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THE EFFECT OF SHORT STORY READING ON TERTIARY LEVEL EFL STUDENTS’ CREATIVE WRITING ABILITY

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ABSTRACT
THIS STUDY WAS CONDUCTED TO DETERMINE THE EFFECT OF SHORT STORY READING ON IRANIAN TERTIARY LEVEL EFL STUDENTS’ CREATIVE WRITING ABILITY. PARTICIPANTS WERE 68 JUNIOR STUDENTS (58 FEMALES AND 10 MALES) OF LITERATURE AT A UNIVERSITY IN Khorasan Razavi, Iran. A MIXED METHOD DESIGN WAS USED FOR DATA COLLECTION. THE QUANTITATIVE PHASE INCLUDED A PRE-TEST/POST-TEST ONE-GROUP EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN IN WHICH THE PARTICIPANTS WERE PRETESTED BY A CREATIVE WRITING TASK, RECEIVED TREATMENT ON SHORT STORY READINGS FOR 12 SESSIONS DURING FOUR MONTHS, AND WERE POST-TESTED ON CREATIVE WRITING ABILITY AT THE END OF THE EXPERIMENT. IN THE QUALITATIVE PHASE OF THE STUDY, THE PARTICIPANTS WERE INTERVIEWED ON THEIR VIEWS ABOUT THE USE OF SHORT STORIES IN TEACHING CREATIVE WRITING. THE RESULTS INDICATED THAT SHORT STORY READING HAD A SIGNIFICANTLY POSITIVE EFFECT ON ONLY ONE ASPECT OF CREATIVE WRITING; THAT IS, THE USE OF LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE DEVICES WITH NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE OTHER COMPONENTS OF CREATIVE WRITING ABILITY: (A) THE USE OF GENRE AND GENERIC CONVENTIONS, (B) CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, AND SOCIAL CONTEXT UNDERSTANDING, (C) THE AWARENESS OF AUDIENCE AND THE READER’S CONTEXT, (D) QUALITY OF IDEAS, AND (E) BALANCED JUDGMENT. THE QUALITATIVE DATA REVEALED THAT THE QUALITY OF CREATIVE WRITING ABILITY IS DEPENDENT ON THE PARTICIPANTS’ WRITING BACKGROUND, THE NATURE OF THEIR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS, THE AMOUNT OF FEEDBACK THEY RECEIVE, THEIR SELF-PERCEIVED QUALITY OF IMPROVEMENT, AND THE COMPLEXITY OF THE CREATIVE WRITING SKILL THAT REQUIRES MORE TIME FOR PRACTICE. IT WAS ALSO FOUND THAT SOME OF LEARNERS LIKED THE CREATIVE WRITING EXPERIENCE AND BELIEVED THAT IT GAVE THEM A PURPOSE FOR WRITING AND ALLOWED THEM TO REFLECT ON THEIR PERSONAL FEELINGS AND IDEAS. NEVERTHELESS, THEY EMPHASIZED ON THE NECESSITY OF SOME PRE-REQUISITE COURSES ON CREATIVE WRITING.

KEYWORDS: CREATIVE WRITING, SHORT STORY READING, COMPONENTS OF CREATIVE WRITING, MIXED-METHOD DESIGN.
1. Introduction

Research has shown that learning to write requires control over cognitive skills such as planning, outlining, thinking, generating and developing ideas, and drafting and redrafting, as well as a command of the linguistic, rhetorical and sociocultural conventions of a particular language. Writing also requires a number of "transitions" such as the transition from oral to graphic expression, which is regarded as a major developmental step by Vygotsky (1978), and the transition from personal communication to "communication with a remote audience" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1982, p.1). Writing is believed to have a major role in the conveyance of knowledge from generation to generation. That is why philosophers, scholars, knowledge providers and educationalists, ages past and ages yet to come have always paid enormous attention to writing.

Candlin (1996) surmised the "plural roles of writing; as a means of measuring cognitive abilities, as a central skill area in the design of educational curricula and in the patterns of their delivery in teaching and assessment, a way of understanding some of the occupational and social demands of daily communication in living and working, in revealing its key gate-keeping role in enabling or disabling the sheer accessibility of life chances for all in contemporary industrial and postindustrial societies, and in its ethnographic significance in exploring and explaining cultural variation and relativeness" (p. xiii). In academic settings in particular, writing is viewed as the primary channel for the communication of knowledge. And students learn to write because writing enables them to take part in the academic community (Bazerman, 1982).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

According to Williamson (1988), the influence of written language is pertinent to both academics' discipline and "their lives in a specific institution" (p. 91). However, concerns about the standards of writing continue to be expressed and addressed. Writing is a complicated task and many students experience difficulty and frustration when writing (Schultz & Fecho, 2000). Schools, colleges, and parents argue that students fail to learn and practice writing reasonable texts. They believe that such failure may result in both declining literacy levels and a weak generation that cannot "think critically about intellectual ideas and academic materials" Hamp-Lyons (1990, p. 69). Cooper et. al. (1984), for example, have addressed this issue of writing weaknesses and irregularities among students both at secondary and tertiary levels. Cooper et.al. agree with school teachers, university professors and "guardians of the language in the media" (p. 19) that there is a "writing crisis "and a "literacy crisis" (p. 19), which it appears has been the cry of every culture and every generation. Consequently, increasing attention has been paid to this vital question and there is a rapidly growing body of research in various areas of the field of writing.

Educators have recognized this fact and have looked for ways to assist students in this area for many years. To start with, it was important to acknowledge that students need to have a good grasp of the nature of writing. With this notion, the focus was placed, by theorists and educators alike, on the process of writing rather than the product. This notion was born from research into writing composition which yielded the following conclusion: writing is a non-linear, recursive process composed of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing experiences (Chiste & O'Shea, 1990). Therefore, the focus of this mixed method study is to determine if creative writing can be improved by learners’ short story reading and what the learners think of the effectiveness of such an approach to developing creative writing.

1.2 Study Objectives

The main objective in this study is to investigate the effect of short story reading on Iranian tertiary level EFL students' creative writing ability.

1.3 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent does short story reading improve Iranian Tertiary level EFL learners' creative writing?
2. What factors are involved in the quality of creative writing by Iranian Tertiary level EFL learners?
3. What are Iranian Tertiary Level EFL learners’ attitudes towards short story reading in improving their creative writing?

1.4 Research Hypothesis
Short story reading has no significant effect on Iranian Tertiary level EFL learners’ creative writing.

1.5 Significance of the Study
The results of the present study can be beneficial to EFL students of literature at the tertiary level and the related instructors as well as the material developers. EFL students of literature will get familiar with this expressive writing discourse that is usually ignored in both undergraduate and postgraduate programs of English literature. It will also give them insights on the practical and productive aspect of short story reading that can be considered as a prerequisite for producing similar texts. English literature instructors will also learn about the nature of creative writing, the uses of short stories, and the learners’ strengths and weakness in the process of creative writing. And finally, material developers will learn about what content with what methodology can be beneficial for the learners at this level to learn creative writing.

1.6 Limitations of the Study
The main limitation in this study is the limited number of participants from one university in Iran. This point was considered as an important factor in the interpretation of the results and the generalization was done cautiously. The second limitation was the presentation of only short story as an example of creative writing excluding, poems, plays, personal essays, and the like.

2. Review of the Related Literature
2.1 Literature and Language Teaching
Lately, there has been an upsurge of many foreign language teaching researchers’ interest in the effectiveness of the literature implementation in teaching a second or foreign language as well as EFL and ESL students’ learning experiences.

Whereas some teachers may still believe that teach EFL include stress on linguistic benefits only, others assert that language and literature are the two sides of a coin and closely connected. Brumfit and Carter (1986) put emphasis on the role of literature as “an ally of language” (p.1). The use of literature in EFL classes was related to the earlier in the 20th century, when the Grammar-Translation Method was developed to appreciate foreign language literature. Students were asked to read and translated target language literary texts to their native language. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) elucidated “Literary language is considered superior to spoken language and is therefore the language the students study. Culture is viewed as consisting of literature and fine arts” (p. 20).

Although literature was a precious source that would add a different dimension to the teaching of EFL, it was forgotten after the GTM. The advocators of the Audio-Lingual Method paid no attention to literature because of its non-realistic nature. In other words, after it, none of the language methods have given a due attention to literature.

More recently, the goal of EFL teaching has changed and shifted to help learners to use a foreign language for real communicative purposes, and literature as an authentic example of target language use with communicative functions were revived. Consequently, language trainers and teachers have started making tireless attempts to find new efficient ways of interconnectivity of literature and language across the principles for the learners’ benefits.

2.2 Creative Writing
According to Sharples (1999), creative writing is an open-ended design process, without a fixed goal and without clearly specified and ordered stages leading to one single solution. Similarly, Maley (2012) considered creative writing as an aesthetically motivated, highly disciplined and a personal
activity that deals less in facts than in the imaginative representation of emotions, events, characters and experiences. This is in contrast to the classic three-stage conception of writing that includes “planning (the generation and organization of information for goal-setting), translation (the turning of the plans and thoughts into text appropriate), and reviewing (the editing and evaluation of the text or the goals)” (Flower & Hayes, 1980, as cited in Vass, Littleton, Miell, & Jones, 2008, p. 149). Sharples (1999) believed that writing incorporates two interlinking and interdependent processes, engagement – the generation of creative ideas; the emotional engagement with the material – and reflection – the conscious break of the chain of association; reviewing, contemplation and planning.

3. Methodology
3.1 Participants
Participants were 68 junior students (58 females and 10 males) of literature at a university in Khorasan Razavi, Iran, selected through convenient sampling. The average age of the participants for this study was between 20 and 25 years. They were the junior students of English literature who were taking essay writing. They were all Iranian students with similar educational backgrounds as to writing in general with no experience of creative writing practice and no earlier residence in an English speaking country.

