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ELT PROGRAM IN IRANIAN HIGH SCHOOLS: FROM PERCEPTION TO PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS: PROGRAM EVALUATION, ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING, CONTEXT, MISSION, CURRICULUM, EFFICACY
1. INTRODUCTION

Educational programs are designed to accomplish a set of specific objectives and purposes. To assure that the intended objectives are met, evaluation of the program is an essential step, so that the people in charge can decide to continue or bring about necessary revisions in the program. As Ornstein and Hunkins (2004) suggests program Evaluation is a process to decide whether to change, modify, eliminate and/or accept something in the curriculum. It can give specialists and policymakers valuable insights into the possible strengths and weaknesses of a program and provide them with an opportunity to determine its degree of success in achieving its intended aims.

English language programs have always been the focus of attention in the educational system of Iran and have undergone dramatic changes through years. Teaching English in Iranian high schools dates back to 1938-1939 when Ministry of Culture offered six volumes of English course books for six years of high schools (Alavimoghaddam & Kheirabadi, 2012). From 1964, other book series called “Graded Books” replaced the previous ones, and were taught till 1982 when with the Islamic Revolution, the educational system experienced a sudden change; a new educational system consisting of elementary, junior high school, and high school replaced the old two six-year periods of the primary and high school. Elementary school started at the age of seven and lasted for five years; junior high school commenced from the sixth to the eighth grades and high school started from the ninth to eleventh grades with a one-year pre-university (totally twelve years). In the old system, students began to learn English from the second grade of junior high school. The scanty literature (Rashidi, 1995; Ghorbani, 2009; Jahangard, 2007; Tabatabaei & Porakbari, 2012) on nationwide evaluation of English teaching programs at Iranian high schools indicates that in spite of a huge investment of time and money, the old program generally failed to achieve the desired outcomes in terms of improving learners’ language abilities. The main problem with this system was lack of a comprehensive, an accurate and a well-organized plan which threw the effectiveness of the program into question (Foroozandeh, 2011; Kiyani, Mirhosseini, & Navidinia, 2011).

After the academic year 2011-2012, Iranian educational milieu experienced a paradigm shift. In the new system, students are required to study six years in primary school and six years in high school. English is taught from the first year of high school to the last year. Based on policies of the Ministry of Education, English, as a required course should be instructed for one hour a week, and about 119 hours for the first three grades and 80 hours for the next three years (Alavimoghaddam & Kheirabadi, 2012). In total, English should be taught for about 200 hours in high school. It is worth mentioning that at the time of the present study only the first and second grades of high school have implemented the new curriculum.

There are more than 40,000 high schools in Iran with about six million students studying General English1. Therefore, to evaluate the extent to which the required objectives of the curriculum are met is of great importance. Hence, the present study is concerned with evaluating the usefulness of ELT program implemented in Iranian high schools and is limited to the examination of the educational setting of the English program in Iranian high schools, the compatibility of the implemented program with the intended (official) one, and the congruence of the outcome of the current program with the expectations of the stakeholders in Iranian high school.

2. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Program evaluation is widely used for assessing a program’s efficacy in state, nonprofit, and private sector organizations worldwide. According to Patton (1997), program evaluation is “the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming” (p. 23). Kelly (1999) defined program evaluation as the process by which we attempt to gauge the value and effectiveness of any particular piece of educational activity. According to Worthen and Sanders (1998), evaluation is the formal determination of the quality, effectiveness or value of a program, product, process, and objective of a curriculum. Program Evaluation generally involves

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assessment of one or more program domains. For Ornstein and Hunkins (2004) program evaluation not only provides useful information to insiders on how the current work can be improved, but also offers accountability to outside stakeholders. It aims to discover whether the curriculum designed, developed and implemented is producing or can produce the desired results. The strengths and the weaknesses of the curriculum before implementation and the effectiveness of its implementation can be highlighted with the help of evaluation (ibid). Thus a systematic and continuous evaluation of a program is essential for its improvement.

It has not been a while since program evaluation has made its way into English language teaching programs in Iranian high schools. Up until now, a handful of studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of the English programs in Iranian context. Table 1 offers a summary of the published studies of evaluation of English teaching programs in Iranian context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher s</th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Participant s/ Materials</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
<th>Shortcomings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rashidi (1995)</td>
<td>Evaluation of junior high school English program in Kurdistan province</td>
<td>Students, teachers, and language policy makers</td>
<td>Questionnaire and interview</td>
<td>Low motivated learners, inappropriate onset time for learning L2, inauthentic course books</td>
<td>Motivating students, course books revisions; inservice teachers training classes, starting teaching English from grade five of primary school</td>
<td>Not considering the process of language teaching, limited scope of data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosseini (2007)</td>
<td>Evaluation of English language teaching in Iranian and Indian high schools</td>
<td>No participants</td>
<td>Descriptive and critical viewpoint of the researcher</td>
<td>Lack of emphasis on communicative competence in Iran, and wash back effect</td>
<td>Use of more communicative approaches and new facilities</td>
<td>Lack of analytic and quantitative approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jahangard (2007)</td>
<td>Exploring EFL course books in Iranian high schools</td>
<td>Four English course books</td>
<td>A checklist for course books evaluation</td>
<td>Oral skills not emphasized in course books, reading being the main focus</td>
<td>Revision of the English course books of high schools</td>
<td>Not taking into account stakeholders’ perspectives about the course books</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen from table 1, although previous studies echo the importance of program evaluation in Iranian context, barely have any study to date examined the new English teaching program at Iranian high schools to find its strengths and weaknesses. In fact, each of above-mentioned studies focused on only one component of the ELT program at the time and has not examined all elements affecting the outcome of the implemented program. Therefore, the main purpose of the present study is to address the following questions:

1. In what kind of educational setting does the English program in Iranian high schools take place?
2. Is the implemented curriculum compatible with the intended one?
3. To what degree does the outcome of the current program meet the expectations of stakeholders?

### 3.1. PARTICIPANTS

The participants were 28 teachers and 606 high school students in different grades from 28 English classes in 10 high schools. In addition, six language policy makers and two course book developers from different departments of the Ministry of Education participated in this study.

### 3.2. INSTRUMENTS and Materials

The following instruments were used in the present study:

A) Questionnaires: Two researcher-made questionnaires of 30 and 28 items for students and teachers were developed. The face and content validity of the questionnaires were estimated through panel discussions involving TEFL experts at University of Tehran. The first 24 items of the students’ questionnaire, were based on the Likert scale addressing their perception of progress in the four language skills, teaching and testing methods in English classes, and English course books; the next five questions dealt with the congruence of the course books content with the students fields of study, classroom facilities and activities, their purpose of studying English; finally an open ended question elicited their attitude toward the efficacy of English language teaching in Iranian high schools. The Cronbach alpha reliability of the first 24 items was .90. Teachers received the same questionnaire except for two items missing from them; the two items were related to the students’ willingness to continue
learning English in future and their eagerness to learn English. The Cronbach alpha reliability of the first 22 out of 28 items was .83.

B) Semi-structured interviews: In the interviews language policy makers, course book developers and language teachers discussed their perceptions of the efficacy of the English language program, the congruence of the implemented program with the intended one, examination of the educational setting, and evaluation of the course books, teaching and assessment methods.

C) Observation of English classes: Two classrooms from each high school of Hormozgan, Fars, Isfahan, Tehran, and Mazandaran provinces were observed for two consecutive sessions lasting for almost one hour. Overall, 20 English classes in 10 high schools were observed for nearly 40 hours utilizing a checklist dealing with the number of students, language of instruction, the role of teachers and students in classroom activities, interaction between teachers and students, feedback and error corrections, and teaching and testing methodology.

D) Document analyses and course book evaluation: The Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE) in I.R. of Iran (2011) and National Curriculum (2009) were reviewed. In addition, course books in the six grades of high school were examined for content validity, level of difficulty, practicality, activities and exercises, and skills and sub-skills coverage.

3.3. PROCEDURES

High school students completed the questionnaire in one of the sessions at the end of the second academic year of 2013-2014. The distribution, administration, and collection of the questionnaires from different high schools took approximately three months. Out of 1000 distributed questionnaires, only 606 were analyzed because 394 respondents did not either complete or return the questionnaires. Among 18 policy makers and course book developers who were asked to participate in the interviews, 10 refused to be interviewed. Also only a total of 28 questionnaires were filled out by teachers. All participants were assured of confidentiality of the responses. Teachers and language policy makers were interviewed on the assumption that questionnaires per se could not provide in-depth information about English classrooms.

Furthermore, classroom observations provided an opportunity for the researchers to not only confirm the findings of the study, but also learn about what could not be discovered through the interviews and questionnaire analyses. In each of the five provinces, two English classrooms were observed for two one-hour sessions yielding approximately 40 hours of observation based on the checklist developed by researchers.

Moreover, the Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE) in I.R. of Iran (2011), and the National Curriculum Document (2009) were reviewed to examine the compatibility of the implemented curriculum with the intended one and provide information about the mission of the program at Iranian high schools.

4.1 THE EDUCATIONAL SETTING

The context of English classes was examined to learn about the educational setting in which the program takes place. As Brown (2001) notes, the institutional context within which the language is learnt plays a central role in effective teaching. In addition to the teachers’ opinion in their interviews, the classroom observations indicated that classes were heterogeneous; while some students were already familiar with English, others were not; therefore, they could not actively take part in the class activities particularly in role plays, interactions and discussions. The analyses of teachers’ questionnaires revealed that 78% of the teachers used first language as a medium of instruction. This could mostly be attributed to inability of students to comprehend English well or teachers’ command of English to conduct classes in English. In their interviews and questionnaires about 47% of teachers indicated that due to large number of students in English classrooms (more than 20), they could not pay equal attention to each individual; in fact, the large number of students prevented teachers from actively engaging students in the role play and reading aloud. In addition, 90% of teachers in their questionnaires indicated that the one hour per week allocated to English classes was inadequate.
Regarding the facilities, the analyses of teachers’ questionnaires showed that only 29% of the teachers had access to CD players; 14% of them asserted that they had access to video projectors, and about half of them articulated that no facilities were available in their English classes. The observations demonstrated that while most of non-profit high schools were equipped with language laboratories, most of state schools were scarcely well-equipped. In general, in most schools, teachers did not have easy access to facilities such as CD players, which was in line with the findings of Tabatabaei and Porakbari (2012). Overall, the teaching/learning resources in English classes were neither adequate nor accessible to all teachers to fulfill the intended aims stressed in the national educational documents. Thus, it is suggested that the classrooms be equipped with necessary facilities.

4.2 THE COMPATIBILITY OF THE IMPLEMENTED CURRICULUM WITH THE INTENDED ONE

To examine the compatibility of the implemented program with the intended one, the Fundamental Reform Document of Education of Iran (2011), and National Curriculum Document (2009) were reviewed for important strategies relating to the mission of foreign language teaching in Iranian high schools.

According to Alavimoghaddam and Kheirabadi (2012) the overall time allocation for all high school subjects is between 30 to 35 hours a week, and each session should not exceed one hour. At the present time, in the first period of high school (1st, 2nd, 3rd grades), teaching English is about 93 hours, and during the second period (4th, 5th, 6th grades), approximately 69 hours are allotted to teaching English. Yet, according to the National Educational Document, it should optimally reach 119 hours (12% of whole academic time) and 80 hours (7.1% of whole academic time) for the first and second periods respectively.

Policies play a significant role in determining the efficacy of high stake programs. Approving and implementing plans and guidelines of the high level documents can be the first and the most important step for making fundamental changes in the Iranian high school curriculum. To compare the implemented and intended programs, first the documents were reviewed to understand the mission of the intended program.

The Fundamental Reform Document of Education (2011) consists of eight chapters. Some important strategies of this plan which can be related to high school programs are:

- Establishing and equipping educational resources
- Promotion of teachers’ competencies through in-service teacher training systems
- Strengthening the teachers’ financial and spiritual motivations
- Increasing time allocation of English courses in high school
- Implementing plans and policies of the country’s formal education system
- Revising course books, amending and updating teaching methodologies with an emphasis on interactive, group-oriented and creative methods
- Evaluating the country’s formal education system

The National Curriculum document of Islamic Republic of Iran (2009) was also examined for teaching foreign languages. Based on this document, the content of course books ought to be in line with learners’ needs such as “health, public sanitation, daily activities, surroundings, and Iranian culture and values in attractive forms and, in specific, for higher grades, economic, political, cultural, and social issues”. (p. 37).

The purpose of teaching English from the first year of high school is to teach four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in a communicative way. This policy can make a paradigm shift in English teaching in Iranian high schools, integrating language skills by emphasizing the communicative approach different from the traditional teaching methods which concentrated mainly on grammar, translation, and reading comprehension which did not lead to the desired outcome. In this way, after graduation, students will be able to read and comprehend texts, write short essays in English, consult sources in English, and communicate with others (National Curriculum Document, 2009).

Based on the analyses of the written documents, it was found that the objectives for English language teaching at Iranian high schools has been stated clearly in a detailed way since the academic year 2011-2012; However, English teachers in the interviews claimed that they were not fully aware of the intended aim of the program, and simply followed the course books; the finding echoes Ediger (2006) who argued...
that it is essential to indicate each objective carefully so that teachers and learners can understand what is to be achieved.

4.3. THE CONGRUENCE BETWEEN THE CURRENT PROGRAM AND THE EXPECTATIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS

The perceptions of stakeholders regarding the course books, teaching and testing methodologies, and the outcome of the program are explored in this section to examine the congruence between the implemented program and the expectation of different stakeholders.

4.3.1 COURSE BOOKS

Examination of the first and second grade course books: In their interviews, course book developers noted that the newly developed books, Prospect one and two, teach English communicatively, in harmony with the Common European Framework principles. The new course book series encouraged teachers to adopt student-centered approach in their teaching. There were opportunities for engaging the whole person through personalizing information in meaningful communications in the “Role play” and “Speaking and writing” sections. The topics of the lessons were selected in a way to provide students with vocabulary required to interact in situations occurring most frequently in daily life such as greeting, family, and appearance, with respect to Islamic-Iranian culture. There were sufficient variety in the subjects and contents of the lessons. The exercises and activities also involved communicative and meaningful practice.

The new edition of course books for the first and second grades integrate four skills with covering all sub-skills. For instance, each lesson has “Conversation”, “Listening and Reading”, “Speaking and Writing”, “Role play”, and “Sounds and Letters (pronunciation)” sections. Overall, almost all language policy makers, course book developers, and teachers in the first and second grades supported changes implemented in the new program especially with regard to the course books.

Examination of the third, fourth, and fifth grade course books: The course books in these grades were evaluated in terms of their content validity, level of difficulty, practicality, activities and exercises, and skills and sub-skills coverage. The analyses of students’ questionnaire showed that the course books are boring, impractical, and unappealing. The course books examination revealed that speaking was taught through dialogs at the beginning of each lesson; listening was completely ignored because course books did not have audio or video materials. The books focused on teaching grammar and vocabulary. These books were not developed on the basis of the principles of the communicative approach. In the interviews, most of the teachers articulated that the course books were not challenging for most of students especially those attending language institutes; therefore, most of students were bored and unmotivated to learn. Also, teachers indicated that there were no teachers’ books accessible homogenize and standardized English teaching all over the country.

Examination of the sixth grade course book: For the sixth grade, most of teachers used supplementary English preparation books to prepare students for university entrance exam; they asserted that they put more emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension because they thought it would help students’ achievement in their final and university entrance exams. The students’ questionnaire analyses showed that more than 75% of students preferred that the content of their course books had a harmony with their fields of study. Both teachers and students expressed their dissatisfaction with different aspects of the course books presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Teachers and students’ dissatisfaction with the course books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>The relevance of the content of the course books to students’ fields of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>The course books activities and exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>The number of units in the course books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>The course books appropriateness with the students’ levels of proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>The relevance of course books subjects to students’ cultural background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>The appearance of course books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>The practicality of the course books</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2. TEACHING METHODOLOGY

Classroom observations showed that some of teachers were not competent enough; they mostly preferred audio-lingual or grammar translation as a safe teaching method. The classes were mostly teacher-centered. Most of the observed teachers in their interviews indicated that team work could motivate students; they believed that role-plays and pair and group work should be employed in English classes; however, this seemed far-fetched because of the high number of students in each class and their heterogeneity in terms of English proficiency.

The findings revealed that as their first priority, teachers had to cover all the lessons specified by the syllabi. In case some time was left, it was devoted to prepare students for the final exam or entrance exam of university by working on sample tests and exercises. Teachers usually used L1 as a medium of instruction since they thought it facilitated the process of teaching and learning. On the whole, teaching methodology was not in line with communicative approach which was intended in the high level documents. According to the high level documents in order to compensate for the drawbacks, in-service teacher trainings and upgrading teaching methodologies seemed greatly urgent.

In terms of class activities, classroom observations revealed that in most classes, reading comprehension, grammar, and translation were emphasized, and listening and speaking were to an extent overlooked; the analyses of the questionnaires showed that reading comprehension, translation, and grammar accounted for roughly 60% of total activities in English classes. Pronunciation received attention only when students mispronounced a word while reading. These findings support the conclusions made by Ghorbani (2009) who reported that in most English classes reading comprehension is the most common activity. In order to reach the desired and intended outcome, teachers should be advised to move toward the communicative approach principles by emphasizing more on role play, and group work, and utilizing different tasks.

4.3.3 STUDENTS ASSESSMENT

The assessments were in a summative and written form including grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension, since teachers thought that these tests could help them determine whether students were making adequate academic progress or meeting expected learning standards; on the other hand, they rarely utilized quizzes and formative tests to continuously assess students’ progress due to the fact that they were more time consuming to correct all the papers and give feedbacks. As Janhangard (2007) remarked the demand for passing the English courses from the authorities played an important role in the way exams were taken in English classes at Iranian high schools. Regarding exams for the third to sixth grade high schools, all the interviewees noted that to succeed in their written final examinations and got good marks, students memorized a limited number of vocabulary items and grammar rules. The tests were in the form of true/false items, short-answer questions, matching items and gap fillings, multiple choice comprehension check items, and translation from English to Persian. This is in sharp contrast to the findings for the first and second grade high schools where the majority of the teachers noted that they allocated eight marks out of 20 for oral tests in the forms of monologues, interviews, and dialogues. It is suggested that, according to the aim of the program, tests in other grades assess the oral skills as well which can profoundly affect the improvement of students in those skills.

4.3.4 OUTPUT OF THE PROGRAM

Students perceived themselves less competent in oral skills; this is in line with Al-Darwish (2006) examining students’ perceptions of their oral skills progress after attending English classes in Kuwait. This could be mostly attributed to the lack of opportunities for real life practices in language classrooms. Additionally, it can be inferred that these skills were to an extent overlooked due to reasons such as lack of basic facilities or structure of the course books.

In general, the teachers complained about the low level of students’ language proficiency in English classes who had been taught in the old curriculum especially in the last grade of high school in which they were supposed to be at the intermediate level according to related documents. Interviewees noted that the students were not competent enough to use English in real contexts. In the interviews, teachers stated that time allocated to English language courses was not adequate to reach the required level in the English language. As a result, they strongly recommend that the number of the sessions should double.
(two days a week) to help students reach an acceptable level of English proficiency. Further, all the language policy makers and most of the teachers strongly recommended that Ministry of education should hold more in-service training courses for teachers to help them understand the aim of the program and become familiar with the new teaching methods and strategies which play a major role in improving teaching efficacy.

