

The Iranian EFL Journal October 2012 Volume 8 Issue 5

Iranian EFL Journal



ISSN On-line: 1836-8751

ISSN Print: 1836-8743

The Iranian EFL Journal

October 2012

Volume 8

Issue 5

Chief Editors

Dr. Paul Robertson

Dr. Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh



Publisher

Dr. Paul Robertson

Time Taylor International Ltd.

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The Iranian EFL Journal Press
A Division of Time Taylor Publishers
QC Pavilion
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Iranian.efljournal@yahoo.com

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



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Foreword

Welcome to the fifth edition of the year 2012. The bi-monthly Iranian EFL Journal has attracted many readers not only from the Middle East but also from different parts of the world and in this way; the number of our reviewers has also increased. More than eighty reviewers are cooperating with the journal and evaluate the articles. The journal has had strong growth over the last few years with a monthly readership now exceeding 2500 readers. For a journal examining the topics of EFL/ESL, Literature and Translation studies, the growth and readership has been pleasing. Statistically, readers are coming from almost 80 countries. In this issue we present twenty three articles for your reading. In the first article, Reza Pishghadam and Paria Norouz Kermanshahi present writers' stance-taking in EFL articles: a case of Persian, English and EFL speakers. In the second article of the issue, patterns of language learning strategy use among Iranian ESP students is done by Seyed Mohammad Jafari and Reza Hajizadeh. In the third article of the issue, Hamed Mahsefat and Sepide Homaie present using internet technology in teaching vocabulary for elementary students. In the next article, cooperative directed reading-thinking activity and referential-inferential reading comprehension skills is presented by Mohammad Reza Hashemi and Mohsen Nazari. In the fifth article of the issue, Shohreh Raftari, Maryam Bijami and Ambigapathy Pandian have studied the use of dichotic listening to establish the critical period for L2 learning in Iran. The next article which is about an investigation into the relationship between field dependence/independence, sex, and age, towards EFL proficiency in Iranian language learners is done by Mehrdad Rezaeian. In the seventh article of the issue Mansoor Tavakoli, Zahra Amirian and Fatemeh Moslemi present analysis of interactional metadiscourse markers across applied linguistics disciplines: focusing on EFL learners' perception. In the eight article of the issue, the effect of cooperative learning strategy of student teams achievement divisions (STAD) on developing oral communication skills of Iranian EFL learners is presented by Seyyed Abdollah Razavi, Mahboube Nakhle and Mohammad Naghavi. In the next article, the effectiveness of skimming in reading comprehension of middle-aged students in Iran is presented by Mohsen Jafarpour and Ebrahim Ezzati. In the tenth article of the issue Mostafa Mirzaii presents consciousness-raising instruction and its effect on Iranian EFL Learners' Use of the Mechanics of Writing. In the next article of the issue, the impact of language-based and content-based pre-tasks on listening comprehension: a case of Iranian EFL listeners is presented by Zahra Zaragaran. In the next article of the issue, the effectiveness of psychotology-reduced L2 teaching



on three linguistically different groups of Iranian undergraduate EFL learners' reading comprehension skill is studied by Hamid Reza Haghverdi, Hossein Heidari Tabrizi and Mohiaddin Manouchehr Eghbalitabar. In the thirteenth article Mina Rastegar, Nahid Heidari and Mahboubeh Akbarzadeh present on the relationship among locus of control, sense of well-being and language proficiency in Iranian EFL learners. In the next article of the issue, the relative significance of lexical richness and syntactic complexity in IELTS academic reading tests is presented by Mehdi Karami. In the next article of the issue, consumers' evaluation of the content parameters of the English course books (Iranian high-school level) is studied by Gholam-Reza Abbasian and Bahareh Malm Meer. The sixteenth article of the issue is about the effect of cultural familiarity on reading comprehension of intermediate Iranian EFL learners is done by Hamid Boadhar. Generic variation across languages: a case for applied linguistics is the seventeenth article and is presented by Massoud Yaghoubi-Notash and Hassan Tarlani-Aliabadi. The eighteenth article of the issue is on the effectiveness of corpus analysis tool in the use of correct preposition in Persian into English translation and is studied by Zohre Hadi and Goodarz Alibakhshi. In the nineteenth article of the issue a critical look at the effect of teachers' self-efficacy on students' academic success is presented by Mohammad Khatib, Saeid Najafi Sarem and Hadi Hamidi. In the twentieth article of the issue Ali Akbar Khomejani Farahani and Maryam Talebi have presented an article on the effect of EFL textbook teachers' manuals on Iranian EFL male and female teachers' perception and treatment of reading skill. In the next article of the issue strategically mediated reflective practice framework introducing reflective practice from a sociocultural perspective is presented by Mohammad Khatib and Mehdi Shokouhi. In the next article, the effect of using E-Portfolio on the writing proficiency of Iranian EFL learners is studied by Maryam Meshkat and Arash Goli. In the next article of the issue Mohamad Taghi Hasani and Cyrus Rouhollahi Moghadam have presented the effect of self- assessment on Iranian EFL learners' writing skills. In the next article, the effectiveness of contextualized versus de-contextualized vocabulary teaching on pre-university EFL Learners' short and long-term retention is presented by Najmeh Beizavi and Mohammad Sadegh Bagheri. The last article of the issue the effect of text type, and organization of the passage on the facility with which students comprehend a passage in a foreign Language, is presented by Zahra Ghaffari Saravi.

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



Title

Writers' Stance-taking in EFL Articles: A Case of Persian, English and EFL Speakers

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Biodata

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Abstract

This study seeks to investigate writers' stance-taking in discussion section of EFL articles written by Persian, English, and EFL speakers. To achieve this purpose, three corpora were selected comprising 90 EFL articles randomly selected from reliable journals. The results of this study revealed that English writers mostly utilize 'textual' stance markers and 'deontic' ones; while Persian articles contained more 'textual' and 'attitudinal / epistemic' markers; and Interlanguage writers make use of 'textual' and 'deontic' stance markers as the first two frequently utilized markers. Finally, the results were discussed in the context of language learning and teaching and some suggestions were made.

Keywords: Stance taking, EFL articles, English, Persian.

1. Introduction

One of the most salient things we do with words is stance taking (Du Bois, 2007). The idea of stance involves the speakers' or writers' choice of words which uncover their relationship to what they say including their certainty/ uncertainty, happiness/ sadness, intensity/ friendliness, surprise, etc. In fact, stance taking involves the writers' or speakers' view point, attitude, judgment, and evaluation towards the proposition they talk about, conveying their personal feeling, degree of certainty, and the perspective they are taking. This would be salient in their identity construction and would also clarify how they put language into good use to persuade or involve readers (Johnstone, 2007).

Previous studies (e.g. Englebretson, 2007) have shown that the use of stance is more frequent in writing than speech, and it is possible to infer about writers' stance and viewpoints through various linguistic forms. Therefore, due to the importance of stance-taking in well expression of ideas, some studies have been carried out so far to investigate stance taking or stance supporting behaviors in English learners' essays (e.g. Xu & Long, 2008), online forums (e.g. Chandrasegaran & Kong, 2006), employing special conversational phrases (e.g. Lim, 2009), and asking questions (e.g. Keisanen, 2006).

Moreover, in the realm of second language writing stance-taking has been examined. Studies (e.g. Liang, 2008; Xu, 2007; Xu & Long, 2008) have revealed the fact that stance taking is a cross-cultural concept in which advanced nonnative learners of English are not perfectly capable of projecting their stance in English. This does highlight the necessity of concentrating on stance-taking and stance-supporting construction among nonnative speakers of English. Therefore, given the fact that most of our daily conversations consist of judgments, evaluations, and assessments, and also there is a dearth of research in this area in the Persian culture, we intend to examine the stance-taking of Iranian and English writers in the EFL articles.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

Du Bois (2002) has indicated that stance is an interacting linguistic feature which marks the writer's or speaker's alignment. He goes further to mention that stance can be a *modus operandi* to construct identity, having not only ideological but also interactional ramifications. Other scholars such as Chandrasegaran and Kong (2006) are of the opinion that stance is somehow synonymous to Hunston and Thompson's term (2000, p.5) 'evaluation' which is defined as the writer's "attitude...towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about". In the same vein, Englebretson (2007)

believes that there are five major themes which are observed in stance taking (1) interactional, (2) indexical, (3) consequential, (4) public and interpretable (5) physical/personal/moral.

Moreover, according to Xu and Long(2008), stance not only expresses the writer's personal feelings and emotions, attitudes, judgment, or evaluation on the proposition, but also clarifies how the writer makes use of language in order to persuade or involve readers, and how he commits to the truth of the proposition.

Xu and Long (2008) believe that there exists a similarity between 'stance markers' and 'linguistic signs' defined by Maynard (1993) as the information which is put forward in the events or propositions and is coded through some exclusively functioning devices in order to describe the world or express oneself.

In another study, Biber et al. (1999) have categorized stance markers into three major groups:1) Epistemic stance markers which deal with the extent to which the reader can rely on the conveyed information which might differ in the degree of precision or certainty. This group of stance markers is itself divided into three subcategories of 'certainty', 'evidentiality', and 'likelihood'. 2) Deontic stance markers which clarify the speaker's stance towards social issues such as morality, legality, power and authority which can be divided into two subcategories of 'necessity/obligation stance markers' and 'permission /possibility /ability stance markers'.3) Causation stance markers which express not only the results and consequences caused by something or some actions, but also the necessary efforts and activities to get the required results according to the writer's belief. According to Xu and Long (2008), causation stance markers are helpful in smoothing the argumentation and aid the writer to be understood better. 4) Attitudinal stance markers which highlight the writer's position and are in line with Hyland's (2005) 'Attitude markers'. According to Hyland (2005), through attitudinal stance markers writers not only indicate what their position is but also lead readers to a conspiracy of agreement. These stance markers are divided into two other groups under the rubric of 'affect stance markers' and 'evaluation stance markers'. 5) Textual stance markers which aid the writer in constructing an effective line of reasoning and ultimately involving and convincing the readers through organizing the text in a way that reflects his stance. Textual stance markers are classified into two subgroups of 'text connectives' and 'illocution markers',

In another study, Lim (2009) scrutinized the use of the Chinese epistemic phrase 'WoJuede' in conversations, concluding that it represents speaker's epistemic uncertainty. Keisanen (2006) also analyzed the forms and functions of tag questions and negative yes/no

interrogatives in American English conversations to come up with how these are involved in the construction of stance and in displaying people's evaluative, affective, or epistemic point of view.

In yet another study, Englebretson (2007) analyzed the Indonesian first person singular pronouns, concluding that unlike English which has only one first person singular pronoun, in Indonesian language, there are several and each can be employed not only to express oneself and the stance one takes, but also to represent social and personal identities. Furthermore, in another study Chandrasegaran and Kong (2006) investigated these behaviors in arguments in an online forum, realizing that most postings project a stance. Alphen (2004) also discussed the issue of stance taking, especially regarding women while using questions, claiming that not always women ask questions out of dependency or submissiveness.

All in all, a bunch of studies have been conducted on the issue of stance taking, investigating the relationship between stance taking and identity construction (Johnstone, 2007), analyzing stance taking in colloquial conversation (Englebretson, 2007), seeking stance markers in spoken languages such as Finnish (Rauniomaa, 2007), and enquiring into the role of special phrases such as *I guess* in stance taking (Kärkkäinen, 2007).

Since the literature of stance-taking shows, no research has been conducted to date to examine stance-taking in the Persian culture. Therefore, this study with the chief purpose of comparing Iranian and English writers' stance taking seeks to answer these four major questions:

1. Are there any significant differences in the use of stance markers in English?
2. Are there any significant differences in the use of stance markers in Persian?
3. Are there any significant differences in the use of stance markers in Interlanguage?
4. Are there any significant differences in the use of stance markers among English, Persian, and Interlanguage?

2. Methodology

2.1 Materials

In the current research, 90 articles were selected to be examined with regard to their discussion section. These articles were in the field of teaching and learning English language and have been published from 2000 to 2011. Due to the unfamiliarity of the authors with other fields of study, they were not taken into consideration to avoid any misinterpretation. The articles constituted three groups of 30 which were labeled as:

- English articles: these articles were written by native speakers of English and chosen randomly amongst the most well-known EFL journals such as, *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *Journal of Language Learning*, and *TESOL Quarterly*.
- Inter-language articles: it encompassed English articles written by native speakers of Persian: *Ferdowsi Review*, *Foreign Language Teaching Journal*, and *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*.
- Persian articles: it covered Persian articles written by native speakers of Persian: *Journal of Foreign Language Study*, *Al-Zahra University Journal*, and *the Journal of Literature and Humanities (Mashhad University)*.

2.2 Procedure

The process of data collection started in May, 2012 and ended in July, 2012 after two months. A total of 90 articles randomly selected from journals in the field of English language teaching and learning. To provide a valid comparison, the first 500 words in the discussion section of articles were selected and analyzed. Every single sentence was considered as a unit of analysis.

Based on the model previously proposed by Xu and Long (2008), different types of stance markers were analyzed:

1-*Epistemic stance*: assessment of the degree of likelihood concerning the described situation, such as really, certainly, clearly, of course...

2- *Deontic stance*: arguments regarding the necessity or desirability of the situation obtaining, such as can, could, will, would, maybe, possibly ...

3- *Causation stance*: show the results and consequences caused by something or some actions, like effect, influence, provide, lead to, control, offer ...

4-*Attitudinal stance*: judgments on the existing things around the topic such as good, better, important, useful, faster, easier ...

5- *Textual stance*: well-organized texts to enhance rationality and logicity like so, thus, however, besides, for example ...

This model was applied to the all 90 articles (see Appendix for a sample of stance marker analysis done by the researchers). Moreover, to ensure the reliability of scoring, two experts were asked to analyze the data. Finally, Chi-square was utilized to detect the areas of differences.

3. Results

As already mentioned, to analyze the data and to answer the research questions of the study, the authors employed Chi-square.

Table 1

Chi-square test for English articles

Stance types / statistics	Observed N	Expected N	χ^2	df	Sig.
Epistemic	75	122.4	204.9	4	.00
Deontic	183	122.4			
Causation	50	122.4			
Attitudinal	74	122.4			
Textual	230	122.4			

Regarding the English writers, the results of the study (see Table 1) show that ‘textual’ stance markers are mostly used in the English articles (observed N= 230), while ‘deontic’ (observed N= 183), ‘epistemic’ (observed N= 122.4), ‘attitudinal’ (observed N= 74) and ‘causation’ (observed N= 50) stance markers are employed less than the ‘textual’ ones by English writers. The summary of results is as follows:

Textual > Deontic > Epistemic > Attitudinal > Causation
--

Table 2

Chi-square test for Persian articles

Stance types / statistics	Observed N	Expected N	χ^2	df	Sig.
Epistemic	63	71.2	68.4	4	.00
Deontic	40	71.2			
Causation	55	71.2			
Attitudinal	66	71.2			
Textual	131	71.2			

As the results of Table 2 demonstrate, like the English articles, in the Persian articles ‘textual’ stance markers (observed N= 131) are used more frequently than ‘Attitudinal’ (observed N= 66), ‘epistemic’ (observed N= 63) ‘causation’ (observed N= 55), and ‘deontic’ (observed N= 40) stance markers. Therefore:

Textual >Attitudinal> Epistemic > Causation > Deontic

Table 3

Chi-square test for Interlanguage articles

Stance types Statistics	Observed N	Expected N	χ^2	df	Sig.
Epistemic	82	112.8	111.9	4	.00
Deontic	138	112.8			
Causation	86	112.8			
Attitudinal	59	112.8			
Textual	199	112.8			

According to the results indicated in Table 3, like the English articles, ‘textual’ (observed N= 199) and ‘deontic’ stance markers (observed N= 138) fall in the first categories. In the interlanguage articles, the third and fourth ranks belong to ‘causation’ (observed N= 86) and ‘epistemic’ stance markers respectively (observed N= 82). And the last category belongs to the ‘attitudinal’ (observed N= 59) stance markers. The results are summarized below:

Textual >Deontic> Causation >Epistemic > Attitudinal

To come up with a better picture of differences among English, Persian, and Interlanguage articles, simultaneous Chi-squares were run.

Table 4

Qui-square test for stance markers in English, Persian, and Interlanguage

		English	Persian	Interlanguage
Epistemic	Observed	75	63	82
	Expected	73.3	73.3	73.3
	χ^2	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Df	2	2	2
	Sig.	.28	.28	.28
Deontic	Observed	183	40	138
	Expected	120.3	120.3	120.3
	χ^2	88.8	88.8	88.8
	Df	2	2	2
	Sig.	.00	.00	.00
Causation	Observed	50	56	82
	Expected	64	64	64
	χ^2	11.6	11.6	11.6
	Df	2	2	2
	Sig.	.003	.003	.003
Attitudinal	Observed	74	66	59
	Expected	66.3	66.3	66.3
	χ^2	1.69	1.69	1.69
	Df	2	2	2
	Sig.	.42	.42	.42
Textual	Observed	230	131	199
	Expected	186.7	186.7	186.7
	χ^2	27.4	27.4	27.4
	Df	2	2	2
	Sig.	.00	.00	.00
Total	Observed	612	356	564
	Expected	510.7	510.7	510.7
	χ^2	72.5	72.5	72.5
	df	2	2	2
	Sig.	.00	.00	.00

As the results suggest, except for ‘epistemic’ and ‘attitudinal’ stance markers, there is a significant difference in the application of the other groups. For instance, there exists a significant difference in the use of ‘deontic’ stance markers among English, Persian, and Interlanguage groups ($\chi^2= 88.8$, $p\leq 0.05$), which are employed mostly by the English writers (observed $N= 183$) than Interlanguage (observed $N= 138$), and Persian writers (observed $N= 40$). That is:

English > Interlanguage > Persian

‘Causation’ stance markers ($\chi^2= 11.6$, $p\leq 0.05$) proved to be utilized more frequently by the Interlanguage writers (observed $N= 82$), than the Persian (observed $N= 56$) and English writers (observed $N= 50$).

Interlanguage > Persian > English

Based on the results, ‘textual’ stance markers are also significantly different with regard to their application among the three groups of English, Persian, and Interlanguage ($\chi^2= 27.4$, $p\leq 0.05$); that is, they are mostly used in the English articles (observed $N= 230$). This could be summarized as follows:

English > Interlanguage > Persian

Considering total application of stance markers among the three groups, the results indicated that there is a significant difference ($\chi^2= 72.5$, $p\leq 0.05$) among English (observed $N= 612$), Persian (observed $N= 356$) and Interlanguage (observed $N= 564$) articles with regard to their use of stance markers. That is:

English > Interlanguage > Persian

4. Discussion

As already mentioned, this study intends to see whether there are any significant differences in the use of stance markers in English, Persian, and Interlanguage, and to examine the areas of differences in the use of stance markers among English, Persian, and Interlanguage.

With respect to the first goal of this research, the results revealed that English writers utilize ‘textual’ stance markers in the first place and ‘deontic’ ones in the second place. It is necessary to mention that all three groups share the first one, that is, native speakers, Persian speakers, and interlanguage ones all make use of ‘textual’ stance markers more often than any other types. This can be due to the fact that they feel responsible to involve the readers, steer them, guide them through the text, and finally convince them. The application of ‘deontic’ markers by English writers can be justified through the cultural differences, i.e., the use of modals in deontic group indicates the relativistic look of the native speakers as opposed to the Persian ones (Hofstede, 1980).

Regarding the second goal of the study, it was found that the Persian articles contained first ‘textual’ stance markers and second, ‘attitudinal’ markers. One line of explanation for this outcome is that according to Hall (1976), people’s attitude can be greatly influenced by some value dimensions affecting their cultures; that is, some cultures are low-context and some like Iran are high-context. In high-context cultures, absolute words do not play major roles and emotions, gestures, and silence accompany to foster comprehension. Therefore, Iranian people involve their emotions even in their writing. Another justification that can be put forward for Persian writers’ frequent use of ‘attitudinal’ stance markers is their being

‘emotional’ and ‘collective’. In fact, this finding is in agreement with what Varnum, Grossmann, Kitayama, and Nisbett (2009) found about the differences between Western and Eastern cultures; they claimed that Eastern people such as Iranians are interdependent, emotional, and holistic. In the same vein, Hofstede (1980) also stated that a ‘collective’ type of culture is dominant in Iran where the concepts of ‘we’, dependence and emotionality are brought into focus.

Moreover, Persian writers do not opt for ‘deontic’ markers as native speakers do, since they favor ‘certainty’ rather than ‘relativity’. This is in line with what Hofstede (1980) mentions about the value dimension of ‘uncertainty avoidance’ and that Iranian people tend to avoid any ambiguity and uncertainty. Since they proved to have very low tolerance of vagueness, they seem not to opt for ‘deontic’ stance markers as native speakers do.

Taking into account the third question of the study, it was indicated that similar to the English writers, Interlanguage writers make use of ‘textual’ and ‘deontic’ stance markers as the first two frequently utilized markers. This and the other similarities evident between English and Interlanguage groups can indicate the fact that the Interlanguage articles are somehow moving towards the English ones.

As regards the fourth objective of this research, English, Persian, and Interlanguage groups were compared and contrasted and it was indicated that except for ‘epistemic’ and ‘attitudinal’ markers, the three groups’ application of stance markers were significantly different.

Considering the first group, in the use of ‘deontic’ stance markers, English writers were ranked to be the first, revealing the fact that they are more tolerant of uncertainty, ambiguity and chaos as opposed to Iranians who cannot stand complexity and ambiguity (Hofstede, 1980). According to the results of the second group, ‘causation’ stance markers were mostly used by the Interlanguage and Persian writers, and the English ones at the minimum. Frequent use of causation stance markers by non-natives can be a reason for their efforts to prove something, bringing reasons, and more explanation as opposed to the native speakers. The last group of stance markers, ‘textual’ ones, follows the previously mentioned pattern of use, i.e. English, interlanguage, and Persian.

Furthermore, when compared totally, the three groups proved to be significantly different with respect to their use of stance markers. English writers were found to make use of stance markers more than the other two groups. This can be justified in light of what Maynard (1993) mentions about stance markers. According to Maynard (1993), stance markers are ‘linguistic signs’ which are utilized to describe the world and express ‘self’. Native speakers

might be more successful in their 'self-expression' through their frequent use of stance markers in comparison to Interlanguage and Persian writers (Pishghadam & Ataran, 2012).

In this study, to avoid genre differences and particular variations in different sections of each research, the examination was limited to articles on English language teaching and learning, and specifically their discussion sections. It is therefore suggested that more studies be carried out in other genres. Moreover, not too overzealous in reporting the results of the current research, we cannot claim that they can be over generalized; therefore, it is thoroughly recommended that further research be carried out on a larger sample.

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Appendix

Epistemic stance markers

Frequent certainty stance markers
Really
as we all know
show/mean/prove/depends on
certainly/sure/true
no doubt/undoubtedly/unquestionably
usually/generally speaking/Generally
clearly/obvious/obviously
of course
truth/fact/in fact
Always
do/indeed
inevitable/inevitably
no one can deny
Admittedly

Deontic stance markers

Frequent permission/possibility/ability stance markers
Can/can't
Will/won't
May/might
Would
Could
Able/unable/abilities/enable
Maybe
Possible

Causation stance markers

Frequent causation/effort stance markers
help/helps/helped
effect/influence/affectation
save/saved/save
provide/provides/provided
waste/wastes/wasted
get in touch with/keep in touch with
offer/offers
Control
lead to
Commit
take advantage of/make full use of

Attitudinal stance markers

Frequent evaluation stance markers
Good/better
Convenient
Bad
Important
Advantages/disadvantages
Useful
Quickly/quicker/quick
Great/greater
Fast/faster
Easy/easier/easily
Agree
Widely/wider/wide
Benefit
Wonderful

Textual stance markers

Frequent textual stance markers
So/thus/therefore/as a result
First of all/most of all/above all
But/however/on the contrary
For example/such as/for instance
Second
All in all/to sum up/in a word/totally
Speaking
In this way/then
Because/as a result of
Especially
Thirdly
Besides/in addition to
Although/though
All the above/from the above
What's more/furthermore

Title

Patterns of Language Learning Strategy Use among Iranian ESP Students

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Biodata

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Abstract

The present study investigated the English learning strategies of Iranian ESP students. In addition, the current study aimed at discovering the differences in the use of English language learning strategies by gender. To this end, the Persian version of Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was administered among 25 male and 41 female students majoring in environmental health, public health, and occupational health and safety at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. Regarding to the overall use of strategies, the results showed that Iranian ESP students can be categorized as medium strategy users. Regarding to the use of each of the six strategy categories, findings revealed that the students used metacognitive strategies significantly more than any other category of strategies, with memory strategies ranking last on students' preference scale. The current study also found that gender did not affect the overall strategy usage of Iranian ESP students and the six categories of strategy.

Keywords: Language learning strategies, Gender, EFL learners, Strategy choices, ESP.

1. Introduction

According to MacIntyre (1994), "one of the most fertile areas of research in language learning in recent years is the topic of language learning strategies" (p. 185). This increased interest in studying language learning styles and language learning strategies is due, for the most part, to this fact that language practitioners and educators became aware that no single teaching method or technique could guarantee complete success in second/foreign language teaching. Regardless of teaching methods that they receive, some ESL/EFL learners appear to be more successful. So, Language educators have shifted their focus from teachers and teaching methods or techniques to learners and learning methods (Fewell, 2010). Chamot (2004) defines language learning strategies as "the conscious thoughts and actions that learners take in order to achieve a learning goal" (p. 14). Some eminent second language acquisition researchers (e.g. Cohen, 1998; Ellis, 1994; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1995; Stern, 1983) believe that language learning strategies are key factors in the acquisition of English as a second or foreign language and understanding them could help language teachers in providing the students with the best possible instruction. Such view has led to a considerable number of studies investigating individual language learning strategies (LLS) and the possible effects of individual variables on LLS. The findings have revealed that individual characteristics would influence ESL/EFL learners using language learning strategies and therefore affect success in language achievement. For instance, proficiency (Fewell, 2010; Zare & Noordin, 2011), learning style (Carson & Longhini, 2002; Oxford & Anderson 1995), gender (Hashemi, 2011; Radwan, 2011), motivation (Al-Otabi, 2004; MacIntyre,2002), anxiety (Horwitz, 2000, 2001; Wu, 2010), beliefs (Sioson, 2011; Su, 2005), learning tasks (Oxford, Cho, Leung, & Kim, 2004), and cultural backgrounds (Rao,2006; Yang, 2007). Despite the fact that a great deal of research has been examined language learning strategies used by language learners across the worldwide, this topic is "still a new area in Iran" (Zare & Noordin, 2011, p. 1870). The present study is a response to a recommendation by Zare and Noordin (2011) that there is a need for additional research, in the Iranian context, to determine the patterns of strategy use and the influence of a number of variables, such as gender on them. It is believed that through replication more consistent information becomes available within groups of learners and settings (Oxford, 1993b). Hence, the present study investigates the use of language learning strategies by Iranian ESP students. Regarding learner factors, it also explores the effect of gender on reported strategy

use by these students. To this end, the current study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the language learning strategies used by Iranian ESP students?
2. What is the difference between female and male ESP students in the use of language learning strategies?

2. Literature review

Numerous studies have been conducted to discover EFL learners' language learning strategies. For example, Khalil (2005) investigated the language learning strategy uses of 370 high school students and university EFL students in Palestine, Khalil found that the most frequently used strategies were metacognitive and social strategies. Rao (2006) investigated the language learning strategy use of 217 EFL students at a Chinese university in Jiangxi.

The findings showed that the students' overall learning strategy use was at medium frequency and indicated that affective strategies were most frequently used by students followed by metacognitive and compensation strategies. The least frequently used strategies were social strategies and cognitive strategies.

Deneme (2007) studied the use and preference of language learning strategies of Turkish students while they are learning English. The participants of the study showed high use of compensation and metacognitive strategies, and medium use of memory, cognitive, affective and social strategies. Shukri et al., (2009) examined whether or not differences exist between female and male Arabic students in the utilization of language learning strategies.

The participants of the study were 457 students at thirteen secondary schools in Terengganu, Malaysia. For data collection the researchers used a questionnaire adapted and modified from SILL (Oxford 1990). The results of the study revealed that there was significant gender difference in the use of language learning strategies as a whole. Female students also tend to use overall language learning strategies more often than males. For categories of language learning strategies, there are significant differences between genders in the use of affective and metaphysic strategies with females using them more often.

Al-Buainain (2010) studied the type and frequency of language learning strategies used by Qatar University English majors. The findings indicated that the students used learning strategies with high to medium frequency. The participants preferred to use metacognitive strategies most, while they revealed the least use of affective strategies. Fewell (2010) studied language learning strategy (LLS) use by Japanese college EFL students. The author

distributed a Japanese translated version of the SILL questionnaire (Oxford 1990) a computerized English proficiency test (Ohyagi and Kiggell 2003), and a brief background questionnaire among 56 participants.

Based on the findings of the study, Fewell stated that noticeable similarities of patterns in the utilization of language learner strategies shared by high proficiency learners and the noted distinctions shared by low proficiency learners show the importance of LLS as an influential variable related in some degree to eventual success or failure in language learning.

Zare and Noordin (2011) studied 148 undergraduate EFL learners in the Iranian context to determine the relationship between language learning strategy use and reading comprehension achievement among them. Furthermore, the authors sought the categories of strategies which best predict reading comprehension achievement among the group. The results showed a strong positive correlation ($r = .82$) exists between language learning strategies and reading comprehension achievement.

In addition, the category of metacognitive strategies was found to be the best predictor of reading comprehension achievement. Hashemi (2011) studied 150 EFL students majoring in English translation and literature in Iran to see whether there is any significant difference between male and female learners in their language learning strategies or not. The findings suggest that although both male and female learners use all six strategy categories, but female learners tend to use affective and compensation strategies more than male learners. Nikoopour, Amini-farasani, and Neishabouri (2011) investigated 137 MA TEFL students in Iran in order to investigate the most preferred strategy used by EFL students in Iran. The results indicated that, in terms of overall strategy use, Iranian EFL learners are, in general, moderate strategy users. The findings revealed that Iranian EFL learners preferred to use metacognitive as the most frequently used language learning strategy and memory as the least frequently one.

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

The study comprised sixty six Iranian ESP students majoring in environmental health, public health, Occupational health and safety at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. There were 25 males and 41 females and ranged between 19 and 23 years in age. All the subjects were monolingual speakers of Persian and had received at least 7 years of formal English

instruction in high school and guidance school. They voluntarily took part in the study in 2010/2011 Iranian academic year.

3.2. Instrument

The instrument in this survey consisted of two parts: the personal background information part, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990).

3.2.1. Personal Background Information Part

In this part, the participants were asked to provide brief information on their individual background. The information obtained includes: gender, age, their major, their mother tongue, length of studying English, and so on (see Appendix A). This information served as important indices to investigate the relationship between individual characteristics and the use of language learning strategies. Of particular importance to the present study was gender of the participants.

3.2.2. Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

In order to identify the variety and frequency of use of language learning strategies, Oxford (1990) created the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL, ESL/EFL student version) which includes six sections: (1) memory strategies which are used to store and retrieve new information, (2) cognitive strategies which are employed to comprehend and produce new language by many different means, (3) compensation strategies which are used to compensate for shortage of a knowledge in a language, (4) metacognitive strategies which are employed by learners to control their own cognition, (5) affective strategies which are used to manage emotions, motivation, and attitudes, and finally (6) social strategies which are used to ease interactions with others. The fifty items of the SILL survey instrument (version 7.0) were translated into Persian by the researcher in order to enable the participants to more easily understand and answer the questions. Each item offers 5-point Likert-type responses, ranging from 1 ("never or almost never true of me") to 5 ("always or almost always true of me"). According to Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995), SILL scores averaging 3.5 - 5.0 are called as high; 2.5 - 3.4 are designated medium strategy use; and scores ranging from 1.0 - 2.4 are often assigned as low strategy utilization. The Cronbach's Alpha of the Persian version of SILL administered in this study was 0.92, which was within the acceptable range of reliability. The reliability of the SILL, using Cronbach's Alpha, in different parts of the world is generally reported to be in the range of the .90s (Oxford & Ehrman, 1995, p. 370).

3.3. Data collection procedure and analysis

All the data- the demographic and the SILL were gathered during the class hour by the researcher with the help of the professors in charge of the class in June, 2011. Before

distributing the Persian version of SILL questionnaire, the subjects were briefly informed about some points such as: the purpose of the present study (discerning the language learning strategies use by this group), the possible contributions that the results of this study would provide for language teachers in EFL context. Participants were also assured of the confidentiality of the results. Then the researcher asked the students who volunteered in this study to fill the consent form. After distributing the questionnaire, the participants were asked to read each statement carefully and answer all of the statements honestly and according to their own English learning situations. They were also reminded that there is no right or wrong answer for each item. The analytical procedures employed to explore the research questions were computed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 16.0.

4. Results

Table 1 *Illustrates the distribution of participants by gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	41	41.62
Male	25	25.38

Table 1, shows the distribution of participants (males and females) in the present study. Female and male students comprised 41.62 and 25.38 percent of this study respectively.

Research question 1: What are the language learning strategies used by Iranian ESP students?

Table 2 *Six categories of strategy use in the SILL*

Strategy category	Mean	Std.Deviation	Number
Memory strategies	2.69	.63	66
Cognitive strategies	2.96	.57	66
Compensation strategies	3.00	.63	66
Metacognitive strategies	3.11	.62	66
Affective strategies	2.78	.63	66
Social strategies	2.98	.72	66
Overall use of strategies	2.95	.52	66

As shown in Table 2, all six strategy categories in the study were used at the medium range of strategy use. In addition, metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used strategies

($M = 3.11$, $SD = .62$), followed by compensation strategies ($M = 3.00$, $SD = .63$), social strategies ($M = 2.98$, $SD = .72$), cognitive strategies ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .57$), and affective strategies ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .63$). Memory strategies were the least frequently used by participants in this study ($M = 2.93$, $SD = .63$). The descriptive statistics for overall strategy use ($M = 2.95$, $SD = .52$) showed that the participants used a medium degree of strategy use.

Research question 2: What is the difference between female and male ESP students in the use of language learning strategies?

Table 3

Independent Samples t-Tests of Overall Strategy Use by Gender

t	df	Sig.(2tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference	95% confidence interval	
- .80	284	.43	-.05	.06	Lower bound	upper bound
					-.17	.70

T-test statistics were conducted to examine the differences in the use of English learning strategies between male and female students. Table 3, reveals that there was no significant difference between male and female, $t(284) = -.80$, $p = .43$. The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means between male and female learners of strategy use was quite moderate, ranging from $-.17$ to $.70$.

Table 4

Independent Samples t-Tests of Six Categories of Language Learning Strategy by Gender

Strategy	Male		Female		T	Sig.(2.tailed)
	Mean	Std.Deviation	Mean	Std.Deviation		
Memory	2.66	.62	2.69	.63	-.39	.70
Cognitive	2.98	.58	3.02	.59	-1.11	.27
Compensation	3.15	.61	3.13	.66	.17	.87
Metacognitive	2.98	.65	3.01	.66	-.47	.64
Affective	2.80	.68	2.83	.63	-.42	.68
Social	2.97	.69	3.00	.75	-.42	.67

As can be seen in Table 4, memory strategies were summarized, $t(284) = -.39$, $p = .70$; cognitive strategies, $t(284) = -1.11$, $p = .27$; compensation strategies, $t(286) = .17$, $p = .87$; metacognitive strategies($284) = -.47$, $p = .64$; affective strategies, $t(284) = -.42$, $p = .68$; and social strategies, $t(284) = -.42$, $p = .67$. As can be seen in Table 4, both male and female learners preferred to use compensation strategies most and to use memory strategies least.

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was twofold. The first was to examine what English language learning strategies are frequently employed by Iranian ESP students and another purpose behind this study was to uncover the differences in the use of language learning strategies by gender.

The Oxford's (1990) SILL was analyzed with descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, standard deviations, etc.) to determine the overall strategy use, strategy use in six categories. The overall mean score of the SILL demonstrated that the subjects used a medium degree of strategy use ($M = 2.95$, $SD = .51$). This finding was consistent with previous studies (examples: Hong, 2006; Lee, 2003; Nikoopour et al. 2011; Zare, 2010). Regarding to the use of each of the six strategy categories, the Iranian ESP students reported using metacognitive strategies ($M = 3.11$, $SD = .63$) more frequently than other categories of strategies and memory strategies was the least frequently ones among Iranian ESP students. This result is in line with previous studies carried out in different parts of Asia on EFL learners (e.g. Al-Buainain, 2010; Griffiths, 2003; Hashim and Sahil, 1994; Nikoopour et al. 2011; Radwan, 2011; Zare, 2010). Radwan (2011) studied the use of language learning strategies by 128 students majoring in English at Sultan Qabos University in Oman. The findings of the study showed that the participants use metacognitive strategies significantly more than any other category of strategies, with memory strategies ranking last on learners' preference scale. However, the findings were different from the studies of Hashemi (2011), Khalil (2005), and Nisbet, Tindall, and Arroyo (2005) studies. In the studies of Hashemi (2011), Khalil (2005), and Nisbet et al. (2005), social strategies were the most frequently use strategies employed by EFL learners.

Regarding the influence of gender on the use of English language learning strategies, the finding of the current study revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female, $t(284) = -.80$, $p = .42$. Some previous studies, including Aydin (2003), Kim (1995), Lee (1994), Nisbet (2002), and Oh (1996) found similar findings to the current study. In Oh's (1996) investigation, there were no significant differences between male and female learners among Korean EFL university students. In Nisbet's (2002) study, results revealed no significant differences between male and female Chinese EFL learners. In his research study on high school students in Turkey, Aydin (2003) found no significant difference between males and females in terms of language learning strategy use. However, there are some other research studies that found the opposite. Kim (1998) discovered that females employ all the categories of the SILL more often than males with exception of compensation strategies.

Green and Oxford (1995) found that females outperform males in the use of four categories of the SILL metacognitive, affective, memory, and social strategies. Lee's (2003) findings showed that in all categories except the category of memory strategies females utilize them more frequently than males. Tercanlioğlu (2004) also found that male students used more language learning strategies in the Turkish context. Pertaining to the Iranian context, Zare (2010) found that females are high strategy users while males showed medium strategy usage.

5.1. Implications

English has increasingly acquired the status of the dominant language of international scholarship and the major means of world communication. Considering the growth of international relations of Iran with other nations and the extended interests towards today's growing technology and science throughout the world (Vaezi, 2008), English has been regarded one of the key components in maintaining the globalization trends in Iran. Therefore, English has been a compulsory subject in the Iranian educational curriculum, and knowledge of the English language is considered a top priority for all Iranian students at all levels. This situation has created great demands in developing effective and efficient learning and teaching models in English education. English teaching and learning theories and methodologies have been introduced through a great deal of research studies with the aim of helping Iranian EFL learners to have native-like proficiency in the English language. However, of all of that research, comparatively little has been done to examine the Iranian EFL learners' English learning strategies. Moreover, very few studies have been conducted concerning individual differences that influence English learning strategy use, such as, gender.

In the present study, Iranian university students that learn English favored using metacognitive strategies, followed by compensation, social, cognitive, affective, and memory strategies. This implies that the English curriculum should be metcognitive and compensation strategy based rather than memory based, that is, language instructors should incorporate these more preferred strategies into their teaching methods and approaches. Iranian English learners have to be provided opportunities to learn how to deal with their struggles, particularly negative emotions, when learning English. Learners should be provided with authentic learning contexts so that learners will put themselves in those types of situations and try to find solutions in English. In turn, Iranian EFL learners also do not favor repeatedly memorizing when learning English. This is clearly shown by the fact that they least preferred using memory strategies. It implies that curriculum planners or English educators should find

more effective and efficient learning strategies to help Iranian EFL learners to learn new linguistic information. In this study, gender was not a factor, nor did it affect the outcome of researching EFL Iranian learners' strategy. In sum, this research provides English teachers and curriculum planners with validated information on strategies currently used by Iranian EFL university learners. The findings allow English teachers and curriculum planners to understand which overall strategies are used by Iranian EFL learners. It also allows English teachers and curriculum planners to reflect upon their current teaching approach. The instructors and planners should analyze the current curriculum and teaching practice to see its compatibility with strategies most preferred or used by learners. Regarding the teaching of learning strategies, the explicit teaching of learning strategies will allow learners to distinguish different learning strategies and furthermore, it will assist learners to apply proper strategies throughout their learning processes. Second, they can monitor their learning overtime by responding to a self-report check list such as SILL periodically. These self-report checks will keep records for learners. Third, by assessing their learning records and experiences in these ways, learners should be able to better foster their learning. Lastly, students should be informed of the broad range of strategy options available. Language learning strategies are not limited to the ones cited in SILL. There are many more strategies proposed by other scholars and still there may be more that have not been explored yet.

First, the number of the participants in this study is relatively small (N= 66) for the findings to be generalized to the whole population of ESP students in Iran. Only ESP students from one university participated in this study.

Second, the present study just used survey approach to elicit students' language learning strategies utilization. The use of multiple-method approaches such as interview and observation could increase the validity of the data. As Cohen and Scott (1996) indicated that "researchers and teachers have a variety of assessment methods at their disposal, and these methods may be combined in any number of ways to collect the more useful strategy data for a given study. The field of language learning strategies may benefit most from a wide application of assessment methods in multiple research contexts" (p. 106).

Third, the findings of the present are potentially limited to only Iranian EFL college students, so it is hazardous to generalize the results as EFL language learning strategies for other groups in the Iranian context that learn English such as: public schools, private institutes, etc.

This study suggests the need for further research in this field of study. First, future research may explore the extent to which strategy use is affected by other variables such as learning style, language anxiety, language learning beliefs, etc.

Second, longitudinal studies, tracking the development of strategic language learners, and the varying factors that influence language learning from year to year in the life of a learner are useful to the development of a more comprehensive picture of language learning in Iran.

Third, researchers who are interested in language learning strategy instruction research can design an experimental research. After completing the learner strategy instruction program, the researcher can administer a post-test to both the control group and experimental group to see whether or not they show significant differences in English abilities and in learner strategy use.

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Appendix A:

Background information and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Version 7.0)

Directions

Part **A** of this questionnaire will ask you questions about your age, gender, and major of study. Part **B** is the form of the STRATEGY INVENTORY FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING (SILL) for students of English as a second or foreign language. You will find statements about learning English. Please read each statement. Next to each statement, select the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that tells

HOW TRUE OF YOU THE STATEMENT IS.

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me

4. Usually true of me

5. Always or almost always true of me

Answer in terms of how well the statement describes you. Do not answer how you think you should be, or what other people do. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements.

Circle your answers next to each statement. Work as quickly as you can without being careless. This usually takes about 30-35 minutes to complete. If you have any questions, let the teacher know immediately.

Background Information and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

Statements

Part A

Please answer the following questions. This is for research purposes only and your responses will be kept confidential at all times.

1. Age _____

2. Gender: Male _____ Female _____

3. Major _____

Part B

1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.

2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them

3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.

4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.

5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.

6. I use flashcards to remember new English words.

7. I physically act out new English words.

8. I review English lessons often.

9. I remember new English words or phrase by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a screen sign.

10. I say or write new English words several times.

11. I try to talk like native English speakers.

12. I practice the sounds of English.

13. I use the English words I know in different ways.

14. I start conversations in English.

15. I watch TV shows or movies in English.

16. I read for pleasure in English.

17. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.

18. I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.

19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.

20. I try to find patterns in English.

21. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.

22. I try not to translate word-for-word.

23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.
24. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.
25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.
27. I read English without looking up every new word.
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.
29. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.
30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.
31. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.
33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.
34. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.
35. I look for people I can talk to in English.
36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.
37. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.
38. I think about my progress in learning English.
39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.
40. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.
45. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
46. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.
47. I practice English with other students.
48. I ask for help from English speakers.
49. I ask questions in English.
50. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.

Title

Using Internet Technology in Teaching Vocabulary for Elementary Students

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Biodata

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Abstract

Considering vocabulary as one of nonnegotiable constituents of any natural language and because of its too noticeable function in language learning, practically in communication, it's so fruitful to embark on the realm of innovative ways for developing vocabulary proficiency in learners via technological tools, most notably internet. Having selected 28 subjects of elementary students from Rasht English institute author tried to study the effect of reading internet news and related texts on student's vocabulary knowledge .first they were divided to two equal groups; control group and experimental group. In order to determining their basic vocabulary knowledge, both groups were taken a pretest of English concrete adjectives in same conditions simultaneously. Then the experimental group received the necessary treatments and no special internet-text based vocabulary training for control group. Finally, after implementing trainings in several sessions, both participants took part in the post test. Comparing those results driven from post test with those of the pretest revealed that the rate of rise in experimental group was nearly as twice as control's one.

Keywords: Internet, Vocabulary, Elementary, Pretest, Posttest.

1. Introduction

Traditional approaches to language teaching and learning have been challenged by new and innovative approaches based on the latest advances in computer and Internet technology. Li and Hart (2002, cited in Nourland & Prueet Said, 2006) proposed two major pedagogical promises conferred by the Internet technology on teachers. First, more authentic material is easily available for language teaching and learning provided by the computer network Technology as resource retrieval. Foreign language teachers do not need to wait for two weeks or more for the latest foreign language newspaper or magazine - today's issue is online now. What learners are looking at online is the same as what native speakers are reading online. In other words, the availability of authentic material, with up-to-the-minute information is seen as the most obvious pedagogical advantage of the Internet technology. The Internet is a living thing. This means that there are endless possibilities for using it. The Internet has vast resources for language teachers, which can be accessed through various, and constantly improving search tools.

Conversely, the computer networks also offer various opportunities for the academic who wishes to mount pedagogical material via the Internet (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2005 cited in Nourland & Prueet Said, 2006). Teachers can, for example, create a personal homepage - a focal point for students to come, detailing course times and changes, reading lists, and so on. They can also publish lecture notes and handouts or design courseware unique to web involving interaction and feedback.

Given these ideas about constructivism, experiential learning can be less demanding with electronic media because large amounts of data are available and students can easily build and revise electronically.

Furthermore, recent lines of inquiry incline to shift attention to the application of the internet technology into class room practice from a socio cultural perspective as a theory of learning. From a socio cognitive angle (Vygotsky, 1981, cited in William & Burden 2002), language instruction has been regarded not only in terms of providing comprehensible input, but also in terms of helping students enter into the kinds of authentic social discourse situations and discourse communities that they would encounter outside the classroom. This interdisciplinary and socially informed approach sheds light on the role of social interaction in creating an environment to learn language, learn about language, and learn through language. The Internet, in this sense, provides alternative contexts for social interaction

where learners can work with text or negotiate meaning with peers and teacher, facilitating access to existing discourse communities and the creation of new ones.

This study examined how students perceive the incorporation and use of IT technology resources in language teaching through investigation of Pre-test and post tests in using an online supplementary resource in vocabulary instruction in an elementary level class. The aim of the study was to explore the factors that does internet help students to construct or improve their vocabulary knowledge in a sustainable the test results revealed statistically significant differences between students who have undergone internet -based training in vocabulary learning and those who have not in terms of undergone internet -based training in vocabulary learning.

2.1. Background of the Study

The interest in and importance given to the role of vocabulary in second and foreign language learning have grown rapidly in recent years. Research studies on turned their focus toward several key issues such as what it means to know a word how many words native speakers know and how they acquire them, which words learners need to know to use another language, and how they should learn them The results of these studies have revealed the need for a systematic and principled approach to vocabulary teaching and learning. Among the many methods and approaches applied to vocabulary learning and teaching, the use of technology has gained in importance in recent years. Advances in computer technology have enabled researchers and teachers to use a more systematic and data-based approach, with innovative methods and techniques, in vocabulary instruction and learning. Technological growth made it possible, large amounts of both written and spoken texts to be identified and analyzed in actual contexts and use.

In doing the research following questions has been posed:

- 1) Does internet – assisted vocabulary learning make a significant difference between the experimental and control regarding the vocabulary learning?
- 2)does internet-based vocabulary learning i.e. learning through online reading trigger learners to put into practice what they have learned?

These are questions we are looking tangible answers for them. As a routine we followed an experimental-based research in doing so. Few researches have been done in Iran in the area of web-based vocabulary training but plethora of studies in abroad.

The reasons is clear, living in a developing country, consequently, lack of some vital pre – requisites in holding these approaches in class rooms, such as internet, computer and the related technologies , lack of updated education policy, knowledgeable teacher being skillful

in the related technological affairs, all play undeniable part in this regression. But ubiquities advent of technology in new millennium which pervades in all aspects of our life, more significantly in education, made us to pay much attention to new ways of training in general and English teaching in particular. All in all we had a small scale study to see what will happen if we change the journey not destination.

2. Review of literature

Internet technology, which has become a fixture in many homes nowadays, has significant impact on education and has been more and more integrated into classrooms. Teachers have been using on line communication in the language classroom since 1980s. From an experience of dozens of teachers around the world who have used the Internet in language teaching, technology can motivate students, foster cooperation and remove barriers (Warschauer, 1995). Schon (1986) justly cited:

a reflective teacher needs a kind of educational technology which does more than extend her capacity to administer drill and practice. Most interesting to her is an educational technology which helps students to become aware of their own intuitive understandings, to fall into cognitive confusion and explore new directions of understanding and action. (cited in William & Burden p.57)

According to Gajek (2004, cited in Schmitt 2002.), preparation of web-based courses becomes a challenge to teachers, especially when autonomous learning is pointed out nowadays. She also claims that e-learning is the only efficient teaching system which brings together family and vocational life with the need to study languages and understanding in which the main role of internet, which according to many becomes “catalyst for new kinds of teaching and learning”, is to enable learners to achieve education goals first. Language learning and teaching has been impacted by growing social requirements and the need for knowledge. Alexander (1999, cited in Richards and Renandya, 2002) says that the usage of the Internet can be regarded as “a ‘tool’ for learning” while Krajka (2005, cited in William & Burden, 2003.p.63) speculates about the incorporation of the Internet as a medium for classroom instruction.

When using technology, foreign language learner can become an autonomous and independent learner. According to Louis (http://www.iatefl.org.pl/call/j_esp25.htm) a learner is autonomous when they become responsible for their own learning.

They take their own decisions how to develop language competences; they become self-sufficient and believe in themselves, which results from reflection and “independent action”. Such autonomous persons also “want to learn and develop a meta-cognitive capacity”.

This results in being able to communicate with others and taking risk when using a foreign language. Such an effective blending of interests, needs and wants requires teachers' Support and help which will develop learning strategies in learners traditional.

Educational system has been dependent in majority on teachers. Connection to the internet, sending e-mails or using messenger services brings communication between learners and teachers out of the classroom. First of all, when we consider technology as the helpful tool to achieve autonomy, according to Louis the internet is a "good source of authentic materials" being aware of their interests.

H.D. Brown (2002) says words shape world, another reputable researcher pointed out that Vocabulary knowledge is knowledge; the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition but also implies how that word fits into the world.

Lowis (1996, cited in Richards& Rennendya 2005) considers vocabulary as the building block of the language knowledge, so it goes without saying that vocabulary knowledge plays a great part in learner's knowledge. But the view toward teaching has been changed. According to Scrivener (2005), using the word 'lexis' instead of 'vocabulary' underlines the shift. Apart from this categorization choosing words to teach separately is impossible because the super ordinate, here language, doesn't happen in isolation. So we as teachers should keep this point in mind that, having the traditional so-called atomistic view to language not meet learners' needs. so we should consider the theoretical philosophy behind it and the process we are going to work on, undoubtedly we should take a holistic look and follow language as a means to an end not and end in itself. When dealing with the aspect of teaching new English words each teacher faces the problem of what words should be chosen. Harmer (1991) stresses the fact that it is clearly known what grammar should be taught at specific level, but this is not so obvious when it comes to teaching words. The fact is that there are many syllabuses but none of them include the same list of lexical items.

According to Harmer (1991), there was a tendency in the past to teach concrete words (physically reachable) at basic levels and then introduce the abstract ones at higher levels. Frequency and coverage are other criteria when selecting words to be taught.

The more frequently a word is used in a particular language the better it is for a learner to absorb it. He puts: "the words which are most commonly used are the ones we should teach first" (Harmer 1991 p. 154).

Moreover, the usefulness of a word increases if it conducts more than one meaning (covers more than one thing). Contrary to the fact that we can estimate frequency of words,

“it does not necessarily give us the only information we need when selecting vocabulary” (Harmer 1991 p. 156) and the question what words to introduce still remains open.

The decision if a proper word should be taught also depends on a particular student and their needs. Another aspect strongly connected with teaching lexical items is word formation. It is also important to get the pronunciation, spelling and stress patterns of a word, especially that some changes the pronunciation, spelling and stress patterns of a word, when selecting new words to be taught, basing on his experience, and Alexander (<http://content.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=4505>) divides vocabulary into five groups. Type A words convey the main meaning and are of the most importance. If one does not know these words, it is impossible to get the meaning of a text. Type B words are the Basics. This is vocabulary that appears very often and is encountered by students in books when reading. Type C words are single words that serve as connectors. They help to organize text in a more logical form. Type D words are those that represent many meanings and are difficult to remember. Eventually, type X words are extra words. This vocabulary does not appear as often as type B words do.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study include In order to conduct the research the author invited twenty -three students to take part in this experiment. They were all teenager elementary students of Parvaz English institutes of Rasht .All of them were divided into two groups an experimental and a control one.

We tried to select two groups of students and then during a period of time, as the course progress, treat them and evaluate results. Before starting the study we took a pre test exam of the attributed materials and then we followed methodology as it was determined. But selecting vocabulary as you saw in preceding sections was difficult. Because vocabulary has a broad coverage, that’s why, decision of vocabulary to teach through internet options was a bit complex if not controversial. As it was mentioned there were some methods for word selection, such common words, that is, words with most coverage and usability, selection based on spelling difficulty abstract and concrete words, word order, and so on. As it is clear the selection of vocabulary is the most important part of the study and firstly the validity of the research is strongly based on this parameter. Any research specially, experimental research must be valid. Keeping this point in mind, accomplishing validity and reliability of our tests (both pre-and post-tests), the significant constituents of our measures, made us

actually combine two ways of word selection, word order and concreteness so we followed concrete adjective as object of studies because our subjects were elementary students.

Unfortunately the students did not have permanent access to the computer classroom and to the Internet overall we tried to provide them occasionally. Because each of these groups also differs when students' knowledge of English and learning experience is taken into consideration, there are often stronger and weaker persons in a group .At the beginning of each semester the teacher organizes a pre-test whose aim is to find out those students who are better than weaker ones.

3.2 Instrumentation

The main aim of the pre-test was as follows: to obtain detailed information about how many of the given words needed to be learned by the research participants. The sample pre-tests has been attached in the appendix.

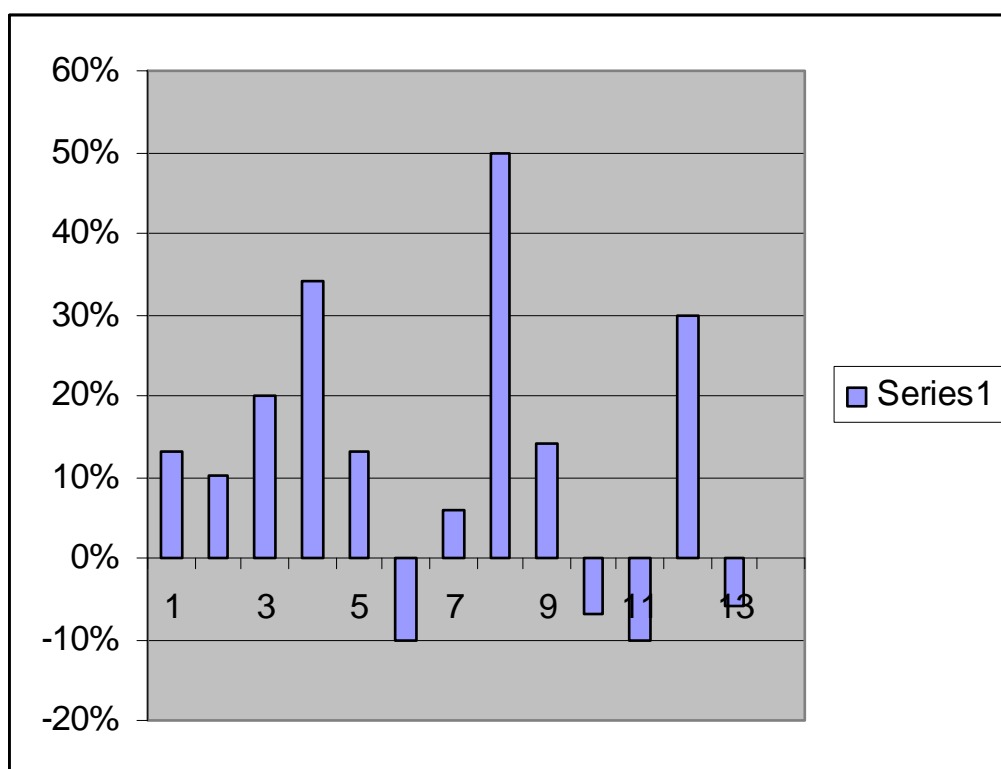
The research began with conducting pre-tests in both the experimental and control groups at the beginning of the lesson I gave the tests to the students and explained to them in details how they should do their job. During working with the pre-tests, the learners were carefully observed so that they were not able to cheat and so that the results of the test could really present what knowledge of the words they had before the research.

4. Results and discussion

After getting through the initial procedure, the way of learning the new words in the experimental groups differed significantly from the way the control groups stuck to. The control groups were asked to study the adjectives within the period of seven days without any access to the application. They were left free to memorize the lexis in the way they chose themselves. After studying the new lexical items for seven days, the post-tests were conducted in both experimental and control groups. The results were unimaginable these tables fully elaborates the token results.

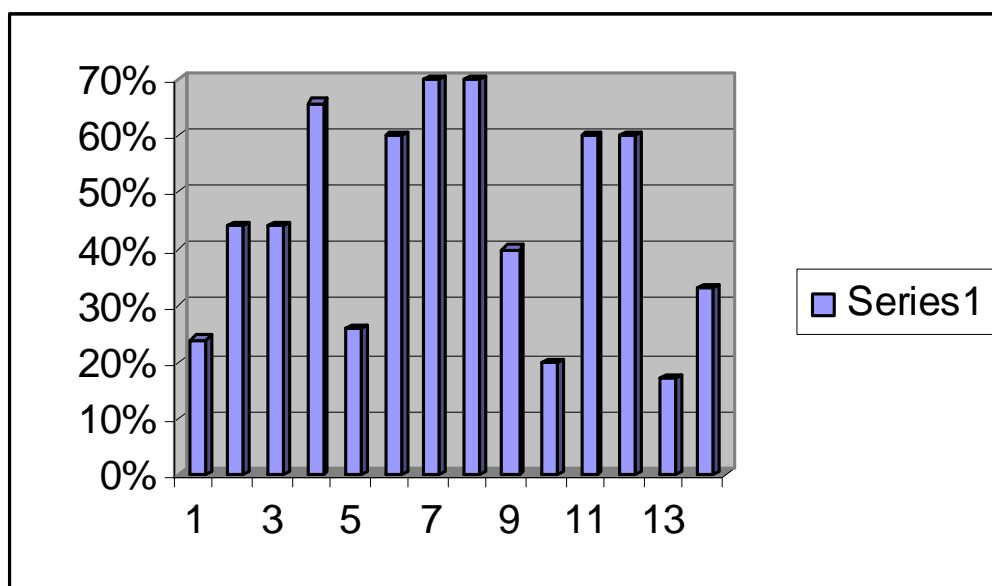
	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Control group	Pre - test result in pts	Pre - test result in pts	Post - test result in pts	Post - test results in %	Rise in lexis Knowledge in %
1	student 1	2	7%	6	20%	13%
2	student 2	2	7%	5	17%	10%
3	student 3	3	10%	9	30%	20%

4	student 4	4	13%	14	47%	34%
5	student 5	5	17%	9	30%	13%
6	student 6	5	17%	2	7%	-10%
7	student 7	5	17%	7	23%	6%
8	student 8	6	20%	21	70%	50%
9	student 9	7	23%	11	37%	14%
10	student 10	8	27%	6	20%	-7%
11	student 11	8	27%	5	17%	-10%
12	student 12	8	27%	17	57%	30%
13	student 13	10	33%	8	27%	-6%
14	student 14	10	33%	10	33%	0%



	Experimental group	Pre - test results in pts	Pre-test results on %	Post-test results in pts	Post-test results in %	Rise in lexis knowledge in%
1	user 1	7	23%	14	47%	24%

2	user 2	7	23%	20	67%	44%
3	user 3	7	23%	20	67%	44%
4	user 4	8	27%	28	993%	66%
5	user 5	8	27%	16	53%	26%
6	user 6	9	30%	27	90%	60%
7	user 7	9	30%	30	100%	70%
8	user 8	9	30%	30	100%	70%
9	user 9	11	37%	23	77%	40%
10	user 10	11	37%	17	57%	20%
11	user 11	12	40%	30	100%	60%
12	user 12	12	40%	30	100%	60%
13	user 13	13	43%	18	60%	17%
14	user 14	14	47%	24	80%	33%



The results derived from the post-tests in both the control and experimental groups and comparing them with those of pre test ones show that nearly all students of experimental group had significant improvement in their vocabulary learning .as you obviously noticed the rise ratio in experimental group compared with that in control group was significant. All of these observations indicate that if learners follow tools, preferably technological one's, it can

pave the way for autonomous independent learners who seeking practical, lifelong and incidental learning in a sustainable manner. Their motivation to learn English for their own sake (intrinsic motivation) increased a lot. Because they eagerly searched for content and wrestle with text through an important and prestigious tool, it formed their enthusiastic to do so as a lifetime. All of them believed that they can use mediating tools such as internet in learning English in general and vocabulary in particular. it instigated them to look at language, preferably English, as a means to an end as means to get some other valuable things such reading online news, finding, email friend, let say e-friend, finding job, and etc.

5. Conclusion

This study was meant to investigate the effect of internet –assisted vocabulary learning. Having embarked upon the domain of technological- mediating learning, particularly vocabulary learning, it seems that internet technology plays a great role. The ubiquities advent mass media social networks provoke an intense tendency to learning via internet. In this study those areas of the use of vocabulary based on the nature of the tasks (concrete adjective) by itself and the features of participants (elementary) were intermingled so as to come with a logic results. The efficiency of internet-assisted vocabulary learning was illustrated by a comparative analysis of test scores taken from both tests.

The main finding of this study is significant efficiency of internet-assisted vocabulary learning. This study revealed that there is a significant difference between teaching via internet and teaching in a traditional fashion. The students themselves claimed it boosts their recalling and it is very easy to use it more applicably. The rise in knowledge for experimental group is approximately as twice as control one, submitting the superiority of internet as valuable tool for learners even elementary students to enhance their knowledge specially vocabulary. As the But in conducting the study there were lots of problems. As you know well internet is not so accessible in our country and specifically in our province, Guilan. That's why it was Herculean task to find enough subjects, necessary equipments and other essentials to conduct the like studies.

As an incumbent function for all postmethod teachers and teachers, it is required to pay much more attention on the role of technology, most notably, internet, as an comprehensive tool for language learning and teaching enterprise. Prolific studies have been done before so as to take a march forward toward effective learning and teaching in the new millennium. The result of this study also can approach all stakeholders in language learning, language teaching and related disciplines to reconsider internet technology for constructing students' lexical

knowledge. Removing lots of burdens from learning and teaching, this view would target the integrated view of teaching and learning; alleviate negative feeling and anxiety and so forth. It can enhance incidental learning and feed elementary students to come up with scaffold knowledge of vocabulary by facilitating the journey, not changing the destination.

Based on the findings of this study the same study can be conducted to high level students namely intermediate and advance. The variables also can change. Other parts of language skills or components such as speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar and so forth can be a fruitful topic of research. The psychological tips with regards to language learning and teaching underlying internet and other mass medias are very good topic as well.

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TURNED-UP	STRAIGHT	BROKEN	WRINKLED
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11. Below there are words describing people. Choose one word from the table and write it next to the suitable description. Some words are added extra.

LIVELY	SCRUFFY ^A	BLUSHING	UNNDY	HANDSOME
GREASY ^A	SKINNY	DRAB	ELDERLY	ENERGETIC
TANNED	PLUMP	PRETTY ^X	DUMPY	PAGE
NEAT	UNSHAVEN			

1. Such a blouse is elegant, it is in order, and carefully made.
2. Such hair is not well arranged and not in order.
3. Such a skirt has no colours, it is not interesting.
4. Such a man is good-looking and attractive to women.
5. Such a person is very thin and ugly.
6. Such a man has hair on his cheeks and chin.
7. Such a person is very old, for example a grandpa or a grandma.
8. Such a person is dirty and his hair and clothes are not in order.
9. Such a person becomes red in a face when is ashamed.
10. Such a person is fat and has a round body.
11. Such a person is short and fat.
12. Such a person has a face that is almost white.
13. Such a person has a brown skin because of sun.
14. Such a woman is very beautiful and attractive to men.

Title

Cooperative Directed Reading-Thinking Activity and Referential-Inferential Reading Comprehension Skills

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Abstract

The present paper discusses the effect of Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA) on students' referential and inferential English reading comprehension skills. Moreover, the effect of collaborative versus individual thinking-activity is compared. In addition, for the inferential questions, the writer's tone, purpose, main idea, text conclusion and finding the similarities between the characters in the text are studied; and for the referential questions, the antecedents to the personal pronouns as well as relative pronouns, the relationship between compound clauses and paragraphs, and action sequencing are discussed. It is shown that the cooperative reading comprehension helps learners in accurate predicting and critical thinking. Besides, the cooperative students' work on Directed Reading-Thinking Activities helps them improve their referential and inferential reading comprehension skills. However, the role of individual instruction and strategy training cannot be denied. The individual Directed Reading-Thinking Activity improves the learners' referential and inferential reading abilities, though to a less degree than the cooperative one.

Keywords: Directed Reading-thinking Activity, Referential Questions, Inferential Question.

1. Introduction

The more access to internet information and other worldwide media than before necessitates thoughtful consideration on being critical reader. Not all the information the students receive is genuine; much is flawed, or untrue. Therefore, students need to blend their own thinking with the information they read to comprehend what is between and beyond the lines. However, a major issue in reading comprehension, as it exists nowadays in Iranian school in Qatar, as in some other foreign schools (El-Koumy, 2006), is that students face difficulty responding to referential and inferential questions.

By doing some experiments and experiencing the Iranian schools in Iran and Qatar, It was found out that Iranian students studying in Qatar have similar problems in reading comprehension; the students' low scores on reading comprehension test are mostly related to inferencing.

One reason is that the students have not been prepared to answer the reading comprehensions referentially or inferentially since they have not been taught so. Mostly the students work on word and sentence level with focus on grammar.

A major cause of Iranian-Qatari high school students' poor comprehension skills may be the students' lack of reading comprehension strategies. As Thompson (1993) states, problems in comprehension could be a result of the lack of instruction in reading comprehension strategies.

In searching for a solution to the students' poor comprehension skills all over the world, many researchers (Troegger, 2011; Bongratz., 2002; Cramer, Fate & Lueders, 2001; Song, 1998) found that reading strategies are beneficial in helping readers improve their comprehension skills. Therefore, this study attempts to build students' comprehension strategies through the implementation of the collaborative and individual Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA). Besides, rooted in the ideas of Piaget and Vygotsky for equilibration, socialization and proximal development, it is tried to testify the notions by exercising collaborative reading (Schunk, 2007; Duncan, 1995).

2. Review of Related Literature

In this section first an overview of cooperative reading techniques will be presented and further the critical thinking will be dealt with.

2.1. Cooperative reading techniques

Cooperative reading techniques were developed during the past two decades in an effort to shift attention and control in the reading classroom from correct answers toward the joint negotiation and co-construction of meaning from text. Emphasis on the constructivist principles rooted in the work of Vygotsky (Jay & Salisbury, 2000).

Evidence suggests that cooperative reading necessitates more collaborative, multidimensional and authentic assessment (Norato & Canon, 2008;). Further, as we rapidly approach the information age, technology assisted cooperative reading will continue to become more and more prevalent. Besides, as our society becomes increasingly diverse, cooperative reading will become more widely used to integrate learners of varying races, ethnicities, ability levels, special education classifications such as EFL and ESL students to name a few of the many process of cooperative reading, as well as their interactions (Abi-Samara, 2006).

Jay & Salisbury (2000) believe that Piaget's (1983) theory of cognitive development was the theoretical framework for the Structured Controversy of cooperative reading technique. They believed that interacting with others helps students to confront their own misconceptions. This practice is also grounded in one of Vygotsky's principles, the zone of Proximal Development, in which more able peers help students to learn at a level that is above that at which they can learn alone (Williamson, 2010).

Further, reading classrooms should encourage some more Piagetian (1963) notions such as positive conflict and dialogue; as well as situations ripe for extending zones of proximal development (Cullinane, 2011). While the developmental research from Piaget and Vygotsky (2000) suggests that reading comprehension would be enhanced when group members with divergent views engage in extended dialogue forcing one or more members to re-examine existing beliefs, the amount of student control over discussion and debate about a passage varies significantly from teacher to teacher.

The work of Piaget (1963) and the belief that cognitive conflict lead to higher levels of reasoning and learning is the base of collaborative reading techniques. In the Piagetian tradition (1983), cognitive development in a reading classroom is contingent on individuals confronting those who hold contradictory thoughts and claims, thereby creating conflicts that spur higher levels of reasoning (Cullinane, 2011; Williamson, 2010; Piaget, 1963).

In addition, technology-supported cooperative reading is firmly grounded in a learner-centered constructivist approach to instruction and learning (Cook, 2010). Many cooperative learning techniques are grounded to some degree in constructivist principles. At the same

time, a learner-centered constructivist approach to instruction has increased practitioners' demand for cooperative learning and cooperative reading techniques (Wiggins, 2006). The cooperative reading skills emphasized in this paper address reading comprehension as opposed to word identification, recognition, or decoding skills. A classroom environment emphasizing a behaviorist, lecture transmission model of instruction will not lend itself to effective cooperative reading. Rather, the complex process of the co-construction of text must be supported by a learner-centered constructivist or social constructivist orientation to learning (Cotugno, 2009; Palincsar, Stevens, & Gavelek, 1989). This leads to the dilemma of cooperative reading approaches; unless teacher beliefs about reading instruction are grounded in a more student-centered, constructivist philosophy, successful methods like reciprocal teaching will only be a marginal success story (Schunk, 2007).

The cooperative reading discussed so far, combines a wealth of existing research on reading and is aimed at increasing the comprehension and retention of text material. Clearly one of the goals of cooperative reading is to negotiate and co-construct meaning from text (Cooper & Kiger, 2011; Paris & Turner, 1990).

2.2. Directed Reading-Thinking Activity

There is a host of work done on the Directed Reading-Thinking Activity and its importance for improving reading comprehension in general (Norato, A., & Canon, J. (2008). According to Tierney, Readence & Dishner (1995), it is a strategy for building independent readers adding that this strategy has the potential to equip readers with the abilities to determine purposes for reading, examine reading materials, suspend judgments and make decisions.

Similarly, Richardson and Morgan (1997) state that the Directed Reading-Thinking Activities engage students in higher order thinking skills making connections between interrelated elements of the text, justifying thought processes and drawing logical conclusions (Echeverria, 2008). Likewise, Jennings and Shepherd (1998) state that the Directed Reading-Thinking Activities help students become aware of the reading strategies, understand the reading process, and develop prediction skills.

Along the same lines, Tankersley (2005) states that the Directed Reading-Thinking Activities extend reading to higher-order thought processes and provides teachers with a great deal about each student's ideas, thought processes, prior knowledge and thinking skills.