3.2 Research Design
The research is a mixed method study using both qualitative and quantitative data. A mixed method design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data to understand a research problem more completely (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). When used in combination, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allow for a more complete analysis (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

The quantitative component of the study is a pre-test to post-test comparison measuring the change in students’ creative writing ability. For a better understanding of learners’ composing behaviors, as posited by Manchon (2011), the qualitative portion of the study focused on gathering information through semi-structured interviews. The participants in the experimental group were interviewed to determine their perception of using short stories for teaching creative writing. All interviews were transcribed, checked for accuracy, and coded (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

3.3 Instruments
Two main instruments were used in this study: two writing tasks and semi-structured interviews. Interviews were used to allow for probing deeply into students’ comments about the quality of using short stories in learning to write creatively. Student volunteers for interviews were requested on four occasions during the semester.

3.4 Materials
This section consists of three short stories used for the study. They were written by the American short story writer, O. Henry. They are The Gift of The Magi, The Last Leaf, and Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure
The data was collected during the spring semester 2014 and was comprised of both quantitative and qualitative data. Participants were required to write two creative essays on a general topic: “The Best Gift” (similar to the short story topics they had during the treatment) twice. Once initially before starting their writing instruction mid-February (Time 1) and then four months later in early July (Time 2). A common narrowed-down specific topic was not given to all students because a basic principle of expressive writing is that students write on their preferred topics. This general topic was treated differently by different students. Specific varieties of the same general topic were: “The Best Gift for my Dad”, the Best gift I have Ever Received”, The Best Gift from a Friend, the Best God-Given Gift, and so on.
The repetition of the same task at both times of data collection was for avoiding possible problems in measuring the development of writing given that different task topics could affect the quality of the written texts (Storch & Tapper, 2009). Moreover, the use of the same topic is frequently used in pre and posttest research designs (e.g., Storch & Tapper, 2009; Elder & O’Loughlin, 2003; Shaw & Liu, 1998; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007) to avoid the possible effect of different topics on the quality of writing. The essays were written in the classroom and students were given one hour to complete the task without the help of external sources such as dictionaries.

In addition, in order to determine the learners’ perceptions of using short stories in teaching and learning to write creatively, four volunteers were interviewed three times during the treatment and once immediately after Time 2. The interview questions were developed on the basis of the researcher’s reading of the literature (e.g., Storch & Hill, 2008; Knoch, Rouhshad, Oon, & Storch, 2015).

During the experiment that lasted for 12 sessions, the three short stories were presented to the experimental group through a short story based language teaching model proposed by Khatib & Seyyedrezai (2013). There are three stages in this method and the following procedure was followed for instruction:

1. **Pre-reading activities:**
   a. The teacher explained the procedures to the students in their own language. Besides, he set linguistic objectives, grammatical points, and key vocabulary items used in the short story text.
   b. The teacher familiarized students with the genre features of each story. He presented the main characters and clarified cultural information that could cause comprehension difficulties. The teacher posed a variety of questions concerning the short story context in order to activate their schemata. Consequently, the students would link their prior knowledge with text experiences.
   c. The teacher showed the students the short story cover and wanted them to make predictions about title and illustrations by asking some question such as what do you see in the picture? What do you think the story will be about? Do you know anything about the writer of this work? These kinds of activities could stimulate the students’ interest in the topics of the short story texts and would motivate them to pursue them to see what would finally happen.

2. **While-reading activities:** In this step, learners learned how to interact with, and appreciate short story text as well as negotiate meaning.
   a. At this phase, the teacher read the short story, made use of facial expressions, gestures, mime and intonations so that the learners would follow the short story.
   b. The teacher involved the learners in the short story text by asking a number of questions about the three basic short story elements (character, setting, and plot). For instance, who is the main character? What are the important events of the story? When and where have they happened? Of course, for more proficient short story readers, the teacher asked questions to challenge the learners’ imagination. For example: How are these characters related? What is the main character’s motivation?
   c. New vocabularies and grammatical items were explained in the short story text. While the learners were reading it, they underlined the unknown words that might hinder them from grasping meaning. Of course, they could infer the vocabulary meaning in the text.

3. **Post reading activities**
   a. Students worked together and answered the questions orally. Referential, factual, inferential, and evaluative questions were used at this phase. Could students, for example, name the main characters or record the events? Also, what was the narrative view point?
   b. Students wrote a conversation between two characters.
   c. Students would paraphrase some paragraphs of a chapter.
   d. Students wrote the theme of the story.
   e. Students wrote a paragraph about the characters motivations or the plot development.
   f. Summary had to cover the characters, resolution, climax, setting, and conflict and had to be written in a few sentences.
   g. Students discussed the short story themes and if they were in protagonist’s shoes, what they would do.
Lastly, students expressed their own personal views, criticized, and rendered a judgment about the story based on how successful it was in fulfilling its aims.

For homework, students were required to summarize the short story using new vocabulary and discussion done in the classroom. In addition, students were asked to form a new coherent work by synthesizing what they had learnt about the characters and events in the short story.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. For analyzing the quantitative data, statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), and because the data were not normally distributed, Wilcoxon signed-rank test, a non-parametric equivalent to the paired sample t-test, was applied to examine changes in students’ performance over time from Time 1 to Time 2. The test converts the continuous scores to ranks and compares the differences between the two time periods (Pallant, 2010). The Wilcoxon Signed Rank assumptions are that the data to be used should be either continuous or ordinal in level, and that it is obtained from independent samples, such that each participant represents one score for either variable (Brace, Kemp, & Sneglar, 2006). Effect size was calculated and absolute effect sizes of 0.1-0.29 were taken as indicating a small effect, from 0.3 to 0.49 a medium effect, and greater than 0.5 a large effect (Cohen, 1969).

As to the analytical measures, two raters (the researcher and a Ph.D. student of TEFL) assessed the participants’ essays based on the six creative writing components suggested by Morris & Sharplin (2013). These components were (a) the use of language and language devices, (b) the use of genre and generic conventions, (c) contextual understandings (cultural, historical, and social contexts), (d) the awareness of audience and the reader’s context, (e) ideas explored, issues raised, themes developed, meanings that can be made (quality of ideas), and (f) on balance judgment. Any disagreement when coding were solved by consensus. The inter-rater agreement was therefore always 100%.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Research Question 1: To what extent does short story reading improve Iranian Tertiary level EFL learners’ creative writing?

To answer this question, first of all, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) Test (as displayed in table 4.1) was conducted to determine whether the data represented a normal distribution for both control and experimental groups.

Table 4.1
The Test of Normality for Post-Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kolmogorov-Smirnov²</th>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen, the significant results obtained for Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests showed that the data was not normal and therefore, in order to answer research question 1, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test (displayed in table 4.2) as the non-parametric version of paired t-test was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between time 1 and time 2 of creative writing test as a result of short story reading.

Table 4.2
Comparing Creative Writing Performance at Time 1 & Time 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative Writing Assessment Criteria</th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Wilcoxon signed rank test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mdn</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mdn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The use of language and language devices</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The use of genre and generic conventions</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Contextual understandings: cultural,</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
historical, and social contexts

4. The awareness of audience and the reader’s context
   Ideas explored, issues raised, themes
   4.33  4.3  .75  4.0  4.5  .82  -2.5  .10

5. developed, meanings that can be made (quality of ideas)
   4.25  4.4  .70  4.0  4.3  .76  -1.4  .14

6. On balance judgment
   4.00  4.2  .75  4.0  4.2  .80  1.5  .10

As shown in this table, the overall findings indicate that the participants did not improve in almost all of creative writing components over time and their improvement was significant only in use of language and language devices with no significant change in other elements of creative writing ability: (a) the use of genre and generic conventions, (b) contextual understandings: cultural, historical, and social contexts, (c) the awareness of audience and the reader’s context, (d) quality of ideas, and (e) balanced judgment.

4.2 Research Question 2: What factors are involved in the quality of creative writing by Iranian Tertiary level EFL learners?

The transcription of interview results led to the emergence of six themes pertaining the factors involved in the quality of creative writing: the participants’ writing background, the nature of their written assignments, the amount of feedback they received, their self-perceived quality of improvement, the complexity of the creative writing skill that requires more time for practice, and their suggestions for curriculum change. It should be noted that not all participants were asked the same questions due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews.

The results of the interview show that most participants did not write much throughout their language learning experience. For example, one of them said:

“During the seven years of high school, I didn’t have any experience in writing and during my university level studies in English literature, I don’t have sufficient writing assignments. Just in exams, we are tested by writing in English that is different from creative writing.”

Likewise, another student complained about this lack of background in writing in general, and creative writing in particular, as a reason for her lack of success in creative writing:

“I expected to develop in proficiency after entering university and studying English literature, but I do not see much difference between the methodology used in high school and that here in the way of teaching. Here, again we have a lot of grammar, vocabulary, and reading. The only differences is the inclusion of some conversation courses and some skills-based writing. Therefore, development in creative writing is almost impossible in this short period of time.”

Moreover, and as a result of focus on grammar, vocabulary, and reading, the majority of respondents believed that they had improved over two or three years of their study in paragraph structure, vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy. For example, one respondent stated:

“I feel relatively confident of my knowledge in use of formal and to some extent literary vocabulary in my writing and have many ideas in my mind but do not know how to organize them to be easily understandable for the readers.”

This statement confirms the quantitative findings that indicate improvement in only one of the six components of creative writing, that is, the use of language and language devices.

Another important point mentioned by most participants was the limited amount of feedback on their writing. When asked whether instructors commented on their written assignments, almost all respondents were not satisfied with the quantity of experts’ comments on the quality of their writing. For example, one student stated:

“During my limited writing practice, I needed a lot of help from my professors, but because of the large number of students, they couldn’t give enough feedback to all of us. Therefore, my writing skill deteriorated over time.”