5. CONCLUSION

Taken together, the data gathered from the questionnaires, interviews, observations, course books and documents analyses indicate that the ELT program in Iranian high schools does not meet the expectations of different stakeholders especially in the last four grades. The program cannot completely meet students’ English needs in Iranian high schools. In fact students are not proficient enough in oral skills after passing English courses in Iranian high schools. This shortcoming has its roots in some reasons such as overcrowded English classes, traditional teaching methodology, the old course books which were not based on communicative approach principals, inadequate time allocation, and lack of educational facilities. All in all, the study showed that the type of English instruction these students received was unlikely to enable them sufficiently for their future needs.

Findings of the study have a number of implications. The implementation of the program needs to be revised and some key measures need to be taken such as decreasing the number of students in English classrooms, equipping schools, and allocating at least two one-hour sessions a week to English in the form of intensive courses boosting the quality of English teaching context. Strengthening the teachers’ financial and spiritual motivations, informing the stake holders about the mission of the program, holding obligatory in-service teacher training courses to increase teachers’ competencies, offering English teaching in all the educational grades, starting English teaching from the first grade of primary school and establishing some bilingual schools, publishing the course books based on the Common European Frameworks principles, and employing more communicative teaching methods. Further research can be conducted in future to investigate the possible differences between English courses in Iranian high schools and high schools abroad in a comparative educational study. Also the effects of gender, city, field of study, type of school, and educational level of the students’ parents can be explored in future studies. These researches can further enhance pedagogical perspectives for improving the program in the coming years.

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ABSTRACT
IT IS WIDELY ACCEPTED THAT REFLECTIVE TEACHING IN ITS PURELY COGNITIVE AND
INTROSPECTIVE SENSE CANNOT BE RESPONSIVE TO THE DILEMMAS AND THE PROBLEMS
WITH WHICH TEACHERS ENCOUNTER DURING THEIR TEACHING PRACTICE. THUS, THE
PRESENT STUDY BELIEVES THAT THE VERY TENTATIVE SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM IS
INTRODUCING TEACHER EDUCATION IN GENERAL AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN
PARTICULAR FROM A SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE WHERE ANY SORT OF KNOWLEDGE IS
DIALOGICALLY CONSTRUCTED AS A RESULT OF INTERACTION AMONG INDIVIDUALS. THE
PRESENT STUDY PROPOSES A TENTATIVE FRAMEWORK UNDER THE RUBRIC OF
‘STRATEGICALLY MEDIATED REFLECTIVE PRACTICE’ (HENCEFORTH SMRP) FRAMEWORK IN
WHICH NEW INSIGHTS EMERGE RESULTING FROM DIALOGICAL THINKING, HIGHLIGHTING
THE VYGOTSKIAN NOTION OF CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT. MORE IMPORTANTLY, EXAMINING
THE SMRP FRAMEWORK WITH FOUR PARTICIPANTS, THE PRESENT STUDY EVIDENTLY
REPORTS THE AFFIRMATIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE OUTCOME OF THIS FRAMEWORK ON THE
UTILITARIAN GROUND LANGUAGE TEACHING.

KEYWORDS: SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY, TEACHER EDUCATION, REFLECTIVE PRACTICE,
STRATEGIC MEDIATION, CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT, INTERNALIZATION

1. Introduction
Reflective practice was originally proposed by educational philosopher John Dewey in the early
twentieth century. Dewey (1933) makes a distinction between action that is routine and action that is
reflective. Routine action is guided primarily by an uncritical belief in tradition, and an unfailing
obedience to authority, whereas reflective action is started by a conscious and cautious “consideration of
any belief or practice in light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it
leads” (Dewey, 1933, p.4).
The Reflective Practitioner in which he expands Dewey’s concept of reflection. Schon shows how teachers,
through their informed involvement in the principles, practices, and processes of classroom instruction,
can bring about fruitful perspectives to the complexities of teaching that cannot be matched by experts who are far removed from classroom realities. He distinguishes between two frames of reflection: reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action.

What has to be underlined is the issue that the concept of teachers as reflective practitioners is clearly a vast improvement over the limited and limiting concept of teachers as passive technicians, where teachers have to submit themselves to the principles of methods. However, reflective teaching is not without its shortcoming. In general, reflective movement has been severely criticized for introducing reflection and reflective practice as an introspective process.

Solomon (1987) makes a powerful case for reflection as a social practice, in which the articulation of ideas to others is central to the development of a critical perspective. According to Day (1993) Reflective movement has also been criticized for its lack of attention to the discursive or dialogical dimension of teacher learning.

Moreover, Zeichner and Liston (1996) believe that reflective movement has portrayed reflection as largely a solitary and individualistic process involving a teacher and her situation and not as an interactive process. Finally, Kumaravadivelu (2003) stresses that by focusing on the role of the teacher and the teacher alone, the reflective movement tends to treat reflection as an introspective process involving a teacher and his or her reflective capacity, and not as an interactive process. Additionally, the consequence of such a shortcoming has also been highlighted eloquently by Valli (1997) stating that if left unsocialized, individual reflection can close in on itself, producing detached, idiosyncratic teachers.

Because reflection is not an end in itself, but for the purpose of action, communal dialogue is essential. Many different voices are necessary. (p. 86)

Elsewhere, Lortie (1975) refers to teaching as the egg carton profession because the walls of classrooms become boundaries that separate teachers as they each occupy their own insulated niche. Consequently, engaging reflective practice aiming at teacher development in such isolation can lead to what Wells (1994) has called “the loneliness of the long-distance reflector” (p. 11).

2. The rationale of the study

The message that all of the criticisms mentioned previously want to get across is the issue that reflective teaching in its purely cognitive and introspective sense cannot be responsive to the dilemmas and the problems with which teachers encounter during their teaching practice. The very tentative solution to this problem, that is the treatment of reflective practice as an individualistic and introspective process, was introducing reflective practice from a sociocultural perspective, where any sort of knowledge is dialogically constructed as a result of interaction among individuals.

This shift in paradigm, i.e. moving from a cognitive position to a more situated and social epistemology in teacher education, has already been acknowledged and addressed by scholars such as Johnson (2006, 2009), Johnson and Golombok (2003), Golombok (2011), Freeman (2004), and Hawkins (2004). Johnson (2006) writes that learning to teach from a sociocultural perspective is based on the assumption that knowing, thinking, and understanding come from participating in the social practices of learning and teaching in specific classroom and school situations.

Johnson (2009) writes that considering L2 teacher education from a sociocultural perspective has several advantages. First, such a perspective provides us with a theory of mind which informs us of the inherent interconnectedness of the cognitive and the social processes by which teachers shape their learning of their careers. Second, a sociocultural perspective to L2 teacher education underlines and remarks the point that learning to teach is not merely a matter of enculturation to social practices connected to teaching but a matter of reconstruction of those activities to be responsive to individual and local needs.

According to Johnson and Golombok (2003), teacher education form a sociocultural perspective enables teacher educators to see how various tools work to create a mediational space in which teachers can externalize their current understandings and then reconceptualize and recontextualize their understandings and develop new ways of engaging in the activities associated with teaching. (p. 735) According to Hawkins (2004), form a sociocultural perspective, it becomes crucial to engage in critical reflective practices and to create learning communities within which individuals participate as teachers and collaboratively negotiate new understandings of their profession and practices.
As a result, the present study tends to propose a tentative framework under the rubric of *Strategically Mediated Reflective Practice* (henceforth SMRP) framework, not only to treat reflective practice largely as an interactive process rather than an individualistic one but also to show how reflective practice is strategically mediated with the help of more knowledgeable others and how new insights and understanding emerge as a result of dialogical thinking highlighting the Vygotskian notion of Concept development. More importantly, examining the SMRP framework with four participants, the present study reports the affirmative and constructive outcome of this framework on the utilitarian ground language teaching.

3. SMRP Framework: The Underlying Principles

3.1. Principle of Concept Development

The very basic issue behind SMRP framework is the issue of concept development and more specifically development of true concept. Vygotsky (1963) distinguishes between two types of concepts 1) everyday concepts, 2) scientific concepts. Vygotsky believes that the content of these concepts shape our mental activity. Everyday concepts are divided in two parts depending on their accessibility to conscious inspection: 1) spontaneous, 2) non-spontaneous. Spontaneous concepts are formed as a result of concrete practical experiences of a person as he is socialized into a culture. Attempting to bring such a concept to conscious inspection, one comes up with vague, incoherent, incomplete, and even inaccurate statement of the concept. Non-spontaneous concepts are those which are open to conscious inspection. Non-spontaneous concepts are intentionally and consciously acquired. Vygotsky (1987) argued that scientific concepts are not assimilated in ready-made or prepackaged form. Vygotsky (1987, as cited in Daniels, 2007) writes that Pedagogical experience demonstrates that direct instruction in concepts is impossible. It is pedagogically fruitless. The teacher who attempts to uses this approach achieves nothing but a mindless learning of words, an empty verbalism that stimulates or imitates the presence of concepts. (p. 312)

3.2. Principle of Psychological Tools (Development of True Concepts)

Another significant principle behind SMRP framework is notion of Psychological Tools in which Kozulin (2003) outlines three types of information that are conveyed in educational setting as follows:

- Psychological tools (true concepts)
- Technical skills
- Content

According to Kozulin (2003), psychological tools are the most powerful because they guide our cognitive activity in many situations while technical skills are used only in activities which they were learned and the content is usually confined to a knowledge area. As Daniels (2001) states from Vygotsky’s perspective the use of psychological tools:

- introduces several new functions connected with the use of the given tool and with its control;
- abolishes and makes unnecessary several natural processes, whose work is accomplished by the tool; and alters the course and individual features (the intensity, duration, sequence, etc.) of all the mental processes that enter into the composition of the instrumental act, replacing some functions with others.

3.3. Principle of Internalization

According to Lantolf (2006), internalization is the process through which members of communities of practice appropriate the symbolic artifacts used in communicative activity and convert them into psychological artifacts that mediate their mental activity. Through internalization, symbolic artifacts lose their exclusive unidirectional quality intended for social others and take on bidirectional functions intended for social others and the self.

According to Kozulin (1990), “the essential element in the formation of higher mental functions is the process of internalization” (p. 116). Vygotsky (1978) addressed internalization in the often-cited statement that every psychological function appears twice: first between people on the interpsychological plane and then within the individual on the intrapsychological plane. But perhaps the true essence of the concept of the internalization is best captured by Winegar’s (1997) definition of the concept:

Internalization is a negotiated process of development that is coconstructed both intra- and interpersonally. Through this process, immediate person-environment relationships are reorganized, and
some aspects of this reorganization may carry forward to contribute to future reorganization. At least for humans, this process always is socially mediated. (p. 31)

3.4. Principle of Verbalization
Considering the importance of concept development in teacher education, SMRP framework suggests, once the contents are presented to the teachers, they should be provided with the chance to verbalize their understanding of the contents, and teachers should receive feedback by more knowledgeable others. Such a process can be captured through the notion of verbalization. According to Gal’ Perin (1992) verbalization is a process by which individuals make their own perceptions explicit to others. According to Arievitch and Stetsenko (2000), Gal’ Perin, in particular, emphasized the importance of orienting individuals to the rationality and systemic structuring of complex domains of knowledge which necessarily precedes guided exploration and practice. Additionally, they underline that Gal’ Perin’s theory of verbalization proposes that without a proper orienting basis, individuals are not able to plan their participation in pedagogical activities and thus their contribution to such activities as well as resultant development are not optimized.

As a result, Gal’ Perin (1992) highlights, once the teachers verbalized their understanding, their perception is made explicit for dialogical mediation and based on their verbalization, it is the job of the more knowledgeable others to introduce them the scientific concepts. Introducing scientific concepts could be in the form of reading a particular article or a specific book suggested by more knowledgeable others. Then new insights and understanding should be achieved as a result of dialogical negotiation between the teachers and more knowledgeable others. Such a process should be continued to the time that evidence of true concept development is heard from the teachers. It is in this sense that the term mediated reflection comes to play a significant role.

3.5 Principle of Mediation and Strategic Mediation
Moreover, such mediation should be strategic in the sense that not all kinds of mediation lead into development rather based on the individuals’ needs, it is the job of more knowledgeable others to provide them this strategic mediation.

Besides, one might argue that such mediation and even strategic mediation by more knowledgeable others would make individuals more dependent and less autonomous comparing with reflective practice as an individualistic and introspective process. But what should be brought into consideration is that the ones who act with the help of more knowledgeable others must not be considered weaker than those who act independently. As a matter of fact, it is absolutely the other way around from a sociocultural perspective. According to Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), potential level is more indicative of mental growth than actual development. Moreover, they underlined that individuals who are able to respond to such mediation must be considered to be at a more advanced developmental level than the ones who fail to do so, because those who responds to mediation can be expected to show a more rapid rate of actual development. Importantly, what is significant is not what a person can do on his own; but rather how far one can move forward and reach what he can potentially do. Moreover, Lantolf (2000) argues, “even in those cases in which experts and novices do come together, as in a teaching situation, novices do not merely copy experts’ capabilities; rather they transform what the experts offer them as they appropriate it” (p. 17).

3.6. An Integrated view of SMRP Framework’s Underlying Principles
Since SMRP framework is framed through a sociocultural theory and based on the notion of concept development, it has great advantages over the other frameworks in which reflective practice is largely treated as an individualistic, solitary, and introspective process. It is believed that teachers practice is largely controlled by the existing psychological tools in individuals’ minds (Kozulin, 2003). Psychological tools are described as “true concepts”. According to Vygotksky (1963), one way to arrive at true concepts is by providing the individuals the opportunities to investigate their “everyday concepts” in the light of the “scientific concepts”. Such a process of investigation could be realized through what was proposed by Gal’ Perin (1992) as “verbalization” by which individuals make their own perceptions explicit to others. Once individuals’ perception is made explicit, they are open to dialogical mediation which can lead to restructuring of the individuals’ perception. This also provides the teachers with psychological tools or true concepts by which they can control their activity in close association with their perception. Since the
teachers develop true concepts through a mediated reflective process, the SMRP framework hypothesizes that the gap between what they believe and what they do, which is a significant concern in teacher education, would be to a great extent minimized and in some cases removed entirely.

4. The study
The study was carried out with a group of four teachers in an English language teaching institute in Babolsar, Mazandaran province. The group, consisting of one male and three females, was arranged and organized by the researcher as the conductor of the study.

The study was mainly carried out through the sessions which were held periodically every two weeks for a period of 6 months. Every session, a topic was introduced for the sake of discussion. Once the topic was fully discussed, defined, and meticulously interpreted, individuals were given time and voice, during the session, to verbalize their thoughts by which they made their thoughts explicit to the researcher who functioned in the form of a more knowledgeable other and a mediator in the process of the study.

Scrupulously analyzing the verbalized thoughts, the more knowledgeable other provided mediation in general and strategic mediation in particular with a consideration of each individual capabilities and ZPDs. Such mediation and strategic mediation was given in a variety of forms such as: introducing a book, an article, a video or a piece of performance by the more knowledgeable other.

Since the present study was after highlighting the Vygotskiyan notion of concept development and consequently achieving the psychological tool, i.e. true concepts, the process was continued, as it is highly recommended by Gal’perin (1992), to the time that evidence of true concept development was heard from the teachers. It was in this sense that the term mediated reflection came to play a significant role.

More importantly, when pieces of evidence of true concepts were heard from the participants, which highly grantee that individuals were equipped with the proper psychological tools, their teaching practice were observed and investigated to see, as proposed by Kozulin (2003), whether their cognitive ability which lead to their activity in the classroom was controlled by the provided true concepts and psychological tools or not.

Finding practical, functional, and pragmatic pieces of evidence of true concepts in the participants teaching practice and self-consciously being aware in terms of both knowledge and the rationale behind the practice was what SMRP framework considered as its ultimate goal and tried to introduce such a framework as a means by which clarity was provided in terms of concepts and practice was guided more rationally, consciously, and fruitfully.

Before the whole research process, an interview, structured or semi-structured, was carried out with the participants to find out the areas which they might potentially have problems in their understanding and practicing their careers as language teachers. Once the interviews were done, there was a detailed investigation of the interviews to find the problematic areas which were shared by all the participants to avoid either frustration or over-learning for the other participants.

Additionally, the topics which were selected for the sake of the discussion and practice in SMRP framework were as following:

1. Teaching by principles
2. Self-evaluation of teacher talk
3. Form-function mapping
4. Willingness to communicate

The rationale behind choosing these topics was the normal misunderstanding of these topics by the majority of the teachers both at the level of theory and at the level of practice. Moreover, the topics were also selected by observation of the participants’ classroom practice as well.

5. Results and discussion
5.1. Teaching by principles
5.1.1. Teaching by principles in terms of the principle of communicative competence

Folder, 5:30

I asked a student to open the door and asked another student to tell the reason I told that student to open it. Here I used the function of request and reasoning. (Principle of communicative competence)

Researcher’s analysis:
According to was provided here, at the beginning section of “teaching by principles”, the principle of communicative competence can be outlined as either by Canale and Swain (1983), grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, or by Bachman (1990), organizational competence, pragmatic competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence. Folder, 5:30 is clearly an example of practicing the principle of communicative competence in classroom context since the participant clearly states that her intention was teaching the function of request which is apparently a part of pragmatic competence and subcategory of illocutionary competence known as manipulative function.

The rater’s analysis:

Watching the video performance, the rater of the study approves both the participant’s practice and the researcher’s analysis with regard to extracts in Folder, 5:30 since he believes that the manipulative function of the illocutionary competence as a subcategory of pragmatic competence is clearly attained.

5.1.2. Teaching by principles in terms of the principle of language ego

Folder, 15

➢ I asked an easy question and I intentionally asked a certain student for the answer because he was sitting silently. I was sure that he knows the answer and wanted to encourage him to speak. (Principle of Language Ego)

Folder, 42:00

➢ The student showed her disability being unable to find out the main idea of any article. By saying that since just the writer is sure of the main idea of her work she helped her feel more confident and more able to guess the writers’ aim to be transmit to the reader of the article. (Principle of Language ego)

Folder, 7:05

➢ There was a student who hasn’t done a piece of her homework, as she was studious and did her job well before, by using this principle the teacher ignored her fault and helped her not to become upset and go on being active in class participation. (Principle of Language ego)

Researcher’s analysis:

According to “teaching by principles”, the principle of language ego is considered as developing a new mode of thinking, feeling, and acting – a second identity. As a learner learns a language, he/she wants to be respected. Subsequently, a teacher should behave in a way that a learner doesn’t think that learning a second language will create in him a sense of humility.

The following sentences form extracts in Folder, 15, Folder, 42:00, and Folder, 7:05 respectively shows how the participants are vigilantly aware the sensitivity of students identity as language learners.

• “I intentionally asked a certain student for the answer because he was sitting silently. I was sure that he knows the answer”

• “By saying that since just the writer is sure of the main idea of her work she helped her feel more confident”

• “as she was studious [……….], by using this principle the teacher ignored her fault and helped her not to become upset and go on being active in class participation”

Additionally, the extracts are also indicative of the fact that the participants are not only aware of the benefits of caring about the students’ identity as language ego but also quite cognizant of the pernicious effect of threatening such an issue in the classroom context leading to seclusion and passivity of many students.