2.3. Experimental literature

A review of research on Directed Reading-Thinking Activities reveals that all the experimental studies conducted on this strategy, except three (Almanza, 1997; Bauman, Russell and Jones, 1992; Draheim, 1988), used it as part of a package of strategies rather than

an individual strategy. Stauffer, the father of the Directed Reading-Thinking Activity, and Hammond (1969) conducted large-scale quantitative studies into the effectiveness of the language experience approach which involved the Directed Reading-Thinking Activities in addition to extensive reading and writing of materials related to students' experiences. Their findings indicated that the language experience approach was effective in improving the reading comprehension of students in the primary grades.

Tancock (1994) used the Directed Reading-Thinking Activities in combination with pre-reading activities such as generating questions and post-reading activities such as clarifying, and investigated their effect on the reading comprehension of children with reading problems. Results revealed that there was significant improvement in their reading skills. Almanza (1997) compared the effectiveness of cooperative learning in small groups during reading to the Directed Reading-Thinking Activities.

Fabrikant, Siekierski and Williams (1999) used the Directed Reading-Thinking Activities in combination with brainstorming of prior knowledge, self-monitoring questions and literature circles. Results indicated that this package of strategies improved students' intrinsic motivation to read as well as their literal and inferential reading comprehension skills.

One relatively recent article by Schorzman and Cheek (2004) examined a teacher-directed version of DRTA in a general education classroom; this research may or may not have included students with disabilities. Schorzman and Cheek (2004) examined the use of DRTA in combination with a "Pre-reading plan" (cf. Langer & Nicholich, 1981).

To conclude, it can be said that although language teaching theoreticians stress the importance of the Directed Reading-Thinking Activities as an individual strategy for developing reading comprehension levels, the experimental studies conducted on this strategy alone are modest and their findings are mixed and inconclusive. This indicates that there is no practical evidence to speak with confidence about the effectiveness of this strategy in improving comprehension levels. Therefore, the need for more research studies in this area seems appropriate. The research reported in this paper was conducted to meet the requirements for further research on the Cooperative Directed reading-Thinking Activities.

In view of the above-mentioned discussions, the present study attempted to examine the effect of cooperative Directed Reading-Thinking Activities. Its focus was on critical thinking and prediction referential abilities in reading comprehension, or mainly referential and inferential reading comprehension questions.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study utilizes a pretest-posttest control group experimental design. Two classes of grade three were randomly assigned to the experimental and the control group. Both groups were pre-tested to measure their referential and inferential reading comprehension before conducting the experiment. During the experiment, the experimental group students worked collaboratively on the Directed Reading-Thinking Activities, whereas the control group worked individually on the same method of teaching reading comprehension. After treatment, the two groups were post-tested to investigate any significant differences in their referential and inferential reading comprehension. The obtained data were analyzed using Matched and Independent *t-tests*.

Besides, the research addressed the following questions:

1. Is there any statistically significant difference ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the third-year high school Iranian students' referential reading comprehension between the collaborative and individual exposure to the DR-TA?

2. Is there any statistically significant difference ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the third-year high school students' inferential reading comprehension between the collaborative and individual exposure to the DR-TA?

3. Is there any statistically significant difference ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the third-year high school students' inferential and referential reading comprehension in the experimental and control groups in Qatar Iranian School?

3.2. Participants

The subjects of the study consisted of 34 students of third grade of high school in Qatar Iranian School for Girls during the academic year 2008/2009. As mentioned above, they were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Almost all of the students were 16 years old.

3.3. Instruments and materials

To achieve the aim of the study, the researcher used a reading comprehension test to measure students' referential and inferential reading comprehension after conducting the experiment. The test consisted of ten reading comprehension questions about a fairy tale taken from Grimm's fairy tales at www.en.wikisource.org. Five of the questions were referential and the other five were inferential. The five referential questions involved:

1) identifying the antecedent of a personal pronoun,

- 2) identifying the antecedent of a relative pronoun,
- 3) identifying the relationship between the clauses of a compound sentence in the tale,
- 4) identifying the relationship between a paragraph and its predecessor in the tale,
- 5) identifying the sequence of actions in the tale.

The five inferential questions involved:

- 1) inferring the implied main idea in the tale,
- 2) inferring similarities between two characters in the tale,
- 3) inferring the author's purpose for writing the tale,
- 4) inferring the author's tone within the tale,
- 5) drawing a logical conclusion from the tale.

The test was validated in the study done by Al-Koumy (2006). To ensure further validation, a jury of three EFL teachers in the Iranian School in Qatar and two university professors in Qatar and Egypt were consulted, and their comments were taken into consideration. To ensure its reliability, the test was administered to a sample of thirty three students in boys' school and re-administered sixteen days later to the same sample to investigate its stability over time. The Pearson correlation coefficient between the scores of the two administrations was 0.79 which indicated that the test was stable over time. The same test had been used in Al-Koumy's (2006) study which showed a reliability of 0.81.

The instructional materials for the study consisted of sixteen reading passages. They were taken from the Hello Bravo Book 6, the students' textbook, the internet site wiki-source available at <http://en.wikisource.org> and students' course book (English for High School Students, Grade Three). All the passages were taught to the experimental group using the collaborative Directed Reading-Thinking Activity and to the control group using the individual Directed Reading-Thinking Activity.

3.4. Procedures

The subjects for the study were chosen from the Iranian High School for Girls in Qatar. Before conducting the research, the approval of Iranian Head of Education in Qatar & Bahrain was collected. Then, the experimental group and the control group were pre-tested in the last week of November, 2008, to measure their referential and inferential reading comprehension before conducting the experiment. The next steps in the procedure were implementing the Directed Reading-Thinking Activity, followed by introducing the DR-TA strategy to the groups that moved from teacher modeling to guided practice and finally to independent practice so that they could use the strategy independently in group and individually. The groups were to work on text with the questions provided to them or even

posed by them. The questions focused on inferential and referential aspects of the reading text. They read between the lines and found the references as well as making their inferences. The sixteen passages were good number of materials to raise their awareness on inference and reference ability. The experiment was conducted from the 12th of December 2008 till the end of April 2009. Post-testing the experimental group and the control group was done on May, 2009 to measure their referential and inferential reading comprehension after treatment. Finally, the data were analyzed using the t-test and point bi-serial correlation.

4. Results and discussion

The table below shows that there were not any significant differences between the results obtained by the control group and experimental group, with regard to the referential and inferential questions.

Table 1: Pre-Test Data Analysis (Independent Samples Test for Pre-Test Result)

Pre-test Questions	T-test for Equality of Means		
	T	df.	sig. (2-tailed)
Inference	.448	32	.657
Reference	-1.527	32	.137
Total	-.802	32	.429

The above table (No.1) indicated that the two groups were nearly similar and their differences were not too high to be regarded as different. For the treatment five tests on inferential and referential tests were given which focused on students' learning. Nevertheless, for the sake of this study their raw data is provided here. The total score for each exam was 20 which were half inferentially and half referentially divided.

Table 2: Scores of tests during treatment

Tests	Question Types	Experimental	Control
Test 1	Inferential Questions	4	5
	Referential Questions	6	7
Test 2	Inferential Questions	6	7
	Referential Questions	9	8
Test 3	Inferential Questions	7	6
	Referential Questions	8	8
Test 4	Inferential Questions	5	4
	Referential Questions	7	8
Test 5	Inferential Questions	7	7
	Referential Questions	6	5
Total	Total average of tests	13	13

During the treatment the obtained averages from the given tests showed that the treatment was effective for both groups and the comparison may have become more difficult. However,

after the treatment, the students' results were compared by using the t-test analysis for their post-test result. Before analyzing the post-test result, the learners' scores on their pre-test and post-test were compared, using Paired t-test. As Table 3 shows, there was no significant difference between the two groups' obtained t-test, which indicated that the treatment was effective for both groups, reiterating the fact about the mini-tests given during treatment.

Table 3: Control Group Pre-test and Post-test Paired Sample Test

Control Group	t.	d.f	sig. (2-tailed)
Total Score	-2.79	16	0.013*
Inferential Questions	-3.3	16	0.004*
Referential Questions	-1.03	16	0.011*

Table 3 indicates that the treatment was effective for the inferential and referential. Therefore, it could be concluded that the individual DR-TA was effective for the control group. Table 4 includes similar information for the experimental group.

Table 4: Experimental Group Pre-test and Post-test Paired Sample Test

Experimental Group	t.	d.f	sig. (2-tailed)
Total Score	-13.83	16	0.000*
Inferential Questions	-8.24	16	0.000*
Referential Questions	-6.06	16	0.000*

The matched t-test used for the analysis of the experimental pre-test and post-test scores (Table 4) shows that the treatment was effective for both the inferential and referential question types; the t-obtained was significant. Here again the impact of treatment is once more emphasized. Nevertheless, the post test result comparing the two groups showed that the groups were meaningfully different.

Table 5: Post-Test Independent Samples Test Result

Post-test Questions	T-test for Equality of Means		
	t	df	sig. (2-tailed)
Inference	2.685	32	.011*
Reference	2.387	32	.023*
Total	2.699	32	.011*

Applying the t-test, it was found that there were meaningful differences in the post-test results of the two groups. So the experimental group outperformed the control group in all the three questions raised in the study. Moreover, the pre-test and post-test results were compared by t-test analysis. The pre-test and post-test analyses also showed meaningful differences between the two groups; the experimental group had meaningful results than the control group.

Each question type assessed five sub-categories of the two reading abilities of referential and inferential questions. For example in inferential questions, questions 1, 2, 8, 9 and 10

tested the following inferential reading comprehension abilities:

- Question 1: inferring the author's tone within the tale,
- Question 2: inferring the author's purpose for writing the text,
- Question 8: inferring similarities between two characters in the tale,
- Question 9: inferring the implied main idea in the tale,
- Question 10: drawing logical conclusions from the text,

The other questions tested the referential reading comprehension ability, as follows:

- Question 3: identifying the relationship between a paragraph and its predecessor in the tale,
- Question 4: identifying the relationship between the clauses of a compound sentence in the tale,
- Question 5: identifying the sequence of actions in the tale,
- Question 6: identifying the antecedent of a personal pronoun
- Question 7: identifying the antecedent of a relative clause

Two types of statistical analysis were applied to find out the relationship between inferential and referential questions and their effect on reading comprehension ability. First the t-test was used to compare questions for the experimental and the control group separately. Then the correlation formula was applied to figure out the relationship between each question with the whole test on two aspects of inferential and referential reading comprehension abilities in both experimental and control groups.

Table 6: Individual Questions for Inferential Questions in Experimental & Control Groups

Inferential Questions	t-test for Equality of Means			
	Question Types	f	T	d.f	sig (2-tailed)
TONE	3.365	0.33	32	0.73
PURPOSE	3.060	1.39	32	0.173
SIMILARITIES	17.965	3.2	32	0.003*
MAIN IDEA	11.176	1.8	32	0.070
CONCLUSION	5.976	1.7	32	0.082

As the t-test¹ for the inferential questions shows, it can be seen that question 8 had the most significant difference in the groups. Question 8 was about "inferring the similarities between the two characters in the tale". So the experimental group working cooperatively on

Directed Reading-Thinking Activity outperformed the control group working individually on reading comprehension tasks.

Table 7: t-test Analysis of Referential Questions

Referential Questions	t-test for Equality of Means			
	Question Types	f	t	d.f	sig (2-tailed)
Paragraph	2.14	0.73	32	0.04*
Compound Clause	4.28	2.17	32	0.03*
Action Sequence	0.36	0.33	32	0.07
Personal Pronoun	3.33	0.88	32	0.38
Relative Pronoun	21.95	2.77	32	0.01*

Based on the findings in Table 7, the t-test applied for the referential questions showed that the students in experimental group outperformed the control group in questions 4 and 7. Question 4 was “identifying the relationship between the clauses of a compound sentence in the tale”. And question 7 was “identifying the antecedent of a relative pronoun”.

5. Conclusion

The DR-TA has proved to be a successful strategy in teaching reading comprehension; nevertheless, it should be noted that the teachers do not need to stick to the hard and fast rules of the Directed-Reading-Thinking Activities which mostly focus on prediction. It is up to the instructors to develop their learners’ critical-thinking. Sometimes a simple question may help; at some other times, the teacher needs to ask the students to analyze the text, to understand every single sentence and come to a conclusion or final discussion. In whatever way that the learning occurs and critical thinking develops, surely the students’ sense of success and curiosity develop. They are not going to be just future university students; they need to know how to think and how to read the unwritten people’s messages. Students no longer think on how exactly they answer the text, but how exactly they understand the writer’s idea, tone, etc. It is hoped that such an orientation in critical-thinking prevails the school as well as university environments.

5.1. Implication and application

The results on the t-test and correlation which examine each of the inferential and referential questions in detail show some important points. It was first observed that the groups had significant differences in the analysis of their mean by the t-test, but further analysis showed that the difference between the groups was due to the experimental group improvement on some strategies rather than all the strategies practiced on collaborative tasks. Moreover, the control group seemed to have improved by being strategically cognizant, though it had not

reached the experimental group's result.

It seems that the strategy-training works, whether individually taught or cooperatively instructed. It can be concluded that teaching reading comprehension strategies in class is of importance; learners need to be taught how to deal with reading strategies.

Moreover, the results indicate that there is high correlation between the scores in the experimental group and control group. Whereas the correlation of scores for the experimental group was very strong for all question types, the control group showed high correlation in referential questions. Nevertheless, their degree of correlation in the control group was slightly less than that of the experimental group.

Furthermore, the null hypotheses were rejected in the three categories of referential score, inferential score, and the whole test score. The test reliability was also calculated to be above 0.75, whereas the test validity was confirmed by referring to some English specialists in Qatar and Egypt and their comments were observed in the test.

Regarding the Directed Reading-Thinking Activities done by the researcher in the Iranian Girls' School in Doha, Qatar, the following conclusions can be drawn. Students initially did not value cooperative work and preferred competitive tasks instead. Nonetheless, as they moved ahead they appreciated mutual interchange of information and sense of cooperation. Besides, it was proved that cooperative activities need accurate classroom management and discipline setting. For 17 students the task of cooperative work was easy to fulfill but when the number increased and the students were less-motivated, the task became more and more demanding. For the teachers who are not well-planned for the cooperative work or the Directed Reading-Thinking Activities, it is not recommended to delve into such tasks and waste students' time. In addition, it should be noted that there are also bad and good points to the Directed Reading-Thinking Activities done in the Doha Iranian School.

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Title

The Use of Dichotic Listening to Establish the Critical Period for L2 Learning in Iran

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Abstract

Critical period -as defined in Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistic (Richards, 2009)- is a period during which language can be acquired more easily than at any other time, and the present study examines the critical age for learning a second language by testing 120 participants of three age groups i.e. 3-5, 11-13, 17 and above, through dichotic listening (a technique which has been used to study how the brain controls hearing and language, in which the subjects wear earphones and receive different sounds in the right and left ear and then are asked to repeat what they have heard). To check the significance of the results of this study paired sample T-test and one-way ANOVA were used. It can be inferred from the results that age of a learner may not be a key factor in his or her success in

learning a second language just due to the loss of brain plasticity at a special age or the completion of the brain functions lateralization.

Keywords: dichotic listening, critical period, second or foreign language.

1. Introduction

From the beginning of the human need to learning other languages, there has always been a great controversy over the issue of age and its effect on quick and easy second language learning (Byram, 2000). Several educators of the past, e.g. Erasmus (1586), Montaigne (1654) and Lock (1743) were in favour of an early start in L2 learning before the age of 10 (Sepassi, 2006). For many years, in all books related to L2 learning and teaching, some chapters have been dedicated to the argument of age and its effect on L2 learning. It has always been believed that children are not only the best L1 acquirers but also are better L2 learners (McLaughlin, 1987). But, why do many people, whether educated or uneducated, think so? Chastain (1988) in his book, *Developing Second Language Skills*, introduces three reasons for this –as he puts it- reality: "first, it is because people are naturally more tolerant of children's mistakes also while speaking an L2 only the child's factual mistakes are corrected. Second, anyone with a young family, who has for a while lived in a foreign country, has seen how easily his children or younger siblings interact and play with others of different mother tongues. This is different from how most adults have to communicate in their jobs or educational environments. For children everything is here and now, whatever they learn is concrete, i.e. they see a doll touch it and learn that is an "arosak" in Persian. Third, younger learners are much better at acquiring native like pronunciation in any foreign language".

In addition to ordinary people who believe in children's being better L2 learners, there are also many scientists who support this belief, so there must be scientific findings supporting the hypothesis of children's being better L2 learners. Moreover, there are many scientists whose findings have been influential in spreading the view of children's being better L2 learners, one of whom is Penfield (1944), a neuropsychologist at McGill University in Montreal, who partly on his personal conviction, puts forward the idea that the early years of life are the best years for learning an L2 and these years should be used more intensively for language training. Briefly, Penfield (1944) found that children before puberty who suffer brain damage in the speech area of the cerebral cortex through accidents, brain tumours or surgical intervention recover speech better than adolescents or adults. From this capacity of the young brain to compensate for the loss of the speech function, Penfield (1944) inferred

that the brain of a young child is much more receptive for the development of speech mechanisms. The other reason leading Penfield (1944) to such a conclusion was his living in Montreal, which wasn't his hometown. There he saw the contrast between his own inability, as an adult, to learn French and the ease with which his children learned other second languages in the nursery as a result of being in contact with the children from other nationalities (Stern, 2009).

Much of the controversy over the issue of the neurology of language acquisition is concerned with the development of cerebral dominance or Lateralization and its relation to language acquisition, both in first and second language. The history of this issue begins with Eric Heinz Lenneberg (1967) who was also one of the theorists who had a role in spreading the view of children's being better L2 learners. Lenneberg's reason for his belief was a conclusion that appeared to be consistent with reports of better recovery from acquired aphasia (loss of the ability to use and understand language, usually caused by damage to the brain) in children. After puberty, the right hemisphere didn't appear to assume the language functions in case of injury to or removal of the left hemisphere (hemispherectomy). So he hypothesized that this was due to the fact that the lateralization of language to the left hemisphere was complete by then (Fraizer & Fraizer, 1974).

About ten years later, Krashen (1976) modified Lenneberg (1967)'s view by saying that the critical age is more around 3-5. He hypothesized that it is not only before puberty but also much earlier that a person's brain lateralizes its functions. More recent research has concluded that the window for acquiring syntax may close at ages five or six, while the window for learning new words may never close (Nash, 1997). Also Chomsky (1975) theorized that children have a 'language acquisition device' (LAD). According to Chomsky (1975), infants' LAD enables them to begin to understand the earliest messages that are coming in, long before the infant can communicate or produce language on its own. All these theoretical arguments are based on the assumption that children are, in effect, better L2 learners than adolescents or adults (Gregg, 1984).

After many years of research and investigation, there are still different ideas over the issue of the critical period and the optimal age for second language learning. The present study intends to investigate whether there is any relationship between the age of second language learners and their greater success in learning a second language. This investigation is to be done with regard to the time lateralization fulfils (based on different hypotheses 3-5, 11-13, or an age after these). In this regard the following null hypothesis is formulated:

‘There is no relationship between the age of learners and their amount of success in learning a second language’.

The results of this study are useful for both practical and theoretical considerations. They are useful for the educational system, language institutes, and parents. Teachers can also take advantage of this study in effective consultation about the suitable age for starting to learn a second language as they are usually asked by the children’s parents about the best age to start learning a second language.

2. Review of the related literature

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA) how specific aspects of learning a non-native language (L2) may be affected by when the process begins is referred to as the age factor. As a result of the age factor intersecting with a range of affective, educational and experiential variables, clarifying its relationship with learning rate and/or success is a major challenge. There is a popular belief that children as the second language learners are superior to adults, i.e. the younger the learner the quicker the learning process and the better the outcomes (Abello-Contesse, 2009). Those in favour of an early start of second language learning support their beliefs through some topics which will be discussed in the following section.

2.1. Lateralization and CPH

Brain consists of two main parts. As the brain develops, it is thought that different bodily functions (e.g. speech, hearing, sensation, actions, etc.) are gradually brought under the control of different areas of the brain. The development of control over different functions in different parts of the brain is known as cerebral dominance or lateralization (Heritage, 2002). Most researchers believe those parts of the brain that control language are in the left hemisphere (Brown, 2000).

According to the critical period hypothesis, in child development, there is a period during which language can be acquired more easily than at any other time. After this specific period, language acquisition or learning is thought to become very difficult because the brain loses its plasticity and lateralization happens or becomes complete. This period of effective language learning or acquisition is called critical period (CP) and the hypothesis in favour of it is the critical period hypothesis (CPH) (Chastain, 1988).

2.2. Studies on the effect of age on L2 learning

Burstall, et al.,(1974) conducted a ten- year study of teaching French in primary schools for the national foundation for educational research (NFER) in England and Wales (1964-1974).The two experimental groups involved about 1800 pupils whose learning of French was investigated from ages 8 and 11 afterwards. When the eight-year-olds were compared at the age of eleven with the eleven-year-olds, who were now fifteen, the eight-year-olds were superior in listening and reading but not in speaking and writing. At age sixteen, the eight-year-old starters were still superior in listening, equivalent in speaking, but lower in reading and writing. Burstall (1974) concluded: “the most conservative interpretation the available evidence would appear to permit is that the achievement of skill in a foreign language is primarily a function of the amount of time spent learning that language, but is also affected by the age of the learner, older learners tending to be more efficient than younger ones due to their logical minds’ being more mature” (p. 304).

Some other studies were also done by Snow and Hoefnagel-Hohle(1978)on English speakers who had immigrated to Netherland and were learning Dutch. The final conclusions according to these studies were that: “older is better for the rate of acquisition especially in academic or formal instruction, and younger is better in long run in natural informal or non-academic situation”.

British researchers Nisbet and Welsh (1972),did a research on three groups of students who were at primary levels of learning French. They compared these three groups of students to see if the students who had started learning French at age eight had any advantages over the students who had started learning French at age eleven. Through ten years of experiment they compared the eight- year- old starters at the age of fifteen with the students who were fifteen too but had started learning French at the age of eleven. They also compared them (eight- year- old starters) to the students who at the time of comparison were older than them (i.e. eighteen years old) but who had been exposed to the foreign language (French) for the same period of time i.e. one year. The comparison of these groups showed that the early starters maintained, after two years a certain but decreasing superiority in speaking and listening and after four years they were superior only in listening. They argued that: “if there is any advantage at all for the early start, it is only that it allows more time for L2 learning. Older learners are more efficient learners because they bring to the learning task more learning experience and greater cognitive maturity”(Stern, 2009, p. 365).

2.3. Studies on lateralization and CPH

Below, there is a brief summary of the experimental and the clinical literature on the topics of lateralization and the critical period. As it will be seen, most of the reports support early lateralization.

2.3.1. Dichotic listening

Dichotic listening is described in Longman dictionary of language and applied linguistics (Richards, 2009) as: a technique used to study how the brain controls hearing and language. Subjects wear earphones and receive different sounds in the left and right ears. They are then asked to repeat what they hear. They may find it easier to repeat what they hear from one ear than the other, and this is thought to indicate which brain hemisphere controls language for them. The ability to perceive language better in the right ear is called right ear advantage and the ability to perceive the language better in the left ear is called left ear advantage.

Witelson (1977) has reviewed all known studies using dichotic listening and concludes that, of thirty six experiments, thirty, or about eighty three per cent reported right ear superiority in at least older groups where in comparison to these older groups the younger group indicates from about age three to about seven. Studies evaluating developmental trends usually report no increase in the degree of lateralization over time (i.e. increase in the age of participants), supporting the hypothesis that lateralization is firmly established far earlier than puberty (Reynolds & Fletcher-Janzen, 2008).

2.3.3. Brain damage

Human brain is said to lose its plasticity after the lateralization, and some case studies are reported on the impaired brains before and after the critical period. Adults who have suffered brain damage in their left hemisphere fail to recover their language if they fail to recover in five months, but children show an ability to recover over a longer period, and have sometimes made a full recovery if they were very young at the time of damage (Crystal, 2003).

2.3.4. Hemispherectomy

The removal of an entire hemisphere is perhaps the ultimate test of lateralization. According to Eliot (1999), if this procedure is carried out on a child no more than four or five years of age, the child will almost completely recover his or her language as the brain rebuilds the language circuits in the right hemisphere. By puberty however such an operation results in complete language loss (Vargha-Khadem et al., 1997).

2.3.2. Motor skills

Caplan and Kinsbourne(1976), in a paper appropriately titled ‘Baby Drops the Rattle’ provide an interesting example. The experimenters gave rattles to twenty one infants (average age twenty one days to twenty one months), and found that the babies tended to hold the rattles longer when they were placed in their right hand (average duration of grasp, sixty two seconds for the right and forty one seconds for the left hand) suggesting early lateral specialization of motor skills or physical actions(Reynolds & Fletcher-Janzen, 2008).

2.3.5.Auditory Evoked Response[AER]

When infants are presented with verbal stimuli, e.g. mother’s voice, the AER is greater over the left hemisphere, and while musical stimuli are presented, e.g. a music box playing, the AER is greater over the right hemisphere. These suggest that the signs of hemispheric specialization are present even at birth (Molfese, 1978).

2.3.6.Anatomical differences between the two hemispheres

Slight differences do in fact exist in the adult brain (Geschwind & Levitsky, 1968), and it has been confirmed that similar left-right morphological differences exist in the infant and even in the prenatal brain (Wada, Clarke, & Hamm, 1975; Witelson & Pallie, 1973) suggesting at least the potential of predisposition for hemispheric specialization.

2.3.7.Feral (confined and isolated) children

Although the critical period hypothesis was hotly debated for some years, there is now compelling evidence that unless they are exposed to language in the early years of life, humans lose much of their innate ability to learn a language, especially the grammatical system (Fisher, 1998). Examples of children supporting this belief are Isabelle (found at the age of six and a half, succeeded in language learning), Genie (found at fourteen, her ability in vocabulary learning was superior to other feral children, but she never succeeded in learning her mother tongue), and the other child was Chelsea (found at her thirties, a good vocab learner who never succeeded in language learning especially in the field of syntax) (Curtiss, 1988).

Up to this point evidence supporting the fulfilment of lateralization by zero, five and puberty has been discussed, but when does it really happen? This paper tries to shed some light on the answer to this question.

The answer to this question can decrease the worries of many parents who all the time are asking about the best age for their children to start learning a second language; also, can erase the question mark on the heads of those who want to start learning a second language.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

One hundred twenty participants of different age groups, (i.e. forty subjects of the age range 3-5 according to Krashen's hypothesis, forty subjects of the age range 11-13 according to Lenneberg's hypothesis and forty subjects of the age range 17 and above as the control group, every age group consisted of 20 male and 20 female subjects) who were chosen according to their availability and all were at elementary level of learning English, served as the subjects of the present study.

3.2. Administration procedure

To fulfil the aims of the study, some kindergartens, schools, language institutes and universities which were most available were chosen. The researcher approached the available subjects at the mentioned sites and asked them to perform the test if they wished. The subjects entered the testing room and attended the test which took about five minutes. They listened to the MP3 players. From one ear they heard the music and from the other the words. After each word while the music went on there was a short pause during which the subject was to repeat the heard word. If the word was repeated correctly it received a tick by the tester on the answer sheet (appendix A, p. 15) and if incorrectly a cross. Then the earphones were changed and the same procedure was repeated with the other ear.

3.3. Data analysis procedure

The data were analysed for descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations, and then for comparing the means of correct and incorrect answers in different age groups a sample of paired T-test was used. Also, for the comparison of the number of correct answers from different ears in different age groups one-way ANOVA test was used.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Results

Table 4.1 (appendix B, p. 16) presents the descriptive statistics of the participants' performance on the dichotic listening test. The table represents the number of wrong answers from the individual subjects of each age group and different ears, also the mean and standard deviations related to the answers of different age groups from their two ears. The next table is table 4.2 (appendix C, p. 17) which shows standard errors of the three age groups from separate ears. In table 4.3 (appendix D, p. 18) the results of paired sample statistics between the two ears in the three age groups are shown. Table 4.4 shows the results of paired sample

T. test. In this table the results of paired sample T-test on the two ears in the three age groups is not significantly different because in all the three groups the significance is bigger than 0.05. Table 4.5 (appendix E, p. 19) contains the descriptive statistics needed for running one-way ANOVA. In table 4.6 the results of ANOVA-ran statistics are presented. As it is clear, ANOVA was once ran on the answers from the left and once on the answers from the right ears, and none of the results is meaningful or significant because in both tests the significance is bigger than 0.05.

Table 4.4
paired sample T. test

	Paired differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error of mean	96% confidence interval of the difference				
				lower	upper			
Pair 1 R&L 17+	- 0.1111	1.16667	0.38889	- 1.0079	0.7857	- 0.286	8	0.782
Pair 2 R&L 11-13	- 0.1111	2.14735	0.71578	- 1.7617	1.5395	- 0.155	8	0.880
Pair 3 R&L 3-5	- 0. 0000	1.11803	0.37268	- 0.8594	0.8594	0.000	8	1.000

Table 4.6
ANOVA

	Sum of square	df	Mean square	f	Sig.
R Between groups	9.556	2	4.778	0.017	0.983
Within groups	6790.444	24	282.935		
Total	6800.000	26			
L Between groups	11.185	2	5.593	0.020	0.980
Within groups	6710.000	24	279.583		
Total	6721.185	26			

4.2.Discussion

In this study, the role of age (3-5, 11-13, 17+) in the amount of one's success in L2 learning is investigated.

Penfield (1891-1976), Lenneberg (1921-1975), Krashen (1941-), Schuman (1810-1856), Rosansky (1975), and some other theorists and scientist believe age to be a fundamental factor in L2 learning. They have been mostly in favour of an early start. But, according to the present study it seems that the age factor cannot be that much fundamental in learning a second language only in accordance with an early fulfilment of lateralization or two-sidedness of activities in the brain.

As a result, the fact that the members of the three age groups in the present study performed somehow similarly in the test of dichotic listening, and the difference between the number of

the wrong answers in the groups wasn't significant, seems to reject the beliefs of all the previously mentioned theorists. Even if lateralization and its lack of fulfilment may play some role in language learning, this role may be in the acquisition of the first language -as the case seen in feral children- and not the learning of the second language.

Finally, it can be concluded that, any person, regardless of his or her age, can be a successful L2 learner. Even if, age has a role, it can be said that the more mature the learner's logical mind, the more successful he or she can be in L2 learning.

5. Conclusion

The question to be answered in the present paper was: 'does the age factor affect the L2 learners' success in L2 learning because of the fulfilment of lateralization at a special age?'

The answer to this question seems to be no. The starter EFL learners of different age groups' performance on the test of dichotic listening was the same, and the average amount of wrong answers for the different age groups in this study didn't show great difference among the three age groups. This shows that, if lateralization is a fact, it may happen much earlier than the three age ranges under investigation here.

5.1.Applications and implications

This study indicated that the lateralization of the functions in the brain happens much earlier than the ages 3-5, so it can't be said that a particular age is better for learning a second language just because at that very age, lateralization has not yet completed. The result of this study is beneficial to all the people interested in learning an L2 not to think they can't learn an L2 properly because they have passed the critical period. This study can also have the same implications for the instructional system, language institutes and language teachers that the most important matters to concentrate on in one's success in learning another language are suitable teaching methods, enough facilities, the amount of input presented to the learners in the specified period of time etc., and not the age of learners (at least not as a very fundamental factor).

Further studies can be conducted using more advanced methods of dichotic listening, e.g. hearing different groups of words or syllables from the two ears at the same time, then repeating the words the participants remember from among the heard words to see the words heard from which ear are mostly repeated or remembered, to make firmer conclusions about the critical period. In such studies the number of participants can be increased too to add to the study power and validity.

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APPENDIX A

Answer sheet

Name Age Sex Level

Right ear Left ear

Di /di/
Co /co/
Le /le/
Lick /lik/	.....	.....
Fuss /fas/	.....	.....
Log /log/	.....	.....
Gist /jist/	.....	.....
Damn /damn/	.....	.....
Flip /flip/	.....	.....

APPENDIX B

Table 4.1 (Descriptive statistics)

	N	Mini	Max	Sum	Mean	Std
Right 17+	9	2.00	40.00	219.00	24.3333	15.94522
Left 17+	9	2.00	40.00	220.00	24.4444	15.54921
Right 11-13	9	2.00	39.00	214.00	23.7778	16.45279
Left 11-13	9	2.00	40.00	215.00	23.8889	16.84818
Right 3-5	9	2.00	40.00	206.00	22.8889	17.99614
Left 3-5	9	2.00	40.00	206.00	22.8889	17.69495
Valid N (List wise)	9					

APPENDIX C

Table 4.2 (Descriptive Statistics)

	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistics	Std. Error	Statistics	Std. Error
Right 17+	- 0.383	0.717	- 1.899	1.400
Left 17+	- 0.453	0.717	- 1.807	1.400
Right 11-13	- 0.411	0.717	- 2.040	1.400
Left 11-13	- 0.341	0.717	- 2.085	1.400
Right 3-5	- 0.375	0.717	- 2.183	1.400
Left 3-5	- 0.417	0.717	- 2.085	1.400

APPENDIX D

Table 4.3 (Paired sample statistics)

	Mean	N	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Pair 1 Right 17+	24.3333	9	15.94522	5.31507
Left 17+	24.4444	9	15.54921	5.18307
Pair 2 Right 11-13	23.7778	9	16.45279	5.48426
Left 11-13	23.8889	9	16.84818	5.61606
Pair 3 Right 3-5	22.8889	9	17.99614	5.99871
Left 3-5	22.8889	9	17.69495	5.89832

APPENDIX E

Table 4.5 (one- way ANOVA descriptives)

	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error	95% confidence interval for mean		Min	Max
					Lower bound	Upper bound		
Right	9	24.3333	15.94522	5.31507	12.0768	36.5899	2.00	40
1.00	9	23.7778	16.45279	5.48426	11.1310	36.4245	.00	39
2.00	9	22.8889	17.99614	5.99871	9.0558	36.7219	.00	40
3.00	27	23.6667	16.17215	3.11233	17.2692	30.0642	.00	40
Total								
Left	9	24.4444	15.54921	5.18307	12.4923	36.3966	2.00	40
1.00	9	23.8889	16.84818	5.61606	10.9382	36.8395	.00	40
2.00	9	22.8889	17.69495	5.89832	9.2872	36.4904	.00	40
3.00	27	23.7407	16.07816	3.09424	17.3804	30.1010	.00	40
Total								

Title

An Investigation into the Relationship between Field Dependence/Independence, Sex, and Age, towards EFL Proficiency in Iranian Language Learners

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Biodata

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Abstract

Variables affecting language learning are generally divided into two groups of cognitive and affective domains. Affective variables are related to the emotional side of the human behavior. Cognitive styles are variations among learners in performed manners of speaking, organizing, analyzing, and recalling. This study aimed at investigating the relationship between field dependence/independence as a cognitive style and foreign language proficiency considering some other variables as sex and age in Iranian language learners. To this end 294 participants took part in this study. Two kinds of instruments were given to the students. One was Group Embedded Figures Test and the other was Oxford Placement Test. The first instrument measured the degree of field dependence/independence, and the second instrument was a measure of proficiency. The relationship between field dependence/independence, sex, and age was analyzed through a two- way ANOVA. Scheffe test was conducted after One-way ANOVA to see where the interactions lay. The results showed that field dependence/independence was a significant factor affecting the performance of the students on the proficiency test. Also age and sex were found to affect the degree of field dependence/independence in Iranian language learners. Theoretical and pedagogical implications of the findings of this study are reported at the end of the article.

Keywords: Field Dependence (FD), Field Independence (FID), Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT), Affective Variables, Cognitive Variables.

1. Introduction

1.1 Proficiency

According to the dictionary of language teaching and Applied Linguistics (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992) a proficiency test is: A test which measures how much of a language someone has learned. The difference between a proficiency test and an achievement test is that the latter is usually designed to measure how much a student has learned from a particular course or syllabus. A proficiency test is not linked to a particular course of instruction, but measures the learners' general level of language mastery.

If we look at proficiency from different points of view, we can come to different classifications. For example, proficiency tests can be integrative, functional, or discrete point. Integrative tests tap different skills or components simultaneously, but discrete point tests focus on one skill or component of language at a time. Functional tests on the other hand, tap the testee's knowledge of language functions.

From another point of view language tests can be divided into two types of linguistic and communicative. Linguistic tests are based on a skills/component model of language proficiency. These tests assess the linguistic competence of the testees. Such tests do not go beyond the sentence level; communicative tests on the other hand, tap the communicative competence of the testees. The issue of communicative competence was first raised by Hymes (1972). Later Canale & Swain (1980), Canale (1983), and Bachman (1995) gave other models for communicative competence. In any kind of proficiency test; in addition to the language knowledge of the students, there may be some other variables involved which affect the testee's performance. Generally speaking, we can divide these variables into two domains of cognitive styles and affective variables. These two domains will be explained next.

1.2 Affective Variables and Cognitive Styles

According to Brown (1994) the affective domain is the emotional aspect of the human behaviour. This emotional side is in line with the cognitive side. A variety of personality factors like self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety, and empathy may affect the development of this side.

Affective variables are not the focus of this study. The researcher has concentrated on the cognitive styles. But what are cognitive styles? In this regard Brown(1994) asserts:" The way

we learn things in general and the particular attacks we make on a problem seems to hinge on a rather amorphous link between personality and cognition; this link is referred to as cognitive style"(p. 104).

Hansen and Stansfield (1982) define the cognitive style as variations among learners in performed manners of speaking, organization, analysis and recall. They state that these variations in the manner of thinking influence human functioning prevalingly in a number of areas, from cognitive to temperamental and interpersonal.

The possible relation between language learning and cognitive styles was suggested first by Brown (1973). Later other studies supported the existence of such a relationship (for example: Hansen & Stansfield, 1981; Carter, 1988, and Witkin et al.1977). Among the cognitive styles field dependence/independence is the focus of this study.

1.2.1 Field Dependence/Independence

According to Brown (1994):

Field independent style is your ability to perceive a particular, relevant item or factor in a field of distracting items. In general psychological terms, that field may be perceptual or it may be more abstract in referring to a set of thoughts, ideas, or feelings from which your task is to perceive specific relevant subsets. Field dependence is conversely, the tendency to be dependent on the total field so that the parts embedded within the field are not easily perceived, though the total field is perceived more clearly as a unified whole. (p.135).

1.2.2 Field Dependent/Independent Students

Witkin et al.(1977) state that field dependent people do better in domains that are social in content, interpersonal in nature, and do not need cognitive restructuring skills. Hansen and Stansfield (1982) characterize field dependents as warm, outgoing, sociable, and highly emotional. They contend that field independents do not like social activities. Carter (1988) attributes success parameters like active approach, willing guess, experiment and practice, analysis and synthesis to field independents. Field dependents as Carter asserts, favor the use of language in communication, take feedback from their listener, empathize, and socialize. Chappelle and Green(1992) state that field independents are more confident learners, active risk-takers in class, and receive more attention as a result. And finally Elliotte (1995b) refers to the reliance on internal orientation in field independents, and external orientations in field dependents. He asserts that field independents are more individualistic and their analytical ability benefits them in learning metalinguistic skills, through conscious learning, when field dependents do better in the acquisition of communicative skills. Wyss (2002) asserts that cognitive tunnel vision limits learners with a strong FI tendency and prevents them from seeing the big picture. While they get stuck in un familiar vocabulary or ambiguous grammar

structures, their FD counterparts will have already understood the jist of a written or spoken discourse- without, however, having caught the precise meaning of every word. The FD learner has the advantage of overlooking problems in order to see the general configuration of a problem or idea. Kozhenvikov (2007) reports high intelligence among individuals with an FI style than among those with an FD style. Carson, et.al. (2009) studied the assessment of an individual difference variable. Field dependence/independence, in the Deese-Roediger-McDermott (DRM) false memory paradigm. They found that field dependent participants falsely recalled and recognized more critical lures than did field –independent participants, due to the distinction between item-specific and relational processing strategies. Ling- Hsiu (2010) asserts that learners with different cognitive styles have similar but linear learning approaches, and learners with different cognitive styles adopt different navigation tools to process learning. Khatib and Hosseinpur (2011) claim that FIs are better at learning and using rules and prefer deductive learning. FDs, on the other hand, tend to look at the whole of a learning task and prefer inductive learning. At a personal level they report claims that say FI learners are mainly introvert and their FD counterparts are extrovert.

1.2.3 Field Dependence/Independence and Different Skills and Components of Language

Defazio (1973) quotes Witkin et al. (1971) as not finding a significant correlation between verbal abilities and field independence. He states that field independents do better on cloze test. Uydi (1974) tested the critical reading abilities. The cognitive style they examined was field dependence/independence. The results showed that field independents performed better in disembedding and organizing information from the reading passage. Kaley (1977) argues that by knowing the cognitive style of field dependence/independence, we can place our children in appropriate courses. In this way, he argues a student should be placed into an educational program based on the way he learns. Powers and Liss (1977) argue that the analytic power of field independent subjects help them distinguish a grammatical structure. Paramo and Tinejaro (1990) studied the performance of students in school subjects. Field independent students had a better performance in all subject areas. Demik et al. (1991) found a significant correlation between field dependence and verbal intelligence. Because verbal intelligence influences one's acquisition of a language, we may conclude that, field dependence influences language acquisition indirectly. Huang and Chao (1995) found that students with the same major had the same amount of field independence. Elliotte (1995a) reports that field independence is significantly related to pronunciation accuracy on various tasks of L2 pronunciation. In another study Elliotte (1995b) supports others as saying that the

way the individuals perceive, organize, and analyze input relates to one's style of field dependence/independence. Finally Gardner al. (1997) state that field independence has a significant correlation with aptitude, while there is a significant correlation between aptitude and language achievement (0.47). As a result they conclude that field independence has an indirect positive effect on language achievement. Behnam & Fathi (2009) proved that field independent subjects perform better in the test of reading comprehension. Nicolaou, A. & Xistouri, X.(2011) , assert that field independent participants outperformed field mixed and field dependent ones in both problem posing ability and the complexity of the problems posed. Khatib&Hosseinpur (2011) found that there was no relationship between the learners' FD/ID cognitive style and their Introvert/Extrovert variable as well as their inductive and deductive learning preference.

2 Methodology

2.1 Participants

The participants of this study were 294 students.148 students were I.L.I (Iran Language Institute) students studying at level ten of the institute. The other 146 students were university students from Shiraz university. Among I.L.I students 70 students were male and 78 students were female. And among the university students 68 were males and 78 were females. I.L.I students were at the age cohort of (15-17), and university students were at the age cohort of (22- 26).

2.2 Instruments

In this study two kinds of instruments were used. One was Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT) which was developed by Witkin et al. (1971) as a measure of field dependence/independence. This test comprises 18 geometrical figures embedded in more complex figures. In each item students should find the simple figure within the complex one. There are three sections in this test. The first section is for the sake of practice. Students receive no point in this part. It has seven figures and takes two minutes. Section two comprises nine geometrical figures with one point each. Therefore the maximum grade is 18. Students cannot answer any section before the allocated time for the previous one is over.

The higher the scores of the students in this test, the higher the degree of their field independence. The possible range of the scores is from zero to nineteen. The second instrument used in this study was oxford Placement test (Allan, 1985). This is a standardized test used to measure the proficiency of the students. It consists of thirty items. In

each item there is a missing word for which there are three options. Students should find the correct item among these options. The test has fifteen items. The level of the test is intermediate.

2.3 Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis; the Effect of Field Dependence/ Independence on Proficiency

In this part, first a t-test was run to analyze the relationship between field dependence/ independence and proficiency. Table one summarizes the characteristics of the participants in this part.

Table 1: The characteristics of the subjects

Total Number	FD	FI
294	136	136

Among 294 subjects 22 were omitted from the study because the median split_half method was used to divide the subjects into two groups of field dependent/ independent, and having the median score , 22 subjects were omitted.

Secondly, the performance of the field dependent/independent participants in the three proficiency groups was compared through conducting a one- way ANOVA. Table two summarizes the descriptive statistics of the three proficiency groups regarding their scores of field dependence/ independence.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for the three proficiency groups

Descriptive Statistics Group	Num ber of Cases	Mean	Median	SD
High Intermediate	76	12.6	11	4.46
Intermediate	142	10.14	11	4.92
Low Intermediate	76	8.6	11	3.94

After ANOVA Scheffe test was run to see where the interactions lay. The median in the three proficiency groups was 11. In order to divide the students into two groups of field dependent and field independent a median split- half method was used. And the students with the score of 11(median) were dismissed from the study. Therefore, the number of the participants reduced to 272.

To find the effect of age and sex on field dependence/independence, a general factorial ANOVA was done. Age and sex were independent variables and field dependence/independence was the dependent variable. Table 3 summarizes the characteristics of the participants in this part of the study.

Table 3: Characteristics of the Participants Regarding Sex and Age

AgeRange	Sex	Number
Young (15- 17)	Male	70
	Female	78
Adult (22-26)	Male	68
	Female	78

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Findings with Regard to the Effect of Sex and Age on FD / ID

In this step; first, the effect of age and sex on the degree of field dependence/ independence was determined. There were 294 participants in this study. 148 of them were in the age cohort of (15-17) who were regarded as adults. From the young participants 70 students were male and 78 students were female. Among the adult subjects there were 68 males and and 78 females. As a whole, there were 138 males and 156 females. The degree of field dependence/independence was determined by the performance of the participants on the group embedded figures test developed by Witkin et al. (1971) as a standard measure of field dependence / independence. The possible range of scores in this test is from zero to eighteen. In the first statistical analysis presented below in table 4 field dependence / independence is a dependent variable and sex and age of the subjects are independent variables. The results are obtained through conducting a general factorial ANOVA.

Table 4: Effects of Sex and Age on Field Dependence / Independence

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean of Squares	F	Sig. of F
Within + Residual	65580.4	294	21.51		
Age	52.25	1	52.25	2.42	.121
Sex	168.14	1	168.14	7.79	.006
Age by Sex	409.97	1	409.97	19	.000

As the above table shows age is not a significant factor affecting the degree of field dependence/independence. This finding is in line with the results reported by Paramo and Timecard (1990) , while in conflict with the findings of Witkin et al. (1977), and Chappelle and Roberts (1986). The reason why age did not make a difference in the degree of field dependence/independence may be related to such factors as culture and the kind of environment. Chappelle and Roberts (1986) argue that in societies in which pressure for conformity is greater, people are more field dependent. When the society is more technological and individual freedom is emphasized, more field independent people are reared. So we may conclude that the effect of age is context-bound As such in this Iranian context age did not have any significant effect on the degree of field dependence/independence.

Another reason for the lack of any significant effect of age on field dependence/independence may be that this trait is not practiced in Iranian educational programs. This means that there is no specific educational planning in the Iranian students' syllabi to rear the trait of field dependence/independence. So, it does not matter whether students are young or old; the degree of field dependence/independence is stable.

In order to find whether young or adult subjects were field dependent or independent the means for the two groups of young and adult subjects were calculated. These means are presented in table 5.

Table 5: Means for Young and Adult Subjects

Age and Number	Young	Number	Adult	Number
Mean	10.96	148	10.53	146

The above table shows that young participants are slightly more field independent. This is based on what Oller (1983) and Canve and Marquez (1995) state about the degree of field independence according to the score of the students in group embedded figures test. These authors state that a higher grade on the test of field dependence/independence shows a higher degree of field independence.

The second factor whose effect on the test of field dependence/independence was studied was sex. As table 3 shows, sex affected field dependence/independence at 0. 006 level of significance. This finding is in line with the findings of Kaman et al. (1964), Sherman (1967, as cited in Witkin et al., 1977), and Poplin and Larsen (1989). In order to see how males and

females had performed on the test of field dependence/ independence, the means for the two groups were calculated. Table 6 shows the means for males and females.

Table 6: Means for Males and Females

Sex	Male	Female
Mean	11.29	9.8

As we see males are more field independent than females. This is in line with the findings of Kagan et al. (1964) and Sherman (1965, as cited in Witkin et al., 1977). The reason, as these authors argue, is because of the fact that boys usually evaluate themselves on internal criteria, while girls evaluate themselves on external criteria. So girls tend to rely more on others and this makes them more field dependent. These authors also argue that girls start to speak earlier. They find satisfaction through speech, and this makes them more field dependent. The third point in table 4 was the interaction of sex and age on FD/ID test. As table 4 shows this interaction is significant at 0.000 level of significance. The means for field dependent/independent students with regard to their sex and age are presented in table 7.

Table 7: Means for FD/ID in Young/Adult Males and Females in GEFT

Sex \ Age	Male	Female
Young	12.87	9.06
Adult	9.72	10.53

As the above table shows, when the age increases in females they become more field independent. But this direction is opposite in males. They become more field dependent as they grow up.

The interaction of sex and age is not considered much by other researchers. Such an interaction makes us more cautious in interpreting the scores of young and adult subjects with regard to their sex.

3.2 Findings with Regard to the Relationship between Field Dependence/Independence and Level

In order to find the effect of proficiency level on the degree of field dependence/ independence, first the subjects were divided into three groups of proficiency based on their performance on Oxford Placement Test (Allan,1985). Then a one-way ANOVA was done,

with level as an independent variable and field dependence/independence as a dependent variable. The results of the one- way ANOVA are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: One-way ANOVA on the effect of Level on Field Dependence/Independence

Source	D.F	Sum of Squares	Mean of Squares	F ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	2	397.996	198.998	8.79	.0002
Within Groups	270	6107.586	22.6207		
Total	272	6505.582			

As the above table shows field dependence/independence is affected by proficiency level of the subjects at .0002 level of significance. In order to see where the difference lies a scheffe test was done. The results of the Scheffe test are presented in Table nine.

Table 9: Scheffe test for the effect of level on Field Dependence/Independence

Mean	Group	3	2	1
8.491	3			
10.119	2			
12.659	1	*	*	

As the above table shows, there is a significant difference between the performance of groups (1, 3) and (1, 2). Group one are high intermediate students, group two are intermediate students, and group three are low intermediate students.

3.3 Findings with Regard to the Relationship between FD/ID and Students` Proficiency

The second part of the study was finding the effect of the degree of field dependence/independence of the students on their proficiency in English and the comparison between three groups of proficiency in terms of their being field dependent/ independent. In order to study the relationship between field dependence/independence and proficiency, a t-test was run between field dependents and field independents. Table 10 summarizes the results of the t-test.

Table 10: t-test on the relationship between field dependence/independence and proficiency

variable	Mean	t-value	DF	2- tail sig	SE of difference	CI for difference
FD	16.93	5.44	270	0.000	0.556	4.12
FI	19.64					1.93

As table 10 shows field dependents and field independents are significantly different at 0.000 level of significance. As the mean for field dependents and field independents show, field independents had a better performance on the test of proficiency. The final step in analyzing the data was studying the comparison of the three proficiency groups (high intermediate, intermediate, and low intermediate) in terms of their being field dependent/independent.

For this purpose, first the participants of the study were divided into three groups of proficiency based on their performance on the Oxford Placement Test. The scores of the subjects in this test were ranked. Then from the top 25% of the subjects were regarded as high- intermediate, 50% in the middle were regarded as intermediate, and 25% at the bottom were regarded as low- intermediate. To investigate the relationship between field dependence/independence and proficiency, a one- way ANOVA was. Table 11 summarizes the results of the ANOVA.

Table 11: One-way ANOVA on the relationship between field dependence/independence and proficiency level

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean Squares	F ratio	F prob
Between Groups ¹	5	5072.11	1014.42	219.99	0.000
Within Groups	267	1231.15	4.61		
Total ¹	272	6303.27			

As the above table shows field dependence/independence affects the performance of the subjects at 0.000 level of significance. In order to understand whether field dependents or field independents had a better performance on the proficiency test, the means for the two

groups were compared. Field independent students had a better performance on the proficiency test.

To find out where the differences lay, a scheffe test was run. Table 12 summarizes the result of the scheffe test

Table 12: Scheffe Test on the Relationship between Field Dependence/ Independence and Proficiency

Mean	Group	5	6	3	4	1	2
11.00	5						
14.08	6	*					
18.28	3	*	*				
18.4	4	*	*				
22.95	1	*	*	*	*		
23.44	2	*	*	*	*		

The definition of the groups is as follows: 1= Field dependent High Proficiency Group, 2= Field Independent High Proficiency Group, 3= Field Dependent Intermediate Proficiency Group, 4= Field Independent Intermediate Proficiency Group, 5= Field Dependent Low Proficiency Group, 6= Field independent Low Proficiency Group.

As the above table shows there is an interaction between groups (6,5), (3,5) , (3,6) , (4,5) , (4,6) ,(1,5) , (1,6) , (1,3) , (1,4) , (2,5) , (2,6) , (2,3) , and (2,4).The interaction between groups (5,6) shows that in low intermediate groups, there is a significant difference between the performance of the field independent and field dependent students on the test of proficiency. Field independents had a better performance. Such a difference does not exist in high intermediate and intermediate groups. The finding shows that in low proficiency level the cognitive style of field dependence/independence influences the performance of the students on the proficiency test, but in intermediate and high intermediate groups the cognitive style of field dependence/independence does not have any effect on the proficiency of the students.

Interactions between groups (3,5), (4,6), (1,5), (1,3), (2,6), and (2,4) are related to the level of the students. Because in all these three groups, the cognitive style is the same, but the level is different.

Interactions between groups(3,5), (4,6), (1,5), (1,3), (2,6), and (2,4) are related to the level of the students. In all of these interactions both level and cognitive styles of students change.

4. Conclusions

In this study, based on the research questions the following conclusions were obtained: Regarding the relationship between field dependence/independence and proficiency, it was concluded that field independents had a better performance on proficiency test. Regarding the interaction between level and cognitive style of field dependence/independence, it was concluded that only in low intermediate proficiency level there was a significant interaction between these two variables. Such an interaction was not observed in intermediate and high intermediate proficiency levels. It was also concluded that in each level, field independent students had a better performance on proficiency test. Regarding the effect of age and sex on FD/ID it was concluded that age was not a significant factor, but sex had a significant effect on FD/ ID. The findings of this study are in line with Defazio (1973), Uydi (1974), Powers and Lis (1977), Hansen and Stansfield (1981-3), D' Anjelia and Renaud (1985),Kozhenvikov (2007), Behnam&Fathi (2009), and Nicolaou (2011); while in conflict with the results of the studies by Carter (1988), Day (1984), Wyss (2002), Carson (2009), and Khatib&Hosseinpur (2011).

4.1. Applications and Implications

Theoretically this study has proved that field dependence/independence is a factor affecting the proficiency of the students. This finding sheds light on the fields of testing and teaching. As Bachman (1985) asserts performance on the language tests are affected by factors other than language ability. One of the factors as Bachman mentions, is the characteristics of the testees that are not supposed to be part of the language abilities that test givers want to measure. Also, Hansen and Stansfield (1983) argue that if some students with a specific cognitive style have a better performance than other students on a particular language test, then the test is not valid, because a bias is in operation- "a bias that would lessen the validity of this instrument as test of general second language proficiency" (p.33).

Regarding the field of teaching, we might say that the theoretical implications about testing can be fed into the field of teaching, as it is always the case.

The pedagogical implications of this study are as follows: 1. This study showed that field independents had a better performance on a proficiency test. This finding gives us the first and foremost implication, that is a precaution in interpreting test scores of the students with regard to their cognitive style of field dependence/independence and may be a suggestion that we help students to become more field independent. 2. This study showed that in different proficiency levels the performance of field dependent/ independent students varied. So in

addition to the cognitive style of field dependence/ independence, teachers should consider the proficiency level of the students. The findings of this study could help teachers in their curriculum development. Being aware that field independent students have a better performance in proficiency, they should gear their attention to field dependent students. In this regard they can count on the characteristics of success present in field dependent students. Field dependent students are better in communicative tasks. They are better in acquiring language through communication. Therefore, educational planners can boost the proficiency of field dependent students through communicative task-based course books. 4. Another implication of this study is the idea of training the cognitive style of field independence in students. Since field independent students are more successful in the proficiency test, teachers can train this trait in field dependent students to improve their performance. 5. This study showed that sex of the students affects the degree of field dependence/independence. Therefore if the comparison is between different sex groups, teachers should be careful of the indirect effect of sex on the proficiency (sex → FD / ID → proficiency). 6. In this Iranian context, age did not have any effect on the degree of field dependence/independence. So this factor cannot have any indirect effect on the proficiency of the students and in the comparison of the different age groups there is no worry about the effect of this factor.

In this study, just the relationship between field dependence/independence and proficiency in general and language proficiency level in particular was studied. There are many other areas for research like the following: 1.the relationship between field dependence/independence and proficiency in different age groups, 2. the relationship between field dependence/independence and proficiency in different sex groups,3. the relationship between field dependence/independence and proficiency in different cultural groups, 4. the interaction of field dependence/independence in teachers and students and its possible effects on the proficiency of the students, 5. The kind of motivation affecting field dependent/independent students, 6. The relationship between field dependence/independence and skills of language (reading, listening, writing, speaking),7. The relationship between field dependence/independence and different components of language (for example; pronunciation accuracy, vocabulary, grammar, ...),8. The relationship between field dependence/independence and other language tests (for example; cloze, dictation, multiple choice, ...), and finally ,9, the comparison between the performance of field dependent/independent students in tests like linguistic versus communicative, or linguistic versus functional.

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Title

Analysis of Interactional Metadiscourse Markers across Applied Linguistics Disciplines: Focusing on EFL Learners' Perception

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Abstract

This study aims to explore variation and distribution of Interactional Metadiscourse Markers across applied linguistics sub-disciplines of English language teaching, English literature and English translation. It also seeks to explore readers' perceptions and attitudes towards these markers to understand whether they are compatible with the functions proposed by Hyland (2005). In the first stage of the study, the distribution of the Interactional Metadiscourse Markers in the articles of the three aforementioned fields was explored. In the second stage, readers' attitudes and perceptions of Interactional Metadiscourse Markers were examined. The result of the first phase of the study revealed that the frequency of Metadiscourse Markers was different across the articles of English translation, English literature and English language teaching. The findings regarding the students' attitudes towards the function

of Interactional Metadiscourse Markers somehow confirmed the functions that Hyland (2005) has defined for each marker in the Interactional category.

Keywords: Applied Linguistics Disciplines; Interactional Metadiscourse Markers; Perception

1. Introduction

One of the growing areas of research in corpus linguistics especially since 1990's has been the study of Metadiscourse Markers. While previous studies have been mainly concerned with exploring variations across different disciplines (e. g. biology vs. history), almost no study has been conducted to explore possible variations of interactional Metadiscourse Markers across three fields of English language teaching, English literature and English translation. Also a number of studies (Hyland, 1996/1998; Prior, 1998) have demonstrated that academic discourse varies enormously. In other words, writers in different disciplines tend to write differently. There is evidence that even within the same discipline, depending on the expertise of the writer, different practices have been emerged (Dudley Evanse, 2002; Hyland, 2002; Harwood, 2003).

On the one hand, it seems reasonable to assume that different cultures would orient their discourses in different ways. Even different discourse communities within a single language, constituted by different academic disciplines, have different writing conventions (Leki, 1991). Given this variation, studies which examine writings of different disciplines are necessary. In this regard, research article has been one of genres studied intensively, since it is one of the major vehicles through which scientific knowledge is transmitted to the scientific community (Soler, 2007). To facilitate reading and writing of scientific research articles, both native and non-native speakers of English need to be aware of the rhetorical organization conventionally used in their field. For this reason, most studies investigating the structure of research articles focused on the description and understanding of different sections of this academic genre (e.g. Hyland, 2000; Ruyiying & Allison, 2003). Several studies have also examined research articles with regard to the use and distribution of Metadiscourse Markers (e.g. Vassileva, 2001; Abdi, 2008), which highlight the importance of these devices as the cornerstone of academic writing. In this regard, Interactional Metadiscourse Markers which involve the reader in the text, play an important role to make a rapport between writer and reader. On the other hand, it seems enlightening to see whether readers and writers as the members of the same discourse community share the same perception while reading a text.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the distribution of Interactional Metadiscourse Markers across three academic fields of English translation, English literature and TEFL. Furthermore, no study has been conducted so far to get aware of readers' perception of Metadiscourse Markers in these three fields. Thus, it addressed the following questions:

- 1) Is there any significant difference in the distribution of Interactional Metadiscourse Markers among the articles written in the three academic fields of English translation, English literature and TEFL?
- 2) Do readers perceive Interactional Metadiscourse Markers in the way that has been meant by the writers?

To find answer to the first research question, research articles were reviewed and manual frequency count of Interactional Metadiscourse Markers was undertaken. For answering the second research question, readers' perceptions and attitudes towards the Interactional Metadiscourse Markers employed in the research articles were studied.

2. Literature review

Parallel to the interactive process between reader and content, there is also another important type of interaction, the one between reader and writer. This dialogue is known as Metadiscourse, defined by Vande Kopple (1997, p. 2) as “discoursed that people use not to expand referential material, but to help their readers connect, organize, interpret and evaluate and develop attitudes toward that material”.

In fact, writers use these devices to produce a desired effect, depending on their underlying purposes and perception of readers' expectations. For example, in textbooks, it helps to present information in a clear and convincing way to promote acceptance and understanding.

These devices are also the cornerstone of every piece of academic writing, including research articles. Interpersonal Metadiscourse Markers according to Hylands' taxonomy (2005) are divided into two functional categories:

Figure 1. An interpersonal model of metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005, p. 49)

An interpersonal model of metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005:49).

Category	Function	Examples
Interactive	Help to guide the reader through the text	Resources
Transitions	Express relations between main clauses	In addition; but; thus; and
Frame markers	Refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages	Finally; to conclude; my purpose is
Endophoric markers	Refer to information in other parts of the text	Noted above; see figure; in section 2
Evidentials	Refer to information from other texts	According to X; Z states
Code glosses	Elaborate propositional meaning	Namely; e.g.; such as; in other words
Interactional	Involve the reader in the text	Resources
Hedges	Withhold commitment and open dialogue	Might; perhaps; possible; about
Boosters	Emphasize certainty and close dialogue	In fact; definitely; it is clear that
Attitude markers	Expresses writers' attitude to proposition	Unfortunately; I agree; surprisingly
Self-mentions	Explicit reference to author(s)	I; we; my; me; our
Engagement markers	Explicitly build relationship with reader	Consider; note; you can see that

Since 1980, a number of studies have been conducted, which highlight the growing interest of researchers in the issue of Metadiscourse as an important persuasive device. Beauvais (1989) in the article *of A Speech Act Theory of Metadiscourse*, provided representative examples of problems which diminished the utility of the metadiscourse theories that were then available. He then proposed an alternative theory and located metadiscourse within the larger context of speech act theory. In his study, he defined metadiscourse as indicator of expositive illocutionary acts, and provided taxonomy of metadiscursive functions and forms.

In 1993, Crismore, under the title of *Metadiscourse in Persuasive Writing*, investigated cultural and gender variations in relation to the use of metadiscourse in the writings of United States and Finland students. This study provided partial evidence for the universality of metadiscourse, and suggested the need for more cross-cultural studies of its use in teaching composition. Barton (1995), in her article of *Contrastive and Non-Contrastive Connectives*, described a set of metadiscourse functions arising from the use of contrastive and non-contrastive connective expressions in academic argumentation. Moving away from descriptions of connectives solely in terms of textual relations, she described interpersonal metadiscourse functions of contrastive and non-contrastive connectives within the presentation of claims and counterclaims in argumentative essays. By emphasizing claims based on the assumed roles and responses of writers and readers in an academic discourse community, she proposed that interpersonal uses of non-contrastive and contrastive connectives mitigate counterclaims.

In the same vein, Hyland (1996), in *Talking to the Academy* identified the major forms, functions, and distribution of hedges in a corpus of 26 molecular biology research articles and described the importance of hedging in this genre. In 1999, he wrote another article under the title of *Talking to Students: Metadiscourse in Introductory Course books*. In this paper, he explored the possible role of university textbooks in student's acquisition of a specialized disciplinary literacy, focusing on the use of metadiscourse as a manifestation of the writers' linguistic and rhetorical presence in texts. He provided useful information about how writers support their arguments and build a relationship with readers in different rhetorical contexts. Pedro A, et al. (2001) studied the metadiscourse devices typically used by copywriters to construct their slogans and headlines. In their study, examples selected from a typical women's magazine showed that both textual and interpersonal metadiscourse help copywriters to convey a persuasive message under an informative mask. Abdi (2002) investigated the ways writers use interpersonal metadiscourse to partly reveal their identity. He examined a total of 55 academic research articles from social sciences (SS) and natural sciences (NS). Based on the use of interpersonal metadiscourse through hedges, emphatics and attitude markers, a comparison of the two disciplines was made. The analysis of his study showed that the SS writers employed interpersonal metadiscourse more frequently than the NS writers. In his research, a qualitative in-depth analysis also revealed that the choice of validity markers was closely related to the type of article being studied (Abdi, 2002).

Considering the effect of metadiscourse on reading comprehension, Camiciottoli (2003) conducted an exploratory research to gain further insight into the effect of metadiscourse on ESP reading comprehension. The result of his study suggested that a more pronounced use of metadiscourse may be associated with improved comprehension in some cases. Later, Hyland (2004) explored how advanced second language writers deploy Metadiscourse in a high stakes research genre. His study proposed a model of metadiscourse as the interpersonal resources required to present propositional material appropriately in different disciplinary and genre contexts. Recski (2005) *demonstrated* that interpersonal meanings construct texts just as much as ideational ones. He also highlighted that modalities contribute to coherence in important ways and that the selection of modals are closely related to speakers' stance in relation to the propositions. Regarding creating a person in academic writing, Harwood (2005) revealed that almost 80% of the pronouns found in the students' corpus were of "I", while the figure in the expert corpus was less than 3%. He also conducted a qualitative analysis to show how methodological "I" can help to achieve a range of textual effects. Corbett (1995) also focused on the question of narrative voice in academic writing. He

discussed the nature of academic voice in particular in the field of English literature, whose students were expected to master the impersonal construction of a “personal response”.

Abdi (2009) introduced a practical model based on Gricean cooperative principle (CP) to help multilingual members of academic discourse community in the use of metadiscourse markers. His attempts led to a new classification of metadiscourse and added two new metadiscourse strategies of collapsers and disclaimers. Guillem (2009) also offered a multidisciplinary approach for communication phenomena that emphasizes the interplay among cognition, discourse and society. His findings demonstrated how different levels of metadiscourse-intra-textual, inter-textual and contextual-are equally relevant for argumentative communication.

However, none of the works mentioned above has examined readers' attitudes and perceptions of the Interactional Metadiscourse markers employed by the writers which are the cornerstones of interaction between writer and reader. Since the focus of study is on ESL learners' perception, Hylands' (2005) interactional category was selected as the framework for the analysis.

3. Method

This study reviewed 60 research articles related to the three academic fields of English translation, English literature and TEFL. For each field, 20 articles were randomly selected from among the articles relevant to the participants' field of study offered by their instructors to be covered during the terms. The participants of the study included 60 M. A. students of the University of Isfahan (20 students of English translation, 20 students of English literature and 20 students of TEFL) both male and female who were randomly selected.

The study was conducted in two phases: (a) a contrastive quantitative phase, in which the Interactional Metadiscourse Markers of the research articles were counted in order to find out any similarities or differences in the use of Metadiscourse Markers across the three aforementioned sub-disciplines. It is worth noting that Metadiscourse Markers were spotted manually and functionally to ensure the validity of the research. And, (b) a qualitative phase, in which 60 post graduate students were randomly selected to examine their perceptions of Interactional Metadiscourse Markers. The Interactional Metadiscourse Markers of the same research articles which were reviewed for the quantitative part of the study were manually spotted and underlined. The Interactional Metadiscourse Markers were underlined and investigated from the readers' standpoint. The researcher thought that it may not be

appropriate to burden participants with the terminology of Metadiscourse Markers. For this purpose, they were just asked to write their opinions about the underlined words, then the data were classified and participants' perceptions were expressed in terms of percentage. In order to get aware of EFL learners' perception, each person was randomly given a research article in his/her own field of study. The students were asked to read the research articles while paying attention to the function of underlined Metadiscourse Markers. After reading the research article, they were asked to write their perception of the function of the words underlined. In the next step, the data gathered from their perceptions were examined to find out whether they confirmed the model proposed by Hyland (2005).

The taxonomy of Metadiscourse Markers formulated by Hyland (2005) appeared in Figure 1. above is taken as the basic model for this study. Hylands' model was preferred for several reasons: (a) being recent, simple clear and inclusive, (b) building on previous taxonomies, (c) more easily lending itself to this research purpose, i.e. focusing on the interaction between writer and readers.

4. Results and discussion

In order to find out whether there was any significant difference in the employment of interactional Metadiscourse Markers in the genre of research article among three applied linguistic sub-disciplines, namely, English literature, English translation and TEFL. Simple frequency counts of these markers were undertaken for this purpose and the raw data were then transformed into adjusted data and chi-square tests were used to examine the hypothesis. The results of chi-square tests are illustrated in the tables below:

Table1, Chi-square test result, comparing interactional Metadiscourse Markers across applied linguistic disciplines

	Engagement markers	Self mentions	Boosters	Attitude markers	Hedges
Chi-Square	148.817 ^a	72.449 ^b	36.660 ^c	10.182 ^d	51.711 ^e
Df	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.006	.000

As illustrated in table 1, The chi-square test value for Engagement Markers is 148.81 and associated significance level is $.000 < 0.05$. Since $148.81 > 5.99$ (critical value=5.99, DF=2, $\alpha=0.05$), indicates that the frequencies of Engagement Markers in the 3 disciplines with the significance level of $\alpha=0.05$ are different. The chi-square test values for all of the

Metadiscourse Markers are greater than 5.99, which indicates that in all of the 3 disciplines, the frequencies of Metadiscourse Markers, (significance level of $\alpha=0.05$) are different. For further investigation of the data, the sub-disciplines were compared two by two, to understand exactly where the significant difference among them stands. As indicated in Table 2, the frequencies of Engagement Markers in TEFL and Translation are the same. However, the significant difference in the above Chi-square test among the three fields stems from the high frequency of Engagement Markers observed in the field of Literature.

Table 2. comparison of Engagement markers between TEFL and Translation

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
TEFL	68	78.5	-10.5
Translation	89	78.5	10.5
Total	157		

Table 3. Chi-square results comparing Engagement markers between TEFL and Translation

	Engagement Markers
Chi-Square	2.809 ^a
Df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.094

For the qualitative part, there was an attempt to see whether student's perception of interactional Metadiscourse Markers confirmed the function proposed by Hyland or not. In this phase, special care was taken to spot examples representing different Metadiscourse Markers. In addition, for the sake of manageability and adequacy of the data, the number of examples underlined to be figured out by the participants was reduced to 30.

The analysis revealed that some of the participants had different perception of Interactional Metadiscourse Markers from the functions stated by Hyland (2005).

Some examples of these markers are presented in the extracted sentences below. For convenience, the Metadiscourse Markers are boldfaced in each example. The unnecessary parts of selected sentences are omitted and the names of relevant journals are given at the end of each sentence.

4.1 Hedges

- (1) The use of linguistic strategies to compensate for the threat of (FTA) **seems** to be universal... (*Journal of English and American Studies*)
- (2) This **may** be one of the reasons why some comments on the issue of translation test validity... (system)
- (3) Nevertheless, it is **possible** that the thematic choices in the students' essays....(Applied Linguistics)

According to Hyland (2005), hedges are linguistic forms to indicate that evidence is not enough to support a hedgeless proposition. They are also used to withhold commitment and open dialogues. However, when asked about participants' perception of hedges underlined in the research articles, interesting ideas emerged. About 30% of the participants believed that when the writer uses hedge, he/she is not brave or confident enough to have a bold claim. About 10% questioned the reliability of writer as a source of knowledge. 20% of the participants believed that the research needs more investigation and the result is only applicable to that specific article, therefore it cannot be generalized. Majority of the participants (about 40%) said that "the proposition is not absolutely true but we could not find any evidence against it". These participants seemed satisfied with the employment of hedges. In their view, writer is not biased, leaves the audience free to decide about the result. They fancied the writer as an adroit person who tries to persuade them by being merely conservative.

