگی خانواده or پیوند عاطفی and did not try to compensate this loss of meaning.

- **Inappropriate Linguistic Variation:** this type of error contains those (register, style, dialect),

در ابتدا سعی در معرفی اندیشه ادوارد سعید نموده ام و سپس به تفسیر و تبیین آنها پرداخته ام. (محمدجانی 1386) ST

TT. To begin with, I have made an attempt to introduce Edward Said's ideas and then I have explained and clarified those ideas.

- The translator in order to rendering this text used inappropriate register, and chose informal discourse for it and also according to formal and academic register just last name of people should be mentioned in academic texts, in other words instead of the name of Edward Said's idea it would be said Said's idea .

- **Inappropriate Renderings Which Affect Expression In The Target Language (Spelling, Grammar, Lexical Items, Text, And Style):** This

category of errors includes four sub-items: Grammatical, Spelling, Lexical and Stylistic errors.

ST لازم به ذکر است ادبیات و اجتماع همواره با هم در وبه بیانی ادبیات تاریخ مکتوب اجتماعات انسانی است. (پوریانی 1385)

TT. It is necessary to mention that Literature and society have always in close relationship with each other. In another word. Literature is the written history of human societies.

- "In another word" is not correct in form, the correct rendering is "in other words" i.e. it has plural form not single form.

#### 4.2.2 Instances of Errors in the Context

To clarify the above mentioned points, the following abstracts and their translations seem to be appropriate.

**مطالعه موردی: دانشگاه، مطالعه و بررسی اثر نگرش های مربوط به بازار کار بر انگیزه پیشرفت تحصیلی دانشجویان های علمی و کاربردی هشتگرد و سیمان آبیک در سال تحصیلی 88-89**

تحقیق حاضر به مطالعه و بررسی اثر نگرش های مربوط به بازار کار بر انگیزه پیشرفت تحصیلی " در بین دانشجویان دانشگاه های علمی و کاربردی هشتگرد و سیمان آبیک در سال تحصیلی 88-89 پرداخته است. نمونه تحقیق شامل ۱۶۱ نفر (۹۱ نفر از دانشگاه علمی و کاربردی هشتگرد و ۷۰ نفر از دانشگاه علمی و کاربردی سیمان آبیک) می باشد که با استفاده از فرمول کوکران محاسبه شده است و از آنجا که جامعه آماری تحقیق دانشجویان دو دانشگاه و تعداد دانشجویان دو دانشگاه می پیمایشی روش روش تحقیق، شد استفاده مطابق گیری نمونه روش از نمونه تحقیق انتخاب برای باشد می نیز متفاوت شده است. پس از تکمیل پرسشنامه ها و تجزیه و تحلیل یافته ها گرفته بهره شده انجام تحقیقات روش مرور از باشد، همچنین کمی (18.6 درصد) بسیار نسبت و دارند کشور کار بازار شرایط به منفی نگرشی دانشجویان نتایج ذیل حاصل گردید: اکثر به ضرورت و تعیین کنندگی ملاک " تخصص " در بازار کار کشور معتقدند. متغیرهای " نوع نگرش نسبت به بازار کار " و " علاقه به رشته تحصیلی " رابطه های مستقیم با متغیر وابسته تحقیق یعنی انگیزه پیشرفت تحصیلی " داشتند که در رابطه میان دو متغیر " نوع نگرش نسبت به بازار کار " و انگیزه پیشرفت تحصیلی " متغیر " نگرش نسبت به ضرورت تخصص در بازار کار " دارای اثر کنترل کنندگی نبود. همچنین میان متغیر " نگرش نسبت به ضرورت تخصص در بازار کار و انگیزه پیشرفت تحصیلی " رابطه معنا داری وجود ندارد.

استامایگاه اقتصادی و اجتماعی " و " گذار تأثیر " کار بازار به نسبت نگرش نوع " بر " گروهی و فردی تجربه " متغیر " علاقه فردی به شغل مرتبط با رشته تحصیلی " تأثیری بر نوع نگرش به بازار کار نداشتند.

بر " انتخاب رشته تحصیلی خود " گذار تأثیر ملاک دومین علاقه ملاک از بعد را " رشته کار بازار " ملاک دانشجویان

عنوان کرده اند و مهمترین علل انگیزه ها جوانان را بر ایور و دبه دانشگاه و طیم قاطع تحصیلی بالاتر " کسب شغل "

و رود به شغل دلخواه، " تسلط روابط به جایض و ابوطوانین " است. راه سر بر مانع مهمترین آنها نظر از دانسته اند. همچنین

تجربه، کار بازار در ضرورت تخصص به نسبت، نو‌ع‌ن‌گ‌ر‌ش‌ن‌س‌ب‌ت‌ب‌ه‌ب‌ا‌ز‌ا‌ر‌ک‌ا‌ر، ن‌گ‌ر‌ش‌ ک‌ل‌ی‌د‌و‌ا‌ژ‌ه‌ا: ا‌ن‌گ‌ی‌ز‌ه‌ی‌ب‌ش‌ر‌ف‌ت‌ت‌ح‌ص‌ی‌ل‌ی  
ف‌ر‌د‌ی‌و‌گ‌ر‌و‌ه‌ی، ع‌ل‌ا‌ق‌ه‌ ب‌ه‌ر‌ش‌ت‌ه‌ت‌ح‌ص‌ی‌ل‌ی، ع‌ل‌ا‌ق‌ه‌ف‌ر‌د‌ی‌ب‌ه‌ش‌غ‌ل‌م‌ر‌ت‌ب‌ط‌ب‌ا‌ر‌ش‌ت‌ه‌ت‌ح‌ص‌ی‌ل‌ی، پ‌ا‌ی‌گ‌ا‌ه‌ا‌ق‌ت‌ص‌ا‌د‌ی‌و‌ا‌ج‌ت‌م‌ا‌ع‌ی

## Abstract

This study has investigated the “influence of work market's attitudes on incentive of educational improvement” among the students of ElmiKarbordi Universities in the cities Hashtgerd and SimanAbiyek during the years 1388 and 1389.

This survey comprises 161 individuals (including 91 individuals from Hashtgerd University and 70 from SimanAbiyek University) which it has been calculated by the Cochran Formula. Since the total students and the statistical society of sampling of these universities are different, a sampling method called stratified is used. This method is a Survey method. For extracting information about the other similar theories and for literature review, the Documentary method has been used as well. After filling, analyzing, and investigating the questionnaires the following results have been achieved: Most of students have a negative view to the job position availability in the country and a less numbers (18.6%) believe in the influence of the term “job proficiency.” The variables “type of view to the labor market” and “fondness to the branch study” have a direct relation to the dependent variable “motivation to the academic achievement” which in the relation between “type of view to the labor market” and “motivation to the academic achievement” the variable “view to the necessity of proficiency in the labor market” doesn't has the influence of controlling. Also, there is no meaningful relation between the variables “view to the necessity of proficiency in the labor market” and “motivation to the academic achievement.” The variable “Individual and collective experience” affects the variable “type of view to the labor market” but the variables “social and economic condition” and “individual fondness to the job related to the academic branch” didn't affect the “type of view to the labor market.” Students have chosen the item of “labor market related to the academic branch” as second important term for choosing academic study branch after the item of fondness which is the first important term. “Job opportunity” has been chosen as 163 the most important reason and motivation for entering to the universities and pursuing the academic career. In addition, students believe that the most important barrier for entering to their favorite job is the domination of personal relationship instead of social terms and laws.

**Keywords:** Motivation to the academic achievement, type of view to the labor market, view to the necessity of proficiency in the labor market, Individual and collective experience, fondness to the branch study, individual fondness to the job related to the study branch, social and economic status.

**Table 4-1 Expressions and Error types**

ST	TT	Errors
انگیزه پیشرفت تحصیلی	Incentive of educational	Faux sense
دانشگاه های علمی کاربردی	ElmiKarbordi University	Non-sens
شرایط بازار کار	Job position availability	Loss of meaning
علاقه به رشته تحصیلی	Fondness to the branch study	Faux sense
نوع نگرش نسبت به بازار کار	Type of view to the labor market	Inappropriate renderings (lexical item)
طی مقاطع تحصیلی بالاتر	Pursuing the academic career	Faux sense
نسبت بسیار کم	Less numbers	Loss of meaning

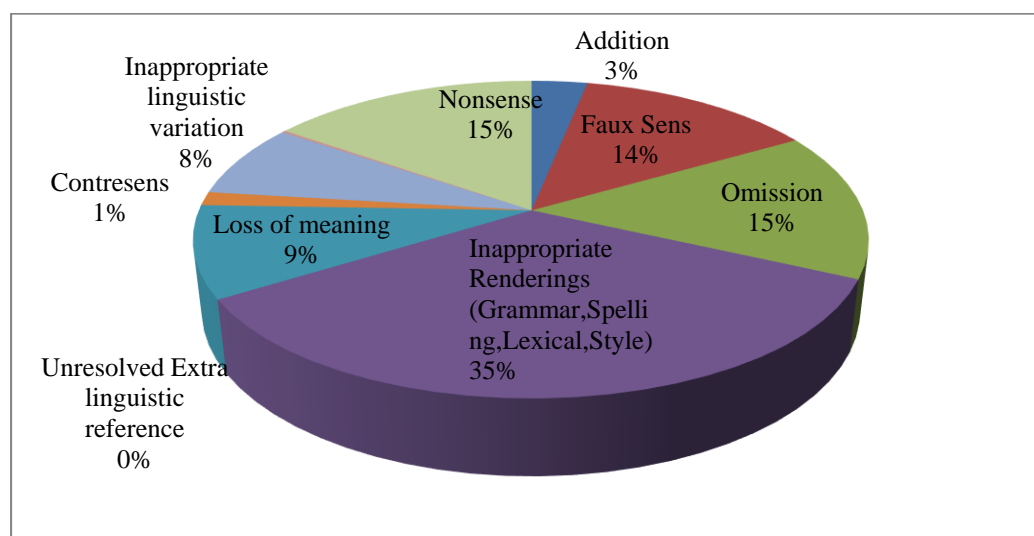
### 4.3 Frequency and Number of Instances of All Errors

In the following section, the frequency of each strategy is shown. The table indicates the number and the percentage of the errors based on Waddington's model and the figure shows the number of the errors.

**Table 4-4 the Frequency and Number of All Errors**

Errors	Number of occurrence	frequency
Addition	16	3.2%
Faux Sens	68	13.5%
Omission	76	15.1%
Inappropriate Renderings (Grammar, Spelling, Lexical, Style)	173	34.4%
Loss of meaning	47	9.3%
Contresens	7	1.4%
Inappropriate linguistic variation	38	7.6%
Unresolved Extra linguistic reference	1	0.2%
Non-sens	77	15.3%
Total	503	100%

**Figure 4-1 Graphic Representation of Frequency of the Errors**



**Table 4-5 Frequency and Number of Second Set of Errors**

Errors	Number of occurrence	frequency
Spelling	57	32.9%
Grammar	70	40.5%
Lexical Items	35	20.2%
Style	11	6.4%
Total	173	100%

The table above shows percentage of frequency of each error from the second set based on Waddington's categorization.. It reveals that the most frequent error in this study is "grammatical errors" with 40.5% which is considerable. Then "Spelling" with 32.9% is the second frequent error.

## 5. Conclusions

With respect to the first question which concerns the common errors in translating the thesis abstracts from Persian to English, the results show that a variety of different errors have occurred in rendering the abstracts.

The data of the research were extracted from 30 MA thesis abstracts whose major was sociology. The theses were selected from the researches carried out from 2000 to 2010 in Islamic Azad University, Science and research Branch of Tehran. All the selected theses were in the field of Sociology because the numbers of translations in this field either from English or from other

languages into Persian are extremely extended within the past decades. The unit of translation assessment used in this study was "sentence".Applying Waddington's translation quality assessment model to the corpus of the study results some interesting observations in the current research. The following general conclusions can be drawn in the light of the results: with the frequency of 34.4%, and the sub set of "grammar" with the frequency of 40.5% is the most frequented error.The frequency of "Nonsense" equals to 15.3%, based on which the researcher believes that in the process of translation, students have used inappropriate words to convey a meaning and their next error is omitting the message of the ST.

The least common error in this study is related to the "Unresolved linguistic reference" with the percentage of frequency of 0.2%.and the highest frequent error in this study as mentioned previously is "Spelling, Grammar, Lexical Items, Text, And Style"with the percentage of 34.4%.

### **5.1 Implications of the study**

The findings of the present study are practically helpful as guidelines for translators, especially amateur translators who are more likely to confront problems of choosing the proper equivalents to convey the concepts to the TT.The findings could be useful in translator training courses to provide students with guidelines to be sensitive to the possible errors they may commit in their works.Writing effective texts demands the ability to select appropriate content and language to suit the communicative task. Having in mind that translation is not just finding equivalent, awareness of writing errors makes writing training more explanatory so that it would be clear for the learner why he/she should write an essay or academic writing in a particular format. Thus, the students need to develop their writing ability to write according to standard format.

Furthermore, the findings could have some implications for course designers. These implications would result in designing courses which cover such issues:

1. Orientation of students with the format of the academic writings such as abstracts
2. Orientation of students with translation of academic writings at least up to an elementary level
3. Orientation of students with correct spelling and orthography

### **5.2 Suggestions for Further Researcher**



Considering the limitations of the scope of this research, the broad area and the important aspects of translation quality assessment, the researcher is inclined to suggest the following questions and topics for further investigation:

1. First and foremost this study can be replicated to find out whether the same results will be obtained or not.
2. The same research can be done from the opposite direction (Placeholder1) i.e. from English to Persian.

This study was done on thesis abstracts in the field of sociology; the same research can be done on thesis abstracts of other fields.

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## **Title**

# **EFL Teachers' Beliefs about Vocabulary and Their Practices: A Case Study**

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## **Abstract**

This article reported a case study which investigates the relationship between three EFL teachers' beliefs and their practices with regard to vocabulary. It takes up Borg's (2009) call for further investigations in vocabulary as one of the scarcely-studied components of language within a language teacher cognition (LTC) framework. The study was conducted in a university context using four different instruments to collect the data, two open-ended structured questionnaires, classroom observations (for the whole semester), two stimulated recall interviews, and material analysis. All the collected data was imported into NVivo for an easier management and analysis. To check the trustworthiness of the results another TEFL graduate student was asked to go through the whole coding process as a second operator within the same NVivo project. The participants in this study manifested different beliefs about what aspects of vocabulary to teach and the differences resulted in a variety of practices. For one of the participants, the observed practices were a mirror of his beliefs; however, this was not the case for the two other participants. A comparison of their beliefs and practices as well as the causes of the

observed incongruences will be presented here. This study has some implications which can be beneficial to both teacher educators, and teachers.

**Key words:** Teachers' beliefs, Teachers' practices, Vocabulary

## 1. Introduction

This article reports a case study of three Iranian EFL teachers whose beliefs and practices about vocabulary were investigated. In other words, it was aimed to figure out what the teachers believed about vocabulary and how they manifested those beliefs in their classroom practices. On a broader scale, this case study can be placed within a language teacher cognition (LTC) framework which takes into consideration different teachers (i.e. pre-service and in-service) and various curricular areas in language (i.e. grammar, reading, etc.). In this study, however, the participants were three in-service EFL teachers and the focus has been on vocabulary.

To rationalize conducting such small-scale classroom research, several reasons can be enumerated. Firstly, according to Wright (2010), 'research and states of practice provide us [teacher educators] with inspiration for our own teacher education practice' (p. 289). Therefore, there exists a need for doing classroom research and observing teachers' real classroom practices rather than merely relying on what they *say* they do in the class. Secondly, it is strongly agreed upon that what the teachers do inside the classroom has a strong relationship with their cognition which is subject to change and development. In other words, although one may observe some mismatches between what the teachers say and what they actually do, the observed behavior is also the result of some beliefs which may have not been already stated. And because, to quote Bartels (2005), 'the knowledge that teachers use in their practice is more complicated than just knowing facts, using facts, general conceptions of language and language learning' (p. 1), the necessity for considering teacher cognition and sources of their knowledge is felt by language teacher cognition (LTC) investigators in order to serve teacher education programs. This study aims to shed some light on our understanding of teachers' actual practices while addressing vocabulary and their corresponding beliefs which are assumed to be responsible for the observed practices. That is why, individual teachers may also benefit from the findings of this study, if they care about teaching as their career.

Considering the importance of LTC, researchers have dealt with teachers' beliefs and practices about some aspects of language, namely grammar, reading, and writing. However, from an LTC perspective, vocabulary has been scarcely investigated (Borg 2009, p. 168). As far as the authors are aware, at the time of doing the present case study, the only *in-depthlong-term* study of *in-service* teachers' cognition and practice in vocabulary instruction was conducted by Zhang in 2008. It must be noted that in the present study, among various issues related to vocabulary, i.e. how to teach, how to learn, what elements to teach, the last one has been emphasized. That is, it was aimed to investigate teachers' beliefs about what aspects of words to teach and the aspects they addressed in their practices. As far as the literature shows, this study can also be differentiated from other LTC studies in Iran, regardless of their areas of interest, in the sense that, they are merely concerned with what the teachers 'say' they will do in the class, while in this study, classroom observation has been the main source of data, so as to grasp a real picture of the participants' classroom practices.

## 2. Literature Review

Defining the construct which is being studied in LTC research is of crucial importance since cognition has been used as an umbrella term to refer to a broad range of concepts (e.g. beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, thoughts) and it is essential that any particular study define the targeted constructs to avoid misconceptions. Among the various terms, the debate on the distinction between knowledge and beliefs, as Borg (2006) states, has been a long-lasting one. Some researchers do see the two concepts as separate ones (Calderhead, 1996; Murphy and Mason, 2006) while there are other researchers who do not. Woods (1996), for example, makes a distinction between the two concepts, to think of beliefs as more subjective and implicit while considering the objectivity and explicitness of knowledge.

As a result, the word *beliefs*, which, based on Borg (1999, p. 22), consists of 'a set of personally-defined practically-oriented understandings of teaching and learning,' 'contextually situated' (Farrell, 2007; Borg, 2003; and Tsui, 2003) and 'dynamic' (Feryok 2010), has been used as a holistic concept. Teachers' *practices* is term to refer to the actual teaching behavior that is observed in the classroom. It can contain a range of activities such as their teaching, questioning, giving exams, in this study, the researcher's attention will be given to any activities focusing on

vocabulary. *In-service* teachers are those who have completed their initial training and work in classrooms (Borg, 2006, p. 75). Here, the word *teacher(s)* is used to denote in-service teachers. Research in this area has identified various sources of teachers' cognition. Here, six of the mostly-acknowledged sources are enumerated (based on Farrell, 2007; Phipps, 2009; and Richards and Lockhart, 1996). It should be noted that the construction of teachers' cognition can be the result of one source or multiple sources. The sources are teachers' *own experience as language learners*, *experience of what works best* (based on their own teaching experience), *established practice* (pre-defined), *personality factors*, *educationally-/research-based principles*, and, *principles derived from an approach or method*.

Although different language areas have been investigated within an LTC framework, it seems that, at the time of conducting the present study, the only in-depth investigation of teacher cognition focusing on *vocabulary* instruction was a Ph.D. dissertation by Zhang in 2008. In this study, Zhang examined seven Chinese in-service EFL teachers through interview, observation, and stimulated recalls to understand their knowledge of vocabulary instruction, their practical vocabulary teaching, and the relationship between their knowledge and practices. The results showed that the teachers were well-developed in terms of their knowledge of vocabulary instruction. The knowledge was found to include three different broad categories of knowing a word, i.e., form, meaning, and use. The observed practices were reported to be consistent with their practices except for their practices on the pragmatic use of the words and this mismatch, according to Tsui (2003), was thought to be probably due to the teachers' own lack of knowledge. As a result, that particular aspect of the words was not taught by teachers, although it was mentioned in the pre-observation interviews.

In some LTC studies, congruence between cognition and practice has been the focus. The aim in such studies has been to see how much of the teachers' observed behavior was in line with their stated beliefs. If they were found to be incongruent with each other, the question would be the cause(s) of the observed tensions since according to Borg (2009), 'a lack of congruence between teachers' beliefs and their practices should not be seen as a flaw in teachers' (p. 167). Moini (2009) concluded that experience might be a crucial factor to justify the observed incongruences. Phipps and Borg (2009) have found *context* to be the most influential factor in the observed tensions. However, context may include many other factors in itself, including *time*

(Farrell, 2005), *meeting different expectations* (Feryok, 2008), *social pressure* (Azimi, 2010), and *what works* (Gholami and Husu, 2010).

Based on Phipps (2009), beliefs are likely to be interacting ‘within a complex network’ (p. 22) which makes it impossible to make rigid conclusions about one’s beliefs on a particular subject. Also, Feryok (2010), looking at teacher cognition from a complexity point of view, concluded that the divergence of the practices from the beliefs is because of the complex and dynamic nature of teacher’s cognition. Within this complex network, Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, and Thwaite (2001) have identified two different, though interacting, sets of beliefs. One set consists of the *core principles* that are said to be made up over time and are applied in various teaching contexts. The other set is made of *peripheral principles* that are more changeable in accordance with varying contexts (pp. 473-4). As a result, it is more likely that what the researchers observe as classroom practices are more in line with teachers’ peripheral beliefs which are necessarily based on some core beliefs and are adapted to match the current classroom situation.

In some cases, finally, the inconsistencies between teachers’ beliefs and practices are justified via making a distinction between teachers’ technical knowledge (i.e. what they *declaratively* know) and practical knowledge (i.e. what they *procedurally* know). Teachers mostly tend to rely on their technical knowledge when asked to express what they know or what they believe, whereas it is their practical knowledge on which they rely while teaching in the real classroom context (Basturkmen et al, 2004, p. 267).

*Espoused* theories and theories *in use* are also, sometimes used, respectively, to reflect the two above-mentioned types of knowledge. The former term refers to those beliefs which are explicitly communicated to others, while the latter type of beliefs are implicitly induced through their practices (Basturkmen et al, 2004). It must be noted, however, that technical knowledge can be transformed into practical knowledge via different means one of which is through reflective pedagogy, for example through writing via which ‘higher forms of development’ is possible (Warford, 2011, p. 255). Consequently, when examining the relationship between teachers’ cognition and practice, the type of knowledge or belief that is going to be relied on must be clearly defined in order to neither create ambiguity nor pass wrong judgment.

Besides LTC, another major theme of this study has been what aspects of vocabulary to teach. It should be clear to a teacher that what is meant by ‘knowing a word’. Several studies have made attempts to elaborate on the idea of different aspects of knowing a word (e.g. Brown, 2010; Schmitt, 2008).

Brown (2010), which seems to be the most comprehensive one, reports that there are nine aspects of the words which need to be known so as to conclude that a word is *known*. These aspects are classified into three broader categories of *form* (spoken, written, and word parts), *meaning* (form *and* meaning, concept *and* referents, and associations), and *use* (grammatical functions, collocations, and constraints on use).

The concept of knowing a word, literally, includes ‘familiarity with all its features,’ but in actual vocabulary learning, familiarity with all the features of a word does not happen. That is, vocabulary learning is partial (Zhang, 2008, p. 28). Brown (2010) hypothesized that textbooks might be one of the causes of the learners’ unfamiliarity with all aspects of a word. It was observed that form and meaning are the most attended aspects in the textbooks.

Consequently, based on the reviewed literature and the recognized gap, the present study intends to answer the following three questions:

1. What did the participants believe about which aspects of vocabulary to teach?
2. Which aspects of vocabulary did the participants address in their practices?
3. To what extent are the participants’ beliefs congruent with their practices?

### **3. Methodology**

To answer the above questions, a case study of three EFL teachers was conducted. This section elaborates the methodology of this study.

#### **3.1 Participants**

Three male English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers who teach General English at the UMZ were the participants of this study. The teachers were of different educational background, and experience. Two of these teachers have majored in English Literature at M.A. with different years of experience. However, the other teacher has majored in TEFL at M.A. and TESOL at Ph.D. with the most years of experience. To ensure the confidentiality of their identities, in this



study, they are referred to by pseudonyms and their exact age and experience are not presented (Duff, 2008, p. 149).

The reason for doing this study at the UMZ was the fact that the first author of this article has received his B.A. from the UMZ, and because of the rapport between the researcher and the teachers there, the same university was chosen to conduct the present study in, as the relationship between the researcher and the participants is of paramount importance in case studies (Duff, 2008). Also, the first author's familiarity with the General English course in the UMZ could be another cause.

### **3.2 Data collection**

Data, for this study, was collected during seven months, i.e. it began two months before the spring semester and continued until the end of the semester. Four data collection instruments, i.e. questionnaires, observations, interviews, and material analysis have been used. Noteworthy it might be that only the first author of this article has been involved in the data collection process.

The process started with two open-ended structured questionnaires to elicit the participants' ideas about vocabulary and what aspects of vocabulary to teach. Two structured questionnaires (Bernard and Ryan, 2010) were the first sources of data for this study. The questionnaires consisted of open-ended questions (Dörnyei, 2003) with one page space for each questions, and the respondents were asked to elaborate on each question. The questions were adapted from Zhang (2008) by gaining the author's permission via email. The items were also checked with a Ph.D. holder in TEFL for their accuracy (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007).

Each questionnaire contains two sections. In the first questionnaire, the first section has to do with the teachers' own education and the second section is related to their becoming teachers. In the second questionnaire, the teachers are asked to answer the questions in section one about their reflection on teaching and section two which has to do with vocabulary instruction (Appendix 1). Their answers were all typed and imported into NVivo.

The largest source of data was observing each teacher's General English class. As the second data source, the researcher had some classroom observations which were all audio-recorded using a SONY IC RECORDER (ICD-UX81F) during the whole spring semester. This counted up to 19-26 sessions for each participant. There were two reasons for this number of observations. First, to decrease the effect of researcher's presence on teachers' performance by

increasing the number of observations in each teacher's classroom, although it is generally agreed upon that the mere presence of a stranger might have some effect on everything. Second, to catch a holistic picture of what the teachers would do, the observations were extended throughout the whole semester in one particular class for each participant. In order to do a naturalistic observation, no observation checklist was used, however, while observing the class, field notes were taken.

It should be mentioned here that the researcher, according to Borg (2006), was a non-participant observer, i.e. he did not have any participation in the teachers' teaching. As the participants were completely aware of the researcher's presence and his purpose, he can be considered as a 'participant-as-observer' (Cohen et al, 2007) whose focus was on any behavior that was related to vocabulary. The audio tracks and the typed field notes were all imported into NVivo.

Thirdly, two semi-structured post-observation interviews took place and as they were of stimulate recall type, they were aimed to elicit the participants' thoughts on whatever vocabulary-related activities which were observed in their classes. The interviews were organized with the teachers to further elicit their cognition on vocabulary (King and Horrocks, 2010). Benefiting from the semi-structured format of the interviews (Bernard and Ryan, 2010), the researcher did not have to ask identical questions, as they were inspired by the teachers' practices in the classroom. In addition, some excerpts of their own teaching behavior were provided from the observed sessions in order to elicit the background thoughts behind their particular actions. The interviews were also audio-recorded using the same SONY IC RECORDER. The audio tracks and the written notes were imported into NVivo.