The rater’s analysis:

Watching the video performance, the rater of the study approves both the participant’s practice and the researcher’s analysis with regard to extracts in Folder, 15, Folder, 42:00, and Folder, 7:05 since he believes that the aforementioned extracts are truly the realization of the principle of language ego in classroom practice.

5.1.3. Teaching by principles in terms of the principle of strategic investment

Folder, 00:21to 4:26

➢ At this moment the teacher helped the students to interact by use of this principle, having different reaction to what they were talking about. For instance, for the first student she was calm not to push her being in a hurry. For the other student that said nothing especial happened to her, since she was a shy
The students are intrinsically motivated to utilize the language and improve using it. When there were some gaps they used strategic pragmatic competence to fill the gap which was born within the interaction. (Principle of strategic investment)

**Researcher’s analysis:**
According to “teaching by principles”, the principle of strategic investment” can be defined as any direct and calculated attempt toward the process of language learning.

Although extract in Folder, 00:21to 4:26 cannot be considered as an appropriate example of the notion of the principle of strategic investment since it does not encompass the core definition of it, the extract in Folder, 15:00-20:00 clearly embodies the principle of the strategic investment since the participant states that it is used as “strategic pragmatic competence to fill the gap which was born within the interaction”.

**The rater’s analysis:**
Watching the video performance, the rater of the study approves both the participant’s practice and the researcher’s analysis with regard to extracts in Folder, 15:00-20:00. The rater of the study also approves the researcher’s analysis in Folder, 00:21to 4:26 and rejects the participant’s both opinion and practice with regard to aforementioned folders.

5.1.4. Teaching by principles in terms of the principle of intrinsic motivation

**Folders 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4**

- Students are autonomous enough to participate in discussion voluntarily. It may be because of their intrinsic motivation. For example, some of them check some new words before attending to class. (Principle of intrinsic motivation)

**Folder, 22:00-26:00**

- The teacher encouraged the students to reveal their opinions about the topic. They did so, being motivated from inside and they were even more enthusiastic during the conversation. The teacher showed her attention to all participants to help them feel ease and comfort to move on. (Principle of intrinsic motivation)

**Researcher’s analysis:**
According to “teaching by principles”, the principle of intrinsic motivation is an inherent part of any successful language learning program and career. Although extract in Folders 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4 cannot be considered as an appropriate example of the principle of intrinsic motivation since it is quite vague both in terms of definition and in terms of practice, the extract in Folder, 22:00-26:00 is quite crystallized both in terms of definition and practice in view of the fact that the students are, as mentioned by the participant, enthusiastically attending conversation.

**The rater’s analysis:**
Watching the video performance, the rater of the study approves both the participant’s practice and the researcher’s analysis with regard to extracts in Folder, 22:00-26:00. The rater of the study also approves the researcher’s analysis in Folders 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4 and rejects the participant’s both opinion and practice with regard to aforementioned folders.

5.1.5. Teaching by principles in terms of the principle of interlanguage

**Folder, 3:20**

- Although the students had some mistakes retelling the story, I gave some feedback in the way that the students don’t feel that mistakes are bad. They are indicators of growth. (Principle of interlanguage)

**Researcher’s analysis:**
According to “teaching by principles”, the principle of interlanguage is clearly indicative that learning a language has unique system of its own and simultaneously is affected by the environmental factors such as feedback. Moreover, Successful interlanguage development is partially a result of utilizing feedback from others. The feedback a teacher gives to his students is very important for their development. Extract in Folder, 3:20 exemplifies that the participant is quite aware of the principle of interlanguage appropriately since the participant considers making a mistake not as devils but as a sign of learning. Additionally, the participant adds that she also quite careful with regard to giving feedback.
The rater’s analysis:
Watching the video performance, the rater of the study approves both the participant’s practice and the researcher’s analysis with regard to extract in Folder, 3:20 since he believes that the participant has a clear image of the principle of interlanguage.

5.2. Self-evaluation of teacher talk
5.2.1. Self-evaluation of teacher talk in terms of managerial mode
Folder 1-2, 2nd video
➢ The teacher tries to do her best to have the managerial mode in her job by changing the seats of the students when they talked or giving them the necessary directions in their class work (self-evaluation of teacher talk, managerial mode)
Folder 4-1
➢ At the beginning of track 1, the teacher used managerial mode, referring to learners' material (p.70-71) and introducing concluding activity.
Folder 4-2
➢ (Track 1, min 4’:00”) The teacher uses managerial mode, introducing concluding activity.
➢ (Track 1, min 11’:23”) The teacher organizes an environment for pair work as a kind of managerial mode.

Researcher’s analysis:
According to Walsh (2006), managerial mode in “self-evaluation of teacher talk” can be summarized as one, long teacher turn, the use of transition markers and an absence of learner involvement. Its principal pedagogic purpose is the management of learning, including setting up a task, summarizing or providing feedback on one particular stage of a lesson. (p. 69)
Extracts in Folder 1-2, 2nd video Folder 4-1 are both indicative of the managerial mode since the former focuses on the arrangement of the class and giving the necessary directions to students and the latter is a direct reference to the page of the material at hand.
Additionally, extracts in folder 4-2 are more indicative of the realization of managerial mode in classroom context since the participant “organizes an environment for pair work” which according to Walsh (2006) is one of the pedagogical goals in managerial mode.

The rater’s analysis:
Watching the video performance, the rater of the study approves both the participant’s practice and the researcher’s analysis with regard to extracts in Folder 1-2, 2nd video, Folder 4-1, and Folder 4-2 in view of the fact that the participants have a clear understanding of the self-evaluation of teacher talk in terms of managerial mode. He also adds that such clarity is quite obvious in the video of their classroom practice as well.

5.2.2. Self-evaluation of teacher talk in terms of material mode
Folder 2-3, 1st video
➢ Encouraging students to write about their family members. Making the necessary corrections and motivating them to take care of their own process of learning (Self-evaluation of teacher talk, material mode)
Folder 3-3, 2nd video
➢ While the students were reading the text, the teacher made the necessary corrections (Self-evaluation of teacher talk, material mode)
Folder 4-1
➢ In reading, after each paragraph, the teacher elaborates contributions as a material mode. By asking questions, the teacher elicits responses then provides feedback that can be in a form of IRF pattern.
➢ (Min 13’:53”) The teacher asks and displays responses as a material mode; besides, she uses managerial mode and refers to learners' materials.

Researcher’s analysis:
According to Walsh (2006), material mode in “self-evaluation of teacher talk” is a mode in which teacher echo serves a useful function, confirming a contribution and amplifying it for the other learners. In other modes, however, its function may be less useful, and there are clear instances where it can even hinder learner involvement. (p. 70)
Extracts in Folder 2-3, 1st video and Folder 3-3, 2nd video show that the participant is after making necessary correction, which is one of the salient interactional features of material mode. Additionally, extracts in Folder 4-1, both first and the second part, are more indicative of the issue that the participant has a clear understanding of the proper use of material mode in her teaching practice due to the fact that she directly pays attention to IRF (Initiation, Response, Feedback), which is the most significant and salient interactional features in material mode of self-evaluation of teacher talk.

The rater’s analysis:
Watching the video performance, the rater of the study approves both the participant’s practice and the researcher’s analysis with regard to extracts in Folder 2-3, 1st video, Folder 3-3, 2nd video, and Folder 4-1 (both fist and the second part) in that he believe the material mode is obviously realized and put into practice in terms of the following pedagogical goals:

- the IRF sequence typically predominates and is closely managed by the teacher
- to check and display answers
- to clarify as and when necessary
- teacher feedback is form-focused, attending to ‘correctness’ rather than content
- repair is used to correct errors and give further examples

5.2.3. Self-evaluation of teacher talk in terms of skills and systems mode
Folder 4-2

(Track 1, min 3':54") The teacher provides feedback and pushes the learner to produce the correct form as skills and system modes.

Researcher’s analysis:
According to Walsh (2006), skills and systems mode in “self-evaluation of teacher talk” is a mode in which
In skills and systems mode, pedagogic goals are closely related to providing language practice in relation to a particular language system (phonology, grammar, vocabulary, discourse) or language skill (reading, listening, writing, and speaking). (p. 73)
The extract in Folder 4-2 shows that the teacher is trying to make the student produce the correct form. Such an action is an action toward skills and systems mode in which the notion of “accuracy” is of paramount significance.

The rater’s analysis:
Watching the video performance, the rater of the study approves both the participant’s practice and the researcher’s analysis with regard to extract in Folder 4-2 in that the main pedagogical goals of this mode are

- to provide corrective feedback
- to display correct answers.
- the use of direct repair
- form-focused feedback

And he adds that the aforementioned pedagogical goals and interactional features are evidently recognizable in the participants’ practice.

5.2.4. Self-evaluation of teacher talk in terms of classroom context mode
Folder 4-1

Min 3':07" = the teacher asks referential question as a subpart of classroom context mode. The teacher provides feedback for the students' responses following classroom context mode.

(Track 2, min 2':40") By asking some questions that are related to the real world of the learners, tries to promote fluency and extends learner turn as a classroom context mode.

Folder 4-2

By asking referential questions, the teacher encourages the learners to speak to promote their speaking fluency, the learners turn is extended. All of these are considered as classroom context mode.

Researcher’s analysis:
According to Walsh (2006), classroom context mode in “self-evaluation of teacher talk” is a mode in which
In classroom context mode in an EFL setting, the interaction is initiated and sustained from the interactional opportunities that emerge from the complex and diverse range of experiences and cultural backgrounds that the learners themselves bring to the classroom. (p. 79)

In extracts in Folder 4-1 (both first and the second part) and Folder 4-2, the participant noticeably underlines that she is trying to practice this mode to help students achieve “fluency”. According to Walsh (2006), fluency is the most significant element in classroom context mode. The extracts in Folders 4-1 (both first and the second part) and Folder 4-2 are clear enough to say that the participant has a proper understanding of the classroom context mode which is fluency is both well-understood and well-practiced by the participants.

The rater’s analysis:
Watching the video performance, the rater of the study approves both the participant’s practice and the researcher’s analysis with regard to extracts in Folder 4-1 (both first and the second part) and Folder 4-2 since he believes that the salient feature of classroom context mode which is fluency is both well-understood and well-practiced by the participants.

5.3. Form-function mapping
Folder 6-1, Track 1050-1
- The modals of "should" and "had better" are introduced to the students. Their function is to give advice. Three forms (should, ought to and had better) are used for one function (giving advice). Besides, the students learned how to make their advices friendlier using "perhaps" or "may be".
- Folder 6-2, Track 1084-86
- Two forms of participial adjectives are presented; -ed and -ing. The differences between these two forms and their use are explained with some examples. The concepts of cause and effect are introduced.
- Folder 6-1, 3rd video
- Teaching students that the word "like" could have different meanings in different contexts. Such as ‘like’ as in ‘I like pizza’ and ‘I can jump like a monkey’ (Form-function mapping, form and different functions connections)
- Folder 1-2, 2nd video
- Constructing the restaurant context in the class to involve students to use their language and the forms they have already know to fulfill the function of ordering some food. We focused on book to read the text and study the form of that specific text (form-function mapping)
- Folder 1-5, 2nd video
- We had individual and chorus in repetition to focus on language form for ordering and shopping (form-function mapping)
- Folder 5-3, 1st video
- For the listening part, they were asked to answer the question (focusing on meaning) and then for the second time they were asked to repeat what they heard (focusing on language form). (Form-function mapping, focus on form and meaning)
- Folder 6-4, 1st video
- We had a kind of role-play based on the story to help students introduce the language they had studied to focus on meaning and form at the same time. (Form-function mapping, focus on form and meaning)

Researcher’s analysis:
According to was provided here, at the beginning section of “form-function mapping”, there has always been a mismatch and sort of confusion between forms and functions in the interlanguage of the students. Helping students to surmount such confusion would be of great help and one of the significant issues to be attended by teachers in classroom context.

Extracts in Folder 6-1, Track 1050-1, Folder 6-2, Track 1084-86, Folder 1-2, 2nd video, Folder 6-1, 3rd video, Folder 1-5, 2nd video, Folder 5-3, 1st video and Folder 6-4, 1st video are quite eligible and commendable examples to believe that the participants have a crystal clear understanding of the importance and notion of form-function mapping in that in the Folder 6-1, Track 1050-1, the participant tries to teach "should" and "had better" with their function as giving advice and three other forms (should, ought to and had better) that are used for one function, i.e., giving advice.

Additionally, the participant in Folder 6-2, Track 1084-86 tries to teach two forms of participial adjectives (-ed and -ing.) and the differences between these two forms leading to the concepts of cause and effect.
Moreover, in Folder 6-1, 3rd video, the participant beautifully practices the one form of the word “like” and its different functions as and more beautifully puts it into practice in extract in Folder 1-2, 2nd video in that she assigns her students to “to use their language and the forms they have already know to fulfill the function of ordering some food”.

Finally, extracts from Folder 1-5, 2nd video Folder 5-3, 1st video show that the participants and making deliberate use of repetition to fix the forms of the language in their students’ mind and in extract form Folder 6-4, 1st video, consequently put them in to real practice by role-play to “introduce the language they had studied to focus on meaning and form at the same time”

The rater’s analysis:
Watching the video performance, the rater of the study approves both the participant’s practice and the researcher’s analysis with regard to extracts in Folder 6-1, Track 1050-1, Folder 6-2, Track 1084-86, Folder 1-2, 2nd video, Folder 6-1, 3rd video, Folder 1-5, 2nd video, Folder 5-3, 1st video and Folder 6-4, 1st video since he believes the extracts are quite indicative of the fact that the notion of form-function mapping is well-understood conceptually and put into practice by the participants by making distinction between ‘should’, ‘ought to’, and ‘had better’ in terms of function in extract Folder 6-1, Track 1050-1, the distinction of the past and present morphemes ‘-ing’ and ‘-ed’ and the introduction of cause and effect, and finally the distinction of word ‘like’ both as a verb and as a preposition followed by the role-play activity in the class.

5.4. Willingness to communicate
5.4.1. Willingness to communicate in terms of motivation
Folder 1-3, 3rd video

➢ Asking students to read from the book to check their pronunciation. Sometimes students read and others repeated after him to give them the role of the teacher to enhance their motivation in language learning (willingness to communicate, motivation)

Folder 4-1, 2nd video

➢ After some parrot like repetition, the students corrected their language when they made a mistake. Then they are encouraged to talk about their daily routines. (Willingness to communicate, motivation)

Folder 4-2, 2nd video

➢ Students were motivated to answer to time questions, because they wanted to go to the board and involved in class cooperation. (Willingness to communicate, motivation)

Folder 5-4, 2nd video

➢ Classifying animals and relating them to their background knowledge to encourage them to the topic of the unit (raising motivation). (Willingness to communicate, motivation)

Folder 6-3, 1st video

➢ The teacher asks some questions about the pictures, about the color, things they see in them and about their characteristics (I mean the story of "The rabbit and the lion") to motivate them to use their known words to make sentences. (Willingness to communicate, motivation)

➢ In the class, we had a game like a puzzle, C L O U D for example. Students should guess the alphabets that match to make the word, which was in the teacher’s mind. This game could activate their mind to remember and analyze more words. (Willingness to communicate, motivation)

Researcher’s analysis:
According to was provided here, at the beginning section of “willingness to communicate, one way to ensure students’ willingness to communicate is by keeping them motivated.

Extract in Folder 1-3, 3rd video, Folder 4-1, 2nd video, Folder 4-2, 2nd video, Folder 5-4, 2nd video, and Folder 6-3, 1st video are quite indicative of the fact that the participants are vigilant aware of this issue in that in Folder 1-3, 3rd video, the participant gives such motivation by giving the student the role of a teacher in the class.

Additionally, in extract in Folder 4-1, 2nd video, students are kept motivated by letting them talk about their routines, which is consequently an issue of paramount help with regard to the notion of willingness to communicate.

In a similar vein, in extract in Folder 4-2, 2nd video, the participant tries to keep her students motivated to communicate by letting them go to the board and involve in class cooperation. More interestingly, in
Folder 5-4, 2nd video, the participant tries to enhance the willingness to communicate of her students by to relate the subject at hand to the students’ background knowledge. Finally, it is in Folder 6-3, 1st video that the participant relies on her students known words to keep them motivated and boost the notion of the willingness to communicate by introducing a game in the class by which she underlies that “This game could activate their mind to remember and analyze more words” which consequently leads to students’ willingness to communicate.

The rater’s analysis:
Watching the video performance, the rater of the study approves both the participant’s practice and the researcher’s analysis with regard to extracts in Folder 1-3, 3rd video, Folder 4-1, 2nd video, Folder 4-2, 2nd video, Folder 5-4, 2nd video, and Folder 6-3, 1st video because he believes the participants are aware that the notion of willingness to communicate is not an issue to be directly addressed in the classroom context. He also adds that keeping the students by any means is of great help to the notion of willingness to communicate, which he believes to apparent in the participants practice in the form of giving the students the role of a teacher, talking about their favorites, and relating the subject matter to their background knowledge or experience.

5.4.2. Willingness to communicate in terms of guessing strategy
Folder 1-4, 3rd video
- Defining the word “pretty” by providing simpler meaning and drawing some pictures on the board to help them understand it better, using their minds and making calculated guesses about the pictures. (willingness to communicate, guessing strategy)

Folder 2-2, 1st video
- The teacher tried to teach the new words in a way that the students could guess the meaning from what the teacher said. Having calculated guess. Then the teacher asked some display questions to check their comprehension again. (willingness to communicate, guessing strategy)

Folder 2-3, 2nd video
- The teacher also tried to build the context for providing them the opportunity for guessing the meaning of words (willingness to communicate, guessing strategy)

Folder 2-2, 3rd video
- Not giving the exact words to the student. Rendering examples to help them guess the word by their own. (willingness to communicate, guessing strategy)

Folder 6-4, 2nd video
- Teaching the words about weather, drawing some pictures about it on the board and motivating them to guess the words. Then teaching seasons and months asking them to read and repeat after the teacher. (willingness to communicate, guessing strategy)

5.4.3. Willingness to communicate in terms of absence of correction and communication anxiety
Researcher’s analysis:
According to the principles of willingness to communicate, another way to enhance such an issue in the classroom context is to help students to be willing to take risks which require them to be good guessers. Extracts in Folder 1-4, 3rd video, Folder 2-2, 1st video, Folder 2-3, 2nd video, Folder 2-2, 3rd video, and Folder 6-4, 2nd video illustrate that teachers attentively take special care of this issue in that in Folder 1-4, 3rd video, the participant is trying to help her students to make “calculated guesses” and in Folder 2-2, 1st video the issue of making calculated guesses is repeated another time which is followed by teachers comprehension check leading to more communication. Additionally, extract in Folder 2-3, 2nd video is indicative of the help that the participant is trying to provide to her student to make good guesses in the form of building the context. Moreover, in Folder 2-2, 3rd video, such help is provided via “Rendering examples to help them guess the word by their own”. Finally, the same issue is repeated once more in extract in Folder 6-4, 2nd video.

The rater’s analysis:
Watching the video performance, the rater of the study approves both the participant’s practice and the researcher’s analysis with regard to extracts in Folder 1-4, 3rd video, Folder 2-2, 1st video, Folder 2-3, 2nd video, Folder 2-2, 3rd video, and Folder 6-4, 2nd video in that he believes the participants are quite aware
of they are doing and they are really using the guessing strategy for sake of more communication of the students which consequently boosts the students’ sense of willingness to communicate.