Likewise, another student commented that:
“For all writing assignments, we only get feedback on whether the assignment is good or bad with few direct guidelines on how to write well.”

The statement by this student shows that what the professors do in writing classes is mostly assessment not feedback.

With regard to the learners’ perceptions of the quality of their creative writing ability as a result of reading short stories, all the respondents believed in the necessity more time for practice. For example, on respondent commented:

“I didn’t learn how to write creatively. I just enjoyed reading the short stories. When it comes to writing, I think I need more time to feel ready for it.”

Finally, most participants had some suggestions for adapting the curriculum in their discipline for a more emphasis on creative writing. For instance, one of them stated:

I believe that the existing curriculum emphasizing on the structural and lexical aspects of language should be changed and that the English literature students should be trained to write creatively.

The same learners believed that they needed more training, assistance and feedback in learning how to write creatively and that the mere reading of short stories may not suffice due to the complexity of the writing process in this genre. For instance, one of them said:

“This course was an introduction to the challenging process of creative writing that requires more time and effort to learn well.”

4.3 Research Question 3: What are Iranian Tertiary level EFL learners’ attitudes towards short story reading in improving their creative writing?

In spite of all these problems (attributed to methodology, lack of background in writing, skills-based nature of learners’ written assignments, amount of feedback they receive, and their self-perceived quality of improvements), some of learners liked the creative writing experience and believed that it gave them a purpose for writing and allowed them to reflect on their personal feelings and ideas. For example, a participant stated:

“So far, I have only learned about the formal aspects of writing that focus on mechanics of writing as well as the rhetorical rules. In creative writing, I tried to express myself without worrying too much about text-based rules and this gave me a better feeling”

Similarly, another respondent reported his satisfaction with creative writing experience, even though not high in quality,

“I’m happy that I had the chance to get familiar with the nature of creative writing that is more personal and gives freedom to the writer rather than sticking to the some rules of what to write”

However, few students seemed to dislike writing in general or preferred different themes or texts for creative writing. As an example, one student stated:

“I like speaking more than writing because I think I’m more successful in expressing myself through speaking. I don’t have any idea for writing because there is no interaction in it”

Another learner reported her inclination for personal anecdotes rather than short stories:

“I don’t like difficult texts written by others. I think all students should write their own personal stories or ideas either in prose or poetry. Then, we can share ideas.”

This statement shows individual differences in students’ preferences and inclinations in writing creatively. It also necessitates more systematic presentation of different sample texts by teachers to make learners reasonably familiar with what creative writing is.

4.4 Discussion

The inconclusive results of this study concur with findings by Storch and Hill (2008) who found that even in an immersion program in an L2 university environment, lack of opportunity to produce extended writing and limited feedback on writing during the course of study could be possible reasons for lack of improvement in L2 writing. Similarly, Wang (2011) found that those who dedicated more time and effort in reading and writing could be more creative in their writings. In general, and irrespective of
any specific area of language, the important role of time and methodology in the effectiveness of any intervention is also underscored by Ellis (2007).

The results pertaining to learners’ success in skills-based aspects of writing or proficiency related parts as one of the six components of creative writing are in line with the findings by Meraji and Sadighi (2013) on the positively significant effects of short story reading on Iranian EFL learners’ writing proficiency. The present study results confirm the importance of different activities, as suggested by Hyland (2016) in order to take individual differences into account and to add systematicity to teaching or learning creative writing that was considered as a complex skill by many learners. These activities are: (a) students’ crucial role in deciding to focus on either fiction, poetry, screenwriting or playwriting, (b) critical appraisal of writing samples and the development of writing techniques such as editing, idea generation and overcoming writer’s block, (c) workshops to develop skills of drafting and rewriting and submitting their original work for peer critique, (d) out-of-class practice by participating in writing-based activities such as publishing clubs, university literary magazines or newspapers, and writing contests.

5. Conclusion
5.1 General Conclusions

This study highlighted the fact that creative writing is a complex skill with a multi-faceted nature that requires different types of knowledge (linguistic, genre-based, and socio-cultural), an awareness of the audience, and a reasonably high level of idea as well as judgment quality. Therefore, the learners need more time in longitudinal studies and practice in different writing assignments as well as feedback from academic staff to develop the required knowledge and skill in creative writing. The cross-sectional studies such as this study that was limited to only short story reading in only 12 sessions cannot have positive effects on the creative writing ability of learners.

More specifically and in line with the above suggestion in terms of time and practice, the curriculum in the discipline of English language literature should be modified for a more stress on creative writing. First, students should develop some creative writing background through the incorporation of some pre-requisite courses on creative writing in addition to linguistically-based grammar and paragraph or essay writing courses.

Second, student assignments should include some out of class practice in creative writing by encouraging the learners to use web-based materials in this area, to read more on the Web by introducing the related websites to them, and to use social networks to communicate with the experts all over the world. In this way, they will develop the socio-cultural as well as genre-based knowledge and an awareness of the audience. Moreover, through interaction with the texts, different available contexts, peers, and experts, the learners will develop knowledge and experience in idea generation and balanced judgment.

Third, in addition to different types of assignments to help learners explore knowledge and develop experience independently, some workshops and seminars should be offered to the learners for the close face to face interaction and real-time feedback by the literature instructors. In such workshops, all the learners will share their knowledge and experience in order to help each other overcome possible problems.

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INVESTIGATING IRANIAN UNDERGRADUATE EFL LEARNERS' KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR

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ABSTRACT
THE NEEDS OF LANGUAGE LEARNERS TO LEARN GRAMMAR IS WELL-KNOWN, BUT THE MATTER OF HOW TO TEACH IT THAT BENEFITS SECOND LANGUAGE (L2) LEARNERS IS CONTROVERSIAL. KNOWLEDGE OF A LANGUAGE IS NOT COMPLETE WITHOUT MASTERY OF ITS GRAMMAR. IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO CONVEY THE INTENDED MEANING, AND TO COMMUNICATE EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY, KNOWLEDGE OF GRAMMAR IS SUBSTANTIAL. GENDER, AS AN INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCE, MAY PROVE TO HAVE AN EFFECT ON GRAMMAR LEARNING. TO INVESTIGATE IRANIAN MALE AND FEMALE UNDERGRADUATE EFL LEARNERS' KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR, THE CURRENT STUDY WAS CONDUCTED. 125 IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS, MALES AND FEMALES, TOOK PART IN THIS STUDY. A RESEARCHER-DEVELOPED TEST OF GRAMMAR BASED ON THE PREVIOUSLY COVERED SOURCES WAS USED. THE RESULTS WERE COLLECTED AND ANALYZED, USING AN INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST, WHICH INDICATED THAT ALTHOUGH THE MALE PARTICIPANTS HAD A BETTER PERFORMANCE THAN FEMALES ON THE GRAMMAR TEST, THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GROUPS WERE NOT STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT.

KEYWORDS: GRAMMAR, UNDERGRADUATE EFL LEARNERS, GENDER

1. Introduction

Knowing a language means at least mastery of vocabulary, grammar and syntax of that language. The term syntax is mostly about the study of sentence structure, and how they go together to make correct sentences, and the term grammar is concerned with the rules that are used to produce grammatical
sentences. Radford (2009, p. 1) views syntax as "the study of the way in which phrases and sentences are structured out of the words". Hawkins's view (2001) is somehow close to that of Radford:

"An important part of learning a second language is learning how words fit together to form phrases, and how phrases fit together to form sentences. The combinatorial properties of words and phrases are known as syntax of a language" (p. 1).

For Hawkins (2001) syntax of a language is a set of properties which makes it possible to form and construct sentences in that language. So, it is these properties that determine if a sentence is grammatical or not. Hawkins, furthermore, distinguishes syntax from grammar by arguing that syntax deals with properties of language like agreement, adjacency, movement, and the same, and grammar as "a set of instructions for generating all the grammatical sentences of a particular language (p 4). These instructions, as Hawkins (2001) argues, specify the pronunciation of sentences, their syntax, and the meanings that are given to these sentences.

Due to the importance of grammar in language learning, and the necessity of grammar to be the focus of attention by both teachers and learners, Foppoli (2015, p. 1) argues that

Grammar is the backbone of a language and without it any single thing you know may be flux, in a sort of jelly without much consistency. In a nutshell, grammar provides you with the structure you need in order to organize and put your messages and ideas across. It is the railway through which your messages will be transported. Without it, in the same way as a train cannot move without railways, you won't be able to convey your ideas to their full extension without a good command of the underlying grammar patterns and structures of the language.

The needs of language learners to learn grammar are known to all, but the matter of how to teach it that most benefits L2 learners is controversial (Abbasian Boroujeni, 2012). Rama and Agullo (2012) demonstrate on how grammar has evolved during the past fifty years, they also focus on how to teach grammar and whether grammar is worth teaching in the classroom. They indicate that a great amount of the class time is devoted to explanation of grammatical rules by the instructors. Seemingly, learning English as a foreign language is equal to knowledge of structure and grammar for many instructors in EFL contexts.

Although great attention is paid to grammar by instructors in EFL settings, L2 learners are, yet, unable to use grammar correctly in their performances, or even in grammar tests. According to Borova and Murphy (1997), passive grammar is a part of the problem and may not change to active grammar: "Passive grammar may be a necessary step toward active use, but it (is) by no means a sufficient one". They define passive grammar as "the grammatical awareness that the learner has but cannot - yet - put into productive use correctly and consistently" (p. 1).