Finally, an analysis of the textbook of the observed course was conducted. As mentioned earlier, the textbook for all the General English courses at the UMZ is the same. It is titled as *Reading Academically: A Task-Oriented Approach* which is co-authored by Yaqubi and Rayati (2009), two of the academic staff members in the Department of English Language and Literature. The analysis of this textbook was thought to be insightful in interpreting teachers' beliefs and practices. Also, the researcher could manage to have an interview with one of the authors on the book focusing on its approach toward vocabulary.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

The data analysis was taking place concurrently as the data was being collected in order to prepare the questions for the two interviews. It can be claimed that the data analysis in this study took place, in a cyclic fashion, both inductively and deductively (i.e. an abductive approach) which started without any pre-defined themes, toward coding with the identified themes, and finally, being open to the emerging themes (Gibbs, 2007; Lewins and Silver, 2008). In other words, the data from the two questionnaires provided the first set of nodes (induction). With these nodes, all the field notes were surfed for the pre-defined nodes (deduction). And finally, in both the field notes and the classroom audio recordings, any emerging nodes, if of importance to the research questions, were embedded into the list of the nodes (induction). What comes next, particularly concerns the way the data was coded.

The coding took place through three different stages (Holton, 2007; Lewins and Silver, 2008). *Open coding* was the first stage in which the whole data was scrutinized in segments to do the indexing of the data in accordance with the nodes. Next, *axial coding* was conducted within which the coded materials were classified into categories and the relationships were sought for. Finally, to illustrate the findings, those instances which could best represent a theme were identified, i.e. *selective coding*. Some steps were also taken to ensure the credibility and the trustworthiness of the results. These steps are explained in the following section.

### **3.4 Triangulation**

Triangulation which, according to Nunan and Bailey (2009), refers to the multiplicity of the perspectives with regard to the data, was done in two different ways in this study. First, *data triangulation* was conducted via having four different sources of data which would allow the researcher to compare the findings in different sources. For their beliefs, for example, the researchers did not suffice to merely asking the participants in the questionnaires. Consequently, the results of the study and the conclusions are not based on a single source of data. *Researcher triangulation* also occurred via having another graduate student of TEFL code the whole data as a second operator for the same research project in NVivo. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings (Kincheloe, 2003), the *intercoder agreement* was determined which revealed that there was an agreement in the two operators' codings. The index was obtained through 'dividing the number of items upon which coders agree[d] by the total number of items that were coded' (Nunan and Bailey, 2009, p. 428). The two codings are said to be consistent if there is at least 85

% agreement. For this study, there was 93% of agreement between the two coders with regard to the whole coding. It must be noted that the items on which the coders have had different points of view, were subject to later negotiations and it was found that the second coders' unfamiliarity with the participants and his not being present in the observation site were the major causes of the disagreement, even though, in some cases the first researcher's judgment was not a proper one.

## 4. Findings

The data presentation begins with providing an account of the textbook analysis because it can be helpful in understanding some of the participants' decision making.

### 4.1 Textbook analysis

*Reading Academically: A Task-Oriented Approach* (Yaqubi and Rayati, 2009) is the textbook which is used for the General English course by all the teachers at the UMZ. There are 20 lessons in two different parts. There are 20 lessons in two different parts. Part One consists of four lessons which introduces some basic skills such as finding the main idea, guessing, and dictionary use. Part Two consists of 16 lessons which primarily develops the skills introduced in Part One. At the beginning of each lesson, in the two parts of the book, there is a section entitled *key words*. The content comes in a table in several parts including the word, part of speech, English definition, an example, and, sometimes, a Persian equivalent. As one of the authors of the book states, the words introduced in this section are not to be easily guessable from the context and that the students should know them first, then they move to the texts in which the introduced words are underlined (R. Rayati, personal communication, March 12, 2011).

Another vocabulary-related section, in the first part of the book, is *guessing the meaning of some unknown words from context*. These activities appear in the reading sections. In the text, there are some bold face words and the students are to guess the meaning of those words and to either write the meaning in the space provided or to complete the table with three pieces of information, i.e. word class, meaning, and contextual clues.

In the second part of the book, the lessons are developed quite differently, although there are still some similarities. A major section of the lessons in the second part of the book is *vocabulary development*. Like the table in the previous section, there is a table with four columns entitled as

*guessable vocabulary, word class, meaning (Persian/English), and contextual clues.* The students' first task, here, is to complete the table. Then, they are required to use the words to complete the sentences and to make their own sentences. Finally, a number of sentences are there to be completed by some given words which have been mostly introduced in the *key words*.

The last item in this book, which can be considered as being related to vocabulary, is *using dictionaries effectively*. Throughout the whole book, at the end of the first five lessons, there is a section on the use of dictionary. The topics which are attended to in this section of the lesson are as follows: what dictionaries to use, guide words, word class, pronunciation symbols *and* stress mark, and phrasal verbs (a sample of related parts of the textbook is reconstructed to be presented in Appendix 2).

## 4.2 Ashkan

The first participant whose beliefs and practices on vocabulary will be presented here, is Ashkan. This is a pseudonym which is used instead of the participant's real name to ensure the confidentiality of his identity, and, with the same aim, presenting the exact biographical data is avoided (Borg, 2010; Duff, 2008). This is also true for the other two participants. Throughout the

**Table 1** References to Ashkan's data sources

Questionnaire	observation	interview
<b>AQuest</b>	<b>AObsv</b>	<b>AIntw</b>
For example, to refer to Ashkan's 1 <sup>st</sup> questionnaire, AQuest1 is used.		

data presentation, the data sources are referred to as shown in Table 1. The reference consists of the initial letter of the participant's name (here A), followed by a short form of the source name and number of the source.

### 4.2.1 Ashkan's profile

Ashkan, as shown in Table 2, is 40-50 years old. He has a B.A. in English Translation. He

**Table 2** Ashkan's biographical information

Age	B.A.	M.A.	Ph.D.	the whole teaching experience	teaching EFL at UMZ
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40-50	English Translation	TEFL	TESOL	More than 25 years	more than 10 years
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continued his education in TEFL and TESOL, respectively for M.A. and Ph.D. He states that he has been a teacher for more than 25 years and has been teaching EFL at the UMZ for more than 10 years (AQuest1).

To develop himself as a teacher, Ashkan seems to have had several teachers education courses, although he believes that ‘the PhD was really effective, and that the others seem to have had nothing worth the effort’ (AQuest1). Among other sources of his development, he enumerates ‘the colleagues, the scholarship available in the literature, criticisms and evaluations by *his* (the words in italics have been substituted for the original words to fit the sentences here) students, and *his* personal religious beliefs’; however, he does not state that this is all what could have influenced him (AQuest1).

When Ashkan was a student, ‘vocabulary used to be taught as an autonomous list of words to be memorized prior to embarking on the texts themselves. Teachers tended to read them aloud to have learners model themselves on them.’ He did not remember exactly how he managed to broaden *his* vocabulary, but *he* tended to make good notes of the vocabulary *he* didn’t know with adequate dictionary citations. Also, *he* tended to read a lot only to be reproduced later to ‘*him*’ alone. Finally, *he* had *himself* process the vocabulary items deeply.(AQuest1)

Ashkan believes that, originally, his learning experience was very decisive in the way he taught. But he has not stopped learning as he states, ‘later as *he* began to learn from the literature *he* seems to have parted with *his* original beliefs and have begun to explore ways shown by others to test out their validity and practicality.’ So, he seems to have ‘other beliefs borrowed from other researchers’ which were not necessarily similar to the ones he used to have from his own learning (AQuest1).

#### 4.2.2 Ashkan’s beliefs

**Table 3** Ashkan’s beliefs about vocabulary

Ashkan	<b>Meaning</b>	✓	Persian meaning
	<b>Form</b>	✓	Pronunciation
	<b>Use</b>	✓	Part of speech
	<b>Others</b>	✓	Words not important on their own

Table 3 his beliefs about those aspects of vocabulary that are necessary to teach. Based on his experience, he thinks ‘pronunciation is very important’. It is the first and most important aspect of a word which must be learned. This is followed by *word meaning*. Having been able to pronounce a word correctly, the learners need to work with the meaning of the words. Finally, attention must be given to the *part of speech* of a word in a particular context. Ashkan states that ‘when learners feel relatively comfortable with these, *he* would say they are on their way to learning it’. Another important thing that Ashkan thinks the learners must know, although it is not an element in the words, is to ‘understand that words are only instruments not the end on their own’ (AQuest2). Assisting the learners to understand this is also considered as part of what he should do while teaching.

#### **4.2.3 Ashkan’s practice**

Here, those aspects of vocabulary that were addressed in Ashkan’s class will be mentioned in order of the overall amount that they occurred throughout the whole semester (i.e. 26 sessions). Examining all the activities that Ashkan has done during the semester, it can be concluded that he was focusing on four different things. Table 4 represents the portion that each aspect of vocabulary has been attended to by Ashkan in each session. In this section, the four aspects will be briefly introduced. It should be noted that Ashkan’s attention to different aspects of vocabulary constituted, approximately, 26 % of the whole semester excluding the mid-term exam session. This amount has been agreed upon up to more than 98% by the two coders, as shown in Table 4.

- Pronunciation (form)

In Ashkan’s class, pronunciation has been the mostly-attended aspect of vocabulary (15.27% of the whole semester). The *key words* sections, the texts, and sometimes the teacher provided the words whose pronunciation was practiced. Also, Ashkan introduced the phonetic symbols and the stress mark to help the learners use their dictionary for the word pronunciation.

- Meaning

Next, in Ashkan’s classroom practice, attention was given to the meaning of the words (9.02% of the whole semester). This happened either in the texts or in the *key words* of the book. The Persian meaning of the words was the primary focus; however, attention to a word’s synonym was also observed in rare cases.

**Table 4** Ashkan's treated vocabulary aspects in the semester (in %)

<b>Ashkan</b>	pronunciation	meaning	part of speech	assisting	all components in each session	inter-coder agreement
session#1	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.5	5.5	100
session#2	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0	100
session#3	5.0	15	0.0	1.0	21.0	99
session#4	1.0	14	1.5	2.0	18.5	98
session#5	1.0	10.0	1.5	1.5	14.0	98
session#6	80.0	1.3	0.0	0.0	81.3	96
session#7	65.0	7.0	1.5	1.0	74.5	98
session#8	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	100
session#9	8.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	13.0	100
session#10	0.0	8.0	0.0	0.3	8.3	99
session#11	30.0	20.0	7.0	0.0	57.0	100
session#12	7.0	8.0	0.0	0.2	15.2	95
session#13	79.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	79.0	100
session#14	10.1	7.0	0.0	0.5	17.6	97
session#15	8.2	14.0	8.1	0.0	30.3	96
session#16	0.0	23.0	0.0	0.0	23.0	100
session#17	17.0	1.9	0.0	0.0	18.9	98
session#18	24.0	10	0.0	0.0	34.0	100
session#19	20.0	15.8	7.0	0.4	43.2	99
session#20	0.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	100
session#21	0.0	15.7	0.0	0.0	15.7	98
session#22	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.4	100
session#23	mid-term exam					---
session#24	0.0	29.3	0.0	0.4	29.7	94
session#25	24.5	8.2	0.0	0.0	32.7	95



session#26	2.0	7.0	0.0	2.3	11.3	93
each component in semester	15.27	9.02	1.06	0.64	25.99	ICA (m) 98.12

- Part of speech (use)

The third focus was on the part of speech of a word in Ashkan's teaching (1.06% of the whole semester). This was primarily used when the learners were to guess the meaning of the unknown words from context. Also, in order for the meaning of a word to be checked in dictionary, Ashkan used to make sure that the students were aware of the part of speech of the word in that particular context.

- Words not important on their own

Finally, Ashkan tended to make the students aware of and help them understand the role that words play in their understanding and that although the words are necessary in order for understanding to take place, they are not the very goal (at least) in that General English course. So, the last focus was on showing that as the words are not the aim on their own, it was not necessary to know all the words in a text to be able to understand it (0.64% of the whole semester).

#### **4.2.4 Congruence in Ashkan's beliefs and practices**

The aspects of words that Ashkan believed important and were to be taught, were all covered in his practices even with same importance that he had already mentioned. In other words, most attention was given to pronunciation, then, the meaning, and finally the part of speech of the words. From Ashkan's experience these have been shown to be important. And part of speech of the words, as Ashkan stated, helped the students to have better guesses and also to find the relevant meaning of the words when consulting a dictionary (AIntw1). As for assisting them to understand that words are not important on their own, Ashkan believed that the words must not distract the students' attention when the purpose was to understand the texts rather than knowing every single word (AIntw1).

### **4.3 Hamid**

Hamid is another participant of this study for whom the references to the sources of data, as in Table 5, is similar to the previous participant, except for the initial letter (i.e. H).

**Table 5**References to Hamid's data sources

questionnaire	Observation	interview
<b>HQuest</b>	<b>HObsv</b>	<b>HIntw</b>
For example, to refer to Hamid's 2 <sup>nd</sup> interview, HIntw2 is used.		

### 4.3.1 Hamid's profile

Hamid's biographical information is shown in Table 6. According to the table, he was 35-45 years old. He has done both his B.A. and M.A. in English Literature. In terms of his whole experience of teaching, more than 10 years is what he states, while he has been teaching EFL at UMZ for less than 10 years.

**Table 6** Hamid's biographical information

age	B.A.	M.A.	Ph.D.	the whole teaching experience	teaching EFL at UMZ
35-45	English Literature	English Literature	---	More than 10 years	less than 10 years

With regard to teacher education courses, Hamid has had two different experiences that he, generally, finds effective. One was a TOEFL training course for more than six months in which three teachers taught them how to teach different skills. And, he had to pass the T.T.C. for one of the institutes he wanted to teach in. Even now, Hamid is 'very keen and sharp to learn from other people (experts) whenever he attends classes, meetings, conferences, etc.' By talking to the experts, he 'got to know about the results of new studies' to be thought about and how to be implemented in his own classes. (HQues1)

Hamid did not have any specific classes on vocabulary, although vocabulary was practiced in some other courses, namely reading comprehension. However, his instructors would provide them with some suggestions, e.g. learning the words in the context, using small cards, clustering or mapping, using some vocabulary books, and improving vocabulary via listening.

Nevertheless, personally, Hamid used to check the meaning of the words and write down the words in his special notebook and he would look at the words whenever he had time. Also, whenever he wanted to learn a word, he tried to learn the related words (the cluster), part of

speech, and different forms (idiomatic, figurative) of a word. Again, he mentions that he thinks ‘knowing the correct pronunciation is required in order for learning to take place’ (HQuest1).

For Hamid, his learning experience, he thinks, has definitely influenced his cognition. He considers this as a point of privilege for the non-native speakers of a language who teach it because of their experience of learning that language themselves. For the language skills, as an example, he always tries to review his mind to remember what his professors did, but not to follow them blindly. Also, when facing a problem, Hamid tries ‘to think back and realize the way he solved the problem and learned’ (HQuest1).

#### 4.3.2 Hamid’s beliefs

Regarding what aspects of vocabulary to teach, as shown in Table 7, Hamid states ‘synonyms, antonyms, word formation, theme grouping, as well as learning different strategies which can help students to boost their vocabulary Knowledge.’ In addition, they need to ‘learn and practice guessing as a helpful strategy while reading’ (HQuest2). The most important thing for him, however, in learning a word is being able ‘to pronounce it correctly’, as he considers ‘pronunciation to act as barrier’ to students’ learning if they fail to deal with it (HQuest1).

**Table 7** Hamid’s beliefs about vocabulary

Hamid	<b>meaning</b>	✓	Synonyms, antonyms, theme grouping
	<b>form</b>	✓	Pronunciation, word formation
	<b>use</b>	---	---
	<b>others</b>	✓	Strategies: guessing

#### 4.3.3 Hamid’s practice

In Hamid’s class, three different aspects of vocabulary were emphasized. These aspects, as shown in Table 8, have made 22.29% of the course. And it can be seen that the coders could reach more than 98% of agreement over the components focused in Hamid’s practice. The table also provides a detailed representation of the course based on the focused vocabulary aspects in each session.

**Table 8** Hamid’s treated vocabulary aspects in the semester (in %)

Hamid	pronunciation	meaning	part of speech	all components in each session	inter-coder agreement
session#1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
session#2	0.0	8.0	0.0	8.0	100
session#3	0.0	18.0	0.0	18.0	100
session#4	0.0	8.0	0.0	8.0	100
session#5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
session#6	0.0	5.0	4.0	9.0	95
session#7	0.0	2.5	2.1	4.6	100
session#8	0.0	6.5	0.6	7.1	98
session#9	0.0	15.4	1.2	16.6	93
session#10	25.3	0.0	0.0	25.3	98
session#11	0.0	34.0	0.0	34.0	100
session#12	69.0	20.0	0.0	89.0	100
session#13	3.2	17.3	1.0	20.6	89
session#14	6.1	12.6	2.4	21.1	90
session#15	5.0	37.9	0.0	42.9	97
session#16	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	100
session#17	3.0	4.9	1.0	8.9	100
session#18	2.0	17.8	0.0	19.8	95
session#19	0.0	3.4	0.8	4.2	100
each component in semester	7.47	13.96	0.86	22.29	ICA (m) 98.68%

- Meaning

Meaning of the words was among the mostly-attended elements as far as the words are concerned (13.96% of the whole semester). In doing so, however, the meanings of the words were not said for their own importance. The purpose was to help the students guess the meaning of the unknown words or to better understand the text.

- Pronunciation (form)

Next, the pronunciation of the words, as another element in vocabulary to be learned, has received some attention from Hamid via using the dictionary or saying the correct pronunciation (7.47% of the whole semester). The phonetic symbols were also taught in two sessions.

- Part of speech(use)

Hamid would pay attention to the part of speech of the words whose meaning were to be guessed from the context (0.86% of the whole semester). Also, to check the meaning of the words in the dictionary, part of speech was sometimes sought.

#### **4.3.4 Congruence in Hamid's beliefs and practices**

Pronunciation of the words was an element which was both stated and observed in Hamid's practice because he believed that students' not knowing the pronunciation of the words might act as a barrier to learning (HIntw1&2). The meaning of the words was attended a lot in Hamid's teaching in different ways including synonyms which has already been stated. Part of speech of the words has received attention although it was not mentioned. This was due to the fact that knowing the part of speech could help the learners do better in guessing and finding the meaning from dictionary (HIntw1). Dealing with the word parts was a mentioned element that did not receive any attention as the class did not have vocabulary as its focus (HIntw1). Finally, the learning strategies could be seen with Hamid's focus on guessing and dictionary, although the two can also be treated as strategies for teaching.

#### **4.4 Reza**

The data presented in this section are obtained from two questionnaires, 21 class observations, and two post-observation interviews which are referred to as introduced in Table 9. Similar to the other participants which have been so far referred to in this study, to refer to Reza's data sources the same procedure is followed, except for the initial letter which is R.

**Table 9** References to Reza's data sources

questionnaires	observations	interviews
<b>RQuest</b>	<b>RObsv</b>	<b>RIntw</b>
For example, to refer to Reza's 15 <sup>th</sup> observation session, RObsv15 is used.		

#### 4.4.1 Reza's profile

As shown in table 10, Reza is 20-30 years old and similar to Hamid, Reza has done his B.A. and M.A. in English Literature. At the time of doing this study, he was experiencing the first year of his teaching. And, as for the General English at UMZ, it was his first experience.

**Table 10** Reza's biographical information

Age	B.A.	M.A.	Ph.D.	the whole teaching experience	teaching EFL at UMZ
20-30	English Literature	English Literature	---	One year	the first semester

Reza has not ever had any formal teacher training experiences. What helped him to develop as a teacher has been 'increasing his knowledge of the courses, thinking about what is the aim of the courses, and thinking about different methods of teaching.' Reza, also, tends to think about 'what his professors did and choose the most helpful methods that suit his personality' as an individual who is different from any other teacher. He believes that while teaching, 'he does what he liked his professors to do when he was a student' (RQuest1).

When Reza was a university student, vocabulary was taught through different vocabulary books. The new words in the reading texts were also taught somehow. And, when he was preparing himself for the M.A. exam, he tried to improve his vocabulary. He used some books such as *Vocabulary for High School Students*, *Essential words for the TOEFL*, *1100 Words You Need to Know*. It seems that he believes, most of the time, he has learned the new words out of context.

Reza thinks that his learning experience has been very influential in his teaching as he asks 'is there any teacher who can claim not?' He has given thought to what his professors did, and classified them as positive and destructive. He tries to use the former and avoid the latter. Doing

so, he is concerned about the personal differences between him and his professors such as age, experience which might not let him implement what he has considered to be effective.

#### 4.4.2 Reza's

Reza					
	meaning(%)	Word parts (%)	use (%)	all components in each session (%)	inter-coder agreement (%)

#### beliefs

Reza's beliefs about the aspects of vocabulary to teach are illustrated in Table 11.

**Table 11** Reza's beliefs about vocabulary

Reza	<b>Meaning</b>	✓	Denotative, connotative, synonyms
	<b>Form</b>	✓	Spelling, pronunciation
	<b>Use</b>	✓	Level of formality, usage

Concerning the aspects of the words which Reza thinks he should teach, he tends to be very comprehensive. He enumerates 'spelling, pronunciation and meaning (i.e. denotative meaning, connotative meaning, and its slight differences from its synonyms), usage, and level of formality' (RQuest2).

#### 4.4.3 Reza's practice

This section has to do with what has been focused on in Reza's teaching with regard to vocabulary. The aspects, making 14.68% of the course, received 97.5 agreement of the two coders, as presented in Table 12. Similar to the two other participants, a representation of Reza's focused aspects of vocabulary in each session can be found in this table.

- Meaning

Meaning is the element which has been mostly attended through different procedures, e.g. the Persian meaning and the synonym. It can also be concluded that meaning has been the most significantly attended category of word elements (12.24% of the whole course).

- Word parts

Talking about the word parts also happened from time to time in Reza's classes. (2.13% of the whole semester)

**Table 12** Reza's treated vocabulary aspects in the semester (%)

session#1	20.0	5.0	0.0	25.0	100
session#2	20.0	5.4	5.1	30.5	98
session#3	31.0	5.0	0.0	36.0	100
session#4	30.0	12.7	0.0	42.7	100
session#5	50.5	4.2	0.0	54.7	90
session#6	61.9	0.0	0.0	61.9	100
session#7	quiz				
session#8	8.4	0.0	0.0	8.4	100
session#9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
session#10	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
session#11	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	90
session#12	students' presentation				
session#13	mid-term exam				
session#14	17.0	8.0	0.0	25.0	100
session#15	4.5	0.0	0.0	4.5	95
session#16	1.0	0.3	0.0	1.3	100
session#17	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
session#18	8.5	4.3	0.0	12.8	87
session#19	3.4	0.0	0.0	3.4	90
session#20	quiz				
session#21	quiz				
each component in semester	12.24	2.13	0.31	14.68	ICA (m) 97.5

- Use

In one case, Reza discussed the difference between the way two synonyms can be used in terms of their level of formality (0.31% of the course).

#### 4.4.4 Congruence in Reza's beliefs and practices

He likes talking about and teaching the word parts in the class, as they have shown to be very useful for him when he was a student and whenever he uses the language (RIntw1). When he talked about the word parts, he seemed to be 'more of himself' rather than a teacher of that



particular book. His being more of himself also seems to have influenced his not encouraging the students to use a dictionary in the class. This was again due to his own experience as a learner and reader. He tended not to use dictionaries much, as he relied on his guessing ability (RIntw1). Another thing was the students' reluctance and the difficulty of getting them to use dictionary effectively. Spelling and pronunciation was not worked on because vocabulary was not the focus of the textbook. However, the meaning of the words and use were practiced in the class as they were previously informed (although the latter occurred only once). In addition, there were some instances of working on the word parts.

## 5. Discussion

A holistic analysis of the data sources reveals that out of the three different categories, and consequently, the nine elements of a word to be learned which different researchers including Brown (2010) have enumerated, meaning, pronunciation (form), and word parts (use) have been considered important by the three participants, although Reza once considered the use of the words. The three participants in this study, similarly, agreed upon the importance of *meaning* of the words in this course. Pronunciation of the words was also believed to be important by three teachers. These two components have been the two points of similarities among the three participants, as they had different opinions about other components of vocabulary to teach. Ashkan and Hamid were the same in terms of their attention to part of speech, though.

Partial similarities can be observed between what the participants of this study and the ones in Zhang (2008) believed in. There, they considered pronunciation, syllabic stress, spelling, meaning, and usage. Here, meaning was important since it helped the learners get to the meaning of the text. Pronunciation was thought to help the learners overcome the process of learning a word, as passing the first stage, i.e. pronunciation, could show their progress (Ashkan and Hamid).

According to Borg (2009), it is not a flaw in the teachers if their practices are not congruent with their beliefs. Of importance, here, is to explore the possible causes of such incongruities. What follows is an account of such an exploration with regard to the participants of this study.

The participants' classroom practices, except for that of Ashkan's, could be concluded to have been incongruent with what they had *already* stated, although the stimulated recalls proved this to be different.

First of all, Ashkan, the most experienced participant, seemed to be particularly doing what he had previously reported. He stated that his giving thought to different aspects of a course is an influential factor in (re)formulating his beliefs and practices (AIntw2). In addition, his own research was thought to be very effective. It should be noted that the things that Ashkan believed in are proved to be important either in the related literature or from his own teaching experience. That is why he has come to believe in them and, consequently, his practice shows to be a manifestation of his beliefs of which he is aware. And it seems that thinking about his cognition and practice can influence his modifying them (AIntw2). Similar to Moini (2009), experience can be a factor that influences teachers' beliefs in and their classroom practices. However, the other teachers' apparent inconsistency is to be further examined here.

In Reza's teaching, word parts received considerable attention, although it was not previously mentioned. Reza tended to talk about the word parts because the strategies seemed to have worked for him and one of his reasons for not asking the students to use a dictionary in the class was said to be his own reading experience and his reliance upon his guessing ability rather than using dictionary (RIntw1). This can then be due to his learning experience (Farrell, 2007; Phipps, 2009; and Richards and Lockhart, 1996) which is affecting his practice. When Reza was asked about his beliefs about what aspects of vocabulary to teach, the General English course had not been started yet. And, as this was Reza's first experience of teaching the General English course, a transformation may be concluded to have happened in his cognition. In other words, Reza, generally, believed that working on the word parts has to do merely with vocabulary learning and that because of the focus of the textbook and the course, vocabulary was not to be emphasized. In spite of this, inside the classroom, things were proved to be different in the sense that he tended to work on such things whenever it was possible. Another thing that he never worked on in the class was the pronunciation of the words. In Zhang (2008), one of the causes of the teachers' being inconsistent with what they had already said was found to be the teachers' lack of knowledge in those particular areas, namely the pragmatic aspects of word usage, but in this case, the focus of the book was again the preventive factor (Brown, 2010). Besides, it seems that

while completing the questionnaires, Reza had relied mostly upon his espoused theories, while teaching, however, his theories in use were at work.