4.2. Boosters

- (4) The book is **in fact** a suite of songs (*Cambridge Collections Online*)
- (5) It is **clear** that in a strategy employed by Joyce to convert (*Cambridge Collections Online*)

According to Hyland (2005), boosters are recourses which suggest that the writer feels somehow confident to accept the commitment on the grounds that the evidence is convincing, but perhaps not enough to qualify the proposition to a naked one, therefore boosting is being honest, if it is supported by enough evidence. However, some of the participants (about 20%) seemed dissatisfied with the application of boosters .They believed that employing boosters such as the one illustrated in the example (5) gives the reader a very bad feeling. The reader feels insulted and humiliated. One of the participants expressed her dissatisfaction as the following: "If the reader is a novice one, better to inform him/her about the proposition instead of implying that "Everybody knows this. How stupid you are"!!! And if the reader knows the proposition, no need to remind him/her in such a humiliating way". On the face of

it, 80% of the participants agreed. They expressed their satisfaction as the following: “Boosters don’t let us think other than what the writer thinks, if we deny the proposition, we have denied an axiomatic fact”. On the whole, boosters give the majority of participants a feeling of certainty as proposed by Hyland.

4.3. Attitude Markers

(6) **I agree** with Field (1998) that spending time on helping learners tackle..... (System)

(7) **Unfortunately**, especially designed experiments were not..... (System)

According to Hyland (2005), writers use Attitude Markers in order to express their attitudes toward the proposition. About 90% of the participants believed that writers tend to insert their affective state into their texts, thus making a kind of human relationship with readers. This view is also favored by recent research paradigms like critical approach (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; cited in Abdi, 2009). Those who were in favor of using attitude Markers believes that words with a positive load (e.g. interestingly, fortunately, I agree, hopefully) make the readers more alert, impress them to see what the writer is going to say, and indeed, keep them following the text. However, about 10% of the participants seemed to oppose the idea of using Attitude Markers. They believed that there is no need to overtly make and develop such a relationship. Their opposition was mostly related to the terms carrying a negative load such as unfortunately. These participants who were against Attitude Marking said that “Science is not the matter of fortune. If a writer uses the word *unfortunately*, he/she wants to convey that the failure is not his/her fault; it is merely the matter of fortune”.

4.4. Self-mentions

(8) It is **my** intention in this paper to gather evidence which may prove, firstly, that.....
(*Journal of English and American Studies*)

(9) **We** intend, through combining the works of Grice and Hyland, to formulate a model.....
(*Journal of pragmatics*)

(10) In this article, I offer a cognitive perspective on the comprehension problems.....(System)

(11) In this study, the **author** will shed some light on the reliability and validity of translation... (System)

As proposed by Hyland (2005), Self Mentions are explicit reference to authors. He maintained that self-mentions are “related to the desire to present oneself as an informed and reliable colleague, strongly identifying oneself with a particular view to gain credit for one’s individual perspective or research decision”. Furthermore, establishing a positive self-representation can be seen as an important aspect of achieving persuasion in academic

discourse (Mur Dueans, 2007; cited in Abdi, 2009). Among Self Mentions, personal pronouns (I, we) seem to be the most controversial ones. A number of corpus-based studies have also identified a range of functions that personal pronouns can play in academic writing (e.g. Harwood, 2003; Hyland2001, 2002; Kuo, 1999; Vassiliva, 1998). Pronouns are said to help the writer organize the text and guide the reader through the argument. They may state personal opinions or recount experimental procedure and methodology. They may even be used to acknowledge funding bodies, institutions and individuals that contributed the study in some way (e.g. **I** thank Professor X for his help....). In addition to performing this range of pragmatic acts, personal pronouns can help to reveal how academic writers construct their relationship with readers and with their discourse community (Kuo, 1999). Those who have constructed functional pronoun taxonomies (Harwood, 2003; Hyland, 2002b; Ivanic, 1998) link pronoun functions with authorial presence. The visibility of the writer in their text will, therefore, depend upon the function of the pronoun in each particular case. Note that in this part of the study, the word pronoun is viewed as Self-mention. Other functions of pronouns (e.g. we, you) as Engagement Marker are discussed in the following section. Meanwhile, about 10% of the participants trust “I” and “we” more than the word “researcher”. They believed that the word “researcher” does not convey an intimate relationship with the reader. This group of participants even said that the passive structure makes the texts literally elegant but they felt that the author hides himself, making them not trust the writer. On the other hand, 90% of the participants considered the word “researcher” and “writer” more trustworthy. They did not oppose the word “we” and “our” but considered the research to be more scientific, done by a group of professional researchers. These participants were completely dissatisfied with the word “I”, they deemed the work abounded with the pronoun “I”, as a term paper, not as an academic research.

4.5. Engagement Markers

(12) **Note that** CCC included only references that didn’t require the child to make an inference.....(Applied psycholinguistics)

(13) By means of it **we** can experience simultaneously both skepticism & deeply felt impact of ([Cambridge Collections Online](#))

(14) In reading through those books **you** are reading and, rereading, the Joycean text itself.....([Cambridge Collections Online](#))

According to Hyland (2005), Engagement Markers explicitly build relationship with readers. They explicitly address and engage readers and are mostly employed in the statements of caution, e.g. Example (12). Engagement Markers promote a relationship with readers either

by selectively focusing their attention or by including them as participants in the text through second person, imperative, question forms, etc (Hyland, 2001) .The quantitative analysis of research articles showed that these Metadiscourse Markers are widely used in the research articles written in the field of English Literature. The result of qualitative study reveals that about 30% of the participants felt that Engagement Markers make the texts more intimate. It gives the readers a sense to accept the proposition more easily. Another 30% of the participants expressed that “when writers use Engagement Markers, we have a sense of respect, we fell the writer feels our presence as respectable reader, and, therefore, he/she is sharing his /her ideas with us.” Technically speaking, to this group of participants, the texts ornamented with Engagement Markers sound reader friendly.

Quite amazingly, the view of the remaining 40% of the participants about Engagement Markers, in particular, the word “we” which means the writer as well as the intended readers, was not that much satisfying. For instance, one of the participants said that “By using the word “we”, the writer has threaten my individuality. It is an obliged agreement. Maybe I’m not that group (we), but the writer has generalized the findings. It questions my autonomy as an independent reader who can decide on his own.... I don’t feel liking it. In other words, they considered this strategy as “imposing the writer's ideas on the intended audience”.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the occurrences of Interactional Metadiscourse Markers across the articles written in three applied linguistic sub-disciplines of English Literature, English translation and TEFL. These devices were investigated both quantitatively and qualitatively. The corpus was manually and carefully reviewed to spot the Interactional Metadiscourse Markers. Then, the data were tabulated and analyzed. It seems that writers of the three fields almost equally took advantage of these devices in their writing. However, the result of the quantitative analysis revealed that in each discipline, the relative frequency of one particular Metadiscourse marker was significantly high and this made the overall frequency dissimilar. For instance in the field of English Literature, Engagement Markers were more frequently employed.

Furthermore, it was found that the frequency of Metadiscourse Markers may vary from one research article to another, depending on a number of factors, such as the degree of strictness of the reviewers of the journal in which the research article has been published, the nature of the issue being discussed and of course the writers’ style of persuasion. Examining

the participants' perceptions and attitudes towards these markers revealed that some of the participants believed that good writers use a greater variety of these markers compared with poor writers while the minority of them were against some particular kinds of Interactional Metadiscourse Markers (e.g. Engagement Markers and Self -mentions). However, these interpretations need to be couched with caution. It seems that the participants' response to the function of Metadiscourse Markers was a matter of personal preference. These perceptions and attitudes may even stem from their first language cultural conventions. In this case, it is essential for EFL readers to become aware of the functions of these markers in English research articles in order to avoid cultural clashes which may lead to misunderstandings. Therefore, further studies of Metadiscourse Markers from a functional perspective are called for, in particular to gain a better insight into the way in which writers in various types of texts express their commitment or lack of it to the truth value of their propositions, into their motivations for their selection of particular ways of committing, and into the relationship between Metadiscourse Markers and variables such as purpose of the discourse as well as the writer's style. In addition, research on Metadiscourse would shed more light on the function of the interpersonal aspects of language in the structuring of texts and creating genres.

In sum, the findings of this study would suggest a number of implications that can be of prime importance for both language teachers and practitioners in the TEFL context. The relatively notable employment of Interactional metadiscourse markers in writing research articles implies that it is an important part of this genre, therefore, they should be considered as an essential part in writing programs, especially essay writing. Furthermore, the result of the quantitative section might imply that there are rhetorical differences among different disciplines; therefore, it gives the EFL readers an awareness of how to write in their own disciplines. On the other hand, the outcome of the qualitative phase of the study implies that writers express their voice through writing, if they do not learn to follow the conventions to which their readers are accustomed, the readers may find the writing difficult to process and even evaluate it negatively. Thus, it is important how to make rapport between writer and readers.

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Title

The Effect of Cooperative Learning Strategy of Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) on Developing Oral Communication Skills of Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of cooperative learning strategy of Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) on developing oral communication skills of intermediate language learners at Iran Language Institute. Utilizing this strategy, a list of six oral communication skills are proposed as the most related skills to intermediate learners. The experimental design of the study depends on voluntary selection of choosing the group of the study, which consists of 60 intermediate learners. The following tools are used to fulfill the purposes of the study: Oxford Placement Test, a pre-post oral communication skills and cooperative learning strategy of STAD which consists of a teacher's guide and students' handbook. The program was administered during a six-week period. In addition, paired t-test is used to measure the effect of the training program on learners' oral performance. The findings revealed that the program is effective in developing students' oral

communication skills as there was statistically significant difference between the pre and post administration of the test. Pedagogical instruments in the form of student and teacher surveys are also administered to provide further insight into the framework of the study.

Keywords: Cooperative learning, STAD, Oral communication skills.

1.Introduction

These days, cooperative learning is applied in almost all school content areas and, increasingly, in college and university contexts all over the world, and is claimed to be an effective teaching method in foreign/second language education by scholars abroad (Kessler, 1992). In addition, It is generally asserted that cooperative learning is the best option for all students because it emphasizes active interaction between students of diverse abilities and backgrounds and demonstrates more positive student outcomes in academic achievement, social behavior, and affective development (Nelson, 1993).

Now cooperative learning is applied in almost all school content areas and, increasingly, in college and university contexts all over the world (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Kessler, 1992), and is claimed to be an effective teaching method in foreign/second language education by scholars abroad (Kessler, 2002).

Moreover, as suggested by Yu (1995), a teacher's familiarity with cooperative learning could affect the results of such teaching method. Lai (2002) also suggests that the teacher need prior training to obtain professional competence of cooperative learning.

In a cooperative learning approach, students and teachers are in a state of dynamic interaction in classroom (Maharan, 2000). When students interact in cooperative groups, they learn to exchange information, develop new understanding, and communicate in a socially accepted manner. It is through interacting with each other that learners construct new ways of thinking and feeling (Gillies, 2004).

The application of cooperative learning to classroom teaching finds its roots in 1970s when Israel and the United States began to designed study cooperative learning models for classroom context. Research in second or foreign language classrooms indicates that cooperative learning is beneficial for second language learners in a number of ways (Xiaping, 2003). For instance, cooperative learning strategies allow the level of learning from reproduction to high levels to defeat tasks that are appropriate to their language proficiency skills (Yang, et al. 2002).

On the whole, by carrying out this study, the researcher hopes that cooperative learning can receive more attention and enjoy more popularity among EFL teachers at all grade levels, so that English education can actually equip our students with communicative competence.

2.Review of the Related Literature

2.1.Cooperative Learning Methods

According to Johnson, Johnson, and Stanne (2000), cooperative learning was actually a generic term that refers to numerous methods for organizing and conducting classroom instruction. Almost any teacher could find a way to use cooperative learning that was congruent with his or her philosophies and practices. So many teachers use cooperative learning in so many different ways that the list of methods was impossibly exhaustive in this literature review.

Out of the many methods that different teachers or researchers have developed, as Johnson, Johnson and Stanne (2000) stated, the following ten had received the most attention, of these methods employed in this study would be discussed in the following sections.

2.1.1.Three-Step Interview

Three-step interviews (Kagan, 1993) could be used as an icebreaker for team members to get to know one another or can be used to get to know concepts in depth, by assigning roles to students. In Three-Step Interview, student A would interview B for the specified number of minutes, listening attentively and asking probing questions (Kagan, 1993). At a signal, students reversed roles and then B interviewed A for the same number of minutes. At another signal, each pair turned to another pair, forming a group of four. Each member of the group introduced his or her partner, highlighting the most interesting points.

2.1.2. The Inside-Outside Circle

The Inside-Outside Circle, first developed by Spencer Kagan (1989), helped students review information while they got to know their classmates. It was particularly useful for review and for mastering new vocabulary and sentence patterns. To form an Inside-Outside Circle, students worked in groups of four or six. Students stood in pairs in two concentric circles, with the inside circle facing out and the outside circle facing in. Students could use flash cards or respond to teacher questions as they rotate to each new partner. It could be a good strategy for checking understanding, reviewing, processing, practicing dialogues in the textbooks, and meeting classmates.

2.1.3. Learning Together

Learning Together was based on the social psychology (Deutsch, 1949; Johnson & Johnson, 1994). The key concept was “interdependence.” This was investigated by Deutsch (1949), a mentor of David and Roger Johnsons who developed Learning Together. Interdependence concerned people’s perceptions of how they affected and were affected by what happened to others (Deutsch, 1949). Deutsch divided interdependence into two types: positive and negative, with a third possibility being that no interdependence existed between people in a given situation. In his research, Deutsch (1949) found that positive interdependence led to superior performance on objective and subjective measures.

The explicit emphasis that Learning Together placed on improving group functioning was one important way that this method differed from STAD. Without using the term interdependence, another social psychologist, Allport (1954), described related concepts in his classic work *The Nature of Prejudice*. Allport (1954) stated that “in order for contact between different groups to lead to a reduction of prejudice, it must be between people of equal status, sanctioned by institutional supports, be in pursuit of common ends, and lead to the perception of common interests and common humanity” (p. 281). Allport (1954) contended that “simply by contact with group members did not promote goodwill unless there was a shared goal” (p. 281).

2.1.4. Student Teams Achievement Division

Based on a review of the research on cooperative learning, Slavin (1987) argued that group contingencies are essential if small-group structures are to enhance achievement. By group contingencies, Slavin meant that, “the behavior of one or more group members brings rewards to a group” (Slavin, 1987, p. 30). Group contingencies worked in two steps. First, the teacher offered rewards or punishments to the groups. Then, the group members applied rewards or punishments to each other. Group contingencies motivated students to hope their teammates do well. In contrast, Slavin (1990) believed that practices in conventional education, such as having students study alone and grading on a curve, create a climate in which students hoped their classmates would fail.

Another important behaviorist concept behind STAD was vicarious reinforcement (Bandura, 1971), which meant that students learned not only by being rewarded or unfinished themselves, but also by seeing other people receive rewards or punishments. Cooperative learning, especially when students were heterogeneously grouped, offered many opportunities for students to experience positive models who were rewarded for their efforts.

There were two types of motivation involved in STAD: (1) intrinsic motivation which flowed from within a person, and (2) extrinsic motivation that came from outside the person (Slavin, 1987). While not denying the importance of intrinsic motivation, Slavin (1987) believed that “extrinsic motivation had to be used. “Students receive about 900 hours of instruction every year. It is unrealistic to expect that intrinsic interest and internal motivation will keep them enthusiastically working day in and day out” (Slavin, 1987, p. 30). Slavin saw cooperative learning as a more efficient way of delivering extrinsic motivators. The method of STAD was utilized in the first and the second phase of this study. It served as a strong enticement to enhance the participants’ motivation, as the discussion on the results illustrates in part five. Therefore, STAD would be explained in more details.

In STAD, the teacher first lectured on the topic. Then, students were assigned to heterogeneous teams in which they studied the learning material provided by the teacher in preparation for a quiz. Each student’s grade was based on his or her own score on the quiz. But, at the same time, each student could contribute to a group score by making improvements. Each student’s contribution to their group’s score was based on how well they did on the quiz compared to their own average score on past quizzes. Thus, a relatively low achiever can contribute as much to their team as a high achiever without doing as well on the quiz as their higher-achieving teammate. The group score was used to determine which groups receive rewards, such as certificates and recognition in newsletters.

The message that students got from the positive reinforcement of STAD conformed Slavin’s (1987) view on the humanistic perspectives on cooperative learning. While Slavin (1987) stressed the importance of group contingencies, he also saw the appeal of cooperative learning to those with a humanistic perspective, which focused on the affective benefits of cooperative learning, e.g., increases in self-esteem, improved ethnic relations. Slavin’s review of the research found that group contingencies were not necessary for achieving these goals. Humanists were attracted to cooperative learning for its other essential ingredient: group interaction. Slavin’s conclusion is that “Cooperative learning represents an odd but happy marriage between behavioral and humanistic approaches to classroom motivation” (Slavin, 1987, p. 35).

3.Method

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study, who were selected via an oral interview (pre-testing), were 60 female Iranian English learners at Iran Language Institute (ILI) in Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province. They were divided into two groups, 30 as control group and 30 as experimental group. To prepare a homogeneous group of participants and avoid bias, only those who had intermediate performance at oral interview were selected. It should be noted that age, gender, and ethnicity of the participants were not controlled.

3.2 Instrumentation

Tools and materials which were applied in this study were as follows:

- Oxford Placement Test
- A pre-post oral communication skills test.
- STAD programme consisting of Teacher's manual and students' handbook

3.2.1. The oral communication pre-post test:

The researcher organized a pre-post test in order to answer the second question of the study: Is there any relationship between cooperative learning strategy of (STAD) and oral communication skills?

The test was in the form of an interview. This was used because of its suitability to the nature of the oral communication skills. Besides, each student needed to be interviewed individually to take his/her time to talk freely with the interviewer. The test included six sections and each section was devoted to test one of the five oral communication skills:

- Giving and eliciting information
- Description
- Explanation
- Expressing opinions and attitudes
- Predicting the future
- Essay Conversation

3.2.2. Pre-testing

Students were pre-tested for 5 days before the training program to determine each student's actual performance level in the six oral communication skills before training for purposes of post treatment comparisons.

3.2.3 Construction of the programme

The training program consisted of a teacher's guide and a students' handbook. The program was designed according to the cooperative learning strategy (STAD) which was chosen to be most closely related to oral communication skills and the most suitable strategy that gives all students a chance to talk and participate in the class.

3.3. Design

The present study is an experimental group design. The group under the study has not received any systematic training in cooperative learning strategy of STAD prior to this study. The group is divided into experimental and control group in which the experimental group receives treatment that lasted for six weeks. In the first week students were interviewed. Each unit was taught in a week, consisting of four units but two lessons of each unit were taught because of time limitation and each lesson was during one session which lasted for one and a half hour.

3.4. Procedure

To start the research, the participants were given Oxford Placement Test in order to distinguish participants with intermediate level. Then, the selected ones were randomly divided into two groups, 30 as experimental group and 30 as control group. The main section of the study began by conducting a pre-test consisted of answering a series of questions which students were required to answer them orally. Both, experimental and control group were taught by the same teacher and groups were provided the same direct instruction except for the control group which was provided with traditional routine instruction in the classroom while experimental was with cooperative learning strategy of STAD as treatment in which students were divided into groups of 4 members. The experiment continued for 6 weeks. Soon after the treatment was over, post- test was administered to measure the achievement of sample subjects. Pre-test scores of the sample served as data to equate the control and experimental groups, while post-test scores served as data to measure achievement of the students as a result of treatment.

The results of the pre-tests and post-tests were rated by three skilled English teachers in the field of EFL (raters). Using SPSS statistic software, version 16, the following analyses were made on subjects' scores resulted from the above mentioned tests:

Table 1

1- Descriptive Statistics was run on the total scores of both groups

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Control Group

	Control Group Pre-test Average	Control Group Post-test Average
Valid	20	20
Missing	25	25
Mean	13.6000	13.8500
Median	13.5000	14.0000

Mode	13.00	14.00
Std. Deviation	1.27321	1.34849
Variance	1.621	1.818
Skewness	.857	.158
Std. Error of Skewness	.512	.512
Range	5.00	4.00
Minimum	12.00	12.00
Maximum	17.00	16.00

A. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

As shown in table 1, the average of control group post-test (13.8500) has very slightly exceeded the average of control group pre-test (13.6000). This increase is scientifically insignificant and can even be simply ignored.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Experimental Group

	Experimental Group Pre-test	Experimental Group Post-test
Valid	20	20
Missing	10	10
Mean	16.5500	18.8000
Median	17.0000	19.0000
Std. Deviation	1.19097	.83351
Variance	1.418	.695
Skewness	-.235	.412
Std. Error of Skewness	.512	.512
Range	3.00	2.00
Minimum	15.00	18.00
Maximum	18.00	20.00

Table 2 presents different descriptive statistics of experimental group pre-test and post-test. It shows remarkable increase between the average of pretest (17.0000) and the average of post-test (19.0000). This increase is statistically interpreted in later tables.

- To make sure that the scores of all four tests have inter-rater reliability, the following set of correlations were run among scores of all the four tests:

2.1 A correlation was run between Rater 1 and Rater 2 on the experimental group post-test scores:

Table 3
Rater 1 and Rater 2 Correlation

		Rater 1	Rater 2
Rater 1	Pearson Correlation	1	.972
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
Rater 2	Pearson Correlation	.972	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	20	20

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

2.2.experimental group post-test scores:

As shown in table 3, the Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); the r-value is 0.972, $p \leq .01$ which means the scores of Rater 1 correlate significantly with the scores of Rater 2. Another point is that the p-value which represents the probability of observing an r-value of this size just by chance is .000.

2.2. A correlation was run between Rater 1 and Rater 3 on the control group pre-test scores

Table 4
Rater 1 and Rater 3 Correlation

		Rater 1	Rater 3
Rater1	Pearson Correlation	1	.932
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
Rater3	Pearson Correlation	.932	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

Table 4 shows the correlation between rater 1 and rater 3. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); the r-value is 0.932, $p \leq .01$ which means the scores of rater 1 correlate significantly with the scores of rater 3.

2.3. A correlation was run between Rater 2 and Rater 3 on the control group post-test scores

Table 5
Rater 2 and Rater 3 Correlation

		Rater 2	Rater 3
Rater2	Pearson Correlation	1	.934
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
Rater3	Pearson Correlation	.934	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	20	20

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

The numbers in Table 5 indicate that the Correlation between rater 2 and rater 3 is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); the r-value is 0.934, $p \leq .01$ that means the scores of Rater 1 correlate significantly with the scores of Rater 3.

3. To assess the intra-rater reliability of our raters, they were asked to rate 8 oral interviews that were selected randomly out of the total of 20 prior to the main rating. The following set of correlations were run among the first and the second scorings of each rater:

3.1. A correlation was run between the first and the second scores of rater 1 on experimental group pre- test.

Table 6
The correlation between First and Second Scores of Rater 1

		First Scoring	Second Scoring
First Scoring	Pearson Correlation	1	.979
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	8	8
Second Scoring	Pearson Correlation	.979	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	8	8

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

Table 6 indicates that the Correlation between the first and the second scores of raters 1 is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); the r-value for rater 1 is 0.979.

3.2. A correlation was run between the first and the second scores of rater 2 on experimental group pre-test.

Table 7
The correlation between First and Second Scores of Rater 2

		First Scoring	Second Scoring
First Scoring	Pearson Correlation	1	.972
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	8	8
Second Scoring	Pearson Correlation	.972	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	8	8

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

Table 7 shows that the Correlation between the first and the second scores of rater 2 is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); the r-value for rater 2 is 0.972 and $p \leq .01$.

These numbers show that the first scores of all three raters correlate significantly with their second scores therefore; the level of intra-rater reliability is acceptable.

3..3. A correlation was run between the first and the second scores of rater 3 on experimental group on pre-test:

Table 8
The correlation between First and Second Scores of Rater 3

		First Scoring	Second Scoring
First Scoring	Pearson Correlation	1	.996
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	8	8
Second Scoring	Pearson Correlation	.996	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	8	8

Table 8
The correlation between First and Second Scores of Rater 3

		First Scoring	Second Scoring
First Scoring	Pearson Correlation	1	.996
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	8	8
Second Scoring	Pearson Correlation	.996	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	8	8

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

The numbers in table 8 show that the Correlation between the first and the second scores of rater 3 is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); the r-value for rater 3 is 0.996 and $p \leq .01$.

The numbers presented in the three previous tables indicate that the first scores of all three raters correlate significantly with their second scores, therefore; the level of intra-rater reliability is acceptable.

3. To see if there is any significant difference between the two performances of our control group, a paired sample t-test was run among the averages of pre-test and post-test.

Table 9
Paired Samples Test of Control Group

		Paired Differences			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
					Lower	Upper
Pair 1	Control Group Pretest Average /Control Group Posttest Average	.25000	1.58529	.35448	-.99194 49194

Table 9 shows that the post-test average of control group ($M = 13.8500$) did NOT significantly exceed pre-test average of Control group ($M = 13.6000$) while $t(19) = -0.705$ and Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.489 which is NOT $\leq .05$. This means that the difference observed among control group averages of pre-test and post-test is NOT a significant reliable difference.

3. A Paired Sample T-test was run between the averages of pre-test and posttest of the Experimental group to see if there is any significant difference among the averages of this group.

Table 10
Paired Samples Test of Experimental Group

		Paired Differences				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Pair 1	Experimental Group Pretest – Experimental Group Posttest	-2.25000	.55012	.12301	-2.50746	-1.99254

Table 10 shows that the post-test average of Experimental group ($M=18.8000$) significantly exceeded pre-test average of Experimental group ($M= 16.5500$) while $t(19) = -18.291$ and $\text{Sig. (2-tailed)} = 0.000$ which is ≤ 0.05 . This means that the difference observed among pre-test and post-test averages of experimental group is a significant difference.

5. Conclusion and Implications for future studies

5.1.1 Inter-rater reliability

Based on previous statistics, the correlations between all three raters were significant which means that the scores of all three raters were highly correlated to one another, thus; we have an acceptable Inter-rater reliability.

5.1.2 Intra-rater reliability

Based on previous, the correlations between the first and the second set of scores of all three raters were significant which means that the first scores of all three raters correlate significantly with their second scores, therefore; the level of intra-rater reliability is acceptable.

Needless to say that the p-value which represents the probability of observing an r-value just by chance was .000 in all correlations.

5.1.3 Paired Sample T-tests

In social sciences when the significance is below 0.05 (e.g. 0.000) the null hypothesis should be rejected and the alternative hypothesis will be accepted. As shown in chapter 4, the paired samples statistics of experimental group say that the t-test with 19 degrees of freedom was significant which in turn means that the null hypothesis can be rejected. This also means that

the difference observed among experimental group averages of pre-test and post-test is a significant reliable difference. Ultimately, this indicates that cooperative learning of STAD had positive effect on oral production of students.

5.2. Implications and Suggestions for Future Studies

Although this study was limited in duration and scope, the results clearly support earlier research on cooperative learning and STAD which found that it accelerates academic achievement as well as having positive effects on important non- academic factors such as motivation, linking of institute and working with others in cooperative learning groups. Cooperative learning strategies like STAD are supported by a multiplicity of theories from a variety of academic disciplines – including Psychological theories of motivation, social cohesion, individual and cognitive development as well as Sociocultural Theory, Cognitive Apprenticeship, Situated Cognition and Communities of Practice.

STAD is also supported by a large body of empirical research across different time periods, subjects, age levels, and geographical locations and has consistently found a variety of positive outcomes – including accelerated academic achievement, and pro-academic norms, increased group cohesiveness, improved social skills, increased self- esteem, liking of others and feeling liked, acceptance of mainstreamed students, internal locus of control, increased time on task and improved classroom behavior. As this study has demonstrated, simply putting students in groups does not guarantee positive results. Teachers cannot simply place students together and expect them to work well with each other. Central components of effective cooperative learning must be in place so that students can come to feel that they are positive contributors, not only to their teams, but to the class as a whole. Most teachers are faced with large heterogeneous classes, making it difficult to serve the needs of all students in the class. Cooperative learning approaches like STAD, take advantage of this heterogeneity, by encouraging students to learn from one another and from more and less knowledgeable peers. The bonds developed in this process can lead to increased understanding and acceptance of all members of society, a benefit of cooperative learning which extends well beyond the walls of the school itself.

In the light of the present study results, more studies are suggested in the area of using cooperative learning strategies in teaching English as a foreign language:

- The present study should be replicated on a large scale and over a long period of time (Three months or more) in order to further test its hypotheses.

- Investigating the effect/effectiveness of the cooperative learning strategy (STAD) programs with elementary and pre-intermediate level students to develop their English language proficiency.
- Investigating the effect/effectiveness of using other cooperative learning strategies in the field of (TEFL).
- Investigating the effect/effectiveness of using cooperative learning strategy (STAD) to teach English as a foreign language to the primary and secondary stages.
- Investigating the effect/effectiveness of using cooperative learning strategies to develop reading, writing, and listening skills for the English majors.
- Investigating the effect/effectiveness of using cooperative learning strategies on the students' attitudes toward English as a foreign language.

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Title

The Effectiveness of Skimming in Reading Comprehension of Middle-aged Students in Iran

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Abstract

Due to the great interest of practitioners in reading comprehension in first language (L1) and second language (L2) English classroom settings, reading comprehension has become a hot topic. Few numbers of studies have suggested that a skimming practice program can lead to improvement of L2 learners' reading comprehension; however, studies about middle-aged students are extremely scarce. Inspired by current issues in reading and previous skimming investigations, this study examined the effectiveness of skimming in reading comprehension of middle-aged students in Iran. In this study, students were provided skimming instruction for 6 weeks. Pretests and posttests of reading comprehension were administered and a *t* test was used to compare means of test scores within groups. Results indicate that skimming instruction is an effective approach to improve students' reading comprehension.

Keywords: Skimming, Reading, Reading comprehension scores, Middle-aged students.

1. Introduction

Reading is a complex process. Therefore, reading instruction is crucial. However, traditional instruction methods and rules-based systems don't work for most students so alternatives are necessary, the most important part of these alternatives is skimming.

There has been great deal of interest in skimming over the past decade. According to Pennington (2008) skimming helps the reader to access the story schema so as to provide a referential context for the reading. In other words, skimming helps the reader to learn in advance what text the gist of the reading passage is, while reminding the reader of any background information and knowledge of how the writing is organized that will assist the reader in understanding the text. In addition to providing main idea to readers, other research (Melvin, 2006) also shows that enjoying through skim reading in the comfort of knowing it will enable readers to increase their overall reading speed.

Surprisingly a little research has been done about skimming, however. There are few reports of skimming and its effectiveness on reading comprehension ability of middle-aged students. It was sought to broaden the scope of skimming literature by reporting on a use of skimming in EFL context.

Specifically it will be shown how skimming in an advanced EFL class in an English language institute will increase readers' understanding of text. The aim is to provide information about incorporating skimming into an advanced-level middle-aged EFL context.

2. Review of Related Literature

Whipple and Curtis (1917) presented the first published experimental study of the process of skimming in reading. Six students read selected prose passages in different ways. The speed of reading was recorded and the efficiency of reading was tested by demanding a reproduction of the passage read. After the skimming test, each student reported how the skimming was done and how it differed from other modes of reading. Results revealed that there were individual differences in speed and efficiency of reading by all the methods teaching skimming. Knowledge of the demand of reproduction slowed the rate of reading of all students by all methods. Skimming speed increased in the later portion of the lengthy texts. The best reproducers were the fast ones. Reproduction became very poor when readers were forced to skim at a prescribed high rate. The preferred rate in skimming was closely related with the natural rate in ordinary reading, which is + 0.71.

It is found that preliminary skimming accelerates the rate of normal reading by university sophomores in a large majority of cases. In a few cases skimming interferes. The conclusions apply primarily to subject matter for which the reader possesses a background of opinion and knowledge (McClusky, 1934).

To 395 boys and girls in five high schools of medium size in Minnesota Douglass and Bauer(1938) administered check lists or questionnaires for the purpose of gathering data relative to their attitudes and practices, particularly the latter, with respect to study. Skimming was one element in their study. A comparison of such data with IQ's and school marks revealed the following trends: (1) At all levels of intelligence the practice of looking up new words in the dictionary is positively associated with better marks. (2) Of pupils of superior intelligence, those who make the most regular practice of skimming over material before reading in detail make better marks. (3) Reading without moving the lips is the more usual practice of those who make the highest marks. (4) Those who usually get their lessons thoroughly from day to day in order to avoid cramming tend to do slightly better than those who do not, especially in the group of slightly superior intelligence. (5) A slight superiority in marks seems to go with "studying for a class just before it begins" for the 111-120 IQ group. (6) Of the least intelligent group, those who always reviewed notes before examinations made better marks than those who did so usually or only occasionally, though no similar difference could be noted for other intelligence groups.

In a comprehensive study by Kilby (1945) four slightly different types of remedial reading program were given to four matched groups of college freshmen, 110 in all, who scored relatively low on the Iowa Silent Reading Test. Some practice was given to everyone in intensive reading, rapid reading with thorough comprehension, rapid reading, and skimming; but of the four programs, each stressed one of these aspects beyond the others. The students who received such instruction earned significantly higher final grade averages than did those in an untrained control group of equal predicted grade status and slightly higher initial reading status. The amount of benefit showed no relationship to a student's status as to initial reading ability, scholastic aptitude, secondary-school achievement, or predicted grade. The training resulted in more improvement in verbal courses than in quantitative ones, such as mathematics or science. Results of all four types of program were similar, except that the group which had emphasis on skimming seemed to show a slight advantage.

Masson (1982) investigated comprehension processes and memory representations associated with normal reading and skimming in 4 experiments with 330 undergraduates. Recognition of important and unimportant information contained in narratives and newspaper

stories that were read for gist information declined by about the same amount as reading rate increased from 225 to 600 words/ minute. A similar result was obtained when Ss read for information relevant to a specific topic. Findings indicated that when skimming, readers apparently found it very difficult to perceptually select from passage information that was relevant to their goal in skimming. There was an RT advantage for verification of gist-relevant information as opposed to details, however, which tended to increase with reading rate. This was interpreted as evidence for conceptually selective processing of information sampled by readers. Recall protocols taken from Ss who read stories at normal and skimming rates provided further evidence for conceptually selective processing, which generally favored information relevant to a passage's gist.

Duggan and Payne (2009) reported 3 experiments that use expository texts and allow readers only enough time to read half of each document. Experiment 1 found that, relative to reading half the text, skimming improved memory for important ideas from a text but did not improve memory of less important details or of inferences made from information within the text. Experiment 2 found no advantage of skimming over reading the first or second half of every paragraph. Two final experiments using a hierarchical, Website-like layout of documents showed that the advantage of skimming found in Experiment 1 was dependent on the linkages between pages and, thus, the ease with which participants could navigate through the text. Data on page-by-page reading times and eye-tracking analyses from Experiment 2 indicated that Skim readers spent more time reading text that was earlier in the paragraph, toward the top of the page and in an earlier page of the document. These findings were interpreted as evidence in support of a “satisfying” account of skimming process.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

This study was conducted for 6 weeks from May to June 2011. The participants were EFL learners studying English at Farhang English institute in Talesh. Two intact (a twenty-one-student and another twenty-student) classes were selected. One of these two classes was randomly selected as a treatment group and another one as a control group. In both pretest and posttest, both groups were given equal time to answer the same reading comprehension test.

Their ages were 20 to 31, and there were all male students. The students’ native language was Persian, and they were learning English as a foreign language. They had two 30-minute

English reading practices per week. English was the medium of instruction in these classes. They had already studied English for 5 to 7 years, with a mean of 6 years.

3.2 Treatment

In the present study, the students in treatment group were provided regular practice of skimming over material before reading in detail. They were asked to skim the text to get the main idea and to tell it to the teacher before reading it completely. Although they were asked to skim the reading text in 1 or 2 minutes before reading completely, they were not limited in time. In control group, however, reading was taught traditionally and without teaching skimming. It does not mean that they had not learnt the skimming up until then, though.

The classes were held three times a week for 6 weeks and each session was 90 minutes, however, the class practiced reading twice per week and in both groups the teacher was the same.

In pretest, both groups were given one and the same test without any difference. In posttest, both groups were given the same test but with a little bit difference: control group didn't have any particular question related to skimming, but treatment group had a question regarding main idea at the beginning of the test. To ensure that students in control group had not skimmed the text, after the test they were asked if they had skimmed the text for main idea or not and this was done orally. The result was satisfying: among 20 students in control group, only 2 ones answered "yes". It means that 90 percent of them had not skimmed the text. In fact there are 2 reasons for this: 1. Students in control group had not practiced skimming for at least 6 weeks. 2. Since they did not have any question regarding the skimming skill they had not found it necessary to skim the text before reading it completely. It is worth saying that those 2 students who had skimmed the text in control group were not dropped.

3.3 Materials

For treatment, the reading texts were chosen from passages 2 (Richards) -- the book that they were taught as their course book and TOEFL Reading Flash (Peterson's) as a complementary book.

To measure the reading comprehension skill, the students read 4 texts extracted from IELTS Reading Tests (McCarter & Ash) that had content at a level similar to what students at their level usually read. The students were told that they would be asked 5 to 10 comprehension questions about the each text after they have studied each one completely. Questions were in 4 types: 1. Details, 2. Reference and vocabulary, 3. Main idea, and 4.

Inference. The students were given a time limit of 5 minutes for each text to answer the questions. Two versions of the same test were administered for both the pretest and posttest.

3.4 Procedure

Before the pretests are administered, students in both groups read a consent form that explained the purpose of the study and they agreed to participate. Following the tests, students filled out a questionnaire on which they recorded just their age-- the classes were intact and all students were male. Students took the pretest in May and the posttest in June.

3.5 Analyses

In this study, there was one dependent variable (reading comprehension) and one independent variable (a 6-week skimming treatment). To compare means of each test within the group, *t* test was used. There are four assumptions for a *t* test: (a) independence of groups, (b) independence of observations, (c) normality of the distributions, and (d) equal variances (Brown, 1992, pp. 644–645). The distribution can be described as normal. All of these assumptions for this statistic were met. In this calculation, the null hypothesis of no difference within group means was chosen. The alpha level was set to .05.

4. Result

4.1 Reading Comprehension Scores

In treatment group, the mean reading comprehension score from the pretest to the posttest improved from 13.26 to 16.39. The standard deviation (SD) remained stable (3.109 and 2.499).

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest (Control)	13.57	20	3.014	.550
	Posttest (Control)	14.13	20	2.933	.535
Pair 2	Pretest (Treatment)	13.26	21	3.109	.558
	Posttest(Treatment)	16.39	21	2.499	.449

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pretest & Posttest (Control)	20	.518	.003
Pair 2	Pretest & Posttest (Treatment)	21	.557	.001

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences		
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest – Posttest (Control)	-.567	2.921	.533
Pair 2	Pretest – Posttest (Treatment)	-3.129	2.692	.484

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences		T
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		Lower	Upper	

Pair 1	Pretest – Posttest (Control)	-1.657	.524	-1.063
Pair 2	Pretest – Posttest (Treatment)	-4.117	-2.141	-6.471

Paired Samples Test

		Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Pretest & Posttest (Control)	19	.297
Pair 2	Pretest & Posttest (Treatment)	20	.000

5. Discussion

The results of the present study showed that middle-aged students' reading comprehension ability improved after a 6-week skimming treatment. However, to appropriately address the results of reading comprehension, they should be interpreted with caution.

5.1 Differences in Reading Comprehension Scores

The differences in students' reading comprehension score of pretest and posttests in treatment group are meaningful because the differences are large. Although in the present study the participants' reading score in the pretest was not so low, reading comprehension scores were shown to increase by about 20 percent in the skimming treatment period. The results of the present study support the research question that middle-aged students' comprehension scores would improve through skimming practices.

Possible explanations for the differences within a group may be found by considering the following two factors: (a) participants' expectations, and (b) measurement. First, students may have expected some improvement in their reading comprehension ability after the treatment. This is because the purposes of the study and of skimming instruction were explained to them before the treatment. In addition, the consent form they read revealed the purpose of the study.

Second, the comprehension results could be different depending on the way they were measured. In this study, 4 reading texts were adopted and the scores of students in answering

to questions following these texts were considered as a method for measuring reading comprehension ability, but this method differs slightly from those used by other researchers.

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Title

Consciousness-raising Instruction and its Effect on Iranian EFL Learners' Use of the Mechanics of Writing

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Abstract

The present study investigated the effect of Consciousness-raising (CR) and Input Enhancement (IE) activities on the use of the mechanics of writing by 62 Iranian elementary EFL learners studying at Kish Institute of Science and Technology. The research method utilized was quasi-experimental; the participants under investigation were divided into two groups: the EG- Experimental Group and the CG- Control Group, comprising 30 and 32 eligible participants, respectively. Prior to the treatment, both groups were subjected to a proficiency test- namely, Key English Test (KET), to ensure homogeneity among the participants. In the course of the study, the participants were required to write one-paragraph expository compositions on ten topics as part of the classroom activities. The participants in the CG received common instruction and practice in writing, whereas the EG was provided with consciousness-raising instruction. To compare the achievements of the groups, a pre-test prior to the treatment and a post-test after the treatment were administered, both in the form of in-class one-paragraph expository compositions of about 100 words within a time limit of 25 minutes. Data analysis indicated the effectiveness of consciousness-raising regarding the EG participants' use of the mechanics of writing.

Keywords: Consciousness-raising, Input Enhancement, Mechanics of Writing, Error-count Method

1. Introduction

From an instructional viewpoint, writing and speaking are two of the four commonly recognized language skills. As two basic productive language skills, writing and speaking share a number of similarities in common. They, however, differ from one another in that whereas speaking can potentially rely on a wide range of contextual factors to help convey meaning and intention, the practice of writing lacks an immediate context of communication. Therefore, for effective and sound writing, the writer is obliged to make use of a large number of formal features so as to help the intended audience infer the meaning. Failure to use these features can simply render a text vague, elliptic and ambiguous

Writing as a skill requires language learners to master a number of complex rhetorical, linguistic and mechanical conventions. By nature, such conventions are complex, tend to be difficult to teach, and require mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgmental elements. These conventions have variously been analyzed and categorized under such rubrics as 'writing components' (Harris, 1969), 'writing criteria' (Jacobs et al., 1981), and 'writing skills' (Heaton, 1988). Although the writing process has been analyzed in many different ways, the related literature seems to be in unanimous agreement about the significance of the mechanics of writing as one of the vital elements of writing. The components of the writing mechanics have subsequently been classified in various ways. The most comprehensive classification among these, however, seems to have been proposed by Jacobs et al. (1981) who define the mechanics of writing as comprising punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and paragraphing.

To date, a number of research studies have attempted to further analyze problems which learners encounter when required to write (Darus & Hei Ching, 2009; Msanjila, 2005). The most commonly reported problems are the misuse of capital letters, the inadequate use of punctuation, and wrong spelling which all rank at the apex of the hierarchies depicted by these studies. It follows that emphasizing the proper use of the mechanics of writing is not merely for the sake of exercises and examinations but also for communicative purposes. In other words, failure to appropriately use the writing mechanics may result in misinterpretation of information. Furthermore, it appears that although incorrect spelling, violation of well-established punctuation customs, and misuse of capitalization do not

generally prevent comprehension of a written message, they can adversely affect the reader's judgment and make the piece of writing look awkward (Harmer, 2007). Despite the availability of research conducted in this area, the question of how EFL teachers can effectively address this issue- i.e., improving correct use of the mechanics of writing, seems to be unanswered.

Due to the enormity and complexity of language, the provision of a viable and comprehensive description of language as a whole is simply not feasible. Considering the regularities and discernible patterns residing in English, EFL teachers can, nevertheless, provide learners with precise guidelines and, more specifically, with activities which encourage them to reflect on samples of language. These samples should highlight such patterns and regularities so as to help learners reach their own conclusions regarding how language is used (Willis & Willis, 1996). Activities of this type are generally referred to as consciousness-raising (CR) and have been a component of language teaching for quite a long time. Ellis (1997) defines a CR task as "a pedagogic activity where the learners are provided with L2 data in some form and required to perform some operation on or with it, the purpose of which is to arrive at an explicit understanding of some linguistic property or properties of the target language" (p. 160). Thus, as Thornbury (1999) puts it, for consciousness-raising to be brought about, learners should pass through three stages- namely, attending, noticing, and understanding. In other words, CR activities attempt to raise learners' awareness through initially helping them attend to and subsequently notice formal features of language so as to convert them into knowledge which is the outcome of understanding (Sharwood-Smith, 1981).

The common practice of CR tasks is described by Ellis (2010) as follows:

The 'attempt to *isolate* a specific linguistic feature for focused attention'; from the wealth of language data to which learners are exposed, we identify particular features and draw the learner's attention specifically to these.

The provision of '*data* which illustrate the targeted feature'; it is our contention that this data should as far as possible be drawn from texts, both spoken and written, which learners have already processed for meaning, and that as far as possible those texts should have been produced for a

communicative purpose, not simply to illustrate features of the language.

The requirement that learners ‘utilize *intellectual effort*’ to understand the targeted feature; there is a deliberate attempt to involve the learner in hypothesizing about the data and to encourage hypothesis testing (p. 6).

According to Schmidt (1990), learners engaged in consciousness-raising activities should be exposed to a body of text, written and spoken, which will illustrate for them the important linguistic features they are required to learn. Once an appropriate set of texts have been drawn up, it is time to design a series of communicative tasks which will obligate learners to process the texts for meaning, so that the texts become a part of the learners' learning experience (Ellis, 2003).

Despite the fact that CR activities could potentially serve to enhance language learning in various areas, they have, thus far, mainly been utilized to improve grammar instruction/learning (Rutherford, 1987; James, 1994; Thornbury, 1999; Mohamed, 2004). A few research studies have, nevertheless, aimed at making use consciousness-raising activities in language learning areas other than grammar. Walsh (2005), for instance, employed CR activities for a writing class- more specifically, to raise his learners' awareness of cohesion and subsequently to instruct them on writing more cohesive texts. In a similar study, Sa-ngiamwibool (2007) intended to examine the effects of consciousness-raising instruction on Thai students' writing achievement.

Back to the issue of the significance of the mechanics of writing and the dearth of research studies in this area, especially with respect to the employment of consciousness-raising activities, the present study attempted to answer the following questions:

Q1: Is there any statistically significant difference between the use of the mechanics of writing by the participants engaged in consciousness-raising activities and that by the participants in the control group?

Q2: Does the use of punctuation marks in writing of the participants engaged in consciousness-raising activities differ statistically significantly on the pre-test and the post-test?

Q3: Does the use of capitalization in writing of the participants engaged in consciousness-raising activities differ statistically significantly on the pre-test and the post-test?

Q4: Does the spelling of words in writing of the participants engaged in consciousness-raising activities differ statistically significantly on the pre-test and the post-test?

Accordingly, the following research hypotheses were stated:

H₀(1): There is no statistically significant difference between the use of the mechanics of writing by the participants engaged in consciousness-raising activities and that by the participants in the control group.

H₀(2): The use of punctuation marks in writing of the participants engaged in consciousness-raising activities does not differ statistically significantly on the pre-test and the post-test.

H₀(3): The use of capitalization in writing of the participants engaged in consciousness-raising activities does not differ statistically significantly on the pre-test and the post-test.

H₀(4): The spelling of words in writing of the participants engaged in consciousness-raising activities does not differ statistically significantly on the pre-test and the post-test.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The participants of the study were selected from among early elementary EFL learners studying at one of the branches of Kish Institute of Science and Technology. They varied in age from 16 to 35 years with an average of 22. The type of sampling employed in the study was cluster sampling, since the unit of selection did not involve individuals, but a group of individuals being selected from larger groups, including all elementary EFL learners, studying in all branches of the institute, to smaller ones. The whole selected sample included 113 elementary EFL male learners. Following the administration of the homogeneity test, those learners whose scores were within one standard deviation above and below the mean score were selected as the eligible participants of the study. As the result of this procedure, 62 students were included in the study. They took part in two separate groups: one taken as the experimental group (EG) consisting of 30 students and the other, the control group (CG), comprising 32 students.

2.2. Instruments

The instruments utilized in the present study included (1) a validated standardized test of language proficiency- namely, Key English Test (KET), as a means of homogenizing the participants with respect to their level of language proficiency, and (2) two one-paragraph expository compositions of about 100 words each, one serving as the pre-test and the other as the post-test.

Homogeneity Test: The Key English Test is planned, prepared and validated by Cambridge ESOL Examinations Centre, thereby enjoying high degrees of reliability, validity, and practicality.

The test is composed of two papers, the first of which is titled Reading & Writing and the second one Listening. The whole test consists of 81 questions with the first paper containing 56 questions, and paper 2 being composed of 25 questions, with a time allocation of 70 and 30 minutes for each paper, respectively.

Written English Test: In the course of the study, the participants were assigned to write one-paragraph expository compositions of about 100 words each, on topics which were selected from the list of topics introduced in *The Teacher's Resource Book of Total English* (2005), published by Longman, Pearson.

In total, 12 topics were assigned, two of which served as the pre-test and the post-test topics which the participants were required to write on in class and with a time limit of 25 minutes. In order for the results to be comparable, the testing environment and the test rubrics were made uniform for both groups. The remaining 10 were the out-of-class composition topics, in response to which the participants in both groups wrote their expository paragraphs, under no time limit. The difference between the groups lied in the consciousness-raising activities that the EG received throughout the study.

Scoring: Due to the nature of the mechanics of writing, the error-count method was utilized as the scoring procedure. The error-count method, also known as the mechanical accuracy, is reported to be the most objective of all methods of scoring writing compositions (Heaton, 1988). Since the relative importance of the components of the writing mechanics- that is, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, is considered equal, the method is highly objective.

The procedure consisted of counting the errors made- i.e., errors relating to punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, and finally deducting the number from 120. In other words, each and every pre-test and post-test writing was marked three times using the error-count method; the markings focused on the writing mechanics components. Thus, the first marking had as its aim the deduction of marks, out of a whole 40, in accordance with the number of misuse of punctuation marks; subsequently, the second and third markings awarded scores to the same writing regarding the use of capitalization and spelling, once again deducting one mark for every error made, but this time with respect to capitalization and spelling, respectively. Therefore, the outcome of the three markings was three independent scores each of which

relating to punctuation, capitalization, or spelling. Further, to arrive at the score indicating performance on the use of the mechanics of writing, the three scores were added up, the result of which was a score out of 120.

2.3. Procedure

The participants of the study were selected from among elementary EFL learners studying at one of the branches of Kish Institute of Science and Technology. The classes under study met 10-hour sessions a week for a total of 9 weeks - 42 sessions on the whole. In total, 40 sessions were devoted to the treatment, since the first and final sessions were taken to administer the pre-test and the post-test. Moreover, the whole selected sample included 113 early elementary EFL male learners. In the first session of the class, all the participants took the proficiency test as the homogeneity test. Following the administration of the homogeneity test, those learners whose scores were within one standard deviation above and below the mean score were selected as the eligible participants of the study. As the result of this procedure, 62 students were included in the study.

The objective of the course was to provide the students with a balanced mix of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and skills work including writing. The writing work done during class time principally revolved around parallel writing- the researcher asked the learners to look at a paragraph, and then having discussed its main features, they were required to write their own similar paragraphs. On the whole, and apart from the pre-test and post-test writing, the participants wrote ten expository paragraphs on the topics proposed by the course book- i.e., Total English, Elementary.

The EG, in addition, was provided with consciousness-raising activities accompanied by enhanced input. Following what Ellis (1993) proposed as the characteristics of CR activities, and what Willis and Willis (1996) put forward regarding the provision of data through texts, the researcher mainly used the very same course book as the basic text for conducting CR activities. To supplement the texts, however, a number of authentic texts with real-life language use were selected. Upon the selection of appropriate texts, considering the language level of the EG participants, CR activities of various types were designed in keeping with Willis and Willis (1996). These activity types took either of the following forms:

Identify/consolidate

Classify (semantic; structural)

Hypothesis building/checking

Cross-language exploration

Reconstruction/deconstruction

Recall

Reference training

The abovementioned CR activity types were integrated within the main activities of the EG class. In the majority of activities, all the three components of the writing mechanics were worked on. To make the components in the texts more noticeable, a strategy similar to input enhancement was made use of; font color changes, bold fonts, italics, and underscoring or circling the components, for instance, were utilized to make key areas of information more obvious. Since all the CR activities were integrated within usual class activities, there was no need to extend the time period of the EG classes.

2.4. Data Analysis

The following statistical procedures were adopted to analyze the results of the tests. Firstly, to determine if there was any difference between the performance of the participants in the EG and the CG on the homogeneity test- KET, an ANOVA F-test was run. Secondly, to determine the difference between the mean scores of the EG and the CG on the pre-test as well as the post-test, two independent t-tests were run. The first t-test was run to arrive at the difference between the mean scores of the participants in the EG and those of the CG participants in the pre-test; the same t-test was run for the post-test as well. Further, to see if there was any difference between the performance of the participants on the three components of the writing mechanics in the pre-test and post-test, a paired t-test was run on the mean scores. Indeed, this paired t-test was run taking the independent scores on the three components of the writing mechanics as the comparison criterion. Next, true main gains were computed on the components of the pre-test and post-test to determine any statistically significant difference between the gains of the EG. Finally, an ANOVA F-test was run on the mean scores of the participants considering the components of the post-test.

3. Results and Discussion

To determine the existence of any statistically significant difference between the language proficiency levels of the EG and CG participants, on the basis of their mean scores on the Key English Test- homogeneity test, an ANOVA F-test was run. Table 1 shows the result of the F-test.

Table 1 EG and CG Homogeneity Test Means, Variance, etc.

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	N
EG	67.26	8.19	67.08	30
CG	68.04	8.25	68.06	32

The result of the F-test comparison is indicated in Table 2.

Table 2 F-test Result: EG and CG Mean Scores Comparisons

F_{observed}	Df	F_{critical}
1.76	1 & 60	4.00

As Table 2 indicates, at the 0.05 level of significance and at 1 and 60 degrees of freedom, the F_{observed} value was 1.76. Since this was lower than the critical value of F, the statistical test proved that there was no statistically significant difference between the proficiency levels of the EG and CG participants at the beginning of the study.

Following this, the means of the scores of EG and CG on the pre-test were compared to determine if they were the same or different before the study began. (See Table 3).

Table 3 EG and CG Mean Scores Difference on Pre-test

Mean Scores Difference	EG	CG	df	T_{observed}	T_{critical}
between EG and CG in Pre-test	84.35	87.01	1 & 60	1.14	2.00

As can be seen in Table 3, at the 0.05 level of significance and at 1 and 60 degrees of freedom, there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups before the study began and the two groups started with the same proficiency level-considering the use of the components of the mechanics of writing.

Table 4 shows the result of the independent t-test for the performance of the two groups on the post-test.

Table 4 EG and CG Mean Scores Difference on Post-test

Mean Scores Difference	EG	CG	df	T_{observed}	T_{critical}
between EG and CG in Post-test	104.15	93.12	1 & 60	4.36	2.00

As Table 4 indicates, the T_{observed} value for the performance of the two groups on the post-test was 4.36 which, at 1 and 60 degrees of freedom, was greater than the critical value of T

at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, it is concluded that EG significantly performed better than CG in the post-test. In other words, the participants in the experimental group who had regular practice with consciousness-raising activities made more progress in their use of the mechanics of writing. Since the two groups of participants had almost the same classes during the time interval between the pre-test and post-test, it can be claimed that the difference in their performance on the post-test was due to the fact that the experimental group had practice with CR activities.

In order to determine how much progress each group had made in the time interval between the pre- and post-test, first descriptive statistics and next a matched t-test was run. Table 5 shows descriptive statistics for the results of the pre-test and post-test for the CG.

Table 5 Results of Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test for CG

Statistics	Pre-test				Post-test			
	Whole Test	Punctuation	Capitalization	Spelling	Whole Test	Punctuation	Capitalization	Spelling
K	120	40	40	40	120	40	40	40
X	87.01	32.12	27.54	27.35	93.12	33.26	27.25	32.61
SD	17.53	4.32	7.43	9.12	18.01	5.58	7.92	8.67
Range	57 (102-45)	11 (36-25)	17 (35-18)	19 (37-18)	59 (105-46)	14 (37-23)	18 (36-18)	17 (37-20)
Skewness	0.45	0.32	-0.1	0.33	0.68	0.41	-0.08	0.39
Kurtosis	-0.89	-0.41	-0.12	-0.23	-0.65	0.30	-0.10	-0.11

As the table indicates, the mean score of the pre-test for the CG was 87.01, and that of the post-test was 93.12. The standard deviation for the pre-test was 17.53, and that of the post-test 18.01. Moreover, the range of the scores of the pre-test was 57, while that of the post-test was 59. In addition, the distribution of scores of both the pre-test and post-test was positively skewed, the latter was more positively skewed though (0.45 versus 0.68). Finally, the scores distribution obtained from both tests was almost flat (-0.89 and -0.69). In regard to the components of the pre-test and the post-test, apart from capitalization, in the two other cases the means of the components of the post-test revealed some increase in

comparison with the pre-test. Considering punctuation, for instance, the mean score for the pre-test was 32.12 and that of the post-test 33.26. Regarding spelling, the mean score of the post-test was 32.61, whereas that of the pre-test was 27.35.

With respect to the standard deviation, no significant difference between the components of the two tests could be observed. The same holds true taking account of the range of the scores of the different components of the pre- and post-tests. Considering the scores distribution on the components of the two tests, except for capitalization whose distribution of scores was negatively skewed in both the pre- and post-tests (-0.1 and -0.08, respectively), the other two components were positively skewed. This indicates that in both tests capitalization, as one of the components of the mechanics of writing, had been the least challenging. Lastly, the values of kurtosis for different components of the tests, aside from capitalization, were significantly different. That is, concerning punctuation, for instance, as the table clearly shows, the scores distribution in the pre-test was flat and that of the post-test was rather peaked (-0.41 and 0.3, respectively). In regard to spelling, however, in both the pre-test and the post-test the distribution of the scores was flat- the degree of peakedness was largely different. In the pre-test, the distribution of scores was flatter, with the value of kurtosis being -0.23, than that in the post-test with a kurtosis value of -0.11.

Table 6 Difference between Mean Scores of Pre-test and Post-test and their Components for CG

	Pre- and Post- tests	Punctuation	Capitalization	Spelling	Pre-and Post-tests excluding Spelling
Difference between the Mean Scores	-6.11 *	-1.14	0.29	-5.26*	-1.68

Note. * represents significant difference at 0.05 significance level.

As Table 6 shows, there was a statistically significant difference between the results of the pre-test and post-test for the CG. With regard to the components of the two tests, however, it can be observed that, except for spelling, there was no statistically significant difference between the results of the two tests. Therefore, to see whether the significant difference between the tests results was due to spelling, a t-test was run between the two tests excluding

this component. As it is indicated in the table, in this case, the tests results did not statistically significantly differ from one another.

The same statistical procedures were taken for the EG, the results of which were quite different in this case. Following is Table 6 which indicates descriptive statistics for the results of the pre-test and post-test for the EG.

Table 7 Results of Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test for EG

	Pre-test				Post-test			
Statistics	Whole Test	Punctuation	Capitalization	Spelling	Whole Test	Punctuation	Capitalization	Spelling
K	120	40	40	40	120	40	40	40
X	84.35	30.31	26.14	27.90	104.15	35.16	37.25	31.74
SD	19.12	5.29	7.19	8.46	14.11	4.48	6.13	7.01
Range	65 (106-41)	14 (37-23)	20 (36-16)	19 (35-16)	37 (109-72)	10 (37-27)	12 (38-26)	15 (38-23)
Skewness	-1.32	-0.91	0.10	-0.03	-0.68	-0.41	-0.08	-0.39
Kurtosis	3.54	1.47	0.53	-0.41	1.18	0.59	1.10	0.51

As can be observed in this table, the mean score for the pre-test was 84.35, while that of the post-test was 104.15. Apparently, there was a relatively large difference between the standard deviation of the two tests: 19.12 in the pre-test and 14.11 in the case of the post-test. This indicates that the participants performed more homogeneously on the post-test. This claim can be supported taking into account the difference between the range of the scores on the two tests (65 for the pre-test and 37 for the post-test). Moreover, the scores distribution on the pre- and post-tests was negatively skewed (-1.32 and -0.68), that of the post-test tended to be more normal. Furthermore, the distribution of the scores of both tests was peaked (3.54 and 1.18). That of the post-test, nevertheless, seemed to be much closer to a normal distribution.

With respect to the components of the two tests, an increase in the means in all the cases can be observed. The most considerable increase, however, can be seen in the case of capitalization- i.e., from 26.14 to 37.25. On the other hand, regarding the standard deviation, a relative decrease in all the cases can be seen. Taking account of the scores range, for all the

components in question the range has decreased, revealing the fact that the participants in the EG became more homogeneous, hence a more homogeneous performance on the components.

In regard to skewness, fairly large differences can be observed between the components of the two tests. In the case of punctuation, whereas the scores distribution of both tests was negatively skewed (-0.91 in the pre-test and -0.41 in the post-test), that of the post test was closer to the normal distribution. In the case of capitalization, the difference was more striking. In other words, while the distribution of the scores in the pre-test was positively skewed (0.10), that of the post-test showed negative skewness (-0.08), pointing to the fact that the latter had been less challenging for the participants. Similarly, considering spelling, it can be observed that the scores distribution tended to be more negatively skewed in the post-test. Whereas, the distribution of the scores in the pre-test was very close to the distribution of the normal curve (-0.03), it was rather negatively skewed in the post-test (-.39).

With respect to the peakedness of the scores distribution, spelling was the only component of the two tests which indicated a difference. In other words, whereas the distribution of the scores in the pre-test was flat (-0.41), it became quite peaked (0.51) in the post-test. This revealed the fact that the scores on the post-test had been much closer to the mean score. In the case of the other components- punctuation and capitalization, the peakedness remained quite stable in spite of slight changes in degree.

Table 8 Difference between Mean Scores of Pre-test and Post-test and their Components for EG

	Pre- and Post-tests	Punctuation	Capitalization	Spelling
Difference between the Mean Scores	-19.80 *	-4.85 *	-11.11 *	-3.84 *

As the table indicates, there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores on the two tests and all the three components. Since the means of the participants in all the components showed an increase from the pre-test to the post-test, it can be claimed that the inclusion of and practice with consciousness-raising activities had a positive effect on the use of the mechanics of writing in the EG, in comparison with the results of the tests done by the CG where an improvement can only be observed in spelling. The reason for the improvement in both cases probably lies in the fact that since the participants were early intermediate learners, a great deal of time in both groups was spent on reading and writing. Thus, in the

course of the study, the participants made rather equal progress in spelling which was the directly focused upon during reading and writing skills work.

Investigation of Null Hypothesis 1. As it was previously indicated in Table 3, at the 0.05 level of significance and at 1 and 60 degrees of freedom, there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups before the study began and the two groups started with the same proficiency level- considering the use of the components of the mechanics of writing. It was further shown, in Table 4, that the T-observed value for the performance of the two groups on the post-test was 4.36 which, at 1 and 60 degrees of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance, was greater than the critical value of T. It can, consequently, be maintained that the EG, that was provided with CR activities to practice the use of the mechanics of writing, performed better on the post-test than the CG. This finding is against the claim of Null Hypothesis 1, hence the rejection of this hypothesis.

Finally, to investigate the other three null hypotheses and to see if there was any difference between the mean gains of the participants in the EG on different components, an ANOVA F-test was run. The results shown in Table 9 indicate the existence of statistically significant difference between the mean gains obtained on different components of the test.

Table 9 ANOVA test for different components of the post-test for the EG

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F _{ratio}	P
Between Groups	1697.46	2	848.73	17.61	.000
Within Groups	2892.16	60	48.20	---	---
Total	4589.62	62	---	---	---

Since the ANOVA F-test indicated significance, there apparently existed a difference somewhere among the means, but it was not justifiable to say that any particular comparison was significant. To localize all possible differences existing among the individual treatment means, Kinnear and Gray (1997) emphasize that further analysis is necessary. A Scheffé's test was therefore run to pinpoint the exact sources of the differences. The results derived from the post-hoc Scheffé's test are shown in Table 10.

Table 10 Post-hoc Scheffé's test for Components of Post-test for EG

Mean Gains		Spelling	Punctuation	Capitalization
3.84	Spelling			
4.85	Punctuation	*		
11.11	Capitalization	*		

The results of the post-hoc scheffé 's test are presented in Table 10. As can be seen, except for punctuation and capitalization on the one hand and spelling on the other, the mean gains on all other components showed significant differences. In other words, there was a significant difference between the mean gain of the participants on punctuation and spelling. Regarding capitalization and spelling, the same fact holds true. Therefore, since the mean gain in capitalization and punctuation was larger than spelling, it can be claimed that the inclusion of CR activities in the EG helped improve the participants' use of capitalization and punctuation more than spelling.

Investigation of Null Hypothesis 2. Taking into consideration the mean scores on the use of punctuation marks of the EG on the pre-test and on the post-test, i.e., 30.31 and 35.16, respectively, and based upon the post-hoc scheffé 's test, it can be observed that there was a statistically significant difference between the two sets of scores. This finding was not in conformity with the claim of Null Hypothesis 1. This hypothesis was therefore statistically rejected.

Investigation of Null Hypothesis 3. According to the results of the post-hoc Scheffé 's test, and considering the mean scores on the use of capitalization of the EG on the pre-test and on the post-test, i.e., 26.14 and 37.25, respectively, Null Hypothesis 3 was statistically rejected, since the mean scores of the participants in the EG differed statistically significantly on the pre-test and the post-test.

Investigation of Null Hypothesis 4. As the third comparison of the Scheffé 's test indicates, the difference between the post-test mean score of the participants in the EG- 31.74, and that of the pre-test, i.e., 27.90, proved to be statistically significant. This finding was against the claim of Null Hypothesis 3, hence the rejection of this hypothesis.

5. Conclusions

The results of the study support the claim that the employment of CR activities can facilitate to a considerable extent the learning of the formal features of language (Robinson, 1995).

Learning is to consciously attend to and notice specific aspects of the target language (Schmidt, 1993). More specifically, these findings echo, to some extent, the earlier findings of Sa-ngiamwibool (2007) who proposed that consciousness-raising instructions could lead to better achievements in writing. The results of this study are also in line with those of Walsh (2010) who maintained that the fact of the teacher providing practice for learners through CR activities and input enhancement, and thus being able to draw their attention towards cohesion- as a formal feature of language, potentially resulted in a better ability to write more cohesive texts.

On the other hand, the results of this study contradict the findings of Fotos and Ellis (1991) and Fotos (1993) in that they found that there was little difference between the traditionally instructed group and those students who received practice with CR activities. Similarly, the results of the present study run counter to those of Alanen (1995) who concluded that the presence of formal instruction with explicit rule presentation enhanced learning and that textual enhancement could not lead to effective learning. Nevertheless, with respect to the input provided through CR activities, the findings of the present study is consonant with those of Doughty (1991), Crookes (1989), and Vanpatten (1996) in that they similarly indicated that the development of input-processing skills and directing this input processing towards the target language was possible. Vanpatten (1996) further contended that there was a compatibility between the processing approach and clear pedagogic goals and that training language learners in effective processing would help them better notice relevant properties of the input, hence a better understanding of them.

In light of the results of the present study, a number of pedagogical implications were arrived at and are briefly discussed below. First and foremost, the findings of this study indicated the plausibility of the use of consciousness-raising activities and their profound effects on an area of language learning other than grammar instruction- the mechanics of writing. Thus, it is highly recommended that the employment of CR activities/instructions be extended to other language learning areas, such as skills work, vocabulary learning, and pronunciation practice. Furthermore, the results of the study proved the effectiveness of CR activities on rendering language learners more consciously aware of the mechanics of writing, specifically, and the whole context of language learning, in general. It follows that the EG participants would probably be more cognizant of the formal features of language and would, in all likelihood, take advantage of this cognizance to master the correct use of such features- be it grammar or any other feature of language. Moreover, it can be claimed, based on the observation of the EG participants in the course of the study, CR activities could aid

learners in becoming more independent, hence, the occurrence of more autonomous and consequently meaningful learning.

Finally, owing to the limitations imposed upon the present study, future research studies may investigate the effectiveness of CR activities/instructions on other language learning areas or on the other components of writing. These studies may be conducted with participants of the opposite sex- female learners, or may be carried out with participants within two different age ranges- young learners and adult learners. The language level of the participants could as well be taken into account- that is, to investigate whether CR activities tend to be more effective at a certain level of language proficiency.

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Title

The Impact of Language-based and Content-based Pre-tasks on Listening Comprehension: A Case of Iranian EFL Listeners

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Abstract

This article aimed for more profound investigation on the roles of content-based and language-based pre-tasks on the Iranian English language learners' listening comprehension. For this purpose, 65 pre-intermediate students were selected and divided up into three groups, one control and two experimental groups. The two experimental groups made benefit from pre-planning while the control group was led directly to the main task. The language-based group pre-planned their tasks linguistically with vocabulary and language skill in center whereas the content-based group removed possible comprehension problems via pre-planning on the themes of the tasks. The post-test revealed an improvement as a result of pre-planning with greater positive effect of content-based pre-planning. Findings of this study suggested that personal knowledge, background knowledge, and topic familiarity require less cognitive capacity and compensate for low language proficiency; therefore, it allows for more comprehension.

Keywords: Task pre-planning, Content-based pre-task, Language-based pre-task, listening comprehension, Content schemata, Language schemata, Top-down processing.

1. Introduction

New insights into language learning have led to the development of task-based approaches which aim to provide an involvement to promote learners' natural language learning processes. Skehan (1996, p.40) introduces task-based instruction (TBI) as one of the approaches in which meaning is primary and has "considerable appeal in terms of authenticity and linkage with acquisition accounts". Nunan (1999, p.24) defines a task-based syllabus as "an approach to the design of language courses in which the point of departure is not an ordered list of linguistic items, but a collection of tasks".

Priority of task-based language teaching in recent years has made some endeavors towards the definition of tasks. Tasks are promoters towards more focus on meaning or content over focus on form by giving learners opportunities to interact with language rather than just manipulate form to learn it. A task has a real-world relationship that reflects communicative nature of task in which it regains its dominancy in meaning representation (Skehan, 1996, p.38). Task in Cameron's (1997, p.346) view point is "a classroom event that has coherence and unity with a clear beginning and an end, in which learners take an active role".

Tin (2003, p.242) classifies tasks in terms of 'divergent' and 'convergent'. He defines 'convergent tasks' as tasks which have only one acceptable outcome, and 'divergent tasks' are those with more than one possible outcome; in 'convergent tasks', learners need to achieve a single goal but learners performing 'divergent tasks' may hold their contrasting opinions even after listening to other participants' opinions. Littlewood (2004, p.321) puts tasks into two dimensions as focus on form and focus on meaning. However, he suggests such dimensionality as a dichotomy, the difference of task operation with the degree that each stresses on.

Engaging in activities which reduce cognitive load of tasks will lower task difficulty; in this respect, Ellis (2003, p.245) offers four ways of completing a task with lowered difficulty: 1) task repetition that supports learners to focus on a task similar to the one they will perform in the implementation phase 2) model observation which shows learners how to handle the tasks 3) non-task preparation designed to make learners familiar with the task performance and 4) strategic planning of the main task.

Nunn (2006, p. 21) recalls Richards' urge of centralization of pre-teaching (pre-planning) of linguistic forms as a beneficial procedure in TBI (Task-based Instruction). He claims that the complexity of a task is reduced by prediction; moreover, it allows learners to deeply get insight into form.

Pre-planning is known as an explicit interpretation of a task to raise learners' consciousness by focusing on suggested areas, and this saliency is acquired when our input during pre-steps of task performance is enhanced through 1) frequent and / or 2) salient input provided (Ellis, 2003, p.158). As a matter of fact, pre-tasks represent the nature of tasks, therefore, being acquainted with types of tasks is a great help.