Feike (2011) believes in presenting grammar features from easy to difficult-something which may be violated in some textbooks. The difficulty of an item in language learning, in SLA settings, can be an inter-lingual problem. That is when two items are identical in the first and target languages, it is easier for the learners to master it; otherwise, it will become difficult. Lado (1957) cited in Sadighi (2014) argues that difference equals difficulty. For instance, in a language like Chinese EFL learners have more problems with learning a feature like articles. "Mismanagement of the article system is the most frequent cause of grammatical error in the Chinese foundation corpus" (Chuang 2005, P. 31). "There is no lexical equivalent of the definite article ("the") in Chinese" (González, Chen and Sanchez 2001, p. 433).
According to Azad (2013, p. 111) "Grammar is now rehabilitated in language teaching and learning after years of debate, and research on how best to teach grammar has produced a variety of options for the teachers to follow in their classrooms." Ellis (2005) believes that explicit knowledge is a matter of learnability, it is learnable, regardless of the age of language learners, while it is not so for implicit knowledge. He points to those languages in which a particular grammar feature (e.g., article) is absent and argues that it is difficult to acquire such (absent) features implicitly.

According to Widodo (2006, p. 125) "Explicit instruction is conscious knowledge of grammatical rules learned through formal classroom instruction." Practically, explicit instruction of grammar (conscious knowledge of the style, form and meaning) is emphasized in many situations. In addition, to some extent the view that learning/ acquisition of L1 and L2 may be two distinct phenomena can affect implicit/ explicit grammar instruction: The acquisition of L1 is implicit, but L2 learning especially in a foreign context is different from L1 acquisition. L2 learners already possess the knowledge of the real world, and at the same time attempt to acquire/learn the L2 knowledge consciously while child L1 acquisition is different and it is not a matter of mimicry. In some situations, the emphasis may be on fluency, such as natural environments, while in other situations accuracy may be emphasized. The purposes of the course and the aims, interests, and needs, of EFL learners may be important in this regard. Moreover, other factors such as personality, attitude, learning style, individual differences, as well as teachers' experiences and the choice of theory and material selection along with motivation of the language learners are very crucial.

Widodo (2006) argues that although explicit grammar instruction leads to declarative knowledge of grammar, production of language is achieved through implicit knowledge of grammar, without any direct or conscious effort on the rules of the language; "Implicit knowledge is automatic and easily accessed and provides a great contribution to building communicative skills" (Widodo, p. 125).

Although grammar teaching implicitly provides procedural knowledge of grammar and while implicit instruction of grammar is somehow identical to L1 acquisition (Tütüniş, 2012), explicit instruction of grammar involves conscious, deliberate and awareness learning; both students and instructors focus on the appropriate forms of the target language. Noonan (2004) believes that "teachers can draw students' attention to certain language features of input through explicit instruction, increasing the frequency and perceptual salience of the structure, and/or designing tasks that require the students to notice a structure to complete it" (p. 3).

Some other researchers in the field have come up with the idea that for some language learners, explicit grammar instruction has a positive impact on achieving fluency and accuracy in L2 learning/ acquisition (Nazari, 2013). It is not determined if communicative classes produce a better learning opportunity for the learners to master grammar. "While we await a more satisfactory conclusion to this debate regarding when and how to teach grammar, it is clear that no one should dismiss grammar instruction altogether" (Celce-Murcia 1991, p. 462). Wang (2010) states that explicit awareness of grammar may increase the competence of learners. Even teaching grammar explicitly before and after meaning-based activities is helpful, whether in L1 or L2 (Nassaji and Fotos, 2012). They argue that grammar is essential in language learning, and language does not make sense if grammar is ignored.

Noonan (2004) argues that through noticing, explicit grammar knowledge can result in implicit knowledge. Through explicit instruction, teachers can draw learners' attention to certain features of language. As Celce-Murcia (1991) argues age is a focal factor in determining implicit or explicit teaching of grammar:

Young children, for example, are by necessity more holistic in their approach to learning than adults. This suggests that age is an important learner variable in helping ESL/EFL teachers decide the
extent to which they should focus on form. If the ESL learners concerned are young children, it is most likely that little explicit grammar instruction is needed. If the students are adolescents or adults, however, their learning may well be facilitated by some explicit focus on form (p. 463).


In sum, knowledge of different aspects of language, including grammar, is fundamental in learning a particular language successfully and communicatively. The problems of language learners in using the correct form of grammar deserve more attention. Gender may affect the process of language learning. The current study, however, aims at investigating the grammatical knowledge of Iranian undergraduate EFL learners and the role of gender in this regard. Therefore, this study relies on the following research question and hypothesis:

RQ: Is there any significant difference between the males and females' performances on English grammar test?
H₀: There is no significant difference between males and females' performances on the grammar test.

2. Literature Review

Uysal & Bardakci (2014) conducted a study concerning teachers' beliefs and practices of grammar teaching, and found that traditional approaches to teaching grammar explicitly followed by a series of controlled drills and repetitions were welcomed by teachers. As they state, after the traditional activities, communicative activities were reported to be important. In this study, it was revealed that teachers used deductive and explicit instruction of grammar. They used first language and translation in teaching materials, too. Furthermore, they argue that the results of interviews with teachers in Turkey revealed that they were highly concerned with the textbooks and the meaning-oriented communication. They report that teachers themselves determined the types of practices, which were explicit in nature, and they rejected to apply new innovations in their classes because of time limitations, low motivation, crowded classes, and other problems related to classroom management.

In a recent study Koksal, Cekic and Beyhan,(2014) found that game is very beneficial for elementary language learners to acquire grammar. They believe that learning grammar through fun (game here) motivates and encourages learning. As they report, language learners remember the taught materials for a longer period of time through the use of game, and it leads them to an increased self-confidence and self-esteem. They argue that learning with games is more effective than the traditional ways of learning and teaching grammar.

Amirian and Abbasi (2014) in a study concerning grammatical conscious-raising task (GRT) found that GRT is very crucial in encouraging explicit grammatical knowledge, and it could lead to autonomy. They concluded that consciousness-raising activities promote greater motivation and involvement of learners in the task. They considered the principles of task based instruction with the focus on communication in grammar instruction, rather than mechanical drills.

Nazari (2013) conducted a study on sixty elementary female adult L2 learners to determine the effect of implicit and explicit grammar instruction on learners' achievements in receptive and productive modes.
The group received explicit instruction on grammar structure outperformed the other group taught implicitly. The results indicated that the first group was more successful in noticing and correcting ungrammatical utterances. As the researcher reports, the familiarity of the participants with the traditional methods of explicit instruction along with the type of the test (production type) used in this study had a meaningful contribution in achieving such a result.

Chalipa (2013) carried out a research study to investigate the impact of deductive and inductive teaching of grammar to ESL/EFL learners and found that teaching grammar deductively was more effective than inductive instruction in short term for EFL learners and that for long term deductive and guided inductive were identical.

Wong and Marlys (2012) on a qualitative case study investigated the perception of teaching grammar of six college teachers teaching Spanish as an L2, and reported that having and utilizing a broad knowledge of teaching methodology was crucial for some teachers. The results indicated that two teachers, among those who expressed their beliefs, confessed that explicit grammar instruction is just conducive to getting high scores on tests and it does not lead to facilitation of communication. For learning an L2, as they argue, communicative activities without any explanation of grammar are helpful. They found that despite the fact that all participants announced the significance of grammar in communication, their views for the effectiveness of teaching grammar varied. That is, some supported explicit explanation of grammar, while some others were opposed to explicit instruction of grammar. The findings revealed that L2 learning experiences highly affect teachers' perception of teaching grammar. They concluded that there is a link between instructors' beliefs, perceptions and earlier experiences.

In another study, Mottaghi Pisheh and Bagheri (2012) conducted a study to determine the impact of games on learning vocabulary and grammar among Iranian EFL elementary learners, and concluded that game has a direct and significant effect on vocabulary and grammar learning.

Ismail (2010) carried out a study on "ESP students' views of ESL grammar learning" and found that many of the participants were interested in the model of grammar learning that allowed cooperative activities. It was reported that explicit grammar instruction has a significant effect on learning a foreign language. For many students explicit instruction of grammar was essential to help them understand the convention of utterances. Some students, however, argued that they could communicate with others without explicit instruction of grammar.

In a study, Gurata (2008) found that Turkish EFL learners take a variety of strategies for learning and using grammar. The researcher reported that age, motivation and proficiency level affect the use of strategy. Furthermore, a positive correlation between grammar learning and strategy use was reported. That is, those students who used different strategies were more successful in grammar. Gurata states that learners should become aware of the strategies to help them learn structure and grammar more successfully.

3. Method

In this section the participants of the study, the instruments and the procedure used in the current study are discussed.

3. 1. Participants

The participants of the study were 125 Iranian senior undergraduate EFL learners majoring in English (94 females and 31 males) at some universities and higher education institutes in Fars Province.

3. 2. Instruments
Two tests were applied in the current study; Oxford Placement Test (2007) to ensure that the participants of the study were the same level of proficiency, and a grammar test developed to determine the grammatical/structural knowledge of the participants.

3. 3. Procedure

The participants took part in this study willingly without knowing the aims of the study. Through Oxford Placement Test the homogeneity of the participants was determined and those with very high or low proficiency were put aside from the current study. They had already been taught the grammar courses. Since the current study attempted to investigate the degree to which the participants have consolidated the taught grammatical materials during their undergraduate education, the researcher made use of the covered books to develop the grammar test. It was a sixty-item test, in multiple choice form. The participants were not allowed to consult any resources or books, but to rely just on their own grammatical knowledge. Piloting study was used to determine the reliability of the test. The results were analyzed for internal consistency through Cronbach’s alpha, the reliability of the test was shown to be ($r = .71$). Some subject matter experts checked and approved the validity of the test, too.