Hamid expressed different elements to be addressed, as far as the vocabulary is concerned, but they were not all observed in his classroom practice. This can be viewed from three different perspectives. Firstly, the focus of the book (Brown, 2010) and the course could be effective, since from Hamid's personal view, all the elements were to be given considerable attention. Secondly, it might be due to the different *types* of theories that the teachers possess, i.e. *espoused theories* and *theories in use* (Basturkman et al, 2004). His espoused theories on what aspects of words to be learned contain various elements, whereas what he has actually done seems to derive from another source, i.e. theories in use. Thirdly, the context (Azimi, 2010; Farrell, 2005; Feryok, 2008; Gholami and Husu, 2010; and Phipps and Borg, 2009) was considered as one of the causes of the incongruity between what Hamid had said and what he did; however, the factors within the context, were found to be different from the findings of other studies. The factors have been the students' not knowing enough words (i.e. low proficiency) and their books being second-hand, so that having things (here meaning of the words) already written in them. These two factors, and consequently, the context could be influential in the way Hamid adapted his practice.

## 6. Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that the teachers, however, tended to insist on what they thought to be important for the learners to know. In some instances, this supposed importance would make the teachers go so far as not keeping in mind what the book, primarily, requires the learners to know and how they actually need to develop their reading ability. For example, the book appreciates any practice (e.g. word parts) which could be helpful in students' development in reading whereas in some cases, the participants ignored the role of such strategies in reading comprehension.

As the results of this study show, some teacher education courses seem to be required for the teachers, especially the novice ones, to get aware of the objectives of the specific courses they are going to teach. This is to clarify for the teachers what are to be achieved via a particular course and how to achieve the expected objectives. Teachers had better get aware of the effect of

their own learning experience, if any, on their beliefs and practices. Although teachers' learning experience is acknowledged as an influential factor affecting their beliefs, it is the students' needs and the focus of the course which must be given due attention in teachers' classroom practices.

### **Acknowledgment**

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Questionnaire 1**

#### **Section 1: Education (2 Questions)**

1. What do you recall about your experience of learning English as a foreign language?  
Please, focus on these: How was vocabulary taught? & How did you learn vocabulary?  
(e.g. strategies, techniques, etc.)
2. Do you feel that your own education as a student has had any influence on the way you teach today?

#### **Section 2: Entry into the Profession and Development as a Teacher (5 Questions)**

1. Why did you become an EFL teacher?
2. What recollections do you have about your earliest teaching experience?
3. Have you had any formal teacher training experiences?  
- If yes, how effective do you find them?  
- If no, how else you have developed yourself as a teacher?
4. What have been the greatest influences on your development as a teacher? (e.g. experience, studying, colleagues, etc.)
5. What qualities do you think a qualified EFL teacher should have?

## Questionnaire 2

### Section 1: Reflections on Teaching (4 Questions)

1. What do you feel is the most satisfying aspect of teaching EFL, and what is the hardest part of the job? (& What about vocabulary teaching?)
2. Please describe one particularly good experience you have had as an EFL teacher, and one particularly unhappy one?
3. What is your idea of a successful lesson?
4. Do you have any preferences in terms of the types of students you like to teach?

### Section 2: Vocabulary Instruction (5 Questions)

1. What role do you think vocabulary plays in EFL learning and teaching?
2. What do you think vocabulary learning involves? How do you judge that your students have commanded the vocabulary you require them to learn? (i.e. What aspects of the words should be learned?)
3. If your students asked you how to enlarge English vocabulary, what suggestions would you give them?
4. How do you teach English vocabulary in your class? (approaches, techniques, etc.)
5. What strategies do you usually use to evaluate students' vocabulary learning?

## Appendix 2

### Vocabulary Development

- ❖ The vocabulary in the following table seems to be guessable from the contextual clues available. Do your best to fill in the blanks. You may need to re-read the relevant parts to make successful guesses.

Guessable Vocabulary	Word Class	Meaning (Persian or English)	Contextual Clues
Essential			
figure out			
Precisely			
Pyramids			
structures			

## Key Words

<b><u>KEY WORDS</u></b>	
The following are some of the words of this unit not easily guessable from their context. Since it is important to know them to understand the text, they are introduced below and <u>underlined</u> in the text. Make sure you are comfortable with them before going through the unit.	
<b>bring up:</b> <i>v phr.</i> Care for a child, teaching them how to behave, etc.	
✓ He was brought up to have respect for his elders.	
<b>upon:</b> <i>prep.</i> Immediately after	
✓ Upon arriving home, I discovered they had gone.	
<b>weight:</b> <i>n.</i> being heavy	وزن
✓ What is your height and weight?	



## **Title**

# **The Effect of Deletion Start, Type of Words, Number of Syllables, and Type of Morphemes on the C-test Performance of Iranian Intermediate Learners**

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## **Abstract**

The developers of C-test; Raatz and Klein-Braley (1995) asserted that their newly developed test, as a measure of general language proficiency, was similar to Bachman and Palmer's (1982) operational competence. The main concern of the present study was probing into the grammatical competence as a subset of operational competence and revealing the effect of its competencies ;i.e., type of words, number of syllables, and type of morphemes on the C-test performance of intermediate learners. It further attempted to diagnose the effect of deletion start; i.e., Even/Odd, on the participants' performance. In so doing, two versions of C-test were presented to 30 Iranian intermediate subjects within a three week interval along with the TOEFL. Results demonstrated that the majority of the sub competencies namely content words, one, two, and three syllables, and lexical and inflectional morphemes proved to exert some influence on the performance of C-test

takers. Hence, C-test confirmed approximately to be measuring the grammatical competence of the learners. Findings also revealed that changing the deletion start from customary Even to Odd will lead to less valid test among intermediate learners hence this is in total agreement with Raatz and Klein-Braley 's (1981) *rule of two*, as the only rule dominating C-test in intermediate levels.

**Keywords:** Operational competence, Grammatical Competence, Deletion start, Natural C-test, Mutilated C-test

## 1. Introduction

By the advent of 80s decade, two German testing specialists, Raatz and Klein-Braley (1981), dared to censure the most reputable test of reduced redundancy family; cloze test, on the ground that it lacked validity and reliability. Subsequently, they introduced a more theoretically and empirically sound test; i.e., C-test which contained four to six semantically distinct texts with a total number of 100 items. The rule dominating such test, *the rule of two*, dictated that the mutilations should start from sentence two word two and then proceed by mutilating every other words. The main difference between C-test and its elder sibling; i.e., cloze test as Babaii and Ansary (2001) mention is that in the former deletions are at word level while in the latter they occur at text level. Moreover, in a C-test a number of short texts are included, whereas, in a cloze test just one long passage is employed.

Rouhani (2008), based on Klein-Braley and Raatz (1984) and Klein-Braley (1997), further substantiates the merits of C-test over cloze as the following:

- 1) The utilization of several passages can to some extent guarantee the better sampling and representation of both language and content.
- 2) Mutilation of every second word could lead to obtaining a more reliable sample of the linguistic elements in the text.
- 3) Contrary to native speakers who are supposed to score perfectly on C-test, the language illiterate are considered to score zero or near zero.
- 4) Construction, administration, and scoring C-test is not that much demanding.
- 5) The exact-scoring method of C-test creates an absolutely objective process.

At the same time, some researchers found that it was an economical and reliable measurement instrument (Grotjahn, 1986, 1987, 2002, 2006; Dornyei and Katona, 1992; Jafarpur, 1995; Babaii and Ansari, 2001; Rouhani, 2008). Besides, some other specialists call it an integrative measure of overall proficiency in first, second and foreign language context (Klein-Braley, 1997; Dornyei and Katona, 1992; Grotjahn, 1992; Arras, Eckes, and Grotjahn, 2002; Sigott, 2004; Rahimi and Saadat, 2005; Ecks and Grotjahn, 2006; Raatz, Grotjahn, and Wockenfub, 2006; Khodadady, 2007; Lee Elis, 2009; Schmid and Dusseldrop, 2010, see Baghaei, 2011 for more citations). C-test is also said to be measuring micro-level as well as macro-level skills (Babaii and Ansary, 2001; Grotjahn and Stemmer, 2002; Singleton and Singleton, 2002). With regard to deletion process, the testing experts have been trying to develop new C-tests with different deletion starts and rates ( Jafarpur, 1995, 1999; Hastings, 2002; Farhady and Jamali, 1999; Rashid, 2001), and deletion positions (Clearly, 1988; Heidari, 1999) with the purpose of improving the reliability and validity of C-test. The majority of the above-mentioned studies mostly conducted among advanced learners have hinted at the better performance of the participants on the tailored C-test; i.e., the one which has undergone new mutilations. Following the same line of studies, Sigott (1995) made a distinction between the test format factors including deletion ratio, pattern and start, and content factors comprising word class, word frequency, and constituent type in the main clause. These two formats, as he pointed out, determine the difficulty level of the C-test.

Despite the great achievements regarding the test, C-test has come across some criticisms associated with its construct validity (Kamimmoto, 1992; Jafarpur, 1995), discriminatory power (Clearly, 1988; Rouhani, 2008), lack of creativity (Carrol, 1987), lack of face validity (Jafarpur, 1995), its puzzle-like nature (Hughes, 2003), unpredictable variability (Rouhani, 2008), and only measuring micro-level processing (Cohen, Segal and Weiss, 1984; Kamimmoto, 1992; Stemmer, 1991). Khodadady (2007) also cautions against the exclusive use of this test for measuring test takers' language proficiency since it fails to correlate highly with standardized tests such as TOEFL. Consequently, the majority of the aforementioned researchers recommend that further investigation with the procedure is needed before it can be used as another testing technique rather than a substitute for cloze testing as claimed by its creators.

### **1.1. The present study**

According to Raatz and Klein\_Braley (1995), the general language proficiency, claimed to be tested by C-test, seemed to be similar to Bachman and Palmer's operational competence. To be more precise, test taker in the process of taking C-test as a measure of language proficiency utilizes grammatical and textual competence as the subsets of operational competence. These competencies which involve lexical, morphological, syntactic, and graphological knowledge at the sentence level and the knowledge of cohesion and rhetorical organization at the text level apparently affect the performance of the test takers.

Ecks and Grotjohn (2006, P. 316) by running a comprehensive study on construct validity of C-test came to the conclusion that: "Lexis and grammar are important components of general language proficiency as measured by C-tests. However, their relative weight in contributing to performance on C-test and, hence, the exact measure of what C-tests measure depends to some extent on the proficiency level of the examinees and on the difficulty of the C-tests."

In the same vein, Rouhani (2008) probed into the validity and discriminatory power of C-test. Concerning its content validity, by calculating the total number of content and function words he found out evidence in support of C-principle, the rule of two, on the ground that it obtained a reasonably representative sample of all the word classes in the text. Apart from the abovementioned studies, no pertinent study was found which could convincingly elaborate on the obscure aspect of the operational competence in the C-test construct. In the light of these shortcomings, pursuing more line of research seems absolutely essential. Hence, the current study makes an endeavor to disclose the grammatical competence utilized by test takers while performing on Even-deleted (Natural) and Odd-deleted (Mutilated) C-tests. Definitely, the realm of such knowledge is so gigantic that considering and detecting the impact of each competency on the performance of the learners is beyond the scope of this study, as a result it seemed more rational to limit the scope of this research to two main competencies of grammatical competence; i.e., lexical including type of words and number of syllables, and morphological comprising the type of morphemes. To fulfill so, types of words, number of syllables, and type of morphemes which have been omitted in each C-test are detected and the total number of them will be calculated. Following that, the effect of each sub component on the performance of the participants will be detected. In addition, whether C-test has been able to measure all these individual competencies is a final objective that the present study pursues. On the basis of such

eminent objectives, the following research questions emerge automatically: 1) What is the effect of deletion start on the performance of the test takers? 2) To what extent does the type of words; i.e., content and function, affect the subjects' performance? 3) Can the number of syllables; i.e., one, two, and three, have any impact on the performance of the subjects? 4) Does the type of morphemes; i.e., lexical, functional, inflectional, and derivational, impinge upon the participants' performance?

## 2. Method and Results

### 2.1. Participants

The participants in this study were 30 female intermediate students from Shiraz Bahar Language Institute studying English as a foreign language. These participants were selected from among 80 students. They were selected since they were homogenous in terms of language proficiency established through TOEFL. All of these students were Persian native speakers and their age ranged between 20 to 28 years. They took Even-deleted/Natural C-test (C-test1), and Odd-deleted Mutilated// C-test (C-test2) in a three week interval (Table 1).

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics of TOEFL, Natural C-test, and Mutilated C-test**

Test variables	No of Items	No of subjects	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TOEFL	63	80	89.53	69	69.49	8.60
C-test1	100	30	98	60	72	9.04
C-test 2	100	30	95	61	78.28	8.03

### 2.2. Instruments

#### 2.2.1. The TOEFL

TOEFL consisting of 63 items of grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension was used both to homogenize students regarding their language proficiency, and as a criterion to validate the newly developed C-tests (Table 1). It was presented to the subjects just one session before the administration of the first C-test.

#### 2.2.2 : The C-tests

Two sets of C-tests were applied in this study:

- 1) Natural C-test (Even-position deletion)
- 2) Mutilated C-test (Odd-position deletion)

The Natural C-test initially constructed by Zahedi (2002) consisted of four texts extracted from authentic materials with an average readability mean of 71.7. Each text incorporated 25 mutilations which started from the second word of the second sentence. Deleting the second half of every other word, a total of 100 mutilations were obtained for the Natural or Even C-test (see Appendices).

In order to construct the Mutilated C-test, the procedure of deleting every other word with the same texts was applied except for the deletion start which shifted from the second word to the first one (see Appendices). To make sure about the reliability of the two developed C-tests, they were given to two groups of students at the intermediate level of proficiency. The results indicated the reliability indexes of .71 and .79 for the Natural and Mutilated C-tests, respectively.

### **3. Procedure**

The two C-tests (C-test1 and C-test2) were administered to the participants in a three week interval. In order to control for potential order effect, the counter balancing technique was applied; i.e., half the subjects took the natural version of the C-test whilst the second half took the mutilated version. After three weeks, the process was reversed; the first half took the C-test2 while the other took C-test1. Then, each participant's C-tests were rated based on four different scoring procedures for four variables of deletion start, type of words, type of morphemes, and number of syllables. Additionally, the four main variables were divided into nine distinct sub variables for the comparison of the means of each sub variable (sub competency) of Natural C-test with its counterpart in Mutilated C-test. Scoring phase of the C-tests was the most challenging one since it entailed different sorts of scoring procedures for all the variables namely deletion start, type of word, type of morpheme, and number of syllables.

The previously scoring procedure of C-tests regarding deletion start was not free from shortcomings in that it just showed the students' performance on the total amount of omissions. In other words, if a test taker scored 75 out of 100 on C-test1, that score was an indication of the amount of wrong restorations, no matter those wrong replacements were content or function words. Similarly, they did not specify the exact amount of wrong answers concerning the number of syllables or type of morphemes. Thus, a new method of scoring needed to be developed in order to overcome such shortcoming. The two primitive C-tests including 100 mutilations in

each were scored for the total number of content and function words, total number of one, two, and three syllables according to the specifications of Cambridge Dictionary (about both parts of speech and number of syllables), and finally for the total number of Free morphemes (lexical, functional), and Bound morphemes (Inflectional, derivational) based on Yule's 1996 categorization of morphemes (Tables 2, 3, and 4). On the second phase of scoring, each subject's C-test was scored based on his/her performance on content and function words, the number of syllables, and the type of morphemes. To fulfill such a demanding objective meticulously, the total amount of the test taker's wrong answers was written in order: in the first column each wrong restoration was analyzed based on the type of word, in the second column each wrong replacement was scored based on the number of syllables, and in the third column based on the type of morpheme. As an example, a student who scored 80 out of 100 on the C-test2 ostensibly had 20 wrong answers. But out of 20, 15 were content words and only five were function. Referring to Table 2, one can draw this conclusion that by subtracting the amount of wrong answers in content and function words from the total number of them on the C-test2, one can determine the final grade of the test taker by subtracting 15 from 53 and 5 from 47 and obtaining her final score just on content and function words (38 and 42 respectively). Following the same procedure for scoring the other variables, all the papers were rated carefully. Hence, the first C-test (C-test1) was rated four times following different scorings. The same was followed for scoring the second C-test (C-test2) making a total of 8 scoring systems for both C-tests of the same participant.

**Table 2. Type of words deleted in both C-tests**

<b>C-test</b>	<b>Content words</b>					<b>Function words</b>					
	Noun	Verb	Adj.	Adv.	Total	Art.	Conj.	Det.	Prep.	Pron.	Total
Natural 100	30	25	7	5	67	1	5	7	12	8	33
Mutilated 100	21	17	8	7	53	2	12	13	11	9	47

**Table 3. Type of morphemes deleted in both C-tests**

<b>C-test</b>	<b>Free morphemes</b>			<b>Bound morphemes</b>		
	Lexical	Functional	Total	Inflectional	Derivational	Total
Natural	63	37	100	28	11	39
Mutilated	48	52	100	9	5	14

**Table 4. Number of syllables deleted in both C-tests**

C-test	1 syllable	2 syllables	3 syllables
Natural	69	23	8
Mutilated	75	21	4

By fulfilling such prominent phase meticulously, the following statistical procedures were applied to answer the research questions. First of all the descriptive statistics; i.e., mean, SD minimum, and maximum were calculated for both C-tests and their sub variables. The reliability and validity of the two newly developed C-tests were also estimated. The results confirmed moderately high reliability coefficients and satisfactory correlation coefficients of/ between the C-tests and the criterion available (Table 5).

**Table 5. Characteristics of Natural and Mutilated C-tests**

Test type	N. of subj.	No. of Items	Max. score	Min. Score	Mean	SD	Reliability KR20	r
Natural C-test	30	100	98	60	72.56	9.04	0.76	0.52
Mutilated C-test	30	100	95	60	78.23	8.03	0.78	0.50

To distinguish the effect of the previously mentioned variables; indeed, sub variables on the performance of the test takers, a paired t-test was run between the paired sub variable such as content 1 and 2 , lexical 1 and 2 , or 3 syllable 1and 2 (1 and 2 refers to C-test1 and C-test2 respectively) making a total number of ten paired t-tests. The results are depicted on Table 6 below.

**Table 6. Basic descriptive statistics for the variables and their paired t-test**

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Stand. Deviation	t- value	t-test
Content 1	50.74	97.01	65.89	10.99	-4.12	0.000
Content 2	55.55	94.44	73.57	10.57		
Function 1	66.60	100.00	86.55	9.86	0.87	0.386
Function 2	65.21	97.82	84.76	7.59		
1 Syllable 1	56.52	98.55	72.68	9.68	-7.50	0.000
1 Syllable 2	72.00	96.00	83.19	7.07		
2 Syllable 1	65.21	100.00	78.40	8.58	5.60	0.000
2 Syllable 2	33.33	95.23	64.97	14.33		



3 Syllable 1	12.50	87.50	53.75	23.01	-6.92	0.000
3 Syllable 2	50.00	100.00	85.00	16.86		
Lexical 1	47.61	96.82	63.91	11.54	-3.21	0.003
Lexical 2	50.00	93.75	70.22	11.94		
Functional 1	51.35	100.00	86.66	11.06	0.42	0.672
Functional 2	67.56	96.15	85.69	6.37		
Inflectional 1	35.71	100.00	67.75	13.27	2.37	0.024
Inflectional 2	22.22	100.00	59.99	19.91		
Derivational 1	18.18	90.90	53.32	20.07	-0.12	0.900
Derivational 2	20.00	100.00	54.00	24.15		
C-test 1	60	98	72	9.04	-3.94	0.000
C- test 2	60	95	78.23	8.03		

In addition, to see if the increase or decrease of each score on each sub variable has correlated with its antecedent C-test, Pearson-correlation coefficients were also applied (Table 7).

**Table 7. Pearson correlation between the Natural C-test and the subvariables**

Variable	Cont <sub>1</sub>	Func <sub>1</sub>	1 Syl <sub>1</sub>	2 Syl <sub>1</sub>	3 Syl <sub>1</sub>	Lexi <sub>1</sub>	Func <sub>1</sub>	Infle <sub>1</sub>	Deriv <sub>1</sub>
Natural C-test	0.92	0.97	0.96	0.80	0.48	0.92	0.52	0.79	0.61

**Table 8. Pearson correlation between the Mutilated C-test and the subvariables**

Variable	Cont <sub>2</sub>	Func <sub>2</sub>	1 Syl <sub>2</sub>	2 Syl <sub>2</sub>	3 Syl <sub>2</sub>	Lexi <sub>2</sub>	Func <sub>2</sub>	Infle <sub>2</sub>	Deriv <sub>2</sub>
Mutilated C-test	0.89	0.59	0.86	0.61	0.17*	0.92	0.83	0.87	0.54

\* The only correlation insignificant in this study

\*\* All the correlations are significant at 0.01 level

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. Deletion start

The descriptive statistics showed means of 78.23 and 72.56 for C-test1 and C-test2 respectively. To see if the existing difference between the two tests was significant, a Paired t-test was run. The result was highly significant at a probability level of .000 (Table 6) that proved the influence of deletion start on the performance of the subjects.

### 4.2. Type of words

The means obtained from content1 and content2 were different (Table 6), but in order to recognize the significance of this difference a paired t-test was applied. As shown in Table 6, a

highly significant difference was obtained. The same procedure was employed to see the effect of content words on the performance of the subjects (Table 6). The result indicated the meaningful difference between the two means. The correlation coefficients for content1 and C-test1, and content2 and C-test2 were .92, .89 respectively that was highly significant (Table 7, 8).

While carrying out the same procedure for the function sub variable, the Matched t-test did not show a significant difference between the means of the function1 and function2. But there was a meaningful correlation between function1,C-test1, and function2,C-test2 (.83 and .59 respectively (Table 7,8).

#### **4.3. Number of syllables**

A Matched t-test was also run on each pair of means. The t-value was -7.506, 5.603, and -6.922 (between one syllable1 and 2, two syllable 1 and 2, and three syllable 1 and 2, respectively (Table 6). The results indicated a significant difference between the means of each pair of sub variables. But regarding 2syllable sub variable, the test takers performed better on C-test1. Therefore, the number of syllables, irrespective of being one, two, or three, has had a profound effect on the performance of all subjects. Tables 7 and 8 show the high correlations between each sub variable and its preceding C-test except for three syllable2 and C-test 2 which indicates a really low correlation of .17.

#### **4.4. Type of morphemes**

The obtained means in the descriptive statistics given in Table 6 revealed the outperformance of the subjects on two sub variables of lexical and inflectional morphemes of C-test 2 ; whereas, their performance on the other two sub variables (functional and derivational) was weak. To distinguish if the differences between each pairs of sub variables were statistically significant the Paired t-test was run on each. The results revealed significant differences between lexical 1, lexical 2, and inflectional 1, inflectional 2, respectively (Table 6). This shows that lexical and inflectional morphemes affected the performance of the test takers. In addition, the high correlations between each sub variable and their dominating C-test also proved their good performance (Table 7, 8). But functional and derivational morphemes did not have any significant effect on the performance of the participants.

## 5. Conclusion

The following remarks can be made considering the results of the analysis:

- 1) With regard to the issue of reliability, the results indicated that both Natural and Mutilated C-tests can be reliable measures of language proficiency since they obtained nearly high reliabilities of 0.76 and 0.78 respectively. Apparently, changing the deletion start has yielded a Mutilated C-test with a higher reliability of 0.78 compared to its competitor; i.e., Natural C-test. This finding seems to be in line with Jafarpur's (1999, P.97) conclusion which says that "there is nothing magical about the rule of two, nor does it offer any advantage over other deletion rates and starting points".
- 2) With regard to the validity of C-test, both C-tests, Natural and Mutilated, revealed moderate correlation coefficients of 0.52 and 0.50 respectively. Hence this finding supports the promising results of the previously run studies on the validity of C-test such as the ones carried out by Klein-Braley, 1985; Dornyei and Katona, 1992; Rashid, 2001, Sigott, 2004; Ecks and Grotjahn, 2006; Rouhani, 2008 (to name a few).
- 3) Due to the satisfying correlation of coefficients of both forms of C-tests with the criterion available, TOEFL, it can be strongly claimed that C-test is capable of measuring the same general language proficiency as the TOEFL.
- 4) According to some researchers such as Jafarpur (1999), and Farhadi and Jamali (1999), changing the deletion start could yield C-tests with higher correlation coefficients; i.e., tests with higher empirical validity compared to the Natural C-tests. Due to such result, they questioned the rule of two, proposed by Raatz and Klein-Braley (1981), as the only rule dominating all C-tests. Quite contrary, the findings of the current study overrules their claim on the ground that maybe *there is* something magical about the rule of two since point of validity Natural C-test seems superior to Mutilated one. As Klein-Braley (1997, cf. Raatz, 1985, P. 14) believes:

.....the deletion rate and starting point for deletions should be fixed, and no longer a matter of personal preference....

The results of this study, therefore, are in total agreement with Raatz and Klein-Braley's (1981) fixed deletion start.

- 5) In fact, the most important reality brought into light in this study was that in constructing a C-test, meticulous consideration should be paid upon a variety of criteria such as the difficulty level of the texts based on the total number of function and content words, number of syllables, and kind of morphemes embodied in a C-test, as well as the proficiency level of the subjects since the studies conducted on the deletion start were mostly among Advanced levels and their findings were not generalizable to the all proficiency levels specially Intermediate and the lower levels. Consequently, as Cleary (1988) mentions, a great deal of caution should be exercised in the use of the C-test and possibly other testing techniques. These tests which have proved effective at advanced levels, probably be less appropriate when applied to lower levels.
- 6) Since C-test has confirmed to measure most of the competencies of grammatical competence, it can be strongly claimed that comparing with cloze test in which every nth word deletion does not guarantee the representativeness of the whole elements of the text, C-test can fulfill so by assessing more components of grammatical competence. Since this research has not been able to consider graphological knowledge at the sentence level, and the knowledge of cohesion and rhetorical organization at the text level, it heralds new lines of research in this area in order to find a definite answer to the question of what C-test actually measures.
- 7) Regarding the type of words, by increasing or decreasing the total number of content and function words, test takers can have different performances. In other words, when an increase in the number of content words can create a partially difficult test, the opposite can be true regarding function words. As a result, depending on the level of participants and the purpose for which the test is administered, the texts with special kind of words can be constructed.

Concerning the number of syllables, apparently the C-test which comprises more number of one and two syllables omitted, looks easier to the learners, whereas, the C-test which consists of more three syllables looks harder.

- 8) A C-test can include a variety of free or bound morphemes, but as much as the number of lexical, inflectional and derivational morphemes increases, the more difficult C-test will emerge while about functional morphemes the procedure reverses.

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## Appendices

### Natural C-test

This is a test of how well you comprehend written English. You will read four texts. In each, half the letters (plus one) of some words are missing. First, study each text. Then write in the missing letters for

each word. Each piece of the line stands for one letter. No negative point will be deducted for a wrong answer.

Example: My name is Tom. I'm t-- oldest ch--- in m- family. I ha-- a sister a-- two brot---- .....