5.4.4. Willingness to communicate in terms of reduction of stress and providing social support

Folder, 4:10’ - 10’

- I tried to create a situation that students could interact and ask and answer with each other. I didn’t correct their mistakes constantly to let them have fluency. A challenge was made among the students. (Willingness to communicate, absence of correction)

Folder, 31:00- 34:00

- The teacher encouraged the students to talk about an especial issue, by pretending not to know the story and by asking for the information and showing interest helped students to move on interaction. While the girl was talking, the teacher ignored the mistakes to help her continue her words. (Willingness to communicate, absence of correction)

Folder, 00:21 to 4:26

- The teacher started class by asking how the day was for students, to melt the ice. The teacher encouraged students to talk by good listening and helping them to move on their speech without stopping them with a sever correction. And helped them continuing by asking some questions inductively scaffold them not to stop. It was done the way that the students showed a lot of interest to be involved in this job. (Willingness to communicate, absence of correction)

Researcher’s analysis:
Not correcting the students on the spot is another way to help the notion of willingness to communicate in the classroom context. However, it has to been done carefully and vigilantly. Extracts in Folder, 4:10’ - 10’, Folder, 31:00- 34:00, Folder, 00:21 to 4:26, and Folder 5-1, 2nd video show how carefully the teachers are trying not to correct the students to let them continue their speech which indeed help the notion of willingness to communicate in the classroom context.

In extract in Folder, 4:10’ - 10’, the participant clearly states that “I didn’t correct their mistakes constantly to let them have fluency” and in extract in Folder, 31:00- 34:00, she eloquently underlines that “While the girl was talking the teacher ignored the mistakes to help her continue her words” to help her students to be more communicative and at the same time she is paying attention to the notion of willingness to communicate.

In a similar vein, it is in extract in Folder, 00:21 to 4:26 that the participant astutely and sagaciously states” helping them to move on their speech without stopping them with a sever correction. And helped them continuing by asking some questions inductively scaffold them not to stop” which shows her overall awareness of the notion of the willingness to communicate.

The rater’s analysis:
Watching the video performance, the rater of the study approves both the participant’s practice and the researcher’s analysis with regard to extracts in Folder, 4:10’ - 10’, Folder, 31:00- 34:00, Folder, 00:21 to 4:26, and Folder 5-1, 2nd video in view of the fact that he believes the true essence of willingness to communicate, which is helping students with the subject of fluency, is attained by the participant in that they are absolutely careful with regard to the absence of correction or severe correction to help their students to move on and communicate.

5.4.5. Willingness to communicate in terms of reduction of stress and providing social support

Folder 7-1, Track 1085-87

- Choosing volunteers to answer the questions may be a good way that may reduce stress, as some of the students are not confident enough to be the first person who answers the questions.
- The class arrangement is another way that decreases anxiety and may increase WTC .e.g. students sit next to their friends.
- Another way that may result in better WTC is letting student answer chorally.
- Providing examples that are related to the students’ own experience may encourage them to participate more in classroom activities.

Folder 7-2, Track 1090-2
Having pair works for some activities may be helpful in increasing students' WTC. For example, for the conversation practice. They are set in a group. They are allowed to express their ideas and share their opinions with their peers.

The teacher tries to give some examples about her own experience because students are interested in knowing more about their teachers. The teacher expresses those things that are in common with her students and it leads students to feel closer to their teacher and to have a better relationship without any stress.

**Researcher’s analysis:**
According to the principles of willingness to communicate, another way to realize such a notion is by providing a stress-free context in which everyone feels secure to take part in any types and sorts of conversation and communication.

It seems that the participant is quite aware of this fact in that the extracts in Folder 7-1, Track 1085-87 and Folder 7-2, Track 1090-2 are both indicative of this issue since the participant, in Folder 7-1, Track 1085-87, tries to ask volunteers due to the fact, as she puts, “Choosing volunteers to answer the questions may be a good way that may reduce stress, as some of the students are not confident enough to be the first person who answers the questions”. Moreover, she adds that “letting students answer chorally” results in better ‘willingness to communicate’.

More interestingly, she, in Folder 7-2, Track 1090-2, adds that “The teacher tries to give some examples about her own experience because students are interested in knowing more about their teachers” and she believe doing so would lead in to less communication and less communication in that “The teacher expresses those things that are in common with her students and it leads students to feel closer to their teacher and to have a better relationship without any stress”.

**The rater’s analysis:**
Watching the video performance, the rater of the study approves both the participant’s practice and the researcher’s analysis with regard to extracts in Folder 7-1, Track 1085-87 and Folder 7-2, Track 1090-2 since he adds that the participant is quite aware of the significance and importance of the reduction of stress with the aim of boosting the notion of the ‘willingness to communicate’.

6. **Conclusion**
It has to be concluded that the data considering the effectiveness of the SMRP framework, as a means of teacher education, in removing the gap and the mismatch between teachers’ cognition (espoused theory) and teachers’ practice (theory in action) with regard to examining it with 4 issues, i.e., the concept of task, meaningful learning, and interaction and negotiation of meaning, were quite conclusive in particular and in many cases irrefutable in that out of 41 extracts pointed out by the participants and analyzed by the researcher and the rater, all of them were indicative of the removal the gap between teacher’s cognition and teacher’s practice in view of the fact that the participants had clear understanding of what they were doing in the class at the level of both theory and practice. Additionally, such a harmony between the participants’ theory and practice were quite palpable in what they reasoned as the rationale behind their practice and actualized the same in their practice. Below comes a general overview of the results of the research project supporting the fact that the gap between teacher’s theory and practice was in many cases removed.

What’s more, field of teacher education has always been looking for an efficient tool to help the teachers have better understanding of their careers in general and to remove the mismatch and the gap between teachers’ cognition and teachers’ practice in particular. During this study, SMRP framework proved itself to have the basic potentiality and preliminary flexibility along with necessary eligibility to help the teachers in this regard. Below comes a list of practical implications of SMRP framework:

1. SMRP framework provide teachers the opportunities to develop ‘true concepts’ which, according to Kozulin (2003), are the most powerful because they guide our cognitive activity in many situations while technical skills are used only in activities which they were learned and the content is usually confined to a knowledge area.

2. SMRP framework gives the participants the opportunity to make their thought explicit, i.e., verbalization (Gal’perin, 1992), and consequently the participants benefit the most form the appropriate help in the forms of ‘strategic mediation’ by more knowledgeable others.
3. From a sociocultural perspective, learning to teach is not the straightforward appropriation of skills or knowledge from the outside in, but the progressive movement from externally, socially mediated activity to internal control by individual teachers (Johnson, 2009). SMRP framework, with the help of the extended team-teaching project, creates this progressive movement opportunities for authentic participation in the activities of teaching and multiple spaces for strategic mediation for the participants.

4. Using SMRP framework as means of teacher development can foster a culture of community and collaboration among the teachers.

5. Participation in SMRP framework supports a teaching identity that is more profession-oriented than technician-oriented. Group members seek to continually experiment with teaching in order to learn and improve.

6. SMRP framework has not only the potentiality to change teachers’ thinking and practice but also the ability to have teachers’ cognition and teachers’ practice harmonized.

7. SMRP framework can function as a place where a variety of everyday problems of teaching can be discussed and analyzed scientifically.

8. SMRP framework gives the teacher educator the opportunity to use different mediation strategies that are dependent on the participants’ needs to enable them to attain better understanding of the career as language teachers.

REFERENCES


EXPLORING IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS DEPLOYING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN ESP CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT
THE PRESENT STUDY SOUGHT TO EXPLORE THE USE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BY IRANIAN ESP LEARNERS. AS SUCH, 240 ESP LEARNERS WERE SELECTED FROM TWO INSTITUTES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SHIRAZ, THEY WERE RANDOMLY AND EQUALLY DIVIDED INTO FOUR GROUPS: TWO CONTROL GROUPS WITH NO TREATMENT AND TWO EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS EXPOSED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN LEARNING ESP CONTENTS. THE INSTRUMENTS TO COLLECT DATA WERE A 20-ITEM QUESTIONNAIRE THAT WAS ADMINISTERED TO THE PARTICIPANTS UPON THE COMPLETION OF THE TREATMENT, AND ALSO THE POSTTEST AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER. THE RESULTS INDICATED THAT IRANIAN ESP LEARNERS IN THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS TOOK ADVANTAGE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES, ESPECIALLY CONFERENCE AND VIDEO CONFERENCE, IN LEARNING ESP CONTENTS. THERE WAS SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS POSTTEST SCORES USING INDEPENDENT T-TEST. IT WAS ALSO NOTED THAT ESP LEARNERS SHOWED POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE TREATMENT.

KEY WORDS: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES, PERCEPTION, ESP

Introduction
Dramatic changes in the approach to language teaching/learning processes are caused by the dynamism of modern society. There is a growing interest in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) due to globalization, resulting in wider and closer international relations. This brings forward the importance of lifelong learning for competitiveness and employability. Currently, adult learners' education and training are considered crucial for every country with globalized, advanced and knowledge-based economy (Aylazyana and Obdalovab, 2014).
Moreover, ESP is an exciting movement in language education, which widens the opportunities for English teachers and researchers to explore the curriculum, course planning and the implementation of
ESP education and its impact on learners. The world we live in has increasingly become more globalized. More and more people are using English in a growing number of occupational contexts. For example, eighty-five percent of all information in science and engineering in worldwide informational storage and retrieval networks is in English (Grabe & Kaplan, 1986; Zengin, Erdogan & Akalin, 2007).

The final aim of any educational planning is to grow students in various cognitive, individual and social skills and knowledge necessary to function occupationally and socio-politically in society (Fullan, 2001). So, compared with other educational contexts, universities have to integrate the educational world and research environment. Thereby, language education can effectively contribute to the development of some professional competencies of specialists in various fields of technology. Competencies such as communicative skills for making contacts worldwide, working in groups or international teams, ability to argue effectively, ethical liability of decision-making, flexibility and social experience, create a lasting ground for professional and cultural development of specialists (Aylazyan & Obdalova, 2014).

Professional development as a matter of course in teaching practice, however, is a relatively new idea, one that emerged only in the latter part of the 20th century (Sykes, 1996). It focused on teacher-learners as intrinsically motivated, particularly on developing themselves in order to improve student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Professional development has attracted a great deal of attention in recent years because of its potential for enhancing quality and learner performance (Burke 1997, 299; Browell 2000, 57).

Facing a higher demand and a greater expectation for English proficiency of college graduates, teachers are encouraging to deploy more professional development activities in teaching ESP contents. ESP is well-known for its learner-centered and content-based approach, which aims to meet learner-specific needs in the utilization of English for their specific field of study. As one of the variables of the ESP course, teachers play a significant role in the success of the ESP programs.

In addition, professional development is seen as an essential key to the reform efforts, as teachers must change their practice in both scope and style in order to support both the range of knowledge that students are expected to learn and the new ways in which students are expected to acquire and assimilate that knowledge (Supovitz, Mayer, & Kahle, 2000).

It is worth mentioning that professional development is a process to improve teacher classroom performance. Most often, the goals of professional development include improving professional skills, knowledge, or attitudes. Professional development experiences encompass areas of training from readiness activities, to practice, and coaching, to support activities (Guskey & Spark, 1991). The model of professional development is theoretically rooted in Vygotsky’s (1978) central thesis that knowledgeable and skillful people can serve as powerful mediators in helping other people to learn and achieve.

The aim of the present study is to investigate whether or not participants of the ESP courses have shown a significant improvement in learning ESP contents based on posttest scores and whether or not there is any difference in teachers’ and students’ attitudes toward the effectiveness of the implementation of professional development activities through the administration of questionnaire surveys.

1.0. Statement of Problem

Over the last two decades rapid developments in computer sciences and technology have established the persistent role of technology-based learning in education, more specifically in second or foreign language learning. According to Cuban (1993), teaching practices have not kept pace with our increasingly complex societal demands. Boyer (1988), head of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advance of Teaching, wrote, “We are beginning to discover that outside regulation has its limits. Education is a human enterprise with teachers and students interacting with each other. There is just so much that can be accomplished by directives from above” (pp. 1319-20). Faced with increasing accountability demands from the private and public sectors, today’s practitioners are seeking the best ways to solve to assist in the complex problems of educating all students.

Most professional development is assessed through teacher surveys that ask teachers’ opinions of the activity; it is rarely known what impact the professional development activity had on student learning. Smylie (1989, p. 543-558) commented that “much of what is known about the effectiveness of sources of teacher’s learning comes from a limited range of studies that report teacher’ opinions about a specific
source or group of related sources of learning.” This claim has been supported by Showers, Joyce, and Bennett (1987), who found that professional development assessments only take into account how participating teachers react to the activity. Moreover, Guskey and Sparks (1991) state that effectiveness of programs is usually restricted to self-reported changes in thinking, beliefs and what they do after going through some professional development activity. Simply put, teachers can only state what they think they know about professional development, not what they actually know (Fenstermacher, 1994). The idea is that as teachers increase their professional capacities; students will increase their learning (Guskey, 1986).

Along this line, several studies have been done to highlight the importance of technological improvements in a variety of educational contexts especially universities for ESP course and also the significance of professional development activities. In the same vein, based on studies done in our Iranian context on ESP courses, the main obstacle for students in improving learning ESP contents can be categorized in two classes. On the one hand, an attempt is made to use translation method and just reading skill and also to memorize technical and specific vocabularies in vast numbers, which are troublesome and tiring for students. On the other hand, compared with other studies with the aim of showing the significance of ESP contents for employability in society, the main focus for Iranian students is passing ESP courses at the end of the semester without any practical and useful knowledge.

So, the present study's main focus is exploring the effectiveness of the implementation of the professional development activities in learning ESP materials. Also, the present study tries to show the students' perceptions towards aforementioned activities with the aid of survey questionnaires.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

In addition to all mentioned issues in improving learning ESP contents by means of professional development activities, the present study has a number of purposes. First, it has made an attempt to manifest whether there is any improvement for students by means of professional development activities in an ESP context at some institutes of higher education. Second, it has investigated whether students reflect positive attitudes towards professional development activities, such as video conference, conference, study groups, internet research and also professional portfolio in improving learning ESP contents. Finally, it has also tried to show which types of activities will result in better performance on learning ESP contents.

1.2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

The present study is an attempt at answering a few questions that pertain to university students' perspectives on improving ESP learning via professional development activities during an academic semester. The objectives of the investigation can be expressed in the following research questions:

1. Are professional development activities effective in learning ESP contents at some institutes of higher education?
2. To what extent do professional development activities have effect on learning ESP contents?
3. Do students have positive attitudes towards the use of professional development activities in learning ESP contents?

All these questions can be expressed in terms of the following research hypotheses.

H1. Professional development activities are effective in learning ESP contents at some institutes of higher education.
H2. Professional development activities have effect to a great extent on learning ESP contents.
H3. Students have positive attitudes towards the use of professional development activities in learning ESP contents.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Reid (2003, p. 33) declared, “Attitudes are important to us because they cannot be neatly separated from study.” Attitude is considered as an essential factor influencing language performance (Visser, 2008, p. 127-137). Besides the intellectual perspective, the nature of language learning has psychological and social aspects
and depends primarily on the learners’ motivation and attitude to learn the target language (Padwick, 2010). Gardner and Lambert (1972) have concluded that the ability of the students to master a second language is not only influenced by the mental competence or, language skills, but also on the students’ attitudes and perceptions towards the target language. They also advocated that attitude concept could enhance the process of language learning, influencing the nature of student’s behaviors and beliefs towards the other language, its culture and community, and this will identify their tendency to acquire that language.

The information obtained from this study may be utilized to design and develop more effective professional development activities to improve students’ learning and their attitudes towards the effectiveness of the ESP contents. Collaborative research or project work should be supported by university teachers to enhance teachers’, especially novice teachers’ skills and strategies in their professional life. Also teachers themselves both novice and experienced should be open to embrace the latest development in the field of teaching English.

2. Review of Literature
Sparks (2006), Guskey (2003), Joyce and Showers (2002), and others compiled research on the attributes of effective professional developments. They found that professional development must be comprised of several specific components in order to engage the adult learner. Eaker, Dufour, and Burnett (2002) stated that an effective professional development experience allows administrators and teachers to reflect on facets of their administrative and pedagogical performance.

The approach to professional development that accompanied the reform movements of the 1990s and early 2000s required a more purposeful and strategic approach to professional development. Sparks (1997) identified the need for a shift from a fragmented, last-minute approach to a clear and coherent plan guided by the district’s strategic plan. Sparks observed this shift has forced the curriculum and staff development departments of school districts to become support departments for schools, instead of offering standard professional development to all buildings.

One of the positive impacts of professional development on both students and teachers is creating an educational environment to encourage teachers’ inputs in the professional development planning process that allows teachers and administrators to practice concepts and innovations and creates opportunities to receive feedbacks on practices (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003; Youngs, 2001). In 1990s, Ferguson (1991), Carpenter (1989) have identified the relationship between professional development experiences, teacher quality, and student achievement.

Effective professional development provides concrete strategies that has far reaching implications in increasing teachers’ professional capacities. Numerous studies point to the effectiveness of professional development in English Language Teaching setting and the ESP initiative began in 1950s and 1960s when there was an expansion of scientific, technical and economic activities on an international scale (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Also, this stage took place in the 1960s and early 1970s and was associated in particular with the work of Strevens (Halliday, Mclntosh and Strevens, 1964), Ewer (Ewer and Latorre, 1969) and Swales (1971) to show the importance of operating on the basic principle of English needed in one scientific field constituted a specific register different from those of other fields of science, or General English. Afterwards, Swales (1985), in fact, uses the development of English for Science and Technology (EST) to illustrate the development of ESP in general.

Wood and Thompson (1993) called for professional development based on research and best practice, but there does not seem to be much agreement in the field about what constitutes “best” practice. Six years later, Wilson and Berne (1999) stated that “what the field ‘knows’ about teacher learning is rather puzzling” (p.173).

According to Matsumura, Sartoris, Bickel and Garnier (2009), effective professional development should be authentic the participants to institute theories of educational practice to the classroom and school settings. A good professional development is contextually designed and situational in application. Job-embedded professional development provides real life applications in response to current challenges. For example, problems plaguing school districts across the nation differ from one another. School districts in
Border States are coping with large influx of immigrants every year or those in the mid-west and the south coping with large population of at risk students (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Trehearn (2010) examined professional development in three Nebraska public schools. For decades, the issue of professional development has been dissected, often resulting in unhealthy opposition between faculty and administration. Numerous studies have been conducted on teacher education, often with inconclusive or conflicting results. A review of literature illustrates how professional development has evolved through time, describing how governance, the role of the administration, strategic planning, and budget all affect the success of teacher education. This research study scrutinized four major themes that emerged as having direct influence on professional development for participating teachers: (1) shared responsibilities, (2) the roles of administrators and teachers, (3) forethought and preparation, and (4) expenditures. Methods and procedures of the dissertation study are detailed. Designed to be retrospective in nature, this investigation sought greater understanding of how teachers and administrators perceived the effectiveness of professional development in their schools. Because of the brevity of the study, proposal of extreme changes to professional development is not intended. Rather, the study is intended to corroborate similar studies’ findings or perhaps reveal new insights in the field. Findings of the study are scrutinized and interpretation of those findings show correlations to the review of literature and the aforementioned emerging themes. Conclusions include a comparison/contrast of teacher and administrator perspectives as well as a discussion on implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

To highlight the importance of students’ needs, Chostelidou (2011) presented an article in Needs-based course design to show the impact of general English knowledge on the effectiveness of an ESP teaching intervention. This paper was an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of a needs-based approach to ESP course design in the context of Greek tertiary education and to measure the impact of the influence of pre-existing English knowledge in relation to the students’ performance in ESP. The results thus, provide support for the efficacy of the adopted needs-based approach to syllabus design.