4. Data Analysis and Results

To determine the performances of the participants on the grammar test and to investigate the possible similarities and differences between the males and the females’ performances in the English grammar test, the collected data were analyzed, using an independent samples t-test. The results are given in this section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Descriptive statistics</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<tr>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. represents the number of participants, the obtained mean score, and the standard deviation of the grammar test.
The graph represents the frequency of the scores obtained by the participants on the grammar test, ranging from 22 to 53. The highest frequency of the obtained score was shown to be belonged to score 38.

To determine whether there was any significant difference between the females and males' performances on the grammar test, an independent sample t-tests was run.

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>35.4362</td>
<td>7.47261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37.5806</td>
<td>8.69013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown, the number of the female participants exceeded that of the males. The mean score of females (M= 35.4) was shown to be lower than that of the males (M= 37.5). Therefore, there were differences between the mean scores of the female and the male participants on the English grammar test. That is, the male participants had a better performance than the females on the grammar test.
Graph 2. The performance of the females on the grammar test

The graph represents the frequency of the obtained scores on the grammar test by the females. It was shown that the scores ranged from 22 to 52. The most frequent score was shown to be 35.

Graph 3. Performances of the males on the grammar test
The distribution of the scores for the male participants is represented in the given graph. As shown, the scores ranged from 22 to 53. The most frequent score was shown to be 42.

Table 3.
*Independent Samples t* -test for the mean scores of the females and the males*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>F</em></td>
<td><em>Sig.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>1.018</td>
<td>.315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-1.232</td>
<td>45.541</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through an independent samples t-test the mean scores of the female and the male participants on English grammar features were compared. Despite the differences between the mean scores of the groups, that was shown in table 2, the differences were not statistically significant. Therefore, there was no significant difference in the mean scores of females (M= 35.43, SD=7.47) and males (M= 37.58, SD= 8.69); t (123) = -133, p=.186, two-tailed. The differences between the groups in terms of SD, also, revealed that this difference was very small (1.21, which is less than 2), which indicates that the differences between the groups were not significant.

5. Discussion

Males and females' performances on a grammar test were compared to determine which group had a better mastery of the English grammar. An independent samples t-test was run to determine whether males or females' performances on the English grammar test were better. The results indicated that the males with the mean score of 37.5 out-performed the females with the mean of 35.4. That is, the males had a better performance on the grammar test. It was, however, revealed that the differences between the groups were not statistically significant, despite the initial differences in their mean scores. Therefore, it was found that gender did not have a significant effect on the participants' total performances on the grammar test, and the null hypothesis was, then, confirmed. Despite individual differences, such as sex, that may affect learning, the results indicated that Iranian males and females did not significantly differ in mastering the English grammar.

Seemingly, language learning, grammar here, is not affected by gender despite the fact that gender is believed to be an influencing factor (Brown 2007, p. 234). Both males and females might have had the same understanding of the grammatical points. A rational explanation may be that both groups used the strategies that best fit them in learning grammar. Another is that since the number of female participants exceeded that of males, partially due to the nature of this field of study, females had a better control on problem-solving sessions, and group discussions concerning problematic grammatical points. Males might ask female classmates for clarifications and more explanations on some materials and, as a result, females may explain the materials based on their preferred learning styles, and learning strategies.
The findings of the study support the results obtained by Tabatabaei and Shakerin (2013) who found that gender does not have a significant effect on the performances of the participants (Iranian intermediate EFL learners) on Multiple-choice (MC) cloze test and C-test. The results are, also, in line with the findings of Daif-Allah (2012) who found that males and females did not differ in beliefs about difficulties in the areas of foreign language learning. The results also confirm the findings of Zokaee, Zaferanieh and Naseri (2012) who found that gender does not have any significant impact on vocabulary learning strategies and learning styles of the participants. Tabanlioğlu (2003) found no significant differences between the preferred language learning strategies by males and females.

6. Conclusions

It was found that males out-performed the females on the grammar test, but the differences between the groups were not statistically significant. The obtained mean scores by the groups signify the fact that there is a slight difference in the observed scores. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the participants had some problems in using proper forms of the English grammar regardless of their gender. The participants were assumed to have a better consolidation of grammatical knowledge, since they were on the verge of graduation. Knowledge of grammar affects all language skills, particularly writing. Therefore, teaching and learning grammar demand more attention; Instructors and language learners should spend more time on it to facilitate the consolidation of the English grammar.

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THE IMPACT OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ON THE USE OF CONVERSATIONAL FILLERS: A CASE STUDY OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT
THE PRESENT STUDY IS AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPACT OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ON THE USE OF CONVERSATIONAL FILLERS. PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED 15 FEMALE EFL LEARNERS FROM A PRIVATE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE. FIVE LEARNERS FROM EACH PROFICIENCY LEVEL (BEGINNER, INTERMEDIATE, ADVANCED) PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY. THE RESEARCHERS INTERVIEWED THE PARTICIPANTS BOTH IN ENGLISH AND PERSIAN TO EXPLORE THE FREQUENCY AND TYPE OF CONVERSATIONAL FILLERS USED IN THEIR SPEECH. RELEVANT FINDINGS ILLUSTRATED THAT THE LEARNERS WITH HIGHER LEVEL OF PROFICIENCY USED FEWER CONVERSATIONAL FILLERS.

KEYWORDS: CONVERSATIONAL FILLERS, EFL LEARNERS, LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY, SPEECH

1. Introduction
In a conversation, people utter some sounds as well as words, especially if it is a daily talk. Swerts (1998) mentioned that a daily talk is different from a well-prepared lecture in many ways (p.485). Daily talks mostly contain pauses, ideally filled pauses. The speakers of various languages resort to pause fillers while speaking. According to Swerts (1998), while the use of filled pauses, or conversational fillers, such as um, uh, em, like, you know, etc., may be seen as a type of disfluency, many believe that fillers indeed carry linguistic signals, and are in the same class as English interjections, similar to ah, well, and oh, in which the speaker gives the listener cues about the dialogue structure.

2. Literature Review
Psycholinguists were the first investigators who studied on fillers, particularly um and uh. Some scholars (Maclay and Osgood, 1959; Kjellmer, 2003; Goldman-Eisler, 1968) conducted corpus-based studies on the subject and considered them as a symbol of hesitation without any lexical meaning and called them filled pauses (Totti, 2011). Clark and Fox Tree (2002) named them fillers. The definition or classification of fillers is apparently an unclear issue. Therefore, in this study the researchers will use the term filler.

According to Rieger (2003), hesitations occur when the speaker is in lack of words or struggling with cognitive or perhaps verbal planning. This action is done by the use of repetition, stretch sounds, and fillers.

Kitagawa, Wantabe and Kumaki (2009) believe that fillers are different from silent pauses because they usually have audible sounds written as "uh", "um" and "er". Erten (2014) also asserted that fillers
are also considered as discourse markers which speakers apply when they are thinking or hesitating during their speeches.

Clark and Fox Tree (2002) believed that fillers fulfilled a communicative function, having a place in the speakers’ vocabulary repertoire. Nevertheless, they are not applied in a communication for primary message they rather express collateral message. In other words, the application of filler only assists the meaning. Nonetheless, fillers can be applied to express a variety of interpersonal messages like ‘holding the floor’ (Clark and Fox Tree, 2002). Corley and Stewart (2008) believe that considering fillers in the sense of communication role is not that certain. Although, fillers are applied as the speaker is not sure about his/her next expression or s/he has options to make his/her expressions, this does not demonstrate that the speaker signals a delay in his/her speech because of an uncertainty. As a matter of fact, it may be difficult to decide why a speaker hesitates by applying some fillers. As there is a complex process in the speaker’s brain during the speech, it is not quite possible to be certain about why s/he hesitates. Things may be even more complicated if this operation is working in the brain of a non-native speaker.

Tottie (2011) indicated that linguists or psycholinguists considered fillers as flaws in speech. In contrast, Swerts (1998) emphasized on the positive sides of fillers and indicated that spontaneous speech is a better means of communication than fluent, read speech. Swerts (1998) mentioned that some researchers had revealed evidence of fillers information value. Erten (2014) also suggested when a speaker uses fillers during his/her speech may be s/he is in a cognitive process, in other words s/he is thinking.

Concerning the difference between native and non-native speakers, Clark and Tree (2002) stated that non-native speakers used their first languages fillers that could help the non-nativeness. Beside this, Riazantseva (2001) believes that non-native speakers did not apply pauses in the same manner to native speakers, it reduced the degree of fluency.

Clark and Tree (2002) conducted a comprehensive study on English fillers using English corpus data. They asserted “speakers use uh and um to announce that they are initiating what they expect to be a minor or major delay before speaking (p.93)”. Therefore, “Uh” and “um” mentioned here are two of the major fillers in English. In contrast, fillers vary from language to language. Candea, Vasilescu and Adda-Decker (2005) concluded that a vocalic segment accompanied by a nasal segment /m/ was preferable in English through examining eight languages: Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, French, German, Italian, European Portuguese, American English and Latin American Spanish.

Belz and Klapi (2013) explored the pauses following fillers in L1 and L2 German Map Task dialogues. The findings clearly demonstrated that filler type in German is not applied to indicate the length of the following delay. Advanced learners seem to have adopted this pattern of application, but cannot overcome their hesitations as fast as native speakers, probably during their less automatised speech production.

Khojastehrad and Nadzimah Abdullah (2012) explored the effect of context on types of hesitation strategies used by Iranian EFL learners in L2 oral language tests. As the study proved the type of questions and background knowledge are elements which can influence on the production of hesitations. Moreover, the finding indicated that the highest frequency of hesitation discourse markers was across the expressions in reply to general questions, but the lowest rate was in the introduction section of the test.