Your job is to complete the text as:

My name is Tom. I'm the oldest child in my family. I have a sister and two brothers....

### **1. Changing Industries, P. 60**

A young man with no money and little education decides he must get to the top. He wo--- hard a-- day, stu---- all ni---, and lo--- around f-- chance t- get ri--. He disc----- that a-- his fri---- like eat--- his moth--- homemade piz---. He lea--- how t- make th-- and sta--- selling th-- at sch---. He lea--- his j-- and op--- a pi--- restaurant. I- is a gr--- success, so he opens another, then another. Five years later, he has made his first million dollars. He is the perfect example of the successful American businessman.

### **2. The First Americans, P. 6**

You probably know the romantic names of the most famous American Indian tribes: Apache, Sioux, Cherokee, and Comanche. They prob---- make y-- think o- men rid--- horses wi-- feathers i- their ha-- , and wo--- with lo-- , plaited ha-- and so-- leather dre----. But th-- are ,i- fact, hund---- of tri--- of Ind----, all wi-- different cus----. Some ha-- always li--- in hou--- and gr--- their o-- food. Some used to move from place to place and hunt animals while the others were fishermen, living by the sea.

### **3. Rich and Poor, P. 14**

Most Americans say they are better off now than they were five years ago. However, i- recent ye---, more a-- more peo--- have bec--- trapped i- an under-----. Many, b-- not a-- of th--, are bl---. Many, b-- not a-- , live i- the o-- inner cit---. These peo--- seem t- be una--- to esc--- from b-- housing, unempl-----, and a li-- of cr--- and hopele-----. For them drugs and alcohol are especially serious problems.

### **4. The Automobile Industry, P. 56**

Today, in America, only really poor families and those too old to drive do not own a motor vehicle. And th--- freedom i- limited. B-- for t-- eighty se--- percent w-- do ha-- cars, th--- is har--- any ne-- to u-- their le-- . There a-- banks, fast---- restaurants, a-- movie thea---- where y-- can with---- money, e-- a me-- , or s-- a fi-- without ev-- getting o-- of yo-- car. There are even drive-in churches. It is surprising that some people remember how to walk at all.

## **Mutilated C-test**

This is a test of how well you comprehend written English. You will read four texts. In each, half the letters (plus one) of some words are missing. First, study each text. Then write in the missing letters for



each word. Each piece of the line stands for one letter. No negative point will be deducted for a wrong answer.

Example: My name is Tom. I a- the old--- child i- my fam---. I ha-- a sister a-- two brot---- .....

Your job is to complete the text as:

My name is Tom. I am the oldest child in my family. I have a sister and two brothers....

### **1. Changing Industries, P. 60**

A young man with no money and little education decides he must get to the top. H- works ha-- all d--, studies a-- night, a-- looks aro--- for cha--- to g-- rich. H- discovers th-- all h-- friends li-- eating h--mother's home---- pizzas. H- learns h-- to ma-- them a-- starts sel---- them a- school. H- leaves h-- job a-- opens a pi--- restaurant. I- is a gr--- success, so he opens another, then another. Five years later, he has made his first million dollar. He is the perfect example of the successful American businessman.

### **2. The First Americans, P.6**

You probably know the romantic names of the most famous American Indian tribes: Apache, Sioux, Cherokee, and Comanche. Th-- probably ma-- you th--- of m-- riding hor--- with feat---- in th-- hats, a-- women w--- long, pla---- hair a-- soft lea---- dresses. B-- there a-- , in fa-- , hundreds o- tribes o- Indians, a-- with diff----- customs. So-- have alw--- lived i- houses a-- grown th--- own fo--. Some used to move from place to place and hunt animals while others were fishermen, living by the sea.

### **3. Rich and Poor, P. 14**

Most Americans say they are better off now than they were five years ago. How----, in re---- years, mo-- and mo-- people ha-- become tra---- in a- underclass. Ma-- , but n-- all o- them, a-- black. Ma-- , but n-- all, li-- in t-- old in--- cities. Th--- people se-- to b- unable t- escape fr-- bad hou----, unemployment, a-- a li-- of cr--- and hopelessness. For them drugs and alcohol are specially serious problems.

### **4. The Automobile Industry, P.56**

Today, in America, only really poor families and those too old to drive do not own a motor vehicle. A-- the fre---- is lim----. But f-- the eig--- seven per---- who d- have ca-- , there i- hardly a-- need t- use th--- legs. Th--- are ba---, fast-food resta-----, and mo--- theaters wh--- you c-- withdraw mo---, eat a me-- , or s-- a fi-- without ev-- getting o-- of yo-- car. There are even drive-in churches. It is surprising that some people remember how to walk at all.

## **Title**

### **The Effect of Cooperative Learning on Reducing EFL Learners' Anxiety**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated the effect of cooperative learning on reducing anxiety of the Iranian intermediate male and female EFL learners. It also set out to explore any possible effect of interaction between grouping (cooperative learning vs. individualistic learning) and gender on anxiety. A total of 80 intermediate level students (divided into four equal groups) participated in this study. Two groups received cooperative learning whereas the other two groups practiced individualistic learning. Two-way ANOVA Analysis of Variance revealed that cooperative learning did not reduce foreign language learning anxiety of the learners. The effect of gender, as moderator variable was also examined,

and the interaction between grouping and gender on anxiety was studied too, but no statistically significant effect was found.

**Keywords:** Cooperative Learning (CL), Anxiety, EFL Learners, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

## 1. Introduction

Language learning is one of the most noticeable issues nowadays and many learners express their inability and failure in learning foreign languages. Different factors can influence foreign language learning and anxiety is one of the important aspects of affective variables. Anxiety is feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry. It stops students' learning and because of these characteristics many people consider foreign language classes more stressful. Language learning anxiety is considered as specific situation anxiety because it is limited to the language learning situation (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986).

The anxiety experienced in a classroom setting is called Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). According to Horwitz (2001) anxiety affects second language learning and language learners with high anxiety perform poorly in language learning classes. Elkhaffi (2005) stated that there is a negative correlation between foreign language anxiety and achievement. Most researchers and teachers try to eliminate affective barriers in language learning and make it more pleasant. There may be different ways or strategies for reducing foreign language anxiety, and cooperative learning (CL) may be one of them. From this stand point, Nagahashi (2007) states that by reducing students' language anxiety we can enhance their learning experience and improve their motivation and achievement. According to Slavin (1987) cooperative learning refers to a set of instructional methods in which students work together on academic tasks. In Cooperative learning methods students sit together and help one another with classroom tasks. This study was an attempt to investigate the effectiveness of Think-Pair-share method of cooperative learning on reducing anxiety between male and female EFL learners in Iran and answer the following questions:

**RQ<sub>1</sub>.** Does type of grouping (cooperative learning vs. individualistic) have any effect on reducing language learning anxiety?

**RQ<sub>2</sub>.** Does gender have any effect on reducing language learning anxiety?

**RQ<sub>3</sub>.** Does the interaction between type of grouping (cooperative learning vs. individualistic) and gender have any effect on reducing language learning anxiety?

MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) define language anxiety as the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning. Some important signs of anxiety include learners blushing, rubbing the palms, staggered voice, uneasiness, frustration, reluctance, poor performance in spoken activities, less enthusiasm or willingness to speak, too fast or too slow speed of speech, etc. (Hashemi & Abbasi, 2013; Mesri, 2012; Xu, 2011). MacIntyre (2007) says that anxiety is divided into three types: *state*, *trait* and *situational anxiety*. *State anxiety* is the apprehension that a person experiences at a particular moment in time as a response to a definite situation. *Trait anxiety* is defined as an individual's likelihood of becoming anxious in any situation. *Situational anxiety* is the specific forms of anxiety that occur consistently over time within a given situation such as public speaking, examination, or class participation (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

According to Horwitz et al. (1986) anxiety can be divided into three types:

- Communication apprehension
- Test anxiety
- Fear of negative evaluation

**Communication apprehension anxiety:** Communication apprehension is fear of or anxiety about communication with people (Horwitz et al., 1986).

**Test anxiety:** Test anxiety refers to a type of performance anxiety resulting from a fear of failure. Students always complain that they know a certain grammar point but during the exam they forget it (Horwitz et al., 1986).

**Fear of negative evaluation:** it is defined as anxiety about others' evaluations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively in foreign language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Foreign language anxiety inhibits students' efforts, reduces motivation, and slows acquisition progress. By reducing students' language anxiety we can enhance their learning experience and improve their motivation and achievement (Nagahashi, 2007). There may be different ways or strategies for reducing foreign language anxiety, and cooperative learning (CL) may be one of them.

According to Johnson and Johnson (2010), Liang, Mohan & Early (1998), Mandal (2009), Robinson (1990), Slavin and Cooper (1999) and Smith (2011) cooperative learning involves small teams of students from different level of achievement that use different activities in order to improve and promote their achievements. Each member is responsible for learning of the other members. Cooperative learning helps students to behave friendly with their peers. It helps students to increase their ego-strength, self-confidence, independence, and autonomy (Almanza 1997). By cooperative learning students learn how to communicate effectively, provide leadership, help the group, make good decisions, and understand others' perspectives (Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

There are comprehensive bodies of research about cooperative learning techniques and anxiety. For example, Horwitz et al. (1986) found a significant moderate negative correlation between foreign language anxiety and the grades. Students with higher levels of foreign language anxiety received lower grades than their less anxious counterparts. Nagahashi (2007), Suwantarathip and Wichadee (2010) examined the relationship between anxiety and cooperative language learning and concluded that cooperative learning provides a nonthreatening, supportive environment and reduces students' language anxiety and develops their thought, language proficiency and language skills.

Another study about cooperative learning and anxiety is Oludipe and Awokoy's (2010) research; they studied the influence of cooperative learning methods of teaching on students' anxiety for learning chemistry. They stated that by cooperative learning anxiety decreased significantly and students showed most interest to have group work. Atef-Vahi and Fard Kashani (2011) stated that English learning anxiety has a significant moderate negative correlation with English achievement of the students in that study. Therefore they said that anxiety plays a debilitating role in language learning. Talebi and Sobhani (2012) investigated the effect of cooperative learning on English language learners' speaking proficiency in Mashhad. Their findings showed that cooperative learning can contribute to improvement of students' speaking proficiency.

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1. Participants**

Eighty Iranian intermediate students in *Irāniān* Institution in Ardabil, Iran served as the participants of the study. The students' ages ranged from 13 to 18 and their first language was Azeri-Turkish. The participants (n=80) were divided into four equal groups, two experimental and two control. From two experimental groups, one of them was male students and the other one was female. The two control groups had the same composition. The experimental groups were assigned to receive Think-Pair Share technique of cooperative learning method as their treatment and the control groups experienced individualistic learning during the study.

## **2.2 Materials**

### **2.2.1 Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)**

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), (Horwitz et al., 1986) was a standardized 33-item questionnaire, which aims at assessing levels of anxiety related to three areas: (1) communication apprehension, (2) test anxiety, and (3) fear of negative evaluation. Scores for nine statements - items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28, and 32 - which were negatively keyed for anxiety, were calculated using a 5-point scale with 1 being "strongly agree" and 5 being "strongly disagree" Scores for the remaining 24 statements, which were positively keyed for anxiety, were calculated using a 5-point scale with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree" The total scale scores range from 33 to 165, with high scores indicating high levels of foreign language anxiety. In order to make sure no misunderstanding of the items will occur, the questionnaire was translated twice, first from English to Persian and second from Persian to English. Before the administration of Persian version of FLCAS to the respondents, the comprehensibility of the translated version was checked out. Two EFL teachers were invited to judge the comprehensibility and ambiguity of the translation and to suggest changes, where needed, to improve the items. After the pilot administration of the questionnaire, the reliability of the scale was computed through the application of Cronbach's alpha and turned out to be 0.96.

## **3. Data Collection Procedures**

The data for this study were collected during the fall semester of 2013. The study lasted 14 sessions. Eighty students (40 males and 40 females) from intermediate level were considered as the participants of this study. They were 13 to 18 years old. They were divided into four groups of 20, two treatment groups (20 males and 20 females), and two control groups (20 males and 20

females). Second, the participants were given the FLCAS followed by the pre-test. Then cooperative learning method was introduced to the experimental groups and for 12 sessions they were taught through cooperative learning. As mentioned above the cooperative method employed in this research was called Think Pair Share. During the first step individuals think silently about a question posed by the teacher. During the second step individuals pair up and exchange thoughts. In the third step, the pairs share their responses with other pairs, other teams, or the entire group. The teachers presented a lesson, and then students worked within their team to make sure that all team members had mastered the lesson. After that, all students were asked questions individually without helping one another to show how much they had learned. The control groups were taught traditionally (individualistic learning) for 12 sessions. All the participants in four groups studied the same material (*interchange 1, active skills for reading 1, practice and progress, Irāniān* flash cards, and short stories). In the last session of the study FLCAS was administered to the learners as post-test.

The obtained scores from both instruments in pre-test and post-test stages were compared to reveal changes in students' anxiety between treatment groups and control groups. The scores were collected and computed to check whether the foreign language anxiety of the experimental groups was lowered or not and which group (males or females) was benefited most from the cooperative learning treatment.

## 4. Results

To examine the research hypotheses a two-way ANOVA was run. Descriptive Statistics for the scores on the pre-test appears in table 4.1 and descriptive statistics for the scores on the post-test appears in table 4.2. As you can see in descriptive statistics of dependent variable, anxiety, in table 4.2 the total mean value of anxiety for cooperative learning group was 80.10 and for traditional learning group was 88.20.

Table 4.1 *Descriptive Statistics for Scores on FLCAS (Pretest)*

Groups	Gender	Mean	SD	N
Cooperative	Female	105.1000	22.99079	20
	Male	88.4500	25.18453	20
	Total	94.7500	24.64179	40

Traditional	Female	92.1000	30.95481	20
	Male	94.0500	28.41140	20
	Total	93.0750	29.34358	40
Total	Female	96.5750	27.29223	40
	Male	91.2500	26.65136	40
	Total	93.9125	26.93602	80

Table 4.2 *Descriptive Statistics for Scores on FLCAS (Posttest)*

Groups	Gender	Mean	SD	N
Cooperative	Female	86.1000	24.62754	20
	Male	74.1000	21.20303	20
	Total	80.1000	23.48245	40
Traditional	Female	87.5000	30.02893	20
	Male	88.9000	27.16984	20
	Total	88.2000	28.27448	40
Total	Female	86.8000	27.11627	40
	Male	81.5000	25.19564	40
	Total	84.1500	26.14376	80

For checking the differences between groups' anxiety scores a t-test was run, the results of which appear in table 4.3. The results indicated that there was not any significant difference between students' anxiety scores (Sig. = 0.783 > .05).

Table 4.3 *Independent Samples Test for Scores on FLCAS (Pretest)*

	t-test for Equality of Means			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
anxiety Equal variances assumed	.276	78	.783	1.67500
Equal variances not assumed	.276	75.737	.783	1.67500

In addition, the researcher used Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to determine the normality of the scores on language learning anxiety as an assumption for the use of two-way ANOVA (see Table 4.4)

Table 4.4 *Normality Check for Scores on Posttest*

Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
Statistic	df	Sig.



Anxiety	.060	80	.200
---------	------	----	------

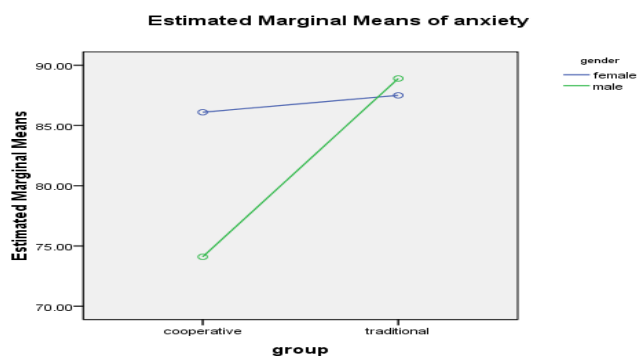
The results indicated that the scores on this test were normally distributed (Sig. =0.2>.05). The normality of the data legitimized using two-way ANOVA, the output of which appears in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5 *Two- way ANOVA for Scores on Posttest*

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Square	Eta
Groups	1312.200	1	1312.200	1.947	.167	.025	
Gender	561.800	1	561.800	.834	.364	.011	
Groups*Gender	897.800	1	897.800	1.332	.252	.017	
Error	51224.400	76	674.005				
Total	620494.000	80					

As table 4.5 shows, the sig. value for independent variable, grouping, was 0.167 that is,  $p > .05$ . This means that there was not a significant main effect for type of grouping. Regarding the second null hypothesis, the result of two-way ANOVA (Table 4.5) revealed no statistically significant effect for gender on anxiety ( $p = 0.364$ ). This means that males and females did not differ significantly in terms of their anxiety.

As mentioned earlier, the third question in the current study investigated effect of interaction between grouping and gender on anxiety. As presented in table 4.5, the alpha value corresponding to the interaction effect (Grouping \* Gender) indicates that the interaction between these two variables is not significant (Sig. = 0.252,  $p > .05$ ). Figure 4.1 indicates the line graph of anxiety scores for cooperative learning group and traditional learning group across genders. This revealed that grouping type does not influence male and female learners' anxiety differently.



*Figure 4.1.* Line graph of mean performance on anxiety across the groups

The line graph also indicated that the mean of anxiety for female cooperative learning group was about 86.1 and for female traditional learning group was around 87.5. The mean of anxiety for male cooperative learning group was 74.1 and for male traditional learning group was about 88.9. As it is obvious from the plot, there is not a significant difference between male and female scores for anxiety in cooperative learning group. Furthermore, the line graph revealed the relationship among variables. It indicated that there was a negative relationship between cooperative learning and anxiety. This means that students who had cooperative learning had lower anxiety compared to the students in traditional group.

## **5. Discussion**

The aim of the present study was to determine the effect of cooperative learning on reducing anxiety of the Iranian EFL male and female learners. To answer the research questions, participants' performance was examined on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale. Regarding the results obtained from the two-way ANOVA for anxiety, there was not a significant main effect for independent variable, cooperative learning. The results showed that cooperative learning had not a statistically significant effect on reducing language learning anxiety. Also, results didn't show statistically significant effect for gender in this regard. Based on these analyses, we can claim that the first null hypothesis was not rejected and the second null hypothesis stating that gender had no effect on reducing anxiety was confirmed. The third question set out to examine the interaction of grouping (cooperative learning vs. traditional learning) with gender in influencing anxiety. The interaction effect was not significant; hence the third null hypothesis was not rejected either. The results of the analyses supported the findings of previous study Duxbury and Tsai's (2010) findings showed that there wasn't any significant correlation between foreign language anxiety and cooperative learning. In contrast to this study Nagahashi (2007) said cooperative learning may help reduce students' anxiety in the FL classroom. And it can be as a technique that teachers can use to help students reduce their anxiety. Similarly Dornyei (1997) concluded that CL produces a group structure and increases motivation that provides excellent conditions for L2 learning. In a CL class students with high motivation engaged in varied interactions while working intensively toward completing group

task- features that are considered crucial for efficient communicative L2 classes. The result of the present study was also in contrast with the findings of Oludipe and Awokoy's (2010) research; they studied the influence of cooperative learning methods of teaching on students' anxiety for learning chemistry. They had two treatment groups, cooperative and traditional method. Both groups had some level of anxiety in pretest level, but at post test level, the cooperative learning groups' anxiety decreased significantly and showed most interest to have group work.

## 6. Conclusion

This study examines the effect of cooperative learning on reducing language learning anxiety of Iranian intermediate students of English language learners who learn it as a foreign language. The findings of the study revealed that cooperative learning had not significant effect on reducing students' anxiety. The effect of gender, as moderator variable was also examined, and the interaction between grouping and gender on anxiety was studied too, but no statistically significant effect was found.

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## **Title**

# **Education in Iran & Iranian EFL Teachers Difficulties in Implementing CLT**

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## **Abstract**

Language Learning in Iran has been a lot of ups and downs from beginning to ends and is influenced by internal and external factors. CLT has been explored and studied by many researchers in the field of English language teaching. Communicative language teaching makes use of real-life situations that necessitate communication. It is based on the theory that the primary function of language use is communication. Therefore, the present study is aimed to investigate Iranian EFL Teachers Difficulties in Implementing CLT and education in Iran. This study first presents an overview of English language teaching in Iran, and then investigates the definition and principles of CLT which is followed by a brief history of CLT. In addition, a review of existing literature related to communicative competence. In the continue 30 English teachers, both male and female aged from 30 to 45 were chosen through different schools and institutes in Mazandaran province. The main modes of data collection consisted of questionnaire and informal interviews. The results show that in one hand Iranian EFL teachers don't have enough knowledge about CLT book, they just follow the methodology and CLT approaches, which was syllabus of books and the others lack of amount of exposure is a big problem.

**Keyword:** Language learning in Iran, communicative language teaching, Teachers difficulties

## **1. Introduction**

English is one of most widely spoken language on earth and used in many areas such as technology, science, business. The worldwide demand has created an enormous demand for quality language teaching and language teaching materials and resources. To make teaching more interesting and meaningful English teachers use different types of teaching methods. CLT is one of most effective methods in achieving communicative competence and may be one of the most popular and widely used. Compensate for the limitations of the traditional language teaching methods, CLT has been introduced in EFL settings to improve students' abilities to use English in real contexts (Littlewood, 2007). CLT advocates teaching practices that develop communicative competence in authentic contexts (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Thus, this study explores factors that promote or hinder teachers' implementation of CLT, with the recommendation that their views be considered in decisions regarding the integration of CLT into Iran Education system. So, the primary focus of CLT is to facilitate learners in creating meaning not in developing grammatical structures or acquiring native –like pronunciation. This means that success of learning a foreign language depends on how well learners have developed their communicative competences and how much they are able to apply this knowledge of language in real life situations.

### **1.2 Significance of the Study**

CLT is a recognized theoretical model in English language teaching today. Many applied linguists regard it as one of the most effective approaches to ELT. In Iran, the main focus of communicative language teaching method is to help the students to learn a language so that they can use it to communicate meaningfully in any real life situation. The methods assume that the learners of English language will be able to communicate socially on an everyday basis with native or expert English language speakers. The communicative approach makes teachers and students consider language in terms of the communicative functions it performs in real situations, as well as its structures (vocabulary and grammar).

Therefore, the present study has been undertaken with following objectives:

1. To identify the problems that is inherent in English teaching in Iran;
2. To know the difficulties and challenges that EFL teachers face in implementing CLT in their English classrooms.

### **1.3. Definition of key terms**

#### **1.3.1. Communicative Language Teaching CLT**

Communicative language teaching makes use of real-life situations that necessitate communication. The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life. Unlike the audio-lingual method of language teaching, which relies on repetition and drills, the communicative approach can leave students in suspense as to the outcome of a class exercise, which will vary according to their reactions and responses. The real-life simulations change from day to day. Students' motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics. Communicative language teaching (CLT) is generally regarded as an approach to language teaching. As such, CLT reflects a certain model or research paradigm, or a theory. It is based on the theory that the primary function of language use is communication. Its primary goal is for learners to develop communicative competence, or simply put, communicative ability.

#### **1.3.2. Definitions and Principals**

Brown gives his definition of CLT as “an approach to language teaching methodology that emphasizes authenticity, interaction, student-centered learning, taskbased activities, and communication for the real world, meaningful purposes.

Savignon writes that “CLT refers to both processes and goals in classroom learning” and that “the central theoretical concept in communicative language teaching. In regard to CLT, fluency is not stressed as much as successful communication. Willems believes that teachers need to train students to just communicate in the L2, not to be perfect in it.

As frequently misunderstood, CLT is not a method per se. That is to say, it is not a method in the sense by which content, a syllabus, and teaching routines are clearly identified. CLT has left its doors wide open for a great variety of methods and techniques. There is no single text or authority on it, nor any single model that is universally accepted as authoritative. By and large, it uses materials and utilizes methods that are appropriate to a given context of learning.

CLT has spawned various movements such as proficiency-based or standard-based instruction. While the early days of CLT were concerned with finding best designs and practices, the proficiency-based movement contributed to the field of language teaching by putting forward



a set of proficiency guidelines. These guidelines describe language ability and are meant to be used to measure competence in a language. In this sense, the proficiency-based movement focused on measuring what learners can do in functional terms.

### **1.3.2.1. The basic principles of communicative language teaching**

Principle 1: Teach communicative competence: grammatical competence plus the ability to use grammar appropriately. Whereas grammatical competence implies the ability to use the linguistic items correctly, communicative competence in addition involves the appropriate use of grammar.

Definition: Appropriateness is the ability to use language that is suitable for the particular.

Principle 2: Practice functions and forms in context-rich environments.

Meaning is expressed through functions and manifests itself in forms.

Definitions: Function is the purpose for which a language utterance is used in speech or writing. Form is the means by which a language utterance is used in speech or writing.

Principle 3: Make sure there are genuine needs, genuine partners and information gaps in the classroom. According to CLT, communication is elicited by needs, partners and information gaps.

Definition: An information gap occurs in a situation where information is known by only some of the interlocutors. Moreover, CLT claims that the classroom provides ample opportunity to create communicative situations.

Principle 4: Give priority to fluency over accuracy.

**Definitions:** Accuracy is the ability to use the language correctly.

Fluency is the ability to use the language spontaneously and effectively. As opposed to traditional methods, CLT regards fluency as the basic aim of language teaching, and thus fluency practice should precede accuracy practice. During fluency practice errors should be left uncorrected, as a rule.

Principle 5: Adopt a learner-centered attitude

A learner-centered attitude means that the teacher regards her students as partners.

The teacher's role changes in the three stages of the language teaching operation.

In the presentation stage, she acts as an informant;

In the practice stage, as a conductor;

In the production stage, she is rather a guide and a co-communicator.

### **1.3.3. Concept of communicative competence**

Communicative competence is defined as the ability to interpret and enact appropriate social behaviors, and it requires the active involvement of the learner in the production of the target language. Such a notion encompasses a wide range of abilities: the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (linguistic competence); the ability to say the appropriate thing in a certain social situation (sociolinguistic competence); the ability to start, enter, contribute to, and end a conversation, and the ability to do this in a consistent and coherent manner (discourse competence); the ability to communicate effectively and repair problems caused by communication breakdowns (strategic competence).

#### **1.3.3.1. Models of communicative competence**

This competence enables the speaker to use knowledge and skills needed for understanding and expressing the literal meaning of utterances. In line with Hymes's belief about the appropriateness of language use in a variety of social situations, the sociolinguistic competence in their model includes knowledge of rules and conventions which underlie the appropriate comprehension and language use in different sociolinguistic and socio-cultural contexts. Canale described discourse competence as mastery of rules that determine ways in which forms and meanings are combined to achieve a meaningful unity of spoken or written texts. The unity of a text is enabled by cohesion in form and coherence in meaning. Cohesion is achieved by the use of cohesion devices (e.g. pronouns, conjunctions, synonyms, parallel structures etc.) which help to link individual sentences and utterances to a structural whole. The means for achieving coherence, for instance repetition, progression, consistency, relevance of ideas etc., enable the organization of meaning, i.e. establish a logical relationship between groups of utterances. In the model of Canale and Swain, strategic competence is composed of knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that are recalled to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to insufficient competence in one or more components of communicative competence.