When listening is pivotal in studies, language processing takes the floor as well; in this regard, top-down and bottom-up processing manifest on their existence. Ellis (2003, p.42) cites Richards (1990) that "listening involves processing at a variety of levels, including both the activation of schemata and constituent identification". Schematic information is activated while concentration is developed through selective attention, motivation and readiness; orientation brings focus of attention whether on meaning or on form (Ellis, 2003, p.48). To create enough and realistic orientation, the most modification concerns task design.

Pre-planning stimulates the concentration and enough attention results in accurate interactive information processing. Pre-tasks act as modifiers to guide listeners to know where to focus their attention by presenting them guided strategies to remove deficit performance.

The purpose of this study is to maneuver upon the kinds of pre-planning which are considered as form-focused and content-focused on the comprehensibility of listening performance. The study is looking for how activation of background knowledge is applied through these two kinds of pre-planned tasks. For input to be sufficiently comprehensible to learners, teachers are required to get control over the materials, either in language or meaning (content). The research assumes pre-planned tasks as vital as to activate or recreate knowledge in hand toward learners' better perception, but what kind of pre-planned tasks makes response to the question will be verified throughout this study.

2. Review of literature

2.1. Task-based instruction

Recent changes in language learning centering on communicative language ability have created new branches of study. As argued by researches such as Ellis (2000, p. 195) and Skehan (1996, p.38) the biggest current change in language learning was the concentration applied on meaning rather than language. Ellis (2003, pp. 9-10) and Skehan (1996, p.38) consider tasks as the meaning providers, which can build the reality of language use. In fact, Bygates (1999, p.187) claims that task-based instruction reflects the idea that tasks are means

of leading students' abilities towards language use rather than focusing them onto the acquisition of new linguistic items. Clearly, TBI is a combination of teaching communication and language form.

TBI is fully acceptable in settings where sufficient exposure to native language occurs. Partial need to such an approach is advocated for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) situations as Swan (2005, p.392) argues that TBI is an obvious value of those learners who do not find their needs in new input. Sensitivity to the appearance of tasks as a base of second language learning has provoked the idea that TBI is pedagogically designed to promote the sense of reality in language use; in other words tasks are the adaptation of classroom and real life.

Generally speaking, the main reason for task emergence is grounded in meaning primacy; in this vein, Skehan (1996, p.42) believes that tasks are endeavors towards lexical communication and strategic solution to the problems rather than letting learners focus their attention on the form. Ellis (2000, p.198), either, sees tasks as the external means by which we can influence the mental computations that learners make. It is extremely true if tasks are called cognition provokers by allowing learners to make their language demands fulfilled via language use.

Recognition of task demands is partly due to the cognitive ability of learners; it is the structure of the task, as Cameron (2001, pp.26-30) views it, which is available but the cognitive restructuring deals with the amount of support that the task brings about to ease the steps of performance. Task demands should be supported by learners' criteria, teacher's assistance, linguistically and non-linguistically, and task features. Tasks are loaded with prefabricated features and it is considered that learners should take their perceptions into task performance.

2.2. Task pre-planning

The role of planning in language use is not in doubt. Ellis (2005, p.317) asserts that planning is "a problem solving activity". Planning can impact on both content and learners' communication when performing a task and on their choice of language. Planning is theoretically strong enough to determine a place for its representation; it, in more depth, is designed to maximize the amount of attention required to highlight a specific feature or part. Setting planning in different time and situation raises distinction in planning use and its characteristics. Ellis (2005, p.3) has distinguished two principle types of tasks based planning on the ground when planning takes place, before or after the task performance or during the tasks which are respectively accounted for as 'pre-task' planning and 'within task' planning.

The crucial role of pre-planning contributes to the preparation and schema activation which is up brought in two general ways as Ellis (2003, p. 249) asserts, content-based and language-based pre-tasks.

- Content-based pre-tasks: Importance of 'content schema' in addition to 'prior knowledge' and 'level of proficiency' is considered vastly in Ming (1997, p.107). Content-based pre-tasks are assumed to implicitly activate the related required language as well as providing context and socio-cultural familiarity in order to enhance the outcome perfection.
- Language-based pre-tasks: Language-based pre-tasks are typically language-oriented in a way that intended forms are purposefully highlighted. The anticipation provided by such pre-tasks is central to explicit linguistic knowledge. Loewen (2003, pp.316-317) suggests that focus on form develops linguistic accuracy and creates conditions for restructuring inter-language. In fact, language-based pre-tasks make the language content of the task. In this regard, Ellis (2003, p.170) maintains that explicit knowledge may enable learners to make a form/meaning connection that is extremely centralized in language-based pre-tasks.

In fact, Robinson (1996, p.5) and Ellis (2003, p.149) propose that pre-planning and its distinctive types lower the memory load, ease the pressure and enhance the Pre-tasks allow learners to anticipate the language and the content required to accomplish the task. Ellis (2003) suggests that pre-tasks are effective when learners focus on the beneficial use of related strategies and tactics to complete the task (p.14). This ideal occasion is prepared by activating learners' noticing on the suggested meaning and/or form.

2.3. Listening comprehension

Listening comprehension has changed its passive place into an active process; it is known in pedagogy of today, as Vandergrift (1999, p.170) puts it, 'the highly integrated skill'. This shift has got its priority especially in EFL situations and the reasons for its growth is searched in the emphasis on the role of comprehensible input in language learning; moreover, listening is a start towards language development and its new roles have actively involved it in both language teaching and research.

Listeners comprehend a text in three ways by Ellis (2003, p. 41) as follows:

- 1) Interpretation in which lexical items recognition is triggered that activates schemata.
- 2) Prediction, which relies on the initial prediction.
- 3) Hypothesizing that involves further language processing of a text.

The second phase is broadly under emphasis in our study because it familiarizes learners with how to benefit from pre-designed sets of tasks to control their selective attention on the area, which hint their comprehension.

In the area of listening comprehension, tasks have always had “bottom-up” or “top-down” interpretation. Bottom-up is responsible for the process of decoding the sound. In top-down processing the process is that of reconstruction. The listener makes sense out of “prior knowledge of the context and situation” in which listening occurs (Nunan, 1997, p. 2). Today actual processing involved in receptive skills such as reading and listening is viewed to be an interactional one, which is based on the compensatory model of Stanovich (1980). Goh (2000) also supports interactive comprehension process by incorporating linguistic, socio-linguistic, and contextual knowledge that affect listening comprehension (p.56). Zhao (1997) defines a much wider boundary for listening comprehension factors; he regards the alternatives of syntax, change of lexis, presentative style, speech rate, listener's prior knowledge, and language proficiency the influencing factors on listening comprehension (p. 49)

Consequently, one of the main solutions to tackle the learners' difficulties in listening comprehension, as “the highly integrated skill” (Vandergrift, 1999, p.170), is the utility of pre-listening activities. Robinson, et al. (1995) show that learners' prediction is collaborating for successful listening. Pre-listening tasks are mostly strategy providers in nature; the value of pre-listening tasks lies in preparation of suitable time and behavior in terms of strategy use.

As tasks and their implications have been currently established in a broader sense of use, empirical studies may have different views on the amalgamation of tasks with different aspects of language learning and teaching. Among many studies with respect to task and its characteristics, a certain numbers of investigations put emphasis on pre-task planning, which more or less, supported pre-planning responsibility for lowering cognitive load, in task performance.

Foster and Skehan (1996) compared guided and unguided planning and they found a positive influence in this regard. Two phases were adopted for the planning. The first phase was the planning time. In the second phase, participants were guided how to use 10 minutes of the planning time. Related suggestions were in the form of attention driven to the anticipated language, discourse, and content that learners needed to perform the task. They mentioned pre-planning as an effective impact on general linguistic accuracy when planning was unguided rather than when it was guided.

Wigglesworth (1997) examined the performance of 107 adult ESL learners on five tasks, which were part of a test. The conditions in which candidates performed the tasks were planned and unplanned situations. She found no logical result into the signification of planned and unplanned conditions, but significant difference in the measures for complexity, accuracy, and fluency was reported especially in tasks with high cognitive load and in candidates with high proficiency. In her view, planning did not greatly affect the performance though some performers were assumed to take benefit from planning to improve their performances.

Tudor (1998) investigated the effects of two pre-reading formats, a text summary and a set of pre-questions. The experimental group was divided into three levels of proficiency, low, middle, and high. Findings in this research offered two main results: impact of proficiency level and the powerful impact of summary rather than use of pre-questions in comprehension enhancement.

Foster and Skehan (1999) showed that pre-task planning could have beneficial effects on task performance, as it leads to more fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Ortega (1999) studied pre-task planning and its effects on oral performance. Oral performance was divided into lexical/syntactic complexity in addition to the agreement use of noun-modifiers and article system in two planning and un-planning conditions. Planning condition was found superior to no-planning condition; on the other hand, the hypotheses regarding syntactic complexity and fluency were supported. Having time for planning was mentioned as an advantage. However, findings shed light on the impact of pre-planning for more accurate oral performance; in other words, focus on form is exclusively monitored with pre-planning and the time allocated towards planning phase.

Ellis and Yuan (2003) studied pre-planning and on-line planning in study on monologic oral production. They showed that pre-task planning enhances grammatical complexity, fluency and lexical variety in language in comparison to on-line planning which resulted in accuracy and in grammatical complexity; however, they showed that focus on the grammatical aspects of tasks deviates attention from content.

Following the results of the previous study, Ellis and Yuan (2004) studied planning variables on narrative writing at intermediate level. Findings suggested that pre-task planning influenced more fluency and syntactic variety whereas engagement in unpressured on-line planning ended up in more accuracy. The group with no planning lagged behind the use of opportunities to formulate and monitor their writings. That is, no-planning group's written

activities lacked sufficient fluency, complexity, and accuracy in comparison to the group involved in planning processes.

Sangarun (2005) investigated the specific foci of strategic planning on task-based oral production at intermediate level. Meaning pre-task (MP), form pre-task (FP), and meaning-form pre-task (MFP) conditions were examined to see the degree of fluency, accuracy, and complexity that each provides for oral performance. Findings suggested that strategic planning impacted accuracy and reduction of processing load during task performance. MP, FP, and MFP conditions influenced speech fluency for the instructive task, and FP condition affected greater fluency for the argumentative task. In brief, the study reported that MFP is more effective than minimal strategies in improvement of fluency, accuracy, and complexity.

Despite the plenty of studies on the value of pre-planning stage, the types of pre-planning have remained a less charted territory. Though in theory, content and language have principally been recognized as two main foci in pre-tasks, practices upon which we can draw evidence have not been enough. A need is felt in the realm of listening comprehension in order to see the significance of pre-planning stage. The above-mentioned studies have to a great extent focused on the oral production and written task. It seems listening comprehension has been underestimated in research on pre-planning. Therefore, research should also bring this into more consideration and investigation.

More specifically, this study, focusing on the pre-planning stage of listening comprehension, is striving to develop aspects of pre-setting listening comprehension tasks. It concentrates on how to organize pre-tasks to improve the comprehensibility of main listening tasks. As pre-planning might shed light on any specific dimension of task, this study draws on language-based and content-based pre-setting tasks. Studies attempted up to now have had a single eye on each issue separately. Most efforts have been carried out on form-focused specificity rather than content-bound pre-tasks before the main performance. What previous studies have failed to show is whether pre-tasks with language or content orientation have more significance. This study, therefore, aimed at finding out the effect of different pre-tasks types on listening comprehension tasks.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Participants in this study were 65 male and female students--5 males and 60 females-- with the average age of 19 to 23, majoring in English language teaching (A.A) at Islamic Azad

University of Ahvaz. Participants were selected on the basis of a paper-based simulated TOEFL test (Peterson, 2005) which assigned them into pre-intermediate proficiency level (Mean= 25.06, SD=7.41 on the scale of 80). None of them had ever been to an English speaking country, and their opportunity to use English for communication purposes outside the classroom had been little. They were divided randomly into three groups, about 22 students in each group. One of the groups was treated as the control group with no pre-planning stage, and the other groups as experimental. The group with language-based pre-tasks was reduced to 19 students with three absentees in the post-test. Similarly, two students in the content-based pre-task group did not put in an appearance in the final test; therefore, the number was reduced to 20. And finally out of 21 students in the control group, only 18 were present in the post-test. Gender was excluded from the research and was taken as a control variable; therefore, the researcher followed a stratified sampling to distribute the males into three groups each of which containing 2 males but necessarily the possibility of males' impact on the performance of other group members was exclusively mutual as gender was not considered an influential variable. In other words, participants were selected through tapping on the general proficiency of learners without gender being taken for granted.

3.2. Instruments

The first instrument was a simulated paper-based TOEFL proficiency test (Peterson, 2005) used to assign learners into suitable language levels. The test included eighty multiple choice items with 20 listening comprehension, 20 grammar, 20 vocabulary, and 20 reading comprehension items. The reliability of this test was calculated through KR-21(0.69). It is true that Listening comprehension was the basis of the study with specifications in the influence of pre- planning going round it but the rationale behind the utilization of such a test was grounded in the fact that the starting point leading to a logical basis of learners assignment into the study was the linguistic abilities that they were to put into actual performance, comprehension in out study. Furthermore, the pre-requisite to the scrutinisation of learners with the sufficient capability of language knowledge was rooted in the linguistic competence including grammar and vocabulary and on the other hand in the topical knowledge that was pragmatically crystallized. In order to carry this out, the specification of the test gave support to a paper-based TOEFL test framework to first assess the learners' grammar and vocabulary, second to measure the pragmatic competence; the test could give rise to the satisfying results.

Two kinds of planned pre-task activities were also utilized in this study, pre-task activities with language-based orientation (vocabulary and structure) and pre-task activities that

focused on the content knowledge (topic). Language-based pre-tasks were selected from *Developing Tactics for Listening 2* (Richards, 2004). In order to remain consistent in the pre-task stage, the same language-based pre-tasks were taken and manipulated for content orientation. To account for the consistency of the tasks, two experts in the field of applied linguistics also judged the activities and agreement was made on them.

As the study was grounded in the nature of pre-task utility, we will describe language-based and content-based pre-tasks below.

3.2.1. Language-based pre-tasks

These tasks, with vocabulary and structure orientations, were picked out with no serious modification. In fact, modification was to ease understanding and to make encouragement. During the performance of each language-based pre-task, learners were provided with unknown words and phrases included in the pre-tasks. It was assumed that the most difficulty which learners encounter while performing a task, primarily with language basis, is unfamiliar vocabulary items; therefore, language discoveries in language-based pre-tasks thoroughly were done through dictionary searching, fill-in-the-blank drills, and the like. By and large, what was crucially supposed to do in this regard was triggering bottom-up language processing.

3.2.2. Content-based pre-tasks

Majority of the textbooks designed for second/ foreign language learning have a linguistic orientation, that is, the activities that precede or proceed a particular task focus on the linguistic elements of the task while they dispense with the content of the task. This was a real obstacle in the way of accessing content-based pre-tasks. The purpose of content-based pre-tasks was to activate students' schemata through familiar, known information and background knowledge. To serve the issue, language orientation of the pre-tasks was manipulated into content-based orientation in order to activate top-down or world knowledge of the participants. This was served through focusing the students' attention on the themes of the pre-tasks.

3.2.3. Coder reliability

As the pre-tasks in this study required manipulation, especially content-based pre-tasks, modification of pre-tasks was consistent via judgment of two experts in the field who controlled the process of modification. Finally, the suitability of pre-tasks for the study was confirmed via the researcher, and the two other consultants. (See appendix for sample content-based and language-based pre-tasks)

3.3. Treatment

The groups were taught by the researcher in order to minimize possible difference in instruction, Time was carefully controlled, and therefore, the experimental groups spent the same amount of time practicing before the main tasks while the control group was engaged directly in the main task. The nature and content of the tasks for all the groups were exactly the same.

The treatment for each group took ten sessions (ninety minutes each session) from the start of the semester. Finally a listening comprehension post-test (Peterson, 2005), actually the listening portion of the pre-test, was administered to trace the progress of learners and the effectiveness of pre-setting tasks in the comprehension of listening tasks.

4. Results

In order to find out any possible difference made as the result of the treatment effect, scores obtained from the students' assessment in the post-test went under calculation and analysis via running an ANOVA. The ANOVA showed $F (6.79)$ at 0.05 level of significance, when P was smaller than 0.002 ($p. < 0.002$), which suggested that the existence of difference was due to the use of pre-tasks; in other words, pre-tasks, language-based and content-based, enhanced performance. Specifically defined, the difference borne by the treatment found its place amongst pre-task users whose superiority over the control group was due to pre-tasks utilization. Table.1 depicts the ANOVA related to the treatment effect on the groups

Table.1 ANOVA on the groups' listening comprehension performance

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	85.937	2	42.969	6.769	0.002
Within Groups	341.431	54	6.323		

A multiple comparison was, further, used between the means. Tukey test demonstrated the mean differences, which highlighted the location of the difference and determined the more effective pre-tasks. Statistical findings revealed that with 2.27 of mean difference at the 0.05 level of significance, content-based performers outperformed language-based group ($p. < 0.018$). The superiority of content-based group could be described as a result of the kind of

pre-task that they put in to use. Underperformance of the control group in comparison to the content-based group showed up when the mean difference of those two groups at 0.05 level of significance was 2.80 that defined better performance of students in content-based group ($p < 0.003$). Statistically observed, the content-based group was the location of difference. In other words, the pre-tasks, mainly based on content, affected the performance of their users. High mean difference between content-based group in comparison to the other two groups supported the significant effect of content-based pre-tasks.

The group that made benefit from language-based pre-tasks reported no significant difference in their performance to the control group with the mean difference of 0.52. The results suggested that language pre-tasks made no significant difference as when no pre-task was used for the students in the control group. Table 2 illustrates the *Multiple Comparisons* of the three groups under study.

Table.2 Tukey test for a Multiple Comparison between means

(I) group	(J) group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
content-based	language-based	2.2763*	0.80556	0.018
	control group	2.8056*	0.81695	0.003
language-based	content-based	-2.2763*	0.80556	0.018
	control group	0.5292	0.82707	0.779
control group	content-based	-2.8056*	0.81695	0.003
	language-based	-0.5292	0.82707	0.799

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level of sig.

The distinctive mean difference between content-based and language-based groups illustrated that participants of content-based group outperformed the students in language-based group, which confirmed that the nature of content-based pre-task activities caused the difference.

The mean difference calculated for language-based and content-based group show $p < 0.018$; on the other hand, content-based and control groups depicted their difference with mean difference of $p < 0.003$, all at $p = 0.05$, which leads us to attribute the difference to the content-based pre-tasks.

The effect of language-based pre-tasks in comparison to no pre-task use was defined with 0.52, $p < 0.77$ at the 0.05 level of significance that gave rise to the position of language-based pre-tasks relative to the control group, that is, when no pre-task is used. Generally speaking, the results showed that the content-based group performed better than language-based and control groups.

Results of the present study did not support those results obtained by Foster and Skehan (1999) and Sangarun (2005) that there is no effective superiority of content-based pre-tasks in task performance at inter-mediate level. One reason may lie in the fact that subjects in the present study were lower intermediate and the difference stems from the tendency of language learners at different levels of proficiency.

5. Discussion

The results clearly illustrated that in general pre-tasks improve listening comprehension; in other words, reliance on pre-tasks can guarantee better performance in listening comprehension. Vandergrift (2003) claims that pre-tasks are opportunities that teacher gives students to provoke the “conscious knowledge of the topic, knowledge of the type of text, and any relevant cultural information” (p.489). Moreover, pre-task is one of the task requirements which is argued to draw attention, and selective attention helps pick up related items which facilitate comprehension (Foster and Skehan 1999, Tudor, 1998, Ortega 1999, Ellis and Yuan, 2003, and Sangarun, 2005) among others.

Mean comparisons proved content-based pre-tasks to be of more value. This might imply that the content-based group relied on their background knowledge of content through content-based pre-tasks. Gass, Mackey, Torres, and Garcia (1999) emphasized the familiarity of content. Urwin (1996) reconsiders that linguistic knowledge is not the only criterion that keeps on comprehension, but background knowledge and the ability to evoke it is of concern.

In line with the results of the present study, Carrel (1987) showed that content schemata establish a crucial place in comparison to formal schemata. Sadeghi and Zare (2006) support the significant role of background knowledge to the consistent listening comprehension, and they suggest pre-listening exercises and advance organizers in order to establish background knowledge, for existing knowledge is activated in relation to the triggered background knowledge. Tuan and Neomy (2007) stressed the need for more attention to content rather than language. Vandergrift (2003) asserts that less-skilled listeners appear to translate by relying too much on bottom-up processing in listening (p.485).

The key factors to the language-based group incapability in listening improvement based on language-based pre-tasks treatment can be classified as follows. One of the basic pre-task models that the language-based group carried out was of dictionary use, in other words, dictionary discoveries and some similar activities were involved in pre-task with language basis. It is true that using dictionary is one of the vocabulary learning strategies and in a pedago-psychological point of view, dictionary discovery activities strengthen learner independence, but this is the surface level of understanding. Another crucial assumption is that the learnt vocabulary would fit the world, that is, the importance of the meaning, the related grammatical points triggered via using vocabulary, and the production to enhance the word's mental stabilization are required. Although the language-based group had the chance to use the aural and the kinesthetic techniques through, for instance, mimicking actions and phrases, however, it was an immediate technique not a complete understanding of words as a whole. Passive reception made the students of this group restricted word retrievers and did not guarantee later word recognition and use.

Another point to the language-based group's failure was that they had no choice to convert the received vocabulary items into production. In reverse, the content-based group was treated mnemonically. The students in this group made advantage from the opportunities of practicing the needed vocabulary items that were related to the topics and the organized theme categories. Production and practice activated the global vocabulary knowledge of the content-based group and gave rise to refining and understanding of the items. In other words, weak listening comprehension was compensated by strength of content.

Briefly, the results, once again establish the support for the priority of the top-down view of processing. Although the students who utilized language-based pre-tasks were superior to students with no pre-task opportunity, too much dependence on vocabulary definition and straight meaning resulted in a poor performance.

Newton (2001) suggests three pre-task options for developing comprehension: 1) Predicting, 2) Cooperative dictionary research, and 3) Words and definitions (p.30). But this study showed that over reliance on dictionary research and word definition caused under-performance of the language-based group. Dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary demands strategies which sufficiently take learners beyond their static meaning knowledge towards a dynamic one. The problem that language-based group encountered was a text-bounded group in which bottom-up processing was in center.

On the contrary, the content-based group in this study guessed the whole meaning by concentrating on the related clues rather than language clues to evoke the meaning, and in

cases they filled the gap of unknown vocabulary items or grammar spots using their world knowledge; whereas, language-based group's dependence on anticipated language parts made them fall back on how to browse the meaning out of raw, unprocessed items; in other words, the key issue upon which the content-based group outperformed the language-based group was grounded by Willis (1981 as cited in Yagang, 1993) that guessing unknown words and phrases, using one's own knowledge enhances comprehension. Broadly speaking, the content-based group offered a more active, flexible process to listening as Goh (2002, p.197) recommends; content anticipation helps for quicker input processing.

Out performance of the content-based group lends support to another fact that the language-based group was mostly involved in controlled processing as it was demanded so; conversely, the content-based group seemed to process the tasks automatically which took up little processing; moreover, content-based pre-tasks probably required the whole meaning while language-based pre-tasks required explicit linguistic knowledge to solve the comprehension problems. As a matter of fact, automatic processing requires less cognition than controlled processing (Ellis, 2003, p.144); therefore, the memory load is lowered while using content-based pre-tasks. Direct notice to language explicitly takes more cognition and enhances attention that is negatively specified only to language knowledge without serving the context as complementary. Following, Ellis (2003), we also argue that "learners who rely on the controlled processing of linguistic forms have less capacity to attend to the content of their message" (p.144).

Following Tudor (1998) we claim that proficiency affects the way that schema is activated. Low intermediate language learners lack adequate knowledge of vocabulary and structures to sweep up comprehension difficulties. In reverse, what made the content-based group more successful in comprehension was using schematic knowledge to overcome the insufficient language knowledge; in other words, personal knowledge compensates for low proficiency.

6. Conclusion

Based on this study, we assume that content-based pre-tasks are valuable devices to facilitate listening comprehension, and they lower the cognitive load related to language processing. Wherever there is not sufficient language as in low proficiency, strengthening of content knowledge is fruitful.

Learners in the language-based group relied on their language knowledge. On the contrary, learners in the content-based group concentrated on the strong familiar images by neglecting weakness at language. Empowering the activation of content schemata compensated for the lack of language knowledge.

Consequently, the findings of this study were based on the effective utility of content-based pre-tasks that reject the priority of bottom-up processing in comprehension at lower levels of language learning. Thus it proposes the effective use of content-based pre-tasks to develop listening comprehension.

Implications of this insight are primarily assigned to language teachers to devote enough time to shift their listening classes from text-bounded to more dynamic situations. The amalgamation of tasks in today's pedagogy has created a new variety of routes to the same goal, preparing learners for out there. The investigation can be held as a hint to teachers who sought for a more real participation of learners into the reality of language use and altering the past rigid understanding of classroom context to an incentive climate. With use of pre-tasks oriented in content rather than language, teachers are able to take the control of deficiencies caused by lack of linguistic properties and provide opportunities for learners to communicate with language and with each other without being concerned about weak language proficiency; consequently, leading to the actual language use with no panic of the low proficiency distraction.

This study, however, suffers from a few limitations. This study was administered to pre-intermediate level while more proficient learners would have more consistent language abilities to resolve the comprehension problem conveniently; on the other hand, the language-based group was restricted to pre-tasks on the basis of straight definition proposed by the researchers.

Moreover, this research was carried out without taking gender and age into consideration. Girls and boys in different ages have distinctive language ability and language performance; no concern about these phenomena might endanger the outcome of the research.

This study considered the effect of content-based and language-based pre-tasks, and how they were used to tackle listening barriers. The problem surrounding the conclusion is that it is not consistent with learners' own performance. We are not sure if learners devise their own strategies instead of pure use of prescribed pre-tasks. Ellis (2005, p. 29) confirms the issue as learners' interpretation of task is not the same as the pre-task that was instructed to use. It requires ascertaining the other criteria in addition to utilization of pre-tasks.

There is room for more investigation in this study. Moreover, discrimination of strategies assigned to content-based and language-based might go under investigation to learn about the true performance of students on each pre-task.

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Title

The Effectiveness of Psychotypology-Reduced L2 Teaching on Three Linguistically Different Groups of Iranian Undergraduate EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension Skill

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Abstract

Three decades have passed since Kellerman (1978) introduced the concept of “psychotypology” within the realm of psycholinguistic studies. He defines it as “the proximity between the L1 and the L2 sensed by the L2 learners” exerting a limiting role on the extent to which the L2 learners would be able to make the best advantage of their language transfer potentials. However, psychotypological studies have not been paid the due attention they merit. The present article attempted to shed more light on the concept of psychotypology and the effect of psychotypology-reduced English teaching on reading comprehension of linguistically distinct adult L2 learners. Furthermore, a further attempt was made to delve into surveying the interactional effect of subjects' motivational and attitudinal profiles on their psychotypology-reduced reading comprehension. The final results supported the main effect of psychotypology-reduced L2 teaching; however, the interactional effects did not meet the significance level.

Keywords: Psychotypology, Language transfer, Reading comprehension, Motivation, Attitude.

1. Introduction

One of the most appropriate ways by the mediation of which L2 learners would be able to achieve the feat of SLA has long been believed to be applying language transfer processes. There is an enormous corpus of evidence underneath the issue that L1 plays an enormous role in assisting the L2 learners in their mastery over the L2 (Ellis, 1994; Gass, 1996; Kecskes & Papp, 2000a, 2000b; Kellerman, 1979; Odlin, 1989; Pavlenko, 1999; Singleton, 1995; Sharwood Smith & Kellerman, 1981). In principle it appears that everything can be transferred in the realm of L2 development (e.g., lexicon, discourse, semantics, syntax, phonetics, phonology and writing system; see Odlin, 1989). Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008) categorized such variables into learner-based (personality, aptitude and age) and language-based variables. Recently research into transfer studies has dwelt upon a wide array of areas, ranging from phonological influence (e.g., Bannert, 2005; Beach, Burnham & Kitamura, 2001) to the transfer of discourse patterns (e.g., Kellerman, 2001), metalinguistic awareness (e.g., Jessner, 1999; O’Laoire & Burke, 2000), pragmatic competence (e.g., Jorda, 2005), syntax (e.g., König et al. 2005), and lexis (e.g., Ringbom, 2001), just to mention a few.

According to Kellerman (1979) transfer processes are constrained by a range of variables including psychotypology. He defines it as “awareness of the typological relations between distinct languages” and claims that it is of no unvarying nature and it would go under revision as the learners obtain more information about the L2. The footprints of psychotypology can be discerned in a variety of L2 learning related fields. For instance they have been recognized in the transfer of lexical items in a number of studies (e.g. Cenoz, Hammarberg, de Angelis and Selinker, Ringbom, Herwig), in the realm of cognate transference studies (e.g., Kecskes & Papp, 2000), interlanguage studies (e.g., de Angelis & Selinker, 2001), and in the organization of the foreign mental lexicon (e.g., Ecke, 2001; Herwig, 2001).

It has also been found that the underlying processes in lexical transfer are common to learners of varying linguistic backgrounds. Supporting evidence as regards such claim has been advanced by Agustín Llach (2007b) for Spanish and German primary school EFL learners, Celaya and Torras (2001) for Catalan and Spanish primary school EFL learners, and Bouvy (2000) for French primary school EFL learners.

As the transfer studies mostly concern a large area of nearly all aspects of L1 transferred into the L2; i.e. positive transfer: cognates, lexical selection (Jarvis, 2000), negative transfer: lexical errors (Celaya & Torras, 2001; Celaya & Naves, 2009), the rate of acquisition of learners of different L1 backgrounds (Altenberg & Granger, 2002; Kempe & Mac Whinney, 1996), or the linguistic aspect affected by transfer (syntax, morphology, lexis) (Arabski, 2006), we decided to delve into the issue of language transfer from an entirely different perspective and hypothesized that, on the whole, it is possible to shift the focus of attention from the transferable items to the extent that it could be facilitated through minimizing at least one of its characteristic constraints; i.e. psychotypology.

The variables determined to be further investigated throughout the present study included; psychotypology, attitude, motivation, age and gender of linguistically distinct adult EFL learners. The underlying reason for the selection of such variables was that they would both incorporate the “affective” as well as the “cognitive” factors contributing to the process of second language learning. All through the study it was basically assumed that attitude is a subcomponent of sociocultural factors (strongly endorsed by Brown, 2000), motivation as an affective factor (ibid.), and psychotypology as a psycholinguistic/cognitive one (Kellerman, 1978). Broadly speaking, the following queries were sought to be addressed through the present study.

- 1- To what degree does psychotypology appear to be significant in the adult L2 learners’ reading comprehension development?
- 2- To what degree does the interaction effect of psychotypology reduced English teaching and gender affect adult L2 learners’ reading comprehension development?
- 3- To what degree does the interaction effect of psychotypology reduced English teaching and attitude affect adult L2 learners’ reading comprehension development?
- 4- To what degree does the interaction effect of psychotypology reduced English teaching and motivation affect adult L2 learners’ reading comprehension development?

2. Significance of the Study

The present study intended to unravel a set of psychotypologically affected aspects of L2 learners’ perceptual traits assumed to arise from their L2 typological perception. Throughout the study, based on the experiential information of the researcher, it was assumed that by advancing educational comments on the part of the L2 teachers the L2 learners would be better able to attenuate the psychological/psychotypological hurdles impeding them from

proper L2 learning. The ultimate objective of this study aimed at affording the teachers, curriculum planners, and materials developers with a terra firma to delve more into the uncharted field of the perception of typological distance (psychotypology) which in turn would benefit them to tap into further intricacies of language transfer processes.

3. Literature Review

Broadly speaking, the study of psychotypology is closely tied to the concept of “language transfer” the root of which traces back to as early as Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) endorsing the dependability of the L2 on the L1 and asserting that the relation between ‘language’ and ‘thought’ is so highly specific to the native language to the extent that full attainment of another language is impossible. Condon (1973) attributed the concept of transfer to L2 learners’ perception. He focused on “perception” as one of the integral variables contributing to the process of language transfer and defined it as the “filtering of information even before it is stored in memory, resulting in a selective form of consciousness”. Tracing their footsteps Schwartz and Sprouse (e.g., 1994, 1996) argued in favor of a full transfer model, i.e., the Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis (FT/FA) according to which all “syntactic properties” of the L1 initially constitute a base for the new developing grammar, which is constructed with the involvement of Universal Grammar.

Currently the scope of language transfer has permeated the boundaries of semantics or syntax and it has incorporated the pragmatic knowledge between the L1 and the L2. For instance, Olshtain (1983) attempted studying the ‘pragmatic knowledge’ between L1 and L2 in “apology situations” and concluded that while individual situations play a role in a learner’s choice of strategies in making an apology, language transfer also guides the choices to a large extent.

In a nutshell three broad transfer theories have been posited so far; a) The CEM (The Cumulative Enhancement Model) hypothesis suggesting that all previously learned languages can act as a transfer source in L3 acquisition; b) The LSFH (Last System First hypothesis, Falk & Bardel, 2010) suggesting that an L2 is favored as transfer source relatively independently of the relative typological similarity or genetic relatedness of the languages involved; and c) The TPM (Typological Primacy Model) hypothesis according to which psychotypology determines whether the L1 or the L2 will be transferred in L3 acquisition.

As already noted earlier, in addition to the major contributing consideration as regards transfer process a number of constraining factors have also been posited to impose intrinsic

limitations on it. Such variables, according to Jarvis (2000, pp. 260-261), are claimed to be age, personality, motivation and language attitude, social, educational and cultural background, language background, type and amount of target language exposure, target language proficiency, language distance between the L1 and the target language, task type and area of language use and prototypicality and markedness of the language feature. Odlin (1989) also adopted a similar position by asserting that “transfer can involve more than native language influence alone” and concluded a “fully adequate definition of transfer seems unattainable without adequate definitions of many other terms, such as strategy, process and simplification...in a sense that one might plausibly argue that a fully adequate definition of transfer presupposes a fully adequate definition of language” (p. 28). Parallel to him recently, advocating a compatible position, Ellis (2008) has also endorsed that “Evidence for transfer in all aspects of language- phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics is truly abundant”.

3.1. The necessity of simultaneously plummeting L2 learners’ negative attitudes and enhancing their motivational prospects through psychotypologically treating the L2 learners

The psychotypological profiles of L2 learners appear to be highly intertwined with their attitudinal status. The common ground between the attitudes and psychotypological profiles could be traced in Bakers’ (1998) introduction of attitudinal characteristics; a) Attitudes are cognitive and affective, b) Attitudes are dimensional rather than bipolar – they vary in degree of favorability / unfavorability, c) Attitudes predispose a person to act in a certain way, but the relationship between attitudes and actions is not a strong one, d) Attitudes are learned, not inherited or genetically endowed. e) Attitudes tend to persist but they can be modified by experience. The common ground in between them turns up to be being both cognitive as well as affective, learned not inherited, and potentially modifiable.

The complexity of attitude studies has of course been confirmed through different sorts of studies (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Gardner, 1979, 2001a, 2001b; Gardner et al., 2004; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003) most of which converge on the issue that ‘positive attitudes’ towards the L2, its speakers and its ‘culture’ can be expected to enhance learning whereas ‘negative’ attitudes would most likely impede (or at least slowdown) its. However, it should be remembered that a straightforward relation between one’s attitudes and L2 achievement still begs the question as the relation between the two is a highly complicated one. As a straightforward relation between one’s attitude and L2 achievement still begs the question the present study was intended for seeking any possible relevance between the psychotypological trends of the adult L2 learners and their attitudinal perspectives. As a further goal the

relevance of L2 learners' motivational profiles to their psychotypological trends was tended to be further investigated. Most studies coincide in pointing out the positive relationship between language achievement and motivation (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Yu & Watkins, 2008) and more specifically some studies report a positive effect of motivation on different aspects of FL vocabulary learning (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991). However, such a correspondence has not been unanimously borne out. For instance, in 2009 a study conducted by Fernandez Fontecha and Agustin Llach revealed that lexical transfer (incorporating learners' psychotypology) is independent of motivation.

3.2. Language Transfer Studies in Iran

To the best of our knowledge specific studies to pin down the effectiveness of psychotypology have extremely rarely been conducted in Iran. The reason for such a shortcoming could be claimed to be the extreme subjectivity of such a notion. Instead, it emerges that transfer studies have almost been abundantly utilized. For instance, Faghih (1997) overviewed language transfer and a renewal of interest in contrastive analysis (CA) as a suitable testing ground for language transfer or Ghazanfari (2003) examined interference from the perspective of language proficiency in a study of Iranian English-as-a-Foreign-Language learners or Yarmohammadi (1995) focused upon formulating contrasts between American English and modern Persian within the system of 'reported speech'.

4. Method and Design of the Study

The present study comprised three distinct pretest-posttest control group experimental designs with utilization of randomization for each group of participants. The dependent variable in the study was decided to be the level of 'English reading comprehension' in the EFL adult learners and the independent variable was determined to be 'comment oriented L2 teaching' (reducing the psychotypology profiles of the L2 learners) to the subjects.

4.1. Study Participants

One hundred and fifty randomly selected subjects in comprising three distinct sample groups each containing fifty individuals took part in the study. They were randomly derived from three branches of Islamic Azad University; Kaboudar Ahang IAU, Kermanshah IAU, and finally Shoushtar IAU, representing three distinct language varieties; Turkish, Kurdish, and Arabic respectively. The age range of the subjects ran from nineteen to forty four years of age with a mean of 26.88 and a standard deviation of 4.842. The first group; Turkish speakers was derived from a population of 121 undergraduate students studying "Islamic Laws". The

second group; Kurdish speakers, was derived from a population of 109 undergraduate students studying accounting and the last group; Arabic speakers was derived from a population of 93 undergraduate students studying business management. They were encouraged to attend the study by being assigned a free of charge ELT class in order to have their general reading comprehension improved. Three professional instructors; i.e. including the researcher and two substitutes, treated the subjects for seven sessions. They were also fully knowledgeable as to the textbooks' contents taught to the subjects and were required to keep using the L2 all through the training sessions.

4.2. Instruments

The most appropriate *modus operandi* to investigate into the research topic emerged to be conducting a couple of opinionnaires. The choice of such a decision was theoretically motivated; i.e., to ensure that all subjects would have the same frame of reference in their responses and to code the responses directly as data and feed it/them into SPSS software for analysis.

The items in the opinionnaires revolved around the feelings and impressions of the subjects toward the English language, its interlocutors, structure, pronunciation system, and the motivating reasons of the subjects for trying to learn it. To substantiate the validity and reliability of the opinionnaire items two of the researcher's colleagues; one an MA holder lecturer, and the other a PhD candidate, were consulted to contribute their own ideas on the points targeted.

The opinionnaires were chiefly of three distinct types. The first contained twenty items on psychotypology presumably encountered by the language learners involving items on the proximity (in terms of the syntax, pronunciation, or vocabulary items) sensed by the language learners between the languages involved. The second centered on the extent of the motivation (both integrative and instrumental) experienced by the subjects. As with the psychotypology opinionnaire the items on this opinionnaire also centered on investigating into the subjects' initial motivational status prior to the treatment and to truly decipher the motivational nuances frequently encountered by them.

The ultimate objective underlying asking the participants such questions was to make a comparison and contrast between the scores obtained on the participants' motivational status and their status on the psychotypological-reduced language learning. The third opinionnaire centered on the extent of attitude already developed by the study subjects. The attitudinal question items mostly involved social, political or economical barriers inherent in the L2

learning which in turn would hinder the proper acquisition of it. To empirically investigate the impact of psychotypology reduction on L2 achievement of the study subjects it was decided to treat them using language liaison comments.

To get a general grasp of reading comprehension status of the study subjects two parallel sets of reading comprehension tests were designed and administered to them (prior and subsequent to the treatment) to work out if there was any meaningful correlation between them. They were devised in the form of multiple choice complete random sampling cloze tests and were almost of a roughly equal level of readability; i.e. ($r_1 = 21.6$; $r_2 = 25.5$) as well as reliability; i.e. 0.23 & 0.46 respectively. Pre and post treatment reading comprehension tests; i.e. RC1 & RC2, were derived from a reading passage in the textbook "Reading through Interaction" by B. Wegmann and M. Knezevic (2001). Throughout the treatment two English teaching textbooks served as the teaching materials to teach loan words and cognates to the subjects; i.e. (a) "Interchange (1)" by Jack C. Richards, Jonathon Hull, and Susan Proctor, (b) "Inside Meaning (1)" by Arline Burgmeier and Cheryl Boyd Zimmerman (2009). Seven deliberately chosen reading passages were selected from each textbook; i.e. fourteen passages all in all. Three separate lists of cognates and loan words corresponding to the local languages used by the L2 learners were also prepared and handed to the substitutes by the researcher. A major number of these items were collected through the dictionary of "Webster New World Dictionary (third edition)" and "internet". The control subjects received no special pedagogical comment rather they received traditional grammatical instructions; basically based on different prepositions, tenses, and passive/active sentences for fifteen minutes every session.

4.3. Procedure

Three randomly selected sample groups attended the study each comprising fifty subjects; 150 altogether. The instructors, already familiar with the respective language spoken by subjects, were individually contacted nearly ten days prior to the treatment and given the teaching materials. The subjects underwent L2 reading comprehension instruction for nine sessions whose first and last teaching sessions were devoted to the pretest and the posttest of the study. In the first step of the study three sets of opinionnaires, structured according to Likert scale, were administered to the subjects in all three sample groups. The opinionnaires were on psychotypological, motivational, attitudinal profiles of the study subjects. A time limit of 60 minutes; i.e. one minute for each item was given to the subjects. No subject took longer time than the allocated to respond the items. Subsequent to the administration of the

opinionnaires a reading comprehension cloze test, containing 70 items was also administered to them. The subjects were given 50 minutes to do the test. Afterwards the subjects in each sample group were randomly assigned into two groups; i.e. experimental, control. Each group comprised 25 subjects. The instructors were advised to adopt a unanimous teaching methodology (moderate form of Audiolingual Approach) throughout the treatment sessions. They were also required to teach the materials by the mediation of frequently resorting to points of commonality and liaison between the two languages involved as well as the cognates and loan words common in them. The comments were mostly afforded in English but using the subjects' local language or even Persian to clarify the troublesome points was not entirely forbidden. In the final session three equal sets of opinionnaires were administered to the subjects in all three sample groups to see if there was any difference between their initial and final psychotypological, motivational, attitudinal profiles. Following doing the opinionnaires the subjects were administered a parallel reading comprehension test (RC2) of nearly the same level of reliability and readability of the previously administered reading comprehension test (RC1) to see if there was any meaningful difference in the mean scores in between the control and experimental groups involved.

4.4. Data Collection

As already noted above in the first stage of the study two parallel reading comprehension tests of a total score of 70 were administered to the subjects both at the outset and final stage of the treatment. In the second stage of the study three distinct opinionnaires on psychotypological, motivational and attitudinal profiles of the L2 learners were constructed and distributed among the subjects. Each questionnaire contained twenty items. The items were constructed based on the Likert test of probability of four distinct choices. There was no specific time limit for answering the items; however, as the number of items was not a great one; i.e. 60 in total, they were done in almost one hour. The items on questionnaires were mostly designed to elicit a negative response from the subjects. The scores assigned to each choice in the items were assumed of being of equal value.

4.5. Data Analysis

To assess the first study question three distinct independent-samples t-test(s) were employed. To assess the rest of the study questions a range of two way ANOVA statistical measures were utilized.

4.5.1. General Data Presentation

General data on the number, gender, linguistic backgrounds, RC1 scores prior and subsequent to the treatment of subjects attending the study are presented by Tables 1 & 2 below.

Table1: General data on the number and gender of subjects attending the study

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	70	46.7	46.7	46.7
	female	80	53.3	53.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Data on the overall linguistic backgrounds of the subjects in all three sample groups

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Turkish	50	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Arabic	50	33.3	33.3	66.7
	Kurdish	50	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: Reading Comprehension scores before the treatment

N valid	Missin g	Mean	Media n	Mod e	SD.	Minimum	maximu m
150	0	32.860	32.000	29.0	4.74311	19.00	44.00

Table 4: Reading Comprehension scores after the treatment

N valid	Missin g	Mean	Media n	Mod e	Std. Deviation	Minimu m	max imum
150	0	35.500	36.000	36.0	6.14123	22.00	51.00

As already mentioned, three sets of scores; i.e. attitude, motivation and psychotypology along with a reading comprehension test for each sample were derived prior and subsequent to the administration of questionnaires. The mean scores obtained in each group have been represented in table 5 depicting the overall data in one look.

Table 5: Overall Data in one Look

Motivation Scores	Before treatment		After treatment	
	EX. G	CON .G	EX. G	CON.G
Kurdish s.	3.3240	3.3980	2.7720	3.4400
Turkish s.	3.4280	3.3420	2.9580	3.4000
Arabic s.	3.2180	3.5900	3.6340	3.6620
Attitude Scores	Before treatment		After treatment	
	EX. G	CON .G	EX. G	CON.G
Kurdish s.	3.3700	3.3140	2.8300	3.3960
Turkish s.	3.3440	3.3480	2.9360	3.3320
Arabic s.	3.3980	3.2660	3.4500	3.3060

	0	0	0	
Psychotypology Scores	Before treatment		After treatment	
	EX. G	CON .G	EX. G	CON.G
Kurdish s.	3.344	3.404	2.642	3.4620
Turkish s.	3.210	3.512	2.874	3.4640
Arabic s.	3.384	3.454	3.342	3.4560
	0	0	0	
Reading comp. Scores	Before treatment		After treatment	
	EX. G	CON .G	EX. G	CON.G
Kurdish s.	32.88	32.92	36.56	32.2400
Turkish s.	34.08	34.20	40.88	35.1200
Arabic s.	32.16	30.92	37.40	30.8000
	00	00	00	

Table 6: Summary of the overall means of attitude, motivation, psychotypology scores of both the experimental and control sample group subjects before and after the treatment.

Attitude				Attitude		
Ex. After	N	M	SD	Ex. Before	M	SD
	2	3.07	.684		3.37	.32206
	5	20	05		07	
Cont. after	N	M	SD	Cont. before	M	SD
	2	3.34	.272		3.30	.27859
	5	47	45		93	
Motivation				Motivati on		
Ex. After	N	M	SD	Ex. Before	M	SD
	2	3.12	.750		3.32	.30351
	5	13	28		33.	
Cont. after	N	M	SD	Con. Before	M	SD
	2	3.50	.261		3.44	.29297
	5	07	17		33	
Psych.				Psych.		
Ex. After	N	M	SD	Ex. Before	M	SD
	2	2.95	.655		3.31	.26624
	5	27	84		27	
Cont. after	N	M	SD	Cont. before	M	SD
	2	3.46	.265		3.45	.27142
	5	07	76		67	

5. Conclusions and Discussion

To address the first study question the mean psychotypological scores of the experimental Turkish, Kurdish and Arabic speaking subjects before and following the treatment were calculated to be 3.21, 3.34 and 3.38 as opposed to 2.87, 2.64 and 3.34. In the control groups the mean psychotypological scores of Turkish, Kurdish and Arabic speaking subjects before and following the treatment were calculated to be 3.51, 3.40 and 3.45 as opposed to 3.462, 3.464 and 3.456.

The mean reading comprehension scores of the experimental Turkish, Kurdish, and Arabic speaking subjects before the treatment were estimated to be 34.08, 32.88 and 32.16 respectively but their mean reading comprehension scores increased to 40.88, 36.56 and 37.40 after the treatment. The mean reading comprehension scores of the control Turkish, Kurdish and Arabic speaking subjects before the treatment was 34.92, 32.92, and 30.92 respectively whereas after the treatment (applying the placebo) there was no great change in them; i.e. 35.12, 32.24, and 30.80.

Using independent sample t-test statistics in all three linguistically different groups the range of difference between the two mean scores of the groups (control and experimental) were estimated to be 5.15, 4.77, and 6.16 respectively. The eta squared (applying the Eta squared = $\frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N_1 + N_2 - 2)}$ formula) for each of the linguistically distinct experimental groups was estimated to be 0.35, 0.37 and 0.44 respectively. As $P < 0.05$ then the first three null hypotheses stressing the equality of the means were rejected. This result could be interpreted as the major role of reducing the psychotypological constraints of the adult L2 learners in order to help them make the best use of their transference potentials.

The second through the last study questions addressed the issue of the extent to which the interaction effect of psychotypology reduced English teaching and subjects' gender, attitude, and motivation would impact their L2 reading comprehension development. In the first stage to answer these questions the extent of issuing educational comments to the experimental subjects in all three sample groups was calculated. The effect size of it in Turkish speaking group was estimated to be (6.8 - 0.92 = 5.88) scores, whereas in Kurdish speaking group it was estimated to be (3.680 - -.6800 = 4.36) scores and in Arabic speakers it was calculated to be (5.2400 - -.1200 = 5.36). Differently put, the experimental subjects who received educational comments throughout the study outperformed the subjects receiving no such comments.

In the second stage to answer the second study question the effect size of the subjects' gender on their reading comprehension was calculated. The mean reading comprehension scores obtained by the experimental male subjects in Turkish, Kurdish, and Arabic speaking groups after the treatment were estimated to be 4.51, 3.66, and 2.84 respectively; whereas, the mean reading comprehension scores obtained by the experimental female subjects in the same groups were estimated to be 1.54, 0.81, and 2.38 respectively. In the third stage of addressing the second query a couple of two-way between groups ANOVA statistics were used. The results demonstrated that the main effect of gender did not reach statistical significance; i.e., ($F(1, 46) = .271, p = .605$) in Turkish speaking group, ($F(1, 46) = .883, p = .352$) in Kurdish speaking group, or in Arabic speaking group ($F(1, 46) = .062, p = .806$). However, the main effect of 'treatment' on their 'reading comprehension' reached statistical significance; i.e., ($F(1, 46) = 9.445, p = .004$) in Turkish speaking group, ($F(1, 46) = 15.77, p < 0.0005$) in Kurdish speaking group, and ($F(1, 46) = 34.332, p < 0.0005$) in Arabic speaking group. Besides it was found that the interaction effect of 'gender' and 'treatment type' on the subjects' 'reading comprehension' was not meaningful; i.e., ($F(1, 46) = .086, p = .771$) in Turkish speaking group, ($F(1, 46) = .086, p = .359$) in Kurdish speaking group, and ($F(1, 46) = .002, p = .966$) in Arabic speaking group. Accordingly no meaningful interaction effect of psychotypology reduced English teaching and gender was found to affect L2 learners' reading comprehension development.

The third study query addressed the extent to which the interaction effect of psychotypology reduced English teaching and attitude would impact adult L2 learners' English reading comprehension development. In the first step to answer this question the extent of issuing educational comments to the experimental subjects on their reading comprehension scores was calculated. The effect sizes were estimated to be $40.88 - 35.12 = 5.76$ scores for Turkish speaking group, $36.56 - 32.24 = 4.32$ scores for Kurdish speaking group and $37.4 - 30.8 = 6.6$ scores for Arabic speaking group. Differently put, the experimental subjects who received educational comments throughout the study outperformed the subjects receiving no such comments. In the second step to answer these questions the effect sizes of the subjects' attitude were calculated. The mean attitude score obtained by the experimental subjects in Turkish, Kurdish, and Arabic speaking groups before the treatment were estimated to be 3.93, 3.37, and 3.39 respectively. Whereas the mean attitude score obtained by them after the treatment were 3.34, 2.83, and 3.45 respectively. In the third stage to answer this question a series of two-way between groups ANOVA statistics was used. It was found that the main effect of attitude of the participants

was meaningful ($F(2, 44) = 4.654, p = .015$) for Turkish speaking group, ($F(2, 44) = 4.654, p = .015$) for Kurdish speaking group, and ($F(2, 44) = .682, p\text{-value} = .511$) for Arabic speaking group. The main effect of treatment given to the participants was also found to be meaningful ($F(1, 46) = 8.968, p = .004$) for Turkish speaking group, ($F(1, 46) = 8.968, p = .004$) for Kurdish speaking group, and ($F(1, 44) = 6.533, p\text{-value} = .014$) for Arabic speaking group respectively. However, it was found that the interaction effect of attitude and treatment-type was not meaningful in any of the groups; i.e., ($F(2, 44) = .179, p = .836$) for Turkish speaking group, ($F(2, 44) = 2.92, p = .094$) for Kurdish speaking group and ($F(2, 44) = .254, p\text{-value} = .777$) for Arabic speaking group. Accordingly no meaningful interaction effect of psychotypology reduced English teaching and attitude was found to affect L2 learners' reading comprehension development.

The fourth study query addressed the extent to which the interaction effect of psychotypology reduced English teaching and motivation would impact adult L2 learners' English reading comprehension development. In the first step to answer this question the effect of issuing educational comments to the experimental subjects on their reading comprehension scores was calculated. The effect size in Turkish speaking group was estimated to be $40.88 - 34.08 = 6.8$ scores. Whereas in the Kurdish speaking group it was estimated to be $36.54 - 32.88 = 3.68$ scores and in Arabic speaking group it was estimated to be $37.4 - 32.16 = 5.24$ scores. Differently put, the experimental subjects who received educational comments throughout the study outperformed the subjects receiving no such comments. In the second step to address this question the effect size of the subjects' motivation was calculated. The mean motivation scores obtained by the experimental subjects in Turkish speaking group before the treatment was estimated to be 3.42, 3.32 in Kurdish speaking group, and 3.21 in Arabic speaking group. Whereas the mean motivation score obtained by Turkish speaking group after the treatment was 2.95, in Kurdish speaking group 2.77, and in Arabic speaking group it was 3.63. In the third step to answer this question a range of two-way between groups ANOVA statistics was used and it was found that the main effect of motivation was statistically significant in Turkish speaking group; i.e., ($F(2, 45) = 4.466, p\text{-value} = .017$), meaningful in Kurdish speaking group ($F(2, 44) = 2.739, p\text{-value} = .076$), but not meaningful in Arabic speaking group ($F(2, 44) = .845, p\text{-value} = .437$). The main effect of pedagogical treatment was also found to be statistically significant in Turkish speaking group, ($F(1, 45) = 5.002, p\text{-value} = .030$), not significant in Kurdish speaking group ($F(1, 44) = .293, p\text{-value} = .591$). However, it was meaningful in Arabic speaking group; i.e. ($F(1, 44) = .5725, p\text{-value} = .021$). The interaction effect of motivation and the

type of pedagogical treatment was not statistically significant in any of the groups; i.e., ($F(1, 45) = 0.467$, $p\text{-value} = 0.498$) in Turkish speaking group, ($F(2, 44) = .293$, $p\text{-value} = .071$) in Kurdish speaking group, and ($F(2, 44) = .569$, $p\text{-value} = .570$) in Arabic speaking group. Accordingly no meaningful interaction effect of psychotypology reduced English teaching and motivation was found to affect L2 learners' reading comprehension development.

In conclusion, the results described above confirmed the findings of the earlier studies on psychotypology that have actually underscored the impact of psychotypology and the tendency of the L2 learners to stay in a foreign language mode in the processing of additional languages. Accordingly, based on the results procured, it appears logical to conclude that psychotypology is primarily of psychological reality (as empirically confirmed by the results of the study). Secondly, it is of negative impact on the learning rate of the language learners. Thirdly, by the mediation of constructively structured pedagogical comments, as to the liaison of the language(s) being learned and the local language already possessed by the learners, it could be claimed that the detrimental impacts of psychotypological profiles of the language learners could be strikingly reduced to a great extent. However, no unequivocal findings were found as to the interaction effect of gender and psychotypology reduced, attitude and psychotypology reduced, and motivation and psychotypology reduced impacts on the subjects' L2 reading comprehension. The reason for such a shortcoming, most likely, does not imply that there is no relation; rather, owing to the extremely limited scope of the study one could deduce that such relations await further probe.

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APPENDICES

Appendix-I

AN EXCERPT OF MOTIVATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1- Learning English will not be highly effective in your job prospect.

A: Strongly disagree B: Disagree C: Undecided D: Agree E: Strongly agree

2- You generally have a rather low interest in learning English.

A: Strongly disagree B: Disagree C: Undecided D: Agree E: Strongly agree

3- Learning English will not be highly crucial in helping you with finding your favorite career.

A: Strongly disagree B: Disagree C: Undecided D: Agree E: Strongly agree

4- You are not required to continue learning English to accomplish a job promotion.

A: Strongly disagree B: Disagree C: Undecided D: Agree E: Strongly agree

5- If learning English does not bring about any change in your employment status then you will not continue learning it any further.

A: Strongly disagree B: Disagree C: Undecided D: Agree E: Strongly agree

AN EXCERPT OF ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE

1- You have always been interested in learning English since you generally consider the English people as some prestigious ones.

A: Strongly disagree B: Disagree C: Undecided D: Agree E: Strongly agree

2- You have always been interested in learning English since you generally consider the English people as rich ones.

A: Strongly disagree B: Disagree C: Undecided D: Agree E: Strongly agree

3- You generally believe that political relationships will negatively affect your interest in learning English.

A: Strongly disagree B: Disagree C: Undecided D: Agree E: Strongly agree

4- You generally believe that social relationships will negatively affect your interest in learning English.

A: Strongly disagree B: Disagree C: Undecided D: Agree E: Strongly agree

5- You consistently feel that the existing cultural differences between you and the English speakers will harm your English language acquisition.

A: Strongly disagree B: Disagree C: Undecided D: Agree E: Strongly agree

AN EXCERPT OF PSYCHOTYPOLOGY QUESTIONNAIRE

1- You generally believe that there is not a close relationship between the Persian language and English.

A: Strongly disagree B: Disagree C: Undecided D: Agree E: Strongly agree

2- You generally believe that there is not much resemblance between the pronunciation system of your ethnic language and that of English.

A: Strongly disagree B: Disagree C: Undecided D: Agree E: Strongly agree

3- You believe there is not much resemblance between grammatical structures of your ethnic language and that of English.

A: Strongly disagree B: Disagree C: Undecided D: Agree E: Strongly agree

4- You see not much similarity between the Persian vocabulary and the English vocabulary.

A: Strongly disagree B: Disagree C: Undecided D: Agree E: Strongly agree

5- You generally do not see any similarity between the English language and your ethnic language.

A: Strongly disagree B: Disagree C: Undecided D: Agree E: Strongly agree

Appendix-III

A partial sample of pedagogical comments afforded by the language teachers in the study

Extra Turkish cognates taught to the experimental participants

English word	Turkish word	English word	Turkish word
Bachelor	Bekar	Cat/kitty	Kedi
Goose	Kaz	Hurry	Huddy
Cut	Kest	Brain	Beyin
Better	Behter	Scarf	Esharp

Extra Kurdish cognates taught to the experimental participants

English word	Kurdish word	English word	Kurdish word
Nail	Nall	Blaze	Blöza
Leave	Levay	Gaze	Gez
Tribe	Taiphe	Light	Lait
Run	Ramay	Long	Leng
Regular	Rek	Jackel	Chagäl

Extra Arabic cognates taught to the experimental Arabic speaking participants

English word	Arabic word	English word	Arabic word
Magic	Mojeze	Here	Hona
Harry	Häyæ	Zero	Sefer
Taramind	Altambr	Mummy	Almumiaee
Guitar	Tar	Giraffe	Alzarrafe
Ghoul	Ghoul	Elixir	Alexir

A partial sample of the cognates and loan words commented on throughout teaching the textbook of “interchange-1” to different groups¹

English words	Turkish-speaking G.	Kurdish-speaking G.	Arabic speaking G.
(p.1) Name	näm/äd	näm	Näm
(p.1) Jacob	yaghüb	yaghüb	Yaghüb
(p.1) Big	boyük	big	Big
(p.2) Shopping	Shop	shop	Shop
(p.2) Musical	müzik	müzik	almüsighi
(p.2) Company	company	company	company

A partial sample of the cognates and loan words commented on throughout teaching the textbook of “Inside Meaning-1” to different groups²

English words	Turkish G.	Kurdish G.	Arabic speaking G.
(p.1) Steel	steel	steel	Steel
(p.1) Giant	gian	gian	
(p.1) Design	design	design	Design
(p.1) Market	market	market	market
(p.2) Chill	chill/chaiden	chill	
(p.2) Start	start	start	Start
(p.2) Far away	fara	fara	
(p.2) Drug	daroo	daroo	Dawa

¹ “P” stands for passage number

² “P” stands for passage number.

Title

On the Relationship among Locus of Control, Sense of Well-Being and Language Proficiency in Iranian EFL learners

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Abstract

The present study was designed to investigate the relationship among external locus of control (ELOC), sense of well-being (SWB) and language proficiency (LP) in Iranian EFL learners. To achieve such goals, 80 Iranian EFL students (34 males and 46 females), studying English at Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman participated in this study. The instruments for data collection were a 29-item LOC scale (Rotter, 1966), a 20-item SWB scale (Paloutzian, 1982) and the LP test (Michigan Test, 1997). The results obtained through using Pearson Product Moment Correlation showed that there was a significant and negative correlation between external LOC and SWB and also between external LOC and LP. Furthermore, there was a significant and positive correlation between SWB and LP.

Keywords: Locus of control, Sense of well-being, Language proficiency.

1.Introduction

In recent years, the area of foreign language education has received a lot of attention in terms of factors influencing learning. Among those influential factors are LOC and SWB, and the relationship between these psychological factors and different levels or branches of learning a foreign language in disparate contexts such as schools, institutes, colleges, and other environments.

It is beyond doubt that LOC is a potential personality factor. The concept of LOC was derived from a social learning theory (Rotter, 1966) and relates to inter-individual differences in one's expectations concerning the consequences of his or her behavior (internal versus external) (Eberhart & Keith, 1989). People with internal LOC (ILOC) believe they control their own destiny. They tend to be convinced that their own skill, ability, and efforts determine the bulk of their life experiences. In contrast, people with external LOC (ELOC) believe that their lives are determined mainly by sources outside themselves (Rotter, 1966; Walky, 1979).

Well-being (WB) is a term frequently used in daily conversation. It is defined as "the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous" (wellbeing, n.d, 2008), or as "a good or satisfactory condition of existence; a state characterized by health, happiness, and prosperity" (wellbeing, n.d, 2008). Psychologists see WB as the result of cognition and emotion. From a psychological perspective (Pinquart & Sorensen, 2000), WB includes (1) the positive evaluation of one's life associated with good feelings, (2) the presence of positive feelings such as joy, happiness, energy, cheerfulness, and (3) the absence of negative feelings such as anxiety, depression, anger or sadness. Diener (1984) suggested that happiness and WB reflect a preponderance of positive thoughts or feelings about one's life.

Regarding LP, Bachman (1990) believes that the term "language proficiency" has been used to refer, in general, to knowledge, competence, or ability in the use of a language, irrespective of how, where, or under what conditions it has been acquired. Bachman (1990) thinks that LP is essentially synonymous with language ability or ability in language use. Oller (1983) argues that LP is not a single unitary ability, but that it consists of several distinct but related constructs of LP (cited in Bachman 1990), as, Farhady, Jafarpour, and Birjandi (1994) state a language learner can be a listener, speaker or both at a given point in time.

Since no previous study has been conducted, investigating the relationship between ELOC and SWB among university learners of English as a foreign language, as well as, considering their relationship with LP, this research can be quite significant and useful in the area of foreign language education. Finding more about the variables under consideration in this study makes both teachers and learners more informed of the learner variables that affect the process of teaching and learning. Hence, the teachers may better help the learners improve their SWB as far as it may become debilitating and affect students' self-efficacy.

Many psychologists believe that learners' personality factors play an important role in their learning process. Therefore, they suggest that language researchers and practitioners should pay attention to both personality-related factors of learning as well as language-related aspects in learning a foreign or second language (Maleki & Zangani, 2007). The present study, hence, aims at investigating the relationship of the psychological characteristics of LOC and SWB with LP among foreign language university learners.

2. Review of the Related Literature

Though many studies have been carried out regarding different aspects of foreign language learning and teaching, especially many of which have focused their attention on LP, few studies have investigated the relationship of LOC, SWB, and LP. The studies which are presented in this part are classified according to their subjects and the variables under their discussion.

2.1. Locus of control and sense of well-being

An overview of previous work on perceived control has been provided by a number of writers (Bandura, 1997; Flammer, 1995; Furnhum & Steele, 1993; Rotter, 1990; Skinner, 1996; Strickland, 1989). According to Grob (2000), these reviews identify three questions: first, to what extent is perceived control general or specific in particular domains? Second, is perceived control a one or multifactor construct? And, third, how is perceived control related to people's level of WB?

Accurate appraisal and positive discrepancies between perceived reality and personal aspiration lead to WB (Brickman, coates, & Janoff- Bulman, 1978; Duncan, 1975; Headey & Wearing 1992; Micholas, 1985; Wills, 1981). Hence, that personal control and control beliefs play an important role in mediating stress experiences and facilitate WB and functional effectiveness in work (Iso, et al., 2005). Several pieces of research have been carried out to investigate the relationship between LOC and SWB.

Krause and Stryker (1984) aimed at finding the buffering role of LOC beliefs on stress and WB. Data from the 1969 and 1971 panels of the national longitudinal survey of middle-aged men were analyzed to assess the mediating effects of LOC beliefs in the relationship between stressful job and economic events and psycho-physiological WB. The analyses indicated that men with ILOC orientations respond more adequately to stress than do those with ELOC beliefs. A more detailed examination of the data revealed that men with moderately ILOC orientations cope more effectively with stress than those whose LOC beliefs may be classified as extreme internal, extreme external or moderately external.

In another piece of research, Noraini (1995) developed a study to test the three-way interaction between job-role quality, LOC, and support in relation to two measures of women's psychological WB (happiness and symptoms of distress). This study was based on cross-sectional data. In his study, the sampling included 109 employed women. The results provided evidence of the three-way interaction between job challenge, LOC and work support in predicting happiness. Neither LOC nor work support independently moderated the effects of job challenge. However, LOC and work support combined interactively to moderate the impact of job challenge on happiness. As predicted, support interacted with job challenge only for internals; no such interaction effect was observed for externals. For distress, no significant interaction was found.

Using data collected from Managers from 24 geopolitical entities, Cooper, O'Driscoll, Sanchez, Sparks and Spector (2002) developed a study to investigate the relationship among work LOC, job-satisfaction, psychological strain, physical strain, and individualism/collectivism. The hypothesis that the salutary effects of perceived control on WB are universal was supported because relations of work LOC with WB at work were similar in almost all the sampled areas. Furthermore, the individualism/collectivism level of each sample did not moderate the magnitude of correlations of work LOC with measures of WB. Findings indicate that control beliefs contribute to WB universally.

2.2. Locus of control and Language proficiency

In accordance with field-theoretical conceptualizations (Lewin, 1952; Rotter, 1954), personality and environment are expected to interact in determining outcomes in terms of LP and academic achievement. Nowicki and Strickland (1973) found a significant relationship between LOC orientation and LP. Higher proficient seventh grade students were more internally controlled than their lower proficient classmates. Payne and Payne (1989) studied elementary school students who had been identified as lower proficient by their teachers.

They found lower proficient students to be more externally oriented than higher proficient students.

Harackiewicz and Elliot (1993) discussed how individuals who are proficient- oriented are motivated to pursue challenging goals and attain high levels of performance in competitive situations. Proficient-orientated individuals were found to actively seek activities that afford self-evaluation and feedback and they value competence (Harackiewicz & Elliot, 1993). Conversely, the authors showed that people low in proficiency are not oriented toward competence. These individuals avoid assessment and competition whenever possible, and are likely to experience performance anxiety. Use of mastery goals that emphasize personal improvement and skill development may increase the salience of competence in threatening situations (Harackiewicz & Elliot, 1993).

2.3. Sense of well-being and Language proficiency

While some hold that higher proficient people are generally less happy over the life cycle (Bowling & Windsor, 2001; Saunders, 1996; Winkelmann & Winkelmann, 1998), others detect the exact opposite (Easterlin, 2001; Tsou & Liu, 2001). Recently, the trend has been to acknowledge that proficiency has a small and positive partial effect on happiness.

Rode et al., (2005), in a sample of US English university students, detected that life-satisfaction is a significant predictor of LP. What is more, they stressed that global life-satisfaction is a more relevant concept than measures of educational satisfaction for this kind of analysis, as it comprises influences that might be unrelated to the educational experience, yet correlated to proficiency. They even discovered that university satisfaction is not significantly related to global life satisfaction. However, the latter finding stands in contrast to research carried out by Gilman and Huebner (2006), who argued that high life-satisfaction is associated with positive academic experiences.

Quinn and Duckworth (2007) put the relationship between happiness and LP into a longitudinal context. By collecting data on SWB and LP scores of US fifth-grade English students, they were able to draw the conclusion that the relationship between the two variables is reciprocally causal in the sense that LP fosters SWB, which in turn will positively influence future performance. This result even holds when controlling for IQ, age, and academic achievement.

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

80 Iranian EFL students studying at the department of foreign languages of Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman took part in this study. These students, including both males and females, were randomly selected from junior and senior students majoring in English Translation and English Literature. Among the sample population, there were forty six females (46%) and thirty four males (34%).

3.2. Instrumentation

The following instruments were used in the study:

1. LOC Scale (Rotter, 1966)
2. SWB Scale (Paloutzian, 1982)
3. LP Test (Michigan Test, 1997)

1. Rotter's (1966) LOC scale was used to measure an individual's internal- external orientation. The scale is referred to as the I-E scale and provides a measure of individual differences in a generalized belief for internal versus external control of reinforcement. It is a two-point scale and Participants are supposed to select item (a) or (b) in each part. The scale consists of 29 items. Of the 29 items, 23 related to internal-external expectancies, and 6 are filler items intended to disguise the purpose of the test. Students' answers can range from 1 to 23, and the scores obtained from this scale were divided in to two groups by the researcher in order to make the analysis of the data easier. Scores from 1-10 indicated ILOC and scores above 10 indicated ELOC. Item and factor analyses indicated high internal consistency, test-retest reliability was satisfactory, and the test correlated satisfactorily with other method of assessing the same variable. (Rotter, 1966).

2. Paloutzian's (1982) SWB scale was used. This 20 item scale is a six-point Likert type scale designed to measure students' SWB and happiness. Participants responded to items by indicating their degree of agreement ranging from 6 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) with each of the 20 statements.

3. LP Test adopted from the Examination for the Certificate of Proficiency in English (ECPE), University of Michigan, (1997).

4. Results

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*

	N	Valid missing	Mean	Std.Deviation	Range	Minimum	Maximum
ELOC	80	0	9.55	4.12	10.00	10.00	20.00
SWB	80	0	93.97	21.35	95.00	25.00	120,00
LP	80	0	25.07	6.65	27.00	7.00	34.00

Table 1 shows the descriptive analysis of the three variables (LOC, SWB, and LP). According to this table the mean for LOC, SWB and LP is 9.5, 93.9 and 25.07 respectively.

Table 2 *Correlation of ELOC and SWB*

		ELOC	SWB
ELOC Correlation	Pearson	1	-0.92**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
	N	80	80
SWB Correlation	Pearson	-0.92**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.
	N	80	80

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

As it is shown in table 2, there is a significant and negative correlation (-0.92) between ELOC and SWB, that is, when LOC is external, SWB is low and vice versa.

Table 3 *Correlation of ELOC and LP*

		ELOC	LP
ELOC Correlation	Pearson	1	-0.89**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
	N	80	80
LP Correlation	Pearson	-0.89**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.
	N	80	80

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

As it is indicated in Table 3, there is a significant and negative correlation (-0.89) between ELOC and LP. It means that students with ELOC are in the low level of LP.

Table 4 *Correlation of LP and SWB*

		LP	SWB
LP Correlation	Pearson	1	0.91**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
	N	80	80

N			
SWB Correlation	Pearson	0.91**	1
		0.000	.
	Sig. (2-tailed)	80	80
N			

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

As can be observed in table 4, there is a significant and positive correlation (0.91) between LP and SWB. It means that students with high level of SWB are in the high level of LP and vice versa.