Erten (2014) conducted a study on the importance of teaching fillers to students in EFL/ESL classrooms and investigated whether students use fillers after they have been taught and if so, which filler they tend to use and why. Findings of the study indicated that, in the second session after teaching and practicing fillers learners applied them. Even though those fillers they desired to apply in the second session speaking differed from those they tended to apply generally in especial points, the learners generally preferred to use the fillers uhm/ehm, well and how to say/how can I say.

In the present study, the notion of fillers includes filled pauses (e.g. uh,er, um, ah, em) as well as other vocalized space-fillers such as you know, I mean, like, so, well, etc.
3. Objectives of the Study
The main objective of the present study is to investigate the impact of proficiency on the use of conversational fillers in Iranian EFL learners’ speech. The study also explores if there is any relationship between the frequency of fillers in Persian as the first language and English as the second language in Iranian EFL learners’ speech. The other objective of the study is to find out which types of fillers are used most by Iranian EFL learners in Persian and English.

4. Research Questions
Based on the objectives, this study seeks to answer the following questions:
1. Does proficiency level have any significant impact on the use of conversational fillers?
2. Is there any relationship between the frequency of fillers in Persian as the first language and English as the second language in Iranian EFL learners’ speech?
3. Which types of fillers are used most by Iranian EFL learners in Persian and English?

5. Methodology
5.1 Participants
The subjects of this research were 15 female EFL learners from Zaban Pazhuhan institute in Bushehr. All of the participants were native speakers of Persian. English language learners are typically classified into three bands based on proficiency: beginner, intermediate, advanced. The institute administers a proficiency test at the end of each level. Based on the proficiency test results, the learners are assigned into the appropriate level. From each proficiency level (beginner, intermediate, advanced), 5 participants were selected randomly.

5.2 Interviews
Participants’ recorded voices during the interviews were the instruments of this study. Depending on the interviewees’ preferences, the interviews were held on in classrooms. The first author, who is fluent in both Persian and English, conducted the interviews. Each participant was interviewed twice. The interviews were conducted in Persian and English. The researchers prepared three topics for each interview. Each participant chose one of the topics based on her interest. Afterwards, the researcher, being the interlocutor in the conversation, asked some questions relating to the topic to elicit responses from the participants. Every participant was recorded for about 10 minutes. Each participant spoke with the interviewer alone so that being in the crowd would not affect their performance adversely. The participants of the present study were asked to take part voluntarily in the study. They were not informed of the purpose of the study. The interviews were structured and lasted about an hour each. The recordings were analyzed by the researcher.

6. Data Analysis
In the first step of data analysis, participants were grouped based on their level of proficiency. As mentioned earlier, three proficiency levels (beginner, intermediate, and advance) were considered in the study. 5 beginners, 5 intermediate and 5 advanced English learners participated in this study. To investigate if proficiency level has any significant impact on the use of conversational fillers, the researchers ran the Kruskal-Wallis test on the data obtained from the English interview. Table 1 and 2 show the pertaining results.

| Table1 Rank of the Groups based on the Use of Fillers in English |
|-----------------|-----|-----|
| Level           | N   | Mean Rank |
| Fillers         |     |           |
| Beginner        | 171 | 224.69    |
| Intermediate    | 150 | 221.45    |
| Advanced        | 147 | 259.23    |
| Total           | 468 |           |

As can be seen from the table, Beginner participants used 171 fillers in their total speech. Intermediate participants used 150 fillers and advanced participants uttered 147 fillers. Based on the results, beginner participants used conversational fillers (N= 171) more than the two other groups.
The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test indicate that there is a significant difference among the three proficiency groups based on the use of fillers (sig. = .02, p < .05). Therefore, it seems appropriate to claim that the higher the proficiency was, the fewer fillers the speakers used.

In the next step, the researchers ran the correlation to investigate if there is any relationship between the number of fillers used in Persian as the first language and English as the second language in Iranian EFL learners' speech. Table 3 represents the result of the correlation.

According to Table 3, there is not any correlation between the number of fillers used in English and the number of fillers used in Persian (r = .30, sig. = .061).

To explore which types of fillers are used most by Iranian EFL learners in Persian and English, the researchers ran the frequency analysis. The overall view of the fillers in English interviews gave the total of 468 fillers used in 15 English interviews. Table 4 shows the pertaining results.

Based on the results, 'er' (57.3%) and 'em' (24.6%) are the most used fillers by the participants in the English interviews. Table 5 illustrates the number of fillers in the 15 Persian interviews.
According to Table 5, out of 5 fillers in Persian interview, er (47.3%) and em (36.3%) were the most used ones. Based on the findings, the participants tended to use “er” and “em” more than the other fillers both in English and Persian.

7. Conclusion

The overall aim of this paper was to investigate if proficiency level has any significant impact on the use of conversational fillers by Iranian EFL learners. Based on the findings, it was discovered that the learners with higher level of proficiency used fewer conversational fillers. The results are in line with the study conducted by Kang, Rubin and Pickering (2010), in which suprasegmental measures of accentedness and judgments of language learner proficiency in oral English were investigated. They concluded that there was a difference in producing fillers and silent pauses between fluent and non-fluent speakers.

It was also demonstrated that there was not any significant relationship between the frequency of fillers used by learners in Persian as the first language and in English as the second language. Concerning the types of fillers used by Iranian EFL learners, the results indicated that “er” and “em” were the most used fillers by Iranian EFL learners in both English and Persian.

REFERENCES


DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF A TRANSLATION QUALITY ASSESSMENT SCALE

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ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS: PACTE, TRANSLATION QUALITY ASSESSMENT, VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, PSYCHO-MOTOR MECHANISM, SCALE
1.1 Introduction

Translation has long been considered as an important testing instrument to evaluate the knowledge of the learners (Waddington, 2001). It is an area where theory and practice are joined, which ideally means that translation scholars apply theoretical ideas in their own practice, whilst continuously improving their own reflective ideas regarding theory of translation based on their experience in pedagogy.

However, word for word translation or literal translation is a direct manifestation that learners are only capable in memorizing prefabricated units and grammatical points without any sign or tint of recreating a similar but a new type of argument conveying the previous information in a creative voice. Therefore, screening the information for translating any type of text is a requisite for which critical thinking can facilitate the skill (Chareonwongsak, 2008).

However, with the great upheaval through the introduction of new skills and components in translation competence, particularly through the advent of models of Campbell (1991) and PACTE (2003), the new assumptions were expressed on the fact that if properly designed, translation activities can be employed to enhance the four skills and develop accuracy, clarity and flexibility (Duff, 1989).

However, after this great revolution in translation studies and repercussion of new ideas in the field, in spite of wide agreement on the utility of translation as a beneficial tool for drawing the learners’ attention to the differences and promoting the flexibility of them, the manifestation of the assumptions could not be traced in any works of translation produced by the learners. The incongruence, even in modern decade of translation studies, can be justified by the fact that the scholars or stakeholders of the field believe these subtleties can sometimes be disregarded since evaluating and scoring the translated texts based on currently introduced components places a double pressure on the shoulders of authorities and organizations and is a futile practice. Subsequently, the stakeholders’ reluctance mandates the learners to behave according to accepted standards and criteria and never move beyond the borders.

To overcome the problem, some measures like developing appropriate scales for measuring the new components of translation competence can be taken and thereby they can be offered to the teachers, raters and practitioners for better and more accurate evaluation of translated texts.

This shift in attention mandates curriculum developers and program designers and most importantly trainers and raters in translation field to embed new criteria for evaluation of translated texts. One of these new criteria is the psycho-physiological component introduced by PACTE (2003) which instantiates critical thinking abilities like analysis, synthesis and evaluation as important and effective benchmarks in evaluating the quality of translation. Therefore, learners who can use abundant data in generating new ideas are favored above those who lack the ability to absorb information to create new ideas to solve problems.

The present study was an attempt to assess the validity and reliability of a researcher-constructed psychomotor mechanism scale based on the theory of translation competence proposed by PACTE (2003).

1.2 Literature Review

Translation is delivering the meaning of a text into another language in the way “that the author intended the text” (Newmark, 1988, p. 5), or from the reader’s point of view, “in such a way that the receptors in the receptor language may be able to understand adequately how the original receptors in the source language understood the original message” (Nida, 1984, p. 119). The translation process can be evaluated in three stages: (1) translation-related reception of the source language text; (2) transfer of text from the source language into the target language; (3) translation-related production of the target language text (Tarp, 2004, p. 31). In fact, the translator can be perceived as an advanced learner of the foreign language who faces problems similar in nature to those encountered by learners of the same level (Abu-Ssaydeh, 1991, p. 66).

Recent translation theory is concerned with two phenomena: (1) the product-oriented theory of translation which denotes that a written text in a target-language as the result of a translation
process has traditionally been described and analyzed by a comparison with the respective source-language text. (2) the competence-oriented theory of translation which focuses on translators’ internalized knowledge (Lörscher, 1995, p. 884). In defining translation competence, theorists focus not only on its product, but also on the processes involved, which signifies that translation is a skill that can be trained and investigated in terms of relevant strategies and/or competencies (Latkowska, 2006, p. 210). Also, Hatim and Munday (2004, p.3) mention that translation can be analyzed from two different perspectives, namely that of a ‘process’, which refers to the activity of converting a source text into a target text in another language, and that of a ‘product’, i.e. a translated text.

PACTE group submitted the first draft of their translation model in 1998. However, two years later, they modified and fleshed out the proposed draft and submitted the final version in year 2000. After several years of attempt, the thoroughly revised model appeared in 2003 and it was applied in researchers done by PACTE group or other researchers around the world (PACTE, 2003).

The model of PACTE as a communicative process originates from the definition provided by Newmark (1988) who introduces two approaches as semantic and communicative translation. Semantic translation “is personal and individual, follows the thought processes of the author, tends to overtranslate, pursues nuances of meaning, yet aims at concision in order to reproduce pragmatic impact” (p.46). Communicative translation, on the other hand, “attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership” (Newmark, 1988, p.46). PACTE’s model is composed of a set of interrelated sub-competencies, which are interdependent, hierarchical and can compensate for one another. The main aim of this group is to validate their theories by the use of empirical tools.