These strategies include paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, reluctance, avoidance of words, structures or themes, guessing, changes of register and style, modifications of messages etc. Moreover, the tendency to use this model, or refer to it, has remained even after Bachman and Bachman and Palmer proposed a much more comprehensive model of communicative

competence. The easiness with which the model of Canale and Swain can be applied is probably the main reason why many researchers of communicative competence still use it. Taking into consideration the results of prior theoretical and empirical research, in the late 1980s, Bachman proposed a new model of communicative competence or, more precisely, the model of communicative language ability. That model was, however, slightly altered by Bachman and Palmer in the mid 1990s.

According to Bachman and Palmer, many traits of language users such as some general characteristics, their topical knowledge, affective schemata and language ability influence the communicative language ability. The crucial characteristic is their language ability which is comprised of two broad areas – language knowledge and strategic competence.

Language knowledge consists of two main components – organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge which complement each other in achieving communicatively effective language use knowledge.

Pragmatic knowledge refers to abilities for creating and interpreting discourse. It includes two areas of knowledge: knowledge of pragmatic conventions for expressing acceptable language functions and for interpreting the illocutionary power of utterances or discourse (functional knowledge) and knowledge of sociolinguistic conventions for creating and interpreting language utterances which are appropriate in a particular context of language use (sociolinguistic knowledge). Strategic knowledge is conceived in the model as a set of metacognitive components which enable language user involvement in goal setting, assessment of communicative sources, and planning. Goal setting includes identifying a set of possible tasks, choosing one or more of them and deciding whether or not to attempt to complete them. Assessment is a means by which language use context is related to other areas of communicative language ability: topical knowledge and affective schemata. Planning involves deciding how to make use of language knowledge and other components involved in the process of language use to complete the chosen task successfully

#### **1.3.4 The Weaknesses of CLT**

Yet, inevitably, despite these outstanding characteristics, CLT also have weaknesses. Schmitt argued that CLT needs supportive vocabulary for functional language use but it gives little guidance about how to handle vocabulary. However, it has been now realized that mere exposure

to language and practice with functional communication will not ensure the proficiency in language learning, so current best practice includes “both a principled selection of vocabulary, often according to frequency lists, and an instruction methodology that encourages meaningful engagement with words over a number of recycling” .Stern also pointed out that CLT approach puts an excessive emphasis on the single concept “communication” so that “in order to account for all varieties and aspects of language teaching we either stretch the concept of communication so much that it loses any distinctive meaning, or we accept its limitations and then find ourselves in the predicament of the “method” solution” .Some people criticized that as CLT focus on learner-centred approach, while in some accounts of CLT, learners bring preconception of what teaching and learning should be like, which when unrealized can lead to learner confusion and resentment.

In addition, some people contended that CLT has not given an adequate account of EFL teaching despite its initial growth in foreign language teaching in Europe .Stern argued that one of the most difficult problems is making classroom learning communicative is the absence of native speakers. Apparently, CLT are more successful in English as a Second Language (ESL) context because students usually have a very supportive learning environment outside school. They have more chances to be exposed to the authentic contact with native speakers and the target language, which reinforces what they learn in class. Besides, they have the motivation to work on oral English because they need it in their lives. In contrast, in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, due to some physical limitations, such as the purpose of learning English, learning environments, teachers’ English proficiency, and the availability of authentic English materials, CLT meets much more difficulties during its application.

Confronted by language teachers but it has a great potential that gain the apparent popularity in language teaching and learning domain. It also needs to realize that there In summary, CLT cannot be seen as a panacea for the problems that have been isn’t a fix framework of CLT. As learners and the learning context are dynamic, when CLT is applied to a certain context, the adaptation and innovation of it is necessary.

### **1.3.5.Classroom Activities in CLT**

Since the advent of CLT, teachers and materials writers have sought to find ways of developing classroom activities that reflect the principles of a communicative methodology.

The principles on which the first generation of CLT materials are still relevant to language teaching today, so in this part we will briefly review the main activity types that were one of the outcomes of CLT.

### **1.3.6. Accuracy versus Fluency Activities**

One of the goals of CLT is to develop fluency in language use. Fluency is natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and ongoing communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence. Fluency is developed by creating classroom activities in which students must negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstandings, and work to avoid communication breakdowns.

Fluency practice can be contrasted with accuracy practice, which focuses on creating correct examples of language use. Differences between activities that focus on fluency and those that focus on accuracy can be summarized as follows:

### **1.3.7. Information-Gap Activities**

Important aspect of communication in CLT is the notion of information gap. This refers to the fact that in real communication, people normally communicate in order to get information they do not possess. This is known as an information gap. More authentic communication is likely to occur in the classroom if students go beyond practice of language forms for their own sake and use their linguistic and communicative resources in order to obtain information.

### **1.3.8. Other Activity Types in CLT**

Many other activity types have been used in CLT, including the following:

**Task-completion activities:** puzzles, games, map-reading, and other kinds of classroom tasks in which the focus is on using one's language resources to complete a task.

**Information-gathering activities:** student-conducted surveys, interviews, and searches in which students are required to use their linguistic resources to collect information.

**Opinion-sharing activities:** activities in which students compare values, opinions, or beliefs, such as a ranking task in which students list six qualities in order of importance that they might consider in choosing a date or spouse.

**Information-transfer activities:** These require learners to take information that is presented in one form, and represent it in a different form. For example, they may read instructions on how to

get from A to B, and then draw a map showing the sequence, or they may read information about a subject and then represent it as a graph.

**Reasoning-gap activities:** These involve deriving some new information from given information through the process of inference, practical reasoning, etc. For example, working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of given class timetables.

**Role plays:** activities in which students are assigned roles and improvise a scene or exchange based on given information or clues.

### **1.3.9 Teachers and Students Role in CLT**

In communicative language teaching several roles are assumed for a teacher. According to Breen and Candlin (1980) cited in Richards and Rodgers (1986), a teacher is facilitator of the communication process, needs analyst, counselor, and process manager. The CLT teacher assumes a responsibility for determining and responding to learner language needs. The teacher has the responsibility to use text-based, task based and realia effectively in his/her classroom. The roles of teachers and learners are in many ways, complementary. Giving the learners a different role requires the teacher to adopt a different role. Language teacher plays active and effective role in need analysis, goal setting, syllabus design, using appropriate methodology and assessing students' progress.. According to Atkins et al (1996), research shows that teachers can positively influence students' understanding of lessons by asking questions, by giving students the chance to ask and answer questions, and more generally by promoting an atmosphere in which participation is encouraged. Learning is an active developmental process in which learners use their existing knowledge to make sense of the flow of new information.

Generally, the roles of the teacher and the learner can be seen in relation to their contributions to the learning process in terms of the activities they are required to carry out. Moreover, these role relationships between teachers and learners determine the type of interaction characteristics of the classroom. Therefore, the types of language classrooms in different methods are characterized by different patterns of interaction as a result of the variation in teacher and learner roles in line with the expectations in the teaching-learning process.

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

There are a number of researches done on the implementation and application of CLT in the classroom in Malaysia and other countries. The studies focus on various aspects of CLT such as on the pedagogical aspects of CLT and teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards CLT. In Malaysia, Mohamed Ismail Ahamad Shah and Normala Othman (2006) investigate learners' modified output in CLT classrooms. In this study, the researchers examine teachers' questions and students' answers during classroom interaction. Their study reveals that teachers do not provide a lot of opportunities for the students' production of modified output.

Faridah Musa et.al (2011) investigates the potentials of project-based learning in developing students' language and communication skills. They report that project-based learning approach has succeeded in developing students' language and communication skills in all four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, the findings also reveal language and communication problems faced by the students.

Harison Mohd Sidek (2012) studies English language curriculum for secondary school in Malaysia in relation to communicative approach. The focus of the study is on EFL reading instructional approach based on Communicative Task-Based Language Teaching (CTBLT) characteristics. The finding of the study shows that the curriculum is highly lacking communicative task-based approach characteristics. In other countries, for example South Korea, The findings of these studies provide useful information on the implementation of CLT in the second or foreign language classrooms. Not only that they give us better understanding on the principles of CLT in its theoretical aspect, but also more importantly on the pedagogical aspects through the teachers' application of CLT in the classrooms which is reflected in their classroom practices. The findings also yield to the understanding of psychological and sociological aspects of both teachers and students in the CLT classrooms. All these findings are vital as they would contribute to the success, or failure, of Communicative Language Teaching in the classrooms.

## **2.1. An overview of English teaching in IRAN**

This is a study to investigate English Language Teaching (ELT) in Iran as well as the extent of its compatibility with communicative pedagogy. It has been accepted that language is more than a simple system of rules. Language is now generally seen as a dynamic resource for the creation of meaning. This section consists of teaching in Iran and how English has been taught so far. The section ends with a detailed account of the current curriculum imposed by the Ministry of

Education in Iran. This information is provided here in order to provide context for the choices made in this study.

## **2.2. Currents English Teaching curriculum in Iran**

Now, English is still taught for seven years of junior and senior high schools with roughly the same methodology and practices that it had under previous educational system. Iranian educational system policy for English mostly centers on grammar and reading –elements incommensurate with the ever – increasing demand of society. Language practices are often based on language usage rather than language use. As a result, students are not proficient in the contexts required for using English as a global language.

### **2.2.1. Teaching English as public schools**

English as introduced only in junior high school and for three years it is taught a very basic level. In high school, it is studied for three to four hours a week for three years as one of the main courses of study. The proclaimed purpose of this course is to enable students to read simple English texts and improve their reading comprehension through passages built around newly introduced vocabulary items.

After high school at this level, students are taught English for four hours a week on a credit semester system. And in last year of high school English textbooks mainly depend on the Reading Method. Students are provided with English texts, often selected from interest sources, to make them familiar with authentic materials and to increase their reading comprehension.

### **2.2.2. Teaching English at Universities**

As the language of scientific communication, English is a key subject in the university curriculum. English Teaching at the university level can be divided into two parts. The first part, called general English, is presented to students of all majors. The second is more focused on English for specific purposes such as English for engineering, English for medical science or English for law, providing students with the opportunity to learn concepts and term that are related to their specific fields. Moreover, English is studied at university in its own right, as separated field, with three branches: Translation, Literature, and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). In line with more progressive views about learning and teaching languages, Linguistics has been added to these majors.

### **2.2.3 Teaching English at private institutions**



With the increasing attention given to English as the medium of scientific communication, it seems that the country's public sector is currently not able to fulfill the needs of language learners adequately. To rectify these insufficiencies, the private sector as a secondary body in the educational system of the country, has shouldered the responsibility of helping the public sector meet the country's demand. We have already noted that the Iran America Society was the first private language institute where English was taught as the only subject matter. After the Islamic revolution, the title Iran America Society was changed to Iran Language Institute (ILI), as its objectives and curriculum were redefined according to ideological orientation of the newly established government. After several years, in response to the undeniable necessity of learning English, many private institutions were established across the country for this purpose, given the public schools could not meet rising demand. A variety of English courses are available at private institutions to learners of various ages through different curricula now.

### 2.3 Education in Iran

Table1. Iranian Education Period

age	Level of education (Persian)	Duration	US degree equivalent	Remarks
5-6	Pre primary	1 year		Optional. 50% of children at that age are enrolled in pre-
7-13	Elementary education/ <i>Dabestan</i>	6 years		<a href="#">Middle school</a> /orientation cycle
13-15	Lower-secondary/ <i>Rahn amayi</i>	3 years (K-12)	<a href="#">Middle school</a> /orientation cycle	Mandatory (6-8th grade). The aim of this level of education is to figure out the capabilities and skills of a child so that the education system could guide her or him to the most appropriate track after the end of compulsory education.
15-18(or older)	Upper-secondary/ <i>Dabir</i>	3 years (K-12)	<a href="#">High school diploma</a> ( <i>Dipl</i>	In Iran, upper-secondary education is NOT compulsory. By 2010, 80% of

	<i>estan</i>		<i>om-Metevaseth)</i>	<p>children aged between 14 and 17 were enrolled. Approximately 6% of upper secondary institutions are private.<sup>[3]</sup> These schools must conform to the regulations of the <a href="#">Ministry of Education</a>, though they are financed primarily through tuition fees received from students. There are three school types: the theoretical branch, the technical-vocational/professional branch, and the manual skills branch (Kar-Danesh). The latter two prepare students to directly enter the job market in the trading, agricultural, industrial professions. The Kar-Danesh track develops semi-skilled and skilled workers, foremen, and supervisors. Besides, each path has its own specialties (e.g. 'math/physics'; 'experimental sciences' or 'literature/humanities' in the case of the theoretical path).</p>
17-19 (or older)	Technical/ <a href="#">Vocational School</a> OR (see below)	2 years	Baccalaureate ( <i>Fogh-e-Diplom</i> or <i>Kārdāni</i> )	Students are able to study two more years in tertiary education, which provides them with the skills to become a highly skilled technician and receive an “integrated associate degree”
18-22(or older)	University	4 years	<a href="#">Bachelor degree</a> ( <i>Kārsh enāsiar Licence</i> )	Academic year: September through June. Students attend classes Saturday through Thursday. Academic term divided in 2 ' <a href="#">semesters</a> ' and ' <a href="#">course credits</a> '. Universities receive their

				budget money from the state, and students normally do not pay for tuition and
22-24 (or older)	University	2 years	<a href="#">Master degree</a> ( <i>Kārsh enāsi-ye Arshad</i> or <i>Fogh Licence</i> )	Iran hosts some of the most prestigious universities in the Middle East such as <a href="#">Tehran University</a> , <a href="#">Sharif University</a> , and <a href="#">Tarbiat Modares University</a>
24-27 (or older)	Doctoral program	3 years	PhD( <i>Karshe nasi-arshad-napayvasteh</i> or <i>Doctora</i> )	Students are admitted following an entrance exam. See also: <a href="#">Higher education in Iran</a> .

### 3. Methodology

This chapter presents an overview of the research methodology. It contains an account of the procedures used in the study, including research design, selection and description of the participants, setting, instruments used for data collection, data analysis and trustworthiness of the study.

Some mixed methods writers consider this form of research a methodology and focus on the philosophical assumptions (e.g., Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). To call it a methodology introduces a complexity (some would say a needed complexity) to the process of research. Unquestionably, all research approaches have underlying philosophical assumptions that guide the inquirer. Other mixed methods writers emphasize the techniques or methods of collecting and analyzing data (e.g., Creswell, Plano Clark, et al., 2003; Greene, Caraceli, & Graham, 1989; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). To call mixed methods research a “method” is clean and concise and resonates with many researchers (Elliot, 2005). It has been called “multitrait/multimethod research” (Campbell & Fiske, 1959), which recognizes the collection of several quantitative methods in a single investigation; “integrated” or “combined,” in the sense that two forms of data are blended together (Steckler, McLeroy, Goodman, Bird, & McCormick,

1992); and “quantitative and qualitative methods” (Fielding & Fielding, 1986), which acknowledges that the approach is actually a combination of methods.

In this study, the mixed methodology helped explain the Iranian EFL teachers’ perceived difficulties in the implementation of CLT with the help of the survey questionnaire, and with the five help of the follow-up interviews the difficulties and challenges that were not covered by the questionnaire were revealed. This was a major tool used in this study to gather data. Data were collected through written survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with the participants. The use of these two data collection instruments helped validate both the answers in the questionnaires and interviews.

### 3.1. Participants

The participants for this study were thirty Iranian teachers of English teaching at secondary level and Advance, both male and female aged from 30 to 45 were chosen through different schools and institutes in Mazandaran province. These participants were asked to complete questionnaire, and five of them were asked to participate in the succeeding interview.

Table2. Gender ratio of survey participants

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	10	33.3
Male	20	66.6
Total	30	100

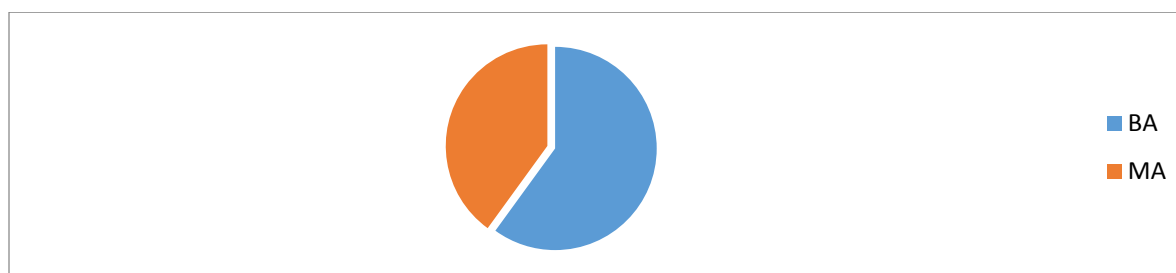
With respect to the age range, the majority of the participants (30%) are to35to40 years old whereas eightof them (23%) are recent graduates of colleges who are aged between 20 and 25. Five participants are in their early thirties while three have 36 to 40 years of age. The remaining fiveparticipants are 40 to 45 years old.

As with the teaching experience of the participants, it varies from four years to 20 years. Among the participants, 10teachers have 5-10years of teaching experience, seven of them have 4-6 years of experience, six have 10-12years, yet four others have 12-14 years of teaching experience. The remaining three participants have been teaching for 17 or more years.

**Table3.** Teaching experience of survey participants

4-6 years	7	
6-10 years	10	
10-12years	6	
12-14years	4	
14or more years	3	
Total	30	100

Regarding the academic degrees earned by the participants eighteen of them hold a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree majoring in *English language teaching, and literatures*, and *Translation* programs. The rest of the twelve teachers are holders of either Master of Arts (MA) master of education degree.



**Figuer1.**Academic degrees of survey participants

### 3.2. Instruments

Given the purpose of this study, mixed methods research seems to be the most appropriate research methodology to be used. It is not only significant to document Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions regarding CLT use in their classrooms, but it is also crucial to determine how their teaching context, in this case an EFL environment, affected and shaped their perceptions. In this study, mainly two types of data collection methods were used: a written survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. These instruments permitted the participant teachers to identify in their own terms what aspects of their particular context they perceived to be constraining in implementing CLT.

### 3.3.Data Analysis

As the initial step in analyzing the data for this study, I read through all the information gathered from the completed questionnaires and the transcripts of the interviews. The questionnaire data analysis included the analysis of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were analyzed with the help of the statistical analysis software program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Frequency calculations (i.e. how many teachers selected each answer) were used to produce descriptive central tendency statistics that were used to present an overall picture of the teachers' perceptions of CLT, and the difficulties and problems that they faced in their attempts to implement CLT in English classrooms. In analyzing the qualitative interview data, I used content analysis technique, which can be described as drawing up a list of coded categories and each segment of transcribed data into one of these categories. Content analysis enables researchers to shift through large volumes of data with relative ease in a systematic fashion. It also allows inferences to be made which then can be corroborated using other methods of data collection (Merriam, 2001).

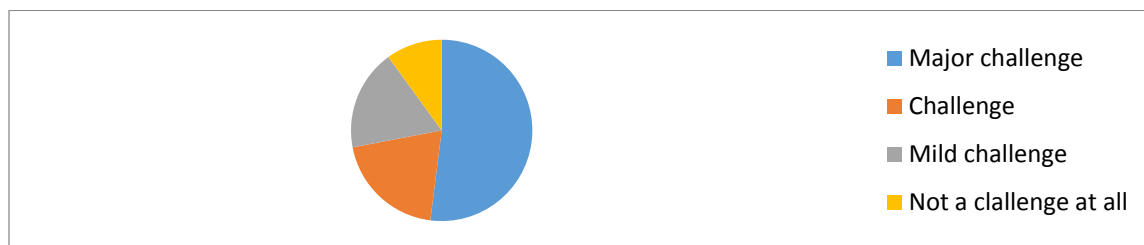
#### **4. Findings of the study**

The following part relates to the teachers' perceived difficulties in implementing the CLT approach in a Iranian context. For convenience, this part has further been divided into three categories: Teachers' lack of proficiency in English, work load and their understanding of the implementation of the CLT approach and Lack of exposure were included in this part. The result of the three items is evident. These items are a genuine concern of the teachers in implementing the CLT approach.

##### **4.1 Lack of Exposure**

Major problem reported by respondents was heavily-loaded English teaching program. Teachers were concerned that they were supposed to cover too many language items, i.e. essentially grammar points, in a limited period of time. This being so, they essentially had to skip activities that focused on productive language skills such as speaking and writing so that they could cover the necessary grammar points in a timely fashion. It was highlighted by the respondents that finishing all the grammar points on time was vital in that students were tested only on grammar in nationwide standardized tests that they were supposed to take at the end of each school year.

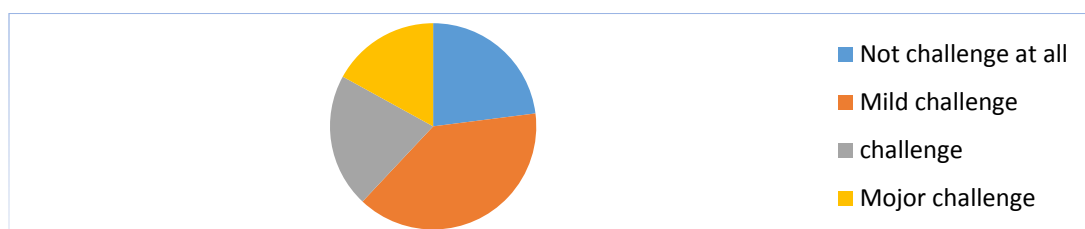
So in this part remember that heavily loaded program and lack of time that mix to each other lead to the major problem of the teacher.



**Figuer2.**lack of exposure and material

#### 4.2 Misconception about CLT

The majority of the teachers confirmed that misconceptions about CLT were not truly obstacles for them to make use of communicative activities in their classes. 46% of the respondents believed that misleading notions about CLT served only as a mild challenge. Further, 30% teachers indicated that they were not a challenge at all while 17% respondents noted that those misconceptions about CLT were serious barriers to implement CLT successfully in English classes.



**Figure3.**misconception about CLT

## 5. Conclusion

It may be concluded that a number of constraints have made it difficult for CLT to be integrated into English teaching classrooms in Iran ; 76%of the respondent revealed that one of themain reasons is lack of time and energy to formulate communicative teaching materials andactivities due to teacher heavy workload; 57%% teachers' mentioned that the resources are notsufficient to meet the needs of such a huge program. Given that there are too many students whoneed to learn English but not enough number of teachers, students is placed, particularly inpublic schools, into large English classrooms. Accordingly, English instruction is mostly limitedto traditional large-group instruction where grammar is given a high significance while oral skillssuch as listening

and speaking are neglected. This being the case, students learning English formany years at school cannot communicate effectively and efficiently with English speakers. Attention should be shifted towards other language skills such as listening, speaking, and writing. From this perspective, students' communicative abilities can be more effectively represented in the selection and placement instruments. Therefore, the most essential and useful way to implement CLT is to provide in-service teachers with opportunities to retrain themselves in CLT.

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## **Title**

# **A Politico– Critical Discourse Analysis: The Study of Coercive Strategies employed in the first inaugural addresses of American Presidents (Bush and Obama)**

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## **Abstract**

Political speeches, the purpose of which is primarily persuasion rather than information or entertainment can be seen as purposeful interactions between the speaker and the audience, in which the communication intention of the speaker to manipulate the addressees to accept the speaker's views and support his/her suggestions. The main concern of this study is to investigate coercive strategies employed by the two American presidents (George W. Bush and Barack Obama) in their first inaugural addresses. In carrying out the study the researcher used the qualitative research method to analyze the data in terms of coercive discourse patterns such as binaries, collective pronouns, lexical reiteration, intertextuality and deontic modality. More specifically, the study aimed to answer the following research question: 1. Do they (the two presidents) employ coercive discourse patterns in their first inaugural speeches? 2. Which one is more coercive than

the other in persuading the audience in his quest to garner popular support for his policies and legitimacy in their implementation? the result of the study shows that Both presidents use coercive discourse patterns extraordinarily in their addresses. However, the main contrast is that Bush uses more binaries through setting opposite options and is more exclusive in his concepts in the sense that his ideology is to create self/ other construct and ‘we’ / ‘they’ mentality. Obama is more interested in persuading Americans to follow his ideals and policies through arousing sense of togetherness and inclusiveness.

**Keywords:** Coercive Discourse, Binaries, Intertextuality, Deontic Modality

## **1.Introduction**

### **1.1 . Background and aim**

Political speeches, the purpose of which is primarily persuasive rather than information or entertainment, can be seen as a purposeful interaction between the speaker and the audience, in which the communicative intention of the speaker is to manipulate the addressees to accept the speaker’s views and support his/her suggestions.

In order to achieve this intention, the speaker uses discourse strategies and a variety of related linguistic resources aimed at creating credible representation of him/herself, aligning him/herself with the views of others claiming solidarity with the audience, modulating power relations and legitimizing the proposed ideology and course of action.

The aim of this study is to explore coercive strategies used in the inaugural speeches of the two American Presidents(Bush and Obama) to see which one is more coercive than the other and whose political speech can best rally people behind their principles. In doing so, the researcher has analyzed the speeches in terms of coercive discourse patterns such as binaries, collective pronouns, lexical reiterations, intertextuality, deontic modality.

### **1.2. Organization of the study**

The analysis in this study is presented in three phases. For each coercive discourse pattern the inaugural address of Bush has been analyzed. Secondly, in the same section, the inaugural speech of Obama is analyzed regarding the same strategic patterns. Thirdly, the coercive strategies used in the two speeches are compared to see the similarities and differences.

## **2. Methods and materials**

### **2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis**

Many social theorists, such as Bernstein, Bourdieu, Derride, Gramsci, Foucault, Giddens and Habermas have drawn attention to the key role of language in society. However, as Fairclough (2003) has pointed out, these theorists have not examined the linguistic features of text. Critical discourse analysis, on the other hand, has sought to bring together social theory and textual analysis. As a mainstream critical social theory, the aim of CDA is to uncover hidden assumptions and debunk their claims to authority.

Following Hegel, however, criticism is not simply a negative judgment, but has a positive emancipator function. CDA thus has a specific agenda in bringing about social change, or at least supporting struggle against inequality (Van Dijk, 2001).

For Fairclough (2003) an important dimension of context is inter – textuality, (Kristeva 1981) following Bakhtin (1986) how one text inter- relates with other texts. In the study of context, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) refer to the historical dimensions, knowing about the historical socio – political situation in which a text is produced. Critical discourse analysis examines the use of discourse in relation to social and cultural issues such as race, politics, gender, and identity and asks why the discourse is used in a particular way and what the implications are of this kind of use.

Critical discourse analysis explores the connection between the use of language and the social and political contexts in which it occurs. It explores issues such as gender, ethnicity, cultural differences, ideology, and identity and how these are both constructed and reflected in texts. It also investigates ways in which language constructs and is constructed by social relationships. A critical analysis may include a detailed textual analysis and move from there to an explanation and interpretation of the analysis.