In addition, following studies highlight the importance of ESP in different educational settings. Hassaskhah (2006) explains the drawbacks of the present paradigm in which ESP works in Iran, and stresses the need for rethinking and reappraisal. She argues that procedures followed in ESP classes do not fulfill the students' needs, and mentions some problems with ESP classes: The language produced in class is language for display, and not intended to have any real communicative content. Study skills have no role in such classrooms. The teaching is exam-oriented; the emphasis is on learners' preparation for tests instead of focusing on the long-term English learning for life-long needs.

At the university context, Chien and Hsu (2010) has carried out a case study of incorporating ESP instruction into the university English course with the aim of investigating whether or not participants of the ESP course have shown a greater improvement in English proficiency based on test scores and whether or not there is any difference in their attitude toward the percentage of the university ‘freshman English’ course materials devoted to a specific area of study between participants and non-participants. The most interesting result is that the suggested percentage of course material correlates with how much the students have improved in English proficiency by the end of the course.

Litton (2012) investigated the effectiveness of ESP courses for business administration students at Community College of Jazan University in Saudi Arabia and found that the existing ESP course is not based on students' work place needs. Furthermore, they reported that ESP in Malaysia needs to be redesigned to meet the demand of the job market. ESP courses are getting popularized in Middle East, East Asian countries, Iran, Lebanon and South Asia due to global trade and career growth. As a result, universities in these countries started offering ESP recently.

Aylazyana and Obdalovab (2014) carried out a study and focused their attention on the design of an ESP course, aimed at instructing adult learners, who were university lecturers, teachers and specialists. They developed a course based on the student-centered approach to meet the needs and individual professional interests of the target category of learners. Also, they discussed the ways in which the course could boost professional competence development in the context of the multi-professional environment of a modern polytechnic university undergoing changes.
Another study was done by Soodman Afshar and his colleagues (2014) to investigate vocabulary learning strategies adopted undergraduate students, EAP students and EFL majors studying, at Bu-Ali Sina University-Hamedan, Iran. This finding implied that both material developers and EAP as well as EFL teachers should make students conscious of various vocabulary learning strategies. Further, the most and the least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies by the two groups were specified, some of which were commonly shared by both groups revealing the fact that certain vocabulary learning strategies might be quite popular with all types of learners while some others might not be so. Notwithstanding the fact that the implementation of the professional development in teaching and learning ESP courses in its early days, it has attracted the attention of many researchers. The upsurge of interest in professional development and ESP has produced a noticeable and rich literature. Many ESP practitioners are publishing books devoted entirely to the subject of ESP materials at the universities. It is, therefore, justifiable to assume that the literature reviewed here does not show the whole picture of professional development and ESP. Rather, it only opens a new window onto the field.

3.0. Method of Research
3.1. Design of the Study
This study was conducted thru a mixed methods approach using qualitative and quantitative facets to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of professional development activities and to determine their effects on learning ESP materials at two institutes of higher education. These courses were assessed from the perspectives of the Iranian ESP students to attain the aforementioned objectives.

Based on Hatch and Farhady (1981), the design of the present study is a subcategory of True Experimental Design, called Posttest Only Control Group, but with a subtle difference in that there is no pretest and only posttest. They stated that this design has three main characteristics:

a. A control group (groups) is present
b. The students are randomly selected and assigned to the groups
c. A pretest is administered to capture the initial differences between the groups

It is worth noting that in the Posttest Only Control Group design both experimental and control groups are assigned randomly and also the decision as to which group will be the experimental group is also decided randomly (e.g. by the flip of coin).

3.2 Participants
The population from which the subjects of the present study were drawn included sophomores and juniors majoring in architecture and computer science at two institutes in Shiraz, Fars province: Eram and Apadana Higher Education institutes. The sample of this study comprises a total of 240 participants, of whom four intact groups in the academic year of 2015-2016 were selected for the present study. More importantly, 8 students in the experimental groups and 9 students in the control groups were absent for the final exam. For the purposes of illustration, Table 1 shows the distribution of the participants of the present study in details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. The Distribution of the Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58 (Experimental)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 (Control)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 (Experimental)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 (Control)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86 (Experimental)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92 (Control)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 (Experimental)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 (Control)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69 (Experimental)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 (Control)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43 (Experimental)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 (Control)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2. Instruments

In an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development activities on the students’ performance concerning learning ESP contents, two research tools are employed since testing is a technique commonly adopted as part of course evaluation. In order to gather data, two different instruments were used in the present study, a description of these instruments appears below:

1. A 20-item survey questionnaire developed by the investigator measuring students’ perceptions,

In order to save the validity, the researcher first tried to gain experts’ opinion through distributing the questionnaire among 4 instructors practicing TEFL at the Islamic Azad University Shiraz Branch. The questionnaire was, then, administered to long-standing experienced English university professors, the advisor and the reader of the present study, to judge whether the items were suitable for the objectives of the study and asked for their comments. The reliability of the questionnaire was achieved through a pilot study at the Institute of Apadana Higher Education due to the ease of access. The final version of the research instrument was developed based on feedback on this draft. The researcher distributed and administered 120 questionnaires at the 2 institutes in the educational year of 2016. The total number of questionnaires the researcher could collect finally and was able to run the study with was 112 since 8 participants of the study were absent in the 13th session and also for the final exam in the experimental group.

2. An ESP post-test developed by the investigator measuring students’ achievement

The ESP posttest consists of two different parts, 20 multiple-choice questions and written questions as translation part. KR21 is used to show the reliability of the multiple-choice questions and interrater correlation is also used to manifest the correlation between ESP posttest scores for the written part. As it is shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4, the alpha coefficient for the four items is .864, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Reliability Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach's Alpha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.864</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Summary Item Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item Means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As it is illustrated in Table 5, the Pearson’s r and Spearman’s r for the correlation between the first rater and the second is .713 and .729, respectively. So, it can be concluded that these two sets of scores are reliable.

### 3.2.1. Survey Questionnaire

One of the steps of the present study was to measure students’ perceptions toward deploying professional development activities in ESP courses. The investigator had to investigate whether the subjects took advantage of the mentioned activities in learning ESP materials. As professional development activities were new to students, a further problem was the subjects’ willingness and their proficiency that were mainly under focus in this study. In other words, the job of the investigator was not only to identify the subjects’ level of proficiency but to do so on the basis of their willingness to agree to cooperate in the present study. Moreover, practical considerations made it even more urgent to hit the two goals with one shot.

In addition to its importance in the classification of the subjects of the study into experimental and control groups, regardless of their proficiency levels, a 20-item survey questionnaire was used for the validation of the main instrument of the present research to measure the willingness, perceptions, and also their level of learning via the implementation of the professional development activities during the term.

It is worth noting that the questionnaire was adapted from a combination of questions gathered from two previous studies, one of which is “Motivation and Attitudes of Iranian Undergraduate EFL Students towards Learning English” by Chalak and Kassaian (2010), and the other “EFL Students’ Attitudes towards Learning English Language: The Case of Libyan Secondary School Students”, by Zainol Abidin, Pour Mohammadi and Alz wari, (2012). It is worth mentioning that some adjustments to the wording of a few items have been made to make them fit the language and application of the questionnaire.

### 3.2.2. An ESP Post-test Developed By the Investigator Measuring Students' Achievement

An ESP test instrument, which is specifically developed to reflect the objectives of the course and the syllabus, is used for measures after the teaching intervention by deploying professional development activities and was devised to all students in the experimental and the control group. As it was mentioned earlier, the investigator had to determine whether the subjects have overcome their learning difficulties in learning ESP materials during the semester. To this end, a step was taken to take posttest at the end of the academic semester and compare the scores of the four groups to see whether professional development activities were effective in learning ESP materials during the semester.

### 3.3. Procedures

The results of students’ final exams in experimental group were compared to the results of students' exams in the control group to assess the effect of classroom observation on students' outcomes. Prior to
the experiment, 120 participants (experimental groups) were given the survey questionnaire measuring students’ perceptions in ESP courses and the effectiveness of the professional development activities at the end of the spring semester. More importantly, the survey questionnaire was used to consider the degree of the students' agreement with the professional development activities at the end of the semester.

3.4. Statistical Analysis
The questionnaires of students' perceptions were collected and the data were entered into SPSS statistics 22. Mean scores and frequencies were calculated for the quantitative responses. Independent sample T-test was used both to measure the differences between the responses and post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. The data analyses were based on 112 students' responses in total. The expected responses of the questionnaire were based on a 5-point Likert scale, analyzed by Chi-square, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". The participants' responses were entered into SPSS statistics 22 program. These responses were coded as Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), No Idea (3), Disagree (4), and Strongly Disagree (5). Subsequently, the data were analyzed by utilizing descriptive statistics tools available in SPSS statistics 22 to calculate various statistics for the given variables.

4.0. Results and Discussion
A survey was administered to all of the student participants to obtain personal information and their attitudes towards deploying professional development activities in ESP course. Information about the participants' age, gender, major, education degree, institute of higher education, the teacher, semester was obtained from the first section of the questionnaire.
As shown in Tables 6 and 7, students' ages in the sample ranged between 20 and 44; the mean is 24.27 and the mode, 21. Very few were older than 25, which was understandable since the majority of the participants in the study were in the first four semesters of their undergraduate studies.

Table 6. Students' Age (Overall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>112</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td></td>
<td>2718</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Z</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>24.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (list wise)</td>
<td>112</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 shows that 61.6% of the participants of this study are male and 38.4% are female out of 112. It is worth mentioning that 112 out of 120 were the total number of participants because 8 students were absent both in their final exam, posttest, and 13th session, in which the attitude survey questionnaire was administered.

Table 8. Students' Gender Distribution

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Participants of the study consist of both undergraduates and graduates in Apadana and Eram institutes of higher education. As Table 9 illustrates 86, 76.8%, and 26, 23.2%, of the students in the sample are sophomore and junior, respectively. Most of juniors didn't pass this course before. So, it was the last chance for them to pass this credit and they enjoyed sophomores' classes.

**Table 9. Participants’ Education Degree**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>61.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to make clear that majors of both experimental and control groups were architecture and computer science. So, 4 groups were assigned for the present study, 2 groups of juniors and sophomores as experimental ones from two mentioned majors and also 2 groups of juniors and sophomores as control ones, as well. In addition, teachers of 4 groups were different.

The next part is a 20-item survey questionnaire to show the effectiveness of the implementation of professional development activities in learning ESP contents. The following Table (Table 10) shows professional development activities of the present study includes conference, video conference, study groups, internet research and professional portfolio. As it was mentioned, coding theme was done to equally and fairly distribute various items of five professional development activities (see Appendix).

Based on the frequencies of the students’ agreement with different activities (see Appendix), Table 10 reveals that conference has the lowest mean, 7.8125. Furthermore, it could also be inferred that students were motivated to learn ESP contents via conference rather than other aforementioned activities. On the other hand, study groups have the higher mean, namely students were less motivated to take advantage of this activity in learning ESP contents.

**Table 10. Descriptive Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of the students' responses to the 20-item questionnaire are given in Table 10. The majority of students agreed that conference provides them with a rich learning environment and it can be used for learning specific purposes (see Figure 1.). Disagreement with some items was also found. The majority of participants disagreed that study groups and internet research can be used for learning ESP contents. Video conference and professional development are approximately equal (see Figure 1.).

Moreover, Chi-square test was conducted to examine the effectiveness of professional development activities, a 20-item, Likert-type frequency response questionnaire was used (see Appendix). The survey questionnaire is aimed at measuring students' perceptions towards professional development activities.
and the students responded to each item statement by indicating their agreement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = No Idea, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36.10</td>
<td>13.757</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35.05</td>
<td>10.495</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Idea</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.75</td>
<td>5.748</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>10.865</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>6.999</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 reveals the mean, number of items, minimum and also maximum of responses for the items that measured participants' perceptions regarding the impact of professional development activities. A Likert-type scale was used for these items. One hundred twelve participants responded to the questionnaire survey, and the highest means of both "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" represent that participants strongly agreed with the implementation of the abovementioned activities in ESP contexts (see Figure 2.).

Figure 2. Students' Agreement with Professional Development Activities

4.1.1. Students' ESP Scores

In the quantitative analysis, to find out whether there was a significant difference between experimental and control groups in the implementation of professional development in ESP context, independent t-test was conducted. Table 12 shows differences in the mean scores of the experimental and control groups. As it is shown in Table 12, the number of participants in experimental and control group is 112 and 111, which illustrates the number of absentness in posttest.

Table 12. ESP Posttest Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the SPSS output shows in Table 13, the p-value is less than the Alpha level (0.05). So, it is concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in the participants' posttest scores (see Figure 3.).

**Table 13. Independent Samples Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equal variances assumed</th>
<th>T-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.62681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>215.381</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.62681</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3. Experimental and Control Groups**

As the SPSS output shows in Table 13, the p-value is less than the Alpha level (0.05). So, it is concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in the participants' posttest scores (see Figure 3.).
The study hypothesized that professional development activities affect teaching and learning ESP contents at some institutes of higher education. This section contains results from Chi-square tests of equal percentages to determine if professional development activities were effective in learning specific materials. Also, independent t-test was conducted to show the difference between the achievement of experimental and control groups in leaning ESP materials via the implementation of professional development activities.

4.1.1. The Effect of Professional Development Activities on Learning ESP Contents

**Research Question 1:** Are professional development activities effective in learning ESP contents at some institutes of higher education?

H1: Professional development activities are effective in learning ESP contents at some institutes of higher education.

Frequencies of responses were calculated for all items of the questionnaire (see Appendix). The frequencies were used in Chi-square tests of equal percentages to determine if there was sufficient evidence that indicated the efficiency of professional development activities in learning ESP contents. As illustrated in Table 10 and Figure 1, the frequencies for the items showed that the majority of participants indicated the implementation of professional development activities especially conference video conference and professional portfolio had effect to a great extent on their ESP learning. So, the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do professional development activities have effect on learning ESP contents?

H2: Professional development activities have effect to a great extent on learning ESP contents.

Means of ESP scores of both experimental and control groups are the conclusive evidence to support the effectiveness of the implementation of professional development activities in learning ESP contents during the term. According to Tables 12 and 13 and also Figure 3, the independent t-test reveals that the mean differences of the ESP posttest scores of experimental and control groups are statistically significant, which considers the great extent of the effectiveness of professional development activities in learning ESP contents.

**Research Question 3:** Do students have positive attitudes towards the use of professional development activities in learning ESP contents?

H3: Students have positive attitudes towards the use of professional development activities in learning ESP contents.

According to Table 11, it is observed that most participants agreed with implementing professional development activities for learning ESP contents at some institutes of higher education. So, the means of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" shows the respondents' positive attitudes towards abovementioned activities in improving their English specific knowledge.

5. General Discussion

Concerning the first research hypothesis, Tables 10 and 11 reveal that professional development activities make learning ESP contents easier. Moreover, Table 10 highlights the role of some activities in leaning ESP materials such as conference, video conference, and internet research, respectively. Among mentioned professional development activities, study groups had the lower mean and respondents were less motivated to do it during the semester. Talking about the second research hypothesis, Table 12 reveals that experimental groups' mean is higher than control group, which shows the significant effect of the implementation of professional development activities in learning ESP materials. Regarding the alpha level of the posttest score, Table 13 reveals that there was a statistically significant difference between the achievement of experimental and control groups. Thus, first and second null research questions can be rejected due to students' achievement and their progress in learning specific materials via professional development activities.

The third research hypothesis deals with the participants' perceptions towards professional development activities in ESP courses. Table 11 and Figure 2 indicate that respondents highly agreed with professional development activities. Table 11 goes into details and reveals that students are motivated to try useful
and effective activities in learning ESP contents. Thus, the third hypothesis cannot be retained. To answer research questions broadly, it can be said that professional development activities have been highly effective for the participants in learning ESP courses.

6. Conclusion
The quantitative and qualitative findings of this research reveal that mostly students prefer to learn new materials via new methods or be involved in various classroom activities instead of attending classes and listening to the teacher and just passing that course. Contrary to the previous semesters, teachers, who helped the researcher in conducting the present study, reported that taking part in different professional development activities made students more motivated to attend ESP classes and helped them change their perceptions towards learning ESP materials just by translating texts and memorizing the great bulk of vocabularies and sentences. Hence, the strongest gain for the students of this study was improvement of their specific knowledge related to their major and profession in the future. And also, it might indicate that such activities might enhance their abilities in their profession and field of study.

REFERENCES


Appendix: Frequency Analysis of the 20-item Students’ Perception Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VIDEO CONFERENCE</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Watching scientific movies in English language</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes learning materials easier during the term.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 I became highly motivated in learning new materials by watching movies related to my major.</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Watching English films related to my major was a</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cause of stress for me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 My teacher’s explanation while watching movies</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>related to the unit's topic helped me to comprehension new materials.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDY GROUPS</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 When I do not understand the lesson's subject in</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language, I face difficulty in presenting it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to my classmates.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 When my teacher sometimes asked us to get into</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>groups of two or three, I got more involved in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning that material.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 I was stressed out When I was got into groups of</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two or three with my classmates during the term.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 I helped my classmates understand the ESP</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>material when I was got into groups.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERNET RESEARCH</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Conducting internet research caused me to be more</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motivated in learning this semester's course.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Due to the lack of familiarity with the use of</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English texts, I am not interested in doing internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>researches.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 I learned how to do internet research correctly with</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my teacher's help during the semester.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 I do not think doing internet researches can be of</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>great help in learning this term's ESP materials.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### CONFERENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Giving a speech by my teacher and my classmates helped me a lot to learn ESP materials during the semester.</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I was more self-confident by providing the summary of the taught lesson during the semester.</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Taking notes of presented materials by my teacher in conferences helped me to comprehend the unit's subject better.</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Taking notes in conferences make me to concentrate more on presented materials.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Owing to a large number of students in ESP class, the delivery and collecting the professional portfolio by my teacher didn't help me learn new materials.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The delivery of the professional portfolio to my teacher help me identify my weaknesses and strengths in ESP materials.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Correcting my mistakes and problems by my teacher was a great help to me for learning ESP materials after giving portfolio during and the end of the semester.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Collecting class activities after the class by my teacher made more motivated.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SD- Strongly Disagree    D-Disagree    NI-No Idea    A-Agree    SA-Strongly Agree
A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF READING SHORT STORIES ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS’ VOCABULARY LEARNING

Fatemeh Salimi, Alireza Bonyadi

ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS: READING, SHORT STORY, VOCABULARY.