5. Discussion

In this section, the research questions presented in this article are dealt with one by one. Each question will be answered based on the findings of the study. First the results indicated that there is a significant and negative correlation (-0.92) between ELOC and SWB. Students with ELOC had lower SWB and vice versa. So, the results of this study support previous established results. For example, Krause and Stryker (1984), Noraini (1995), and Cooper et al., (2002) found similar results in their studies.

Second, the results indicated that there is a significant and negative correlation (-0.89) between ELOC and LP. More proficient students had ILOC while less proficient students had ELOC. This finding echoes similar findings reported in researches concerning the relationship between LOC and LP. For instance, Payne and Payne (1989) and Nowicki and Strickland (1973) found that lower proficient students are more externally oriented than higher proficient students.

Third, the results also indicated that there is a significant and positive correlation between SWB and LP. The relationship between the two variables is reciprocally causal in the sense that LP fosters WB. So, the result of this study supports previous established beliefs. For example, Easterlin (2001) and Tsou and Liu (2001) found similar results in their studies. However, this result contrasts with some other studies (Bowling & Windsor, 2001; Saunders, 1996; Winkelmann & Winkelmann, 1998) in which there is a significant and negative relationship between SWB and proficiency.

Analyzing these results and considering limitations of this research, two steps are suggested for future studies. 1) To consider the influential factors of age and gender in

investigating the relationship among LOC, SWB, and LP. 2) To study a larger sample of the population (more participants) because these reasons vary significantly between individuals.

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Title

The Relative Significance of Lexical Richness and Syntactic Complexity in IELTS Academic Reading Tests

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Abstract

Academic reading tests have always been a challenge for English for Academic Purposes readers. There are various reasons for their difficulty; however, linguistic elements were investigated in this study which aimed at finding out whether academic tests' lexical richness is the main cause of their difficulty, or their syntactic complexity. For such a purpose, 60 academic and 36 general reading tests of IELTS were included in the corpus, and their lexical richness and syntactic complexity were computed using Web-VocabProfiler and MLTU (Mean Length of T-Unit) respectively. Lexical and syntactic profiles of these tests were compared to each other so that their differences reveal the causes of difficulty in academic texts. Results of the study indicated that syntactic complexity could be regarded as influential as lexical richness in the difficulty of academic tests. Therefore, lexical richness may no longer be supposed as the single cause of difficulty in academic reading tests.

Keywords: Academic Reading Test, Syntactic Complexity, Lexical Richness, Mean Length of T-Unit, Web-VocabProfiler.

1. Introduction

Academic texts have different linguistic requirements from non-academic ones, since they belong to different genres with different features. Scarcella (2003) argues that learners need to be familiar with lexical and syntactic features particular to a discipline. The lexical

components of academic English include knowledge of sub-technical words in addition to general words (p. 12), while sub-technical words are common-core words frequent in academic texts. Syntactic features of English academic texts are also different from non-academic texts. Scarcella (2003) asserts that, in academic English, students need knowledge of particular syntactic features other than those necessary for ordinary English. They should be able to deal with additional structures such as complex sentences, parallel clauses, conditionals, and passive sentences (p. 12). Logical connectors (coordinators and subordinators) have a higher profile in academic texts than in general texts, since, in academic register, ideas need to be linked together to create a cohesive discourse. In non-academic texts like fiction and conversation this link of ideas is created through order of events (Conrad, 1999; and Dudley-Evans and St John, 2005). This higher profile of subordinators means more complex and longer sentences which make the text more difficult to comprehend. Therefore, EAP readers are supposed to learn those lexical items and syntactic structures which are more frequent in academic texts. However, a substantial amount of empirical research claim that vocabulary knowledge, compared to grammar, is the most important competence for academic needs (Saville-Troike, 1984; Qian, 2002; and Cobb & Morris, 2004).

The main purpose of this study was discovering the main linguistic sources of difficulty in academic reading tests of IELTS and knowing whether these are words particular to them that prohibit comprehension or their particular syntactic structures. The results of the study may contribute to IELTS readers to deal better with linguistic requirements of these tests.

1.1. Academic Reading

Uribe (2008) states academic English is needed by the educated for the university studies and not for everyday situations (p. 1). Particularly in this study, academic reading may be defined as a skill necessary for reading semi-specialized and not technical texts. These texts are usually seen in the magazines, newspapers, and even some university textbooks. Dudley-Evans and St John (2005) have defined them as EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes) texts and have distinguished them from ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes). In testing EGAP skills, there are a few standardized tests like IELTS Academic Modules, UETESOL (University Entrance Test in English for Speakers of Other Languages), and MELIAET (Michigan English Language Institute's Academic English Test) (Hamp-Lyons, 2002, p. 129; and Dudley-Evans and St John, 2005, p. 214).

1.2. Lexical Richness

Laufer and Nation (1995) presented Lexical Frequency Profiler (LFP), which measures “the proportion of high frequency general service [GSL] and academic [AWL] words in texts ... seen as being a measure of how vocabulary size is reflected in use” (p. 305). In their original study, they used a profile that comprised four levels: first 1000 (K1) and second 1000 (K2) most frequent words based on West’s (1953) GSL, words in the Academic Word List (AWL) based on Coxhead’s (2000) AWL, and other less-frequent words outside these two lists of words (Off-List or OL). Thus, if an essay contains 200 word families in total and these consisted of 150 from K1, 20 from K2, 20 from AWL, and 10 from OL, the LFP index for it would be 75%-10%-10%-5% respectively. Cobb (2009a) adapted this LFP program to the web for free online access under the name Web-VocabProfiler (Web-VP). Once a text has been keyed into the program window, VP determines what percentage of the words in the text is covered by each of K1, K2, AWL, and OL.

Read and Chapelle (2001) state a “discrete, comprehensive, and context-dependent” measure of vocabulary is assumed to be a comprehensive and valid one. This is just the lexical richness measure of LFP (VP) which has all three qualities of discreteness, comprehensiveness, and context-dependency. Read’s (2000) argument is that LFP provides a more objective and differentiated measure of the lexical richness than the other statistics because it draws on a range of established word lists (GSL and AWL) to classify the words into categories. It has additional advantages of being completely computerized except for preparation of the written document (Laufer and Nation, 1995, p. 319).

1.3. Syntactic Complexity

Ortega (2003) stated that “syntactic complexity refers to the range of forms that surface in language production and degree of sophistication of such forms” (p. 492). Carroll (2008) defines syntactic complexity as “the complexity of the expressions used to convey the idea” (p. 288). Length of production unit, amount of embedding, range of structural types, and sophistication of the particular structures deployed in production have all been the target of quantifications when characterizing syntactic complexity, resulting in a variety of global measures (Ortega, 2003, p. 492). The cumulative effect of these features is striking in complexity of structures, not one of them alone. Take the following sentence as an example.

It had taken ages – not to mention a hefty contribution to their campaign coffers – to talk them into a Sunday meeting to consider her redevelopment plans for the seafront, and Theo along with their architect and a city planner imported from Newport, Rhode Island, had been scheduled to make the presentation. (Goerge, 1997, p. 51, as cited in Rimmer, 2006, p. 506)

It is a complex sentence due to length effect (51 words), coordination with ‘and’, and heavy embedding. Grammatically speaking, a complex sentence is a ‘complex’ sentence not a ‘compound’ or a ‘simple’ one, that is, a sentence whose clauses are linked together through subordinators like ‘although, since, because, so that’ rather than coordinators like ‘or, but, yet, so, and’ (Frank, 1972, p. 1). However, if we define a complex sentence psycholinguistically as one that expresses more than one proposition, passive sentences, complements, coordinations, relative clauses, and subordinations are among complex sentences, since they convey a single idea in a linguistically complex form that is difficult to process (Carroll, 2008, p. 293).

Therefore, syntactic complexity is a psycholinguistic concept rather than merely a linguistic idea. Sentences may be syntactically complex not simply for their grammatical definition, but because of complexity in processing them due to limitations in working memory capacity (Singer and Donald, 1989, p. 611). The most important characteristic of working memory is that it is limited and is only capable of holding about seven pieces of information at a time (Kess, 1992, p. 141). It is controlled by a “central executive” which determines how much attention a particular processing task demands. A sentence like “Canaries have wings.” demands few attentional resources whereas a sentence like “The point about photography – and I shouldn’t really be saying this because I write books about it – is that you have to keep at it.” demands more (Field, 2003, p. 113). So, the deficits observed in syntactic comprehension are best explained by a reduction in central executive capacity (Harley, 2001, p. 401). Carpenter et al. (1994), Gass and Selinker (2008), and Carroll (2008) noted that the working memory load imposed by comprehension is directly related to sentence complexity. Complex sentences are heavy burden on working memory. They increase processing load and “this leads to deterioration of linguistic performance” (Smith and Tsimpli, 1995).

Many studies have emphasized the relevance of the sentence length to syntactic complexity. Singer and Donalds (1989, p. 331) and Wilson (1995, p. 46) have stated that longer sentences are usually more syntactically complex and may have one or more embedded sentences that create this complexity. Aitchison (1993) has argued, “A sentence that is long will be difficult” (p. 231). Humans have limited immediate memory space and processing ability, therefore, they clear away sections of speech or text as they have dealt with them. This would explain why unusually long sentences are difficult (Aitchison, 1993, p. 232). Nuttall (1996) has stated, “Syntax in terms of long sentences and difficult grammar can block comprehension even when vocabulary is familiar” (p. 78). Scovel (1998) has

argued that from the standpoint of Transformational-Generative grammar, longer sentences include more transformations and are more complex, syntactically and psychologically, so they are psychologically real in complexity (pp. 60-61).

However, one drawback is that increased length by run-on sentences does not necessarily translate into increased syntactic complexity (Szmrecsányi, 2004). Alderson (2000) has stated that there is considerable research which shows that to make sentences easier to understand, words may have to be added to enrich the context, and more length contributes to more understanding (pp. 71-72). This drawback is not attributed to mean length of T-Unit (MLTU), since there is less probability of run-on sentences.

Mean number of words per T-Unit or MLTU can be used as a measure of syntactic complexity of a text. T-Unit is a basic unit of expression which is defined as “a main clause plus all subordinate clauses and non-clausal structures attached to or embedded in it” (Hunt, 1965; and Mousavi, 1999, p. 430). For example, the sentence ‘The fire burned.’ is one T-Unit; so is ‘The fire burned until the fuel ran out.’ but longer and more complex. Estimating MLTU for texts is not so hard. You just need to count the number of T-units in that text so that you can divide number of words in the text by number of T-units, and the result will be mean number of words per T-unit, e.g., MLTU of an essay with 300 words and 18 T-Units is equal to 16.60. There is no predefined norm to interpret what 16.60 means, therefore MLTU of all texts will be compared to each other.

MLTU as a measure of both syntactic and psychological complexity has psychological reality, since complex sentences (T-Units) are cognitively more difficult for both children as first language learners or adults as second language learners and require more processing abilities in both production and comprehension than compound sentences (Kess, 1992, pp. 321, 323). Complex sentences or T-Units contain subordinations which according to Taylor (2002) create higher degrees of integration and complexity of clauses than coordinations which produce compound sentences (p. 430). Read (2000) has referred to the ease in the identification of T-Units or its practicality as another advantage for it (p. 231).

2. Review of the Related Literature

Corpus analyses, under different headings such as “How large vocabulary is needed for EAP reading?” or “Frequency of logical connectors in EAP texts”, have investigated the significance of lexical richness and syntactic complexity in academic reading texts.

2.1. Lexical Requirements for Academic Reading Texts

Some researchers like Alderson (2000) are made sure that, for academic purposes, knowledge of GSL is not enough and at least AWL knowledge (knowledge of sub-technical words) is also necessary. “GSL and AWL account for 95% of EAP tokens in academic texts”, Cobb and Horst (2008) reported.

Table 1 *Coverage by GSL and UWL of Different Registers*

Source	GSL%	UWL%	Total%
Academic Texts	78.1	8.5	86.6
Newspapers	80.3	3.9	84.2
Popular Magazines	82.9	4	86.9
Fiction	87.4	1.7	89.1

Reproduced from Nation and Waring (1997, p. 17)

Nation and Waring (1997) emphasized that, for academic purposes, one needs knowledge of UWL (similar to AWL) in addition to low frequency words, but the need for GSL in academic texts vis à vis non-academic texts is less. Table 1 above illustrates the coverage of GSL, UWL, and both of them condensed in different registers.

Nation (2006) reported that EGAP texts such as newspapers, magazines, and IELTS academic reading tests need as much vocabulary knowledge as general non-academic texts like fiction, novels, and manuals. Coverage of GSL in academic and non-academic corpus shows that there is only a difference in lexical coverage distribution which indicates that GSL coverage is less in academic but more in non-academic texts, and coverage of AWL is higher in academic texts (Dudley-Evans and St John, 2005). Therefore, academic texts need more knowledge of AWL. One can conclude that these are AWL and less-frequent words (later in this study known as AWL-OL) which have made academic texts distinguished from and perhaps more difficult than non-academic texts.

2.2. Syntactic Requirements for Academic Reading Texts

Register analyses in different studies has shown that certain syntactic features of English academic texts are different from non-academic texts. Scarcella (2003) asserted that in academic English, students need knowledge of additional structures such as complex sentences, parallel clauses, conditionals, and passive sentences (p. 12).

Gaies (1979) in a syntactic complexity analysis of general ESL reading materials of some learners found that they are far less complex than their academic textbooks. MLTU in 20 ESL readers was 14.98, while it was 19.59 in academic textbooks. Beers and Nagy (2009) reported that essays written in expository and academic genre had longer T-Units (MLTU = 15, SD =

2.8, $p < .000$) than narratives (MLTU = 11, SD = 2.8, $p < .000$). These results might show that syntactic complexity of academic texts is far higher than non-academic texts, and we can conclude that these are complex structures which have made academic texts distinguished from and perhaps more difficult than non-academic texts.

According to what was mentioned above, lexical and syntactic features of IELTS academic reading tests and their relative importance as two contributing factors are in question. Is there any difference between lexical richness of general and academic reading tests of IELTS? Is there any difference between syntactic complexity of general and academic reading tests of IELTS? What makes IELTS academic reading tests difficult, their lexical richness or their syntactic complexity? Consequently, this study may help us in confirming or rejecting the following hypotheses:

1. There is a difference between lexical richness of general and academic reading tests of IELTS.
2. There is a difference between syntactic complexity of general and academic reading tests of IELTS.
3. Syntactic complexity, if not a more significant cause of difficulty in academic reading tests of IELTS, is as significant as lexical richness.

3. Method

3.1. Corpus Selection

The corpus included 36 general training and 60 academic reading tests of IELTS. The first 300 words of general tests and the first 500 words of academic tests were selected for lexical richness and syntactic complexity analysis. Sinclair (1991) warns, "A corpus should contain texts whose sizes and shapes accurately reflect the texts they represent. If long texts are included in a corpus, peculiarities of an individual style show through, and making use of a variety of short texts allows more variation in vocabulary" (p. 19). Therefore, the researcher decided the mean length of texts to be 300 and 500 respectively for "representativeness purposes" (Conrad, 1999, p. 3), since the naturally occurring general and academic tests are at these lengths.

3.2. Materials

IELTS academic and general reading tests were employed for comparing their lexical and syntactic features. Laufer and Nation's (1995) Lexical Frequency Profiler or VocabProfiler was employed as a measure of lexical richness. Mean number of words per T-Unit or Mean Length of T-unit (MLTU) was used as a measure of syntactic complexity of the texts.

3.3. Procedure

General and academic reading tests of IELTS were chosen for analysis of their lexical and syntactic features. MLTU and VocabProfile of these tests were calculated. These texts were entered into ‘Web-VocabProfile’ for lexical richness analysis. They were also analyzed syntactically using MLTU for their syntactic complexity features. The length of each text in number of words was divided by the number of T-units in that text, and the result was MLTU which was an index of syntactic complexity of the texts.

3.4. Analyses

To test the validity of VP indexes as a measure of lexical richness against “Web-VocabProfile BNC” indexes (Cobb, 2009b) as already established measures, the correlations between VP and VP (BNC) indexes of the whole sample were calculated. If high correlation between them were observed, VP would have been implied to be a valid measure of lexical richness. Testing the validity of MLTU as a measure of syntactic complexity was conducted employing correlational analysis. MLTU indexes of the texts were correlated with their MLS (Mean Length of Sentence) indexes another length-based measure of syntactic complexity. A high correlation between them was an indicator of MLTU validity.

To find whether lexical richness and syntactic complexity of general and academic reading tests of IELTS are different, an independent-samples t-test analysis was carried out. For this purpose, the means of general and academic reading tests of IELTS in VP’s AWL-OL index (for lexical richness) and MLTU (for syntactic complexity) were compared separately. To find which of these two components more is significantly the cause of difficulty in academic reading tests, the Eta-squared of the t-value in the t-test was calculated to show the effect-size of each variable. The level of significance adopted for this study was .05 and for all statistical calculations, version 16.0 of SPSS software was used.

4. Results

Descriptive statistics for lexical richness of two types of academic and general texts in the corpus are presented below in Table 2.

Table 2 *Descriptive Statistics of VocabProfile Indexes in Academic (A) and General (G) Reading Texts of IELTS*

		A.AWL	G.AWL
N	Valid	60	36
Mean		18.84	16.42
Std. Deviation		3.47	2.91

A non-parametric statistic known as one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov is also presented in Table 3 which shows normality of distribution of indexes in these texts.

Table 3 *One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of VocabProfile Indexes in Academic (A) and General (G) Reading Texts of IELTS*

	A.AWLLOL	G.AWLLOL
N	60	36
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.585	.458
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.884	.985

4.1. VocabProfile's Index of AWL-OL

Descriptive statistics for VP's AWL-OL index (AWL and OL condensed together to be an indicator of lexical richness in IELTS reading texts) of 60 academic and 36 general reading texts of IELTS are displayed in Table 2, respectively. The mean of AWL-OL index in academic texts is 18.84, while it is 16.42 in general texts. This higher profile of AWL-OL index in academic texts may be an indicator of more difficulty, because this index indicates a higher profile of less-frequent words and words used frequently in academic registers. One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Asymp. indexes of .88 and .98, summarized in Table 3, respectively for academic and general texts may indicate that AWL-OL index is distributed normally in academic and general texts of IELTS.

Descriptive statistics for syntactic complexity (MLTU indexes) of two types of academic and general texts in the corpus are presented below in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4 *Descriptive Statistics for MLTU Index of Academic (Ac.) and General (Gen.) Reading Texts of IELTS*

	Ac. MLTU	Gen. MLTU
N	Valid 60	36
	Missing 0	24
Mean	18.87	17.35
Std. Deviation	2.89994	3.62991

Table 5 *One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for MLTU Index of Academic (Ac.) and General (Gen.) Reading Texts of IELTS*

	Ac. MLTU	Gen. MLTU
N	60	36
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	1.182	.798
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.122	.547

4.2. MLTU as a Measure of Syntactic Complexity

Summed in Table 4, you can find descriptive statistics for MLTU index of 60 academic and 36 general reading texts of IELTS. The mean of MLTU index in academic texts is 18.87,

while it is 17.35 in general texts. This higher MLTU index in academic texts may be an indicator of more difficulty, because this index indicates the presence of much more complex sentences in such texts. One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Asymp. indexes of .12 and .54, summarized in Table 5, respectively for academic and general texts, although too small for academic index, are larger than the .05 level of significance designated for this study. Therefore, there seems to be certainty that MLTU index is distributed normally in academic and general texts of IELTS.

4.3. Validation of Vocabprofile Indexes through Correlations with Vocabprofile (BNC) Indexes.

Table 6 *Correlations between Academic VocabProfile and VocabProfile (BNC) Indexes*

		A.BNCK1K2	A.BNCK3toK20
A.K1K2	Pearson Correlation	.790**	-.742**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	60	60
A.AWLOL	Pearson Correlation	-.785**	.735**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	60	60

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

As it is displayed in Table 6, VocabProfile indexes are condensed into two main sub-categories, i.e., K1-K2 and AWL-OL.

VP (BNC), another measure of lexical richness based on British National Corpus, employed by Nation (2006) in a corpus analysis showed to be a valid measure for sorting vocabularies of a text. Therefore, VP indexes in K1-K2 (most frequent words in GSL) of academic texts of IELTS were correlated with VP (BNC) indexes K1-K2 (most frequent words in BNC corpus). And, VP indexes in AWL-OL (AWL words and words not included in GSL) of academic reading texts of IELTS were correlated with VP (BNC) indexes K3-K20 (less-frequent words in BNC corpus). The results are displayed in Table 6. There was found relatively high and significant correlations between these two sorters of vocabulary. VP's K1-K2 index correlated .79, $p < .01$, 2-tailed with VP (BNC)'s K1-K2 index. VP's AWL-OL index correlated .73, $p < .01$, 2-tailed, in academic tests with VP (BNC)'s K3-K20 index. These results suggest that VP or LFP may be a valid measure of lexical richness for sorting out vocabularies in a text according to factors like frequency, range, register, etc. that West (1953) and Coxhead (2000) have claimed.

4.4. Validation of MLTU through Correlations with MLS

The validation of syntactic complexity measure of MLTU was established through correlating it with another similar measure of syntactic complexity – MLS (mean length of sentence). Nation and Snowling (2000) and most of the 25 studies in Ortega's (2003)

research synthesis found MLS as a valid measure of syntactic complexity. Therefore, for validation purposes, MLTU indexes of both academic and general reading texts of IELTS were correlated with their MLS indexes.

Table 7 *Correlations between Academic MLTU and MLS*

		A.MLS
A.MLTU	Pearson Correlation	.800**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	60

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

The correlation results are presented below in Table 7. MLTU and MLS correlated .80, $p < .01$, 2-tailed, in academic texts. This high and significant correlation coefficient indicates the validity of MLTU as a measure of syntactic complexity of texts.

4.5. Identification of Difficulty Factors in IELTS Academic Reading Tests through Independent-Samples T-test Analysis

Two final measures of lexical richness and syntactic complexity in the texts of present corpus were decided to be AWL-OL and MLTU respectively.

Table 8 *Descriptive Statistics of AWL-OL and MLTU Indexes in Academic (Ac.) and General (Gen.) Reading Texts of IELTS*

	Group	N	Mean	SD
AWL-OL	Ac.	60	18.84	3.47
	Gen.	36	16.42	2.91
MLTU	Ac.	60	18.87	2.89
	Gen.	36	17.35	3.62

Table 9 *T-test Results for AWL-OL and MLTU Indexes in Academic and General Reading Texts of IELTS*

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
AWL-OL	Equal variances assumed	3.492	94	.001
	Equal variances not assumed	3.648	83.909	.000
MLTU	Equal variances assumed	2.262	94	.026
	Equal variances not assumed	2.139	61.582	.036

Mean difference in terms of AWL-OL and MLTU indexes was used, first, to show the difference between academic and general reading tests of IELTS in these indexes, and second, to demonstrate their significance in the difficulty of academic tests. We have carried out an independent-samples t-test to compare AWL-OL and MLTU in academic and general

tests. The results are summarized in Tables 8 and 9 above. There was a significant difference in AWL-OL index of academic (mean = 18.84, SD =3.47) and general (mean = 16.42, SD = 2.91) texts, $t(df94) = 3.49, p < .01$. The significance of t-value indicates a great difference between academic and general tests, and positive for academic texts, in AWL-OL index of lexical richness. There was also a significant difference in MLTU index of academic (mean = 18.87, SD =2.89) and general (mean = 17.35, SD = 3.62) texts, $t(df94) = 2.26, p < .05$. The significance of t-value indicates a difference between academic and general texts, and positive for academic texts, in MLTU index of syntactic complexity. Although the significance of t-value is more for AWL-OL ($p < .01$) mean differences in academic and general texts than MLTU ($p < .05$), they are both different significantly in these texts. Moreover, this is the magnitude of each mean difference (Eta-squared value) that tells us whether AWL-OL index or MLTU index is more determining in the difficulty of academic versus general texts. Eta-squared is the most common effect size indicator for independent-samples t-tests. It can be interpreted as the percentage of the variance in the target variable explained by the grouping variable. It is easy to compute using the following formula (Dörnyei, 2007):

$$Eta\ Squared = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N1 + N2 - 2)}$$

In this formula, ‘t’ is the t-value in t-test, and ‘N’ is the number in each group. In fact, ‘(N1+N2-2)’ is the degree of freedom or ‘df’ in the t-test. The usual interpretation of Eta-squared is that .01 = small effect, .06 = moderate effect, and .14 and larger = large effect. The magnitude of the difference in the means was moderate for both AWL-OL and MLTU – Eta squared = .11 versus .06 respectively – with AWL-OL explaining 11 percent and MLTU 6 percent of the variance in academic texts difference from general texts. Therefore, the difference is not much in their magnitude of mean differences.

5. Conclusion

It was hypothesized that general and academic texts of IELTS are different in their lexical richness and syntactic complexity; and second, syntactic complexity has the same potential as lexical richness for making academic texts difficult to comprehend. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in AWL-OL index of academic and general texts, positive for academic texts, i.e., first hypothesis was proved. There was also a significant difference in MLTU index of academic and general texts, positive for academic texts, i.e., second hypothesis was proved. These results are consistent with earlier findings (Gaies, 1979; Nation

and Waring, 1997; Nation, 2006; Cobb and Horst, 2008; and Beers and Nagy, 2009) suggesting that academic and general reading texts are different in their lexical and syntactic requirements. Since the magnitude of the difference in the means for both AWL-OL and MLTU was moderate, MLTU as an index of syntactic complexity could be as effective in the difficulty of academic texts as AWL-OL as an index of lexical richness. That is, lexical richness could no longer be regarded as the single element of difficulty in academic reading tests of IELTS, and complex syntactic structures make such tests difficult to comprehend even when vocabulary is familiar, i.e. third hypothesis proved. This is consistent with earlier findings (Gaies, 1979; and Beers and Nagy, 2009) suggesting that syntactic complexity is also a cause of difficulty in reading academic texts.

In conclusion, we can say that previous claims about lexical richness as the single element of difficulty may be reconsidered at least in academic reading tests, since the presence of complex sentences (long, passive, and ambiguous sentences, relative clauses, etc.) are as mentally challenging for readers in such tests as less-frequent and academic words. These findings that to some extent justify syntactic complexity as important and significant as lexical richness in academic reading, may be explained by the fact that academic texts are abstract and include long, embedded, and complex syntactic structures which also need strong syntactic processing abilities in addition to knowledge of academic and less-frequent words.

The results of the present research may contribute to teachers and learners in EAP fields to deal better with linguistic features of academic texts. Based on the findings of this research, deepening EAP learners' knowledge of academic and less-frequent words and improving their abilities in processing complex syntactic structures may be essential factors in boosting their academic reading performance. By enabling EAP learners to use more complex sentences, to embed less relevant information, to use logical connectors for integrating more sentences (Larsen-freeman, 1978), to be engaged in more university studies (Ortega, 2003), and to improve working memory capacities (Carroll, 2008; and Field, 2003), MLTU scores and syntactic processing abilities of the learners may be improved substantially.

Some limitations restricted the extent of generalizing in the research. First, the sample was small. Second, IELTS academic reading tests are not representative of academic reading texts, since some are too specialized and some are too general (Alderson, 2000). This may be shown in the close AWL indexes of both general and academic reading tests of IELTS, i.e., 6.8 % versus 7.5 % respectively.

For further research, the corpus analysis can be replicated comparing lexical richness and syntactic complexity of ESP materials, e.g., articles published in science vis à vis humanities and social sciences journals. It may also be replicated through comparing academic and ordinary spoken English in their lexical richness and syntactic complexity.

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Title

Consumers' Evaluation of the Content Parameters of the English Course Books (Iranian High-School Level)

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Abstract

This study aimed to evaluate the content of the three English course books written for Iranian High-School students. The proposed hypothesis predicted the content of Iranian English High-School textbooks suffers from lack of EFL textbooks standards from the main consumers' perspectives; teachers' professional and learners' intuitive ones. To this end, 50 EFL teachers holding MA or BA degrees in TEFL who had been teaching High-School English textbooks and 100 senior EFL learners from the three grades of High-School were randomly selected as the participants. Data were collected through: a) two comprehensive textbook evaluation checklists prepared by Joshua Mickley, b) a written protocol based on Leslie E. Sheldon checklist. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed for data analyses. The analyses of chi-square and correlational copulations revealed that Iranian English textbooks do not much meet the consumers' standards in terms of content parameters. Based on the analyses, it is concluded that the content parameters of target textbooks are not

much keeping abreast of the assumed standards and criteria in the field of material development regarding their content.

Keywords: Textbooks, Textbook evaluation, Materials preparations, Context analysis.

1. Introduction

It goes without saying that English language is of prime importance and being able to communicate in this language is one of the keys for success in any field. In Iran, however, English is still considered as a foreign language. Each year, millions of Iranian students attend English classes held in schools with the hope of mastering this highly significant skill. After studying English for almost 6 years in schools, they graduate. Now the question is if these students achieve the first and the most important purpose of learning a language during these years.

It's unfortunate to say that most of the students who have graduated from High Schools are not able to communicate in English even at the very basic levels. Ali Jahangard (2007) stated: "I've been teaching in High School for more than 8 years throughout which time my mind has almost always been occupied with the question that why the curriculum in Iranian public High School meets neither the expectations of the teachers and students nor those of the specialists who were involved in the developing of the curriculum" (p.1). Consequently, after attending English classes for almost 6 years in schools, the majority of these students rush to language institutes in order to learn the ability that they could not learn in educational system in schools.

There are many factors which contribute to the learners' success in achieving the ultimate purpose of learning a language. Chief among these factors is the teaching materials (textbooks) which play a significant role in many language classrooms. While the extend of textbooks contribution to students' success in learning is still debatable, it is undeniable that they do play a crucial role in determining learners' success or failure. Regarding the importance of textbooks, Hutchinson and Torres (1994 cited in Litz, 2005) 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).

Regardless of the necessity of textbooks, educational materials including books need to be evaluated in terms of many features to make sure of their match with the objectives they are designed for. Textbooks can be evaluated from many different viewpoints and in terms of many different factors. Content is only one factor among many that can be the basis for textbook evaluation. Content mainly accommodates vocabulary and grammar, exercises and activities. Subsequently, each factor has its own categories and subcategories. And for each factor, different textbook evaluation checklists exist that specifically define the details and elements that should be considered while evaluating.

2. Review of the Related Literature

2.1. Curriculum development

It is unquestionable that developing and evaluating materials cannot be considered apart from curriculum development in language education. Nunan (2001) says "curriculum is concerned with the planning, implementation, evaluation, management, and administration of education programs"(p.8). Wilkins, (1976) defined Curriculum development as " ...the curriculum includes the goals, objectives, content, processes, resources, and means of evaluation of all the learning experiences planned for pupils both in and out of the school and community through classroom instruction and related programs" (p.18). In other words, curriculum development is a term which covers both materials preparation and materials evaluation.

2.2. Syllabus design

The concept of curriculum development is closely related to syllabus design. Candlin (1984) stated that "syllabuses are more localized and are based on accounts and records of what actually happens at the classroom level as teachers and learners apply a given curriculum to their own situation" (p.31). On the other hand, Harmer (2001) says "syllabus design concerns the selection of items to be learnt and the grading of those items into an appropriate sequence"(p. 295). Also Widowson (1984) maintains that "...the syllabus is simply a framework within which activities can be carried out: a teaching advice to facilitate learning. It only becomes a threat to pedagogy when it is regarded as absolute rules for determining what is to be learned" (p.26).

Within any syllabus identified as an orderly presentation of instructional materials, textbook plays a crucial part since the framework is boxed in the textbook as a means to the determined end. Syllabus evaluation as an unavoidable requirement for any respective curriculum would be rational through the channel of textbook evaluation.

2.3. Textbooks Evaluation

Generally speaking, “an evaluation is a judgment of merits, sometimes based solely on the measurement such as those provided by test scores but more frequently involving the synthesis of various measurement, critical incidents, subjective impressions, and other kinds of evidences” (Ebel, 1980, p. 554). Sheldon (1988) stated “whether we like it or not, textbooks represent for both students and teachers the visible heart of any ELT program. The selection of a particular core volume signals an executive educational decision in which there is considerable professional, financial, and even political investment”(p.237). In addition, Allwright (1981) stated that “The use of the textbook, for a sensible review to be possible, has then to be *monitored* to permit *evaluation* of its use and effectiveness, and the result can then go forward to inform subsequent decisions”(p.5).

2.4. Types of textbook evaluation

Many authors have proposed different classifications for the types of textbook evaluation among which the one suggested by Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) could be considered the most comprehensive one. They believe that there are three main types of textbook evaluation: pre-use evaluation, in-use evaluation, post-use evaluation.

Pre-use or predictive evaluation: As the most common form, it is designed to determine the possible performance of the book in future. Hayo Reinders and Marilyn Lewis (2006) stated, “at the pre-use stage, materials are seen as work plans or constructs” (p.1). Ellis (1997) claims that predictive evaluation are performed by experts or teachers using checklists and guidelines and they are used to determine appropriateness for a specific context.

In-use evaluation: Refers to a continuous evaluation of the material currently in use. At the in-use Stage, ‘long-term, systematic evaluation of the material ... is generally considered to be successful.’(Tomlinson, 1998:5) The in-use evaluation includes ‘formative decisions for improvement through supplementation, adaptation and sensitizing teachers to their own teaching methodology as well as their learning situation’ (Nedkova 2000:210)

Post-use or retrospective evaluation: As an advantage, Jahangard (2007) calls it “an attempt to check the characteristics of textbooks under study against a collection of criteria’s proposed by various researchers” (p.2).

2.5. Empirical studies

A number of scholars have studied Iranian High School textbooks from different perspectives. Riazi and Mosalanejad (2010) evaluated the learning objectives in Iranian High-school and pre-university English textbooks using Bloom’s taxonomy of learning objectives. They came to the conclusion that there is even a lack of progression from the lowest

(knowledge) to the highest (evaluation) cognitive levels as one move from Grade 1 to pre-university textbooks. Abbasian and Hassan Oghli's (2011) study entitled: "Evaluation of Iranian EFL textbooks :(a study of learner- teacher's criteria compatibility" revealed that teachers and learners held different views on most areas and criteria related to textbooks; signifying that their views are not much compatible, though they held some common views with respect to certain measures. Meanwhile, the teachers showed to be less satisfied with the EFL textbooks than their learners. Jahangard (2007) , in the same vein, claimed that "In sum, the final goals of the EFL program, as well as the behavioral objectives which are aimed at by the curriculum designers, are obscure and remain to be delineated"(p.3). He also asserted that "Teachers actually dissent as to what teaching methodology to be employed, which skills and psycholinguistic abilities to emphasize and what to include in their exams. Now, the nationwide exams which are administered by the officials for third graders are playing the role of an agreement document among teachers which, in turn, has its own negative effects known as the 'wash back effect'(p.3).

Chief among the pertinent studies one may refer to those conducted by Amalsaleh (2004), Ansary and Babaii (2002), Yarmohammadi (2002) and Shahedi (2002), among others. Amalsaleh (2004) examined the representation of social factors in three types of textbooks, including junior and senior High School textbooks, based on Van Leeuwen's model (1996).the results showed that the textbooks demonstrated a representation of social factors that tended to depict females as belonging to a home context and having limited job opportunities in society. In addition, junior and senior High School textbooks tended to shape normative views of gender and class relations in which a middle-class urban male was considered to be the norm. Ansary and Babaii's (2002) study was an exploratory study which has lead to offering common core features of standard EFL/ESL textbooks. Yarmohammadi (2002) evaluated the senior High School textbooks based on a revised version of Tucker's model. He came to the conclusion that these textbooks suffer from a lot of shortcomings: 1. they are not authentic; 2. English and Persian names are used interchangeably; and 3. oral skills are ignored. Shahedi (2001) analyzed one of the leading texts in TPSOL and stated that in these series, not enough attention has been attached to the four skills of the language. Moreover, the manner and amount of the presentation of vocabulary and pronunciation are not in harmony with language learners' proficiency levels.

2.6. Purpose of the study

While textbooks provide the structure and a central core for the process of teaching and learning in any academic course, there have been unfortunately, too few researches on their

nature at least in the Iranian setting. To this end and to fill the stated gap, this study aimed at evaluating Iranian High School English textbooks designed for Iranian High School students from content perspective which specifically focuses on material presentation, second language culture relatedness, authenticity, potential for challenging critical thinking, use of variety of literary genres, vocabulary and grammar, exercises, and activities of the series of high-school English course books.

The following research questions were raised in the present study

1. Do the content parameters of Iranian English High School textbooks meet the EFL teacher' needs and expectations?
2. Do the content parameters of Iranian English High School textbooks meet the EFL learners' needs and expectations?
3. Do the content parameters of Iranian English High School textbooks meet the teachers' professional and the learners' intuitive standard criteria?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

50 EFL teachers holding an MA or BA degree, and 100 EFL learners who have been at three grades in High Schools were the participants of this study.

3.2. Instrumentation

Two different checklists were used in this study. The first one was Miekley's checklist (2005) entitled "Textbook Evaluation Checklist", which consists of 40 items classified into three main categories as textbook, teachers' manual, and context. The second checklist was proposed by Sheldon (1988), which consists of 17 items as rationale, availability, user definition layout and Figures, accessibility, linkage, selection, grading, appropriacy, authenticity, sufficiency, cultural bias, stimulus practical revision, flexibility, guidance, and overall value for money. Another instrument used in this study was in the form of two separate written protocols based on the two checklists mentioned. Each protocol consisted of 11 items to be answered. The rationale behind the written protocols use was to enhance the reliability of the data. Written protocols allow opportunities for the respondents to open-endedly express their views. Three English High School textbooks which are being taught in Iran were used in this study. These books are entitled

Birjandi, P., Norozi, M. and Mahmoodi, GH. (2011)English Book One. Iran Textbook Development Center

Birjandi, P., Norozi, M. and Mahmoodi, GH. (2011)English Book Two. Iran Textbook Development Center

Birjandi, P., Norozi, M. and Mahmoodi, GH. (2011)English Book Three. Iran Textbook Development Center

3.3. Procedures

To conduct the study, the participants were first randomly selected from various High Schools in Kermanshah, Iran. Then, both groups of the participants were given the checklists and protocols. The checklists and protocols for teachers were in English but the ones for the learners were in Persian.

3.4. Design

The design of the study is a survey which takes advantage of checklists and protocols.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was the most demanding section of this study as far as multiple analyses were required. To this end, the data from both checklists were coded and inserted into SPSS software version 16.0 for analyzing. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were run. In other words, the data was analyzed both as a whole and in details. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistic included chi-square analysis, and correlational analysis like frequency and percentage were calculated for both checklists by both groups of participants.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Investigation of the research question one

The aim of the first question raised in this research was to investigate if the content parameters of Iranian English High School textbooks meet the EFL teacher' needs and expectations. The investigation of this question was followed through percentage, Frequency and Chi-Square and of the data gathered from EFL teachers. Table 1 displays the frequencies and the percentages of the teachers' responses to the checklists. The teachers evaluated Iranian English High School textbooks as being poor at all nine main categories of Content Presentation, Teaching Culture, Authenticity, and Challenges for Critical Thinking, Use of Variety of Literary Genres, Vocabularies, Grammar, Exercises and Activities, and Attractiveness. Except for two items of "Content Presentation" and "Exercises and Activities" which are evaluated as "Adequate" by the teachers, The Percentages of teachers selecting the "Poor" and "Lacking" choices for the above mentioned categories are more than the percentages of teachers selecting other alternatives like "Excellent", "Good" and

“Adequate”. A total of 31 percent of teachers evaluated these textbooks as “Poor” and 28.1% as Lacking”. While only 14 percent of them evaluated these textbooks as “Good” and 7.42 percent as “Adequate”.

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of Teachers’ Responses to the Checklists

		CHOICES					TOTAL
		Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Lacking	
Content Presentation	N	10	18	33	37	28	100
	%	10%	18%	33%	37%	28%	100%
Teaching Culture	N	2	7	6	22	13	50
	%	4%	14%	12%	44%	26%	100%
Authenticity	N	4	11	5	18	12	50
	%	8%	22%	10%	36%	24%	100%
Critical Thinking	N	13	24	26	18	19	100
	%	13%	24%	26%	18%	19%	100%
Literary Genres	N	2	4	5	15	24	50
	%	4%	8%	10%	30%	48%	100%
Vocabularies	N	8	13	20	65	93	200
	%	4%	6.5%	10%	32.5%	46.5%	100%
Grammar	N	5	8	14	37	36	100
	%	5%	8%	14%	37%	36%	100%
Exercises	N	19	49	55	53	24	200
	%	9.5%	24%	27.5%	26%	12%	100%
Total	N	78	147	216	336	296	1050
	%	7.42%	14%	20.5%	32%	28.1%	100%

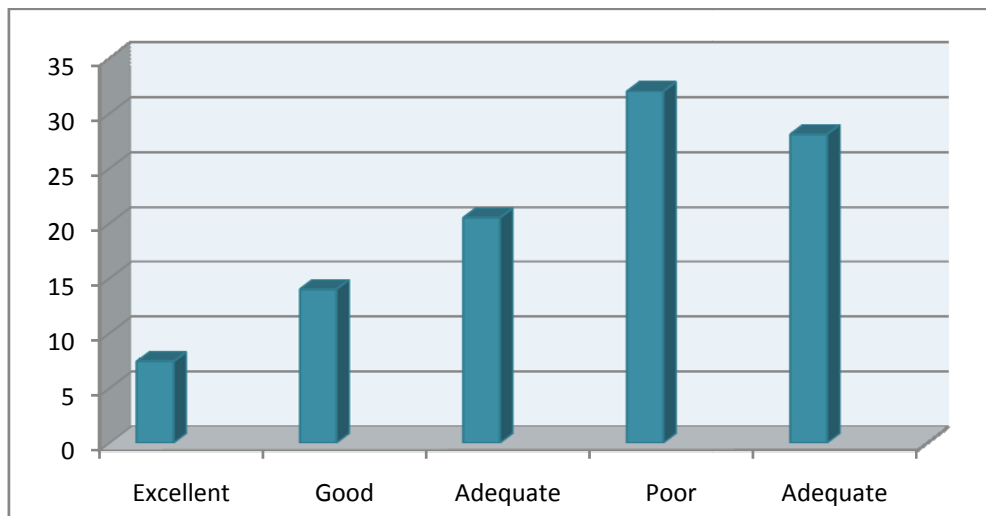
This result is also verified by the Chi-square value of 24.41 presented In Table 2. The computed value exceeds the appropriate critical value which justifies rejection of the Null Hypothesis at the .01 degree of freedom. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the content parameters of Iranian High School English textbooks do not meet the EFL teacher’ needs and expectations.

Table 2: Analysis of Chi Square on Teachers View

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi Square	24.41a	12	.01
a.3 cells (15.0%)have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.24.			

Figure 1 demonstrates the percentages of the teachers' views toward Iranian High School English textbooks.

Figure 1: Percentages of the Teachers' Views.



As it is demonstrated, it can be expressed that the teachers are not generally satisfied with the Iranian High School English textbooks. A total 32% of them evaluated these books as “Poor”. Although they are more satisfied with the way the content of these books are presented and the exercises and activities. 18 and 33 percent of teachers evaluated “Content Presentation” as “Good” and “Adequate” and 24 and 27 percent of them evaluated the exercises and activities “Good” and “Adequate”.

4.2. Investigation of Research Question Two

The second research question aimed to investigate if the content parameters of Iranian High School English textbooks meet the EFL learners' needs and expectations. Similar statistical analyses as those of the first research question were run. The learners hold more positive attitudes toward their English textbooks at High Schools. Table 3 displays the frequencies and percentages of the students' responses to the 9 main items mentioned in the checklists. The findings revealed that students hold more positive views toward their English textbooks in terms of “Content Presentation”, “Grammar” and “Exercises”. 32 percent of students evaluated the presentation of content as adequate. Also 35.5 and 34.5 percent of them evaluated grammar and exercises as adequate. However, they hold negative view toward other 5 items including “Authenticity”, “Teaching Culture”, “Vocabularies” and “Use of Variety of Literary Genre”. A total 30.7 percent of them evaluated these textbooks as “Poor” and only 9.38 percent of them chose the choice “Excellent”.

Table 3: Frequencies and Percentages of Students' Responses to the Checklists

		CHOICES					TOTAL
		Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Lacking	
Content Presentation	N	23	48	64	40	25	200
	%	11.1%	24%	32%	20%	12.5%	100%
Teaching Culture	N	12	17	16	32	23	100
	%	12%	17%	16%	32%	23%	100%
Authenticity	N	13	9	19	33	26	100
	%	8%	9%	19%	33%	26%	100%
Critical Thinking	N	33	44	38	46	39	200
	%	16.5%	22%	18%	43%	19%	100%
Literary Genres	N	11	9	17	35	28	100
	%	11%	9%	17%	35%	28%	100%
Vocabularies	N	24	73	112	126	65	400
	%	6%	18.25%	28%	31.5%	16.5%	100%
Grammar	N	12	30	71	58	29	200
	%	6%	15%	35.5%	28%	14.5%	100%
Exercises	N	39	52	138	105	66	400
	%	9.75%	13%	34.5%	26.25%	16.5%	100%
Total	N	197	336	567	625	355	2100
	%	9.38%	16%	25%	30.7%	16.9%	100%

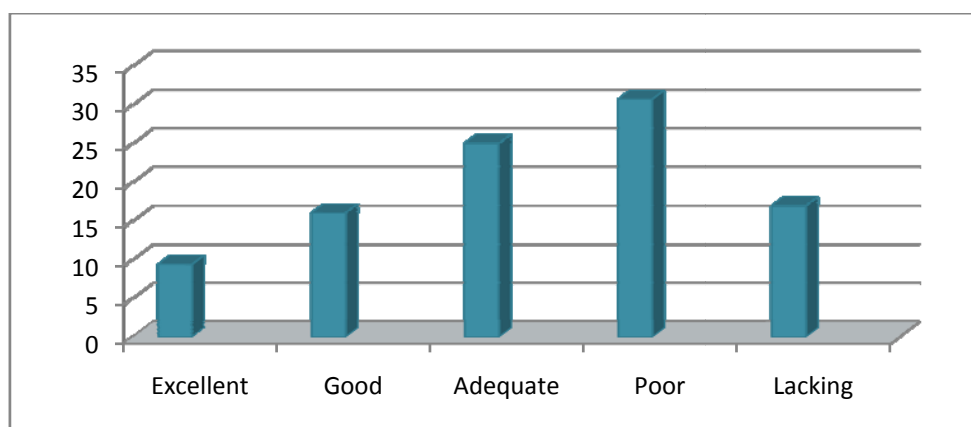
These results are also verified by the significant Chi-square value of 34.95 presented in Table 4. also Figure 4 also shows the percentages of students' views toward Iranian High School English textbooks.

Table 4: Analysis of Chi-Square on Students' Views

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi Square	34.95a	12	.01
a.0 cells (0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.53.			

The computed value exceeds the appropriate critical value at .01 degree of freedom. Based on these results it can be concluded that Iranian students are not satisfied with the content of their English textbooks, although they evaluated three specific features of these textbooks as adequate. Then, the second research question was similarly rejected.

Figure 2: Percentages of the Students' Views.



4.3. Investigation of Research Question Three

The aim of the third research question was to investigate if the content parameters meet the teachers' and learners' professional and intuitive standard criteria of content development and presentation, respectively. As the analyses made concerning the question one and two, further analyses were made to compare the perspectives of both groups on the content of English textbooks designed for Iran's High School students.

Table 5 displays the frequencies and percentages both the teachers and students' responses to the checklists. The teachers evaluated these textbooks more negatively. 60 percent of them evaluated the textbooks as "Poor" or "Lacking" while the same percentage for students is 47.6 percent. On the other hand, 21.42 percent of teachers had positive views toward the content of these textbooks as far as they chose the choices of "Excellent" and "Good" while the same percentage for the students is 25.38. Moreover, a total of 51.21 percent of all participants hold negative views toward the content of English textbooks taught at Iran's educational system and 24.3 percent of them hold positive views.

Table 5: Frequencies and Percentages of Students and Teachers' Responses

		CHOICES					Total
		Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Lacking	
Teachers	N	78	147	216	336	296	1050
	%	7.42%	14%	20.5%	32%	28.1%	100%
Students	N	197	336	567	625	355	2100
	%	9.38%	16%	25%	30.7%	16.9%	100%
Total	N	275	483	783	961	651	3150
	%	8.7%	15.33%	24.85%	30.50%	20.66%	100%

The observed chi-square presented in Table 6 exceeds the appropriate critical value at .00 degree of freedom implying that the Null Hypothesis is rejected. It can be concluded that the content parameters of Iranian English High School textbooks meet neither the expectations of teachers nor those of the students. The results also show that the content parameters do not

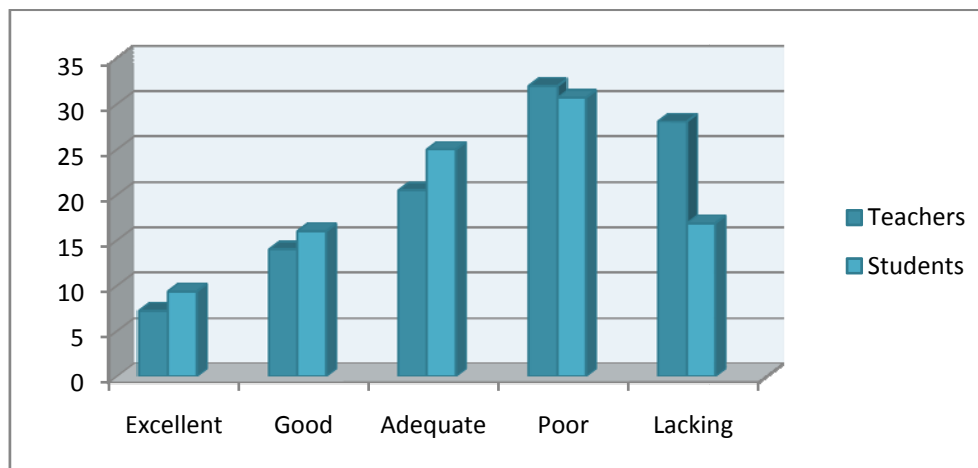
meet the standard criteria of content development and presentation from the learners and teachers perspectives, of course.

Table 6: Analysis of Chi-Square on Students and teachers' Views

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi Square	35.22a	4	.00
a.0 cells (0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 29.89			

Based on these results, it can be concluded that teachers hold more negative views toward High Schools textbooks as compared to that of student and students evaluated these textbooks as “Adequate” more than teachers. Figure 3 also shows the percentages of teachers and students’ views toward the content of English textbooks at High School level. Still, as it is shown in Figure 3, both students and teachers chose the item “poor” more than the other alternatives.

Figure 3: Frequencies and Percentages of Students and Teachers' Responses



To investigate if there are any significant differences between the teachers and students ‘evaluations of the content of Iranian High-School English textbooks, descriptive statistics and correlational analyses were run.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics: Teachers and Students' Evaluations

	Mean	Std. deviation
Teachers	3.54	3.34
Students	1.24	1.20

As illustrated in Table 7, the grand means of teachers and students’ evaluation is 3.54 and 3.34, respectively, implying that both groups of participant hold the same views toward the content of High Schools English textbooks.

Table 8: Correlational analyses: Teachers and Students' Evaluation

	Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Pearson's R	.902	.021	14.447	.000 ^c
Spearman correlation	.884	.030	13.101	.000 ^c

Based on the observed values, it can be concluded there are not significant differences between the teachers and students' attitudes and views on the content of High School English textbooks.

4.4. Written Protocols Data Analysis

As a triangulating effort and in order to maximize the reliability of the data collected, a written protocol was applied. The participants answered 11 items extracted from the checklists, addressing mainly:

1. Rationales, goals, and objectives
2. Layout/Figures
3. User Definition and specification of the target learners
4. Accessibility and organization of the content
5. Linkage/connection in terms of situation and topics
6. Selection/Grading
7. Appropriacy
8. Authenticity
9. Sufficiency
10. Cultural bias
11. Stimulus/practice/revision

All the data gathered through the Protocol were analyzed in terms of the frequencies and percentages of the Participants' common views on each item.

The first item addressed the textbooks' rationales, goals, and objectives. Concepts such as clear, good, general, unclear, and lacking were the items which enjoyed the highest frequency. As illustrated in Table 9, 29.3 percent of all participants believed that the statement of goals and objectives in High School English textbooks are not clearly stated. Also 18 percent of all participants believed that learning goals and objectives are not stated at all. Only 12 percent of all participants evaluated this item as clear, 16 percent Good.

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics on the 1st Item of the Written Protocol

Item No.1							Total
		Clear	Good	General	Unclear	Lacking	
Teachers	N	4	16	10	13	7	50
	%	8%	32%	20%	26%	14%	100%
Students	N	12	26	9	33	20	100
	%	12%	26%	9%	33%	20%	100%
Total	N	18	24	19	44	27	150
	%	12%	16%	12.6	29.3	18%	100%

The second item addressed the “Layout and graphs”. Concepts such as Bad, Irrelevant, Black and White, Old, and Childish were the items which enjoyed the highest frequency regarding this item. It was surprising that almost none of the participants had a positive view toward the physical characteristics, pictures and illustrations. The findings are illustrated in Table 8.

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics on the 2nd Item of the Written Protocol

Item No.2							Total
		Bad	Irrelevant	Black/white	Old	Childish	
Teachers	N	14	15	8	9	4	50
	%	28%	30%	16%	18%	8%	100%
Students	N	11	12	15	7	5	100
	%	11%	12%	15%	7%	5%	100%
Total	N	25	27	23	16	9	150
	%	16.6%	18%	15.3%	10.6%	6%	100%

As shown in Table 10, a total 16 percent of all participants believed that the pictures, Figures and the layout of High Schools English textbooks are irrelevant and that they do not clarify the learning points. While 30 percent of teachers believed evaluate this item as irrelevant, the majority of students hold negative views toward the textbooks expressing that pictures and illustrations are black and white. Also 12 percent of students believed that these pictures are old and childish.

The third item addressed “User Definition and specification of the target learners”. This item investigated if there is a clear specification of the target age range, background, probable learning preferences, and educational expectation. In other words, it attempted to specify if the entry/exit language levels are precisely defined. Unfortunately like the previous

item, none of the participants hold positive view toward this aspect of the textbooks. The concepts like “Weak”, “Lacking” enjoyed the highest frequencies.

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics on the 3rd Item of the Written Protocol

Item No.3				Total
		Weak	Lacking	
Teachers	N	23	27	50
	%	46%	54%	100%
Students	N	39	61	100
	%	39%	61%	100%
Total	N	62	88	150
	%	41.3%	58.6%	100%

As shown in Table 11, 54 percent of teachers and 61 percent of students believed that Iranian High Schools English textbooks do not have specification of the target age range, background, probable learning preferences, and educational expectation. Also a total of 41.3 percent of both groups evaluated this item as “Weak” and 58.6 percent as “Lacking”.

The fourth item addressed “accessibility and organization of the content” in order to specify if the material is clearly organized and if different sections of the textbook allow students to use the material easily specially for the purpose of self-study. . The concepts like “Good”, “Satisfying” and “Confusing”, enjoyed the highest frequencies. The findings observed are shown in Table 12.

Table 12. Descriptive Statistics on the 4th Item of the Written Protocol

Item No.4					Total
		Good	Satisfying	Confusing	
Teachers	N	21	24	5	50
	%	42%	48%	10%	100%
Students	N	22	15	63	100
	%	22%	15%	63%	100%
Total	N	43	39	68	150
	%	28.6%	26%	45%	100%

As shown in Table 12, teachers are more satisfied with the organization of the content and accessibility as far as 48 percent of them evaluated this item as “satisfying”. Unlike teachers, students are not satisfied with content organization and that 63 percent of them evaluated the content organization as “confusing”. In general, a total of 45 percent of both groups of participants evaluated this item as “Lacking”

The fifth item addressed “Linkage/connection in terms of situation and topics” to see if the units and exercises connect in terms of theme, situation, topic and pattern of skill development. In other words, the question is if the nature of connection is obvious by placing input texts and supporting exercises in proximity. Regarding this item, the concepts of

“Good”, “Related”, Irrelevant” and “Weak” were the most common. The findings are shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Descriptive Statistics on the 5th Item of the Written Protocol

Item No.5						Total
		Good	Related	Irrelevant	Weak	
Teachers	N	12	10	14	14	50
	%	24%	20%	28%	28%	100%
Students	N	3	10	51	36	100
	%	3%	10%	51%	36%	100%
Total	N	15	20	65	50	150
	%	10%	13.3%	43.3	33.3	100%

As shown in Table 13, a total 43.3 percent of all participants evaluated this item as “irrelevant”. In other words, they believed that units and exercises are not connected in terms of theme and topics and situations. Only 12 percent of teachers and 3 percent of students evaluated this item as “Good”.

The Sixth item addressed the “Selection/Grading”. This item investigated a discernable system in selection and grading of different sections in Iranian High School English textbooks. Students and teachers evaluated this item from different perspectives differently. The concepts of “systematic”, “useful”, “unsystematic”, and “Weak” enjoyed the highest frequency. The findings are summarized in Table 14.

Table 14: Descriptive Statistics on the 6th Item of the Written Protocol

Item No.6						Total
		Systematic	Useful	Unsystematic	Weak	
Teachers	N	8	7	23	12	50
	%	16%	14%	46%	24%	100%
Students	N	3	10	21	66	100
	%	3%	10%	21%	66%	100%
Total	N	11	17	44	78	150
	%	7.3%	11.3%	29.3%	52%	100%

As shown in Table 14, 46 percent of teachers and 21 percent of students evaluated this item as “Unsystematic”. Also 24 percent of teachers and 66 percent of students evaluated this item as “Weak”. While a total 81 percent of all participants hold negative views toward the selection and grading of content in Iranian High School English textbooks 19 percent they held positive attitudes toward the selection and grading. Still they believed that the content sequence, selection and grading are based on a linguistic system.

The Seventh item addressed the “Appropriacy”. The question raised was if the textbooks’ content is interesting enough to hold the attentions of learners and if it is at the

right conceptual level. Regarding this issue, the concepts of “Good”, “Boring”, “Repetitive” and “old” enjoyed the highest frequency. The findings observed are illustrated in Table 15.

Table 15: Descriptive Statistics on the 7th Item of the Written Protocol

Item No.7						Total
		Good	Boring	Repetitive	Old	
Teachers	N	10	14	5	21	50
	%	20%	28%	10%	42%	100%
Students	N	5	48	15	32	100
	%	5%	48%	15%	32%	100%
Total	N	15	62	20	53	150
	%	24.19%	41.3%	13.3%	35%	100%

As it can be observed, 24 percent of all participants held positive views toward the item of “Appropriacy”. A total 80.1 percent of both groups believed that the content of Iranian High Schools English textbooks is boring, repetitive and old.

The Eighth item addressed the “Authenticity”. The question is if the content is obviously realistic, being taken from L1 material not initially intended for ELT purposes. In other words, do the tasks exploit language in a communicative and ‘real-world’ way? The concepts of “Good”, “Average” and “Lacking” were the most frequent responses given to this item. The results are shown in Table 16.

Table 16: Descriptive Statistics on the 8th Item of the Written Protocol

Item No.8					Total
		Good	Average	Lacking	
Teachers	N	3	5	42	50
	%	6%	10%	84%	100%
Students	N	5	13	82	100
	%	5%	13%	82%	100%
Total	N	8	18	124	150
	%	5.3%	12%	82.6%	100%

As shown in Table 16, a significant number of all participants believed that the content of Iranian High School English textbooks is not authentic and that they have designed for purpose of language learning at first place. A total 82.6 percent of all participants evaluated this item as “Lacking” and only 5 percent of them evaluated this item as “Good”.

The Ninth item addressed the “Sufficiency”. This item explores if the books is complete enough to stand on its own or the teacher must produce a lot of ancillary bridging materials to make it workable. Put simply, can a teacher teach the course using only the student’s book or he/she must deploy all the attendant aids. The most frequent concepts observed for the ninth item were “Good”, “Enough”, “Confusing” and “Imperfect”. The findings are shown in Table 17.

Table 17: Descriptive Statistics on the 9th Item of the Written Protocol

Item No.9						Total
		Good	Enough	Confusing	Imperfect	
Teachers	N	5	22	4	19	50
	%	10%	44%	8%	38%	100%
Students	N	7	7	54	32	100
	%	7%	7%	54%	32%	100%
Total	N	12	29	58	51	150
	%	8%	19.3%	38.6%	34%	100%

As shown in Table 17, 38.5 of all participants evaluated the ninth items mentioned in protocol as “confusing”. While teachers were more satisfied with these textbooks as to the item of sufficiency, 54 percent of students believed that the content of their English textbooks were confusing and hard to understand on its own. They believed that they depend strongly on teachers’ explanations so as to understand the instructions, grammar, vocabularies as well as other sections.

The Tenth item addressed the concept of “Cultural Bias”. The questions raised were if different religious and social environment catered for are left out and if an accurate or sanitized view of the USA or Britain could be presented and finally if the unpleasant social realities are left out. The most frequent concepts observed regarding this item were “Adequate”, “weak”, “Rarely” and “Lacking”. The findings are summarized in Table 18.

Table 18: Descriptive Statistics on the 10th Item of the Written Protocol

Item No.10						Total
		Adequate	Weak	Rarely	Lacking	
Teachers	N	8	24	13	5	50
	%	16%	48%	26%	10%	100%
Students	N	9	12	18	61	100
	%	9%	12%	18%	61%	100%
Total	N	17	36	31	66	150
	%	11.3%	24%	20.6%	44%	100%

As illustrated in Table 18, 44 percent of all participants believed that there is almost no attention paid to teaching the culture of second language .Many students believed that the pictures and topics in their English textbooks represent Iranian people’s culture and way of living. Also the topics chosen for the readings sections are generally scientific topics which have nothing to do with the actual culture, custom and traditions of the people who speak the target language.

The Eleventh item addressed the “Stimulus/practice/revision”. It evaluated the extent to which the course material is interactive and if there are sufficient opportunities for the

learner to use his or her English so that effective consolidation takes place. Also, it attempted to investigate if the material is likely to be remembered by learners. Table 19 summarizes the findings.

Table 19: Descriptive Statistics on the 11th Item of the Written Protocol

Item No.17						Total
		Good	Adequate	Weak	Lacking	
Teachers	N	24	13	7	6	50
	%	48%	26%	14%	12%	100%
Students	N	11	16	53	20	100
	%	11%	16%	53%	20%	100%
Total	N	35	29	60	26	150
	%	23.3%	19.3%	40%	17.3%	100%

The results showed that teachers are more satisfied with this aspect of textbooks and that they believe the learning materials are likely to be remembered by the students as far as they evaluated this item 48 percent “good”. Unfortunately, this is not how students feel. A total of 73 percent of all students hold negative views toward the potential of their English textbooks to stimulate them. By and large, 40 percent of both groups of the participants evaluated this item as “Weak”.

5. Discussion

As stated before, three research questions were raised in this study. The results revealed that in general, neither teachers nor students hold positive views toward the content of English course books at high school level. The teachers evaluated these textbooks more negatively. 60 percent of them evaluated the textbooks as “Poor” or “Lacking” while the same percentage for students is 47.6 percent. These findings are aligned with the findings of study conducted by Abbasian and Hassan-Oghli (2011) which proved that the main consumers are less satisfied with textbooks than their learners.

In addition, the results of this study revealed that teachers and students hold different views toward some specific items mentioned in both checklists and protocols. As an example, the learners approached positively the exercises and vocabulary and grammar presentation in their course books, while the teachers did negatively. These findings are also compatible with the findings of the study conducted by Abbasian and Hassan-Oghli (2011) which revealed that teachers and learners hold different views on most areas and criteria related to the EFL textbooks.

Moreover, in this study, the written protocols analysis revealed that 29.3 percent of all participants believed that the statement of goals and objectives in High School English textbooks are not clearly stated and 18 percent of them believed that learning goals and objectives are not stated at all. Regarding this issue, Jahangard's (2007) claim and position is warranted. The findings of the present study also proved that both teachers and student had totally negative views toward the Iranian high school English course books as far concepts such as 'Bad', 'Irrelevant', 'Black and White', 'Old', and 'Childish' were the items which enjoyed the highest frequency regarding this item.

Conclusively speaking, then, the content parameters of the Iranian English High School Course books are judged meeting the standard criteria of neither the teachers nor the learners'. Although teachers were more satisfied with some specific features of these course books, in general, both teachers and students had negative attitudes toward these course books, although students were more satisfied about the exercises and grammar. The results of this study are of value since it has taken the ideas of both teachers and students into account; the perspectives of those who deal with this course books. In other words, this study is the reflection of Iranian high school English textbooks' strengths and weaknesses. Now, this is the responsibility of policy makers, curriculum planners and syllabus designers to develop or update the materials which have been used in Iran's educational system for years and open new horizons for innovations which will consequently change Iranian High School English textbooks for betterment.

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Title

The Effect of Cultural Familiarity on Reading Comprehension of Intermediate Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of familiarity with the cultural background of a text on the reading comprehension performance. 56 Iranian TEFL university students participated in this study. These students were given an Iranian and an English story to read in two separate sessions. They were asked to write down in their mother tongue anything they could remember from the texts immediately after they finished reading them. The results of this study showed a profound facilitative influence of cultural familiarity on reading comprehension. These findings encourage the L2 teachers and material developers to use culturally familiar texts teaching reading comprehension courses and to devise pre-reading activities when they are bound to utilize a passage assuming a more distant cultural identity.

Keywords: Cultural familiarity, Reading comprehension, Intermediate language learners.

1. Introduction

As the main source of comprehensible input for extending the language knowledge and fostering independent learning, reading is properly considered as the most significant and basic skill in the learning of any language. Yet, a large percentage of EFL and ESL learners, even in the advanced levels of second language proficiency, fail to do as it should be expected on the English texts (Peretz & Shoham, 1990; Alptekin, 2006). Some researchers attribute this situation to the readers' insufficient language knowledge and the linguistic

difficulty of the texts, arguing that they are responsible for the readers' not comprehending the L2 passages efficiently (Salmani-Nodoushan, 2003; Alderson, 2000). These people believe in the existence of a kind of language threshold (Clarke, 1980; Eskey, 2005) beyond which readers should progress until they can read and comprehend foreign language texts well.

Others while agreeing that language proficiency is an important component of the reading process; they see it as not enough. They claim that some nonlinguistic factors such as the prior or world knowledge that the reader brings to bear before he or she begins to read are involved in deriving meaning from printed work. (Reynold, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirley, & Anderson, 1982; Bartlet, 1932; Carrell, 1983, 1987; Carrell&Eisterhold, 1983; Johnson, 1981, 1982; Brantmeier, 2003, 2004; Pulido, 2003, 2004 a, 2004b, 2007). So, they maintain that the lack of the appropriate background knowledge for a text or the failure to activate it appropriately is the main obstacle to read and understand a text flawlessly.

The studies investigating the role of prior knowledge in reading comprehension have generally shown that the more the text interact with the readers' cultural-specific background knowledge, the better the quality of comprehension will be (Bartlet, 1923; Steffensen, Joag-Dev, & Anderson, 1979; Alice, 1980; Johnson, 1981, 1982; Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, & Anderson, 1982; Carrell, 1987; Kintsch& Greene, 1989; Anne, 1993; Florenico, 2004; Alptekin, 2006; Garth-McCullough, 2008; Erten&Razi, 2009). This interaction happens even when certain words in the original texts are changed into the ones more familiar to the readers (e.g., John to Ali). In addition, it is often a challenge for L2 learners to identify and associate themselves with the characters and content of the passages from the target language culture. Almost all such texts take for granted the cultural assumptions of native speakers of that language. In other words, most writers write for a culturally familiar audience of readers and assume that these readers share common knowledge base and value system. So, second language readers frequently, if not invariably, encounter topics and attitudes in their reading that are new or strange to them which hinder their comprehension (Eskey, 2005). Therefore, what is needed for a genuine comprehension to take place is some kind of cultural membership that leads to the development of “interpretive communities” through which readers can interpret the meaning of a text by rewriting it in their minds based on the shared values, customs, and assumptions (Fish, 1980).

Widdowson (1990) stresses the use of familiar texts in general as they reduce the burden of focusing on language forms. For example, he argues, if one is engaged in reading a text whose content is familiar, he/she only needs to pay attention to the linguistic signs to the

degree that they fit in this schematic knowledge. On the contrary, if one reads a text with an unfamiliar content area, he or she have to look more closely at the language itself as the main source of information as to what is meant (p.105). Coady (as cited in Carrel &Eisterhold, 1986) also suggests that background knowledge can compensate for certain syntactic problems the readers encounter in second language passages.

The ideas just mentioned in favor of using culturally familiar texts are supported by what is known as the Schema Theoretic model of comprehension. The main concept of this model, the schema, is a kind of cognitive construct allowing for the organization of information in the long term memory (Widdowson, 1983) and acting like a "reference store" from which a person can retrieve relevant existing knowledge and into which new information is assimilated (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). According to the schema theory or model, in the comprehension of language input, people activate relevant schemata or background knowledge which gives them an opportunity to process and interpret new experiences quickly and efficiently (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). In other words, when one encounters a topic in reading or listening, one activates the schema for that topic and makes uses of it to anticipate, infer, and make different kinds of judgments and decisions about it. As it may be clear, one of the basic tenets of this theory is that meaning does not entirely reside in the text but it is created through the interaction between the reader and the text. In addition, schema theory implies that one of the main reasons why readers cannot understand a particular text appropriately is that they either do not possess the right schemata or fail to activate it. This case, the absence of the suitable background knowledge or the failure to activate it, may be due to the fact that the schemata assumed by the text are culturally specific and are not part of the readers' cultural background knowledge. The studies that will be considered in the following part of this study have shown that texts whose content is based on one's own culture are to be read and understood easier than the syntactically and rhetorically equivalent texts based on a less familiar and more distant culture.

In an attempt to provide more empirical evidence for the idea of using texts being in vicinity of students' cultural reality, the present study intends to shed more light on the influences the familiarity with the overall cultural background of a text may have on the reading comprehension performance.

2. Review of Literature

Among the pioneers investigating the role of the schematic knowledge in the receptive skills was Sir Frederic Bartlett who studied the effect of cultural background knowledge on the

reading comprehension in 1923. He examined the examples produced by the educated Englishmen trying to recall an American Indian folktale. He found that these subjects modified the tale in a manner consistent with their own culture. Through his study, Bartlett concluded that an individual who reads a story that presupposes the schemata of a foreign culture will comprehend it quite differently from a native and probably would make what a native would classify it as mistakes.

In their study, Steffensen, Joag-Dev, and Anderson (1979) asked a group of nineteen Indians (i.e., citizens of India) and twenty Americans to read two letters about an Indian and American wedding ceremony. They found that the participants read the native passage more rapidly and recalled a large amount of information from it. These results emphasized the pervasive influence of the cultural schemata, which embody the knowledge of the content, on memory and comprehension. In the following lines we came across other researchers who did similar studies and also achieved results parallel to those of Steffensen and her co-researchers.

Droop and Verhoeven (1998) investigated the role of cultural schemata on the reading comprehension of the children acquiring literacy in Dutch as a first and second language. Children were given three types of texts: texts referring to Dutch culture, texts referring to the cultures of immigrants, and neutral texts. These researchers found a facilitating effect of cultural familiarity for both reading comprehension and reading efficiency.

A study by Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, and Anderson (1982), originally conducted to see if any significant differences exist among the subculture groups in the U.S.A, revealed that cultural schemata could influence the way the prose material was interpreted. They asked 105 eighth grade black and white American students to read a passage dealing with an instance of "sounding" or "playing the dozens" that is a form of verbal ritual insult found in the black community. It was found that the black students tended to interpret the passage as being about verbal play, as it actually is, while the white ones tended to interpret it as being about physical aggression.