According to Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) in conducting critical discourse analysis, the analyst may use the following concepts or tools and explores them in order to achieve his/her assumed objectives:

1. Central vs peripheral processing
2. Use of heuristics
3. Ideology
4. Reading position
5. Naturalization, “common sense “

6. reproduction- resistance hegemony
7. Cultural models and myths; master narrative
8. Intertextuality
9. Context; contrast effects
10. Communication ethos
11. Vividness
12. Repetition
13. Face work
14. Type of argument
15. Interests
16. Agenda – setting

Fairclough and Wodak(1997) describe a number of principles for critical discourse analysis which underlie many of the studies done in this area. These include:

1. Social and political issues are constructed and reflected in discourse
2. Power relations are negotiated and performed through discourse
3. Discourse both reflects and reproduces social relations
4. Ideologies are produced and reflected in the use of discourse

## **2.2 Materials**

In order to evaluate the political discourses of Barack Obama and George W. Bush, I have chosen to look at two inaugural speeches. Obama's speech was delivered on 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2009, and Bush's speech on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2001. The reason I have chosen their first inaugural speeches is that their second speeches often are influenced by their first terms of presidency, and may be evaluated or misinterpreted by regarding the effect of many things involved.

## **2.3 Research Questions**

1. Do they(the two presidents) employ coercive discourse patterns in their first inaugural speeches?
2. Which one is more coercive than the other in persuading the audience in his quest to garner popular support for his policies and legitimacy in their implementations?

## **3. Data Analysis: the analysis of data in terms of binary discourse strategy**

### **3.1 The use of binaries in Bush's 2001 inaugural address**

Binary elements revealing coercive discourse in Bush's speech revolve around a number of thematic issues which according to Coe et al(2004) can be referred to as central organizing objects. The thematic issues Bush uses are directly or indirectly involve the terms like freedom, liberty, democracy, high ideals, etc. By creating antitheses – through his speech regarding these terminologies – Bush creates dichotomous, either – or, all or nothing situations.

In fact, explicit binary discourse presents the world in absolute opposites which prompts the culture of insiderism Vis – a – Vis outsiderism. It is basically an exclusionist strategy which condemns to the periphery those who dare oppose the ideology espoused in the inaugural address. This kind of discourse is essentially Manichean discourse in that it leaves no space for hybrid personalities or those who occupy neutral spaces. According to Coe,K. (2004), binaries connote a strength too predominant that powerfully suggests that if one position is right, then the other must be wrong. As said (1998) observes ‘underlying these categories is the rigidly binominal opposition of ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’.

When Bush says “the peaceful transfer of authority is rare in history, yet common in our country .....” through using the lexical items ‘rare ’and ‘common ’that are opposite lexical items, Bush subtly elevates the moral standing of the Americans as well as the uniqueness of their political system. The rest of the world that are lagging far behind the United States should follow the American model of democracy lest they will risk being branded as politically deficient.

Regarding the theme of freedom, in his speech, Bush uses five direct references to freedom, indirectly it is also referred to as such terms as liberty, and liberation. In pursuit of this theme, Bush extensively uses binaries. The following paragraph highlights this strategic use of binaries: It is the story of a new world that became a friend and liberator of the old, a story of a slave-holding society that became a servant of freedom. The story of a power that went into the world to protect but not possess, to defend but not to conquer.

Here, Bush employing the oxymoronic features such as new world and old world, slave-holding society and servant of freedom, protect and possess and defend viz-a-viz conquer, tries to use binary strategies completely with the centrality of freedom. The audience is compelled to identify with Bush’s ideals. For him, America is the representative of the new world which is a willing servant of freedom and a power that protects and defends its citizens and other vulnerable societies.

Those who do not subscribe to this philosophy are inevitably associated with the subaltern ‘other’. These binaries used by Bush, do not widen the options, but limit the choices. In this regard, one cannot be indifferent or assume other options.

Since the theme of security is closely related to the theme of freedom, and Bush claims that America is the custodian of the world security and freedom. According to Bush:

“If our country does not lead the cause of freedom, it will not be led.”

Bush represents America as a policeman of the world whose duty is to guarantee world security and liberty.

In another paragraph Bush states:

We will build our defense beyond challenge, lest weakness invite challenge. We will confront weapons of mass destruction, so that a new century is spared new horrors. The enemies of liberty and our country should make no mistakes. America remains engaged in the world, by history and by choice shaping a balance of power that favors freedom.

Bush through creating the battle lines between those who love freedom and those who hate it, speaks with a tone of aggression and finality. This is a hegemonic discourse coercing audience. President forces the audience to embrace his vision. Bush feels that America has moral responsibility to export its cherished ideals of freedom to other countries that are conceived as less democratic. When Bush equals the enemies of liberty with the enemies of America, he creates an exclusive binary atmosphere of ‘self’ and ‘other’. There is no middle of the road choice or option to the rest of the world. They should either rally behind American ideals or be American foes.

In another part of his speech Bush states:

We will defend our allies and our interests. We will show purpose without arrogance. We will meet aggression and bad faith with resolve and strength. And to all nations, we will speak for the values that gave our Nation Birth.

In this statement the president uses curt and crisp elements that give prominence to his nonnegotiable stance against those forces that seek to threaten America’s security in particular and world security in general.

There are many occasions that Bush tries to construct the self/other dichotomy and the construct of the enemy as the other. For example, there is a sentence:

“When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you.”

Here Bush draws on the idea of the United States as the granter for freedom and that the rest of the world is either with it or against it.

In another paragraph Bush evidently states that:

The concerted effort of free nations to promote democracy is a prelude to our enemies defeat.

This sentence also contributes to the creation of the enemy as the other. One might see it as a softer version of the infamous quote “Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists”( Bush quoted in Merskin, 2004).

There are cases in Bush’s speech where he associates his philosophy with American ideals. In this way he tries to persuade the people to follow his plans and in this way he limits the options. For example Bush states:

America has never been united by blood or birth or soil. We are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests and teach us what it meant to be citizens. Every child must be taught these principles. Every citizens must uphold them.

There are three issues that emerge from this quotation. Firstly, the ideals which define the nation of America are presented as enduring since they have stood the test of time. Secondly’ the audience is compelled to uphold these ideals since they define their identity. Thirdly, the audience feels obliged to execute policies that are meant to safeguard and perpetuate the ideals which define America with a sense of urgency. Bush through associating his policies to the ideals of American people. And by using the intertextuality attempts to rein in the American populace within the framework of his vision. His is in line with Bettinghaus (1980) observation that “persuasion is an attempt to control one’s environment and people are an important part of that environment.”

Again Bush says:

Now we must choose if the example of our fathers and mothers will inspire us or condemn us. We must show courage in a time of blessing by confronting problems instead of passing them on to future generations.

Through appealing to the commitment of the nation to preserve the heritage of their old generations, Bush makes use of this commitment to compel the audience to support his vision by setting two opposing options. Moreover, the use of ‘*must*’ and ‘*will*’ excludes the possibility of more choices and is essentially coercive. Addressing the citizens of the nation, Bush retorts “I ask you to be citizens: citizens not spectators, citizens not subjects, responsible citizens building communities of service. And a nation of character.



Here Bush uses coercive discourse by using binary patterns creating opposite positions to choose from: citizens as defined by Bush stand against subjects, spectators, and irresponsible persons.

### **3.2 The use of binaries in Obama's 2009 inaugural address**

In his speech, Obama, through referring to the background of American history, tries to use a coercive strategy to rally people of America behind his own vision:

At these moments, America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because we the people remained faithful to the ideals of our forebears and true to our founding documents. So it has been; so it must be with this generation of America.

Through limiting choices. Obama claims that the only option ahead of American generation is to follow the example of the ideals of their forebears and old generations.

When Obama mentioned some problems of the country, he said:

They are serious, and they are many, they will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, American: they will be met.

Here Obama, uses a binary discourse to persuade the civilians to follow his vision in economy, politics, and other areas.

The president says:

Our journey has never been one of shortcuts for those who prefer leisure over work or seek only the pleasure of riches and fame. Rather it has been the risk – takers – the doers, the makers of things.....By using the 'journey' metaphor and present perfect tense, Obama tries to justify his policy that it is in line with the American ideals that started years ago and that people of America should support his government and policies, lest they are condemned to be stigmatized as lazy, inactive consumers.

The president says:

Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin the work of remaking America.

Through reminding of his election slogan (change) Obama apportions responsibility to American people to support his view of change, and remaking the country. This is another binary strategy that erases other middle of the road options and categorizes people into just two

categories: Those who will support him and those who will be indifferent regarding American ideals envisioned in Obama's philosophy.

Again, somewhere in his speech, Obama, refers to the 'journey' metaphor, warns his opponents not to be short of memory or narrow-minded. He states that:

Now, there are some who question the scale of our ambitions, who suggest that our system cannot tolerate too many big plans. Their memories are short for they have forgotten what this country has already done.

Most of Obama's binary patterns, are addressed to the American citizens in an attempt to persuade the pragmatic society to be united in following his policy. They are all inclusive patterns in the sense that while they set limited options ahead of citizens, their main objectives are bringing the people from all walks in brotherhood and unity, and to be one hand against their internal and external enemies. However, there are a few cases that Obama like Bush uses binaries as more exclusive patterns in an attempt to threaten his enemies both within the United States and in the world in general. He states that:

And so to all the other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to small village where my father was born, know that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman, and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity and we are ready to lead once more.

The president confesses the ambition of America as a policeman of the world, tries to convince other nations to be supporters of American ideals and American-type democracy; otherwise, they can be grouped as supporters of terrorism and dictatorship.

In a rather serious tone Obama says:

To the Muslims of the world, we seek a new way forward based on mutual interest and mutual respect, ...To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict or blame their society's ills in the west, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.

Obama feels that America has a moral responsibility to export its cherished ideals of freedom to other nations and countries that are less democratic, and other nations and leaders should make

no mistake and they have no other choice in front of them. They should be with American side and support its ideals and follow its model or else, they are enemies of the America and should wait the bad consequences.

Again Obama states that:

To the people of poor nations – we pledge to work alongside you to make farms flourish and let clean waters flow, to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds ....

The president visualizes an ideal country with full resources in the minds of the other people in other nations of the world, to convince them to value the ideals of Americans and be the supporters of American policy. This arises from the post- colonial view that has roots in colonialism and this shows that Obama uses this strategy to convince other nations that if they are ruled by American leadership, the result will be prosperity and well-being.

**3.4. Coercion by the use of collective pronouns (we, us,. Our , ...)** Collective pronouns such as ‘we’, ‘us’, and ‘our’ foster a collective approach to both presidents’ visions and governing principles. These are totalizing strategies which are aimed at obliterating differences and depicting the American society as homogeneous. In their speeches, they use pronoun ‘we’ overwhelmingly and that cannot be coincidental, but a well-calculated strategy designed to the presidents’ propositions. These are politically loaded pronouns that have intentional referents. America by its nature is a heterogeneous society in terms of race, religion, nationalities, and other elements.

Where the presidents feel that they need the support of all the Americans in order to achieve their objectives of militarization for example, they psyche up the audience. The effect of the inclusive ‘we’ as Fairclough(2001) notes is to assimilate the people to the leader or leadership. In so doing, the speaker demonstrates that he has authority to speak on behalf of others and indeed all right-minded Americans. In addition to this, Shea(1995) maintains that the speaker uses collective pronouns to bond himself with the audience .For any political leader this bond is priceless.

The use of ‘we’ and other collective pronouns is ubiquitous in the speech, when referring to the encouragement of reform in government it is evident that it is an exclusive ‘we ‘. When it comes to defining who ‘we’ refers to, it may be understood as the citizens of the U.S.A. it creates a feeling of togetherness under one national identity. Another aspect of the usage of pronoun ‘we’ is that it represents the world as a place of polar opposites (Coe et al., 2004). When for

example Bush says “when you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you”, he draws on the idea of the united states as the granter for freedom and that the rest of the world is either with it or against it.

The analysis of data showed that the number of collective pronouns used in Obamas speech, was as follows:

‘we’ = 55 times                      ‘our’ = 74 times                      ‘us’ = 18 times

However, In Bush’s speech the number was as follows:

‘we’ = 43 times                      ‘our’ = 44 times                      ‘us’ = 8 times

As it was mentioned, the main function of collective pronoun is to create a feeling of togetherness, to arouse a sense of patriotism in audience(the citizens of the USA) to be in line with the speaker’s notions and ideology. It is evident that Obama is interested in this aspect of collective pronouns. Obama’s usage of collective pronouns is “inclusive”. However, most of Bush’s usage of collective pronouns are “exclusive”. The exclusive usage or aspect of collective pronoun creates self/other concept and that can be related to coercive binary concept formation.

Although both presidents are over ally consistent in the use of collective pronouns, there are situations where they notably deviate from this strategy by creating some distance between themselves and the audience. Typical examples which appear in both addresses are the use of the first person singular pronoun ‘I’/‘my’ and the imperative use of the second person pronoun ‘you’. However, Bush used the two pronouns(I and You) more than Obama in his speech. The following statement illustrates the use of ‘I’:

We do not accept this, and we will not allow it. Our unity, our nation, our union is the serious work of leaders and citizens in every generation. And this is my solemn pledge. I will work to build a single nation of justice and opportunity.

In the first part of the quotation, Bush identifies himself with the audience in advancing the cause of unity and liberty. In the second part, he abandons the audience and elevates himself to the higher position in the fight for the same principle.

What you do is as important as anything government does. I ask you to seek a common good beyond your comfort; to defend needed reforms against easy attacks; to serve your nation beginning with your neighbor. I ask you to be citizens.....

Here Bush apportions the responsibility to the people through the imperative pronoun ‘you’.

It is evident that Bush exploits three sources of persuasion mentioned by Aristotle more successfully than Obama through using 'I', 'you', and 'we'.

Medhurst(1996) confirms the Aristotelian view that a speaker exploits three sources of persuasion namely ethos(character of the speaker), logos( reasonableness and rationality of speaker's arguments) and pathos(appeal to emotions and feelings).

### **3.5. Lexical reiteration is another strategy**

Basically, lexical reiteration is a repetitive use of certain words or phrases in a text in order to achieve maximum effect on the audience. Lexical selection, good diction, and the repetition of those words are not haphazardly in the speeches made by presidents. They are required to use some words in their inaugural speeches. Repetition of some special words and associating them with their mottos and visions make them to be remembered easily by the audience. Moreover, this can be persuasive and coercive discourse since the audience in a way are obliged to follow the president's plans.

The analysis of data shows that in the speech made by Bush, the most frequently used and reiterated words are: America, Nation, Citizens, liberty, Freedom, Today, People, Unity.

Also in the speech made by Obama are: America. Nation, Citizens, New, Generation, American, Free, People, Peace, Unity, Now,

It can be noticed that there are some words that are reiterated and are similar in the speeches of both presidents and they are called "buzz words".

The words like these and the emphasis on the repetition of these words, arouse US citizens' sense of patriotism and have special effect on people's attitudes toward the president's policies and ideas.

The analysis showed that both presidents are more or less similar in using this strategy. The only difference that can be seen in this regard is that the word "new" has been used more in the Speech made by Obama than in Bush's speech and this word reflects the election campaign slogan of Obama "change we can believe in".

### **3.6. Deontic modality as coercive discourse pattern**

Where the presidents want to show personal commitment to proposed policies and cherished American ideals, and to instill the same commitment to the populace, they make extensive use of deontic modality. According to Steele et al cited in Palmer(1986)deontic modality refers to'....

Probability or the related notion of obligation, certainty or the related notion of requirement'. In the two addresses the modality is marked by the words must and will. It is interesting that both presidents used nearly the same number of will and must. Bush used 30 times and Obama used 31 times. As an example Bush states that:

Now we must choose if the example of our fathers and mothers will inspire us or condemn us. We must show courage in a time of blessing by confronting problems instead of passing them on to future generations.

In this instance modality is mainly related to the notion of obligation and requirement. The use of must and will excludes the possibility of choice and is essentially coercive.

Also, as an example from Obama's speech is the following sentence:

We will restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost.

The core message is to ask the citizens to be aware of their duties, responsibilities, commitments and requirements to themselves, to their nation, and to the world. This is a persuasive tone rather than a mere suggestion.

### **3.7. Intertextuality as a coercive strategy**

Intertextuality helps the discourse be memorable, provocative, and persuasive, through relating it to another well-known text or idea or event in history, literature, and religion. Although quotations from US history – speaking to ages – is one of the requirements of US presidential inaugural addresses in order to legitimize the proposed ideology and vision, they make use of more of intertextuality of different types. In this regard Obama makes direct reference to the Holy Bible when saying that 'time has come to set aside childish things'.

However, Bush uses indirect reference to the Holy Bible. Reference to the US history and historical events that are highly valued by Americans, is another type or aspect of intertextuality as a coercive discourse to help the speaker's visions to be associated with the American history and background. Also, reference to the literary and artistic works is another type of intertextuality that can be seen in inaugural speeches.

Intertextuality may have different sources in the speeches made by US presidents in their inaugural addresses. Religion, US history, and literary or artistic works are among the sources. Use of religion that is common in the speeches of the two presidents, is the direct or indirect

reference to the Holy Bible and Christian faith. In order to bring together American political and religious affiliating, they associate their ideologies and policies with the Christian faith and God in an attempt to show the righteousness of their vision and the immorality of evilness associated with the other choice. And those who may want to oppose the presidents' visions and policies are deemed to be on the devil's side.

**Some examples of intertextuality in Obama's speech are as follows:**

**Dorothy Fields song from the movie *Swing Time*:**

"Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America."

**Thomas Paine's words ordered by George Washington to be read to his troops during the American Revolution:**

"Let it be told to the future world that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet it".

**The Declaration of Independence:**

"...the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness."

**The Bible:** "Our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken. You cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you."

**Some examples of intertextuality in Bush's speech are:**

**The Declaration of Independence:**

"... Today we affirm a new commitment to our Nation's promise through civility, courage, compassion, and character".

**The Bible:**

"we are guided by a power larger than ourselves, who creates us equal in His Image..."

**American history:**

"A rock in a raging sea ...."

## **4. Conclusion**

This study was motivated by the question ‘ which president(Bush or Obama) is more coercive than the other. In order to clarify the stylistic characteristics the researcher employed a method of critical discourse analysis that combined content analysis and linguistic( lexical, structural, pronoun) analysis. The analysis of data in terms of patterns of coercive discourse revealed that both presidents were successful in persuading the audience to be in line with their visions. The dominant tone in their speeches is to make use of the coercive strategy as persuasive discourse towards their American citizens and the nations of the world as well. Both of them used binary patterns as coercive discourse through presenting the world, concepts, policies and ideals in absolute opposites. It is basically an exclusionist strategy which condemns to the periphery those who dare oppose the ideologies espoused in the inaugural addresses. However, Bush outnumbered Obama in using binaries and self/other construct. Bush stands out as the more direct in his discourse. Obama does beat around the bush a great deal. This implies that Bush’s speech is more exclusive and he is more interested in coercing not only his citizens but also the international community. Obama used more collective pronouns and intratextuality implying that he is more interested in arousing sense of togetherness, unity, homogeneity and patriotism among the citizens of America to be one hand in accepting his vision. He tries to associate his ideas with American history, backgrounds and religious values in an attempt to show his righteousness of his visions and that American citizens, collectively have commitment to follow his policies that are in harmony with their predecessors’.

The key ideological components of Obama’s speech can be summarized into the concepts like pragmatism, liberalism, inclusiveness, acceptance of religious and ethnic diversity and arousing sense of patriotism, unity, togetherness and solidarity in the time of peril while embracing the social and religious diversity.

Surprisingly, in terms of the frequency of lexical reiteration( the repetitive use of certain effective words and phrases and deontic modality(must and will) as other patterns of coercive discourse strategy, Both presidents acted more or less similarly.

It is recommended that future researchers may attempt to the extent to which other political leaders employ these strategies to rally their people behind their vision. It will be interesting to compare and contrast the political leaders’ speeches in terms of coercive discourse patterns to predict their success or failure in persuading the audience to rally behind their policies.



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## Appendix 1

### Barack Obama's Inaugural Address

*Following is the transcript of President Barack Obama's Inaugural Address, as transcribed by CQ Transcriptions:*

1 My fellow citizens: I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors.

I thank President Bush for his service to our nation...

... as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition.

Forty-four Americans have now taken the presidential oath.

The words have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace. Yet, every so often the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms. At these moments, America has carried  
10 on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because We the People have remained faithful to the ideals of our forebears, and true to our founding documents.

So it has been. So it must be with this generation of Americans.

That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age.

Homes have been lost, jobs shed, businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly, our schools fail too many, and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and  
20 threaten our planet.

These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable, but no less profound, is a sapping of confidence across our land; a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, that the next generation must lower its sights.

Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real, they are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this America: They will be met.

On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord.

On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and false promises, the recriminations  
30 and worn-out dogmas that for far too long have strangled our politics. We remain a young nation, but in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things.

The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed

on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness. In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned. Our journey has never been one of shortcuts or settling for less.

It has not been the path for the faint-hearted, for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the  
40 pleasures of riches and fame.

Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things -- some celebrated, but more often men and women obscure in their labor -- who have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom.

For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and traveled across oceans in search of a new life. For us, they toiled in sweatshops and settled the West, endured the lash of the whip and plowed the hard earth.

For us, they fought and died in places Concord and Gettysburg; Normandy and Khe Sanh.

Time and again these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw so  
50 that we might live a better life. They saw America as bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions; greater than all the differences of birth or wealth or faction.

This is the journey we continue today. We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth. Our workers are no less productive than when this crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive, our goods and services no less needed than they were last week or last month or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished. But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions -- that time has surely passed. Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America.

For everywhere we look, there is work to be done.

The state of our economy calls for action: bold and swift. And we will act not only to create new jobs but to lay a new foundation for growth.

We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together.

We will restore science to its rightful place and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality...  
... and lower its costs.

We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories. And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age.

All this we can do. All this we will do.

Now, there are some who question the scale of our ambitions, who suggest that our system cannot tolerate too many big plans. Their memories are short, for they have forgotten what this country has already done, what free men and women can achieve when imagination is joined to common purpose and necessity to courage.

80 What the cynics fail to understand is that the ground has shifted beneath them, that the stale political arguments that have consumed us for so long, no longer apply.

MR. The question we ask today is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works, whether it helps families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified.

Where the answer is yes, we intend to move forward. Where the answer is no, programs will end. And those of us who manage the public's dollars will be held to account, to spend wisely, reform bad habits, and do our business in the light of day, because only then can we restore the vital trust between a people and their government.

90 Nor is the question before us whether the market is a force for good or ill. Its power to generate wealth and expand freedom is unmatched.

But this crisis has reminded us that without a watchful eye, the market can spin out of control. The nation cannot prosper long when it favors only the prosperous.

The success of our economy has always depended not just on the size of our gross domestic product, but on the reach of our prosperity; on the ability to extend opportunity to every willing heart -- not out of charity, but because it is the surest route to our common good.

As for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals.

100 Our founding fathers faced with perils that we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man, a charter expanded by the blood of generations.

Those ideals still light the world, and we will not give them up for expedience's sake.

And so, to all other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born: know that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity, and we are ready to lead once more.

110 Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with the sturdy alliances and enduring convictions.

They understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please. Instead, they knew that our power grows through its prudent use. Our security emanates from the justness of our cause; the force of our example; the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.

We are the keepers of this legacy, guided by these principles once more, we can meet those new threats that demand even greater effort, even greater cooperation and understanding between nations. We'll begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan.

120 With old friends and former foes, we'll work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat and roll back the specter of a warming planet.

We will not apologize for our way of life nor will we waver in its defense.

And for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that, "Our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken. You cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you."

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness.

We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and nonbelievers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth.

130 And because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.

To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect.

To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict or blame their society's ills on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy.

140 To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.

To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds.

And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to the suffering outside our borders, nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect. For the world has changed, and we must change with it.

150 As we consider the road that unfolds before us, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who, at this very hour, patrol far-off deserts and distant mountains. They have something to tell us, just as the fallen heroes who lie in Arlington whisper through the ages.

We honor them not only because they are guardians of our liberty, but because they embody the spirit of service: a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves.

And yet, at this moment, a moment that will define a generation, it is precisely this spirit that must inhabit us all.

For as much as government can do and must do, it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies.

160 It is the kindness to take in a stranger when the levees break; the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job which sees us through our darkest hours. It is the firefighter's courage to storm a stairway filled with smoke, but also a parent's willingness to nurture a child, that finally decides our fate.

Our challenges may be new, the instruments with which we meet them may be new, but those values upon which our success depends, honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism -- these things are old.

These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history.

170 What is demanded then is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility -- a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character than giving our all to a difficult task.

This is the price and the promise of citizenship.

This is the source of our confidence: the knowledge that God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny.

This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed, why men and women and children of every race and every faith can join in celebration across this magnificent mall. And why a man whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath.

So let us mark this day in remembrance of who we are and how far we have traveled.

In the year of America's birth, in the coldest of months, a small band of patriots huddled by dying campfires on the shores of an icy river.

The capital was abandoned. The enemy was advancing. The snow was stained with blood.

At a moment when the outcome of our revolution was most in doubt, the father of our nation ordered these words be read to the people:

190 "Let it be told to the future world that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet it." America, in the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember these timeless words; with hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come; let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested we refused to let this journey end, that we did not

turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.

Thank you. God bless you.

And God bless the United States of America.

## Appendix

## II

Inaugural Address of George W. Bush; January 20, 2001 President Clinton, distinguished guests and my fellow citizens: The peaceful transfer of authority is rare in history, yet common in our country. With a simple oath, we affirm old traditions and make new beginnings. As I begin, I thank President Clinton for his service to our nation; and I thank Vice President Gore for a contest conducted with spirit and ended with grace. I am honored and humbled to stand here, where so many of America's leaders have come before me, and so many will follow.

We have a place, all of us, in a long story. A story we continue, but whose end we will not see. It is the story of a new world that became a friend and liberator of the old, a story of a slave-holding society that became a servant of freedom, the story of a power that went into the world to protect but not possess, to defend but not to conquer. It is the American story. A story of flawed and fallible people, united across the generations by grand and enduring ideals. The grandest of these ideals is an unfolding American promise that everyone belongs, that everyone deserves a chance, that no insignificant person was ever born. Americans are called upon to enact this promise in our lives and in our laws; and though our nation has sometimes halted, and sometimes delayed, we must follow no other course

Through much of the last century, America's faith in freedom and democracy was a rock in a raging sea. Now it is a seed upon the wind, taking root in many nations. Our democratic faith is more than the creed of our country, it is the inborn hope of our humanity, an ideal we carry but do not own, a trust we bear and pass along; and even after nearly 225 years, we have a long way yet to travel.

While many of our citizens prosper, others doubt the promise, even the justice, of our own country. The ambitions of some Americans are limited by failing schools and hidden prejudice and the circumstances of their birth; and sometimes our differences run so deep, it seems we share a continent, but not a country. We do not accept this, and we will not allow it. Our unity, our union, is the serious work of leaders and citizens in every generation; and this is my solemn pledge, "I will work to build a single nation of justice and opportunity." I know this is in our reach because we are guided by a power larger than ourselves who creates us equal in His image and we are confident in principles that unite and lead us onward.