1. Introduction
According to Graves (2000), short stories are among the most effective reading texts for the teaching of different linguistic items including vocabulary items and grammatical structures. As he noted, since short stories are more directly related to the language learners’ lives, they are more interesting for the learners as reading tasks and as free reading texts. As Stahl (1999) noted, among different reading text genres, the short story has not received enough attention in research studies. As he explained, in addition to the research studies, most of the curriculum designers have neglected short stories in the language teaching materials in both the second and foreign language contexts.
A review of the literature regarding the use of short stories in language classrooms shows that these stories have been mostly employed in order to investigate the learners’ general comprehension. That is, most of the research studies have investigated their effectiveness for the learners’ general understanding (Carrel & Grabe, 2002). However, few studies have investigated their effect on the students’ language
learning (Grabe & Stoller, 2001). Finally, there is not any research study which has compared the
effectiveness of short stories for the language learners’ vocabulary learning. Therefore, it can be argued
that, there is a gap in the literature regarding the role of short stories as a teaching instrument in second
and foreign language contexts. Based on the lack of information regarding this aspect of second language
acquisition, there is a need for a research study that tries to deal with this gap in a foreign language
context such as the EFL context of Iran.

The present study tried to provide more illuminating information about the reading skill in the EFL
context of Iran. Based on this aim, the study focused on the use of short story as one of the most
important reading text genres in the field of second language acquisition. More specifically, the present
study investigated the effect of reading short stories on intermediate male and female Iranian EFL
learners’ vocabulary learning, and by doing so tried to provide more information about: a) the
effectiveness of the short story as a teaching instrument in the EFL context of Iran; b) the role of short
stories in the language learners’ grammar learning which has been neglected in the related literature; and
c) the comparison between the effects of short stories on the EFL learners’ vocabulary and grammar
learning.

2. Review of the Related Literature
2.1. The Definition of Reading
The reading skill has been differently conceived and defined by second language researchers. Richards
and Schmidt (2010, p. 483) stated that:
Reading can be defined as the process by which the meaning of a written text is understood. When this is
done silently, it is known as silent reading. The understanding that results is called reading
comprehension. Reading employs many different cognitive skills, including letter and word recognition,
knowledge of syntax, and recognition of text types and text structure. Comprehension that is based on
clues in the text is referred to as bottom-up processing, and comprehension that makes use of information
outside of the text is known as top-down processing.
Similarly, Goodman (1967, p. 127) noted that:
Reading is a selective process. It involves partial available minimal language cues selected from
perceptual input on the basis of the reader’s expectations. Efficient reading does not result from precise
perception and identification of all elements, but from skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues
necessary to produce guesses that are right the first time”.

2.2. Short Story as an Important Genre of Reading Tasks
According to Nagy and Anderson (1984), short stories are regarded to be one of the most important
reading text genres because they take a short time to finish, do not create any difficulty for the learners’
comprehension, and are very attractive for both the language teachers and students because of their
subject matter. Moreover, as these researchers explained, the use of short stories may help the language
teacher integrate the receptive skill of reading with the productive skills of writing and speaking which
may in turn help the language teachers and syllabus designers to create certain reading tasks for the
Teaching of all of the language skills simultaneously.
Moreover as Collie and Slater (1991) stated, short stories involve authentic conversations in which the
characters employ the language along with its contextual functions and in this way are very helpful to
teach different speech acts along with their different grammatical structures and vocabulary functions.
Moreover, as they further explained, short stories are one of the best tools for the teaching of different
learning strategies since they involve authentic texts. That is, since in these stories the vocabulary items
and language functions are provided in the easily comprehended contexts, the learners learn to guess the
meanings of unfamiliar words by the help of contextual factors.

2.3. Short Stories and Vocabulary Learning
Brabham and Villaume (2002, p. 266) stated that “a serious commitment to decreasing gaps in
vocabulary and comprehension includes instruction that allows all students to learn and use strategies
that will enable them to discover and deepen understandings of words during independent reading”.
According to Rupley, Logan, and Nichols (1999), reading tasks help language teachers to teach the new vocabulary items in authentic situational contexts. According to them, this kind of vocabulary teaching has certain advantages in the academic contexts. As they explained, since the learners guess the meaning from the context they develop critical thinking skills which are necessary in various kinds of linguistic tasks. Moreover, this kind of teaching is more appropriate based on the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in which meaning comprehension is more important than learning the formal aspects of the language.

As Nagy and Anderson (1984) stated, short stories are one of the most important reading text genres in language classrooms since they involve interesting topics, authentic situational contexts, real conversations among different characters, cultural information about the second language, different linguistic functions along with their grammatical structures and vocabulary items, and sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic information about the second language. Moreover, as they noted, because of their short length and simple structure, they are very interesting for both the language teachers and learners. As they concluded, because of these characteristics, short stories are one of the best text genres in which the learners have the opportunity to learn the new vocabulary items in authentic contexts.

3. Method
3.1. Research Question
The present study tried to answer the following research question:

**Research Question:** Does reading short stories have any significant effects on Iranian junior high school students' vocabulary learning?

3.2. Design of the Study
In the present study, the researcher tried to determine whether there was a probable cause and effect between reading short stories and the language learners’ vocabulary learning. Based on this aim, she used 2 intact classrooms and tried to control the extraneous variables of the study including their gender. Moreover, she administered pretests to the experimental group and the control group and manipulated the treatment conditions by providing a special kind of instruction for the experimental group of the study and withholding it from the control group. Finally, she evaluated the outcome measures of the study by administering a posttest to the experimental and control groups. Based on these features, it can be argued that the present study had all of the characteristics of the true experiments except the random assignment and therefore it had a quasi-experimental design.

3.3. Participants
In this study, 40 ninth grade elementary-level EFL learners (20 male & 20 female) from Panezdah Khordad Halaj village junior high school, Urmia (Iran) were selected as the participants of the study. All of the participants were native speakers of Kurdish and ranged in age from 13 to 17. They were selected from 2 intact classrooms. In each of these classrooms there were 10 male and 10 female EFL learners.

3.4. Materials
The following instruments were employed in the present study:

3.4.1. Vocabulary Pretest
A vocabulary pretest comprising of 40 multiple-choice vocabulary items made by the researcher was administered to the vocabulary experimental group and vocabulary control group to investigate their knowledge of the vocabulary items before the treatment. The vocabulary items of the pretest were selected from among the vocabulary items that were presented in treatment short stories. The learners answered the pretest questions in 40 minutes during their regular class time.

3.4.2. Short Story Reading Texts
The researcher used ten short story reading texts in the treatment of this study. All of the texts were selected from *Steps to Understanding* (Hill, 1980) which is a book that provides short stories for different proficiency levels. All the texts were nearly 150 words in length and were accompanied by three comprehension questions chosen from among the comprehension questions provided by the source book of the readings. The administration of the short stories began one week after the administration of the pretest. Each short story took about twenty minutes of the class time and all of the stories were administered during five weeks.
3.4.3. Vocabulary Posttest
In order to investigate the effects of reading short stories on the vocabulary learning of students, the vocabulary pretest was again administered to the experimental vocabulary group and control vocabulary group as a posttest one week after the end of the treatment of the study. The administration of the posttest took about 40 minutes.

3.5. Procedure and Data Analysis
In this study, first, 40 ninth grade elementary-level EFL learners (20 male & 20 female) from Panezdah Khordad Halaj village junior high school, Urmia (Iran) were selected as the participants of the study. These learners were selected from 2 intact classrooms with each class consisting of 10 male and 10 female learners. Next, a vocabulary pretest was administered to the vocabulary experimental group and vocabulary control group to evaluate their vocabulary knowledge one week before the beginning of the treatment.

During the treatment of the study, 10 short stories were given to the learners of the experimental vocabulary group during ten sessions in five weeks (each week two sessions) with each session lasting about 100 minutes. The learners of this group were asked to read these short stories and answer their comprehension questions. Moreover, the learners of this group were asked to write a summary for each of the short stories. However, the vocabulary control group did not receive the short stories. Instead, the researcher deductively taught the vocabulary items of the short stories in the vocabulary control group during ten sessions.

Then, one week after the end of the treatment, the vocabulary experimental group and vocabulary control group took the vocabulary pretest as a posttest, and their results were compared to determine the effects of the treatment of the study on the learners’ vocabulary learning. Based on the aims of the study Independent-samples t-test and Paired-samples t-test were employed for analyzing the data and answering the research questions of the study.

4. Data Analysis
Based on the aims of the present study both types of the T-test (paired-samples t-test & independent-samples t-test) were employed for analyzing the data and answering the research question of the study. The research question of the study aimed to determine whether reading short stories has any significant effects on Iranian junior high school students’ vocabulary learning. A paired T-test was employed to compare the results of the vocabulary group on the pretest and the posttest. Table 1 provides a summary of the descriptive statistics of the vocabulary group on the pretest and the posttest.

Table 1
Comparison between the Performance of the Vocabulary Group on the Pretest and the Posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest Scores</td>
<td>14.80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.764</td>
<td>1.512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Scores</td>
<td>31.85</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.020</td>
<td>1.346</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 1 reveals, there was an increase in the vocabulary group’ mean score on the posttest (M=31.85), in comparison with its mean score on the pretest (M=14.80). However, in order to determine whether this increase was statistically significant the result of the paired-samples T-test had to be examined. The result of this test is provided in Table 2 below:

Table 2
Paired-Samples T-Test of the Performance of the Vocabulary Group on the Pretest and the Posttest
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Scores</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 2, there was a significant difference between the performance of the vocabulary group on the pretest and the posttest since the p value .000 (marked as Sig) was less than the level of significance .05. This significant difference is visually presented in Figure 1 below:

![Figure 1. Comparison between the performance of the vocabulary group on the pretest and the posttest](image)
However, in order to make sure that the significant difference between the performance of the vocabulary group on the pretest and the posttest was the result of the treatment of the study, the results of this group on the posttest were compared with the results of the control group on the posttest. Table 3 provides a summary of the descriptive statistics of the results of these groups on the posttest.

Table 3
Comparison between the Performances of the Vocabulary Group and the Control Group on the Posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Group</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31.85</td>
<td>6.020</td>
<td>1.346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.65</td>
<td>3.703</td>
<td>.828</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 3 shows, the mean value of the vocabulary group on the posttest (M=31.85) was higher than the mean value of the control group on the posttest (M=19.65). Therefore, the vocabulary group had a better performance on the posttest in comparison with the control group. However, in order to determine whether the difference between the performances of these groups was significant an independent-samples T-test was employed. The results of this test are provided in Table 4 below:

Table 4.4
Independent–Samples T-Test of the Performances of the Vocabulary Group and the Control Group on the Posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Scores</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>6.420</td>
<td>7.720</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>12.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>7.720</td>
<td>31.578</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>12.200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on these results, there was a significant difference between the performances of the vocabulary group and the control group on the posttest since the p value .000 (marked as Sig) was less than the level of significance .05. This significant difference is visually presented in Figure 2 below:
Based on these results it was argued that, reading short stories had a significant positive effect on Iranian junior high school students’ vocabulary learning.

5. Discussion

The research question of the present study tried to determine the effects of reading short stories on Iranian junior high school students’ vocabulary learning. The results of the data analysis revealed that reading short stories had a significant positive effect on Iranian junior high school students’ vocabulary development. These results are in line with previous research studies (e.g. Dillard, 2005; Dixon-Krauss, 2002; Rupley, Logan, & Nichols, 1999). According to Nagy (1988, p. 17), “through wide independent reading, language learners are able to become familiar with vocabulary items that rarely occur in spoken form of the language and can grasp their meanings because of the context in which they are used”. According to her, learning words from context is an important avenue of vocabulary growth and it deserves attention and practice in the language classrooms.

According to Walters (2006), wide-reading in the second language can be motivated by interesting L2 texts. As he noted, short stories are one of the best genres of interesting reading texts in EFL classrooms which can be employed to teach different aspects of the second language including its vocabulary items. As he further argued, the most important advantage of short stories is that they help the learners to consciously pay attention to the new vocabulary items in the text. The importance of attention in language learning and especially L2 vocabulary learning is clear in Schmidt’ (1990) noticing hypothesis. According to Schmidt (1990, p. 134):

The concept of attention is necessary in order to understand virtually every aspect of SLA, including the development of interlanguages over time, variation within interlanguage at particular points in time, the development of L2 fluency, the role of individual differences such as motivation, aptitude and learning strategies in L2 learning, and the ways interaction, negotiation for meaning, and all forms of instruction contribute to language learning.
Therefore, it can be noted that, in the present study short stories had a significant effect on the language learners’ vocabulary development since they helped the learners to pay conscious attention to the meaning of the new vocabulary items and to guess and remember their meanings through the use of meaningful contexts of the short stories.

6. Limitations of the Study
The present study had some limitations which should be considered in the future studies:
1) The present study did not control the language learners’ age;
2) The present study only involved the Kurdish learners of English;
3) The present study only involved EFL learners at the elementary proficiency level.

7. Suggestions for Further Research
Before wide-reaching conclusions about the effects of reading short stories on language learning can be made, more studies in this line of research need to be done. For example, future research studies should include larger samples of EFL learners and should control the language learners’ age. Moreover, the future studies have to investigate the effects of reading short stories on the vocabulary and grammar learning of learners from different native language backgrounds. Finally, these studies have to investigate the effects of reading short stories on the language learning of learners from different proficiency levels.

8. Conclusion
The present study tried to determine the effects of reading short stories on Iranian junior high school students’ vocabulary learning. The results of the data analysis revealed that reading short stories had significant positive effects on these students’ vocabulary development. It was argued that, short stories were effective for language learners’ vocabulary learning since they helped the learners to pay conscious attention to the meaning of the new vocabulary items and to guess and remember their meanings through the use of meaningful contexts of the short stories.

It is recommended that, the EFL teachers should provide the students in the lower levels of proficiency with materials including short stories which have a better chance of attracting their conscious attention to the new vocabulary items. Moreover, it is recommended that, these teachers should provide the language learners with appropriate short stories which involve the grammatical points that are covered in the students’ second language textbooks. Finally, these teachers are recommended to involve explicit methods of teaching grammatical points along with their presentation within the short story texts.

REFERENCES


THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING AMONG IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT
THE PRESENT PAPER WAS AN ATTEMPT TO INVESTIGATE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE, AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING AMONG IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS. TO DO SO THE RESEARCHER SELECTED 100 EFL STUDENTS FROM AMONG A POPULATION OF 150 EFL LEARNERS STUDYING IN ARIANA LANGUAGE INSTITUTE IN AZARSHAHR. THE SELECTED LEARNERS RECEIVED THE QUESTIONNAIRES OF WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE (WTC), AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING (SDL). THE DATA WERE COLLECTED AND ANALYZED. IN THIS REGARD MEASURE OF PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENT WAS USED TO ANALYZE THE DATA. THEN THE FINDINGS WERE REPORTED AND CHECKED AGAINST THE RESEARCH QUESTION OF THE STUDY. THE RESULTS REVEALED THAT THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING AMONG IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS. THE FINDINGS OF THE PRESENT STUDY COULD HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR EFL TEACHERS AND LEARNERS IN THE IRANIAN CONTEXT.

KEY WORDS: WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE (WTC), SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

1. Introduction
Most second language learners spend a considerable time acquiring information and learning new skills. The rapidity of change, the continuous creation of new knowledge, and an ever-widening access to information make such acquisitions necessary. Much of this learning takes place at the learner's initiative, even if available through formal settings. A common label given to such activity is self-directed learning (Grabe, 1991). In essence, “self-directed learning is seen as any study form in which individuals have primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and even evaluating the effort” (Gibbons, 2002, p.12). Some confusion still existing about self-directed learning and its present status within the domain of ELT assert that a coherent theory is not available for the emergence of self-directed learning. Candy (1991) outlines some useful dimensions of a theory and cautions about the often unrecognized dichotomy that exists between self-directed learning as a process and as a goal. Long (1989) also urges that any self-directed learning theory building be examined in terms of sociological, pedagogical, and psychological dimensions. These controversies in the field have led to a number of studies which have been aimed at reaching to the consensus of the nature on strategies in different areas in order to examine (Self Directed Learning) SDL for EFL Iranian intermediate learners. However, Long (1989, 1994, 1995) has tried to provide the ELT community with a self-directed learning theory which mostly concentrates on Self-efficacy and Self-planned learning.
Within the body of FLA research an emerging, propensity factor that has attracted recent attention is willingness to communicate (WTC), which is defined as "the intention to initiate communication, given a choice" (MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, & Conrad 2001, p. 369). Willingness to communicate (WTC) is also defined as the extent to which learners are prepared to initiate communication when they have a choice.
It constitutes a factor believed to lead to individual differences in language learning. A lot of WTC issues have been researched and documented in the FLA and SLA domain (e.g., Kang, 2005; McCroskey & Baer, 1985; McCroskey, 1992; MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei, & Noels, 1998; MacIntyre, 2007; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987; Yashima, 2002). Meanwhile the relationship between willingness to communicate and some other specific learning strategies such as self-directed learning or the cognitive concepts such as critical thinking requires more research. Regarding the literature on second/foreign language development, willingness to communicate and self-directed learning, it is assumed that these two constructs are closely connected. Thus, it might seem reasonable to investigate the relationship, if any, that might exist between willingness to communicate, and self-directed learning among Iranian EFL learners at the upper intermediate level of language proficiency.

2. Literature review
2.1 Theoretical Background to the Study

The present section deals with the theoretical issues pertained to willingness to communicate, and self-directed learning. Meanwhile the specific discussions pointed out here will be focusing on the EFL and ESL contexts.

**Willingness to Communicate (WTC)**

The starting points of the WTC construct are in the researches on the first language (L1) communication (McCroskey and Baer, 1985). The scale was initially introduced as an endeavor aiming to quantify the respondent's inclination to approach or abstain from starting communication (McCroskey and Richmond, 1987). The early form of the scale in the interim depended on Burgoon's (1976), as refered to in Berry and Woods (2007, p.352) unwillingness to convey scale, with the exception of that the construct is worded in positive terms and accept the respondent is mindful of his/her own particular methodology/shirking propensities.

McCroskey, et al. on the other hand, connected his prior structure of Communication Apprehension, which is generally characterized as trepidation or tension in oral communication and which is viewed as one of the principle issues underlying WTC, into the second language setting, including Japan (McCroskey, Gudykunst, and Nishida, 1985). McCroskey, Fayer, and Richmond (1985) utilized the scale as a part of concentrating on the levels of Communication Apprehension too.

In the region of second language (L2) WTC research, MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei, and Noels (1998) consolidated communication researches on in L1 WTC and inspiration ponders in L2, and added to a conceptualized model made up of twelve variables, some of which were conjectured to impact L2 learners' WTC, the component that was estimated to in the long run lead to their communication practices. MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, and Conrad (2001) concentrated on eagerness to convey as a measure of social backing, and language learning introductions of inundation students. Construct basically in light of MacIntyre et al's. model, Yashima (2002), one of only a handful few second language procurement specialists who has researched WTC, inspected how singular contrast variables, for example, state of mind (worldwide stance), English learning inspiration, and English communication certainty, impact WTC in English in the Japanese setting.