Johnson (1982) studied the effects of building background knowledge on the reading comprehension of the English L2 learners. She gave her subjects a passage containing familiar and unfamiliar information based on the subjects' recent experience of the Halloween custom. The participants also studied the meanings of the preselected unfamiliar vocabulary words before reading and/or found them during reading the text. Statistical analyses of the reading comprehension tasks done and completed after reading the passage such as the recall and the sentence recognition tasks indicated that prior cultural experience prepared the

readers for the comprehension of the familiar information about Halloween in the passage. Johnson, in addition, found that exposure to the meanings of the target vocabulary by any treatments seems not to have any significant effect on the reading comprehension.

Carrell (1987) investigated the effects of content schemata (i.e., knowledge relative to the content domain of the text) and formal schemata (i.e., knowledge relative to the formal, rhetorical organizational structures of different types of the text) on the ESL reading. In her study, two groups of high intermediate ESL students of Muslim and Catholic/Spanish backgrounds read, recalled and answered questions of the two passages having culturally familiar and unfamiliar content. Within each group, one half of the participants read the texts in a familiar, well-organized rhetorical format and the other half read the same texts organized in an unfamiliar, different way. The results showed that the text with familiar content and rhetorical format produced more reading comprehension than the other one having both unfamiliar content and rhetorical format. Moreover, it is found that in the mixed conditions, that is, familiar content/unfamiliar rhetorical format and/or unfamiliar content/familiar rhetorical format, the content schemata or familiarity with what is being discussed in the text seems to affect the reading comprehension more than the formal schemata.

Kintsch and Greene (1978) examined the influence of cultural content on the first language readers' recall. They asked their participants who were adult American university students to read either a Western or an Alaskan Indian short story. They found that these students gave better summaries for the stories coming from the Western culture than for the collection of the Alaskan Indian myths. For example, when the participants listened to a Brothers Grimm fairy tale and an Apache Indian story, their sequential recall of the latter narrative was poorer.

Johnson (1981) asked a group of Iranian and American university students to read a Mullah Nasser-el-Din story from the Iranian folklore and an American traditional story called Buffalo Bill. The results of this study demonstrated superior performance on the given texts by the members of the cultural group represented in the texts and poorer performance by those not belonging to the cultural context assumed by the passages.

Florencio (2004) investigated the effects of cultural schemata on the reading comprehension of familiar and unfamiliar passages by Brazilian EFL and American university students. The results showed that the both groups of participants performed better on the multiple-choice and cloze tests of the passage related to their own culture. The students also read faster the passage with familiar background knowledge.

Garth-McCullough (2008) tried to explore the effects of cultural orientation of literature and culturally-bound prior knowledge on the reading performance of 117 eighth grade African American students. Based on these students' reading level determined through their performance on a kind of test called Iowa Test of Basic Skills, they were divided into low, mid, and high readers. Before the main study begins, in the first two sessions of the study, the students completed a demographic/reading behavior survey and a prior-knowledge instrument measuring their understanding of the cultural and general content of the texts they were supposed to read in the remainder of the study. In the last three sessions of the research, the subjects read six stories from young adult multicultural analogies, each of which represented such different cultural orientations as African American, Chinese American, and European American. After reading each text, the readers answered literal and inferential multiple-choice reading comprehension questions. At the end of the study and after going through all the measures, the participants completed a short post-survey which asked questions about their interest level, text difficulty and familiarity. The data analyzed in this study revealed that the students' high level of culturally bound prior knowledge of the African American stories significantly and positively influenced their reading comprehension performance on these narratives despite their prior achievement levels. It is worth mentioning that this cultural support was especially important in the mid level.

El-daly (2010) investigated the effects of different EFL materials on the reading comprehension of the Egyptian university students. He did so by trying culturally familiar (an Egyptian story) and unfamiliar (an American story) texts on two experimental groups sampled out from the first and fourth year students studying in the English department of one of the Egyptian universities. The participants went through this study as follows. First, they completed a questionnaire asking them about their reading habits and what their attitude was toward reading in Arabic and English. Second, they read an Egyptian story and answered comprehension questions relating to it. These questions came in four types: true/false, vocabulary, interpretation, and understanding. After reading this text and answering its questions, they completed another questionnaire in which they are asked to report their understanding of the passage they just read. Third, they were given an American story and completed its following exercises. Then, they completed a questionnaire probing about their understanding of the American passage. The analysis of the data collected in this study showed that all the participants, in both first and fourth year, performed better on the familiar (Arabic) story than on the unfamiliar (American) one. They also found the Arabic text easier than its American counterpart.

Chang (2007) conducted a study to examine the impacts of the readers' background knowledge on their reading comprehension. In this study, thirty low intermediate Taiwanese EFL university students were divided into two groups and were given a passage of the same difficulty and familiarity level to read. The two groups, while reading the same passage, were separately taught with a different lesson plan. In one of these lesson plans, through a fifteen-minute warm-up discussion, the teacher and the students performed cultural pre-reading activities to activate the background knowledge necessary to comprehend the text. In the other one, the pupils were deprived of such cultural background information. The whole subjects finished their text and then completed a reading comprehension test. The findings of this study indicated that the participants who had received pre-reading activities scored higher in the reading comprehension test than those who had not been provided with any prior knowledge activation practice.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

56 Iranian university students in two intact classes served as the participants of this study. All of these students majored in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) at Azad university of Ahwaz, a southwestern province in Iran. This population comprised 40 women and 16 men. The students also aged between 18 and 30 with an age average of 24. These students were studying in this institution to achieve a post diploma degree in TEFL. As the participants had intensively received courses in the language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking produced and prepared for the intermediate English learners, they were assumed to be at this level of language proficiency. The two classes picked for the current investigation were also divided into a low and high ability group on the basis of their instructional levels. Those studying in the second semester were taken as the low proficient learners and those studying in the fourth term were considered as the high proficient pupils.

3.2. Instrumentation

3.2.1. The passages

The passages selected for this study were an English translation of an Iranian story titled "the little sugar beets vendor" and an English short narrative "the winepress". The Iranian story was written by the great Iranian author SamadBehrangi which happens in an Iranian village and depicts the hard life of an orphan Iranian boy and his struggle to protect his family. Since this story takes place in an Iranian context, has Iranian characters, and portrays the fight to save the honor of the family represented in a female character, a typically eastern and Iranian

tradition, it was expected that the students would comprehend it easily. The other short tale was written by Josef Essberger and was about a retired French politician telling his friends strange stories about the different kinds of wines he drinks. This short story happens in France, has foreign characters, and is full of French names and also replete with the names of the different types of wine, a beverage forbidden in Iran because of this country's Islamic culture. Therefore this passage has things in its stomach which are strange to a typical Iranian ear. This made us to anticipate that our participants will face difficulties understanding this story efficiently.

Every essential step was taken to make these two passages as equal as possible. They were analyzed through Flesh software of readability formula. It was shown that while the two passages differed in the number of words (1492 for the foreign story and 2182 in the Iranian text) and sentences (117 and 133 in the alien and Iranian texts respectively), their readability grades were nearly equal (Flesh Kincaid Grade Level: 5.88 and 6.28 and Flesh Reading Ease Score: 75.61 and 79.26 for the foreign and Iranian passages separately). Thus, we can surely conclude that the two short stories we have selected for this study are the same regarding the degree of reading difficulty. In this formula, the scores ranging from 70 to 80 represent the fairly easy texts which are suitable for a 7th grade student. Therefore, due to the fact that the reading ease scores of the texts used in this study were within this range (the Iranian story: 79.26 and the foreign story: 75.61), it can be concluded that these two texts are fairly easy to read by an intermediate second language reader.

3.2.2. The Reading Comprehension Questions

The reading comprehension questions unit of both the Iranian and foreign stories consisted of the following sections:

a) Sentence verification or true/false measure

This part of the reading comprehension questions consisted of six items for both the Iranian and foreign story. In this section, the students were required to indicate which items were right (true) or wrong (false) according to the passage.

b) Multiple-choice question tests

The multiple-choice section of the reading comprehension questions in this study had comprised six questions for the Iranian story and ten question items for the foreign story. All the items were provided with four possible responses: three distractors and one correct response.

(c) Essay type questions

In this part which was also constructed to assess the participants' comprehension of the passages they were supposed to read, the students were asked to answer, in much detail as they could, a set of open ended questions derived from these texts.

3.2.3. The Written Recall Task

The free written recall tasks have been used in a number of studies to gauge the participants' reading comprehension and also the quantity of the idea units recalled from the L2 texts (Steffensen, Joag-Dev, & Anderson, 1979; Johnson, 1982; Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, & Anderson, 1982; Brantmeier, 2003, 2004, 2005). In this kind of task, the readers are required to remember and write down as much as they can of what they have just read without looking back at the passage. The validity of the recall procedure, however, has always been questioned on the grounds of the effects of such intervening variables as memory and writing ability on the quality of the recall. For example, Alderson (2000) claimed that one's ability to remember something is different from their ability to understand it. So, he concluded that in recall, we can not distinguish remembering from comprehending. Yet, some other researchers (Bernhardt, 1991; Brantmeier, 2003, 2004, 2005) do not share this view. They argue that in the recall method, the readers are not confined by the predetermined tasks and their role is recognized in meaning construction. Bernhardt (1991), as a major proponent of utilizing recall protocols for testing reading comprehension, claimed that performing a recall task does not influence the readers' understanding of the text in any way. On the other hand, their performance on the other instruments such as the multiple-choice or open-ended questions is often affected by the intervening interactions which may take place among texts, readers, testers, and even among the questions themselves. Furthermore, the presence of retrieval clues in the multiple choice and open-ended questions may have a doping effect on the amount of ideas the test takers can remember from the text.

In order to control for the effects of the intervening variables claimed to be associated with the recall procedure such as memory and also not to overwhelm and overburden the participants with the English writing ability, the participants were instructed to complete the written recall task in their native language, Persian, and immediately after they had finished reading each passage (Bernhardt, 1991).

3.2.4. Text Familiarity Measures

Two measures were used to check the participants' familiarity with the two passages they were assigned to read. The first one was given to the participants before they begin reading each passage. It was a 4-item questionnaire asking the participants if they were familiar with the author of the passage or his/her works and if they had read or heard anything about the

story they were going to read. The students were instructed to provide "yes" or "no" as an answer to each item.

The post-test questionnaire was given to the students immediately after finishing reading each passage. It was a Likert Scale Questionnaire asking the students to identify their degree of familiarity with the content of the text they had just read. This questionnaire had five response options ranging from completely familiar to completely unfamiliar of which the students were supposed to choose only one alternative. The primary purpose of this test was to check if the students were precise enough in answering the pretest questionnaire and to see if the texts were truly familiar or unfamiliar.

4. Procedure

The study was conducted during the regular class time, in the middle of the second semester, and in the presence of the instructors of the classes. In addition, in all phases of the data collection, the researcher was present and provided any help the participants needed. The students were first told that they were going to be given a passage to read for comprehension and nothing was mentioned about any test that might follow.

The participants went through the steps of the study in two separate sessions. In the first session, they were first given a pre-test questionnaire asking them about their prior familiarity with the Iranian story, its author and his works. Then, they were asked to read the Iranian story. Immediately after they finished reading the Iranian text, the participants completed the post-test questionnaire inquiring about the degree to which they were familiar with the content of the story. Then, they were asked to write in their mother tongue, Persian, as complete a recall as they could from the story they had just read. Finally, they answered the reading comprehension questions. In the second session, the same students did the above activities with the foreign story. That is, they completed the pre-test questionnaire, read, answered the post-test questionnaire, did the recall task, and completed the comprehension questions of the text having an unfamiliar context.

5. Results

5.1. Scoring

Before going through the results of the data analysis, it is helpful to discuss the process of coding or scoring the measurement instruments used in this study. Each of the two forthcoming paragraphs will be devoted to explaining the procedures followed in rating each of the tests and tasks utilized in the current research investigation.

The three sections of the reading comprehension questions task of the Iranian story were scored using the subsequent method. The six items of the true/false section was given three points, 0.5 for each item. The multiple choice part of the reading comprehension questions consisting of 6 items received 4.5 points or 0.75 for every question item. The first two items of the essay type questions were granted 0.75 each and the last three items got 2 points each. So, it was supposed that the one answering the whole items in all three sections of the reading comprehension questions would be awarded 15. The three parts of the reading comprehension questions of the foreign text were scored nearly the same as their counterparts of the Persian narrative. The only difference was that in the former, the first three question items of the essay type questions were given one point each and the last two items received 0.75 each.

The written recall tasks of the two stories were scored using idea units. A total of 23 sentences representing a summary of the foreign story “the winepress” and a total of 18 sentences giving an overall picture of the events of the Iranian story “the little sugar beet vendor” were gathered. If these idea units or their paraphrases had been present in the recall protocol of each student, each correctly recalled sentence would have been awarded one point. If the participants had provided only part of each idea unit or its paraphrase, they would have received a partial (i.e., 0.5) point. On the other hand, if the participants had provided wrong idea units, ideas not present in the original story, they would have been given a zero point.

5.2. The Assumed Familiarity or Unfamiliarity of the Texts used

In order to make sure that the texts used in this study are appropriately classified as familiar or unfamiliar and to check that they have not been previously read by the participants of this study, the participating students were asked to declare their acquaintance with the passages both before and after they read these texts. Tables 1 and 2 show the results of the pretest and posttest questionnaires of the Iranian story. As you can see nearly all the participants, precisely about 96.4 percent of them, indicated they had not known the author of the Iranian story or read his works. Nor had they read the story they were supposed to read or even heard anything about it. Statistically speaking, 100 percent had not read the story and 98.2 percent had not heard anything about it. So, we can safely conclude that the students had not read this text before. However, although before reading the Iranian narrative, the students demonstrated that they had not read it or even known its writer, they found its content to be familiar after they finished reading it. About 78 percent of them found the story to be either completely or mostly familiar whereas only 21 percent said that the text was half familiar and

half unfamiliar. As it can be seen from these figures, we can conclude that the Iranian story was familiar to our research population.

Table 1

The participants' responses to the pre test questionnaires of the Iranian and foreign story

The items	The Answers	
	Yes	No
Do you know Samad Behrangi?	3.6%	96.4%
Have you ever read his stories?	3.6%	96.4%
Have you ever read his Little Sugar Beet Vendor?	0	100%
Have you ever heard any thing about this story?	1.8%	98.2%
Do you know Josef Essberger?	0	100%
Have you ever read his stories?	0	100%
Have you ever read his The Winepress?	0	100%
Have you ever heard any thing about this story?	0	100%

Although the results obtained through the pretest questionnaire of the foreign story and those gained from the set of questions given prior to the Iranian passage were almost similar, they went in a quite opposite direction with regard to the posttest questionnaire. As it can be noticed through Table 1, all the students stated that they had neither known the author of the foreign story nor read his other works. They also unanimously indicated that they had not read the chosen story and even had not heard anything about it leading to the conclusion that the participants had not had any prior experience with this story. After the participants had finished reading the foreign story, their responses to the question coming immediately after this text showed that this passage was unfamiliar to a high proportion of them. Table 2 shows that 83 percent of the population expressed that the story was either completely or mostly unfamiliar (completely unfamiliar: 48.2% and mostly unfamiliar: 35.7%). Moreover, finally, only 16.1 percent of the students served as the participants of the study indicated that the content of the foreign story was half familiar and half unfamiliar to them. Therefore, our assumption that the foreign story was unfamiliar to the participants was actually confirmed through these percentages.

Table 2

The participants' responses to the posttest questionnaires of the Iranian and foreign stories

The items	The options				
	Completely familiar	Completely unfamiliar	Mostly familiar	Mostly unfamiliar	Half familiar/unfamiliar
The content of the Iranian story was?	50%		28%		21.4%
The content of the foreign story was?		48%		35%	16.1%

5.3. The effect of cultural familiarity on reading comprehension

In order to determine if using a text which is within the cultural experiences of the EFL readers can make a positive difference in their reading comprehension performance, a paired samples t-test procedure using SPSS 16 (2008) was carried out. In this statistical technique, the reading comprehension performance of the participants represented by the scores they obtained on two occasions, that is, the written recall and reading comprehension questions tasks of the Iranian and foreign texts were compared. The results of this statistical formula shown in the Tables 3 and 4 revealed that the Iranian or culturally familiar story yielded more reading comprehension than its foreign or culturally unfamiliar counterpart. Table 3 demonstrates that the participants scored higher in both the reading comprehension questions and written recall tasks of the Iranian story than in those of the foreign story (i.e., the mean of 9.82 in the written recall of the Iranian story vs. 6.1 in the recall of the foreign story and the mean of 7.9 in the reading comprehension questions of the Iranian story vs. 5.4 in those of the foreign story). Table 4 shows that this difference between the students' performance on the reading comprehension tasks of the Iranian and non-Iranian passage is highly significant ($t(55) = 9.18, p < .05$ for the recall scores and $t(55) = 7.88, p < .05$ for the scores of the reading comprehension questions). So, the answer to the main question of this study asking whether membership or familiarity with the overall cultural background of a text has any effect on the comprehension of that text is positive. The intermediate EFL learners participating in this research study comprehended the Iranian story, the text with which they were more familiar, significantly better than the foreign story whose content they specified as unfamiliar.

Table 3

The statistics of the participants' performance on the Iranian and foreign stories

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	The recall scores of the Iranian story	9.8214	56	3.88520	.51918
	The recall scores of the Foreign story	6.1071	56	3.31760	.44333
Pair 2	The reading comprehension scores of the Iranian story	7.9420	56	3.13049	.41833
	The reading comprehension scores of the Foreign story	5.4509	56	2.24794	.30039

Table 4

The statistical differences between the participants' performance on the reading comprehension tasks of the Iranian and foreign story

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	The recall scores of the Iranian story - The recall scores of the Foreign story	3.71429	3.02543	.40429	2.90407	4.52450	9.187	55	.000
Pair 2	The reading comprehension scores of the Iranian story - The reading comprehension scores of the Foreign story	2.49107	2.36401	.31590	1.85798	3.12416	7.886	55	.000

familiarity on reading comprehension, the findings indicated that the students comprehended the culturally familiar text far better than the one whose cultural context was rather strange to them. This result corroborates the preceding studies investigating the role of background knowledge in reading comprehension performance or the research investigating the schema theory (Bartlett, 1923; Steffensen et al., 1979; Droop & Verhoeven, 1998; Reynolds et al, 1982; Recht & Leslie, 1988; Pritchard, 1990; Tinker, 1989; Anne, 1993; Alice, 1980; Johnson, 1981; Johnson, 1982; Carrell, 1987; Kintsch & Greene, 1987; Florenico, 2004; Alptekin, 2006; Erten & Razi, 2009; Al-Shumaimeri, 2006; Brantmeier, 2005; Chang, 2006; Yin, 1989; McCullough, 2008; El-daly, 2010; Keshavarz, Atai, & Ahmadi, 2007; Chang, 2007).

Schema theory asserts that if the content of a text is in the close proximity or coincides with the readers' (cultural) schemata stored in their brains, the text interacts more with his/her cultural specific background knowledge. This interaction occurs even when certain words in the foreign text are familiar to a reader's ear and leads to a satisfactory reading comprehension performance (Oller, 1995). In addition, this theory also suggests that reading is in principle a process of assimilating new information presented in the text into the old knowledge already stored in memory. This previously stored knowledge guides what the readers focus on in the text, what they recall, and how they integrate and interpret the information presented in the text (Spyridakis & Wenger, 1991). In other words, the schemata embodying the readers' background knowledge of the culturally familiar materials facilitate the integration of local understandings and enable readers to develop a unified meaning of the text (Pritchard, 1990). The possession of appropriate, relevant background knowledge is also assumed to reduce the cognitive load imposed by the complex reading procedures on the memory system and to facilitate attentional allocation as well as the construction of the

mental representation of the text (Pulido, 2004a, 2004b; Erten&Razi, 2009). For instance, Widdowson (1990) argues that reading within a familiar setting releases the reader from focusing too heavily on the individual words and structures and provides him/her the opportunity to concentrate on the linguistic forms to the extent that they fit in their background.

On the other hand, when reading culturally unfamiliar materials, readers often lack the relevant schemata which results in fewer connections and greater ambiguity (Pritchard, 1990). Unfamiliar content and structure also hamper the activation of appropriate schemata to accommodate the new, incoming information. Such texts, therefore, present difficult challenges to the readers in the reading process and result in various degrees of noncomprehension (Chang, 2006).

In addition, finally, when one reads a text assuming an unfamiliar foreign cultural schema, one has to compensate for one's lack of appropriate background knowledge through focusing on the linguistic forms too profoundly (Widdowson, 1990; Stanovich, 2000). In this case, the reading process is slowed down severely for the reader who has to concentrate on every single word and grammatical structure to make sense of the written discourse. This obviously places high demands on the cognitive resources of the readers. Consequently, the comprehension suffers since the large portion of the readers' attention is dedicated to the individual words and/or sentences and not much is left for the whole text and what is beyond the sentence and word level.

7. Conclusion

This study corroborates the previous research done on the reading skill which studied the role of familiarity with cultural background of a text in the comprehension of that text. It was found that intermediate level learners understood the passage assuming a familiar cultural context better than that happening in a more culturally distant setting. Thus, one of the major implications drawn from this study is that the second language teachers and textbook developers should take the matter of text selection more seriously. They should choose for the reading comprehension courses they teach texts which are more or less related to the students' cultural background. However, since it is not always possible to use culturally familiar materials and also due to the fact that any language should be learned through its own culture, the second language instructors should play the role of facilitator when they introduce to their students texts which are culturally distant to them. It means that they should

facilitate their learners' reading comprehension through familiarizing and providing them with the cultural information or schemata necessary to understand the foreign language texts. They can do so by designing and/or using pre-reading activities containing some culture instruction. These activities can take the form of explicitly teaching the words carrying more or less cultural connotations, explaining the cultural events, occasions, and traditions mentioned in the text, and discussing the cultural experiences mentioned in the passage and comparing them to those of the learners. Material developers should incorporate such activities in the reading textbooks as well.

Before any generalization is made about the results of this study, some points should be taken into account. First, in this study, just narrative texts were used to investigate the issue raised here which is the effect of cultural familiarity on reading comprehension. Future researchers should also make use of the expository texts to see if the same results can be achieved with such texts. Second, for the purpose of the current study, only intermediate level adult students were hired. Any future attempt need to include language learners across all proficiency and age levels to see if the same findings are to be repeated with the more or less proficient readers or with younger students. Finally, in the present study, no measures were taken to find out how the students interacted with the passages and how they dealt with the tasks to complete them. So, in any future research, introspective or retrospective procedures such as think aloud should be used in order to get a clear understanding of the strategies or steps taken by the students to comprehend the familiar or unfamiliar texts, to infer the meaning of the unknown words they encountered during reading the passages, and to complete the tasks designed to measure their reading comprehension.

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Title

Generic Variation across Languages: A Case for Applied Linguistics

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Abstract

Abstracts are a growing field of study in applied linguistics. The interest that linguists show in the genre of the RA abstract stems from the need to understand its rhetorical organization which is different from other units of RAs. This paper compares the rhetorical organization of research article abstracts in Persian and in English within a field of Applied Linguistics. Using Swales' (1990) CARS model as well as the four traditional categories of IMRD/C as an analytical framework, this exploratory study investigated 80 research articles. The findings indicated the pervasive absence of Move 2 in Persian articles. That is to say, English writers drew on significantly more instances of Move 2 compared with their Persian counterparts. Different explanations are offered to account for the cross-cultural differences.

Keywords: Abstracts; applied linguistics; rhetorical organization; IMRD/C; cross-cultural reasons

1. Introduction

Prompted by Kaplan's (1966) study of essays written by writers from different language/cultural backgrounds, contrastive rhetorical investigations, an established area of inquiry, have brought to attention certain culture-specific patterns which seem to leave their

imprints upon the texts created within different linguistic and cultural contexts. This means that these preferences might be linked to the locality of cognitive paradigms characteristic of culture-specific discursual patterns. According to Flowerdew (2002), contrastive rhetorical analysis of academic discourse shows that there are discrepancies in the way information is organized in different languages and cultures. In other words, it brings to light “vast complexities of the cultural, social, situational and contextual factors affecting a writing situation (Connor, 2008, p. 304). Drawing on 80 articles in the field of applied linguistics (40 written in Persian and 40 written in English), the present study aims at seeing whether native Persian and English writers differ in the employment of rhetorical moves in their abstracts sections about applied linguistics. Contrastive rhetorical studies are able to provide teachers and students with knowledge about the preferred patterns of writing (Connor, 2003) by uncovering specific rhetorical patterns, which might be culturally and contextually specific (Shim, 2005). Such knowledge could provide the sound basis for explicit strategies which Iranian students might draw on to comprehend and produce effective English academic writing.

2. Findings on Generic Moves in RAs

As touched upon, one source of variation, which is the focus of the present study, comes from intercultural disparities that might leave their joint imprints on the discourse created by writers from different languages. Such cross-cultural studies as Taylor and Chen (1991) Ahmad (1997) Duszak (1994, 1997) Melander, Swales, & Fredrickson (1997), Yakhontova (2002, 2006), Salager-Meyer, Ariza, & Zambrano (2003), Martin (2003), Fakhri (2004), Hirano (2009), Loi and Sweetnam Evans (2010), Soler-Monreal, Carbonell-Olivares and Gil-Salom (2011) have observed discrepancies in macro-structural organization of texts written in languages other than English since Swales (1990) put forward his ground-breaking CARS model. For example Duszak (1994) demonstrated that English and Polish writers differed in the formulation of Move 3 with English writers being “predominantly direct, assertive and positive rather than indirect, affective and tentative” (p. 309). Martin (2003) found that Spanish writers differed considerably from their English counterparts in their strong tendency to omit the Results Move in the Spanish abstracts. This could be attributed to several “socio-cultural” (p. 42) factors such as different intellectual styles and cultural patterns, he argued. Also Yakhontava (2006) came across intercultural variation in the distribution of moves with English texts being marked by “preliminary ‘scene-setting’”, and Slavic abstracts focusing

constantly on the “description of the paper’s content” (p. 163). This ensues from different vision of the genre in Ukrainian and Anglophone academic cultures. Each of these studies attributed different discursal preferences to intercultural variations which are, in turn, influenced by diverse factors varying, for example, from sociopolitical factors to purely intralinguistic peculiarities. Thus Yakhontova’s (2006) argument asserting that not all differences should be explicated as cultural is relevant here. In her view, these differences, taken as an umbrella term, entail such inextricably interrelated interpretations as “academic discourse community factors, influences of sociohistorical and sociopolitical circumstances, of national intellectual styles, and, finally, of the possible correlation between language structures and grammatical norms” (p. 154).

In addition to the ways that national or linguistic cultures influence writing, research in ESP has increasingly begun to explore the impact of corporate, institutional, and disciplinary cultures (e.g. linguistic, mathematical, medical) on genres. Berckenkotter and Huckin, (1995) once suggested that genre conventions signal a discourse community’s norms, epistemology, ideology, and social ontology” (p. 121). Research (Swales and Najjar, 1987, Samraj, 2005; Hopkins, 1988; Salager- Mayer, 1990; Holmes, 1997; Nwogu, 1997; Anthony, 1999; Posteguillo, 1999; Williams, 1999; Connor, 2000; Upton and Connor, 2001; Samraj, 2002; Lores, 2004; Kanaksilapatham, 2005; Ozturk, 2006) has shown that rhetorical practices across different disciplines are constrained by community conventions and values. These interpretations invoke the idea of *discourse community* which brings writers, readers, and texts in a particular discursive environment. By surveying distinctive rhetorical patterns, one could identify the community-defined practices and the way language use is influenced by social, cultural, and epistemological characteristics of different disciplines and professions. For example, Samraj’s (2002) analysis of research article introductions from the two related disciplines (wild life behavior and conservation biology) revealed disciplinary variations regarding the employment of moves. This simply helps illuminate the intercommunity diversity and conventions valued in different discourse communities. Also, Yakhontova (2006) found discrepancies in the way conference abstracts in the two disciplines (applied mathematics and applied linguistics) are organised in terms of rhetorical moves. These intracultural variations, she argues, are caused by specific proclivities of certain fields or disciplines.

3. Analytic Framework

Swales' (1990) CARS model as the most dominantly employed model to characterize the generic structure of research article introductions and abstracts was selected as the basis for the analysis and coding of the moves and steps in both groups of articles (see Figure 1), while a number of studies have also incorporated the traditional rhetorical categories of *Introduction, Method, Results & Discussion, and Conclusion*, hereafter IMRD/C, in order to come up with an exhaustive account of RA textual organization (see Martin, 2003; Samraj, 2005, for example). Previous studies (e.g. Najjar, 1990; Taylor and Chen, 1991; Ahmad, 1997; Jogthong, 2001; Ahmed, 2004) have corroborated Swales's move-analysis framework as a valid instrument for analyzing research article introductions in particular and other research article sections (including complete research articles) in general. Swales and Feak (2000, p. 35) specify a move as "the defined and bounded communicative act that is designed to achieve one main communicative objective". Thus, both Swales' (1990) CARS model of RA introductions and the four traditionally known moves (IMRD/C) were adopted in order to come up with an exhaustive account of generic patterns of English and Persian RA abstracts. Following Lorés (2004), we would call this approach a "combinatory type" (p. 298).

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- Move 1: Establishing a territory
 - Step 1 Claiming centrality and/or
 - Step 2 Making topic generalization(s) and/or
 - Step 3 Reviewing items of previous research
 - Move 2: Establishing a niche
 - Step 1A Counter-claiming or
 - Step 1B Indicating a gap or
 - Step 1C Question-raising or
 - Step 1D Continuing a tradition
 - Move 3: Occupying the niche
 - Step 1A Outlining purposes or
 - Step 1B Announcing present research
 - Step 2 Announcing principal findings
 - Step 3 Indicating RA structure
-

Figure 1. The structure of research article introductions (Swales, 1990).

4. Corpora and Methods

The corpus of the present study was built from abstract sections of 80 randomly selected research articles (40 English articles written by native English writers and 40 Persian articles written by native Persian writers) in the field of applied linguistics. Care was taken to focus exclusively on data-based articles, i.e. those containing quantitative information rather than theory-based ones (see Swales, 2004). In choosing the articles, effort was made to meet Nwogu's (1997) three criteria, namely, *representivity, reputation, and accessibility*. That is to say, the selected articles were fairly representative of the genre (research articles) in content

(all the articles were also controlled for their topics to avoid any incongruity that might distort the result of the study) in the field of applied linguistics. Regarding reputation requirement, there is no reservation that all English journals have strong international stance and Persian journals are peer-reviewed and most cited journals in Iran. The ease with which the articles could be found comprised the accessibility criterion.

All English articles written by native English writers were randomly selected from the five most leading international journals in the field (namely, *Applied Linguistics*, *English for Specific Purposes*, *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *Journal English for Academic Purposes*, *TESOL Quarterly*, and *System*) whereas Persian articles written by native Persian writers were mostly published in Persian-medium journals published in Iran. The publication period was from 2000 to 2010. All abstract sections were examined in terms of their length to make sure that they were of relatively the same length. Longer articles were included in very few cases where moves represented comparable patterns. The unit of analysis was the sentence though there were moves that were represented by multiple sentential units. In such cases, the whole group of the sentences was assigned to one move.

The motivation behind choosing applied linguistics was the conviction in “linguistics which, like other disciplines in the humanities, is more subjective and consequently more sensitive to national contexts, textual patterns may show greater variability, yielding the considerable divergences“ (Yakhontava, 2006, p. 163). Since applied linguistics both focuses on the human-related issues and implies messages for humans on a social scale, it is considered a typical instance of soft knowledge within the locality of this study. In the latter fields, moves and strategies are mainly aimed at persuading readers of an argument. We calculated the percentages of moves in the two groups of articles to make corpus comparability possible. Then, the Independent Samples T-Test was employed as a statistical formula to see whether there were significant differences between the two groups of articles in the utilization of moves.

5. Results and Discussion

We found that there is, indeed, an underlying rhetorical structure common to the two languages. This reflected Salager-Meyer’s (1990) argument asserting that a well-structured abstract should have all the four rhetorical moves which are mandatory in the process of scientific inquiry and patterns of thought. As indicated in Table 1, Results, Methods and Conclusions moves were the most frequent moves in both groups of articles and the two

groups made approximately identical uses of these moves in their abstracts. That is to say, language background or writing culture did not make difference in utilizing these moves and they must have been present in the abstracts as they were likely to be imposed by the requirements of the genre itself. Therefore, this sided with Berckenkotter and Huckin's (1995) suggestion that "genre conventions signal a discourse community's norms, epistemology, ideology, and social ontology", p. 121) and both Persian and English writers, in this study, have successfully complied with disciplinary integrity and community-defined practices. Thus, one might argue that the common and similar use of these particular moves characterizes the discipline than the writing cultural proclivities.

Table 1. *Frequency of Occurrences and Distribution of Structural Units in the Abstracts*

	English articles written by native English writers	Persian articles written by native Persian writers
Introduction	85 (70.83%)	67 (55.83)
Methods	39 (97.5%)	40 (100)
Results	40 (100%)	37 (92.5)
Conclusion	18 (45%)	13 (32.5)

Although Results, Methods and Conclusion moves were approximately equally employed, there was systematic variation in the configuration of the introductions moves. Introduction units which were the longest and most frequent rhetorical units allowed for some variations between the two groups of articles. The analysis showed that English writers drew on significantly more instances of Move 1, 2 and 3 in their introduction units (see Figure 2).

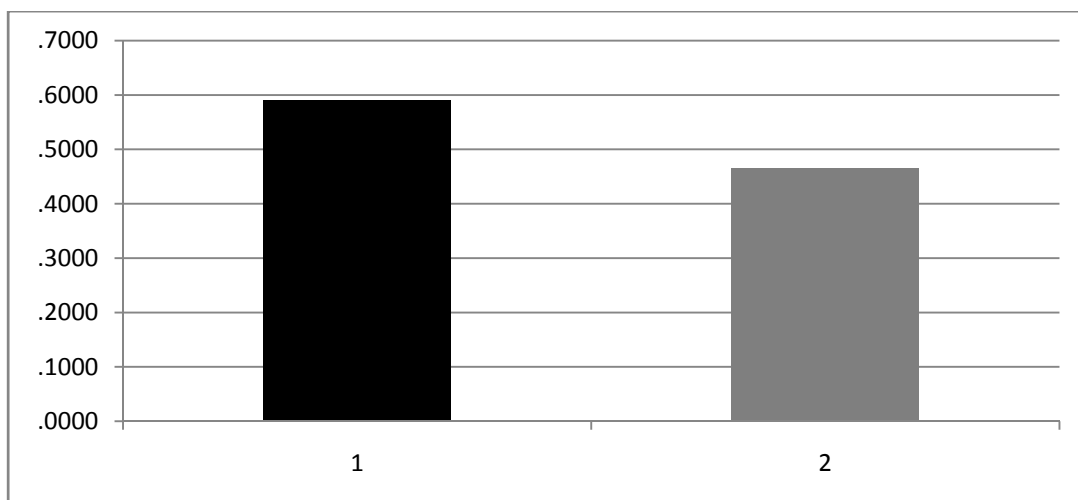


Figure 2: Use of Three Moves in the Introduction Unit of the Abstracts in Two Groups of Articles

Notes: (1): English articles written by Native English writers

(2): Persian articles written by native Persian writers

This is in line with Yaghoubi and Tarlani's (2011) study that found English writers employing more instances of introduction moves compared with their Persian counterparts writing in English. Thus, the present study could contribute to the existing literature (e.g. Taylor and Chen, 1991; Yaghoubi and Tarlani, 2011) in that establishing a territory, establishing a niche, and occupying the niche (which were found to be the main purpose of introduction moves in Swales' CARS model) seemed to be an inherent element of English writing culture and a more localized cognitive paradigm in native English academic writers.

Regarding Move 1 in which the authors are expected to establish the relevance of their work to the existing literature, no significant difference was found (see Table 2). This implies that the indication of the relevance of their work to literature is highly valued in both writing cultures as the following examples from in the corpus illustrate:

(1)

English Transliteration:

Tafavot ha-ye zabani mardan va zanan dar javame zabanie moxtalef hamvare mored motale pezhuheshgaran va zaban shenasane ejtemaei garar gerefte ast va dar hame javame mian in do ghune zabani tafavothayii moshahede shod east.

(Jannezhad, 2006)

English Translation:

Language differences between men and women have always been the object of the study of researchers and social linguists and differences have been observed in all societies.

(2)

In the past several decades, analyses of large corpora of published written texts in English have allowed for new insights into the meanings, uses, and functions of adverbials of all types.

(Hinkel, 2002)

Table 2 *The Independent Samples T-Test to Compare Distribution of Move 1 in Two Groups of Articles*

Article Source	Mean	Sig (p-value)
English articles written by English speakers	0.7353	
		G1/G2= 0.413
Persian articles written by Persian speakers	0.8582	

Notes: G1: English Articles written by Native English Applied Linguists;
G2: Persian Articles written by Native Persian Applied Linguists

The most noticeable difference was in the frequency and distribution of Move 2 (Table 3) which requires the writer to establish a niche by means of counter-claiming, indicating a gap, question raising, and continuing a tradition as revealed by the following examples:

(3)
 English Transliteration:
 ... va digar javaneb in danesh manannde zharfa, ... kamtar mored tavajoh garar gherefte ast. (Zandi and Keivanpanah, 2008)

English Translation:
 ... and other aspects of this knowledge such as depth, ... has been given little attention.

(4)
 Despite his considerable influence on the development of ESP and all our professional lives, almost nothing has been written about John Swales' distinctive prose style. (Hyland, 2008)

Move 2 was pervasively absent in Persian articles. Other studies (Taylor and Chen, 1991; Ahmad, 1997; Jogthong, 2001; Martin, 2003; Hirano, 2009) reported a similar pattern in the frequency and distribution of this Move. Establishing solidarity with the local research community by avoiding questioning other colleagues' views in such developing countries as Iran seem to be a plausible explanation for the pervasive lack of this move.

Table 3 *The Independent Samples T-Test to Compare Distribution of Move 2 in Two Groups of Articles*

Article Source	Mean	Sig (p-value)
English articles written by English speakers	0.5294	
		G1/G2= 0.009
Persian articles written by Persian speakers	0.1852	

Notes: G1: English Articles written by Native English Applied Linguists;
 G2: Persian Articles written by Native Persian Applied Linguists

Since stating the purpose of a particular study is the main function of Move 3, no significant difference was observed in the frequency of use of this move between the two language groups (see Table 4).

Table 4 *The Independent Samples T-Test to Compare Distribution of Move 3 in Two Groups of Articles*

Article Source	Mean	Sig (p-value)
English articles written by English speakers	1.536	
		G1/G2= 0.213
Persian articles written by Persian speakers	1.243	

Notes: G1: English Articles written by Native English Applied Linguists;
 G2: Persian Articles written by Native Persian Applied Linguists

However, one interesting point about the employment of this move is the *coalescence* of these moves with method moves which were observed **15** times in Persian articles **12** times in English articles. This is illustrated by the following examples:

(5)

English Transliteration:

Phezhuhesh hazer sa'a bar an darad ta rahbordha-ye ghaleb yadghiri radar zaban amuzanae irani moshakhas konad. (Pishghadam, 2008)

English Translation:

The present research intends to identify dominant learning strategies used by Iranian language learners.

(6)

This article re-examines the question of what makes some grammatical structures more difficult to learn than others, arguing that this question can only be properly understood and investigated with reference to the distinction between implicit and explicit knowledge of a second language. (Ellis, 2006)

This coalescent use was also reflected in Martin's (2003) study of Spanish and English articles. This reflects Graetz's (1985, p. 125) point that the abstract is characterized by 'tightly worded sentences' and is in line with The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) definition of abstract as "an abbreviated, accurate representation of the contents of a document, preferably prepared by its author(s) for publication with it" (ANSI, 1979, p. 1, in Bhatia, 1993, p. 78). Thus, to be tightly worded and abbreviated representation, the abstracts should sometimes have moves coalesced into one another in their rhetorical organization.

4. Conclusion

This paper set out to analyze the macro-structural organization of RA abstracts of 80 applied linguistics with the intention that whether writers from different language backgrounds differ in rhetorical organization of their abstracts. The analysis of rhetorical structure carried out following Swales' (1990) model of move structure along with four traditional rhetorical categories of IMRD/C yielded similarities as well as differences in the configuration of these abstracts. A detailed analysis of Introduction unit revealed a certain degree of homogeneity regarding Move 1 and 3 even though the writers come from different countries. The two groups showed a clear preference for the use of move 3 which, following Nwogu (1997), could be regarded as an obligatory move as it is present in all abstracts analysed. However, a significance difference between the Persian and English texts is the strong inclination of Persian writers to omit Move 2 which could be attributed to their culture-driven tradition of not finding a "chink in their armour" by questioning their colleagues' views.

This exploratory study investigated a small corpus of article abstracts in Persian and in English from different English and Persian journals that specialize in the same field of Applied Linguistics. As such, the findings reported here only reflect the rhetorical organization identified in this particular corpus. Larger studies investigating more RA abstracts from different academic fields are needed to verify whether the cross-linguistic/cross cultural differences between Persian and English identified in this study can be generalized.

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Title

On the Effectiveness of Corpus Analysis Tool in the Use of Correct Preposition in Persian into English Translation

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Abstract

Corpus linguistics is the study of language through a corpus as a collection of texts in electronic format. Recently large corpora have played a crucial role in solving various problems of linguistics such as language learning and teaching and translation studies. Prepositions are connective words that relate a noun to other elements of the sentence. It is difficult to use prepositions correctly in a foreign language. According to the complexities of using prepositions, native speakers of Persian who are learning English, face different problems in using correct prepositions while translating from Persian into English. This study investigated how Iranian language learners have problems in the use of correct prepositions in Persian into English translation and whether Corpus Analysis Tool has an impact on the use of correct prepositions. Based on the results, 53% of the prepositions were used wrongly by all the participants. It was also indicated that Corpus Analysis Tool has an impact on the use of correct prepositions in Persian into English translation.

Keywords: Corpus linguistics, Corpus Analysis Tool, Concordancer, Collocation, Preposition.

1. Introduction

Corpus linguistics is a relatively new field in linguistics and a new approach to language study (Kitao, 1994). It involves the examination of linguistic phenomena through large collections of machine-readable texts. In other words corpus linguistics is the study of language through corpus-based or corpus-driven research (Cheng et al., 2003). Moreover, corpus linguistics has helped to develop new ways of looking at and thinking about language knowledge and language use, and using corpora can help learners to refine their own perspectives (O'keeffe et al., 2007). It should be kept in mind that the use of corpora is a methodological approach rather than an independent branch of linguistics. The aims and goals of corpus-based research are the same as all other empirical linguistic investigations, which is to understand and explain language as a means of communication between people (Ludeling & Kyto, 2008).

However, during the last decade, there has been a shift in the use of computerized texts from pure linguistic research to more applied corpus linguistics where the focus is on the learner. Corpus linguistics is already a well-established area for language description and analysis (Flowerdew, 1998). With corpora, linguists, teachers and students of language can use actual linguistic data to show how language works. For instance they can analyze vocabulary in terms of frequency, collocations and grammar. They can test descriptions of grammar mentioned in their books. They can describe the language and show qualitative and quantitative analysis. They can use corpora as a large dictionary or grammar book. They can compare corpora of the speech and writing of learners of English with corpora of Standard English and find out what types of errors and patterns of errors these learners make. So, there are many ways to look at the language by using corpora (Kitao, 1994).

Over the past two decades, corpora have not only been used in linguistic research but also in the teaching and learning of languages. Computer corpora of English open a wide range of possibilities for teachers and learners of this language. These corpora contain a powerful data bank of real English language texts which can be discovered and applied to English language teaching (Garcia, 2010). The potentials of corpora for language learning and teaching have been acknowledged and they are available on the web to facilitate access of such as users like language teachers and learners (Braun, 2005). Working with corpora helps learners to focus on the grammatical patterns of language in ways that are not possible by language textbooks and traditional language classes. Furthermore, learners are able to generate their own original

questions in the form of hypotheses and test them by means of authentic data and make their own discoveries (Hunston, 2002).

2. Review of the Related Literature

Yoon and Hirvela (2004) tried to study the effectiveness of corpus use in two ESL academic writing courses and the results revealed that the corpus use improved the general writing skills in second language writing. Furthermore, Braun (2007) conducted an empirical case study to integrate corpus materials and corpus-based learning activities into English language classes and he concluded that the group which was given corpus-based activities scored significantly higher than the group which was given the traditional activities. Another study conducted by Jafarpour and Koosha (2005) which proved that concordancing was highly effective in the teaching and learning of collocations of prepositions.

A large number of studies within the discipline of translation studies have focused on corpora and their applications in translation classes. Such studies have mainly focused on the benefits of corpora for translators and the effect of using corpora on the quality of translation. Corpus-based translation classrooms have more advantages than traditional translation classes (Vaezian, 2009). In recent years, computers have increasingly found their way into different branches of sciences and in this new world of technology, linguistics, like other disciplines, can benefit from modern tools such as electronic corpora. Recently large corpora have played a crucial role in solving various problems of translation studies (Mohammadi, 2007).

Bowker (1998) examined the usefulness of a monolingual native language including a specialized subject field for translators who are translating into their native language (English) and the results showed that the students using the corpus made fewer errors than the students using the conventional resources. Moreover, Mohammadi (2007) carried out a study to compare the accuracy in translating collocations, using a specialized monolingual corpus with the conventional resources and she concluded that corpora become an effective solution to these problems.

3. Method

This study was a true experimental study to investigate whether Iranian language learners have problems in the use of correct prepositions and if Corpus Analysis Tool had a significant impact on the use of correct prepositions in Persian into English translation. The study was carried out in 2010 and 2011 in Shiraz, Iran. 64 male and female students majoring in English translation from

Fasa Payame Noor University were selected through a convenient sampling. A test consisted of different items delineating the participants' knowledge of place, time and means prepositions was designed.

The experiment was conducted in two different stages. At first the Corpus Analysis Tool designed by Anthony (2010) was downloaded from http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/antcon_index.html. At the second stage, a specialized monolingual corpus which involved most common prepositions of time, place and means was compiled. Then all 64 students were divided into two groups (control and experimental). Next, both groups of the students were given a pre-test and they had to translate the sentences just using monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. After that, the experimental group received information about AntConc Corpus Analysis Tool. Afterwards, this test was administered again as a post-test. The control group was permitted to use dictionaries during their translation process but the experimental group had to use AntConc Corpus Analysis Tool. Finally the data were collected and analyzed.

4. Results and Discussion

In order to make sure that there was no initial difference between the participants of the study (control and experimental groups) in the use of correct prepositions, an independent t-test was run. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

T-test for Comparing the Means on the Pre-test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	.966	.329	.561	62	.577	.28125	.50173
Equal variances not assumed			.561	60.237	.577	.28125	.50173

As the results in table 1 shows, there is no significant difference between the means of control and experimental groups ($\text{sig}=0.57$, $t=0.56$, $\text{df}=62$). Therefore, we could make sure that the control and the experimental groups were homogeneous and there was no initial difference between the two groups.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics for the First Question

The first question of the study was whether Iranian language learners have problems in the use of correct prepositions when translating from Persian into English. 64 participants attempted the pre-test containing 15 sentences in each of which a prepositions was used. Totally, 960 prepositions were used. The frequency for the correctly used prepositions and wrongly used ones were counted. The results are presented in table 2.

Table 2 *Descriptive Statistics of the Participants in the Pre-test*

Type of Preposition	Wrong Prepositions		Correct Prepositions		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Place	204	64%	116	36%	320	33.3%
Time	138	43%	182	57%	320	33.3%
Means	166	52%	154	48%	320	33.3%
Total	508	53%	452	47%	960	100

As the results show, 53% of the prepositions were used wrongly by all the participants. The results indicated that the participants had the greatest problem in the use of correct place prepositions (64%). Prepositions of means were ranked after place prepositions (52% of the prepositions of means were not correctly used). In terms of time preposition, the results show that 43% of the prepositions of this category were not used correctly.

4.2 Results of Post-test

The second question of this study was whether Corpus Analysis Tool had significant impact on the use of correct prepositions when translating from Persian into English. To do so, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to compare the means of both control and experimental groups in order to show if there is any difference between their means before and after implementing the corpus analysis tool. As two different groups took the same test, independents

sample t-test was the best statistical procedure. The descriptive statistics and the results for t-test are shown in Table 2.

Table 3 *The Comparison between Control and Experimental Groups' Performances on the Post-test*

Groups	Participants	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control	32	7.7438	2.00980	.35529
Experimental	32	11.4656	2.47772	.43800

It can be seen in the above table that there is a difference between means of the control (7.7) and experimental (11.4) groups which shows that the experimental group had a better performance in the post test than the control group.

Table 4

T-test for Equality of Variances and Means of the Groups (Control and Experimental) in the Post-test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	.108	.744	-5.890	62	.000	-3.32188	.56398
Equal variances not assumed			-5.890	59.469	.000	-3.32188	.56398

In the above table, the results of Leven's test shows that the variances of the two groups are equal (sig=0.74 & f=0.1). Therefore the assumption of t-test for equality of means is not violated and we were on the safer ground to make use of t-test results.

The results of the independent sample t-test shows that there is a significant difference between the means of two groups ($t=-5.89$ and $sig=0.0$) which confirms the assumption that corpus analysis tool has an effect on the use of correct prepositions in Persian into English translation.

The main purpose of the study was to identify types of prepositional errors made by Iranian language learners and to study the impact of AntConc Corpus Analysis Tool. To do so, 64 English students were selected. The results of the study show that Iranian language learners had major problems in the use of prepositions in Persian into English translation (Table 2); that is, 53% of the prepositions were used wrongly whereas it seems that although Iranian translation students have problems in the other types of prepositions, time prepositions were less problematic for language learners (43%).

It can be seen that they mostly have problems with prepositions of place (64% of prepositions were used wrongly) which might be due to the fact that Persian place prepositions have more equivalents in English. For instance, the Persian place preposition like "در" has English equivalents of "in", "inside" and "at" as in examples "*in* Iran", "*inside* the box", "*at* the bus station". Another example is Persian preposition of place "بین" which can be translated into "between" or "among" in English. So, Iranian language learners try to relate those English place prepositions to the smaller number of place prepositions in Persian language.

The results of the study also indicated that 52% of the prepositions of means were used wrongly. It could be inferred that the collocational patterns for means determine the type of prepositions. The Persian preposition "با" is translated to "by" and "with" in English according to the means located after it as in examples "by train" and "with pen".

Furthermore, the less problematic prepositions were prepositions of time (43%). It seems that since there are a limited number of rules for time prepositions in English grammar system, Iranian language learners use the correct time prepositions when facing specific time prepositions. For instance, English time prepositions are used to show exact time "at 6 o'clock", day of a week "on Monday", month "in July" and year "in 2010". So, it is easier for the students to learn those rules and use correct prepositions related to each of these time points.

The results for the first question of this study are in line with Jafarpour and Koosha (2005) who found that Iranian EFL learners have problems with production of English collocations specially collocations of prepositions. DDL approach showed to be highly effective in the

teaching and learning collocations of prepositions. Moreover, Hill (1999) states that lack of collocational competence of English prepositions can be a cause of EFL students' problems in learning English prepositions. He also suggested that one reason for EFL students' problems in learning English prepositions is that they usually try to learn the meaning and use of prepositions individually without paying sufficient attention to their collocational properties. So, it is necessary for Iranian language learners to increase their knowledge about different types of prepositions and their use in English language in order to have native-like translations.

The second question of this study was whether Corpus Analysis Tool had an impact on the use of correct prepositions in Persian into English translation. The results of the pre-test examination, which are shown in Table 4.1 indicates that there is no significant difference between the means of control and experimental groups ($Sig=0.577$), which shows the equality of their knowledge about English prepositions. However, the results of the post-test shown in Table 4 display a significant difference between the means of the two groups, which suggests that Corpus Analysis Tool has an impact on the use of correct prepositions in Persian into English translation.

The results obtained for the second question of this study confirms Mohammadi's (2007) suggestion that monolingual corpus is an effective tool for learning collocations in comparison with other traditional resources that give more than one equivalent or improper ones. However, the findings are similar to Yoon and Hirvella's (2004) claim that students accept corpus activity to be beneficial for their English writing specially for learning collocations of words, and they confirm that corpora increase their confidence in second language writing.

Moreover, the results are also in line with Bowker's (1998) examination which shows the usefulness of a monolingual native language corpus for translators translating into their native language (English). Based on the results, he suggested that using the corpus helps translators to make fewer errors in choosing correct term in comparison with the conventional resources. As Braun (2007) suggested, integrating corpus-based activities into English language classes will lead to better performance specially in concordance activities.

Considering the previous studies, Iranian researches had investigated the role of Corpus Analysis Tool in translation from English into Persian but they had not pointed out the role of this tool in translating from Persian into English. The results of this study alongside with other

studies confirm the view that Corpus Analysis Tool has an impact on translation in both directions.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study Iranian language learners have major problems in the use of correct prepositions (53%). The most problematic prepositions were prepositions of place (64%) which might be attributed to the fact that the number of place prepositions in Persian is less than their equivalents in English. The less problematic one were time prepositions (43%) which could be due to the fact that there are a limited number of rules for time prepositions in English grammar system and it is convenient for Iranian language learners to learn those rules. The use of Corpus Analysis Tool has significant impacts on learning prepositions by Iranian language learners. It seems that using Corpus Analysis Tool decreases the number of wrong prepositions.

The findings of the present study might give some guidelines to translators and teachers. Corpora can provide translators with both linguistic and conceptual information that is not found in dictionaries. In order to provide translations that are natural, translators have to be aware of the way native speakers of the target language actually use that language. Since corpora provide the translators with authentic texts, it would enable the translators to select the words that will sound natural for the speakers and readers of the target language.

Since Corpus Analysis Tool provides a large number of contexts for collocations, it could be used as an effective tool for the language learners and translators for discovery learning and problem-solving activities. Moreover, among different types of corpora, specialized parallel corpus can raise translator's subject-field understanding significantly.

The findings of the present study would shed some light on the teaching and learning of grammar. As Corpus Analysis Tool can be used with any kinds of corpora, teachers could use specialized monolingual corpora made for specific purposes such as teaching two-word verbs, expressions, definite articles, etc. In addition, corpora might provide pedagogical solutions to teaching prepositions to Iranian language learners. Since teaching prepositions is one of the most important issues for English language learners, having knowledge of prepositions will help the learners producing error-free English texts.

This study investigated the effectiveness of Corpus Analysis Tool on the use of correct prepositions of place, time and mean. First, researchers are recommended to prove the impact of

this tool on other types of prepositions. Then, the researcher recommends doing the same study with more participants because due to the limitations of this study, the number of participants was not enough.

Next, it seems that the gender of participants and their level of proficiency will affect the results of the study, so considering these variables in future studies is recommended. Finally, since Corpus Analysis Tool is a useful tool for exploring collocations, it could be used to study collocations other than prepositions.

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Title

A Critical Look at the Effect of Teachers' Self-Efficacy on Students' Academic Success

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Abstract

Self-efficacy is considered as a key variable in educational psychology which has a crucial role in the process of language teaching and learning. This psychological characteristic can bear important outcomes and may lead to academic achievements both for teachers and students. According to Bandura (1993), self-efficacy beliefs pivot around student-teachers'

capability to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives. In order to obtain a thorough understanding on the role of self-efficacy in language teaching and learning, the current article was developed trying to shed light on possible ambiguities in the field (the effect of teachers' self-efficacy on students' academic achievements). Elaborating on the term in general, the sources of self-efficacy as well as its possible effects on both teachers and learners in the teaching/learning direction were elaborated. Finally, how teachers could foster self-efficacy in students was discussed and also some implications and applications for the stakeholders in the field were mentioned.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Sources of Self-efficacy, Teachers' Self-efficacy, Students' achievements

1. Introduction

Self-efficacy beliefs are essential for developing lifelong-learning skills, being about “student-teachers' capability to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1993, p. 118). The term self-efficacy for learning, based on Schunk (1977, cited in Williams & Burden, 2000, p. 129), refers to students' beliefs about their capabilities to apply effectively the knowledge and skills they already possess and thereby learn new cognitive skills. So, according to Williams and Burden (2000), this is one way of explaining the common distinction between capability and performance.

Zimmerman (1990) maintains that self-efficacy is a good indication of whether students can process and complete assigned tasks successfully. Self-efficacy subsequently influences student planning, motivation, strategy use, and ultimately actions (Zimmerman, 1990). According to Woolfolk Hoy and Burke Spero (2000) efficacy is essentially individuals' future-oriented judgment about their competence rather than their actual level of competence. This is an important feature because people regularly overestimate or underestimate their actual capabilities, and these estimations may have consequences for the courses of action they choose to follow and the effort they exert in those pursuits (Woolfolk Hoy & Burke Spero, 2000).

Self-efficacy theory is a model, based on Pintrich and Schunk (1996) that emphasizes the importance of an expectancy construct for motivated behavior. They believe that self-efficacy is grounded in social cognitive theory, which has its roots in the more behavioral learning theory, in contrast to the more personality-based expectancy-value theory and the developmental

perspective of the perceptions-of-competence research. Therefore, according to Pintrich and Schunk (1996), self-efficacy theory presumes that self-efficacy is much more situation specific and delineates efficacy in terms of judgments of capability to perform specific actions in light of specific goals.

According to Schwarzer (1997, p. 2), actions are pre-shaped in thought, and people anticipate either optimistic or pessimistic scenarios in line with their level of self-efficacy. Once an action has been taken, high self-efficacious persons invest more effort and persist longer than those who are low in self-efficacy. When setbacks occur, people with high self-efficacy recover more quickly and maintain the commitment to their goals. Self-efficacy also allows people to select challenging settings, explore their environments, or create new environments.

According to Pajares (2002), Self-efficacy beliefs provide the foundation for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment. Pajares (2002) mentions that this is because unless people believe that their actions can produce the outcomes they desire, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties. “Much empirical evidence now supports Bandura's contention that self-efficacy beliefs touch virtually every aspect of people's lives—whether they think productively, self-debilitatingly, pessimistically or optimistically; how well they motivate themselves and persevere in the face of adversities; their vulnerability to stress and depression, and the life choices they make. Self-efficacy is also a critical determinant of self-regulation” (Cited in Pajares, 2000).

Bandura (1982) argued that those students with a higher degree of self-efficacy tend to exert more effort, persevere in difficult situations, choose a course of activities more attentively, and retain more realistic and flexible attributions. While students with low self-efficacy display less persistence and effort expenditure, avoid uncertain and challenging tasks, lack intentionality, and possess attributions that are nonrealistic and maladaptive.

According to Schwarzer (1997) a review of the literature has shown that a strong sense of self-efficacy is related to higher achievement. For example, Pajares (2002) in his paper titled *self-efficacy beliefs in academic contexts* concluded that research findings over these past thirty years have reinforced Bandura's (1982) claim that self-efficacy beliefs play an important role in human agency. The apparent implication that comes forth from this conclusion is that researchers and school practitioners should look to students' self-beliefs about their academic capabilities, since they are important components of self-regulation, motivation, and academic achievement

(Pejares, 2002). Pejares (2002) emphasizes that findings from this line of questioning should go forward to provide a powerful contribution to educational policy, practice, and theory.

Consequently, individuals with a high self-efficacy are more likely and willing to tackle new and challenging tasks and to stick with them, whereas individuals with lower self-efficacies are more likely to neglect trying new experiences. Therefore, clarifying the concept of self-efficacy in detail through the above lines, this article is of two-fold: first, it is going to elaborate on the sources of self-efficacy, and then exploring the role of self-efficacy beliefs in teachers, it aims to shed light on the effect of teachers' self-efficacy on students' success and academic achievements.

2. Sources of Self-Efficacy

Before discussing the sources of self-efficacy, it deserves mentioning that self-efficacy based on Woodruff and Cashman (1993) is thought to have three dimensions: magnitude, which deals with the belief about performance in increasingly difficult aspects of the task; strength, involving the effort placed on maintaining the behavior in spite of obstacles; and generality, which concerns the broadness of applicability of the belief.

As Bandura (1997, p. 3) states perceived self-efficacy, i.e., “beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments”, can be developed by four main sources of influence. Bandura (1997) postulated these sources of efficacy expectations as: mastery experience, also called enactive self-mastery, vicarious experience, also called role-modeling, social or verbal persuasion, and arousal or physiological and emotional states.

According to Maddux (2002) when a child attributes a success to internal, stable, and global factors, (“I got an A on my test because I am smart and know how to study.”), he will experience a sense of mastery and this will reinforce his self-efficacy. When a child attributes success to external, unstable, and specific factors, (“Total luck! The test was really easy and the teacher gave everyone good grades.”), he will not experience a sense of mastery or efficacy. Bandura (1997) claims that the most prevailing and powerful influence on efficacy is mastery experience through which successfully performing the behavior increases self-efficacy for that behavior. The perception that a performance has been successful enhances perceived self-efficacy and ensures future proficiency and success. Contrary to this, the perception that a performance has

been a failure weakens efficacy beliefs and leads to the expectation that future performance will also be inefficient (Bandura, 1997).

The second prominent influence, vicarious experience, in Bandura's (1997) view originates from observing other similar people to perform a behavior successfully. It provides people with ideas about successful manners of action. In contrast, observing people similar to oneself fail lowers an individual's confidence and subsequently undermines their future efforts. Based on Maddux (2002), seeing someone who is similar to oneself work hard to achieve a goal or overcome an obstacle contributes to our belief that we, too, can successfully negotiate our environment. For example, if a first-grade child sees his/her friend climb to the top of the jungle gym after several attempts, the first grader might think to himself/ herself, "If Laura can do it, I can, too." The more similar the child feels to the person he/she is observing, the stronger the effect the other person's successes or failures will be on the child's beliefs about his/her own ability to succeed.

A third source of influence, according to Pajares (2002), is social or verbal persuasion received from others. Successful persuaders foster people's beliefs in their capabilities, while at the same time, ensure that visualized success is achievable. Negative persuasion, on the other hand, may tend to defeat and lower self-beliefs. The most contributing effect of social persuasion pivots around initiating the task, attempting new strategies, and trying hard to succeed. More specifically, Maddux (2002) adds that children's beliefs about their ability to master a situation are influenced by what they hear from their teachers, parents, coaches, and friends. Children who receive strong messages that they have the skills and capabilities to handle a situation are more likely to put in greater effort and to persist in the face of setback. However, such feedback cannot consist of general or empty pep talks ("You can do anything.") but rather must reflect the child's real strengths and be specific ("You are good at solving problems. You can think of a creative solution.").

Psychological and affective states, such as stress, anxiety and excitement, also provide information about efficacy perception and boost the feeling of proficiency and self-concept. Self-concept is defined as the image a person has of himself or herself and is sometimes included in the study of affective variables in language learning (Richards et al., 1992). Of course the self-concept is a global term which refers to the combination of all our perceptions and conceptions about ourselves which give rise to our sense of personal identity (Williams & Burden, 2000).

Humanism would also concentrate upon the development of the child's self-concept. When a child feels good and confident about himself/herself, it shows a positive beginning (Vasuhi, 2011). The multifaceted nature of self-concept, based on Williams and Burden (2000), has led many researchers to concentrate on specific aspects of it such as self-image (the particular view that we have of ourselves), self-esteem (the evaluative feelings associated with our self-image), and self-efficacy (our beliefs about capabilities in certain areas or related to certain tasks). Williams and Burden (2000, p. 97) give an example to help clarify the point. For instance, an anorexic person is likely to have a highly complex self-concept, but to have a self-image of being overweight, however slim she may actually be. This would probably lead to her having particularly low self-esteem. She might, nonetheless, see herself as being particularly capable in learning foreign languages and thus have a high degree of self-efficacy in that specific area.

Hence, trying to reduce individual's stress and anxiety and modifying negative debilitating states to positive ones plays an influential role in amending perceived self-efficacy beliefs. Another important affective factor, according to Pintrich and Schunk (2001), is attribution. For example, if success is attributed to internal or controllable causes such as ability or effort, efficacy will be enhanced. Nevertheless, if success is attributed to external uncontrollable factors such as chance, self-efficacy may be diminished. Maddux (2002) maintains that positive emotions and mood build perceptions of efficacy and negative emotions and mood weaken them. People who experience positive emotion can also experience "upward spirals" such that their positive emotions enable them to see more solutions to problems they face, which strengthens their positivity, which further enhances their ability to cope with challenges, and on and on. These upward spirals can lead to strengthening a child's perception that he can effectively control his environment.

3. Teacher's Self-Efficacy

Teacher efficacy, according to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998, p. 22), is defined as "the teacher's belief in his capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context". It has been found to be associated with learners' individual differences such as motivation, achievement, and efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

A plethora of studies, conducted in L1 context, has demonstrated the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their instructional behaviors. Gibson and Demo (1984), for example, indicated a high correlation between teachers' sense of efficacy and their persistence in the presentation of lessons, feedback presentation, and support scaffolding for weaker students. In a similar study, Pajares (1992) found a strong relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions, classroom practices, and subsequent teaching behaviors. He concluded that "beliefs are far more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organize and define tasks and problems and are stronger predictors of behavior" (Pajares, 1992, p. 311). On the other hand, Pajares and Schunk (2001) contend that teachers with a low level of efficacy have been found to be cynical not only of their own abilities, but also of the abilities of their students and colleagues. They also tend to undermine students' cognitive development as well as students' judgments of their own capabilities (Pajares & Schunk, 2001).

Previous studies have also pointed to the role of teacher's sense of efficacy in shaping students' attitudes toward school and subject matter, i.e., the higher the teaching efficacy of a teacher, the greater the students' interest in school and learning materials. Beyond shaping students' attitudes, teacher efficacy has been also associated with the degree of personal commitment (Coladarci, 1992, cited in Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 9) and enthusiasm in teaching (Allinder, 1994) exhibited by the teacher.

To determine how teachers' efficacy affects student achievement, Ross (1994), scrutinized 88 teacher efficacy studies and contended that teachers with a higher sense of efficacy are more likely to:

“(1) learn and use new approaches and strategies for teaching, (2) use management techniques that enhance student autonomy and diminish student control, (3) provide special assistance to low achieving students, (4) build students' self-perceptions of their academic skills, (5) set attainable goals, and (6) persist in the face of student failure.”

4. Conclusion

As it was mentioned earlier, self-efficacy is defined as the belief that someone is capable of performing in a certain manner to attain a certain set of goals.

Perceived self-efficacy, based on Bandura (1994), is concerned with people's beliefs in their capabilities to exercise control over their own functioning and over events that may affect their lives. Beliefs in personal efficacy affect life choices, quality of functioning, level of motivation, resilience to adversity and vulnerability to stress and depression (Bandura, 1994). Bandura adds that people's beliefs in their efficacy are developed by four main sources of influence which include mastery experiences, seeing people similar to oneself manage task demands successfully, social persuasion that one has the capabilities to succeed in given activities, and inferences from somatic and emotional states indicative of personal strengths and vulnerabilities. Therefore, as Bandura (1994) suggests, people must have a rich sense of efficacy to sustain the perseverant effort needed to succeed. Succeeding periods of life yield new kinds of competency demands requiring further development of personal efficacy for successful functioning.

It was discussed through the article that self-efficacy either on the part of the students or the teachers plays a crucial role in both teaching and learning outcomes. Teachers and students as the main stakeholders in the field need to develop positive self-efficacy in order to achieve academic success as well as lifelong social and cognitive capabilities. According to Zimmerman (1990) positive self-efficacy activates self-regulation processes, including planning, goal setting, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and corrective actions. Zimmerman (2002) maintains that self-efficacy influences student self-regulated learning (SRL) strategy use. Through SRL, students self-monitor and evaluate current and prior learning to improve subsequent learning so that they can achieve academic goals. By self-monitoring it is meant, based on Richards, Platt and Platt (1992) observing and recording information about one's own behavior for the purpose of achieving a better understanding of and control over one's behavior and/or checking one's performance during a learning task as a metacognitive strategy during language learning.

Educators need to assist students with beyond-ability tasks through scaffolding because appropriate scaffolding prevents self-efficacy from going down (Moos & Azevedo, 2008). In the process of teaching, language teachers need to develop an adequate domain knowledge including subject, pedagogical and curricular knowledge, hence it enhances their self-efficacy and consequently affects their students' motivation and performance in a positive way. Wolters (2003) remarks that efficacious students are motivated learners who rarely give up tasks, being flexible, enthusiastic, curious, persistent, and risk-takers. They regulate their motivation to keep up with tasks. A low self-efficacy is associated with a low self-esteem. Individuals with a low

self-esteem have pessimistic thoughts about their accomplishments and personal development. Having a strong sense of competence helps cognitive processes and performance in areas such as academic achievement (Schwarzer, 1997).

According to Williams and Burden (2000), a person may have all the necessary skills to perform a certain task, but unless he believes he is capable of doing so, he is unlikely to demonstrate those skills in that context. Therefore, our self-efficacy, based on Williams and Burden (2000), will influence our choice of activities that we undertake. It will also affect the amount of effort that we are prepared to expend and our level of persistence.

According to Pajares (2000), Self-efficacy has generated research in areas as diverse as medicine, athletics, business, social and political change, media studies, psychiatry, psychology, and education. In psychology, it has been the focus of studies on clinical problems such as depression, phobias, social skills, smoking behavior, assertiveness, and moral development. Pajares adds that Self-efficacy has been especially spectacular in studies of educational constructs such as academic achievement, attributions of success and failure, social comparisons, goal setting, problem solving, memory, career development, and teaching and teacher education. By and large, researchers have demonstrated that self-efficacy beliefs and behavior changes and outcomes are highly correlated and that self-efficacy is a wonderful predictor of behavior. The depth of this support inspired Graham and Weiner (1996, cited in Pajares, 2000) to reason out that, particularly in education and psychology, self-efficacy has evidenced to be a more steadfast predictor of behavioral outcomes than have any other motivational constructs. Apparently, what we are concerned with is not simply a matter of how capable one is, but of how capable one believes himself/ herself to be.

Taking the above points into account, it is concluded that in the context of language classroom, familiarity with the concept of self-efficacy and its effects bears important applications and implications.

- Teachers should teach students to identify and challenge negative thoughts that undermine their belief in their ability to master a task and instead replace the negative thought with a positive, truthful idea.
- Teachers should give students opportunities to control their environment. Creating opportunities for children to make decisions, use and practice their skills, and try

different paths to achieve their goals will help build self-efficacy. This requires genuinely knowing the child's strengths and being able to link those to their goals.

- Process praise, in which children are praised for their efforts and the strategies they used to bring about a success can lead to greater mastery, persistence, and achievement than simply praising children for being smart. Emphasizing effort and strategy helps children focus their attention on variables they can control: how hard they try and the strategies used (Kamins & Dweck, 1999).

Research has consistently shown based on Pintrich and Schunk (1996), that self-efficacy beliefs to be related to academic achievement and performance on standardized tests and actual school tasks in addition to self-report measures of cognitive engagement and self-regulated learning. Ultimately, we should perhaps focus and direct our attention based on Pejares (2002), to the important inner processes of students, to the beliefs that they create and hold about themselves, as they get deeply involved in what is clearly one of the major tasks in the human life cycle -- success or failure in school.

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Title

On the Effect of EFL Textbook Teachers' Manuals on Iranian EFL Male and Female Teachers' Perception and Treatment of Reading Skill

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Abstract

The core interest of this study was to explore the manifestation of the effect of EFL textbook teacher's manuals on Iranian EFL male and female teachers' perception and treatment of reading skill to delineate any meaningful differences between male and female teachers with regard to the effect of teachers' manuals. To fulfill the objective, a questionnaire consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions according to the principles and clues of Interchange series teachers' manuals written by Dr. Jack C. Richards was administered by 20 male and 20 female randomly-selected teachers of Interchange series books with at least 4 years teaching experience in order to determine if they had studied teachers' manual of the book they were teaching or not. Also, they took part in a very short interview contained 5 questions about the reading skill, its strategies, and its mental aspects to measure their perception towards reading skill. At the same session, their reading classes were observed by the researcher by the means of a teacher observation

form consisted of 5 parts with 25 criteria which were conducted according to the principles, techniques, and procedures of Dr. Jack C. Richards's teachers' manuals to monitor how well and to what extent teachers practice what they believe. Quantitative analysis was utilized to efficiently answer the research question. The data analysis safely rejected the null hypothesis of the study, and demonstrated a positive directional effect of EFL textbook teachers' manuals on both perception and treatment of male and female teachers; furthermore, it corroborated that male teachers outperformed female ones in this research.