America has never been united by blood or birth or soil. We are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests and teach us what it means to be citizens. Every child must be

taught these principles. Every citizen must uphold them; and every immigrant, by embracing these ideals, makes our country more, not less, American. Today, we affirm a new commitment to live out our nation's promise through civility, courage, compassion and character. America, at its best, matches a commitment to principle with a concern for civility. A civil society demands from each of us good will and respect, fair dealing and forgiveness. Some seem to believe that our politics can afford to be petty because, in a time of peace, the stakes of our debates appear small. But the stakes for America are never small. If our country does not lead the cause of freedom, it will not be led. If we do not turn the hearts of children toward knowledge and character, we will lose their gifts and undermine their idealism. If we permit our economy to drift and decline, the vulnerable will suffer most. We must live up to the calling we share. Civility is not a tactic or a sentiment. It is the determined choice of trust over cynicism, of community over chaos. This commitment, if we keep it, is a way to shared accomplishment. America, at its best, is also courageous. Our national courage has been clear in times of depression and war, when defending common dangers defined our common good. Now we must choose if the example of our fathers and mothers will inspire us or condemn us.

We must show courage in a time of blessing by confronting problems instead of passing them on to future generations.

Together, we will reclaim America's schools, before ignorance and apathy claim more young lives; we will reform Social Security and Medicare, sparing our children from struggles we have the power to prevent; we will reduce taxes, to recover the momentum of our economy and reward the effort and enterprise of working Americans; we will build our defenses beyond challenge, lest weakness invite challenge; and we will confront weapons of mass destruction, so that a new century is spared new horrors. The enemies of liberty and our country should make no mistake, America remains engaged in the world by history and by choice, shaping a balance of power that favors freedom. We will defend our allies and our interests; we will show purpose without arrogance; we will meet aggression and bad faith with resolve and strength; and to all nations, we will speak for the values that gave our nation birth.

America, at its best, is compassionate. In the quiet of American conscience, we know that deep, persistent poverty is unworthy of our nation's promise. Whatever our views of its cause, we can agree that children at risk are not at fault. Abandonment and abuse are not acts of God, they are failures of love. The proliferation of prisons, however necessary, is no substitute for hope and order in our souls. Where there is suffering, there is duty. Americans in need are not strangers, they are citizens, not problems, but priorities, and all of us are diminished when any are hopeless. Government has great responsibilities for public safety and public health, for civil rights and common schools. Yet compassion is the work of a nation, not just a government. Some needs and hurts are so deep they will only respond to a mentor's



touch or a pastor's prayer. Church and charity, synagogue and mosque lend our communities their humanity, and they will have an honored place in our plans and in our laws. Many in our country do not know the pain of poverty, but we can listen to those who do. I can pledge our nation to a goal, "When we see that wounded traveler on the road to Jericho, we will not pass to the other side." America, at its best, is a place where personal responsibility is valued and expected. Encouraging responsibility is not a search for scapegoats, it is a call to conscience. Though it requires sacrifice, it brings a deeper fulfillment. We find the fullness of life not only in options, but in commitments. We find that children and community are the commitments that set us free. Our public interest depends on private character, on civic duty and family bonds and basic fairness, on uncounted, unhonored acts of decency which give direction to our freedom. Sometimes in life we are called to do great things. But as a saint of our times has said, every day we are called to do small things with great love. The most important tasks of a democracy are done by everyone. I will live and lead by these principles, "to advance my convictions with civility, to pursue the public interest with courage, to speak for greater justice and compassion, to call for responsibility and try to live it as well." In all of these ways, I will bring the values of our history to the care of our times.

What you do is as important as anything government does. I ask you to seek a common good beyond your comfort; to defend needed reforms against easy attacks; to serve your nation, beginning with your neighbor. I ask you to be citizens. Citizens, not spectators; citizens, not subjects; responsible citizens, building communities of service and a nation of character. Americans are generous and strong and decent, not because we believe in ourselves, but because we hold beliefs beyond ourselves. When this spirit of citizenship is missing, no government program can replace it. When this spirit is present, no wrong can stand against it.

After the Declaration of Independence was signed, Virginia statesman John Page wrote to Thomas Jefferson, "We know the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. Do you not think an angel rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm?" Much time has passed since Jefferson arrived for his inauguration. The years and changes accumulate, but the themes of this day he would know, "our nation's grand story of courage and its simple dream of dignity."

We are not this story's author, who fills time and eternity with His purpose. Yet His purpose is achieved in our duty, and our duty is fulfilled in service to one another. Never tiring, never yielding, never finishing, we renew that purpose today; to make our country more just and generous; to affirm the dignity of our lives and every life. This work continues. This story goes on. And an angel still rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm. God bless you all, and God bless America.

## **Title**

# **Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of the Difficulty Level of the Grammar Test Items: The Case of University Entrance Examination in Iran**

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## **Abstract**

Appropriate learning underlies constructive alignment by harmonizing the objectives, the teaching method and the assessment within a teaching system (Briggs, 2003). Hence, high-quality assessment should be seriously taken into account especially when it entails some selection purposes (Van de Watering and Van der Rijt, 2006). Within the context of Iran, University Entrance Examination is a widely used exam through which the students are selected for continuing their education at the university level in a variety of fields of study. The current study aimed at investigating whether teachers and students had accurate perceptions of the difficulty of multiple-choice grammar test items of English subject in this exam. To this end, 100 pre-university students and 15 English teachers were asked to estimate the difficulty level of 15 multiple-choice grammar test items excerpted from the university entrance examinations of the recent three years for three majors including math, empirical science and humanities. P-value indices were calculated for each item. The results revealed that the students were more accurate in their

estimations than their teachers. The findings are discussed and some implications and suggestions for further study are presented.

**Keywords:** Assessment, University Entrance Examination, Teachers' perceptions, Students' perception, Item difficulty, P-value index

## 1. Introduction

Appropriate learning will not be achieved unless all subsystems e.g. the objectives, the teaching method and the assessment within a teaching system operate in the same line. This is what Briggs (2003) calls *constructive alignment*. In this regard, Gibbs (1999) and Scouller (1998) reiterate the significant role of assessment in the whole learning process. Hence, high quality assessment should be one of the priorities of those who are involved in designing and implementing the assessment procedures and those who make decisions based on the results of these procedures. The quality of assessment outstands more when it deals with some selection purposes (Van de Watering & Van de Rijt & van der Rijt, 2006).

Within the context of Iran, one such important examination can be the university entrance examination through which the high school students are selected to continue their education at the university level in a variety of fields of study. Among several general and specific items, English subject as one of the general ones seems to play a determining role in their outcomes in the form of percentages and ranks. As the exam serves as their first step to go ahead in their serious, academic life and as far as high quality assessment is concerned, studying item difficulty and the perceptions of teachers and students seems to be relevant. Bearing this in mind, the main interest of the current study was to see whether teachers and students had correct perceptions of item difficulty of English subject in the university entrance examination.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical introduction

Van de Watering and Van der Rijt (2006, p. 134) define item difficulty, item difficulty index or *p*-value, as "the proportion of assessees who answered the item correctly". *P*-value lies between 0 and 1. The higher the *p*-value is, the easier the item or assessment will be. Van de Watering and Van der Rijt (2006) argue that a high quality assessment would be possible by employing a

measurement which is both valid and reliable. They refer to item difficulty as a significant aspect of validity and reliability.

As Messick (1989) maintains, validity is always defined as "the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support adequacy and appropriateness of interpretation and actions based on test score" (p. 13). The assessment is considered valid if it measures the target features intended to be measured (Van de Watering & Van der Rijt, 2006). In other words, there should be an optimal degree of correspondence between the assessment items and the specific purposes for which the assessment is implemented (Allen & Yen, 1979; Mehrens & Lehmann, 1991; Messick, 1989). According to Van de Watering and Van der Rijt (2006, p. 135), "when the level of cognitive processes in assessment items does not correspond with the level of cognitive processes in the tasks of the educational programme, an assessment is not *valid*". This is why the difficulty of the items in an assessment might influence its validity.

Moreover, when the items of an assessment are too difficult that a high proportion of students cannot choose the correct answer, the assessment reliability is endangered. If the items are more difficult than the degree the students expect, it may lead to their confusion, lack of motivation, anxiety, etc. (Stanley, 1971). In addition, if the items are too difficult, higher possibility of guessing would insert more random error to the variance of assessment score (Bereby-Meijer, Meijer, & Flascher, 2002).

## **2.2. Teachers' perceptions of item difficulty**

The overall difficulty of the assessment should be adjusted to the level of the intended population taking the test (Van de Watering & Van der Rijt, 2006). In this way, teachers estimate the items difficulty based on a hypothetical students along with hypothetical number of hours s/he has studied. Although estimating item difficulty level is of paramount importance for designing the assessments as well as deciding based on their results, only a few studies have touched upon the item difficulty. Also, less is known about the teachers' abilities to accurately estimate item difficulties especially in Iranian context.

Shepard (1995) found that judges undermined the difficulty of hard items and the easiness of easy items for the minimally competent candidate. Later, Impara and Plake (1998) investigated teachers' ability to estimate item performance for the minimally competent students. Teachers accurately ranked the items with regard to their difficulty level but they failed to estimate the

actual levels of the students' performances accurately. The findings of this study supported Shepard's (1995) findings. Moreover, Mattar's (2000) findings were in line with Shepard (1995) and Impara and Plake (1998). Additionally, in Goodwin's (1999) study, only 39.3% of the estimates were accurate and the other 60.7% were overestimates. In Goodwin's viewpoint, this might be grounded in the judges' too high expectations. In line with previous studies, Van de Watering and Van der Rijt's (2006) findings pointed to the teachers' inaccurate estimation of item difficulty level. In their study, teachers overestimated the difficulty of easy items and underestimated the difficulty of difficult items.

On the other hand, a burgeoning research has increasingly shown that discussion among judges as well as training would result in more accurate judgments. In this regard, Plake and Impara (2001) showed that estimations of item performance for a minimally competent candidate were both consistent and reliable across different panels. The results suggested the correspondence between judges' estimations of item performance and the actual performances of the minimally competent candidates. Bateman and Griffin (2003) also demonstrated the positive influence of on-the-job training in item estimation on the judges' estimation of difficulty level.

### **2.3. Students' perceptions of item difficulty**

Like teachers' perceptions of item difficulty, students' perceptions have been investigated. Lee and Heyworth (2000) scrutinized the students' perceptions of the problem difficulty of math test items. The results demonstrated that students were more accurate than the teachers in terms of predicting their performance. Moreover, the findings indicated the high correlation between the estimated problem complexity, the students' performances, the teachers' estimations and the students' perceptions of problem difficulty. Further, Verhoeven et al. (2002) investigated recently graduated students' item estimates along with item writers' ability to estimate item difficulty. It was found that graduate students' perceptions were more credible than those of the item writers who overestimated the performance of students. In a similar study, Brown and Iwashita (1996) point to the impact of the students' language backgrounds on their perceptions of item difficulty.

### **2.4. The study**

Although the findings of previous research into both teachers' and students' perceptions of item difficulty are not consistent, a large body of research shows the subtleties of estimating item difficulty. It gains much more notoriety as the teachers tend to overestimate the difficulty of easy

items and underestimate the difficulty of difficult items. However, the research points to the better estimation of item difficulty by the students.

As the university entrance examination is taken annually by a large number of students in Iran, this task seems to be much more delicate. In particular, when it comes to English subject at the school, it seems that the students have more problems. It seems that this subject deserves much more attention as it highly influences their rank. Hence, this question might be arisen that whether teachers and students have correct perceptions of the item difficulty of the multiple-choice grammar items of the university entrance examination and whether the items difficulty affect the students' level of confidence in answering the items.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Participants**

220 tests were distributed among all the students of a state pre-university center in academic year 2011-2012. Out of 181 returned tests, 13 were omitted due to being incomplete. 18 tests were omitted as the respondents did not answer the questions about their previous English learning experience. Moreover, in order to avoid heterogeneity, 50 tests were omitted since these respondents had attended English classes at language institutes. Hence, a final group of 100 pre-university students majoring in math (45 students), empirical sciences (30 students) and humanities (25 students) participated in this study.

Additionally, to elicit the English teachers' perceptions of the test items difficulty, 15 pre-university English teachers whose age ranged from 25 to 43 were asked to estimate the difficulty level of the test items. The teachers' years of teaching experience ranged from one to fifteen years.

#### **3.2. Instrumentation**

The grammar test items were excerpted from three years (2009-2011) university entrance examination for three majors (a total of 33 multiple-choice items) including math, empirical sciences and humanities. 15 items were selected so that the items of all three majors and all the last three years were proportionally included. For the students, each item was followed by two questions regarding their perceptions of the item difficulty and their level of confidence of the accuracy of their responses. Similarly, for the teachers, each item was followed by one question

eliciting their perceptions of the items difficulty. Moreover, at the end of the test, both the students and the teachers were asked to mention the factors leading to higher degree of difficulty of a multiple-choice grammar test item. The questions were all in Persian in order to avoid any ambiguity and to compensate for the students' as well as the teachers' lack of sufficient proficiency. In addition, this might have led to more elaborate and comprehensive responses. It also deserves mentioning that the students were asked if they had attended any English classes out of school, i.e. at language institutes. Those who answered positively to this question were eliminated from the sample in order not to contaminate the results.

### 3.3. Data analysis

To examine the accuracy of the teachers' and the students' estimations of the difficulty levels of the test items, the ratings were compared with the actual  $p$ -values of each test item. Moreover, the students' answers to the confidence scale were counted to find out about the number of the students who had a specific level of confidence for each item.

## 4. Results

The main interest of this study was to see whether teachers and students had correct perceptions of the item difficulty of the multiple-choice grammar items of the university entrance examination. To this end,  $p$ -value for each item was calculated. Table 1 demonstrates  $p$ -value indices for each test item.

Table 1  $P$ - value indices for each item

Item	$P$ -value	Rating if the item	Item	$P$ -value	Rating of the item
1	0.49	Non difficult, not easy	9	0.67	Too easy
2	0.47	Non difficult, not easy	10	0.27	Too difficult
3	0.54	Non difficult, not easy	11	0.36	Difficult
4	0.34	Difficult	12	0.17	Too difficult
5	0.29	Too difficult	13	0.19	Too difficult
6	0.57	Easy	14	0.41	Difficult
7	0.16	Too difficult	15	0.46	Difficult
8	0.40	Difficult			

Table 2 *The students' perceptions of the items difficulty level*

Item	Too difficult (percentage)	Difficult (percentage)	Not difficult, not easy (percentage)	Easy (percentage)	Too easy (percentage)
1	8	17	48*	18	5
2	6	29	47*	9	4
3	8	30	33*	16	9
4	7	28	36*	16	3
5	10	35*	26	6	0
6	4	10	31	35*	15
7	15	29*	25	9	0
8	16	27	34*	12	2
9	4	8	17	33*	33*
10	11	24	47*	10	3
11	8	33	42*	6	3
12	17	30*	26	11	3
13	16	24	35*	10	1
14	14	31*	28	12	3
15	15	42*	22	6	2

As Table 2 indicates, the students' perceptions and *p*-value index corresponded for item number 9 as a "too easy" item. Their perceptions of the difficulty level of items 14 and 15, as "too difficult" items were consistent with the obtained *p*-value indices.

Table 3 *The teachers' perceptions of the items difficulty level*

Item	Percentage of the teachers estimated the item difficulty	Rating if the item	Item	Percentage of the teachers estimated the item difficulty	Rating of the item
1	47	Not difficult, not easy	9	54	Not difficult, not easy



2	40	Not difficult, not easy	10	40	Not difficult, not easy
3	34	Not difficult, not easy	11	47	Difficult
4	47	Difficult	12	54	Not difficult, not easy
5	47	Not difficult, not easy	13	54	Difficult
6	47	Easy	14	47	Not difficult, not easy
7	47	Not difficult, not easy	15	47	Not difficult, not easy
8	40	Not difficult, not easy			

As Table 3 illustrates, the students' and the teachers' perceptions and the  $p$ -value index corresponded for item number 6 with "easy" level of difficulty. Moreover, both the students and the teachers perceived items number 1, 2 and 3 as the moderate ones ("not difficult, not easy") in line with the obtained  $p$ -value indices.

However, no item was perceived as "too difficult" by neither the students nor the teachers while  $p$ -value index showed item number 7 as being "too difficult".

Regarding the second research question, it was found that only for one item which was identified as "too easy", i.e. item number 9, through  $p$ -value index, the students showed high level of confidence of the accuracy of their response and the rest of the items showed no pattern considering the students' confidence level and the items difficulty level (see Table 4).

Table 4 *The item difficulty level and the students' level of confidence of their response*

Item	Item difficulty	Confidence level		
		Completely	To some extent	Not at all
1	Not difficult, not easy	11	64*	18
2	Not difficult, not easy	13	60*	22
3	Not difficult, not easy	21	43*	29
4	Difficult	7	51*	33
5	Too difficult	5	37*	35

6	Easy	38	43*	13
7	Too difficult	6	42*	28
8	Difficult	11	55*	15
9	Too easy	58*	27	10
10	Too difficult	11	55*	28
11	Difficult	4	53*	35
12	Too difficult	6	44*	37
13	Too difficult	6	45*	34
14	Difficult	10	48*	28
15	Difficult	8	39	40*

Moreover, scrutinizing both the teachers' and the students' responses to the question posed at the end of the test with regard to the factors which would make a multiple-choice grammar test item difficult, the following comments were pointed out. Both the students and the teachers stated that requiring the learners' vocabulary knowledge beside their grammar knowledge, including grammar exceptions as a test item, similarity of the alternatives in terms of their forms and the ambiguity of the stem might lead to higher difficulty levels.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The current study sought to see whether Iranian EFL teachers and the students perceived the difficulty level of the multiple-choice grammar test items of the university entrance examination accurately. Having compared the *p*-value indices and the students' estimations of the difficulty level of the items, the researchers found out that the students were accurate in their estimations for three items (9, 14, 15). Moreover, it was found that both teachers and students accurately estimated the difficulty level of four items (1, 2, 3, 6). However, neither the teachers nor the students were accurate in estimating the difficulty level of the only item which was identified as "too difficult" by *p*-value.

In addition, for only one item (9), *p*-value index corresponded with the students' level of confidence of the accuracy of their response. Besides, the teachers and the students pointed to the integration of both vocabulary and grammar knowledge and inclusion of grammar exceptions in grammar test items as well as presenting similar forms as the alternatives and providing

ambiguous stems as the factors underlying higher difficulty levels for a multiple-choice grammar test item.

We might speculate from these results that the students were more accurate than the teachers in their perceptions regarding the item difficulty, i.e. 7 *p*-value indices out of 15 ones corresponded to the students' perceptions. Hence, the findings of this study bear some similarities with those of previously conducted ones (Goodwin, 1999; Impara & Plake, 1998; lee & Heyworth, 2000; Mattar, 2000; Shepard, 1995; Van de Watering and Van der Rijt, 2006; Verhoeven et al., 2002).

On the other hand, this lack of correspondence between the *p*-value indices and the teachers' perceptions of the item difficulty might rather challenge the teachers' criteria for evaluating the students' language knowledge in general and their grammar knowledge in particular.

As the adjustment of the overall difficulty of the items to the level of the target student population has been reiterated (Van de Watering & Van der Rijt, 2006) and since the university entrance examination is widely used for selections purposes and is followed by some social consequences for the applicants (Messick, 1989) , the results of this investigation highlight the significance of deciding on a set of strict criteria to make the university entrance examination more valid and reliable. In this regard, bearing an average student in mind would hopefully lead to defining more realistic standards so that the students are assessed appropriately (Van de Watering and Van der Rijt, 2006). Hence, the university entrance examination seems better to be modified at least regarding the grammar points which are included in the test items in order to enhance its validity and reliability.

In addition, this study yields certain educational implications. As the research points to the beneficial contribution of training sessions to the accurate estimation of the difficulty level of the items (Baterman & Griffin, 2003), it is highly recommended to hold some workshops for the teachers and test constructors both to raise their awareness and to enhance the cooperation among them so that more valid and reliable tests are designed and implemented (Plake & Impara, 2001). This might result in promoting the students' motivation and lowering their anxiety and confusion in the test-taking process as a result of designing the items with more optimal levels of difficulty (Stanley, 1971).

Furthermore, in line with Brown and Iwashita (1996) who related the students' perceptions of the item difficulty to their various language backgrounds, the current study can be replicated by taking a number of Iranian students from different linguistic backgrounds from different parts of the country to see whether the linguistic variation would lead to variation in the students' judgments of the difficulty level of the grammar test items. Such study might have some implications for the fairness issue in language testing for multilingual communities.

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## **Title**

# **Literature and Translation Studies: Domestication and Foreignization Strategies in dealing with Culture-Specific-Items in the Translations of Two English Novels**

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## **Abstract**

The present study, attempted to examine Culture-Specific-Items (CSIs), and domestication and foreignization strategies in translation. For collecting data, two English novels were selected. These novels were translated before and after the Islamic Revolution in Iran. For analyzing CSI, the categorization of CSIs was selected according to Newmark. And for analyzing domestication and foreignization strategy, the categorization of Vinay and Darbelnet was chosen. Data analysis and statistical calculations reveals that the dominant strategy either before or after the Islamic Revolution was domestication and all the translators in the two different periods tend to retain CSIs in the target text.

**Keywords:** Literature, Culture-Specific-Items, Domestication Strategy, Foreignization Strategy, Novel

## 1. Introduction

Communication has always had a great role in man's life.. Through communication people exchange many ideas, beliefs and etc. By expanding the relations among societies, the communications increased and the people of one society communicate to others to get familiar with other different cultures, beliefs and ideas. To come up with these matters translation required. Translation is an important issue for exchanging information and is an effective tool in communications.

Like other concepts, translation has some theories. Miremadi (2008) mentions some of these theories suggested by Cicero, Luther, Dolet, Humphrey, Denham, Woodhouslee, Kebel, Nida, Newmark, and etc. Many scholars believe that in almost all of the translational concepts, trying to find the appropriate equivalence that the writer intended to convey, and creating the same effect on the readers is an important factor.

In order to achieve the original meaning and create the same effect on the readers, Newmark suggests that a translator should choose the communicative translation instead of semantic translation to have the same effect on the readers (cited in Munday, 2001, p.44).

Nida believes that a translation should be on the level of word or sentence but Reiss believes the work of translation should be on the level of text. She identifies four kinds of text such as "informative, expressive, operative and audio-medial text" (cited in Munday, 2001, p.73).

According to Nida, the important matter in translating a text is "naturalness" (cited in Munday, 2001, p.42). Nida suggests that a translator should use the dynamic equivalence instead of formal equivalence (cited in Munday, 2001). As Munday (2001) states, Nida declares for using dynamic equivalence in translation "four basic requirements of translation [are:] making sense, conveying the spirit and manner of the original, having a natural and easy form of expression, and producing a similar response" (p.42).

Some people believe a good translation is a translation that source language text transfers to the target language text word by word. The duty of a translator is being faithful to the source language text and save the scent of the original text but sometimes he obliged to use the elements of target language text. So, the needs of some strategies of translation come up.

Domestication and foreignization are two translation strategies which are coined by Venuti. In addition to Venuti, other scholars such as Bastin, Braithwaite, Vinay and Darbelnet, Harvey

and etc. discussed on this matter. According to Venuti (1995) domestication refers to translation strategy in which transparent and fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target language readers. Domestication is replacing the source culture with the target one. And also Venuti defined foreignization translation (1995) as “the type of translation in which a TT is produced which deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the original” (Cited in Dukate, 2009, p.189).

In this study a contrastive and comparative analysis of translation process of translators was conducted. The corpus of this study consists of four translations (before and after the Islamic Revolution) of two English novels, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Wuthering Heights*. The translators of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* are Hooshang Pirnazar and Najaf Daryabandari, and the translators of *Wuthering Heights* are Ali Asghar Bahram Beigi and Reza Rezaee. The article dealt with the comparison between the translated texts to find out if there is any differences between two translations of the same novel in different periods.

## **2. Significance of the Study**

This study dealt with the comparison of two novels with their Persian translations in two different periods of before and after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, to examine the process of translation in these novels. This matter helped us to figure out that which strategy has been the dominant one in the translation of these novels before and after the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Translation is an integral part of communication in each society and a translator should try to be faithful to the original text and translate a text as the reader reads in his source language. The translated text should have the same effect on the target reader. Accordingly for the correct translation, the translator should be proficient in both languages.

How well translators used the strategies of translation to initiate intercultural communication is very important. So, the characteristics of a good translation is using the true strategy in the target text to access the fluent translation. The need to have a fluent translation in one hand and choosing domestication or foreignization strategy in translation on the other hand makes this study significant.

### **2.1 Research question and hypothesis:**



To do the research, the following research question was proposed; are culture-specific-items mostly domesticated or foreignized in the translations of *Wuthering Heights* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* before and after the Islamic Revolution in Iran? And the research hypothesis was; Culture-specific-items are mostly domesticated before and after the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework of this study on the segment of CSIs is based on Newmark scheme. Newmark (1988) categorized CSIs as follow: Ecology, material culture, social culture, social organization and gestures and habits.

Also, the theoretical framework on the segment of domestication and foreignization is based on Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) scheme. They divided the translation strategies into two groups namely, direct translation and oblique translation.

Direct translation consists of three processes namely, borrowing, calque and literal translation. If the translator uses these processes, he has used foreignization strategy.

Oblique translation consists of four processes namely, transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation. If the translator uses these processes, he has used domestication strategy.

### 4. Data Collection

For the data of the article and analysis, *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain were selected. The translations of these two English novels before and after the Islamic Revolution in Iran are:

- The translation of *Wuthering Heights* by Ali Asghar Bahram Beigi. This translation has been done before the Islamic Revolution in 1971(1350).
- The translation of *Wuthering Heights* by Reza Rezaee. This translation has been done after the Islamic Revolution in 2011(1390).
- The translation of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Hooshang Pirnazar. This translation has been done before the Islamic Revolution in(1345).1966
- The translation of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Najaf Darya Bandari. This translation has been done after the Islamic Revolution in 2001 (1380).

These four translations were studied from the beginning, up to the end, and then, the chapters with more frequency of CSIs were chosen to be analyzed. These chapters were; one, two, five, sixteen and thirty-one from *Wuthering Heights* and chapters two, three, nine and fifteen from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

The main procedure adopted is to compare and contrast these translations (both the translations of before and after the Islamic Revolution) with the novel in English, to discuss the CSIs and domestication and foreignization strategies in order to figure out how many occurrences of CSIs, domestication and foreignization items are existing in these translations. Classification of Culture-Specific-Item According to Newmark (1998) are mentioned in Table 1.

*Table 1.*

Ecology	Social Culture	Gestures and habits
Material Culture	Social Organization	

Procedures of Domestication and Foreignization according to Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) are based on Table 2.