Matsuoka (2004) concentrated on WTC among the undergrads in Japan both in L1 and L2. Matsuoka and Evans (2005) contended that ability to convey assumes a critical part in the second language advancement of Japanese nursing students. As displayed in MacIntyre (2007) WTC is an unpredictable develop, affected by various other individual distinction variables, for example, 'communication tension', 'perceived communication capability' and 'perceived behavioral control'. Macintyre, Clement, Dornyei, and Noels (1998) displayed a schematic model of the WTC build demonstrating different layers of variables, (for example, those recently said) that bolster into WTC. As such WTC is seen as a last request variable, dictated by different elements, and the prompt predecessor of communication conduct. Significant examination exertion has gone into the endeavor to approve this model.

It is likely, then again, that the exact example of variables affecting WTC is not altered but rather circumstance subordinate. As Yashima (2002) noticed "a careful examination of what it means to learn a
language in a particular context is necessary before applying a model developed in a different context" (p. 62). Yashima's own study examined the WTC model in Japanese EFL connection. Utilizing basic mathematical statement demonstrating, Yashima (2002) demonstrated that WTC figured in both an aberrant way between other ID variables (international stance, inspiration, self-assurance in communication) and language capability, and an immediate way (i.e., worldwide stance was specifically identified with WTC). The key variable impacting WTC in this setting consequently was 'worldwide stance', characterized as "a general mentality towards the international group that impacts English learning and communication among Japanese learners" (pp. 62-3). Ellis (2008) mentions that work on WTC is in its early stages and it is a promising build in a few regards. WTC constitutes an undeniable connection between other, all the more completely explored builds, (for example, learner mentalities and inspiration) and language capability. It is likewise a build of evident importance to dialect educating. Dornyei (2005) recommended that creating WTC is "a definitive objective of guideline". (p. 210) Macintyre (2007) presents the thought of volitional handling in WTC. He mentions that the past examination has committed a lot of thoughtfulness regarding portraying the long haul examples and connections among attribute level or circumstance particular variables. Macintyre contends that variables, for example, language difficulty and language learning inspiration ought to be looked into in the WTC research. He utilizes these elements to outline the contention that starting correspondence at a specific minute in time can be conceptualized as a volitional (uninhibitedly picked) process. The outcome is a level of readiness to convey (WTC) with the possibility to rise and fall quickly as the circumstance changes. Dornyei (2005) presents that exploration taking into account both subjective and quantitative techniques exhibits the many-sided quality of the procedures included in making WTC. It is contended that strategies must be adjusted to center upon the dynamic procedure of starting or keep away from second language communication when the open door emerges.

WTC offers the chance to coordinate mental, etymological, instructive, and open ways to deal with L2 research that normally have been free of one another. WTC may be seen as both an individual contrast element encouraging L2 obtaining, particularly in a pedagogical framework that accentuates communication, and as a nonlinguistic result of the language learning procedure (Macintyre, 2007).

**Self-Directed Learning**

Self-directed learning is a term often used in adult learning contexts. Merriam (2001) asserts that self-directed learning and andragogy are the pillars of adult learning theory. Self-directed learning has different definitions by different scholars even more than one definition is presented by one scholar. As cited in Rafiee, Pazhakh, Gorjian, (2014), Knowles defined self-directed learning as "A process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, identifying humans and materials resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes" (P. 18).

Since there are different ideas about self-directed learning, this term has been defined in many different ways. Some scholars believed that self-directed learning (SDL) can be viewed as a process of organizing the instructions. These researchers focused on the learners’ level of autonomy. On the other hand, some other researchers have assumed SDL as a personal attribute. They try to describe individuals who assume responsibility in the process of learning (Rafiee et al., 2014). However, according to Lai (2015), SDL is considered as both, the personality characteristics and instructional processes.

Self-directed learners are defined by Abdullah (2001), as "responsible owners and managers of their own learning process" (p.18), and he emphasizes that in order to grow as a self-directed learner, the student needs to take ownership of the learning process and the responsibility of managing it. This further buttresses the student-centered concept of self-directed and adult learning (Reed, Shell, Kassis, Tartaglia, Wallihan, Smith, Hurtubise, Martin, Ledford, Bradbury, Bernstein, & Mahan, 2014).

Self-directed learning is the learning type “which occurs via employing deliberate means or anticipated ends” (Long, 1994, p. 84). Gibbons (2002) defines self-directed learning as “any study form in which
individuals have primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and even evaluating the effort”. (p. 12)

The central question of how adults learn has occupied the attention of scholars and practitioners since the founding of adult education as a professional field of practice in the 1920s (Merriam, 2001). Some eighty years later, we have no single answer, no one theory or model of adult learning that explains all that we know about adult learners, the various contexts where learning takes place, and the process of learning itself. What we do have is a mosaic of theories, models, and sets of principles, and explanations that, combined, compose the knowledge base of adult learning. Two important pieces of that mosaic are the andragogy and self-directed learning (Merriam, 2001).

Models of Self-directed Learning

How one actually works through a self-directed learning experience has generated a number of models of the process. As Mayer, Roberts and Barsade (2008), propose the earliest models proposed in this field are the most linear, moving from diagnosing needs to identifying resources and instructional formats to evaluating outcomes. Models developed in the late 1980s and the 1990s are less linear and more interactive; in such models not only the learner but the context of the learning and the nature of the learning itself are taken into account. As Mayer (2008) cites, in Danis’s model, for example, learning strategies, phases of the learning process, the content, the learner, and the environmental factors in the context must all be taken into account in mapping the process of SDL.

What Merriam and Caffarella (1999) term “instructional” models of the process focus on what instructors can do in the formal classroom setting to foster self-direction and student control of learning. The best known of these is Grow’s (1994) Staged Self-Directed Learning (SSDL) model (See Figure, 2-1). Grow presents a matrix whereby learners can locate themselves in terms of their readiness for and comfort with being self-directed, and instructors can match the learner’s stage with appropriate instructional strategies. For example, whereas a dependent learner needs more introductory material and appreciates lecture, drill, and immediate correction, a self-directed learner can engage in independent projects, student-directed discussions, and discovery learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Instructional Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Dependent</td>
<td>Authority, Coaching with immediate Coach</td>
<td>Feedback. Drill. Informational lecture. Overcoming deficiencies and resistance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Interested</td>
<td>Motivator, guide</td>
<td>Inspiring lecture plus guided discussion. Goal-setting and learning strategies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Involved</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Discussion facilitated by teacher who participates as equal. Seminar. Group projects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Self-directed</td>
<td>Consultant, delegator</td>
<td>Internship, dissertation, individual work or self-directed study-group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: The Staged Self-Directed Learning Model (Grow’s, 1994, p.131)

Scales of Self-directed learning

Two scales of self-directedness, one measuring readiness (Guglielmino, 1977), and one measuring personal characteristics, have been used in a number of studies. SDL has some documented measurement tools. One is the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS), which is used for measuring “learning readiness”, not a specific style of learning (Lounsbury, Levy, Park, Gibson, & Smith, 2009, p. 413). The original adult Guglielmino SDLRS was designed in 1977, and contained 58 items. There is a modified
SDLRS (MSDLR), evaluated in 20 teacher-assessment questions, for measuring the learning readiness of children, as discussed by Nor and Saeednia (2008), in a study of 183 nine-year old Iranian children. This study reinforced that "SDL is measurable among children" in spite of the "inefficiencies of the educational system". (Nor & Saeednia, 2008, p.9). There is also a "Resource Associates Self-Directed Learning Scale, as a 10-item scale, measured in a 5-point Likert scale" (Lounsbury, et al., 2009, p. 413).

Costa (2013) writes that since a learner’s autonomy is likely to “vary from situation to situation,” (p. 2). Educators should not assume that because a person has been self-directed in one situation, "he or she will be able to succeed in a new area: Orientation, support and guidance may all be required in the first stages of a learning project." (p. 2). Merriam (2001) pointed out Self-directed learning remains aviable arena for theory building related to adult learning. However, self-directed learning appears to be at a juncture in terms of which direction research and theory building should take in order to advance our understanding of this important dimension of adult learning. Candy (1991) has constructed a conceptual framework for understanding self-directed learning as both a goal and a process, which embraces four distinct phenomena: personal autonomy, self-management, learner control, and autodidaxy. The literature on adult education emphasizes the characteristics of the learners and the learning process and provides insight into methods that may be used to facilitate the learning (Wilcox, 1996). "They who effectively engage in self-directed learning are more creative and curious". (Edmondson, Boyer, & Artis, 2012, p. 45)

In contrast to the conceptualization of SDL as a process, some researchers, for example Chen, Fellenz, Oddi, Knowles, and Guglielmino see SDL more as a personality characteristic (Svedberg, 2010). Several researchers state that the personality characteristics and skills of the self-directed learner are: initiative, emotional independence, responsibility, a strong desire to gain knowledge and to learn, ability to dialogue, reflectivity, planning, an ability to organize tasks, goal-orientation and intentionality (Virta, 2005, 2006).

Guglielmino regards setting personal goals for learning, identifying learning resources and evaluating the success of learning as important skills. Guglielmino’s personality characteristics of self-directed learners are: initiative, independence and persistence in learning, responsibility for one’s own learning, viewing problems as challenges, capability of self-discipline, curiosity, a strong desire to learn or change, self-confidence, an ability to use basic study skills, to organize and set an appropriate pace for learning and to develop a plan for completing work, enjoying learning, and goal-orientation. Several researchers consider that self-direction consists of four basic dimensions (Vesisenaho, 1998).

Usually the dimensions, components or factors of self-directed learning have been based on studies using Guglielmino’s SDLRS-scale (see e.g. Virta, 2005). Guglielmino’s SDLRS is one of the most frequently used in SDLR assessment (Svedberg, 2010; see also Guglielmino & Guglielmino, 2008). Originally, the SDLRS-scale has eight factors, but some researchers have changed its construction to four factors for better validation and reliability. Pasanen, Ruuskanen, and Varila, (1989) have translated the SDLRS-scale into Finnish. Koro (1992) decided to use Varila’s model because his research subjects were similar to those of Varila. Koro found four dimensions in his wide study concerning self-directed learning. His dimensions were: 1) intrinsic motivation and planning, 2) self-confidence and initiative, 3) creativity and flexibility and 4) self-evaluation. A salient feature in the first dimension is intrinsic motivation towards a desire to learn. In the second dimension a learner can take feedback and is also capable of self-evaluation. An independent learner is capable of making choices. Finding and using flexible solutions is closely connected to self-confidence. The fourth dimension contains the learner’s openness and curiosity towards new challenges. The learner is critical and ready to question traditional solutions and to find new ones. If the learner is not confident, he/she is not able to use these solutions. (Virta, 2005, 2006).

Recently in higher education self-directed learning is gaining greater attention than ever as it is believed that SDL improves comprehension, remembering, critical thinking, inquisitiveness, good decision making, achievement satisfaction, enthusiasm, competency and self-reliance (Shen, Chen, & Hu, 2014).

As a personality trait, SDL is “relatively enduring over time and across situations for individuals”, on a “continuum ranging from low to high”, and is a characteristic that exists to some degree in each of us and in each potential learning opportunity. (Lounsbury et al., 2009, p. 411) For example, SDL as a personality trait would be a skill or talent a student ‘just had’ as a child, within the pedagogical world. As the student matured into andragogy, that personality trait would blossom, shining continually brighter.
et al., (2009, p. 412) "elaborates on this as related to two characteristic of the Myer-Briggs personality test: Extraversion and Intuition. "As a personality trait that you may or may not be born with, any trait could still be continually cultivated if you were motivated, just as you could work at improving your GPA, if you desired that goal" (Lounsbury, et al., 2009, p. 412)

2.2 Empirical Background to the Study

This section deals with presenting the empirical studies conducted on the relationship between the variables of the study. Also the studies pertained to second and foreign language development under the effect of willingness to communicate, and self-directed learning are touched upon.

Related Research done on Self-directed Learning

Meshkat and Hassanzade (2014) investigated the effect of SDL on the components of reading comprehension, that is, main idea, specific information, scanning, detailed comprehension, and lexicographic patterns. The findings of their study suggest that SDL may not be significantly effective for the learning of the components of reading comprehension. These findings also suggest that SDL may not be compatible with Iran’s system of education. Zarei and Gahremani (2010) studied the relationship between learner autonomy and reading comprehension ability. They found that learner autonomy and SDL enhanced reading comprehension ability/proficiency of the L2 learners. Hosseini and Assareh (2011) stated that an effective strategy for promoting nurses’ successful lifelong learning is SDL.

According to Kirwan, Lounsbury, and Gibson (2014), self-directed learners have great self- and time-management skills. Khodabandehlou, Jahandar, Seyedi, and Mousavi Dolatabadi (2011) did a research on upper-intermediate and advanced EFL learners in an IELTS class to find the impact of SDL on the learners’ reading comprehension proficiency. They suggest that implementing SDL with adult and high-proficient L2 learners can be beneficial. Reio and Davis (2005) investigated age and gender differences in self-directed learning readiness. Based on the result obtained a significant age x gender interaction demonstrated that in comparison with the younger males, the younger females indicated higher levels of self-directed learning readiness.

McCauley and McClelland (2004) designed a study to examine the role of self-directed learning in physics. They launched two studies among undergraduate physics students and postgraduate science students. The result indicated that SDL readiness among postgraduate sample was significantly higher than the undergraduate sample.

Klunklin, Viseskul, Sripusanapan, and Turale, (2010) also employed the Guglielmino’s Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (Guglielmino’s SDLRS) to evaluate 272 Thai nursing students’ readiness for SDL and reported the same findings. In another study, Cadorin et al. (2012) evaluated registered nurses, radiology technicians, as well as nursing and radiology students’ readiness for SDL in Italy. They used the Williamson’s Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (Williamson’s SDLRS). On this scale, scores 221–300 reflect great readiness for SDL. They found that nurses, radiology technicians, and nursing and radiology students’ SDL readiness scores were respectively 229.1, 219.6, 212.3, and 222.4. Finally, they concluded that given the complexities and instabilities of clinical settings and patient care, SDL is a necessary skill for healthcare professionals and recommended implementing strategies for supporting, encouraging, and facilitating health care professionals’ SDL. Karshki, Mohammadzadeh Ghaser, Taghizadeh, and Garavand, (2013) reported that Iranian nursing students’ SDL readiness mean score was 148.20, indicating optimum readiness for SDL.

Recently in higher education self-directed learning is gaining greater attention than ever as it is believed that SDL improves comprehension, remembering, critical thinking, inquisitiveness, good decision making, achievement satisfaction, enthusiasm, competency and self-reliance (Shen, Chen, & Hu, 2014). In developed countries like US in response to learning challenges learning organizations focused on taking responsibility for own learning needs or simply self-directed learning to meet the goals of advancing world, at the same time research base advocacy and emphasis has been surfaced in under developed regions of the world like Asia (Francom, 2010). A study done by Zhou and Lee (2009), which investigated possible differences between the self-directed learning skills of students exposed to the problem based
project learning strategy and those of the traditional instruction, indicated that the treatment group performed better on the self-directed learning readiness scale.

Yazdkhast, Keshavarz, Mahmoodi, and Hosseini (2014) evaluated the effects of self-directed learning (SDL) on MENQOL. In their research, implementation of Self-directed Learning (SDL) model led to a significant statistical difference in scores of vasomotor symptoms, psychosocial symptoms, physical symptoms, sexual symptoms and the overall score for quality of life. No significant changes were found in the QOL scores of the control group. They conclude that implementation of self-directed learning provides a useful strategy that should be included in health intervention and national surveillance programs in order to improve health and therapeutic compliance in postmenopausal women.

Jossberger, Brand-Gruwel, Boshuizen and Wiel (2010) discuss SDL, self-regulated learning (SRL) and workplace simulations (WPS), and include constructive implications to students as their transition through vocational training. Jossberger, et al., (2010) resoundingly recommends that vocational students "acquire SDL and SRL skills"(p.426) so that they can learn and work effectively in WPS in preparation for the actual workspace. They also differentiate between SDL as both a personality/learning characteristic and a learning environment compared to self-regulated learning (SRL) as solely a personality/learning characteristic. This clarification of SDL and SRL is needed, they say, due to the “confusion” caused by Knowles’ definition of SDL.

Jossberger, et al.’s thorough report continues with the concept of “authentic setting”, which is also taught by Clark and Mayer (2008). Authentic setting and authentic practice integrate SDL, andragogy and educational technology’s best practices. "Integrating theory and practice seems especially relevant for vocational education” (Jossberger, et al., 2010, p. 426) Rusch, Hughes, Agran, Martin and Johnson (2009, p. 53) recommend teaching students, with and without disabilities, to become self-directed learners “before they enter high school”.

**Related Research done on willingness to communicate (WTC)**

Merciful, Baker, and Macintyre (2003) concentrated on the impacts of setting, standards, and essentialness. They joined both social setting model, which focuses on the significance of contact, L2 certainty, and personality in getting an L2 and WTC, which worries with the elements of L2 use. The point of their study was to consider both relevant and individual distinction variables in an L2 use. Members of their study were both Anglophone and Francophone students going to a Canadian bilingual college. Their examinations bolstered a model in which "connection, individual, and social elements were immensely critical determinants of L2 use, in spite of the fact that examples of relations varied relying upon the ethno etymological imperativeness of the group" (P.12)

Kang (2005) reported a subjective investigation of the arranged WTC of four grown-up male Korean learners of English in the United States. The learners were matched off with local speakers and welcomed to take part in free discussion. In this setting 'global stance' did not seem to assume any part. Maybe “the members' situational WTC in their L2 seemed to rise under mental states of fervor, obligation and security” (p. 282). Arranged nature of WTC additionally has been researched by Cao and Philp (2006). They discovered no statistically huge relationship between the eight grown-up learners of English self-reported WTC and their genuine WTC as prove through perception of three interactional classroom settings (entire class, pair work, and gathering work). Nor arrived an unmistakable relationship among showed WTC in these three settings.

WTC is of evident enthusiasm to open dialect instructing (CLT), which puts a premium on learning through conveying; learners with a solid eagerness to impart may have the capacity to profit by CLT while the individuals who are not all that willing may gain better from more customary instructional approaches. Interestingly, MacIntyre et al. reported that WTC inside the classroom associated emphatically with WTC outside in Anglophone learners of L2 French in Canada, exhibiting that WTC is a steady, characteristic like component.

Dornyei and Kormos (2000) found that Hungarian students' WTC in the classroom was affected by their states of mind to the instructional-assignment, Strong, positive relationships were found between a measure of WTC and the measure of English delivered while performing an open undertaking on
account of learners who communicated inspirational dispositions to the errand yet almost zero connections on account of learners with low undertaking demeanors. No doubt then that learners' eagerness to impart depends to a limited extent, on their identity and to some extent on their natural inspiration to perform particular classroom exercises.

Research Questions And Hypotheses
Considering the problems stated and the study purpose, the following questions was raised.
Q: Is there any statistically significant relationship between critical thinking and self-directed learning among Iranian EFL Learners?
H0: There is no statistically significant relationship between willingness to communicate and self-directed learning among Iranian EFL Learners

The study
The present study is an attempt to investigate the relationship between willingness to communicate, and self-directed learning among Iranian EFL learners at the upper intermediate level of language proficiency.

3. Method
3.1 Participants
The EFL learners taking part in the present study were 100 EFL learners studying English in Ariana Language Institute in Azarshahr. The participants were females with the age range of 18-25. For EFL learners living in Azarshahr, Persian is the second language and English is the third one. Of course they learn English as a foreign language. To do the research 100 EFL students studying in Ariana Language Institute in Azarshahr were selected based on the results of the learners’ performance on a standardized Oxford Placement Test, which had been given to the learners by the institute and they were considered as upper intermediate. This ensured if the learners knew enough English and could answer the questions in the questionnaires appropriately.