Under the impact of results emerging from evaluating translation competence and its acquisition the model changed in time (PACTE, 2005). Moreover, the description of respective sub-competences developed simultaneously with the model (PACTE, 2003, p. 58-59):

- **Bilingual sub-competence**: It is mainly the procedural knowledge needed to communicate in two languages. It includes the specific feature of interference control when code-switching between the two languages. It is composed of pragmatic, socio linguistic, textual, grammatical and lexical knowledge in the two languages.

- **Extra-linguistic sub-competence**: It is predominantly declarative knowledge, both implicit and explicit, about the world in general and in specific areas. It contains bicultural knowledge (about the source and target cultures), encyclopaedic knowledge (about the world in general) and subject knowledge (in specific areas).

- **Knowledge about translation sub-competence**: It is chiefly declarative knowledge, both implicit and explicit, about what translation is and aspects of the profession. It includes knowledge about how translation functions and knowledge related to professional translation practice.

- **Instrumental sub-competence**: It is predominantly procedural knowledge connected to the application of documentation sources and information and communication technologies applied to translation such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias, grammars, style books, parallel texts, electronic sources, corpora, searchers, etc.

- **Strategic sub-competence**: It is the procedural knowledge to be applied as an ancillary tool in translation process and solve the problems encountered. This is an essential sub-competence that affects all the others and causes interrelations among them because it controls the translation process. It intervenes by planning the process in relation to the translation project, evaluating the process and partial results obtained, activating the different sub-competencies and compensating for deficiencies, identifying translation problems and applying procedures to solve them.

- **Psycho-physiological components**: It includes different types of cognitive and attitudinal components and psycho-motor mechanisms. They include: cognitive components (memory, perception, attention and emotion), attitudinal aspects (intellectual curiosity, perseverance, rigour, critical spirit...), and abilities like creativity, logical reasoning, analysis and synthesis, etc.
1.3 Method

Subjects
In this study, the participants were 100 male and female MA students majoring in English Translation who studied at four different branches of Islamic Azad University and only the freshmen were selected, as the rational was having a screened up group as they fulfilled the main courses of translation in their undergraduate level by proof of their BA degree, and secondly they had passed the Iran’s Sanjesh Organization test of MA, therefore they could meet several criteria in order to be eligible for advanced translation courses. Next, standard version of TOEFL PBT was administered to all these five classes of M.A. candidates comprising a group of 100 students. The students whose scores fell one standard deviation below and above the mean (±1SD) were selected as the main participants of the study. Therefore, the final group of EFL learners taking part in this research were 90 participants based on the result of their performance in the TOEFL test.

Instruments

Translation tasks
The main information used for evaluating and validating the developed scale was elicited from two translation tasks, each involving translation of a news story from an English learning website that garners the learning material from the Guardian (www.theguardian.com).

Test of Linguistic Ability
To assess the reading comprehension ability of subjects, a standard version of TOEFL PBT was used to gather the data from participants. This test was a standard previous exam released by ETS organization in 2013 and has been registered in the ETS web site (http://www.ets.org/toefl). It was supposed that the information provided by the test would facilitate the process for determining the external validity of the developed scale.

Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal
In this research, one of the fundamental goals was to evaluate whether the scale developed based on the psycho-physiological component of PACTE’s model of translation competence could be an accurate and valid scale to predict critical thinking ability of the learners. In other words, through obtaining the correlation between the developed scale and Watson-Glaser critical thinking appraisal, the scale could be validated. The Watson-Glaser critical thinking appraisal was one of the main evaluating tools for cognitive abilities in professionals, since it was able to measure critical thinking. The main functions of the test include making correct inferences, recognizing assumptions, making deductions, coming to conclusions and interpreting and evaluating arguments (Watson & Glaser, 1980).

Honey Critical Thinking Questionnaire
Besides Watson-Glaser critical thinking appraisal, Honey’s critical thinking questionnaire was used in this research. The rationale for applying questionnaire was that it contains 30 multiple choice items presenting short statements that just elicits from the learners whether they possess several skills or not. In other words, since the learners do not have to challenge with passages like the ones in Watson-Glaser, they have more energy and are fresh to answer the short items. Sometimes, the long passages may exhaust the learners and propel them to answer the passage questions based on their personal knowledge and not according to inferencing, deducing and making conclusions.

Holistic Scale for Translation Quality Assessment
In order to validate the researcher constructed scale, there was a need for a well-accepted and validated scale in order to find the correlation between the two and have a fair judgment of the researcher developed scale.
In this regard Waddington Method C (2003) was considered as the most similar instrument to researcher constructed scale. Also, Waddington (2003), in a comprehensive study, evaluated the validity of Method C and found its reliability which was 0.84.

**Researcher-constructed Psycho-motor Mechanism Scale**

The constructed five-point Likert scale had three sections. The first section was *accuracy in comprehension of source language* content and five descriptors were used to assess the level of accuracy in participants with allocated points ranging from one to five. The next section was *appropriacy in production of target language* with subsequent five descriptors. Likewise, the allocated score of the participants could range from one to five. The last section named *translation strategies* consisted of six sub-components. They were *translation of words with multiple meanings, translation of words with no appropriate equivalence in target language, translation of idioms, the author’s point of view, making conclusions, and interpretation of the text and title.*

**Procedure**

First, Translation tasks were given to all 90 participates and in the successive sessions, Test of Linguistic Ability, Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal, and Honey Critical Thinking Questionnaire were completed by the subjects. Their answers were recorded in separate sheets and were rated by two experienced raters. Based on the rating done by two experienced raters, reliability and validity of the scale was revealed. In this quantitative study, the results of TOEFL, PBT as the test of linguistic ability and a holistic scale for translation quality assessment devised by Waddington (2001) were used to find their correlation with the results obtained by psycho-motor scale to confirm the concurrent validity of the scale. Moreover, the answers to Watson –Glaser critical thinking appraisal as a critical thinking performance assessing instrument and Honey Critical Thinking Questionnaire as a critical thinking competence assessing instrument were used to evaluate whether the researcher-constructed psycho-motor mechanism scale can predict the participants performance this instrument. In this vein, linear regression and ANOVA tests were applied to assess the predictive validity of the scale. Finally, for calculating the construct validity of the scale, factor analysis was run to probe the underlying constructs of the eight components of the researcher-constructed psycho-motor mechanism scale. As for reliability, the correlation between the two ratings by the raters based on the constructed scale was calculated.

1.4 Results

After subject selection, the first step was assessing the normality of the data garnered from various means. As displayed in Table 1, the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their respective standard errors were lower than the absolute value of 1.96, hence normality of the data was confirmed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Skewness Statistic</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Kurtosis Statistic</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>-.085</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>.278</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>-.319</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>-1.26</td>
<td>.257</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watson-G</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>.391</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>-.337</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waddington</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>-.184</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>-0.72</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>.263</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.148</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriacy</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>-.350</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>-1.38</td>
<td>-.275</td>
<td>-0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWMM</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>-.350</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>-1.38</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next for evaluating the construct validity of the scale, factor analysis was run to probe the underlying constructs of the eight components of the researcher-constructed psycho-motor mechanism scale. In doing so, assumptions of sampling adequacy and lack of multicollinearity were met. As displayed in Table 2 the KMO index of .915 was higher than the minimum acceptable criterion of .50.

Table 2
KMO and Bartlett's Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</th>
<th>.915</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approx. Chi-Square</td>
<td>477.964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Df</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Bartlett’s test of multicollinearity was significant ($\chi^2 (28) = 477.96, p = .000$) indicating that the correlation matrix was significantly different from an identity matrix – a matrix with zero correlations among all variables.

The determinant value of .004 (> .00001) indicated that the correlation matrix did not suffer from multicollinearity, too high correlation among all variables. As displayed in Table 3, none of the correlation coefficients were higher than .80 (Field, 2013).

Table 3
Correlation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
<th>Appropriacy</th>
<th>WWMM</th>
<th>WWNE</th>
<th>Idiom</th>
<th>Point</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.730</td>
<td>.423</td>
<td>.696</td>
<td>.766</td>
<td>.714</td>
<td>.486</td>
<td>.536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriacy</td>
<td>.730</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.450</td>
<td>.724</td>
<td>.746</td>
<td>.742</td>
<td>.578</td>
<td>.588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWMM</td>
<td>.423</td>
<td>.450</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.450</td>
<td>.386</td>
<td>.358</td>
<td>.306</td>
<td>.484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWNE</td>
<td>.696</td>
<td>.724</td>
<td>.450</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.717</td>
<td>.717</td>
<td>.687</td>
<td>.683</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Determinant = .004

The SPSS extracted one factor which accounted for 64.37 percent of the total variance (Table 4).

Table 4
Total Variance Explained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Initial Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Vol. 6, Issue 7, October 2016
As displayed in Table 5, all of the eight components of the researcher-constructed psycho-motor mechanism scale loaded on the only extracted factor. Based on these results, it can be claimed that the researcher-constructed psycho-motor mechanism scale had construct validity.

Table 5

Component Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Variance</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WWNE</td>
<td>5.150</td>
<td>64.375</td>
<td>64.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriacy</td>
<td>.799</td>
<td>9.986</td>
<td>74.361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idiom</td>
<td>.627</td>
<td>7.840</td>
<td>82.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point of View</td>
<td>.477</td>
<td>5.957</td>
<td>88.158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>.277</td>
<td>3.461</td>
<td>91.619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>.251</td>
<td>3.137</td>
<td>94.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>.227</td>
<td>2.840</td>
<td>97.596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWMM</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>2.404</td>
<td>100.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For finding concurrent validity of the scale, Pearson correlations between the eight components of the researcher-constructed psycho-motor mechanism scale and the TOEFL and Waddington Method C scale for scoring were employed as the concurrent validity of scale. Based on the results displayed in Table 6, it was concluded that the eight components of the researcher-constructed psycho-motor mechanism scale had significant correlations (P < .05) with the TOEFL and Waddington Method C scale for scoring; indicating the concurrent validity of the newly developed scale.