*Table 2.*

<b><i>Domestication Strategy</i></b>	<b><i>Foreignization Strategy</i></b>
Transposition	Borrowing
Modulation	Calque
Equivalence	Literal Translation
Adaptation	

The number of Culture-Specific-Items in the two English novels are high. So, some of them have been mentioned in this essay.

Table 3 shows some samples of ‘ecology’ in the translations of *Wuthering Heights* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Table 3.

English CSI	Translation of CSIs Before the Islamic Revolution	Process	Domesticated or Foreignized	Translation of CSIs After the Islamic Revolution	Process	Domesticated or Foreignized
Stormy weather	به هنگام طوفان	Modulation	Domesticated	هوای طوفانی	Equivalence	Domesticated
Red cow	گاو قرمز	Literal translation	Foreignized	گاو قرمز	Literal translation	Foreignized
North wind	طوفانهای سخت و بادهای سرد	Adaption	Domesticated	باد شمال	Equivalence	Domesticated

Table 4 shows some samples of ‘Material culture’ in the translations of *Wuthering Heights* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Table 4.

<i>English CSI</i>	Translation of CSIs Before the Islamic Revolution	<i>Process</i>	<i>Domesticated or Foreignized</i>	Translation of CSIs After the Islamic Revolution	<i>Process</i>	<i>Domesticated or Foreignized</i>
<i>Sitting room</i>	اتاق نشیمن	<i>Equivalence</i>	<i>Domesticated</i>	اتاق نشیمن	<i>Equivalence</i>	<i>Domesticated</i>
<i>Evening meal</i>	شام مفصل	<i>Modulation</i>	<i>Domesticated</i>	عصرانه	<i>Equivalence</i>	<i>Domesticated</i>
<i>Glass of brandy</i>	لیوانی براندی	<i>Calque</i>	<i>Foreignized</i>	گیلاس برندی	<i>Borrowing</i>	<i>Foreignized</i>

Table 5 shows some samples of ‘Social organization’ in the translations of *Wuthering Heights* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Table 5.

<i>English CSI</i>	<b>Translation of CSIs Before the Islamic Revolution</b>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Domesticated or Foreignized</i>	<b>Translation of CSIs After the Islamic Revolution</b>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Domesticated or Foreignized</i>
May the Lord deliver us from evil	خدا ما را از شر شیطان مصون بداره!	<i>Adaptation</i>	<i>Domesticated</i>	خدا ما را از شر شیطان حفظ کند!	<i>Adaptation</i>	<i>Domesticated</i>
I know that ghost have wandered on earth	می گویند ارواح پیوسته بدین دنیا رفت و آمد می کنند	<i>Equivalence</i>	<i>Domesticated</i>	من می دانم که ارواح به دنیای ما رفت و آمد می کنند	<i>Equivalence</i>	<i>Domesticated</i>

Table 6 shows some samples of ‘Gestures and habits’ in the translations of *Wuthering Heights* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Table 6.

<i>English CSI</i>	<b>Translation of CSIs Before the Islamic Revolution</b>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Domesticated or Foreignized</i>	<b>Translation of CSIs After the Islamic Revolution</b>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Domesticated or Foreignized</i>
I bowed and waited	بعظت احترام و ابراز آشنایی سری فرود آوردم	<i>Equivalence</i>	<i>Domesticated</i>	سری به نشانه احترام تکان دادم	<i>Equivalence</i>	<i>Domesticated</i>

The figures related to the occurrences of domestication and foreignization in all the translations either before or after the Islamic Revolution are as follows:

Figure 1. Percentages of Domestication and Foreignization in the translation of *Wuthering Heights* before the Islamic Revolution.

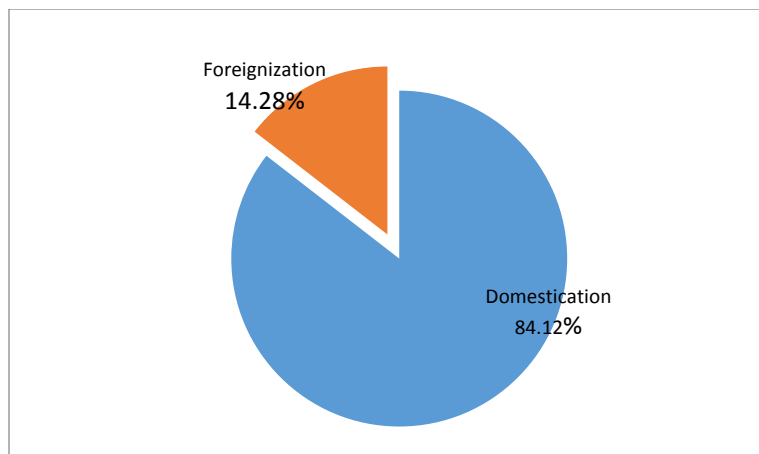


Figure 2. Percentages of Domestication and Foreignization in the translation of *Wuthering Heights* after the Islamic Revolution.

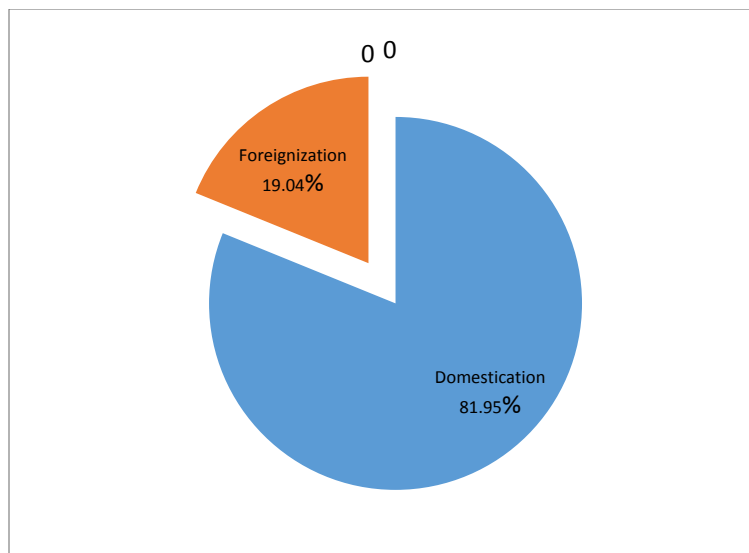


Figure 3. Percentages of Domestication and Foreignization in the translation of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* before the Islamic Revolution.

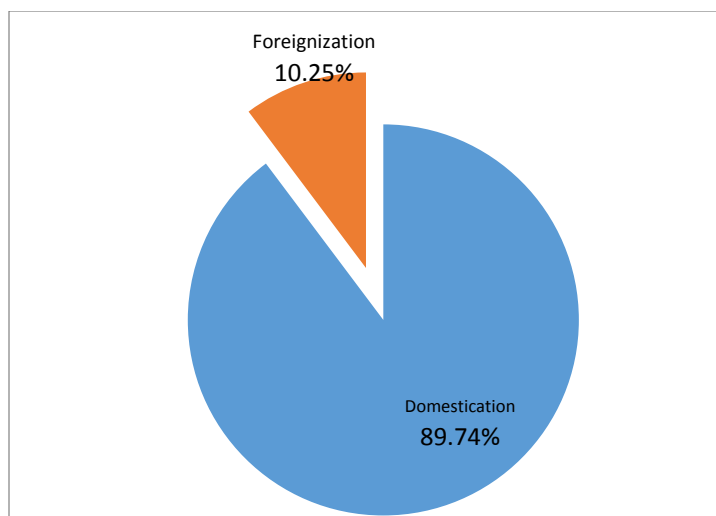
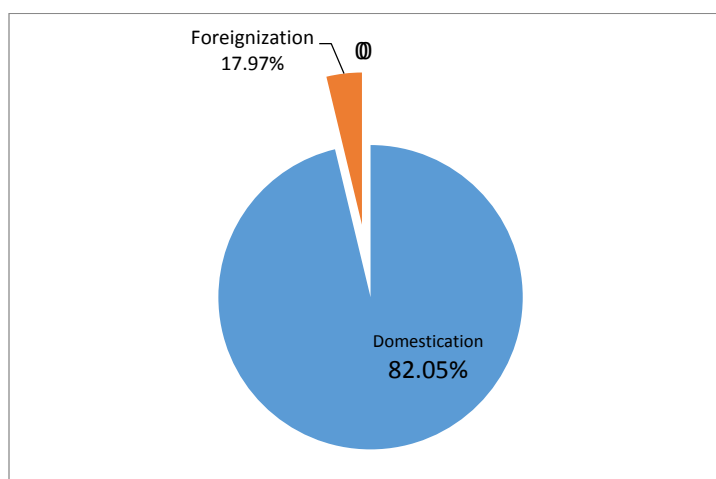


Figure 4. Percentages of Domestication and Foreignization in the translation of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* after the Islamic Revolution.



## 5. Conclusion

The categorization of Culture-Specific-Items were extracted from Newmark (1988) taxonomies and also, the strategies for the processes of translation and the strategies for translating domestication and foreignization were from Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) categorization.

By analyzing the CSIs, domestication and foreignization strategies in the translations of the two English novels, the researchers have concluded that:

- In translating *Wuthering Heights*, the hypothesis is approved. Both of the translators, before and after the Islamic Revolution, have used domestication strategy more than foreignization strategy.
- In translating *Wuthering Heights*, after the Islamic Revolution, the hypothesis is approved. Both of the translators have domesticated the CSIs, before and after the Islamic Revolution,
- In translating *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the hypothesis is approved. The dominant translation strategy is domestication for both of the translators, before and after the Islamic Revolution,.
- In translating *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the hypothesis is approved and the CSIs are domesticated in both of the translations, before and after the Islamic Revolution.

To sum up, the most frequent translation strategy either before or after the Islamic Revolution in the two English novels was domestication and the CSIs were also domesticated.

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## **Title**

# **A Comparative Investigation of the Effect of Summarizing and Paraphrasing Short Stories on the Achievement of Male and Female Iranian EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension**

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## **Abstract**

The objective of this study was to investigate the relative effectiveness of two different types of reading strategies, namely summarizing and paraphrasing, on reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners and the role of gender in this regard. To do so, based on a proficiency test, three homogeneous groups were selected (two experimental and one control groups). Each group consisted of 20 students (10 males and 10 females). The participants were pre-tested before treatment sessions. Experimental groups received explicit instruction of summarizing and paraphrasing while the control group did not receive these instructions. Then after 18 sessions a post-test was administered to the learners. A two-way ANOVA was used to analyze the data. The results indicated that instructing summarizing and paraphrasing strategies had a significant effect on reading comprehension with participants in paraphrasing group outperforming those in summarizing group. There was not a statistically significant difference between scores of male and female participants in two experimental groups.



**Keywords:** Reading, Reading comprehension strategy, Summarizing, Paraphrasing

## 1. Introduction

Shaywitz (2003) points out reading process is the royal road to knowledge; it is essential to the success in all academic subjects. Furthermore, he states that reading comprehension is an important life skill and it is one of the most important domains in education, because it is the best predictor of success in higher education and job performance. Reading can be challenging, particularly when the material is unfamiliar, technical, or more complex. It is the common experience of EFL teachers that, most students fail to learn to read efficiently and adequately in the target language. Many students fail to conceptualize reading as a search for meaning, so they have a lot of problems during the study. They can read variety of texts with accuracy and fluency but cannot demonstrate an understanding of what they have read. This is often indicated by an inability to recall key information from the text, to retell the story or answer questions related to it. Students with reading problems tend to be less aware of text structure and have poorer recall of textual ideas than good readers (Fitzgerald, 2003). It is very important that the reader is aware that the purpose of reading is to make meaning of the text being read, not just be able to decode it (Hedin & Conderman, 2010).

On the other hand, readers have been found to employ a wide range of strategies like reading aloud, guessing, deduction, and summarizing (Chamot & Kupper, 1989). Ehrman and Oxford (1990) argue that strategies are able to help L2 learners to "enhance the acquisition, storage, retention, recall, and use of new information" (p. 182). Rubin (1985) suggested that teachers could help their less successful students improve their performance by applying learning strategies used by successful language learners. However, a more significant issue worthy of further in-depth explorations is how these strategies are employed. Many studies have shown that reading strategies can be taught to students, and when taught, improve students' performance on test of comprehension and recall (Brown & Palincsar, 1989; Carrell, 1985). Research has also repeatedly shown that the conscious use of strategies is related to language achievement and proficiency (Cook, 1991; Larsen-Freeman, 1991; Oxford, 1990). Summarizing and paraphrasing are among the best types of these strategies. As a comprehension fostering activity, the process of summarization focuses attention on the central information of the text and provides the reader

with a conceptual framework that facilitates memory and comprehension (Cordero-Ponce, 2000). Summarizing allows readers to focus on gist information as Cordero-Ponce (2000) explains, "summarization is perhaps one of the most significant and encompassing of all reading strategies available to the learner for effective studying and comprehension" (p. 103). Also, according to Shugarman and Hurst (1986) paraphrase writing is a powerful method that teachers can use to improve content understanding, learning, and interest while developing reading content, communication, and creative skills. This strategy not only gives students a reason to read but also encourages them, to keep reading and keep learning together (Wilkinson, 2002). In order to consider the effect of summarizing strategy, some researchers like Bean and Steenwyk (1984) working with sixth-grade subjects, compared a rule-governed approach to summarization with an intuitive approach and a control. In the rule-governed approach, students were taught directly six macro-rules for producing a summary. The intuitive approach also used direct instruction techniques and involved teaching children to delete trivial information and use topic statements to make 15 word paragraph summaries. Both treatment groups significantly outperformed the control group on both paragraph summarization measure and a standardized reading comprehension test. The reciprocal relationship between reading and writing was studied by Graham and Herbert (2010) to find out the impact of writing on reading activities. They noticed that having learners write about the texts they have read can improve their abilities in reading. In a case study conducted by Correia (2006), with a group of advanced university students in Brazil, the researcher examined the effect of writing summary and discussing about the article on the students' reading comprehension. Correia got the result that writing summary has positive effect on reading comprehension of her students.

Katims and Harris (1997) used paraphrasing strategy in inclusive classrooms with 207 students in seventh grade. The results confirmed that students with LD in the experimental group receiving paraphrasing instruction increased their scores more from pre-test to post-test than students with LD who were in the control group.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of implementing two reading strategies, *summarizing* and *paraphrasing*, as an aid to improve the learners' reading comprehension while attempted to examine these strategies with use of short stories for both male and female intermediate Iranian EFL learners.

With these justifications, the present research set out to provide answers to the following questions:

1. Does type of strategy (summarizing and paraphrasing) have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension?
2. Does gender have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension?
3. Does the interaction between gender and type of strategy (summarizing or paraphrasing) have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension?

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Participants**

The participants in this study were 90 male and female EFL learners (their L1 was Azeri Turkish and Persian). After administration of the proficiency test, 60 learners who scored between 7 and 17 were selected and were divided into three groups randomly; two experimental groups (10 males and 10 females in each group) and one that served as a control group (10 males and 10 females). The first experimental group was called Summarizing Group (SG) and the second experimental group was called Paraphrasing Group (PG). Participants' age in this study ranged from 18-22. They were at the same level of language proficiency, namely intermediate and the study was conducted at Namavaran English teaching Institute in Ardabil, Iran. The learners received three hours of English language instruction in two sessions 2 days a week (90 minutes per session). The researcher herself was the teacher of three groups of the participants.

### **2.2. Instruments and Materials**

The following research instruments were used in this study:

- **Proficiency test**

Preliminary English Test (PET) was used in order to get assurance as to the homogeneity of the learners and to match the participants on their level of proficiency. This test comprised of 35 items. One point was awarded to each correct response. In order to make the scores more sensible to the learners, the total number of correct response was converted to the scale of 20.

- **Pre-test**

The second instrument in the pre-treatment stage was a reading comprehension test including 40 items based on *KhateSefid work book* written by NematiMoghadam and Pasandideh (2011)

which was developed by the researcher and used as the pretest. One point was allocated to each correct response by the participants. The final point was calculated by dividing the total number of correct items by two. So, the maximum possible score of this exam was 20. The reliability of this test was calculated as 0.83 based on KR-21 formula which is an acceptable reliability and its content validity was confirmed by a professional teacher at Ph.D level in the institute. This test took around 40 minutes for the learners to answer. Based on the results of the one-way ANOVA it should be mentioned that there was no significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the results of reading comprehension pre-test ( $p=.06$ ).

- **Post-test**

This test, same as the pre-test, was administered to measure the participants' achievement as a result of the treatment with 18-session distance. The interval length was long enough for the participants to neutralize the test effect.

- **Instructional materials**

The materials in this study consisted of 18 short stories extracted from Intermediate part of *Steps to Understanding* written by Hill (1980). The study of this book was part of the course requirements in Namavaran Institute.

### **2.3. Procedure**

The entire study took 10 weeks. The total sessions of the study were 21 sessions (two days a week), one session was devoted to proficiency test, one to pre-test, and one to post-test. The proficiency test (PET) was administered in the first session. The pre-test was administered in the second session and all participants received reading comprehension test. Finally, in the last session the post-test was administered (was the same test as the pre-test) with 18-session distance to find out the effects of paraphrasing and summarizing strategies over time. Therefore, the total sessions devoted to the treatment were 18 sessions. The present study was accomplished during the course of the participants' regular schedule and each session took one and a half hour out of which the last forty minutes of the class time was devoted to reading comprehension exercises and the rest of the time was spent on checking homework, dictation, dialogue, listening and speaking activities. All of the participants ( $N=60$ ) received the selected short stories. Each passage of this short story contained some exercises and participants of all groups were asked to answer them. The role of teacher in the devoted time to the reading comprehension was to teach

the reading passages to all three groups in the same way (i.e., words, structures, pronunciation, etc.).

### 3. Analyses and Results

As mentioned earlier, in order to select homogeneous subjects for the study, a group of 90 students took a proficiency test (PET-test). Table 3.1 shows the descriptive statistics for the scores on this test.

Table 3.1.

*Descriptive Statistics for Scores on Proficiency Test*

Source	N	M	SD
proficiency-test	90	11.68	2.17

In order to ensure that the learners in three groups (SG, PG, CG) enjoyed the same level of language proficiency prior to the main study, their scores on the proficiency test were put into a One-way ANOVA (Table 3.2) and the results revealed that there were no significant differences across the participants on their level of proficiency ( $p = 0.80 > 0.05$ ).

Table 3.2.

*One-Way ANOVA for Scores on Proficiency Test*

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.358	2	0.179	0.212	0.809
Within Groups	48.075	57	0.843		
Total	48.433	59			

Table 3.3 shows Descriptive statistics for the scores of the learners on pre-test. This test was administered to make sure if they were homogeneous in terms of their reading ability.

Table 3.3.

*Descriptive Statistics for Scores on Pre-test by Gender*

Source	Gender	N	M	SD
SG	Male	10	13.02	0.380
	Female	10	12.95	0.368
PG	Male	10	13.42	1.253
	Female	10	13.22	0.880
CG	Male	10	12.85	0.529
	Female	10	12.72	0.463

A One-way ANOVA was run to see if any differences existed among the three groups in terms of their reading comprehension ability. As Table 3.4 indicates there was not any significant difference on the pretest scores across the groups ( $F=2.90$ ,  $Sig=.063$ ). Thus, it can be concluded that the three groups enjoyed the same level of reading comprehension ability.

Table 3.4. *One-Way ANOVA for Scores on Pretest*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.894	2	1.447	2.902	0.063
Within Groups	28.426	57	0.499		
Total	31.320	59			

The post-test of this study was the same test as pre-test. Descriptive statistics was computed after the post-test administration. Table 3.5 shows the results. The three groups performed differently and showed a gain but the two treatment groups' gains were substantial. PG showed higher mean so, it can be concluded that PG performed better than both SG and CG. Figure 3.1 shows a comparison between the groups' mean scores on the posttest and regarding gender, there was no significant difference between males and females.

Table 3.5. *Descriptive Statistics for Scores on Post-test by Gender*

Source	Gender	N	M	SD
SG	Male	10	16.48	0.423
	Female	10	16.72	1.208
PG	Male	10	17.16	0.429
	Female	10	17.34	0.400
CG	Male	10	15.68	0.423
	Female	10	15.58	0.370

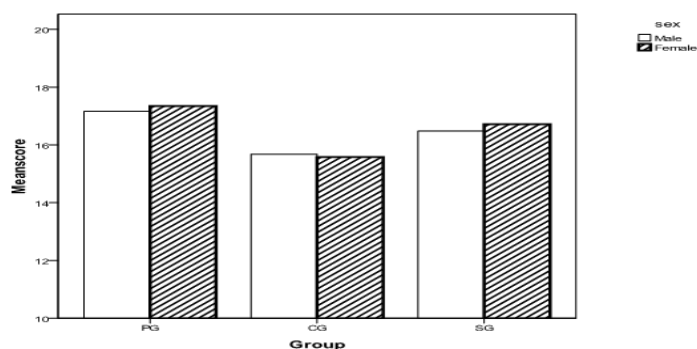


Figure 3.1. Descriptive statistics for scores on post-test by gender

Before discussing the main results of two-way ANOVA, it should be mentioned that the groups enjoyed homogeneous variances (Levene's  $F=1.46$ ,  $Sig> 0.05$ ). Table 3.6 shows the result.

Table 3.6. *Test of Homogeneity of Variances for Scores on Post-test*

F	df1	df2	Sig.
1.463	5	54	.217

As there are two independent variables, namely type of strategy and gender, the present data analysis utilized a two-way ANOVA to explore the impact of sex and type of strategy on reading comprehension. As can be seen in Table 3.7 there was a statistically significant main effect for group ( $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ). Using Cohen's (1988) criterion, the effect size for this difference (partial eta squared =.562) can be considered as large. These results suggest that explicit teaching of reading strategies had a significant effect on students' reading comprehension. Thus, the first null-hypothesis predicting that "type of strategy does not have any effect on students' reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners" was **rejected**. As shown in Table 3.7 the p-value of gender was higher than 0.05 (.50>.05). It indicates the fact that there was no significant main effect for gender and gender had not a significant effect on students' reading comprehension. Therefore, the second hypothesis stating that "gender does not have any effect on students' reading comprehension" was **supported**. The interaction effect between gender and strategy type was not statistically significant either (.65>.05). This indicates that there was no significant difference in the effect of strategy type on reading comprehension for males and females. Thus, the third hypothesis claiming that "interaction between gender and type of strategy does not have any effect on students' reading comprehension" has also been **confirmed**. Figure 3.2 indicates a plot of the reading comprehension scores for males and females, across the three groups.

Table 3.7. *Two-way ANOVA for Scores on Post-test*

Source	SS	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Group	26.585	2	13.293	34.656	.000***	.562
Gender	.171	1	.171	.445	.508	.008
Group*Gender	.329	2	.165	.429	.653	.016
Error	20.712	54	.384			

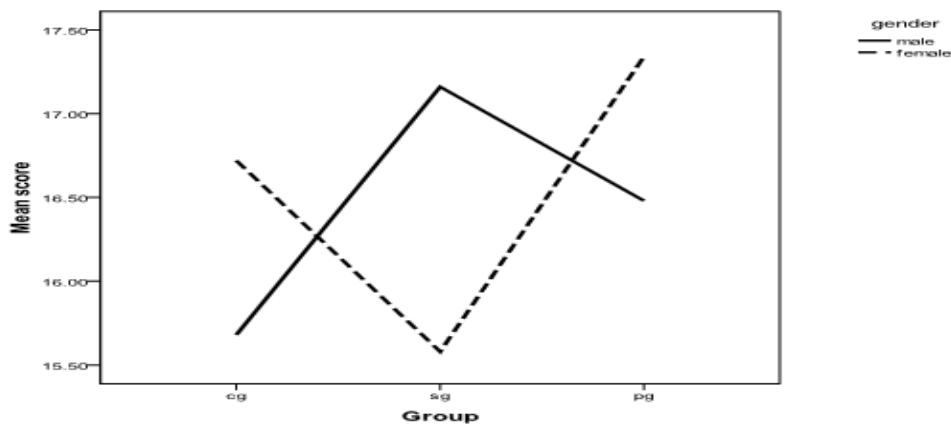


Figure 3.2. Mean performance on posttest across the groups

A Post-hoc multiple comparisons was run to examine the differences between the three groups statistically and to pin down where the differences exactly lie, as shown in Table 3.8. The results obtained from these comparisons indicated that the mean score for SG (M=16.60) was significantly different from both PG (M=17.25) and CG (M=15.63) and also the mean score for PG (M=17.25) was significantly different from CG (M=15.63). These comparisons coupled with the descriptive statistics presented in Table 3.7 revealed that experimental group two (PG) outperformed experimental group one (SG) and control group (CG) and experimental group one (SG) performed better than control group (CG).

Table 3.8.

*Post-Hoc Tests (Multiple Comparisons) of the Three Groups for Scores on Post-test*

Group		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
SG	PG	-.6500*	.19585	.005	-1.1220	-.1780
	CG	.9700*	.19585	.000	.4980	1.4420
	CG	1.6200*	.19585	.000	1.1480	2.0920
PG	SG	.6500*	.19585	.005	.1780	1.1220
CG	PG	-1.6200*	.19585	.000	-2.0920	-1.1480
	SG	-.9700*	.19585	.000	-1.4420	-.4980



#### **4. Discussion**

The results of the study indicated that the effect of summarizing and paraphrasing strategies on the students' reading comprehension ability is clear, while these strategies affect Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension differently. The obtained findings proved that there was a significant difference between scores of participants of experimental groups and control group, as well as among participants of two experimental groups. In other words, the different strategies (summarizing and paraphrasing) have significant role in increasing Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension, but this effect was more significant for the learners with paraphrasing strategy. In fact, participants in paraphrasing group outperformed participants in summarizing group.

The result of the current study is in line with the studies by Bean and Steenwyk (1984) and Correia (2006), which concluded that instructing students to generate summaries of texts has been shown to improve reading comprehension. And the results obtained from the post-test show that, paraphrasing group outperformed summarizing one. Paraphrasing strategy was found to be effective in the current study. This finding supports the research of Katims and Harris (1997), who suggested that the explicit teaching of the paraphrasing strategy will improve students' reading comprehension. Rosenshine and Meister (1994) believe that paraphrasing is an important technique that can be taught to improve comprehension.

The findings of the present study revealed that there was not a significant difference between scores of male and female participants in two experimental groups. Both males and females' scores after summarization and paraphrasing strategies showed significant improvement, whereas the same result contrasts with the study conducted by Oxford and Nyikos (1989) which showed that females outperformed males in their comprehension of given passages in a written recall task. The interaction effect between gender and strategy type was not statistically significant either. This indicates that there was no significant difference in the effect of strategy type on reading comprehension for males and females.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Providing learners with explicit instruction on summarizing and paraphrasing strategies can facilitate their reading comprehension process. Teaching these strategies is often neglected by teachers. Consequently, students are generally told to summarize and paraphrase the text but they

are not given enough instruction for using these strategies. Thus, it is important for teachers to guide their students to develop these strategies that can be highly effective for helping students identify main ideas, generalize, remove redundancy, integrate ideas, and improve memory for what is read. These strategies help readers associate text concepts into their schemata and encourage the readers to make connections with prior knowledge to access what is already known about the topic and to use words that are part of the reader's knowledge.

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