Keywords: Teaching strategies, Reading strategies, Reading comprehension ability, Teacher's manual, Communicative language teaching, Teacher efficacy.

1. Introduction

Teaching and learning English as the only international language is essential in any society. An increasing need to teach and learn English as a foreign language has been observed in Iran in recent years. Every one admits its key role as a link-language, a library language and a medium of instruction in any educational system; however, the educational system in Iran has produced students the majority of whom are not able to communicate effectively after many years studying English (Yarmohammadi, 2000; Moradi, 1996; Rahimi, 1996; Saadat, 1995; Rashidi, 1995; Zanganeh, 1995; Bagheri, 1994). The Communicative Approach in language teaching originates from a theory of language as communication. Based on this approach, the chief purpose of language teaching is to develop "communicative competence" (Hymes, 1971). Educational authorities and teacher educator centers are enthusiastic to know what teachers understand by CLT and how well they have incorporated this approach into their foreign language teaching (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006).

Learning to read is an important educational goal. The ability to read opens up new worlds and opportunities. It enables us to gain new knowledge, enjoy literature, and do everyday things that are part and parcel of modern life. Since reading depends on efficient word recognition and comprehension, instruction should develop reading skills and strategies, as well as build on learners' knowledge through the use of authentic texts. Reading instruction needs to take into account different types of learners and their needs (Pang, et al., 2003). According to Richards (2005), teacher efficacy is the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute

courses of an action requires accomplishing a specific teaching task in a particular context successfully, and teacher's manual is a book published to go with a set of students' books, giving the teacher answers to questions and suggestions for teaching. This study was an attempt to analyze the effects of teachers' manuals on the classroom activities of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) male and female teachers, and as a result on learners' reading skill. The researcher examined if teachers' manuals help male and female teachers gain a better understanding of reading skill, its different strategies, its mental aspect. Also how teachers' manuals can be helpful in successful teaching of this skill practically.

Thus, the study aimed to find answer to the following question:

1- Are Interchange series teachers' manuals more helpful for the perception and treatment of Iranian EFL male teachers teaching the reading texts or female teachers?

2. A Brief Background Research

Based on (Nazari,2011), in some countries, ELT teachers' guides (TGs) both serve as a source of pedagogical advice and instructions for teachers and a statement of the national (e.g., in Niger) syllabus, because they contain declarations about the course objectives, the course content, implementation, methodology, and sometimes even assessment procedures. Considering their crucial function in defining classroom activities, it is necessary to examine TGs to see how they may also be enhancing certain values and principles. However, literature review of the evaluation of TGs is extremely thin on the ground, materials reviews demonstrate inadequate attention to TGs, or their being completely ignored. Obviously, this is an under-researched area.

Saadat (1995) pointed out that a clear-cut line could not be drawn to distinguish periods during which a specific teaching method was applied in language teaching methodologies in Iran. A particular method might greatly be used during a specific period of time, and some features and techniques of other teaching methods could also be observed simultaneously. Rahimi (1996) demonstrated that GTM was applied in 1950's all over the country. Iranian English teachers have applied various approaches, methods and techniques at different times. He further declared that ALM was not successful in Iranian English classes as a result of the lack of qualified teachers, teaching aids, time, etc.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

This study was conducted with 40 randomly-selected 26-48-year-old experienced English teachers with the degree of BA or MA of any majors, mostly English Teaching. They were 20 male and 20 female teachers who had been teaching Interchange series English books for at least 4 years in different institutes of Mazandaran Province.

3.2. Instrumentation

1. A questionnaire which contained 20 questions according to the principles and clues of Interchange series teachers' manuals considered by Dr. Jack C. Richards to determine if the randomly-selected teachers had studied teacher's manual of the book they were teaching or not.
2. An interview with 40 teachers teaching Interchange Textbooks in different institutes of Mazanradan Province to measure their perception towards reading skill.
3. An observation of the reading classes to examine if the randomly-selected teachers were applying the principles in their real teachings or not, in other words the observations were used to measure the treatment of those teachers while their teaching reading texts.

3.3. Procedure

Having studied exactly the Interchange Series Teachers' Manuals, a questionnaire of 20 multiple-choice items considering the teaching clues of Dr. Jack C. Richards was presented by the researcher. A list of all English institutes as well as their telephone numbers in all 26 cities of Mazanradan Province was obtained from the Organization of Education of Mazanradan Province by the researcher. Table.3.1. shows the name of all cities arranged according to English alphabet with the number of English institutes for male and female learners.

Table.3.1. The list of all English institutes in all cities of Mazanradan Province

	<i>Name of the cities</i>	<i>Number of the English institutes for male learners</i>	<i>Number of the English institutes for female learners</i>	<i>Number of all English institutes of the city</i>
1	<i>Abbas Abad</i>	6	7	13
2	<i>Amol</i>	18	20	38
3	<i>Babol</i>	16	22	28

4	<i>Babolsar</i>	7	5	12
5	<i>Bahnamir</i>	2	2	4
6	<i>Bandpei Gharbi</i>	6	3	9
7	<i>Bandpei Sharqi</i>	6	7	13
8	<i>Behshahr</i>	11	11	22
9	<i>Chalus</i>	5	6	11
10	<i>Chamestan</i>	--	--	--
11	<i>Fereydunkenar</i>	4	4	8
12	<i>Galugah</i>	1	3	4
13	<i>Juybar</i>	3	4	7
14	<i>Kelar Dasht</i>	3	4	7
15	<i>Kia Kola</i>	2	1	3
16	<i>Mahmud Abad</i>	6	6	12
17	<i>Miandorud</i>	2	3	5
18	<i>Neka</i>	6	5	11
19	<i>Nur</i>	8	6	14
20	<i>Noshahr</i>	6	5	11
21	<i>Qaem Shahr</i>	14	16	30
22	<i>Ramsar</i>	5	8	13
23	<i>Sari, Zone 1</i>	15	20	35
24	<i>Sari, Zone 2</i>	6	11	17
25	<i>Savadkuh</i>	2	3	5
26	<i>Shirgah</i>	3	3	6
27	<i>Tonekabon</i>	7	8	15
	Total numbers	170	193	363

There were 170 English institutes for male learners and 193 for female learners among all 363 English institutes in Mazandaran Province. As the first step, 10 cities were randomly selected, then the researcher called the English institutes of the selected cities one by one to determine if Interchange books were being taught there or not. The institutes in which Interchange books were not taught were excluded, and in each city one institute in which Interchange books were taught was randomly selected. The researcher selected 40 teachers -20 males, and 20 females, 1male and 1 female from each institute- randomly again to increase the validity and reliability of the study.

3.3.1. Questionnaire Administration

The questionnaire of 20 multiple-choice questions according to the principles and clues of Interchange series teacher's manuals written by Dr. Jack C. Richards was given to the teachers. Before answering the 20 questions, they were asked to fill in the blanks at the top of their questionnaire with this personal information: their name, degree, field of study, experience of

teaching English, years of teaching according to teachers' manuals. It took about 10-15 minutes to administer the questionnaire.

3.3.2. Interview Administration

The randomly-selected teachers took part in a very short interview contained 5 questions-each had 4 scores- about the reading skill, its strategies, and its mental aspects to answer. It took about 5-7 minutes to have an interview with a subject.

3.3.3. Class Observation

At the same session their reading classes were observed by the researcher by the means of a teacher observation form consisted of 5 parts with 25 criteria which were conducted according to the principles, techniques, and procedures of Dr. Jack C. Richards's teacher's manuals to manage a successful reading class. Part 1 appertained to teacher's preparation with 2 criteria, part 2 belonged to teacher's presentation with 7 criteria, part 3 related to teacher's execution/method with 8 criteria, part 4 appertained to teacher's personal characteristics with 2 criteria, and part 5 belonged to teacher/student interaction with 6 criteria. Each criterion could be scored from 0-4, for being Not Applicable, Unsatisfactory, Average, Above Average, and Excellent respectively. The total score of observation was 100 which were divided by 5 to be 20-the same score as the other two materials. The teachers were encouraged to teach the reading texts honestly according to their usual plans by the researcher. It took about 20-30 minutes for teachers to teach the reading texts depending on the length of the texts, so the observation time for the researcher was the same.

There was no treatment in this study. Data triangulation helped to confirm the obtained result and thus improve the reliability and validity of the data. In order the research results to be reliable, the researcher selected test-retest method by which reliability is estimated through administering a given test to a particular group twice and the intra-reliability between each two sets of scores was obtained by calculating the correlation between them. Thus, 15-25 days after the first administration, the researcher asked the 40 participants to take part in the same interview as the previous one, to administer the same questionnaire, and let the researcher observe their reading class as well. The results of the first and the second administrations are shown in table.3.2. and table.3.3. in each of which the two groups of male and female participants are arranged from higher score to lower.

Table.3.2. The results of the first administration of the 40 participants

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>sex</i>	<i>Questionnaire Score</i>	<i>Interview Score</i>	<i>Observation Score</i>	<i>Total Score</i>
1	M	18	20	20	58
2	M	18	20	20	58
3	M	17	20	20	57
4	M	17	20	20	57
5	M	17	20	20	57
6	M	17	20	20	57
7	M	16	20	20	56
8	M	16	20	19	55
9	M	16	18	20	54
10	M	16	18	20	54
11	M	16	20	17	53
12	M	15	20	18	53
13	M	15	20	17	52
14	M	15	18	19	52
15	M	15	20	16	51
16	M	14	20	16	50
17	M	14	18	18	50
18	M	15	14	15	44
19	M	12	14	16	42
20	M	13	12	14	39
21	F	19	20	20	59
22	F	18	20	20	58
23	F	17	20	20	57
24	F	16	20	20	56
25	F	16	20	19	55
26	F	16	20	17	53
27	F	15	20	18	53
28	F	14	17	19	50
29	F	12	20	18	50
30	F	13	15	17	45
31	F	11	16	18	45
32	F	14	12	18	44
33	F	13	16	15	44
34	F	11	12	15	38
35	F	10	12	16	38
36	F	11	12	15	38
37	F	11	10	14	35
38	F	11	8	15	34
39	F	11	8	14	33
40	F	11	8	14	33

Table.3.3. The results of the second administration of the 40 participants

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>sex</i>	<i>Questionnaire Score</i>	<i>Interview Score</i>	<i>Observation Score</i>	<i>Total Score</i>
1	M	20	20	20	60
2	M	18	20	20	58
3	M	18	20	20	58
4	M	18	20	20	58
5	M	18	20	19	57
6	M	17	20	20	57
7	M	17	20	19	56
8	M	17	20	19	56
9	M	17	18	20	55
10	M	16	20	19	55
11	M	16	20	18	54
12	M	16	20	18	54
13	M	16	20	16	52
14	M	16	17	19	52
15	M	16	20	16	52
16	M	16	20	16	52
17	M	16	16	17	49
18	M	15	15	14	44
19	M	13	13	15	41
20	M	13	14	13	40
21	F	20	20	20	60
22	F	19	20	20	59
23	F	18	20	20	58
24	F	18	20	19	57
25	F	17	20	18	55
26	F	17	19	18	54
27	F	16	20	18	54
28	F	16	17	19	52
29	F	14	18	18	50
30	F	14	15	16	45
31	F	13	15	17	45
32	F	15	13	17	45
33	F	14	15	14	43
34	F	12	13	15	40
35	F	11	13	15	39
36	F	12	13	14	39
37	F	12	12	13	37
38	F	10	10	14	34
39	F	10	10	13	33
40	F	10	10	12	32

Then the researcher calculated the correlation between each two sets of questionnaire, interview, observation, and total scores of the first and second administrations of the study via SPSS. As shown in table.3.4., table.3.5., table.3.6., and table.3.7., the results proved to be significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), with the correlation of 0.956, 0.975, 0.971, and 0.919 respectively each of which shows high positive correlation between each two sets of scores.

Table.3.4. The correlation between questionnaire scores of first and second administrations of the study

Correlations

		X	Y
X	Pearson Correlation	1	.956**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Y	Pearson Correlation	.956**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

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

X= Questionnaire scores of first administration

Y= Questionnaire scores of second administration

Table.3.5. The correlation between interview scores of first and second administrations of the study

Correlations

		X	Y
X	Pearson Correlation	1	.975**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Y	Pearson Correlation	.975**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

Correlations

		X	Y
X	Pearson Correlation	1	.975**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Y	Pearson Correlation	.975**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

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

X= Interview scores of first administration

Y= Interview scores of second administration

Table.3.6. The correlation between observation scores of first and second administrations of the study

Correlations

		X	Y
X	Pearson Correlation	1	.971**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Y	Pearson Correlation	.971**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

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

X= observation scores of first administration

Y= observation scores of second administration

Table.3.7. The correlation between total scores of first and second administrations of the study

Correlations

		X	Y
X	Pearson Correlation	1	.919**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Y	Pearson Correlation	.919**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

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

X= Total scores of first administration

Y= Total scores of second administration

As each set of scores showed high positive correlation, the mean of two scores of questionnaire, interview, and observation administrations was the ultimate score of the 40 participants in each material, as shown in table.3.8. .

Table.3.8. The ultimate scores of 40 participants

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>sex</i>	<i>Questionnaire Score</i>	<i>Interview Score</i>	<i>Observation Score</i>	<i>Total Score</i>
1	M	19	20	20	59
2	M	18	20	20	58
3	M	18	20	20	58
4	M	18	20	20	58
5	M	18	20	20	58
6	M	17	20	20	57
7	M	17	20	20	57
8	M	17	20	19	56
9	M	17	18	20	55
10	M	16	19	20	55
11	M	16	20	18	54
12	M	16	20	18	54
13	M	16	20	17	53
14	M	16	18	19	53
15	M	16	20	16	52
16	M	15	20	16	51
17	M	15	17	18	50
18	M	15	15	15	45
19	M	13	14	16	43

20	M	13	13	14	40
21	F	20	20	20	60
22	F	19	20	20	59
23	F	18	20	20	58
24	F	17	20	20	57
25	F	17	20	19	56
26	F	17	20	18	55
27	F	16	20	18	54
28	F	15	17	19	52
29	F	13	19	18	50
30	F	14	15	17	46
31	F	12	16	18	46
32	F	15	13	18	46
33	F	14	16	15	45
34	F	12	13	15	40
35	F	12	13	15	40
36	F	11	13	16	40
37	F	12	11	14	37
38	F	11	9	15	35
39	F	11	9	14	34
40	F	11	9	13	33

After the required data of 40 participants was collected, the researcher put the data in SPSS program and computed the means of two groups by T-Test, then she obtained the level of significance of them to compare the difference of their means to test the null hypothesis of the study. The result is just generalizable to Mazandaran Province.

4. Results and Discussion

In order to carefully examine whether there is difference in usefulness of Interchange series teachers' manuals for male and female teachers, the means and standard deviations of each group in each material were demonstrated in table.4.1., and the means of each group were depicted in figure.4.1., as well.

Table.4.1. Means and standard deviations of group 1 & group 2

<i>Materials</i>	<i>Mean</i>		<i>Std. Deviation</i>	
	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>
<i>Questionnaire</i>	16.30	14.35	1.593	2.907
<i>Interview</i>	18.70	15.65	2.227	4.158
<i>Observation</i>	18.30	17.10	1.976	2.292
<i>Total Score</i>	53.30	47.15	5.292	8.958

Group 1= Male teachers N=20

Group 2= Female teachers N=20

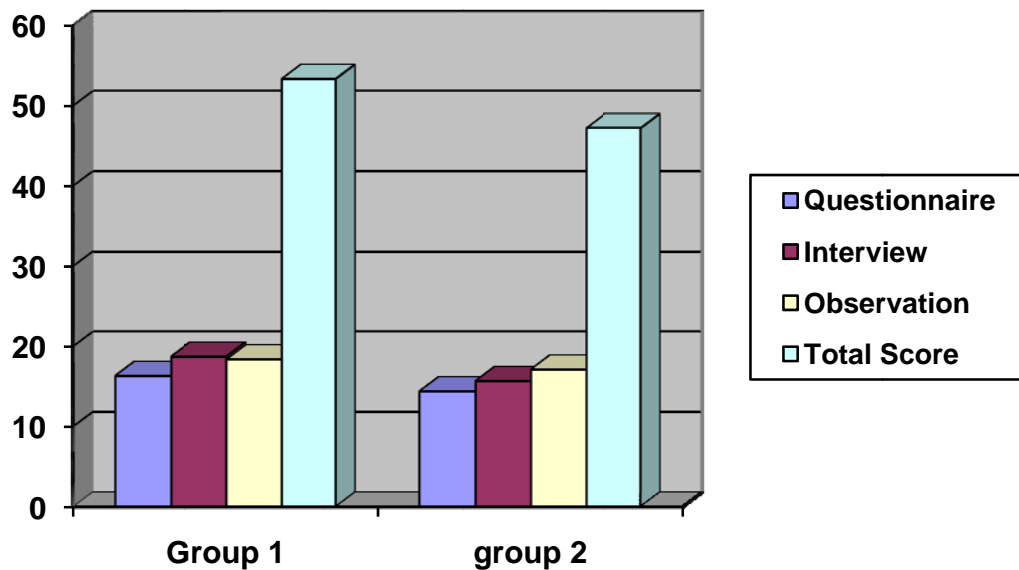


Figure.4.1. Means of group 1 & group 2 of male and female teachers

Then, an independent sample t-test was run to compare the means of total scores of two groups in order to test the null hypothesis **'There is no significant difference between male and female teachers with regard to the effect of Interchange series teachers' manuals on their perception and treatment'**. As each total score consisted of questionnaire, interview, and observation scores of each group, in order to prove the effect of each, the independent samples t-test of each set of them was obtained, as well. The results are shown in table.4.2., table.4.3., table.4.4., and table.4.5. respectively.

Table.4.2. Independent Samples t-test for total scores of group 1 & group 2

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	9.230	.004	2.643	38	.012	6.150	2.326	1.440	10.860
Equal variances not assumed			2.643	30.824	.013	6.150	2.326	1.404	10.896

Accordi

ng to this table, t-test for equality of means displays that if equal variances are assumed sig= .012 and if equal variances are not assumed sig= .013, in both cases significance level is less than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis '**There is no significant difference between male and female teachers with regard to the effect of Interchange series teachers' manuals on their perception and treatment**' is rejected. Moreover, the confidence interval of the difference clarified us of the same conclusion, because there is no 0 between 1.404 and 10.896. It surely confirms the fact that means are not equal and as a result it can be certainly inferred that the stated null hypothesis is rejected.

Table.4.3. Independent Samples t-test for questionnaire scores of group 1 & group 2

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	10.884	.002	2.631	38	.012	1.950	.741	.450	3.450
Equal variances not assumed			2.631	29.465	.013	1.950	.741	.435	3.465

Based on this table, t-test for equality of means exhibits that if equal variances are assumed sig= .012 and if equal variances are not assumed sig= .013, in both cases significance level is less than 0.05, as a result the null hypothesis **'There is no significant difference between male and female teachers with regard to the effect of Interchange series teachers' manuals on their perception and treatment'** is rejected. Besides, the confidence interval of the difference proved us of the same conclusion, as there is no 0 between .435 and 3.465. It safely certifies the fact that means are not equal, so it can be verily concluded that the mentioned null hypothesis is rejected.

Table.4.4. Independent Samples t-test for interview scores of group 1 & group 2

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	12.406	.001	2.892	38	.006	3.050	1.055	.915	5.185
Equal variances not assumed			2.892	29.068	.007	3.050	1.055	.893	5.207

T-test for equality of means in the above table elucidates that if equal variances are assumed sig= .006 and if equal variances are not assumed sig= .007, in both conditions significance level is less than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis **'There is no significant difference between male and female teachers with regard to the effect of Interchange series teachers' manuals on their perception and treatment'** is rejected. Furthermore, the confidence interval of the difference corroborated us of the same conclusion, since there is no 0 between .893 and 5.207. It reinforces the fact that means are not equal, accordingly it can be inferred that the declared null hypothesis is rejected.

Table.4.5. Independent Samples t-test for observation scores of group 1 & group 2

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.997	.324	1.773	38	.048	1.200	.677	-.170	2.570
Equal variances not assumed			1.773	37.195	.048	1.200	.677	-.171	2.571

In this table, t-test for equality of means demonstrates that in both cases of assuming the equal variances or not, sig= .048 which is less than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis '**There is no significant difference between male and female teachers with regard to the effect of Interchange series teachers' manuals on their perception and treatment**' is rejected again. Also it certifies the fact that means are not equal. Although the confidence interval of the difference is between -.171 and 2.571, the obtained significant level in both conditions is less than 0.05, and as a result it can be concluded that the stated null hypothesis is rejected.

Delving into the details of the data collected, the researcher found that most female teachers taught Intro and Interchange 1 books, and Interchange 2 and Interchange 3 were taught by male teachers, even in female classes. Many of the female teachers claimed that they were too busy with kids, housework, ... most of the time at home and they pertain no or little time to study teachers' manuals. Also they complained of their very low salary which did not motivate them to study teachers' manuals. Besides, they noted that the English institute had not provided them with teacher's manuals of the books they were teaching. Since they had to buy them on their own, they refused. Further exploration of the data also indicated that some of both male and female teachers were BA or even MA of other fields of study other than English language, thus

they were not aware of the crucial need of a teacher to use teacher's manuals. Some of them had studied abroad, so they were very fluent in English and could manage the class successfully without knowing even one strategy of teaching, learning, reading, cognitive, metacognitive, comprehension, and so on. Some of them believed that many contextual factors of Iran which hindered teaching had not been considered in teachers' manuals.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of EFL textbook teacher's manuals on Iranian EFL male and female teachers' perception and treatment of reading skill.

The outcome of the present study demonstrated a positive directional effect of EFL textbook teacher's manuals on Iranian EFL male and female teachers' perception and treatment of reading skill, it also revealed that group 1- male teachers - outperformed group 2 - female teachers. The obtained result of t-test reinforced us of the same conclusion.

The researcher believes that utmost implication of this study goes to the teachers teaching reading skill, also it has some implications for syllabus designers, material developers, and educational managers. Delving into the details of results proved that using teacher's manuals is an inevitable need for every teacher to conduct a diverse and successful reading class. According to Rivers (1981), "The language teacher often assumes that, because students have already acquired reading skill in their native language, reading in another language will not be difficult for them" (p.262). Since teachers often do not consider it as detailed, purposeful task, they do not spend time to study teacher's manuals to teach resourcefully. Based on Brown (2004), each type of written texts has its own set of governing rules and conventions. A reader should be able to anticipate those conventions to process meaning efficiently. With an extraordinary number of genres present in any literate culture, the reader's ability to process texts must be complicated. It is the teachers' art to familiarize their students with the purpose of reading task, the strategies for performing that purpose, and how to retain the information. Material developers have to provide the teachers with the content of the most effective and practical clues, principles, strategies and other requirements adapted to the needs of the learners of that book. Syllabus designers have to consider the effect of EFL textbook teacher's manuals on Iranian EFL teachers' perception and treatment of reading skill in order to offer suitable curriculum, appropriate study programs, and task-based courses according to the recent findings of the related issue. Finally, educational

managers have to supervise their English classes to assure the utilization of the EFL textbook teacher's manuals by the teachers in order to enhance the teachers' efficacy and as a result learners' success.

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Title

Strategically Mediated Reflective Practice Framework Introducing Reflective Practice from a Sociocultural Perspective

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Abstract

The field of ELT found the reflective movement (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983) quite responsive and effective to the needs of the teachers in classroom. However, in general, reflective movement has been severely criticized for introducing reflection and reflective practice as an introspective process. Therefore, present paper argues that how introducing reflective practice from a sociocultural perspective can be a remedy to the already mentioned criticisms. Although, the application of a sociocultural perspective to the field of teacher education has already been addressed and suggested (Johnson, 2006, 2009), there has been no attempt to directly taking up the issue so far. As a result, the main concern of the present paper is to propose a framework under the rubric of *Strategically Mediated Reflective Practice* where reflective practice is strategically mediated with the help of more knowledgeable others and new insights and understanding emerge as a result of dialogical thinking highlighting the Vygotskian notion of Concept development.

Keywords: Teacher education, Reflective teaching, Sociocultural perspective, Mediation, Scientific concept, Concept development.

1. Introduction

Feeling quite disappointed with the inefficiency and inadequacy of methods, ELT found itself in what Kumaravadivelu (1994) has called the post-method condition. The post-method condition “enables practitioners to generate location-specific, classroom oriented innovative practices” (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 29). A post-method pedagogy is built on three principles:

- Particularity or a localized context-sensitive approach
- Practicality in which the unequal power relationship between theory and practice is overthrown
- Possibility or a manifestation of a critical approach emphasizing the role of teaching in identity formation and social transformation.

The three principles of an alternative to method rather than an alternative method, teacher autonomy, and principled pragmatism outlined by the post-method condition 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.

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 unfailing obedience to authority, whereas reflective action is started 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” (Dewey, 1933, p.4).

In the Deweyan view, teaching is seen not just as a series of predetermined and pre-sequenced procedures but as a context-sensitive action grounded in intellectual thought (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). 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).

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. He shows how teachers, through their informed involvement in the principles, practices, and processes of classroom instruction, can bring about 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.

2. 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 (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). 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. According to Day (1993) Reflective movement has also been criticized for its lack of attention to the discursive or dialogical dimension of teacher learning. Moreover, Zeichner and Liston (1996) believe that reflective movement has portrayed reflection as largely a solitary and individualistic process involving a teacher and 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 eloquently 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).

3. Teacher education and sociocultural perspective

The message that all of the criticisms mentioned previously want to get across, is the issue that reflective teaching in its purely cognitive and introspective sense cannot be responsive to the dilemmas and the problems with which teachers encounter during their teaching practice. One of the solutions to this problem, that is the treatment of reflective practice as an individualistic and introspective process, was introducing reflective practice from a sociocultural perspective, where any sort of knowledge is dialogically constructed as a result of interaction among individuals.

This shift in paradigm, i.e. moving from a cognitive position to a more situated and social epistemology in teacher education, has been acknowledged and addressed by scholars such as Johnson, 2006, 2009; Johnson and Golombek, 2003, 2011; Freeman, 2004, and Hawkins, 2004 .

Johnson (2006) believes that learning to teach from a sociocultural perspective is based on the assumption that knowing, thinking, and understanding come from participating in the social practices of learning and teaching in specific classroom and school situations.

Johnson (2009) states that considering L2 teacher education from a sociocultural perspective has several advantages. First, such a perspective provides us with a theory of mind which informs us of the inherent interconnectedness of the cognitive and the social processes by which teachers shape their learning of their careers. Second, a sociocultural perspective to L2 teacher education underlines and remarks the point that learning to teach is not merely a matter of enculturation to social practices connected to teaching but a matter of reconstruction of those activities to be responsive to individual and local needs.

According to Johnson and Golombek (2003), teacher education from a sociocultural perspective

enables teacher educators to see how various tools work to create a mediational space in which teachers can externalize their current understandings and then reconceptualize and recontextualize their

understandings and develop new ways of engaging in the activities associated with teaching. (p. 735)

According to Hawkins (2004), from a sociocultural perspective, it becomes crucial to engage in critical reflective practices and to create learning communities within which individuals participate as teachers and collaboratively negotiate new understandings of their profession and practices.

The very basic and fundamental problem with regard to a sociocultural view of teacher education is the issue that there is no framework in which such a view is put into practice. The only application of sociocultural perspective in teacher education is just showing how teacher development is also justifiable from this perspective.

4. Strategically Mediated Reflective Practice: Introducing Reflective Practice from a Sociocultural Perspective

The very basic issue behind *Strategically Mediated Reflective Practice* framework is the issue of concept development and more specifically development of true concept. Vygotsky (1963) distinguishes between two types of concepts 1) everyday concepts, 2) scientific concepts. Vygotsky believes that the content of these concepts shape our mental activity. Everyday concepts are divided in two parts depending on their accessibility to conscious inspection: 1) spontaneous, 2) non-spontaneous.

Spontaneous concepts are formed as a result of concrete practical experiences of a person as he is socialized into a culture. Attempting to bring such a concept to conscious inspection, one comes up with vague, incoherent, incomplete, and even inaccurate statement of the concept. For instance, if a teacher is asked to describe cooperative learning, he may describe it as a group work activity which is a description that mirrors his experience as a student in school.

Non-spontaneous concepts are those which are open to conscious inspection. Non-spontaneous concepts are intentionally and consciously acquired. The example of such a concept could be our learning of how to ride a bike. Everyday concepts are closely linked to concrete activities in social contexts. On the other hand, scientific concepts are not as a result of everyday experience but result from theoretical investigation of specific domain which enables learners to move beyond the limitation of everyday experiences.

Vygotsky (1987) argued that scientific concepts are not assimilated in ready-made or prepackaged form. Vygotsky (1987, as cited in Daniels, 2007) writes that

Pedagogical experience demonstrates that direct instruction in concepts is impossible. It is pedagogically fruitless. The teacher who attempts to use this approach achieves nothing but a mindless learning of words, an empty verbalism that stimulates or imitates the presence of concepts. (p. 312)

Johnson (2009) describes the responsibility of education as to present scientific concepts to the learners in a way that involves concrete practical activities and connecting them (scientific concepts) to everyday activities of learners. Johnson (2009), referring to Robbins (2003), writes that this lies at the heart of internalization which means the transformation of the social into the psychological.

In a similar vein, Kozulin (2003) outlines three types of information that are conveyed in educational setting as follows:

1. Psychological tools (true concepts)
2. Technical skills
3. Content

According to Kozulin (2003), psychological tools are the most powerful because they guide our cognitive activity in many situations while technical skills are used only in activities which they were learned and the content is usually confined to a knowledge area.

What has to be underlined is the importance of concept over content. According to Johnson and Golombek (2011), when concept and content are presented together, one may mistakenly take content as concept. Such a mistake deprives him from developing psychological tools or the true concept of an issue.

Going back to the example of cooperative learning mentioned previously, which the teacher defined it as a group work, we see that if the concept of cooperative learning is presented to the teachers as a set of procedures for the matter of practice in the class, they may think that 'group work' is cooperative learning and this prevents them to fully internalize the concept of cooperative learning.

The same is true for the field of teacher education. Issues of language teaching are the same as the scientific concepts that could not be taught or as Vygotsky (1963) believes be directly instructed. As a result, the present paper argues that the content of any teacher education

programme should be after concept development, not just providing the teachers with the appropriate content knowledge. Moreover, most of the mismatches and discrepancies observed between what teachers say and what they do are due to not developing true concepts of their field's content.

Considering the importance of concept development in teacher education, the present paper suggests, once the contents are presented to the teachers, they should be provided with the chance to verbalize their understanding of the contents, and teachers should receive feedback by more knowledgeable others. Such a process can be captured through the notion of verbalization. According to Gal' Perin (1992) verbalization is a process by which individuals make their own perceptions explicit to others.

Once the teachers verbalized their understanding, their perception is made explicit for dialogical mediation and based on their verbalization, it is the job of the more knowledgeable others to introduce them the scientific concepts. Introducing scientific concepts could be in the form of reading a particular article or a specific book suggested by more knowledgeable others. Then new insights and understanding should be achieved as a result of dialogical negotiation between the teachers and more knowledgeable others. Such a process should be continued to the time that evidence of true concept development is heard from the teachers. It is in this sense that the term mediated reflection comes to play a significant role. Moreover, such mediation should be strategic in the sense that not all kinds of mediation lead into development rather based on the individuals' needs, it is the job of more knowledgeable others to provide them this strategic mediation.

Besides, one might argue that such mediation and even strategic mediation by more knowledgeable others would make individuals more dependent and less autonomous comparing with reflective practice as an individualistic and introspective process. But what should be brought into consideration is that the ones who act with the help of more knowledgeable others must not be considered weaker than those who act independently. As a matter of fact, it is absolutely the other way around from a sociocultural perspective. According to Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), potential level is more indicative of mental growth than actual development.

Moreover, they underlined that individuals who are able to respond to such mediation must be considered to be at a more advanced developmental level than the ones who fail to do so, because those who responds to mediation can be expected to show a more rapid rate of actual

development. Importantly, what is significant is not what a person can do on his own; but rather how far one can move forward and reach what he can potentially do. Moreover, Lantolf (2000) argues, “even in those cases in which experts and novices do come together, as in a teaching situation, novices do not merely copy experts’ capabilities; rather they transform what the experts offer them as they appropriate it” (p. 17).

5. Conclusion

Since strategically mediated reflective practice framework is framed through a sociocultural theory and based on the notion of concept development, it has great advantages over the other frameworks in which reflective practice is largely treated as an individualistic, solitary, and introspective process.

It is believed that teachers practice is largely controlled by the existing psychological tools in individuals’ minds (Kozulin, 2003). Psychological tools are described as “true concepts”. According to Vygotsky (1963), one way to arrive at true concepts is by providing the individuals the opportunities to investigate their “everyday concepts” in the light of the “scientific concepts”.

Such a process of investigation could be realized through what was proposed by Gal’ Perin (1992) as “verbalization” by which individuals make their own perceptions explicit to others. Once individuals’ perception is made explicit, they are open to dialogical mediation which can lead to restructuring of the individuals’ perception. This also provides the teachers with psychological tools or true concepts by which they can control their activity in close association with their perception. Since the teachers develop true concepts through a strategically mediated reflective process, the present paper hypothesizes that the gap between what they believe and what they do, which is a significant concern in teacher education, would be to a great extent minimized and in some cases removed entirely.

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Title

Effect of Using E-Portfolio on the Writing Proficiency of Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract

This research was carried out to find out whether using electronic portfolios is effective on Iranian EFL learners' writing proficiency. To do so, two samples of students were selected as the control and the experimental group. To check their homogeneity, an IELTS test (writing section) was administered as pretest. Using Independent Samples T-test, it was proven that students of both groups were at the same level of proficiency. After that, the traditional method of teaching writing was used for the control group and using e-portfolios for the experimental group. The students of the experimental group used e-portfolios for their writing homework assignments while students of the control group used papers. When 2 months of instruction ended, another IELTS test (writing section), as the posttest, was given to the students of both groups to assess their writing proficiency. Using Independent Samples T-test, it was shown that using e-portfolios was more effective than the traditional method of teaching writing on the writing proficiency

of the Iranian EFL learners. The second research question was whether using e-portfolios had an effect on students' motivation towards writing. Therefore, at the end of instruction a motivation questionnaire was given to the students of the experimental group. Analysis of students' answers to the questionnaire, using descriptive statistics and bar charts, showed high motivation. Therefore, using e-portfolio had a positive effect on Iranian EFL learners' motivation towards writing.

Key words: E-portfolio, Portfolio, Motivation, Writing proficiency.

1. Introduction

An e-portfolio is a repository of information about a particular learner provided by the learner and by other people and organizations, including products in a range of media that the learner has created or helped to create alongside formal documents from authoritative sources, such as transcripts of assessed achievement, which the learner has chosen to retain (Wilson, 2005 cited in Attwell, 2005). Wilson (2005 cited in Attwell, 2005) also says that the learner is primarily the owner of an e-portfolio, however, some items in it can be co-owned. This latter part of the definition is both important and contentious and will be returned to later in this section of the paper. "Wilson continues to say an e-portfolio is capable of providing the information about a learner from which different profiles of the learner may be developed through other services and retained within the portfolio" (Attwell, 2005, p 2). An e-portfolio is a purposeful selection of evidence by the learner at a point in time, with a particular audience in mind. It is part of a personal online space, where learners can store their work, record their achievements and access personal course timetables. This space can provide digital resources relevant to a learner's own study (personalized information) and links to other learners (for collaboration and feedback). E-portfolios benefit learning most effectively when considered as part of a system, rather than as a discrete entity. The system should include online repositories, planning and communication tools, and opportunities for both students and teachers to draw out and present e-portfolios at particular times and for particular purposes.

E-portfolios are a very suitable tool to use in writing classes. According to opinions of many Iranian EFL learners, writing is the most boring, tedious, and uninteresting part of an English class. This research attempts to change the medium of instruction of writing to see if better results will ensue. In order to achieve the above this research strives to find out if using e-

portfolios facilitates better writing ability in language learners. This medium may motivate language learners and increase their interest in the writing of English because the process is fun and inspiring in itself. In order to do so, the following research questions were designed for this study.

- a) Does using e-portfolios have a significant effect on the writing proficiency of Iranian EFL learners?
- b) Is using e-portfolios significantly effective on Iranian EFL learners' motivation toward writing?

2. Review of the Related Literature

According to Abrami & Barrett (2005), an Electronic Portfolio (EP) is a digital container capable of storing visual and auditory content including text, images, video, and sound. Government policy indicates that e-portfolios are part of a personal online space, where learners can store their work, record their achievements (a repository function) and access personal course timetables (an organizing function). E-portfolios can provide digital resources relevant to their own study (personalized information) and links to other learners (for collaboration and feedback). Some saw e-portfolios as containers for collections of evidence for a purpose and made connections with the former paper-based records of achievement. One teacher suggested an e-portfolio is 'any form of electronic folder that students will use to save anything pertaining to them as an individual: individual learning plan, homework, and coursework, everything that relates to that student'. Several included out-of-school activities. Others, focusing on processes, saw the benefits for e-portfolios in supporting personal organization, reflection and presentation to a range of audiences. The processes required to create an e-portfolio include capture and ongoing storage of material, selection, reflection and presentation, using a variety of hardware and software tools from digital cameras to blogs.

According to Wade, Abrami & Sclater (2005; see also Abrami et al., 2007), EPs are linked to a student's ability to self-regulate their learning and to enhance their meaningful learning of important educational skills and abilities, especially literacy skills. Self-regulated learners are individuals who are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning (Zimmerman, 2000).

Zou (2006) quotes that in terms of writing, Loveless et al. (2001) states that the computer can promote writing skills on the part for students and can help them to change the product of texts. Hyland also suggests that the computer-based writing changes our writing habits and the word-processor allows students to check their spelling and grammar, cut and paste, delete and copy, import images and change every aspect of formatting, which make our texts longer, look much better and more subject to revision. It helps students to integrate texts with other materials and mix the visual and the verbal in new ways. Texts are becoming increasingly multimodal.

An electronic portfolio as established by the National Learning Infrastructure Initiative (Cambridge, 2001) is a collection of authentic and diverse evidence, drawn from a larger archive representing what a person or organization has learned over time on which the person or organization has reflected, and designed for presentation to one or more audiences for a particular rhetorical purpose. An electronic portfolio uses electronic technologies as the container, allowing students/teachers to collect and organize portfolio artifacts in many media types (audio, video, graphics, text); and using hypertext links to organize the material, connecting evidence to appropriate outcomes, goals or standards (Barrett, 2001).

In order to develop and create an electronic portfolio, Sun (2002) states that documentation of student learning requires collection of evidence of student learning outcomes. Technology enhanced courses again provide tools which can help students to create their individual portfolios to showcase their learning. Data from such student portfolio will be essential in generating useful information about students' learning outcomes. Making the portfolio in an electronic format will provide opportunities for students to be more creative in deciding how to assemble their learning products. A brief description is provided below on how to use some of the basic functions in word processing programs to compile an e-portfolio.

According to Sun (2002) there are some steps for creating an e-portfolio. Such information of directions of how to prepare for compiling an e-portfolio can be shared with students at the beginning of the course so that they follow the process in assembling their learning products for future inclusion into their portfolio.

- Step 1: Save and keep all course work (writing assignments, projects, etc.) on a disk;
- Step 2: Design and begin to build e-portfolio;

- Step 3: Create a new file which can contain a cover page on which one can create a **Table of Contents** (indicating what is to be included in the portfolio);
- Step 4: Copy all saved course work onto this new file in a sequence as desired;
- Step 5: Make **Book Marks** and **Hyperlink** each course work assignment to its title listed in the **Table of Contents**;
- Step 6: Save the whole file and submit it to the instructor.

Regarding pedagogy Sun (2002) believes that creating an e-portfolio makes this process more meaningful to the students as they realize that this is an opportunity to “showcase their learning outcomes.” Students can be creative in making their e-portfolios. While building up this portfolio, students are learning new things. They are now looking at their learning as a whole, rather than separately. The process would become a re-evaluation for the students. They can feel proud of their own product once it is completed. The portfolio can be easily stored and transported for various purposes.

Bisovsky & Schaffert (2009) mention that five most important processes in working with e-portfolios are: to clarify the target and context of the digital portfolio work; to collect, select and connect artifacts with a learning target; to reflect and manage the learning process; to present the e-portfolio artifacts; and to assess and evaluate the learning processes / development of competencies.

The advantages of e-portfolios are numerous:

Skill development. The creation of an electronic portfolio serves to develop multimedia technology skills (Abrami & Barrett, 2005; Barrett, 2000; Heath, 2002, 2005; Wade et al., 2005), as well as more general literacy, communication and problem solving skills (Abrami & Barrett, 2005; Canada, 2002). Electronic portfolios are also a way to showcase technology skills (Heath, 2002, 2005), and to model technology skills for others (Barrett, 2000; Heath, 2005).

Evidence of Learning. As Abrami and Barrett (2005, online) argue, electronic portfolios encourage “flexible, inclusive, and distributed evidence of learning including variable times and places for learning”. Electronic portfolios provide a ‘rich picture’ of student learning and competencies (Love & Cooper, 2004), thus facilitating authentic learning (Love & Cooper, 2004; Wade et al., 2005). They actively involve students (Love & Cooper, 2004) in demonstrating past learning and current learning gains (MacDonald, Liu, Lowell, Tsai, & Lohr, 2004; Wade et al.,

2005), and help students to make connections between their course projects and non-academic projects (MacDonald et al., 2004). They help students learn to manage their own professional development, and thus contribute to lifelong learning (Barrett, 2000; Love & Cooper, 2004; Wall et al., 2006). They promise significant pedagogical benefits by stimulating class discussion and providing student-centered learning (Canada, 2002). Finally, electronic portfolios help a learning community to establish its goals and expectations (Ahn, 2004).

Feedback. Electronic portfolios facilitate the exchange of ideas and feedback (Lorenzo & Ittleson, 2005a). Students can receive feedback quickly and regularly throughout the process of constructing their portfolios (Ahn, 2004), across electronic media channels (Abrami & Barrett, 2005). Electronic portfolios contribute to the ‘feedback loop’ integral to formative assessment (Cambridge, 2001).

Reflection. Just like traditional paper-based portfolios, electronic portfolios encourage students to reflect on their work and their reasons for choosing certain pieces to be incorporated in their portfolio. Students are encouraged to be reflective throughout the entire portfolio process and to use that reflection to integrate their learning experiences and find meaning in them (Lorenzo & Ittleson, 2005a; Young, 2002). Through reflection, electronic portfolios make meaning out of diverse and unconnected pieces of information (Cambridge, 2001).

Psychological benefits. For those compiling them, electronic portfolios foster a sense of pride in their work, a sense of personal accomplishment, and a feeling of satisfaction (Canada, 2002).

Assessment. Electronic portfolios engage students in the evaluation and assessment process (Wade et al., 2005), as they continually revisit and refine their portfolios. Students gain a better understanding of the assessment they are undertaking and can use that assessment to constantly improve their learning (Cambridge, 2001). Electronic portfolios can also help to put failure into context; they can show the steps taken to redress failure, and what the student has learned from the experience (Cambridge, 2001).

Artifacts. Many kinds of artifact can be incorporated into electronic portfolios. They can integrate text and multimedia elements such as pictures, graphics, and audio and video recordings (Abrami & Barrett, 2005; Canada, 2002; Heath, 2005; Wade et al., 2005). They also take advantage of work that is already in an electronic format (Heath, 2002, 2005).

Maintenance. Electronic portfolios are easy to maintain, edit and update (Canada, 2002; Heath, 2002, 2005), and because of this are more likely to be constantly revised (Canada, 2002).

Portability and sharing. Whether saved to CD-ROM or to the web, electronic portfolios are easy to carry, to share with others, and to transport into a new system or new working environment (Abrami & Barrett, 2005; Strudler & Wetzel, 2005; Wade et al., 2005). For these reasons, they have longevity, existing beyond the end of a course or a student's university career (Canada, 2002).

Access. Especially when saved to the Internet, electronic portfolios are easily accessible by a number of people. Students can work on their portfolios, and supervisors can review and assess portfolios, from many different sites (Ahn, 2004; Canada, 2002; Heath, 2005; Wade et al., 2005).

Audience. Because of their accessibility, electronic portfolios are viewable by a much larger audience (Ahn, 2004; Strudler & Wetzel, 2005), including students' peers, supervisors, assessors, parents, employers and others (Wade et al., 2005).

Organization. Electronic portfolios are easy to organize and search (Ahn, 2004; Wade et al., 2005; Young, 2002). Because of their electronic nature, they can be organized in complex ways, with navigational links connecting ideas and artefacts (Canada, 2002; Heath, 2002, 2005). They also look perpetually polished (Canada, 2002).

Storage. Because they do not rely on large binders full of paper, electronic portfolios are easy and efficient to store (Ahn, 2004; Canada, 2002).

Cost. Electronic portfolios are inexpensive (Heath, 2005), especially to reproduce, although initial set-up costs in software and equipment may in fact be quite high.

Standardizations. Electronic portfolios have the potential to be standardized across regions and countries (Abrami & Barrett, 2005), if universal specifications can be agreed upon.

Privacy. Ultimately, electronic portfolios can include a privacy feature (Young, 2002) to protect student work. Access can be limited to only those that students wish to view their work.

Van Wesel & Prop (2008) believe that portfolio-based learning finds increasing implementation in a variety of educational and professional learning contexts. It is utilized to stimulate and monitor students' professional development and to stimulate their ability to become lifelong learners. Simultaneously, we observe a move from the paper-based portfolio to the electronic counterpart. Portfolio literature mentions many advantages of an electronic portfolio (e-Portfolio) over its paper-based counterpart, such as hyperlink functionality, use of multimedia and the ease of sharing the portfolio. Driessen et al. (2007) conclude that creating an e-portfolio enhance student motivation, an e-portfolio is more user-friendly for portfolio

mentors, and delivers the same content quality compared to the paper-based variant. They also found that students spent significantly more time preparing an e-portfolio than a paper-based one.

2.1 Motivation and E-portfolios

Theorists have since been able to differentiate several specific types of motivation based on the interaction of these needs and the environment: 1) intrinsic motivation- the drive to pursue an activity simply for the pleasure or satisfaction derived from it, 2) extrinsic motivation- pursuing an activity out of a sense of obligation, or as a means to an end, and 3) amotivation - the absence of intent or drive to pursue an activity due to one's failure to establish contingencies between their behavior and the activity (Vallerand, Pelletier, Blais, Brière, Senécal, & Vallière, 1992). These differential states have been argued to fall along a motivational continuum that reflects the degree of self-determined behavior, ranging from amotivation to extrinsic to intrinsic (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Vallerand et al. (1992)'s examination of this research prompted them to distinguish between three subscales of intrinsic motivation: 1) intrinsic motivation to know, 2) intrinsic motivation to accomplish, and 3) intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation. Intrinsic motivation to know refers to the desire to perform an activity for the enjoyment one receives while learning new things. Intrinsic motivation to accomplish refers to the desire to perform an activity for the satisfaction that one receives from accomplishing or creating new things. Finally, intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation refers to the desire to perform an activity to experience sensory stimulation. This stimulation may reflect either intellectual or physical sensations.

Hartnell-Young (2007) mentions it is often claimed that students are more motivated and engaged when using information and computing technology (ICT), but the study found that while teachers believe their students are enjoying this use of ICT, for the students themselves it depends on the purpose and type of activity. E-portfolios have the potential to encourage creativity by encouraging students to populate an empty repository with personally created material in a variety of digital formats.

Motivation is an individual variable, which is both shaped by internal factors and influenced by context (Rentroia-Bonito, Jorge, & Ghaoui, 2008). It captures the impact of events that may take place within the individual's immediate context. Such events may affect student

efforts and results. Understanding what aspects could affect motivation-to-e-learn the most is critical to improve acceptance behaviors, and consequently to increase learning effectiveness.

According to Schunk (1990 cited in Abd Wahab, 2008, p 60), “Motivation is a crucial component in determining students’ achievement. Motivation refers to the process whereby goal-directed behavior is instigated and sustained. It could be extrinsically or intrinsically enforced.” Keller (1984) noticed that students’ motives as well as expectation influence the degree of attention and effort they will put in to a learning task and these in turn are being called achievement.

Portfolios are motivating since students have control over their learning and can select what they want to use in their learning. On the other hand, using e-portfolios can multiply this motivation because dealing with internet and online facilities and also computers is something fun and interesting for Iranian students, both young and old. The most important benefit of electronic portfolios is that they are more accessible and economical than usual paper-based portfolios. Furthermore, e-portfolios can store different kinds of media and this is more stimulating and can develop the students’ creativity.

3. Methodology

In order to answer the above research questions the following participants were chosen and the subsequent steps were taken.

3.1 Subjects

In this research, 4 classes of 15 male students in an English institute in Mashhad, Iran were selected. Two classes (30 students) were randomly assigned as the control group and two classes (30 students) as the experimental group. All these students were intermediate in their proficiency level and between 18 to 30 years of age. Students of experimental group were familiar with basic knowledge of working with computers and also were able to work on Internet.

3.2 Instrumentation

In order to complete this research the following instruments were used.

1. The writing section (task 1) of two IELTS tests (General) were given to both groups, one at the beginning as a pretest and one at the end of the course to assess their writing proficiency.

2. The second instrument was the e-portfolio. Since all famous e-portfolio provider websites are not free to sign up, the researcher decided to use a weblog instead (This is due to the

fact that registration in Iran is virtually impossible). Every student in the experimental group registered a free account on <https://www.blogger.com/start> and in this way they owned the electronic portfolio required in the study.

3. A questionnaire was used to assess students' motivation toward writing skill using e-portfolios at the end of the course. These questionnaires were given to students of experimental group. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher. For its content validity, expert judgment was carried out. The questionnaire was checked by 2 TEFL experts. For its reliability, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each item to assure of internal consistency of the questionnaire items. There are 10 five-point likert-scale items in this questionnaire.

4. Finally, to analyze and compute the data in this research SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 15 was used.

3.3 Procedure

This study is an experimental research. There were 4 classes of 15 male students taking part in the study. Two classes were randomly chosen as control group and two classes as experimental. All students had passed 7 levels in the institute and at that time they were in Level 8. The instruction in both groups was 3 sessions a week, each of which was about 2 hours. Total period of instruction was about 2 months.

Since all the students had passed 7 levels and no new student had joined them, therefore they were all homogenous. However, to be sure we gave them a pretest. Writing section (Task 1) of a general IELTS test (see Appendix 1) was given to the students of both control and experimental group to check their homogeneity. To score the tests and so that scores be inter-rater reliable, 2 skillful and experienced EFL teachers were selected. "IELTS task 1 writing band descriptors" (see Appendix 3) was given to them and every teacher scored the tests according to that manual. To be intra-rater reliable, every teacher scored the tests again after 2 days. An inter-rater reliability analysis, using the Kappa statistic, was performed to determine consistency among raters.

Control Group: In control group the teacher used traditional method of teaching writing. It means that according to their textbook students had some writing exercises every session which they did in the class and every session they had to do a homework assignment on a piece of paper and deliver them to their teacher the next session. The writing at this level was mainly paragraph writing similar to that which is required in the IELTS test of writing. The teacher

collected, corrected, and brought them back the next session. Then, students asked questions about their errors and the teacher explained.

Experimental Group: What is different between this group and control group is that the homework assignments are done in e-portfolios. In first session the teacher explained what these e-portfolios are and how students can create them. After signing up and creating the e-portfolios students gave their e-portfolios' internet address (link) to each other and to the teacher. Then, students wrote each of their assignments in a single post in their own e-portfolio. Students visited each other's pages and put comments about their friends' writings regarding errors or suggestions. The teacher also visited every student's page and gave his/her comments and corrected the writings or even the students' comments. Students could add different kinds of materials to their e-portfolios, such as pictures, audio or video files, hyperlinks to other websites, or any other things related to the subjects of their assignments which they thought it helped their learning.

The subjects that students used for their home assignments and class exercises were exactly the same in both groups and based upon the textbook which was used in the institute. Every now and then, some tasks close to the topics which are used in IELTS tests (suitable for their level) were given to students for their homework. At the end of the course, task 1 of writing section of a General IELTS test (see Appendix 2) was given to the students of both groups as a posttest.

To score the tests and so that scores be inter-rater reliable, 2 skillful and experienced EFL teachers were selected. "IELTS task 1 writing band descriptors" (see Appendix 3) was given to them and every teacher scored the tests according to that manual. To be intra-rater reliable, every teacher scored the tests again after 2 days. An inter-rater reliability analysis, using the Kappa statistic, was performed to determine consistency among raters and these analyses are fully presented and discussed in the results section.

On the other hand, at the end of the course, the motivation questionnaire (see Appendix 4) which was distributed among the participants of the experimental group to check whether or not developing and using e-portfolios had a significant effect on the motivation of students towards learning of writing.

4. Results and Discussion

In order to answer the research questions a pretest was given to the students of both control and experimental group to assure of their homogeneity. To do this, Writing section (Task 1) of a general IELTS test was chosen (see Appendix 1). To assure inter-rater and intra-rater reliability 2 raters scored the test papers twice. For inter-rater reliability and inter-rater reliability analysis the Kappa statistics was performed to determine consistency among raters. To do this, in control group, the means (MeanCR1 - control group 1- and MeanCR2 –control group 2) of first rating (CR11) and second rating (CR12) of the first rater and the second rater were compared. The same was done for the experimental group. The results for control group are shown in Tables 1a, 1b, and 1c:

Table 1a - Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
MeanCR1 * MeanCR2	30	100.0%	0	.0%	30	100.0%

Table 1b - MeanCR1 * MeanCR2 Cross-tabulation

Count

		MeanCR2				Total
		3.50	4.00	4.50	5.00	3.50
MeanCR1	3.50	2	0	0	0	2
	4.00	0	8	3	0	11
	4.50	0	4	8	0	12
	5.00	0	0	0	5	5
Total		2	12	11	5	30

Table 1c - Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error(a)	Approx. T(b)	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.654	.122	5.446	.000
N of Valid Cases		30			

- a Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- b Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

In these 3 Tables:

MeanCR1= means of the scores in control group rated by first rater

MeanCR2= mean of the scores in control group rated by second rater

As a rule of thumb values of Kappa from 0.40 to 0.59 are considered moderate, 0.60 to 0.79 substantial, and 0.80 and above are outstanding (Landis & Koch, 1977). According to Table 1c, the inter-rater reliability for the raters was found to be Kappa = 0.654 (p <0.001), 95% CI (0.414, 0.893). Therefore, Kappa value is substantial and consequently the scores in control group are inter-rater reliable.

The results of inter-rater reliability analysis in the experimental group are shown in Tables 2a, 2b, and 2c:

Table 2a - Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
MeanER1 * MeanER2	30	100.0%	0	.0%	30	100.0%

Table 2b - MeanER1 * MeanER2 Cross-tabulation

Count		MeanER2				Total
		3.50	4.00	4.50	5.00	3.50
MeanER1	3.50	1	0	0	0	1
	4.00	0	9	1	0	10
	4.50	0	1	11	3	15
	5.00	0	0	2	2	4
Total		1	10	14	5	30

Table 2c - Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error(a)	Approx. T(b)	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.631	.121	4.927	.000
N of Valid Cases		30			

a Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

In these 3 Tables:

MeanER1= means of scores in experimental group rated by first rater

MeanER2= mean of scores in experimental group rated by second rater

According to Table 2c, the inter-rater reliability for the raters was found to be Kappa = 0.631 ($p < 0.001$), 95% CI (0.393, 0.868). Therefore, Kappa value is substantial and consequently the scores in experimental group are inter-rater reliable.

Now that it was proven the pretest was reliable, in this part the results of the test are analyzed. Table 3a shows the descriptive statistics related to pretest scores:

Table 3a - Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
MeanCont	30	1.500	3.500	5.000	4.32500	.405512	.164
MeanExp	30	1.500	3.500	5.000	4.37500	.358096	.128
Valid N (listwise)	30						

In this Table:

MeanCont= means of scores in control group

MeanExp= means of scores in experimental group

Since both raters rated the papers twice, for every student in each group there were 4 scores and the mean of these 4 was used as their pretest score. Therefore 2 sets of score were obtained:

- 1) The means of control group students' scores (MeanCont)
- 2) The means of experimental group students' scores (MeanExp)

To check the homogeneity of the students of 2 groups the abovementioned 2 sets of scores were compared using an Independent Sample T-Test. Tables 3b and 3c show the results of the T-Test:

Table 3b - Group Statistics

group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
MeanContExp 1	30	4.32500	.405512	.074036
2	30	4.37500	.358096	.065379

Table 3c - Independent Samples Test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
							Lower	Upper	

MeanContExp	Equal variances assumed	.106	.745	-.506	58	.615	-.050000	.098771	-	.14771
	Equal variances not assumed			-.506	57.12 6	.615	-.050000	.098771	-.247712 .247776	.14777 6

In short, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the pretest scores of students in the control group and in the experimental group. According to Table 3c, in Levene's Test the **P-value= 0.745** which was higher than 0.05; therefore, "Equal variances assumed" row was used for T-test.

Since in T-test P-value= 0.615 which was higher than 0.05, as a result the null hypothesis is accepted. In another words, There was not a significant difference in the scores for control group (M=4.325, SD=0.405) and experimental group (M=4.375, SD=0.358); $t(58) = -0.506$, $p = 0.615$. These results suggested that the students in control group and experimental group were homogeneous.

4.1 Posttest

After the treatment was carried out the writing proficiency of the students of both control and experimental group was assessed through the writing section (Task 1) of a general IELTS test (see Appendix 2). To assure inter-rater and intra-rater reliability 2 raters scored the test papers twice. For inter-rater reliability, an inter-rater reliability analysis using the Kappa statistic was performed to determine consistency among raters. To do this, in control group, the means (MeanCR1 and MeanCR2) of first rating (CR11) and second rating (CR12) of the first rater and the second rater were compared together. The same was done for the experimental group. The results for control group are shown in Tables 4a, 4b, and 4c:

Table 4a - Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
MeanCR1 *	30	100.0%	0	.0%	30	100.0%
MeanCR2						

Table 4b - MeanCR1 * MeanCR2 Cross-tabulation

Count

		MeanCR2						Total	
		3.00	3.50	4.00	4.50	5.00	5.50	6.00	3.00
MeanCR1	3.00	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	3.50	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	4.00	0	0	6	2	0	0	0	8
	4.50	0	1	3	11	0	0	0	15
	5.00	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
	5.50	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
	6.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total		1	1	10	13	3	1	1	30

Table 4c - Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error(a)	Approx. T(b)	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.609	.119	5.661	.000
N of Valid Cases		30			

- a Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- b Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

In these 3 Tables:

MeanCR1= means of the scores in control group rated by first rater

MeanCR2= mean of the scores in control group rated by second rater

According to Table 4c, the inter-rater reliability for the raters was found to be Kappa = 0.609 (p <0.001), 95% CI (0.375, 0.842). Therefore, Kappa value is substantial and consequently the scores in control group have inter-rater reliability.

The results of inter-rater reliability analysis in the experimental group are shown in Tables 5a, 5b, and 5c:

Table 5a - Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
MeanER1 * MeanER2	30	100.0%	0	.0%	30	100.0%

Table 5b - MeanER1 * MeanER2 Cross-tabulation

Count

		MeanER2						Total
		3.50	4.00	4.50	5.00	5.50	6.00	3.50
MeanER1	3.50	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	4.00	0	2	3	0	0	0	5
	4.50	0	1	8	2	0	0	11
	5.00	0	0	0	8	0	0	8
	5.50	0	0	0	1	2	0	3
	6.00	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Total		1	3	11	11	2	2	30

Table 5c - Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error(a)	Approx. T(b)	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.684	.105	6.868	.000
N of Valid Cases		30			

- a Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- b Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

In these 3 Tables:

MeanER1= means of scores in experimental group rated by first rater

MeanER2= mean of scores in experimental group rated by second rater

According to Table 5c, the inter-rater reliability for the raters was found to be Kappa = 0.684 ($p < 0.001$), 95% CI (0.478, 0.889). Therefore, Kappa value is substantial and consequently the scores in experimental group have inter-rater reliability.

The result attained from the administration of the post test is presented in Table 6.

Table 6 - Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
MeanCont	30	3.000	3.000	6.000	4.41667	.562221	.316
MeanExp	30	2.500	3.500	6.000	4.75000	.557086	.310
Valid N (listwise)	30						

In this Table:

MeanCont= means of scores in control group

MeanExp= means of scores in experimental group

Since both raters rated the papers twice, for every student in each group there were 4 scores and the mean of these 4 was used as their pretest score. Therefore 2 sets of scores were obtained:

- 1) The means of control group students' scores (MeanCont)
- 2) The means of experimental group students' scores (MeanExp)

To check that whether or not there was a significant difference between the means of control and experimental group (the abovementioned 2 sets of scores), they were compared using an Independent Sample T-Test. Tables 7a and 7b show the results of the T-Test:

Table 7a - Group Statistics

group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
MeanContExp 1	30	4.41667	.562221	.102647
2	30	4.75000	.557086	.101710

Table 7b - Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
MeanContExp p	Equal variances assumed	.325	.571	-2.307	58	.025	-.333333	.144503	-.622588	-.044078
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.307	57.995	.025	-.333333	.144503	-.622589	-.044078

In short, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the posttest scores of students in control group and in experimental group. According to Table 7b, in Levene's Test P-value= 0.571 which was higher than 0.05; therefore, "Equal variances assumed" row was used for T-test. Since in T-test P-value= 0.025 which was lower than 0.05, as a result the null hypothesis is rejected. In another words, There **was** a significant difference in the scores for control group (M=4.416, SD=0.562) and experimental group (M=4.750, SD=0.557); t (58) = -

2.307, $p = 0.025$. These results suggested that the means in control group and experimental group were significantly different and according to Table 7a, the means in experimental group is higher than the means in control group. Therefore, the treatment has been effective. In other words, the writing proficiency of the students of experimental group who used e-portfolios was higher than the students of control group who used the traditional method.

This statistically significant difference stems from a difference in the tools or medium of instruction used. As explained previously both groups were taught the same material, however, this was done through different means; one group used paper and pencil and the other group designed their portfolios using a word-processor, nevertheless the group that had used e-portfolios was more successful. This proves that computers can be a huge aid in learning even if the syllabus is not changed. Computers stimulate interest and motivate the learners.

4.2 Motivation Questionnaire

To check the effect of e-portfolios on students' motivation towards writing, a motivation questionnaire was given to the students of the experimental group. It was a 10-item five-point likert scale. Before administration, its validity and reliability were examined. For content validity experts judgment was used and it was checked and modified by two TEFL experts. For reliability, Cronbach's alpha was used to calculate its internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient normally ranges between 0 and 1. The closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the questionnaire. Gliem & Gliem (2003) provides the following rules of thumb for alpha coefficient:

If $\alpha > 0.9 \Rightarrow$ excellent

If $\alpha > 0.8 \Rightarrow$ good

If $\alpha > 0.7 \Rightarrow$ acceptable

If $\alpha > 0.6 \Rightarrow$ questionable

If $\alpha > 0.5 \Rightarrow$ poor

If $\alpha < 0.5 \Rightarrow$ unacceptable

The results of Cronbach's alpha calculation are shown in Tables 8a and 8b:

Table 8a - Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	30	100.0
	Excluded(a)	0	.0
	Total	30	100.0

Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table 8b - Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.926	.926	10

According to table 8b Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.926 which was excellent. In other words, there was a high internal consistency between the items of this questionnaire and all the items measured the same construct (motivation).

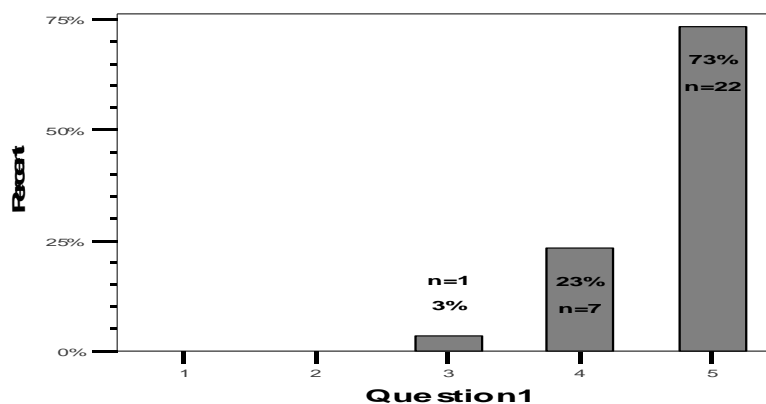
In the next stage students' answers to every item on the motivation questionnaire are analyzed using descriptive statistics and bar charts. The first item of the questionnaire is:

1. I used e-portfolio and I enjoyed it.

a) completely disagree b) disagree c) natural d) agree e) completely agree

Diagram 1 shows the bar chart of students' answers to this question in terms of percentage:

Diagram 1 - percentage of students' answers to question 1



According to Diagram 1, 73% of students (22 students) completely agreed with this question and there is no disagreement among the answers. The bar chart shows 97% of students "completely agreed" and "agreed". This shows that all students were interested in using e-portfolios and were happy with using this tool for practicing and learning writing.

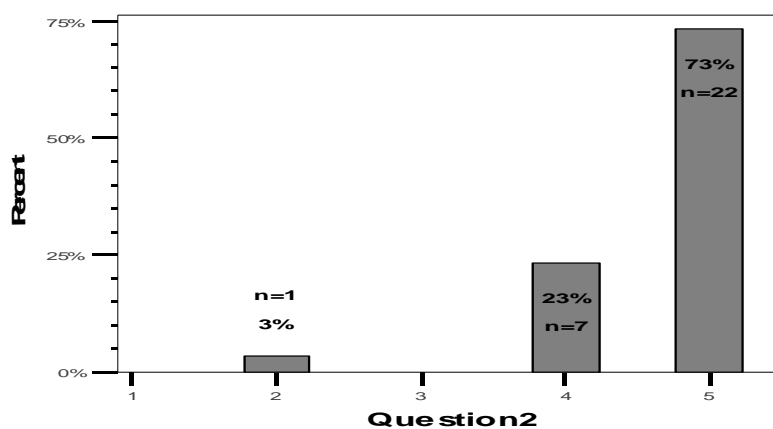
The second item of the questionnaire is:

2. I learned and practiced using e-portfolio because I enjoyed the challenge.

a) completely disagree b) disagree c) natural d) agree e) completely agree

Diagram 2 shows the bar chart of students' answers to this question in terms of percentage:

Diagram 2 - percentage of students' answers to question 2



According to Diagram 2, only 1 student disagrees with this question while 7 students “agree” and the other 22 completely agree with it. This chart also shows high agreement with this question. This again shows that the tool used for the experimental group motivated the students and therefore resulted in enhanced performance.

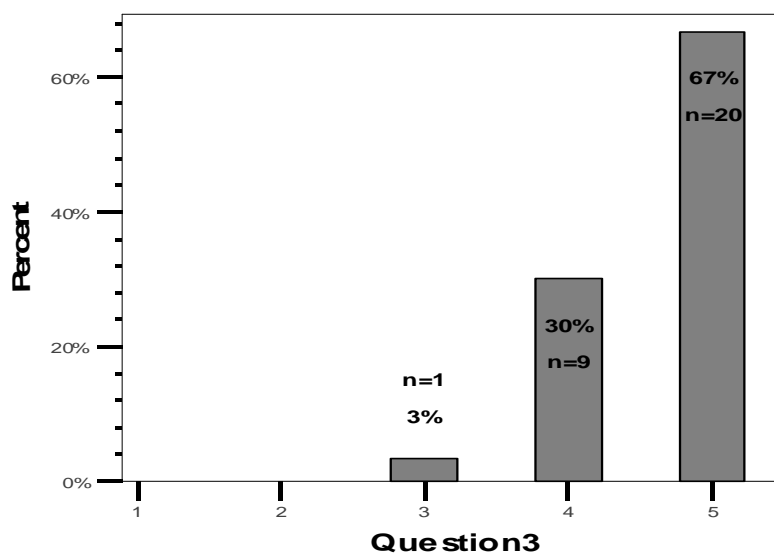
The third item of the questionnaire is:

3. I did my assigned work because what I learned was really interesting.

a) completely disagree b) disagree c) natural d) agree e) completely agree

Diagram 3 shows the bar chart of students' answers to this question in terms of percentage:

Diagram 3 - percentage of students' answers to question 3



According to Diagram 3, there is no disagreement with this question and only 1 student's opinion is "neutral". 67% of students "completely agree" and 30% "agree" with this question. This question also shows that students were interested in the work that was assigned them.

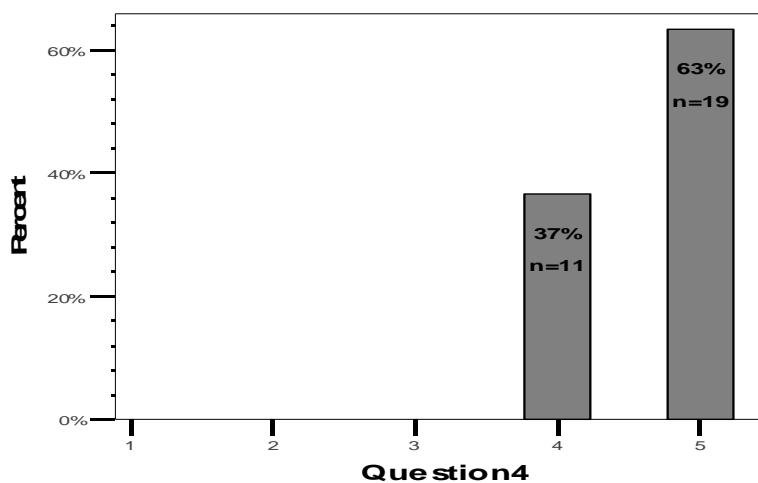
The fourth item of the questionnaire is:

4. Using e-portfolio gave me opportunity to expand my writing knowledge and ability.

a) completely disagree b) disagree c) natural d) agree e) completely agree

Diagram 4 shows the bar chart of students' answers to this question in terms of percentage:

Diagram 4 - percentage of students' answers to question 4



According to Diagram 4, all the students *completely agree* and *agree* with this question. In other words, nearly two thirds of the students *completely agree* with it. This question speaks for the e-portfolios and their effectiveness in arousing the interest and motivation of the learners. In this question, students see the use of e-portfolios as an opportunity provided that could help them enhance their performance.