Table 6

Pearson Correlations; Researcher-Constructed Scale with TOEFL and Waddington

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>TOEFL</th>
<th>Waddington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.678**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To find the predictive validity of the scale, linear regression using a backward method was ran to predict Watson Glaser critical thinking appraisal through the researcher-constructed psycho-motor mechanism scale. As displayed in Table 4.10, the regression model converged in six steps; to exclude all variables except for accuracy and point of view which predicted 67.5 percent of Watson Glaser critical thinking appraisal ($R = .821$, $R^2 = .675$). All components of the newly developed scale predicted 70.4 percent of the Watson Glaser critical thinking appraisal ($R = .839$, $R^2 = .704$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriacy</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WWMM</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWNE</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idiom</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PointOV</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

TABLE 7
Model Summary; Predicting Watson Glaser

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.839a</td>
<td>.704</td>
<td>.675</td>
<td>3.844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.839b</td>
<td>.704</td>
<td>.679</td>
<td>3.821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>.835c</td>
<td>.697</td>
<td>.675</td>
<td>3.843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>.833d</td>
<td>.693</td>
<td>.675</td>
<td>3.842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>.827e</td>
<td>.683</td>
<td>.669</td>
<td>3.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>.821f</td>
<td>.675</td>
<td>.663</td>
<td>3.912</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Conclusion, WWMM, Accuracy, Point, Idiom, Appropriacy, WWNE

b. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Conclusion, Accuracy, Point, Idiom, Appropriacy, WWNE

c. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Conclusion, Accuracy, Point, Idiom, Appropriacy

d. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Accuracy, Point, Idiom, Appropriacy

e. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Accuracy, Point, Idiom

f. Predictors: (Constant), Accuracy, Point, Idiom

The results of the ANOVA tests (F < .05) (Table 8) indicated that the regression model at all six steps enjoyed statistical significance. That is to say, the researcher-constructed psycho-motor mechanism scale significantly predicted subjects’ performance in Watson Glaser critical thinking appraisal.

Table 8
ANOVA* Test of Significance of Regression Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Regression</td>
<td>2846.222</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>355.778</td>
<td>24.074</td>
<td>.000b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Residual</td>
<td>1197.067</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>14.779</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Total</td>
<td>4043.289</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Regression</td>
<td>2846.217</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>406.602</td>
<td>27.852</td>
<td>.000c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Residual</td>
<td>1197.072</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>14.598</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Total</td>
<td>4043.289</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Regression</td>
<td>2817.426</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>469.571</td>
<td>31.793</td>
<td>.000d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Residual</td>
<td>1225.863</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>14.769</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Total</td>
<td>4043.289</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Regression</td>
<td>2803.463</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>560.693</td>
<td>37.988</td>
<td>.000e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Residual</td>
<td>1239.826</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>14.760</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Total</td>
<td>4043.289</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Regression</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>690.830</td>
<td>45.876</td>
<td>.000f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Residual</td>
<td>1279.971</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15.058</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Total</td>
<td>4043.289</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Regression</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>909.099</td>
<td>59.409</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Residual</td>
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<td>15.302</td>
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</tr>
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<td>6 Total</td>
<td>4043.289</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: WatsonG

b. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Conclusion, WWMM, Accuracy, Point, Idiom, Appropriacy, WWNE

c. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Conclusion, Accuracy, Point, Idiom, Appropriacy, WWNE

d. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Conclusion, Accuracy, Point, Idiom, Appropriacy

e. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Accuracy, Point, Idiom, Appropriacy
f. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Accuracy, Point, Idiom

g. Predictors: (Constant), Accuracy, Point, Idiom

to find the predictive validity of the scale, the linear regression using a backward method was ran to predict Honey critical thinking questionnaire through the researcher-constructed psycho-motor mechanism scale. As displayed in Table 9, the regression model converged in five steps; to exclude all variables except for words with multiple meanings (WWMM), accuracy, idioms and appropriacy which predicted 72.7 percent of Honey test (R = .821, R2 = .675). All components of the newly developed scale predicted 73.6 percent of the Watson Glaser critical thinking appraisal (R = .858, R2 = .736).

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.858a</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>.710</td>
<td>13.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.858b</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>.714</td>
<td>13.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>.858c</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>.717</td>
<td>12.937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>.857d</td>
<td>.735</td>
<td>.719</td>
<td>12.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>.852e</td>
<td>.727</td>
<td>.714</td>
<td>12.998</td>
</tr>
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</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Conclusion, WWMM, Accuracy, Point, Idiom, Appropriacy, WWNE

b. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Conclusion, WWMM, Accuracy, Point, Idiom, Appropriacy
c. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Conclusion, WWMM, Accuracy, Idiom, Appropriacy
d. Predictors: (Constant), Conclusion, WWMM, Accuracy, Idiom, Appropriacy
e. Predictors: (Constant), WWMM, Accuracy, Idiom, Appropriacy

The results of the ANOVA tests (F < .05) (Table 10) indicated that the regression model at all five steps enjoyed statistical significance. That is to say; the researcher-constructed psycho-motor mechanism scale significantly predicted subjects' performance in Honey critical thinking questionnaire.
Table 10
ANOVA Test of Significance of Regression Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>38680.307</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4835.038</td>
<td>28.246</td>
<td>.000b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Residual</td>
<td>13865.293</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>171.176</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52545.600</td>
<td>89</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>38680.237</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5525.748</td>
<td>32.679</td>
<td>.000c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Residual</td>
<td>13865.363</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>169.090</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>52545.600</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
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<td>6442.300</td>
<td>38.491</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Residual</td>
<td>13891.798</td>
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<td>167.371</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>Regression</td>
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<td>7722.852</td>
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<td>165.849</td>
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<td>Regression</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>52545.600</td>
<td>89</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Honey
b. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Conclusion, WWMM, Accuracy, Point, Idiom, Appropriacy, WWNE
c. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Conclusion, WWMM, Accuracy, Point, Idiom, Appropriacy
d. Predictors: (Constant), Interpretation, Conclusion, WWMM, Accuracy, Idiom, Appropriacy
e. Predictors: (Constant), Conclusion, WWMM, Accuracy, Idiom, Appropriacy
f. Predictors: (Constant), WWMM, Accuracy, Idiom, Appropriacy

For finding the reliability, each of the eight components of the researcher-constructed psycho-motor mechanism scale was rated twice. The inter-rater reliability indices (Table 11) indicated that there were significant agreements between the two raters (p < .05).

Table 11
Pearson Correlations; Inter-Rater Reliability Indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HolisticR2</th>
<th>AccyR2</th>
<th>AppR2</th>
<th>WWMMR2</th>
<th>WWNER2</th>
<th>idiomR2</th>
<th>PointR2</th>
<th>ConcR2</th>
<th>InterR2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R .719**</td>
<td>.598**</td>
<td>.524**</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>HolisticR1</td>
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<td>N 90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>AccyR1</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>AppR1</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>N</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>WWMMR1</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>WWNER1</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.5 Discussion and Conclusion

In the first place, the findings of the present study revealed the construct validity of the scale with respect to the data provided by factor analysis. In other words, the operationalization of the construct which was the researcher-constructed psycho-motor mechanism scale was the good reflection of the theory underlying it. Therefore, psycho-motor abilities of the translators in the act of translation could be assessed with the constructed scale.

In line with this study, in a comprehensive research work, Famil Khalili (2011) tried to develop a translation quality assessment scale based on the theories of PACTE (2003). However, he operationalized and developed 7 descriptors based on the first two subcomponents, namely, bilingual and extra-linguistic subcomponents. The descriptors derived from the bilingual and extra-linguistic subcomponents of PACTE’s model were evaluated in terms of five independent variables. These investigated variables were: (1) the ability to use the language to manifest linguistic functions and speech acts; (2) the ability to use the language according to the socio-linguistic conventions of the target language; (3) the ability to apply the textual conventions of the target language including knowledge of texture (coherence and cohesion mechanism) and knowledge of different genres with their respective conventions (structure, language feature, etc.); (4) the ability to use well-formed sentences involving conformity with the native speakers’ knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and phonology/orthography; and (5) the ability to use culturally appropriate language. The developed scale based on the above criteria had a considerable reliability and was successful in assessing translation quality and that established the construct validity of the scale.

Therefore, with having consolidated theoretical backgrounds, it is possible to develop valid and reliable scales which can alleviate the subjective ratings of teachers and all stakeholders in the field in order to have a more objective assessment instrument.

Moreover, most of the works done in translation quality assessment deal with identification of the variables that contribute to the quality of a piece of translation. Accordingly, this study exploited PACTE (2003)’s multi-componential model of translation competence and one of its main components as psycho-physiological one as the theoretical basis for developing a scale in translation quality assessment. In fact, this is the first study that tried to operationalize the psycho-motor mechanism concept in PACTE theory of translation competence.

A possible future trend in the field of translation studies might be investigating the subjective nature of the variables involved in translation quality assessment. In this vein, a scale based on the subjective and objective nature of the variables can be constructed in which according to the nature of each variable, subjective or objective measurement of the construct can be done. Therefore, finding the procedures for reducing the observed subjectivity or even objectivity of constructed scales, can be an important concern for interested scholars in the field.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>P</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>PointR1</td>
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<tr>
<td>InterR1</td>
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<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
REFERENCES