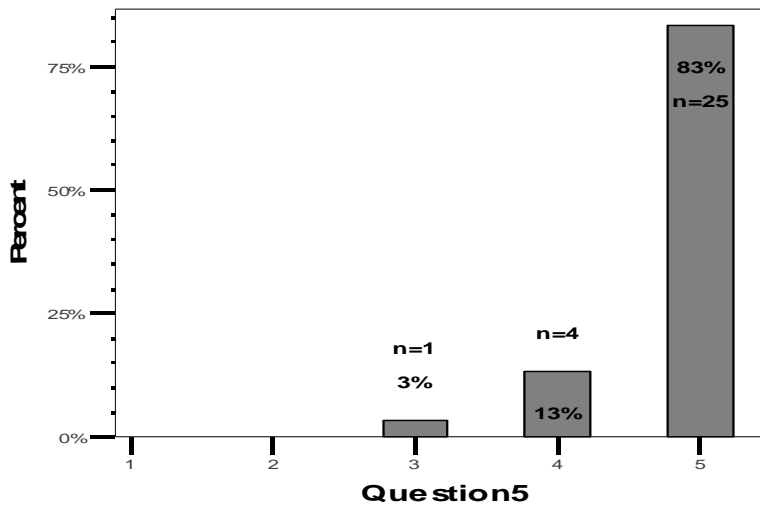
The fifth item of the questionnaire is:

5. Using e-portfolio improved and initiated a positive change in the way I think about writing.

a) completely disagree b) disagree c) natural d) agree e) completely agree

Diagram 5 shows the bar chart of students' answers to this question in terms of percentage:

Diagram 5 - percentage of students' answers to question 5



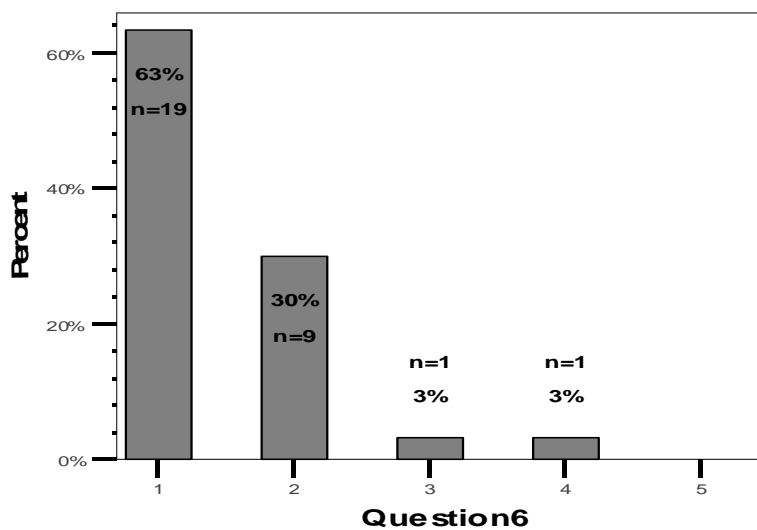
According to Diagram 5, only 5 students did not “completely agree” with this question and even 4 of these 5 students “agreed” and the other one’s opinion is “neutral”.

The sixth item of the questionnaire is:

6. I did not like learning new knowledge found in using e-portfolio for my writing assignments.
a) completely disagree b) disagree c) natural d) agree e) completely agree

Diagram 6 shows the bar chart of students' answers to this question in terms of percentage:

Diagram 6 - percentage of students' answers to question 6



Since this question is a negative question this bar chart is reversed relative to other charts. According to Diagram 6, only 1 student *agrees* with this question and another's opinion is "neutral". The other students which are 93% of the students *completely disagree* and *disagree* with the question. This negative question shows that students were interested in new knowledge found in e-portfolios. Therefore, this question goes to support the finding that e-portfolios facilitate learning and are a better tool compared to the traditional paper and pencil routine.

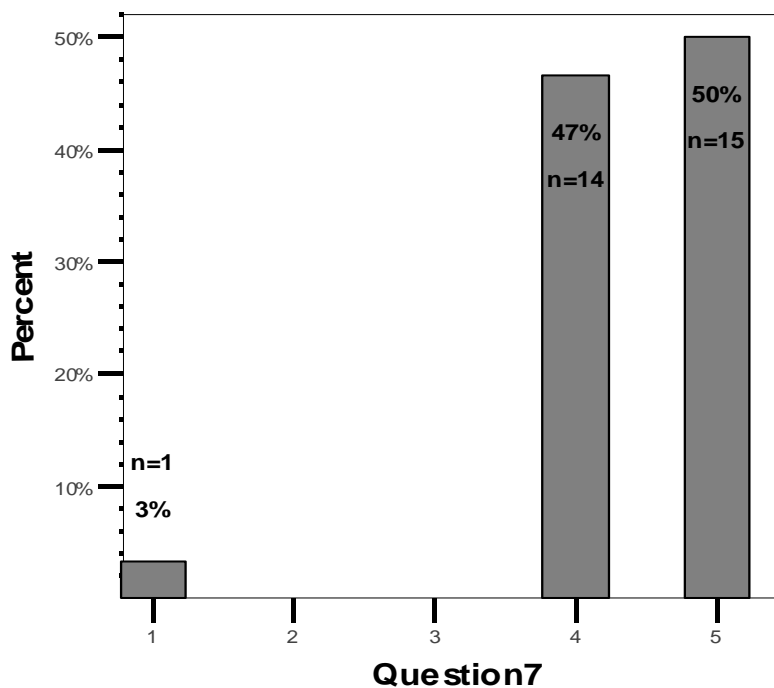
The seventh item of the questionnaire is:

7. I will use e-portfolio for other skills too.

a) completely disagree b) disagree c) natural d) agree e) completely agree

Diagram 7 shows the bar chart of students' answers to this question in terms of percentage:

Diagram 7 - percentage of students' answers to question 7



According to Diagram 7, only 1 student *completely disagreed* with the question while 50% "completely agreed" and the others "agreed" with this item. This item shows that the use of e-portfolios was not only effective but learnt so well that students consider using this it for other skills as well. Actually, the use of e-portfolios is transferred to other areas as well. This not only

shows learner interest but also the fact that the learners have become very skilled at using this tool otherwise they would not be able to transfer it to other areas.

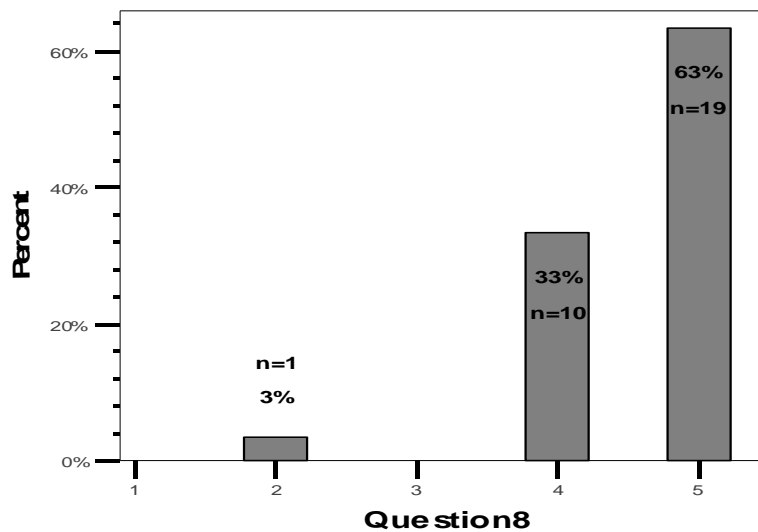
The eighth item of the questionnaire is:

8. Using e-portfolio had positive impact on my education and career.

a) completely disagree b) disagree c) natural d) agree e) completely agree

Diagram 8 shows the bar chart of students' answers to this question in terms of percentage:

Diagram 8 - percentage of students' answers to question 8



According to Diagram 8, nearly two thirds of the students “completely agreed”, 33% “agreed”, and only 1 student “disagreed” with this question. This shows that not only were the students motivated but using e-portfolios opened avenues for improvement in other aspects of their life as well.

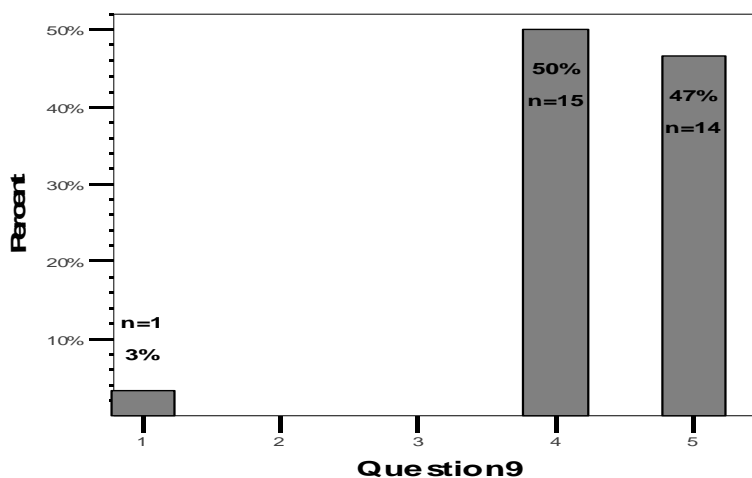
The ninth item of the questionnaire is:

9. I used e-portfolio to improve my academic and professional skills for writing.

a) completely disagree b) disagree c) natural d) agree e) completely agree

Diagram 9 shows the bar chart of students' answers to this question in terms of percentage:

Diagram 9 - percentage of students' answers to question 9



According to Diagram 9.99% of the students “completely agree” and “agree” with this question and only 1 student “completely disagreed”. This shows that the majority of students detect improvement on account of using e-portfolios.

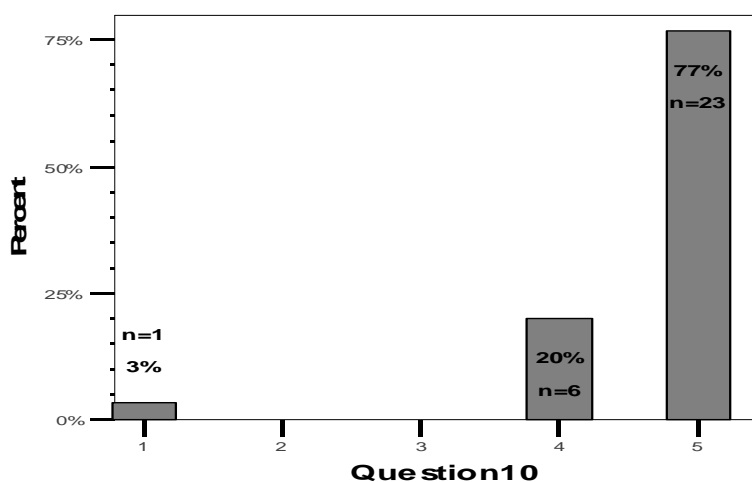
The tenth item of the questionnaire is:

10. By using e-portfolio I did not feel bored doing my writing assignments.

a) completely disagree b) disagree c) natural d) agree e) completely agree

Diagram 10 shows the bar chart of students' answers to this question in terms of percentage:

Diagram 10 - percentage of students' answers to question 10



According to Diagram 10, more than two thirds of the students “completely agreed” with this question and only 1 student “completely disagreed”. Also, 6 students “agreed”. This item shows that the majority of students did their assignment not with force but with interest and enthusiasm, which of course leads to enhanced performance.

The summary of these 10 diagrams is presented in Table 9.

Question	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Completely agree
1	0	0	1	7	22
2	0	1	0	7	22
3	0	0	1	9	20
4	0	0	0	11	19
5	0	0	1	4	25
6*	19	9	1	1	0
7	1	0	0	14	15
8	0	1	0	10	19
9	1	0	0	15	14
10	1	0	0	6	23

* Item 6 is a negative question and the frequency of its choices was analyzed in reversed.

Table 9 – frequency of students’ answers to choices of questionnaire items

As it was shown in diagrams 1 to 10 and Table 9, and since all the items of the questionnaire measured just one construct which is motivation, nearly all the students of the experimental group were significantly motivated towards writing by using e-portfolios. Therefore, the second null hypothesis of the research was rejected. The students using e-portfolios were motivated to learn due to the tool they were using to make the portfolios and studies have proven that when students are motivated their likelihood of success increases. What is of importance at this stage is to recognize the fact that e-portfolios and working with word-processors can motivate student and then naturally lead to enhanced performance.

5. Conclusion

The first part of the results related to the posttest demonstrated that the ratings were highly reliable. The second part of the posttest results which is the most important part of the study showed that the treatment had been effective and there was a significant difference between the means of the scores in the control group students and experimental group ones. According to the

results, the mean of scores in the experimental group is higher than the control group and this means that the students who used e-portfolios for their writing assignments had a higher level of proficiency than the students who used the traditional method. In other words, using electronic portfolios had a positive effect on writing proficiency of the students.

The results related to motivation questionnaires also showed the effectiveness of the treatment. In the first part these results showed that the questionnaire was internally valid. The second part which is the analysis of students' answers to the questionnaire showed that using e-portfolios significantly motivated the students in learning the writing skill to a great extent.

Since there is no completely similar study in the previously done related literature a full comparison is not possible. Furthermore, there are not enough studies in the field of e-portfolios. However, there have been studies which are similar in some parts with this study. For instance, in the case of motivation most of the previous studies also show that using electronic portfolios or in some cases weblogs are really suitable in motivating students in writing. Regarding effectiveness of using e-portfolios in writing proficiency of students no similar study was observed in the literature. The difference is that in this study the e-portfolios themselves were not rated and scored and scoring was done through standardized test of IELTS. Another difference is that in some studies students used e-portfolios for all four skills and in other cases for lifelong learning.

Based upon the findings of this study, electronic portfolios can be really helpful in motivating language learners. Policy makers, curriculum developers, and syllabus designers can involve e-portfolio in different EFL/ESL contexts. When e-portfolios are included in EFL/ESL syllabuses, teachers as facilitators can utilize them in class as a basic requirement of any EFL/ESL course for all skills specially writing which students find very difficult. While this research dealt with using e-portfolios for the writing skill future studies can use e-portfolios for all 4 skills and attempt to see if it has a significant effect on the general proficiency of EFL learners.

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Appendix 1

IELTS Writing Task (Pretest)

Instruction: You should spend about 20 minutes on this task. Write at least 100 words. You do NOT need to write any addresses.

A friend you met last year has invited you to visit them in their country. You have never been there before and need some information before you leave.

Write a letter to your friend. In your letter:

- Request advice about a gift for his/her family.
- Ask about activities and clothing.
- Find out about the food.

Appendix 2

IELTS Writing Task

Instruction: You should spend about 20 minutes on this task. Write at least 100 words. You do NOT need to write any addresses.

A family member is coming to stay with you. He/she will arrive by train in the morning, but you won't be home until the evening.

Write a letter to your relative. In your letter:

- Explain arrangements you have made for him/her to have keys and get into the house.
- Tell your relative how to get from the train station to your house.
- Say when you will be home and suggest what you can do together that evening.

Appendix 3 IELTS task 1 writing band descriptors:



IELTS Task 1 Writing band descriptors (public version)

Band	Task Achievement	Coherence and Cohesion	Lexical Resource	Grammatical Range and Accuracy
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fully satisfies all the requirements of the task clearly presents a fully developed response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention skillfully manages paragraphing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> covers all requirements of the task sufficiently presents, highlights and illustrates key features / bullet points clearly and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sequences information and ideas logically manages all aspects of cohesion well uses paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of vocabulary fluently and flexibly to convey precise meanings skillfully uses uncommon lexical items but there may be occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation produces rare errors in spelling and/or word formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures the majority of sentences are error-free makes only very occasional errors or inaccuracies
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> covers the requirements of the task (Academic) presents a clear overview of main trends, differences or stages (General Training) presents a clear purpose, with the tone consistent and appropriate clearly presents and highlights key features / bullet points but could be more fully extended 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> logically organises information and ideas; there is clear progression throughout uses a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-/over-use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision uses less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation may produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a variety of complex structures produces frequent error-free sentences has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> addresses the requirements of the task (Academic) presents an overview with information appropriately selected (General Training) presents a purpose that is generally clear; there may be inconsistencies in tone presents and adequately highlights key features / bullet points but details may be irrelevant, inappropriate or inaccurate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> arranges information and ideas coherently and there is a clear overall progression uses cohesive devices effectively, but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical may not always use referencing clearly or appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses an adequate range of vocabulary for the task attempts to use less common vocabulary but with some inaccuracy makes some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but they do not impede communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms makes some errors in grammar and punctuation but they rarely reduce communication

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> generally addresses the task; the format may be inappropriate in places (Academic) recounts detail mechanically with no clear overview; there may be no data to support the description (General Training) may present a purpose for the letter that is unclear at times; the tone may be variable and sometimes inappropriate presents, but inadequately covers, key features / bullet points; there may be a tendency to focus on details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> presents information with some organisation but there may be a lack of overall progression makes inadequate, inaccurate or over-use of cohesive devices may be repetitive because of lack of referencing and substitution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a limited range of vocabulary, but this is minimally adequate for the task may make noticeable errors in spelling and/or word formation that may cause some difficulty for the reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses only a limited range of structures attempts complex sentences but these tend to be less accurate than simple sentences may make frequent grammatical errors and punctuation may be faulty; errors can cause some difficulty for the reader
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempts to address the task but does not cover all key features / bullet points; the format may be inappropriate (General Training) fails to clearly explain the purpose of the letter; the tone may be inappropriate may confuse key features / bullet points with detail; parts may be unclear, irrelevant, repetitive or inaccurate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> presents information and ideas but these are not arranged coherently and there is no clear progression in the response uses some basic cohesive devices but these may be inaccurate or repetitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses only basic vocabulary which may be used repetitively or which may be inappropriate for the task has limited control of word formation and/or spelling; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> errors may cause strain for the reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses only a very limited range of structures with only rare use of subordinate clauses some structures are accurate but errors predominate, and punctuation is often faulty
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fails to address the task, which may have been completely misunderstood presents limited ideas which may be largely irrelevant/repetitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not organise ideas logically may use a very limited range of cohesive devices, and those used may not indicate a logical relationship between ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses only a very limited range of words and expressions with very limited control of word formation and/or spelling errors may severely distort the message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempts sentence forms but errors in grammar and punctuation predominate and distort the meaning
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> answer is barely related to the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has very little control of organisational features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses an extremely limited range of vocabulary, essentially no control of word formation and/or spelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot use sentence forms except in memorised phrases
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> answer is completely unrelated to the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fails to communicate any message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can only use a few isolated words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot use sentence forms at all
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not attend does not attempt the task in any way writes a totally memorised response 			

Appendix 4

Motivation Questionnaire

The student believes that:

1. I used e-portfolio and I enjoyed it.

- a) completely disagree b) disagree c) undecided d) agree e) completely agree
2. I learned and practiced using e-portfolio because I enjoyed the challenge.
a) completely disagree b) disagree c) undecided d) agree e) completely agree
3. I did my assigned work because what I learned was really interesting.
a) completely disagree b) disagree c) undecided d) agree e) completely agree
4. Using e-portfolio gave me opportunity to expand my writing knowledge and ability.
a) completely disagree b) disagree c) undecided d) agree e) completely agree
5. Using e-portfolio improved and initiated a positive change in the way I think about writing.
a) completely disagree b) disagree c) undecided d) agree e) completely agree
6. I did not like learning new knowledge found in using e-portfolio for my writing assignments.
a) completely disagree b) disagree c) undecided d) agree e) completely agree
7. I will use e-portfolio for other skills too.
a) completely disagree b) disagree c) undecided d) agree e) completely agree
8. Using e-portfolio had positive impact on my education and career.
a) completely disagree b) disagree c) undecided d) agree e) completely agree
9. I used e-portfolio to improve my academic and professional skills for writing.
a) completely disagree b) disagree c) undecided d) agree e) completely agree
10. By using e-portfolio I did not feel bored doing my writing assignments.
a) completely disagree b) disagree c) undecided d) agree e) completely agree

Title

The Effect of Self- Assessment on Iranian EFL Learners' Writing Skills

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Abstract

This article which aims to facilitate the trend of writing presents the results of a ten-stage study of essay writing in English as a foreign language in Iran. The present project seeks to investigate the effect of self-assessment on writing skills and proficiency of Iranian EFL learners. In this regard, Prior to the study, 60 participants who were at advanced level were given a standard pretest to be homogenized and some instructions on scoring compositions based on grammatical relationships, structural relationships, word choice and mechanics. Then ten stages of writing, based on Pre-professional Skills Test, were given to the learners intermittently. After each stage, the participants of experimental group (30 participants) were supervised to be directed. However, the control group members (30 participants) were just given scores. The last stage of each group (writing 10) were compared to be prepared for an independent T-test. The results indicate that the experimental group members did much better than those of the control group.

Keywords: Assessment; Writing assessment; Critical thinking; Self-assessment; Portfolio assessment.

1. Introduction

Writing and its indispensable role for learning a language can not be denied. Hamp-Lyons (2004) believes writing is considered as a principal medium of communication where by the people can understand each other from different points and geographical spots of the globe. Definitely writing like other skills must be assessed and rated.

One of the greatest aspects of writing assessment is called self-assessment. Traditional approaches to the self-assessment of language ability are of two main types: (i) objectively-marked discrete-point tests of linguistic knowledge, and(ii) rating scales or checklists (Brindley, 1989, North, 2000, Oscarson, 1989). Objectively-markable tests, although reliable as self-assessment instruments, do not allow learners the opportunity to produce a complex or sustained piece of written or oral communicative performance.

Self-assessment also leads to gaining writing skills when it is accomplished, under the supervision of the teacher, consecutively. There are three ways of development Writing including, a) focusing on form, b) focusing on the writer and c) focusing on the reader. Some scholars have reflected How writing assignments can be designed elicit critical thinking and active learning to across disciplinary boundaries (e. g, Bean, 1996; Wade, 1995). Critical thinking allow individuals to analyze, interpret, and synthesize information.

2. What is writing?

By and large, writing has been considered as a support skill which was previously done to reinforce the grammar acquisition, support the memorization of language structures and emphasize, lately, on even oral proficiency as in grammar-translation, audio-lingual and communicative methods respectively (Homstad & Thorston ,1994). “A student’s writing is not only used to evaluate her/his English proficiency, but also to assess her/his understanding of other subjects such as social studies, law, economics, and physical and natural sciences. Writing is also considered an important part of almost all university level courses” (Rezaei & Lovorn, 2010, p. 2) .

Kellogg (1996) explains the writing process in terms of an interaction of three processing systems in which each processing system is made up of two sub-systems comprising formulation, which is made up of planning and translating; execution, which is made up of programming and execution; and monitoring, which consists of reading and editing and provides

detailed information about what goes on in each system and how the systems interact with each other. In this model, ideas and languages are already determined at the formulation stage. Then the ideas and languages become the input to the execution system where the writer decides how to execute them. Once they are executed, the monitoring system looks for a discrepancy and a solution in conjunction with the formulation system. The formulation system starts again for new ideas or language to resolve the discrepancy detected in the previous system.

Ferris (2002) maintains that not with standing the fact that issues and skills related to writing process are important, we must be aware that problems and also disorders of grammar can have negative impact and impression on the general quality of student's writing . Because of this, writing teachers need to help students develop their editing as well as their composing skills.

3. Theories Related to ESL Writing

In the study of ESL writing history, Silva (1990, as cited in Mu, 2005) roughly divided ESL writing instruction into four stages marked by the four most influential approaches: the controlled approach, the current-traditional rhetoric approach, the process approach and the social approach. The first stage was dominated by the controlled or guided approach which was influenced by structural linguistics and behaviourist psychology. This approach saw learning to write as an exercise in habit formation. Students were trained to practice sentence patterns and vocabulary by means of writing. The major approach in the second stage of ESL writing instruction was the current-traditional rhetoric approach with the influence of Kaplan's theory of constructive rhetoric. It regarded learning to write as stage of ESL writing teaching was the process approach. According this approach, learning to write was developing efficient effective writing strategies. The social approach in the fourth stage viewed that learning to write was part of becoming socialized to the discourse community finding out what is expected and trying to approximate it. In fact, the four approaches these four stages of ESL writing instruction are supported by four important theories related to ESL writing. They are contrastive rhetoric theory, cognitive development theory, communication theory and social constructionist theory. Among these theories, it is evident that contrastive rhetoric theory, cognitive developmental theory and social constructionist theory correspond with the current rhetoric approach, the process approach the social approach of ESL writing

instruction respectively. In addition, ESL writing as a means of communication is naturally influenced by communication theory.

4. Approaches to Teaching Writing

Scholars such as (Raimes, 1983) believe there are a variety of methods to teach writing comprising, a) the controlled-to-free approach which is dealt with the emphasis on speech and writing to achieve mastery of grammatical and syntactic forms, b) the free-writing approach which stands for stressing the writing quantity and assigning enormous amount of free writing on given topics with only minimal correction of errors, c) the paragraph-pattern approach in which instead of accuracy of grammar or fluency of content, the stress is put on organization such as copying paragraphs, analyzing the model paragraph and imitating model passages, d) the grammar-syntax-organization approach that stresses on working simultaneously on more than one composition feature in which the students should be trained to pay attention to organization while they also work on the necessary grammar and syntax, e) the communicative approach which highlights the purpose of writing and the audience for it. Student writers are encouraged to behave like writers in real life and ask themselves the crucial questions about purpose and audience, f) the process approach in which the emphasis is not on written product, but on the process of writing. Thus, writers ask themselves: How do I write this? How do I get started?

5. Writing Assessment

Assessment can be referred to the evaluation processes or getting judgemental view of student writing (Wyatt-Smith , 1999) . In this regard, Weigle (2007) believed :

Assessment of student writing is an essential task for writing teachers. Unfortunately, however, many graduate programs in TESOL and rhetoric/composition do not require students to take a course in assessment or evaluation, and courses on teaching writing often devote only a limited amount of time to the discussion of assessment. Moreover, teachers often feel that assessment is a necessary evil rather than a central aspect of teaching that has the potential to be beneficial to both teacher and students. They may believe, rightly or wrongly, that assessment courses focus too much on statistics and large-scale assessment and have little to offer

classroom teachers. As a result, teachers sometimes avoid learning about assessment or, worse, delay thinking about how they will assess their students until they are forced to do so, a situation which unfortunately decreases the chances that assessments will be fair and valid. (p. 1)

Students' progress, learning needs and their achievements are some activities which are constantly and continuously evaluated and assessed by the teachers (Brown, 2004). Assessment can be divided into two functional and main parts including formal and informal assessments. By formal assessment, it is meant traditional writing tests, for instance, a kind of writing exercise in which the subjects are required to make, in a limited time period, one or more pieces of related discourse which are scored numerically, or other sorts of activities such as answering to portfolios, homework assignments or out class writing activities (Hamp-Lyons , 1991). Informal assessment can be referred to some activities like making sure subjects understand special teaching points, choosing students' answers on style and usage related questions, or adopting peer response policy among students to ensure they are on task (Brown , 2004).

6. Critical Thinking

In order to develop and enhance students' abilities to make decisions and settle the difficulties for the sake of learning, science teachers can incorporate and adopt instructional methods like inquiry-based learning ones which facilitate higher level of cognition in students who expand a process for the betterment of principles and concepts understanding(Uno, 1999). Science instructors have many opportunities to employ inquiry-based learning in the classroom; however, Zoller, Ben-Chaim and Ron (2000) argue that in order to facilitate learning, the passive and rote applications of memorized concepts, in science classrooms, must be avoided using critical thinking as a basic building.

As for the critical thinking, Bekrus and Santoli (1999) maintained:

When we write -to- learn what we think, we are practicing critical thinking in its basic form. A letter to a relative , a note to a friend, and a diary entry are all examples of the writing - to- learn theory if the writer discovers what she thinks as she is writing. Write- to- learn assignments capitalize on students' prior knowledge and force them to evaluate that knowledge in order to reach meaningful, personalized

conclusions. Hence, such assignments allow students to build on prior knowledge in order to progress to the next cognitive level of maturity.(p.2)

Diagnosing kernel issues, distinguishing relationships, generating judgments and conclusions, and evaluating conclusions can be emanated from the study of the critical thinking (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Facion (1990) clarifies the core constructs of the critical thinking as a set of six particular skills comprising interpretation– clarifying meaning, analysis–examining arguments, evaluation–assigning value to claims, inference–drawing conclusions, explanation presenting arguments, and self-regulation– self-examining biases. The validity of these skills was confirmed by the research conducted by Jones, Hoffman, Moore, Ratliff, Tibbetts and Glick (1995) and Giancarlo (1996).

If an individual consecutively questions assumptions, reckons the context, makes and explores choices, and also is involved in intellectual doubt, it will be the state of critical thinking (Brookfield, 1987). By their very nature, critical thinking skills are progressive and create changes in an individual over time. Carroll (2004) maintains that having more knowledge and dexterity does not mean the involved people are equally good thinkers. If only one of them is thinking critically, that one will be better at analyzing and evaluating facts and opinions, sources and claims, options and alternatives. The critical thinker will be a better problem-solver and better decision-maker.

6.1. Attitude of a critical thinker: open-minded, skeptical, and tentative

Concerning about the attitude of a critical thinker, Carroll (2004) maintains:

The most distinctive features of the critical thinker's attitude are open-mindedness and skepticism. These characteristics may seem contradictory rather than complementary. On the one hand, a critical thinker is expected to consider viewpoints different from his or her own. On the other hand, a critical thinker is expected to recognize which claims do not merit investigation. Also, sometimes what looks like open-mindedness is simply gullibility and what looks like skepticism is really closed-mindedness. To you, you are being open-minded when you take at face value the psychic's tip about a bomb on the plane. To your boss, you are being gullible. On the other hand, if you had dismissed the psychic's claim out-

of-hand and written her off as deluded despite her offering to prove her psychic ability by reading your mind, then you would have crossed over from a healthy skepticism to closed-mindedness. To be skillful and fair in evaluating beliefs and actions, we need to seek out various views and positions on the issues we intend to judge. Being open-minded means being willing to examine issues from as many sides as possible, looking for the good and bad points of the various sides examined. (p. 4)

7. Portfolio Assessment

According to portfolio assessment, one can choose and assess a set of objectives observed as necessary (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000; Yancey & Weiser, 1997). In portfolio assessment, quantifying learning is laborious, and students are required to exhibit their learning via choosing and presenting their best exemplary work (Jacobson , Sleicher & Maureen , 1999).

Based on the research results, portfolios can drastically aid the students to be strongly involved in their learning (Newman, Smolen & Lee, 1995), and ameliorate the state of texts questioning, organizing and exemplifying (Pally, 1998). In an empirical study (Paesani, 2006) in which a writing portfolio project was presented, it was stated that portfolio keeping helps students integrate the development of proficiency skills, content knowledge, and grammatical competence. In Ozturk and Cecen's (2007) investigation on the effects of portfolio keeping on the writing anxiety of EFL students, the results show that writing anxiety can be alleviated by portfolio keeping. Finally, Burksaitiene and Tereseviciene (2008) examined students' perceptions of comprehensive learning. Their study indicated that students can get and receive suitably a well-integrated approach which must be involved in some particular reasons including, a) amelioration of students productive and receptive skills, b) enhancement of students satisfaction with their results, c) buttressing up foreign language learners' motivation and, d) promotion of learner autonomy.

Portfolios are used formatively and summatively in professional education (McMullan , 2002), and to develop generic or specific skills such as critical thinking (Sorrell , 1997; Fonteyn & Cahill, 1998; Kennison & Misselwitz, 2002; Simpson & Courtney, 2002); reflective practice (Durgahee, 1996; Platzer et al., 1997; Duke & Appleton, 2000; Glaze, 2001, 2002); writing as learning (Allen , 1989; Ushe , 1999; Haigh, 2001; Brady , 2002); linking theory with practice

(ENB, 1993; Taylor and White, 2001; Taylor, 2003) and in knowledge development (Kim, 1998; Lyons, 1999; Johns, 2001; Rolfe, 2001).

Professional groups' growth, enhancement and also purposeful assessments have been immensely impressed by the application of portfolio assessment (Wilkinson, 2002; McMullan 2003). Aydin (2010) aimed to descriptively measure the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students towards portfolio keeping. Two results were gotten from his study: (1) vocabulary, grammar knowledge, research and skills of writing can be emanated from portfolio keeping; and (2) portfolio keeping process can cause the students to perceive the related problems.

Next, the kernel point of portfolio structure is contemplation or reflection which purposefully engulfs the practitioners in a sort of thinking process that can be holistic, focused, cyclical and flexible. This embodies practitioners issues' promotion and advancement (Ghaye & Ghaye, 1998).

Finally, Not only is portfolio considered as records of attainment, but it is also a means of supervision, inspection and monitoring trainees' knowledge's growth, attitudes and skills. In other words, for formative aims, chances of guidance and supervision can be prepared by portfolio work, whereas in summative contexts, it examines the product of learning at the end of the process. Portfolio puts both teachers and students in a learning conversation whose characteristics and veracity is still somehow unknown (Woodward, 2000).

8. Self-assessment

Assessment is regarded as a process of collecting, synthesizing and interpreting information in order to make decisions on student performance. In class, assessment can be conducted to diagnose student problems, to judge their academic performance, to provide feedback to students and to plan instruction (Airasian, 1994 cited in Srimavin & Darasawang, 2003).

Self-assessment can be called differently such as self-rating, self-evaluation or self-appraisal. The application of self-assessment is culminated to some practical issues comprising the enhancement and promotion of students centered learning, augment of contemplation regarding the learning trend, the active learning encouragement, saving teachers correction time, supporting the learners with respect to their own individual faults and weak points and the establishment of associations between the teacher assessment and the self-assessment (Blanche

& Merino, 1989; Falchikov & Boud, 1989; Sadler, 2006). Dlaska & Krekeler (2008) strongly believe being invested with the authority of monitoring is one of the major targets of self-assessment process from which the learners benefit immensely. Besides, acquaintance of the learners with regard to the standards against which they should appraise their performance is a criterion to get the accuracy of the self-assessment (Miller, 2003).

Helping the learners become conscious and vigilant regarding their achievement at any time period given and also reach the point of learning enhancement is an indispensable reason for self-assessment. Self-assessment training can bring about accuracy for overestimation-centered learners and cause the low achievers to understand the teachers' demands. Mok (2006) divided the learning trend into three initial, middle and last parts. Then he required the learners (student teachers) to appraise themselves. The consequence showed that the students found the self-assessment a case which provides them with encouragement, help and hope.

9. Method

9.1. Participants

The participants in this study were, language learners of a private institute in Rasht, at advanced level. They were selected from an institute since they were more homogenous and interested than those from universities. They were divided into two groups of 30 members each comprising control and experimental ones. The participants had already been given writing information, term by term, from Paragraph Writing book by Evan-Moor.

9.2. Instrumentation

In order to carry out this study, before starting the experiments, the participants were given some instructions on scoring compositions. Then ten writing topics were given to them based on a standard writing test namely Pre-professional Skills Test. After each test, the needed instructions, according to the area of difficulties, were given to the subjects. The afore-mentioned instructions were administered to some particular assessment indicators such as grammatical relationships, structural relationships, word choice and mechanics. These characteristics are considered in the writing section of the TOEFL tests. The top score was deemed 20.

By grammatical relationships we mean adjectives, adverbs, nouns (agreement), pronouns (agreement, proper use) and verbs (agreement, form, tense). Structural

relationships go with comparison, coordination, correlation, negation, parallelism and subordination. Word choice can be related to idiomatic expressions, commonly confused words, word wrong use and redundancy. Mechanics stands for capitalization, period, comma, question mark, exclamation mark, colon, semi-colon, hyphen, dash, parentheses , brackets, ellipsis and apostrophe.

9.3. Procedure

To do this study ,first a standard general proficiency test was used as a pretest to determine the homogeneity of the participants. Then two control and experimental groups of 30 homogeneous members each were selected. The experimental group was given a standard writing test titled Pre- professional Skills Test. This test assesses the ability to use grammar and language appropriately and the ability to communicate effectively in writing. The students were required to write, based on 10 different topics, 10 essays . After each writing , the students were given the required instructions and ways of correction including writing and grammar tips to become acquainted with correction and assessing ways. The writing products, after each time, were assessed on the basis of grammatical relationships, structural relationships, word choice and mechanics. It is noteworthy that the last two writing materials, from experimental and control groups, were corrected and scored by an experienced colleague to be prepared for an independent T- test. The control group was treated differently via nine stages in that writing materials, after each time, were just corrected, scored and given to the members of the said group with no tips and instructions.

10. Methodology and Results

This section presents the results of the study that was an attempt to investigate the impact of self-assessment of EFL Iranian learners' writing proficiency.

In order to answer the question raised in this study, two tests were used. A standard general proficiency test was used as a pretest to determine homogeneity of the participants. Ten writing topics were given based on the Pre-professional Skills Test, every three days, to the learners. After each writing, the students were taught the required correction techniques including writing and grammar tips to be able to get acquainted with correction and assessment. Their writings were assessed on the basis of grammatical relationships, structural relationships, and word choice and mechanics. From all the writings the participants handed in, only the last two writing materials were subjected to independent T-test analysis.

10.1. A preliminary comparison

Table 1 presents the results of the analysis of the learners' ten writings in both the control and the experimental group. As the tables show, improvement in the writing ability of the experimental learners' was more apparent over time, while the writing proficiency of the participants in the control group remained at the same level.

Table 1 Learners' writing performance in the two groups over the ten sessions

	Experimental	Control
Writing 1	Mean = 13.97	Mean = 14.03
Writing 2	Mean = 10.27	Mean = 14.16
Writing 3	Mean = 16.36	Mean = 13.73
Writing 4	Mean = 16.53	Mean = 12.8
Writing 5	Mean = 18.13	Mean = 13.5
Writing 6	Mean = 13.93	Mean = 14.16
Writing 7	Mean = 18.2	Mean = 13.66
Writing 8	Mean = 19.1	Mean = 14.9
Writing 9	Mean = 19	Mean = 13.5
Writing 10	Mean = 18.86	Mean = 14.43

Mean Difference: 4.43

10.2. Answering the research questions

The main purpose of the present study was to examine whether or not self-assessment would have any impact on the writing ability of the EFL learners. It seems appropriate to Restate the research question:

Does self-assessment significantly affect Iranian EFL learners' writing skills?

The main goal of this research was to test the following null hypothesis:

Self-assessment does not significantly affect Iranian EFL learners' writing skills.

The scores of students participating in this study on 10 sessions of writing were computed. The performance of the participants of the two groups are illustrated in table 4.1. However, out of all writings, only the writing scores of the last session were subjected to independent T-test analysis.

Table 4.2.

Group statistics: Description of the scores of the two groups on writing

group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1.00	30	18.87	.681	.124
2.00	30	14.43	1.331	.243

As it is shown in table 4.2. , the average writing score of the experimental group is much higher than that of the control group. An independent t-test was run to see if any significant difference could be found between the performance of the experimental group and the control group.

Table 4.3. Independent Sample Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	43.518	.000	16.240	58	.000	4.433	.273	3.887	4.980
Equal variances not assumed			16.240	43.228	.000	4.433	.273	3.883	4.984

As table 4.3. shows, the results indicate that there was significant difference in performance between the experimental group and the control group, $t(43)=16.24$, $p= .01$. That is the average performance score of the participants in experimental group

($M=18.87$, $SD= .681$) was significantly different from that of the control group ($M= 14.43$, $SD= 1.331$). So, the null hypothesis was rejected; in this way, it confirms the idea that self-assessment significantly improves Iranian EFL writing skills.

11. Conclusions and Implications

The findings of this study reveal significant and dramatic discrepancies among various activities on students' writing tasks and the said study which shows that the experimental group who got needed instructions; based on grammatical relationships, structural relationships, word choice and mechanics considered assessment elements; acted better than the control group who received just scores. Accordingly, the students in experimental group could be acquainted with appraisal and correction ways of their own writing materials.

Another finding is that the students can get fairly autonomous, in line with self-assessment and writing, gradually via ten stages of writing since after each stage of self-correction and self-evaluation, the assessment indicators and the related elements can be internalized which can be led to independence.

The results of the present study indicates that ten-stage writing instructions, with the accomplishment of three introductory sessions, compulsorily done because of lack of didactic places to run and handle a standard pre-test to select homogeneous participants, can provide the learners with lots of opportunities to express themselves and display a magnificent exhibition in and of writing respectively. When the learners are given opportunities, they feel honoured, accountable, responsible and answerable. Consequently, they endeavour to answer the instructors' trust and to be appeared in the eyes of the peers at best.

The present study is commensurate and on a par with what Wood (1976) who defined the scaffolding writing, under the framework of the Zone of Proximal development (ZPD), based on six items comprising, 1) keeping the inexperienced learners' heed, 2) increasing integration via the task, 3) grasping the targets via the task, 4) focusing on crucial learning features, 5) diminishing hopelessness through development, and 6) generating a problem-solving system.

The most salient part of this study reflects that self-assessment and learner autonomy can not be completely; particularly in the light of grammatical and structural relationships and word choice; taken placed, but relatively. As a result, the supremacy, authority and inspection of the teachers can be slightly felt in this respect.

It is noteworthy that the bulk of learners' problems can be related to structural and grammatical relationships, word choice and mechanics which go with some items such as subordination, coordination, comparison, correlation, comma, semi-colon, proper use and agreement of pronouns and verb agreement respectively. As a result, these areas ought to be given remedial materials and substantial attention.

The findings of the present study can have implications for teachers and learners. On one hand, the incorporation of three preliminary sessions can be considered so effective that it is not needed to hold standard pre-tests to make a homogeneous group of participants since preparing an educational space for handling the aforementioned pre-tests has been considered a notable limitation of this study. On the other hand, all learners did not use some elements of writing materials comprising question mark, exclamation mark, colon, hyphen, dash and so on. Thus, the teachers can design the writing assignment in a way that the learners are required to use the aforesaid forsaken elements in their writing materials. Finally, the learners ought to be given more and special attention and guidelines to solve some particular difficulties, according to this study, related to subordination, coordination, comparison, correlation, comma, semi-colon, proper use and agreement of pronouns and verb agreement.

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Title

The Effectiveness of Contextualized versus De-contextualized Vocabulary Teaching on Pre-university EFL Learners' Short and Long-term Retention

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Abstract

This study was conducted to compare the effectiveness of two vocabulary teaching/learning techniques, namely contextualized and de-contextualized techniques on short-term and long-term vocabulary retention of fifty three Iranian pre-university learners of English as a foreign language. They were divided into two groups, and a counterbalanced design was employed. The treatment, i.e. teaching the vocabularies in context of reading passages, was given to both groups in a different order. The data were collected using four multiple-choice vocabulary tests. The results revealed that the two teaching methods did not differ significantly in learners' short-term retention of vocabularies. However, the de-contextualized method, i.e. teaching/learning words through wordlists, was more effective in learners' long-term retention of vocabularies.

Keywords: Vocabulary, Contextualization, De-contextualization, Short-term Retention, Long-term Retention

1. Introduction

Learning a second or foreign language mainly involves learning the sound system, grammar, and vocabulary of that language. Vocabulary learning by far plays a very crucial role in learning another language. According to Seal (1990), to the non-language specialist, the common sense view of how languages are learned is that you substitute the words in your first language for the corresponding words in the second language. Words are perceived as the building blocks upon which knowledge of the second language can be built. "Simply put, people with large vocabularies are more proficient readers than those with limited vocabularies. In fact, there is usually a positive correlation between one's knowledge of vocabulary and his/her level of language proficiency . " (1993, p- 266)

There are many dimensions to vocabulary learning and acquisition. Although some teachers may think that vocabulary learning is easy, learning new vocabulary items has always been challenging for the learners. Generally speaking, vocabulary can be taught in different ways each of which with its own merits and demerits."Language learners are looking for effective ways of increasing the chance of storing new words into their long-term memory but forgetting is a common problem among them. They often complain that they forget words soon after learning them."(Rahimi & Shojaee,2008, p1). The teachers, also like to know in which ways instructional programs might foster the acquisition of so many words. Learning vocabulary from context or 'incidental learning' versus 'direct intentional learning' are two different ways of learning vocabulary which relate to short-term and long-term memory.

In Iranian high schools, most English teachers try to teach vocabulary items using L1equivalents; however, a few others criticize translation-based learning and they try to teach English words in context. It is worth mentioning that most English vocabulary items used in both midterm and final exams ask the students either to complete the sentences using given words or they are required to complete the sentences using their own vocabulaty knowledge. Their vocabulary knowledge is tested in regard to their ability to use such knowledge in context, although the main focus has been on translation while teaching.

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the present study intends to find answers to the following questions:

1. Which of the two methods of vocabulary learning/teaching is more effective for long term retention of vocabularies, contextualized or de-contextualized method?

2. Which of the two mentioned methods is more effective for short term retention of vocabularies?

2. Review of Literature

Contextualization method is one of the vocabulary teaching methods whose effectiveness has been studied by some scholars and they have reported different results and some commented differently on it. Rahimi and Shojaee (2008) define the contextual method as implicit or incidental vocabulary learning which occurs when the mind is focused elsewhere, such as on understanding a text or using language for communication purposes. “This involves making use of the context in which the word appears to derive an idea of its meaning.”(Gairns and Redman, 2006, p. 83)

Some Scholars argue that a major consequence of learning words in a context is learning how to use those words: “When teaching vocabulary this is a major part of the teacher’s art. Students need to see words in context to see how they are used. Accordingly, the best way, perhaps, of introducing new words is for students to read texts or listen to audio tracks and see or hear those words in action. A major reason for reading texts in class is to give students new language input. And whenever we ask students to read or listen, we will want them to see how words are used.” (Harmer, 2007, p. 229)

However, there is a controversy over the effectiveness of contextual methods, mainly guessing from context. A number of potential problems are associated with inferring from context. For example, “some researchers (Bensoussan & Laufer, 1984; Carnine, et al. , 1984; McKewon, 1985) object to the guessing from context method on practical and pedagogical grounds. According to them, the inferring method is an error-prone process and can have the inherent risk that learners rarely guess the correct meanings, make wrong inferences, and learn the wrong meaning because the context rarely offers enough information.” (Hulstijn, 1992, p. 114)

Oxford and Scarcella (1994) conducted a study and observed that while de-contextualized learning (word lists) may help students memorize vocabulary for tests, students are likely to rapidly forget words memorized from lists. McCarthy (1990) argues that a word learned in a meaningful context is best assimilated and remembered. However, most studies have failed to

produce findings favoring context-dependent vocabulary learning (e.g. Gershman, 1970, Tudor and Hafiz, 1989, Hulstijn, 1992).

In another study by Mohammadi (2003) two approaches of teaching vocabulary, i.e. indirect instruction (contextualization) and direct instruction (memorization) were investigated with 60 Iranian high school students who were divided into two groups. The vocabulary items were taught to the control group by giving the native equivalents of the English words, while the procedure for presenting the new words to the experimental group was using the new words in a context. After the treatment, a test based on the list of vocabulary was administered to both groups, and it was found that the students' degree of learning was higher when they were taught the new vocabulary items through context and exemplification.

However, the outcome of some studies showed that the de-contextualizing method works better (mostly for beginners). For example, Qian (1996) compared the learning of second language words in lists and in contexts. He employed 63 Chinese university learners of English learning a set of 15 English target words. The no-context group produced significantly better scores on an immediate recall test than the context group did; and this difference was also observed on a post-test administered one week and three weeks later. The findings of his study suggest that de-contextualized L2 vocabulary learning with feedback is more effective for these particular students than contextualized vocabulary learning without feedback. He also provided a comprehensive review of research that compares the learning of L2 words in lists and in contexts. Based on the results of this review he argues that most of these data are equivocal, in that it fails to show significant effects for one method over the other. He also challenges the assumption that contextualized vocabulary learning always leads to superior retention.

Another experimental study by Sonbul and Schmitt (2009) evaluated the effectiveness of direct teaching of new vocabulary items in reading passages. The study compared vocabulary learning under a reading only condition (incidental learning) to learning that is aided by direct communication of word meanings (explicit learning). Three levels of vocabulary knowledge (form recall, meaning recall, and meaning recognition) were assessed using three tests (completion, LI translation, and multiple choice, respectively). Incidental learning plus explicit instruction was found to be more effective than incidental learning alone for all three levels. The results also showed that direct instruction is especially effective in facilitating the deepest level

of knowledge, i.e. form recall. These findings demonstrate the value of the time and effort spent on direct teaching of lexical Items in EFL reading classes.

In another study by Webb (2009), the effects of pre-learning vocabulary on reading comprehension and writing were investigated. Japanese EFL students learned word pairs receptively and productively (out and in the context respectively). Four tests were used to measure reading comprehension, writing, and receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. The findings suggest that pre-learning vocabulary may be an effective method of improving reading comprehension and writing, with the direction of learning having a significant effect on a learner's ability to use or understand a word. Participants who completed the productive learning task had higher scores on the writing test and on the test of productive vocabulary knowledge, while participants who completed the receptive learning task had higher scores in the comprehension test. The study highlights the importance of the direction of learning in attaining communicative skills.

Another study by Hayati and Shahriari (2010) was conducted to compare the impact of two vocabulary learning techniques, namely context learning and translation learning, on vocabulary recall of sixty pre-university Iranian learners of English. They were divided into two groups of high and low proficient. In regard to two vocabulary learning conditions, each group was divided into two subgroups of fifteen. The data were collected using two types of tests, translation and fill-in-the-blank. The result revealed that the students' proficiency affects their recall. It also revealed that low proficient learners did well when translation learning was followed by translation recall test. However, they could not transfer their vocabulary knowledge to a new context. In other words, they did not perform well enough when translation learning was followed by context recall test. The high proficient group, on the other hand, had a better performance on the context recall test.

In some studies a comparison has been made between two methods of teaching vocabulary and their relationship with short-term and long-term retention of the vocabularies. For example, Hummel (2010) addresses the role that active translation may have in second language vocabulary learning. Some research suggests that translation might be an effective cognitive strategy for L2 vocabulary learning. Participants were 191 native French-speaking students. The study compared results across three different tasks: L1 to L2 translation, L2 to L1 translation; and a rote-copying task. Results indicated significant short term lexical recall following all three

conditions, with no difference between the two translation conditions. However, a significant advantage was found for the rote-copying condition compared to the two translation conditions.

A paper by Wai Yee (2010) examines the effectiveness of L1 glossing, in comparison to L2 glossing, on the immediate recall and long-term retention of 20 L2 unfamiliar lexical items. The study involved 84 students in Hong Kong. They were put into four groups (groups A and B forming the L2 glossing group, and groups C and D forming the L1 glossing group). All groups took part in two workshops, with each one covering a reading passage containing 10 target words. The participants also finished two immediate and two delayed posttests requiring them to choose the correct definitions that best matched the target words. The results indicated that L1 glossing led to better performance in the immediate recall and long-term retention of unfamiliar L2 words, specifically among participants of a low English proficiency level. The effects of glossing gradually diminished as reflected in the change in participants' performance from immediate posttests to delayed posttests, which can be considered to be a natural process in vocabulary acquisition.

Along with all the studies presented above, the present study also investigated the effectiveness of contextualized method versus word-list method of teaching/learning vocabulary. Moreover, it attempted to compare the two methods regarding the learners' short-term and long-term retention of the words separately. A comparison of the two techniques has not been investigated examining the learners' short-term and long-term retention of words. As a result, a study of such a topic is of necessity.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

Participants in the present study consisted of 56, pre-university students of Mohaddese high school - a high school in Kavar- comprising of two classes (23 students in the first class and 33 students in the second one), chosen based on availability. They were 17-18 years old. Both classes were given the treatment. The study took place in the second semester of the 1390 school year. The homogeneity of the students was checked using a 25-item test before the study started. The reason for choosing pre-university students among students of other grades is the effectiveness of contextualizing vocabulary instruction on more advanced learners according to

the previous studies. (e.g. Coady, 1997b; Meara, 1997; Nation and Newton, 1997; Laufer, 1997; Sarvrooy, 1999; Wai Yee, 2010)

3.2 Materials

The material was composed of reading comprehensions and exercises of the second half (four lessons) of the book “English for Pre-University students” and the new vocabulary items presented there; and also lists of new words of each lesson accompanied with their Persian equivalents. Each lesson contained around 50 new words.

3.3 Instruments

Five instruments were applied in the current study. A 25-item multiple-choice vocabulary test was given to the students as a pretest based on the vocabularies they learned in the first semester of the school year to confirm their homogeneity. In order to conduct the study two 20-item multiple-choice vocabulary tests were given to the students based on the vocabulary items of the first half of the material (lessons 5 and 6); and two other 20-item tests were given based on the vocabularies of the second half (lessons 7 and 8) to measure the difference between the students’ vocabulary retention with respect to the type of vocabulary teaching/learning technique employed. (All the tests were taken from the book “Pre-university English” by Boland (2009).

The reliability of the tests was estimated using “Cronbach’s Alpha” method. To confirm the reliability, a group of 20 students of another school in Kavar were chosen to be the participants of the pilot study. They took all the tests, and the reliability of the tests was confirmed according to their grades. The reliability of the pre-test was 0.68, and the reliabilities of the four tests of the study were 0.73, 0.75, 0.81, and 0.69 respectively. In order to include a representative sample of vocabulary items of each of the units the researcher did her best so that the tests would enjoy a high level of content validity. The researcher also invited three colleagues- all of whom have taught the book “English for Pre-University students”- and one university professor to examine the structure, wording, clarity, and order of the questions. The researcher then made some modifications according to the comments received.

3.4 Procedure

The study started at the beginning of the second semester of the school year 1389. In the first semester, the students were taught the vocabularies using the contextualizing method, i.e. teaching/learning new words while teaching reading comprehension. Before the study started, the students took part in a vocabulary pre-test, so that their homogeneity would be checked.

The participants were divided into two groups, and a counterbalanced design was employed: The students of the first group tried to learn the vocabulary items through rote memorization of word-lists containing Persian equivalents of the words, while learning the first half of the material, i.e. two lessons out of four (a de-contextualizing technique). This class received the treatment, which is learning new words while being taught the reading comprehension for the second half of the material (a contextualizing technique). Accordingly, the second class received the treatment while being taught the first half of the materials, and did not receive it for the second half.

Two tests were given to each group after teaching the first half of the materials at an interval of three weeks, the first test as a short-term retention test and the second one as a long-term retention one. Two other tests were given to each group after teaching the second half of the materials at the same interval(three weeks). The tests were given to them in order to compare the effectiveness of the two methods on their short-term and long-term retention of vocabulary items. The reliability of each test was examined on the pilot group before being administered for the main groups of the study.

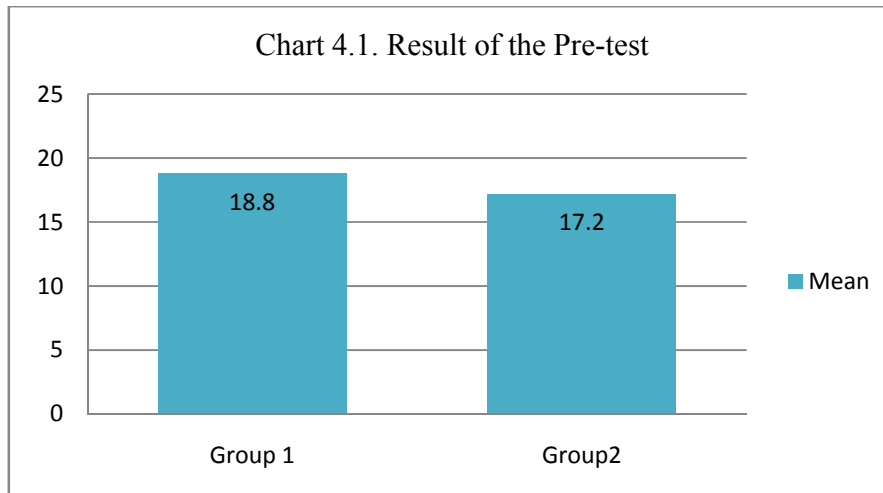
The reason for choosing a counterbalanced design was to prevent the order effect of two different methods of teaching used in the first and the second semester: the students might have got accustomed to the teaching method of the first semester; and this fact might have affected their performance and consequently the result of the research. Therefore by choosing a counterbalanced design, the researcher increased the validity of the research.

4. Results

After data collection, the results of current paper were calculated using Statistical Package for Social Science, version 16 to compute the data of the study. The data gathered from the tests were analyzed using independent *t*-test to compare the results of the two tests of short-term retention and the two tests of long-term retention. The reliability of the tests was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha method.

4.1 Pre-test

A pre-test was administered in order to confirm the homogeneity of the two groups. Chart 4.1 presents the result of the pre-test, i.e. the mean of the scores of the two groups. As shown in the chart, the two groups are homogenous.



4.2 First Short-term Retention Test

Data collected from the instruments were analysed using the SPSS software. After administering the four tests of the study the following data analysis was carried out:

To compare the results of the first test of short-term retention an independent *t*-test was used; and it was found that although the context group achieved better scores (mean of 15.38 compared to mean of 14.86 for word-list group there is no significant difference between the scores of the two groups, since the significance level is 0.445, and the *t*-value is -.769 as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. First Short-term Retention Independent *t*-test

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	df	sig
Word-list	22	14.86	2.69	-.769	51	.445
Context	31	15.38	2.24			

4.3 First Long-term Retention Test

Another independent *t*-test was carried out to calculate the results of the first long-term retention test. Analyzing the results of this *t*-test, according to Table 4.2, it can be concluded that in the first long-term retention test the word-list group had a significantly better performance than the

context group, since the significance level is .002. The mean of the word-list group's scores is 13.31, and the mean of the context group's scores is 11.25, and the *t*-value is 3.320.

Table 4.2. First Long-term Retention Independent *t*-test

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	sig
Word-list	22	13.31	1.7	3.32	51	.002
Context	31	11.25	2.52			

4.4 Second Short-term Retention Test

After finishing the first part of the material a test of short-term retention and one of long-term retention were administered based on the second part of the material, whose *t*-test results are presented in this section and the next one.

The result of the second short-term retention test, i.e. the first test of the second part of the material, is presented in Table 4.3. The results show that as the first short-term retention test, in the second one there is no significant difference between the performance of the two groups. The significance level is .872 and the means of the scores of the word-list and context group are 14.13 and 14.25 respectively.

Table 4.3. Second Short-term Retention Independent *t*-test

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	sig
Word-list	22	14.25	3.07	-.162	51	.872
Context	31	14.13	2.05			

4.5 Second Long-term Retention Test

This is the last test administered in this study. The students' long-term retention of the vocabularies of the second part of the materials was tested.

The result of the last tests shows that there is no significant difference between the two groups. It means they performed almost similarly in this test; and also their scores were lower than those of the three other tests. The means of both groups were around 11, and the significance level was .927. More detailed statistical results are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. Second Long-term Retention Independent *t*-test

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	sig
Word-list	22	11.06	3.12	-.092	51	.927
Context	31	11.13	2.27			

5. Discussion

According to the results of the two short-term retention tests which were administered 2 days after teaching the vocabularies, it can be concluded that contextualized and de-contextualized methods of teaching vocabulary make no significant difference in the learners' short term retention of words. Since short-term retention tests were administered for the two parts of the materials and the results of both parts were the same, the conclusion is confirmed.

The results of the two long-term retention *t*-tests, which were administered three weeks after teaching the material, were not the same. According to the results of the first long-term retention test, the word-list group outperformed the context group. In other words the de-contextualized (word-list) method of teaching vocabulary was more effective in the learners' long-term retention of the words.

However, the result of the second long-term retention test was different. There was no significant difference between the two groups, although in the first long-term retention test the word-list group outperformed the context group. Furthermore, the students' scores in the second long-term retention test were lower than those of the first one. The reason is that they did not cooperate and were not well-prepared for the test; consequently, the result of the last test was not satisfactory.

Based on the findings, the research questions are to be answered here:

1. Which of the two methods of vocabulary learning/teaching is more effective for short-term retention of vocabularies, contextualized or de-contextualized method?

According to the two short-term retention tests, whose results were the same, the two methods of teaching/learning vocabulary make no significant difference in the learners' short-term retention, since the performance of both groups were the same, according to Tables 4.1 and 4.3.

2. Which of the two mentioned methods is more effective for long-term retention of vocabularies?

Based on the results of the first long-term retention test (Table 4.2), it can be concluded that the decontextual method of teaching/learning vocabulary is more effective than the contextual one in long-term retention of words, since the word-list group outperformed the context group. However, in the second long-term retention test the result was different: both groups performed almost the same, bearing in mind the poor performance of both groups in this test.

In the present study the de-contextual (word-list) method of teaching/learning vocabulary turned out to be more effective than contextual method for learners' long-term retention of new words; and generally, the two methods did not make a significant difference in learners' vocabulary learning and retention. This finding is especially in line with what Qian (1996) found in his study comparing the effectiveness of contextual versus word-list method of teaching vocabulary; and also with what Nist and Olejnik (1995), Lawson and Hogben(1996), Dunham (1997), and Sonbul and Schmits (2009) found regarding the effectiveness of using context in comparison with using dictionary definitions. This study also supports the findings of Prince (1996) and Sarvrooy (1999) regarding the effectiveness of translation versus context. Furthermore, Mehrpour (2008), Pressley et al. (1982), Barcroft (2000), and Nielsen (2002) have found that a decontextualized method of teaching vocabulary is more effective than sentence writing method as a contextualizing method. Kibby (1989) also found *minimal context*, i.e. visual characteristics of the words more effective than *context*, i.e. context, meaning, usage, and the visual characteristics of the words taught.

However, Oxford and Scarcella (1994), Khuwaileh(1995), Nagy et al. (1985), and Mohammadi(2003) have found the contextualizing method more effective than the de-contextualizing (word-list) method. Piran (2010) also suggested intensive and extensive reading to grow learners' vocabulary size and depth.

Regarding the research done on the topic of short-term and long-term retention of vocabularies, the findings of the present research is especially in line with the result of Mattola's (1951) study; and opposes to what Redouane (2010) and Laufer and Shmueli (1997) have found. Most of the research done on the topic of short-term and long-term retention compare the effectiveness of memory strategies with the effectiveness of context; and prove the superiority of memory strategies over context. The results of studies such as McDaniel et al. (1987), Alvin and Margaret (1995), and Nemati (2007) are somehow in line with the results of the current study.

Consequently, the results of the current study confirm the results of most of the studies done on contextualized versus de-contextualized methods of teaching/learning vocabulary.

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Title

The Effect of Text Type, and Organization of the Passage on the Facility with which Students Comprehend a Passage in a Foreign Language

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Abstract

Throughout the history of language teaching (LT), there have been numerous researchers working on the effective ways to improve the reading abilities of the learners. They have all contributed a lot to the enhancement of learners' general reading proficiency and skill to help them to have a better understanding of a passage. The present research attempted to find out the effect of text type, and organization of the passage on the facility with which students comprehend a passage in a foreign language. To achieve this end, two groups of students were selected from the intermediate level, studying at Iran Language Institute. The result obtained from a t-test showed a significant difference between the means. Therefore both null hypotheses were rejected demonstrating that the text type could affect the facility with which students comprehend a passage in FL, in addition having a description or preview of the organization of a passage before attempting to read could help students in comprehending it.

Key words: Text type, Text organization, Reading comprehension, Advanced organizer.

1. Introduction

The definition of reading comprehension may appear to be both simple and obvious. Reading comprehension seems a simple concept because for good readers, the comprehension process has become more or less automatic. Most of the time good readers do not think about what they are doing to make sense of text, to find important information, to learn how to do something, or to follow events in a story.

The ability to read has a positive impact on school success, employability, independence, and autonomy, as well as providing a means for lifelong learning, entertainment, and introspection.

Goodman (1967) claims that, “reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game. It involves “an interaction between thought and language”. (p. 135). He writes that “efficient reading does not result from precise perception and identification of all elements, but from skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which are right the first time.” (p. 126)

Falk (1973) states that “... for literate adult who already know how to read, reading is an active interaction of adults’ knowledge of their language with the material, printed or written, that they perceive visually, the purpose is to comprehend meaning”. For young children, just beginning to read with printed material, “reading can become just what it is for the adults”. (p.386)

Rivers (1981) states that “reading is the most important activity in any language class. Reading is a source of information, a pleasurable activity and a means of consolidating and extending one’s knowledge of the language.” (p. 259). Teachers of language must understand the processes involved in reading and help their students develop habit of reading that will lead them to direct comprehension. This should not be done hurriedly; instead, it should be done steadily and continuously.

Goodman (1967) describes the reading process convincingly when he states that:

Readers develop sampling strategies to pick up the most useful and necessary graphic cues. They develop prediction strategies to get the underlying grammatical structures and to anticipate what they are likely to find in the print. They develop confirmation strategies to check on the validity of their predictions. And they have correction strategies to use when their predictions do not work out and they need to reprocess the graphic, syntactic and semantic cues to get the meaning. (p.135)

Durkin (1993) says that “Comprehension is critically important to the development of children's reading skills and therefore to the ability to obtain an education.” Indeed, reading comprehension has come to be the "essence of reading", this is essential not only to academic learning in all subject areas but to lifelong learning as well. (p. 481)

The last four decades have seen the emergence of three reading models. In the first model, the *bottom-up* (data-driven) reading process, the reader decodes, letter-by-letter, word-by-word the written symbols in the text and then reassembles the pieces to form meaning.

Carrell (1988b) states that “this process creates problems such as fragmentation and memory overload because the reader attempts to store too many separate pieces of information without any higher-order relationship between them.” (p. 113)

The second model, the *top-down* (concept-driven) reading process, arose out of psycholinguistic research by such scholars as Goodman (1971) and Smith (1971). Carrell (1988a) points out “in this model, the efficient reader does not need to use all of the textual cues. (p. 7). Goodman (1971) described reading as a "psycholinguistic guessing game" (p. 135) and later he wrote that the better the reader is able to make correct predictions, the less confirming via the text is necessary .

The third model is the *interactive* processing approach, developed in response to the deficiencies of both bottom-up and top-down approaches. Eskey (1988) believes in this model “interaction refers to the constant interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing skills.” (p. 98)

Stanovich's (1980) *interactive-compensatory* model deals with the shortcomings of both approaches. “The bottom-up model assumes background knowledge cannot be activated before lower level decoding while the top-down model does not allow lower level processes to influence or direct higher-level ones.” (p. 32)

2. Statement of the Problem

It is apparent that the more extensively the learners read the better and more proficient readers they would become. On the other hand, although teaching students different strategies for effective reading may have beneficial effects on their grades in exams, it may not influence or enhance their proficiency level as much.

There have been numerous researchers working on the effective ways to improve the reading abilities of the learners namely; Fast Reading, Skimming, Scanning; they have all contributed a lot to the enhancement of learners' general reading proficiency and skill to help them to have a better understanding of a passage. As a basic premise, we believe that there are critical differences in the way in which readers must approach different genres of text. Further, we have come to believe that differences between text types are so important for readers that they must be part of instruction.

Different types of the texts can be seen through multiple facets, whether they are literary, historical, informational, political, etc. In addition, various genres of texts have different organizational pattern and structure that affect text's complexity and readability.

Since the study endeavors to discover whether or not the text type and organization of the passage will have an apparent influence on the facility with which students comprehend a passage in a foreign language, the research questions and hypotheses are as follow:

Q1. Does the type of text affect the facility with which students comprehend a passage in EFL?

Q2. Does having a description or preview of the organization of a passage before attempting to read help students in comprehending it?

H01. The text type does not affect the facility with which students comprehend a passage in FL.

H02. Having a description or preview of the organization of a passage before attempting to read does not help students in comprehending it.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants of the present study were sixty. The subjects were chosen from a language institute in Sari (Iran) at intermediate level. The subjects without residency background were selected in order to delete any intervening variables. Two groups would be selected, one experimental, and the other control group. Furthermore, the participants in this study would be adult learners aged above 18 years old.

3.2 Instrumentations

First step

A TOFEL test was conducted to a group of Intermediate learners of English in order to have

homogenous participants.

Second step

The instrumentations used in this study include reading comprehension tests that are available in written forms. Most standardized instruments are written tests of silent reading comprehension, most often in a multiple-choice format. The learner reads a passage and answers its questions.

3.3 Procedures

The most efficient approach for the first research question is to carry out a research based on the Quasi- Experimental Design. To do so, the researcher selected only one group, which consisted of 30 participants at the Intermediate level. The materials that were presented to them included ten passages in two different genres, five of them were in the genre of literature, and the other five texts were simplified scientific texts. Each of the passages had five reading questions to be answered at the back of the paper. The most efficient approach for the second research question is to carry out a research based on the Experimental Design. Two groups - an experimental group that receives the special treatment and a control group that does not- are randomly selected.

The researcher simply presented the materials to the control group, including five short stories which were in genre of literature accompanying with five reading comprehension questions in a multiple-choice format for each short story. This group was asked to read the five short stories, and then answer the five items that each short story had in an allocated time without having any advanced organizer before attempting to read the passages. The researcher presented the materials to the experimental group, too, including five short stories which were in the genre of literature accompanying with five reading comprehension questions in a multiple-choice format for each short story. The materials were the same as the control group, but the procedure was different.

The researcher would like to see whether having a description or preview of the organization of a passage before attempting to read would help students in comprehending it. Therefore, a short description and preview was prepared for each passage. In each preview, the main idea of the story, some key sentences and clues were brought to assist the students get some ideas from the story, and become aware of the contents of it. Students were asked to listen to the preview which was uttered by the researcher in the classroom. They were not allowed to have a look at the passage. After that in the allotted time, they attempted to read the passage and answered the five reading comprehension questions which were printed at the back of the paper, in this way; they did not get the chance to have a look at the prepared items before reading. These similar steps were completely obeyed for each short story.

4. Result and discussion

Below, the results of the application of statistical procedures to the data to test the two hypotheses of the research are presented. The first null hypothesis was raised as: “The text type does not affect the facility with which students comprehend a passage in FL.”

Table 1-1 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the experimental group for the paired samples.

Table 1-1 Descriptive Statistics of the experimental group

Variables	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair ADABI	18.4667	30	1.7564	.3207
ELMI	12.3667	30	2.4563	.4485

Comparing the two means, it can be seen that the mean of the literary texts (18.46) exceeds the mean of the scientific texts (12.36). To decide whether the differences are statistically meaningful and significant the Matched T-Test is conducted. (Table 1-2)

Table 1-2 Matched t-test for comparing the means of two pairs

Pairs	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Pair 1 ADABI - EL	6.1000	2.7836	.5082	12.003	29	.000

A look at the table above allows the reader to conclude that the sig. number equals .000, the difference between the means of the pairs samples equals 6.1, and t=12.003 which shows a significance between the two pairs samples. In other words, the text type will affect the facility with which students comprehend a passage in FL. Consequently, the first null hypothesis is rejected.

The second null hypothesis was raised as: “Having a description or preview of the organization of a passage before attempting to read does not help students in comprehending it.”

To address this question, first table 1-3 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the experimental group and the control group.

Table 1- 3 Descriptive statistics of the experimental group and the control group

Group Statistics

Dependent variables	GROUPS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
TOTTAL	Experimental	30	18.43	1.55	.28
	Control	30	13.23	2.39	.44

Comparing the two means, it can be seen that the mean of the experimental group (18.43) exceeds the mean of the control group (13.23). To decide whether the differences are statistically meaningful and significant the Independent Samples Test is conducted. (Table 1-4)

Table 1-4 Independent Sample Test

Independent Samples Test

Dependent variables	Assumptions	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
TOTTAL	Equal variances assumed	4.802	.032	10.011	58	.000	5.20	.52
	Equal variances not assumed			10.011	49.689	.000	5.20	.52

A look at the table above one can conclude that the sig. number equals .000, and t=10.011 which shows a significance between the two groups. In other words, Having a description or preview of the organization of a passage before attempting to read will help students in comprehending it. Consequently, the second null hypothesis is rejected, too.

5. Conclusion

Regarding the first research question, *“Does the type of text affect the facility with which students comprehend a passage in EFL?”* The result of the matched t- test indicated that different text genres (literary texts & scientific texts) had an impact upon the reading comprehension of the students in the relevant area. It could be seen that the literary texts had a positive impact on the performance of the learners, and they could answer the reading comprehension questions successfully, on the other hands, the scientific texts had a negative impact on their performance.

These findings indicate that the comprehension process is an active, “hypothesis-testing” procedure in which the reader constructs his or her own version of the passage from existing schemata and attempts to match that version against the incoming information. When a match cannot be easily achieved, readers either tend to adjust the input to fit their hypotheses, choose different schemata and begin the “hypothesis-testing” process again, or eventually fail to comprehend. The more different schemata that are required to make sense of a given story, the less comprehensible the story will be. This problem occurred when the learner coped with the complex structure and the amount of unfamiliar words in scientific passages.

Addressing the second question of the research which was stated as “*Does having a description or preview of the organization of a passage before attempting to read help students in comprehending it?*” examined the advance organizer factor. The result of statistical computation showed that if the students have a description or preview of the organization of a passage before reading the text, they will comprehend it better. In other words, advance organizer had a positive impact upon the success of the students in this study.

In a broader scope, the students’ reading comprehension performance increased significantly. Students who had the expanded framework as an advance organizer performed significantly better than those who had no framework. The researcher also concluded that providing readers at lower levels of proficiency with advance organizers about the structure of the passage might be an important step in helping them get the most information from a foreign-language text.

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