3.2 Instrumentation
To collect the data, the following instruments were employed:

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Scale
Willingness to communicate questionnaire developed by McCroskey and Richmond (1987) and modified by McCroskey in 1992 is the most basic orientation toward communication. Almost anyone is likely to respond to a direct question, but many will not continue or initiate interaction. This instrument measures a person's willingness to initiate communication. The face validity of the instrument is strong, and results of extensive research indicate the predictive validity of the instrument. Alpha reliability estimates for this instrument have ranged from .85 to well above .90. Of the 20 items on the instrument, 8 are used to distract attention from the scored items. The twelve remained items generate a total score, 4 context-type scores, and 3 receiver-type scores. The sub-scores generate lower reliability estimates, but generally high enough to be used in research studies. See appendix III for a copy of the questionnaire.

Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS)
One of the instruments used for measuring self-directed learning, Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS), has been developed by Guglielmino (1977) in her doctoral dissertation. The SDLRS uses a 58-item 5-point Likert scale. Through factor analysis, the scale includes eight factors: openness to learning opportunities, self-concept as an effective learner, initiative and independence in learning, informed acceptance of responsibility for one’s own learning, love of learning, creativity, positive orientation to the future, and ability to use basic study skills and problem-solving skills. Higher scores occurring from using the scale represent higher readiness for self-directed learning (Guglielmino, 1977). Since development of the scale by Guglielmino, a number of studies have supported its reliability and validity (Guglielmino, 1989). According to Guglielmino and Guglielmino (2003), this instrument "has consistently
demonstrated strong reliability and validity in identifying those who are ready for self-directed learning in its 26-year history” (p.5). See appendix II for a copy of the questionnaire.

3.3 Procedure
100 EFL learners studying at the upper intermediate level in Ariana Language Institute in Azarshahr were selected as the participants of the present study.

The participants were females with the age range of 18-25. This ensured if the learners knew enough English and could answer the questions in the questionnaires appropriately. The selected learners received the questionnaire of Willingness to Communicate (CT) in the first session of the data collection procedure. The learners were briefed about the significance of the study and their responsibility to provide the researcher with valuable and to-the-point information and data. The aim of WTC scale is to indicate to what extent the participants is willing to communicate in each type of situation. The results of the test revealed how well Iranian EFL learners were willing to communicate in the social context. After a week, the participants received the Self-directed Learning questionnaire. The researcher explained that participants should read each item carefully and select the response according to their first reaction to the question. The data were collected and analyzed via SPSS software (version 21), and then reported and checked against the research questions of the study.

3.4 Design
The present study enjoyed an Ex post Facto Design. The reason is that, based on Hatch and Lazaraton (1991), there was no treatment involved in the study, nor was the study concerned with the learning process the participants might have gone through as a significant factor. No control was implemented over the effect of the variables of the study (willingness to communicate, and Self-directed learning). None of the variables of the study were manipulated to cause changes, either. What was of paramount importance then was the type and strength of the connection between variables of the study; therefore an Ex Post Facto Design was the appropriate design for the accomplishment of the purpose of the study (Field, 2009).

3.5 Data Analysis
The correlation coefficient between the learners’ performances on the two questionnaires were calculated and reported. Also the reliability of the questionnaires used were calculated and compared with the reported ones in the literature.

4. Results
The present data were analyzed through Pearson correlation, that is why it should be verified that the data enjoyed normal distribution.
Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Skewness Statistic</th>
<th>Skewness Std. Error</th>
<th>Kurtosis Statistic</th>
<th>Kurtosis Std. Error</th>
<th>Kurtosis Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WTC</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-.037</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDL</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-.072</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPT</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-.011</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.425</td>
<td>.478</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As displayed in Table 4.1, the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their standard errors were lower than +/- 1.96; hence the normality of the present data was confirmed.

4.1 Checking Reliability
As it was mentioned before the reliability of the questionnaires was calculated. The following table represents the results of these analyses.

Table 4.2
KR-21 Reliability Indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>KR-21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WTC</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60.06</td>
<td>14.912</td>
<td>222.360</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPT</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26.74</td>
<td>6.687</td>
<td>44.720</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDL</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>219.89</td>
<td>54.598</td>
<td>2980.988</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The KR-21 reliability indices for the WTC, OPT and SDL were .90, .97, .80 and .99 respectively.

The research question was an attempt to find out ‘whether there was any statistically significant relationship between willingness to communicate and self-directed learning among Iranian EFL Learners.

For this purpose, the researcher ran a Pearson correlation analysis, the results of which are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3
Pearson Correlation; Willingness to Communicate with Self-Directed Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SDL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WTC</td>
<td>.908**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

The results of the Pearson correlation (r (98) = .90, p = .000 representing a large effect size) indicated that there was a significant relationship between willingness to communicate and self-directed learning among Iranian EFL Learners. Thus, the first null-hypothesis as ‘there is no statistically significant relationship between willingness to communicate and self-directed learning among Iranian EFL Learners’ was rejected.
As displayed in Scatter Plot 4.1, the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were met. Since majority of the dots clustered around the diagonal, it can be concluded that the relationship between the two variables was linear. The dots did not show any funnel shape – narrow at one end and wide at the other, indicating that the two variables enjoyed homogenous variances; i.e. homoscedasticity.

Discussion

The present findings are in line with the results of the previous research on the relationship between willingness to communicate (WTC) and self-directed learning (SDL). The findings emphasized the positive relationship between willingness to communicate and self-directed learning among EFL learners. Gibbons (2002) found that self-directed learning increases individuals’ responsibility for planning, implementing, and even evaluating the effort. In its own turn, “SDL encourages the learners to be more willing to communicate as they are more self-regulated and self-autonomous in their problem solving trends and strategies” (Gibbons, 2002, p.12). Halpern (2010) also asserted that SDL can affect and WTC can have mutual effects in helping the second language learners develop their own learning strategies.

Focusing on the role of feed back in energizing SDL, Costa and Garmston (2013) in their study entitled “supporting self-directed learners” came to know that SDL could be increased through appropriate feed back. One of the main factors they emphasize in their study is making the students think of communicating with others in the target language they are developing. This signifies that increased thought about willingness to communicate can promote the interest of the learners in using SDL. Adams’ (2014) study focusing on self-determined learning also stressed the positive impact of SDL on WTC among the EFL learners in the Asian contexts.

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THE EFFECT OF TEXT RECONSTRUCTION TASK VS. EDITING TASK UNDER IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT LEARNING CONDITIONS ON GRAMMAR LEARNING

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ABSTRACT
THE TYPES OF THE TASKS AND THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THEY ARE PERFORMED HAVE BEEN REPORTED TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN LANGUAGE LEARNING. THE PRESENT STUDY AIMED AT INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTS OF TWO TYPES OF TASKS, NAMELY, RECONSTRUCTION AND EDITING TASKS, ON THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR UNDER EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT LEARNING CONDITIONS. A HUNDRED AND SEVENTY TWO LEARNERS PARTICIPATED IN THIS STUDY. SOME TEXT RECONSTRUCTION AND TEXT EDITING TASKS WERE DEVELOPED REGARDING THE TARGET GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES AND PRESENTED TO THE PARTICIPANTS UNDER EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT LEARNING CONDITIONS. THEIR GRAMMAR ACHIEVEMENT WAS OPERATIONALIZED THROUGH A MULTIPLE-CHOICE RECOGNITION TEST. THE RESULTS INDICATED THAT THE TWO TYPES OF TASKS DID NOT DIFFER IN TERMS OF THEIR EFFECTS UNDER IMPLICIT LEARNING CONDITION, RECONSTRUCTION TASK WAS MORE EFFECTIVE THAN EDITING TASK UNDER EXPLICIT CONDITION, AND EXPLICIT LEARNING CONDITION RESULTED IN MORE GAINS OF THE TARGET GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES THAN IMPLICIT LEARNING CONDITION.

KEY WORDS: LANGUAGE LEARNING, IMPLICIT, EXPLICIT RECONSTRUCTION TASK, EDITING TASK

1. Introduction
There has been a growing interest in the role of tasks and task types in second language acquisition (SLA). As Ellis (2003) points out, a substantial body of research exists that have investigated the effects of different task types and their accompanying instructions on language learning. These studies have explored the relative effects of tasks on learning and their pedagogical contributions to classroom and out-of-class learning. Hence, task characteristics beneficial to learning have been examined by different researchers. These include various types of planning, the effects of task repetition and the task type, the interaction between task and the grammatical structure, and collaborative and individual performance of the tasks (Foster & Skehan, 1999; Lynch & Maclean, 2001; Oxford, 2006; Tarone, 1985).
Moreover, the conditions under which the tasks are employed are considered to affect the degree of learning. For instance, how implicit and explicit learning conditions affect the acquisition and storage of
the L2 data in the mind has attracted the attention of many researchers in field of applied linguistic (Dekeyser, 1998; Ellis, 2001; Robinson, 2002). Dekeyser (1998) favors the use of explicit learning conditions, arguing that explicit instruction may help the learners develop declarative knowledge before it can be proceduralized. Identifying different types of learning conditions, Robinson (2002) suggests that comparing the results across different leaning conditions with different degrees of explicitness may help SLA researchers determine the most optimal conditions for learning.

There has been a controversy over implicit and explicit learning conditions in the field of language pedagogy (N. Ellis, 2005, 2008). In some approaches, conscious and explicit presentation of materials is considered crucial (Long & Robinson, 1998; Sharwood Smith, 1981; Svalberg, 2007). In this view, successful language learning is characterized by conscious knowledge of syntactic rules or other grammatical paradigms (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The teacher’s job is to either promote conscious learning or provide explicit explanation on the target language, and the learners’ task is to learn the rules and consciously practice them through their application to new instances or through translation. The theoretical support for the positive role of explicit instruction comes from Robinson (1995b) and Schmidt (1990, 1994a, 1995, 2001, 2010). In his noticing hypothesis, Schmidt (1990, 1994b, 1995) postulates that awareness at the level of noticing is necessary and sufficient for the conversion of input into intake. Similarly, studies by Leow (1997, 2001), Rosa and O’Neill (1999), and Rosa and Leow (2004) have provided evidence for the positive role of explicit instruction in language learning. The results of these studies indicate that when learners are provided with explicit instruction, they can process the language consciously which increases the amount of learning.

Others, however, have leveled some strong objections against the role of conscious processes in language learning (McLaughlin, 1990; Tomlin & Villa, 1994; Truscott, 1998). Truscott (1998) argues that explicit teaching leads to the development of metalinguistic knowledge which is of little use in language learning. In the same vein, Krashen’s (1985, 1987) Natural Approach denies any positive role for explicit language learning and teaching. In fact, his distinction between learning and acquisition follows from the idea that acquisition results from unconscious process, whereas conscious process, which is of little value in language pedagogy, leads to learning.

1.1 Task Types and L2 Learning

Numerous studies have investigated the role of tasks in language learning. Majority of them have attempted to address task types, learning conditions, individual variables, and the type of language component involved. For example, Fotos and Ellis (1991) and Fotos (1993, 1994) examined the role of consciousness raising tasks on the acquisition of grammar. Fotos and Ellis (1991) asked the learner to cooperate with each other and come up with rule concerning the grammatical points under investigation. The results indicated a positive role for consciousness raising tasks on the acquisition of grammar.

Researchers have particularly been interested in the role of task type in language learning (Izumi & Bigelow, 2000; Nassaji & Tian 2010; Storch, 1999, Tocalli-Beller & Swain, 2007). It is argued that when used within a pedagogical context, different task types may generally provide different opportunities for learning (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). Empirical investigation supports Swain and Lapkin’s position. For example, Nassaji and Tian (2010), comparing individual and collaborative editing and cloze tasks, reported that editing tasks were more effective than cloze tasks. Izumi and Bigelow (2000) investigated text-reconstruction tasks as part of structure-based production tasks. Their text-reconstruction tasks required learners to read a short written passage that had been seeded with the target structure (English hypothetical/counterfactual conditionals) and to underline the parts they felt were especially important for subsequently reconstructing the passage. In their study, text-reconstruction tasks were successful in eliciting attempts to use the conditional structure. Storch (1999) examined the effect of three types of tasks including cloze, text reconstruction, and short composition on the grammatical accuracy of the learners. The tasks were performed both individually and collaboratively. Results indicated that collaborative performance had a positive effect on the grammatical accuracy of the learners but varied according to the type of the task. That is, collaboration increased accuracy on the reconstruction and composition tasks compared with the cloze task.
In another study, Colina and García-Mayo (2007) compared the effects of jigsaw, dictogloss, and text reconstruction tasks in relation to focus on form and metatalk among the first year undergraduate students at the elementary level of proficiency. They divided their participants into three groups, and each group consisted of four pairs, each performing one of the task types. They found that reconstruction task was much more effective than the other two types in relation to the number of language related episodes (LREs). The linguistic features they focused on were determiners, connectors, and spelling. Likewise, Foster and Skehan (1996) examined a personal information exchange task, a narrative task and a decision-making task in terms of their impact on accuracy, fluency, and complexity of learners’ language performance. The participants in their study were 32 pre-intermediate-level students studying English as a foreign language at college level. Foster and Skehan found that the personal task generated less complexity than the narrative and decision-making tasks although the personal task produced the greatest amount of fluency. In light of this result, they proposed that interactive tasks tend to be associated with greater accuracy, complexity, but lower fluency. Skehan and Foster (2007) further examined the effects of types of tasks, as well as different task implementation conditions, on the fluency, accuracy and complexity of the learner language produced. The three tasks chosen for this study were similar in type to the tasks used in Foster and Skehan (1996). They found that the decision task under planning conditions produced the highest complexity scores. The results of these two studies became the basis of Skehan’s trade-off hypothesis that fluency, accuracy and complexity seem to enter into competition with one another, given the limited attentional capacities of second language users. However, Skehan and his colleagues’ observation that more interactive tasks lead to more complex language performance did not find support in Michel, Kuiken, and Vedder’s (2007) study which found that the dialogic (i.e., interactive) task tended to elicit shorter and structurally simpler sentences than the monologic narrative task. In other words, it is suggested that interactivity may affect structural complexity negatively.

Swain and Lapkin (2001) compared the effectiveness of a dictogloss task with a jigsaw task. Participants of the study comprised of two grade 8 French immersion classes, each class doing one of these tasks. The researchers analyzed the learners’ interactions during the tasks in terms of language related episodes (LREs). They came to the conclusion that both tasks produced a similar and substantial amount of language related episodes. However, no significant difference was found between the two groups’ posttest scores, suggesting that the two types of task produced comparable degrees of language gains. Garcia Mayo (2002) investigated the effect of dictogloss and text reconstruction tasks on producing LREs. Seven pairs of high intermediate to advanced EFL learners volunteered to participate in the study. The results indicated that the text reconstruction group generated more LREs than the dictogloss group.

1.2 Implicit and Explicit Learning Conditions

Conditions under which learning takes place has drawn considerable attention from researchers in the area of applied linguistics. Some have focused mainly on the tasks that presented students with the target structure implicitly and others on the tasks that presented learners with the target structure explicitly. For instance, Housen and Pierrard (2006) investigated the effects of two types of input tasks on high-intermediate and advanced university students in Germany and analyzed their improvement in initiating and responding to speech acts and conversational routines. After 14 weeks of education and also listening to tapes and behaving on their own language, the result showed that both implicitly and explicitly instructed groups had improvement, but the explicit groups’ improvement was higher than the implicit one.

Takimoto (2008) studied on beginner learners of Japanese as a foreign language and how they develop pragmatic proficiency under two types of instruction (implicit and explicit). In explicit groups learners received teacher explanations and also they watched some video clips of examples of target pragmatic forms. The implicit group watched the same video clips but they did not receive any explicit metapragmatic activities. Quantitative and qualitative results including role play, multiple choice test, and self-reports showed the advantage of explicit instruction over implicit one just after 50 minutes.

A similar study was done by Rosa and O’Neill (1999). They investigated the implicit and explicit instruction to understand which one results in greater language learning. They studied learners’
The procedure for both groups were the same, the only difference was that the implicit group watched some video clips and they were guided by performing on some questionnaire on the target features instead of teacher-fronted activities. After six 30 minutes lessons, self-assessment, discourse completion, and metalinguistic questionnaire, the results showed that both groups developed their pragma linguistic proficiency effectively, but only the explicit group developed their socio pragmatic proficiency effectively. Takahashi (2005) studied on four input enhancement conditions: explicit instruction, form-comparison, form-search, and meaning-focused conditions. In explicit instruction, learners were provided by some metalinguistic and teacher explanations of the target forms. In form-comparison group, learners compared their own forms with those which provided by native speakers of English. In form-search form condition, learners compared forms of Japanese English language learners with English native speaker forms. Also, in meaning focused group learners simply listened, read, and answered comprehension questions based on the input. After four weeks of instruction the results of discourse completion test and self-report demonstrated that the explicit group learned all different parts more successfully than the other groups.

The results concerning the positive role of explicit learning, however, are not conclusive. Fotos and Ellis (1991) studied the effect of input enhancement of explicit and implicit meta-pragmatic instruction on learning L2 pragmatics by intermediate and advance learners. The explicit group watched videos and 30 scenarios with subtitle, the implicit group watched the video without subtitle. The results after taking two listening comprehension tests and two pragmatic multiple choice tests showed that there was no difference between explicit and implicit group. A similar study by Tateyama (2001, as cited in Takimoto, 2008) showed that increasing instructional period, still there was no difference between explicit and implicit instruction. Takahashi (2005) found some attended learners in explicit group that used non-target pragma linguistic forms in the discourse completion test as a result of previous instruction interfering with their restructuring process.

Thus, the finding of this study may provide additional support for the arguments mentioned above by shedding light on whether text editing and text reconstruction tasks would help Iranian intermediate learners to master the four target forms chosen by the researcher in a foreign context.

Moreover, the tasks of the present study were constructed on two learning conditions: explicit and implicit. It is generally expected that the explicit instructions would succeed in drawing learners’ attention to the target features and that this would lead to increased acquisition (DeKeyser, 1995). Robinson (1996) also found a significant advantage for the application of rule searched tasks and explicit instruction. Norris and Ortega (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of studies investigating explicit instructions and then a clear advantage was found for the studies involving explicit instructions. However, given the objections levelled by some researchers (Tomlin & Villa, 1994; Truscott, 1998) and the inclusiveness of the results on the roles of explicit an implicit teaching further investigation of the issue is warranted.

Considering the above, the present study aimed at investigating the effects of two types of tasks, namely, reconstruction and editing tasks, on the acquisition of English grammar under explicit and implicit learning conditions.

2. Research Questions
1. Is there any significant difference between the effects of text reconstruction and text editing tasks on the learners’ grammar achievement in the implicit learning condition?
2. Is there any significant difference between the effects of text reconstruction and text editing tasks on the learners’ grammar achievement in the explicit learning condition?
3. Is there any significant difference between the effects of text reconstruction task in implicit and explicit conditions on the learners’ grammar achievement?
4. Is there any significant difference between the effects of text editing task in implicit and explicit conditions on the learners’ grammar achievement?

3. Method
3.1 Participants
Participants for the present study were 172 intermediate university students of English Translation and English Teaching at three universities:
(1) Islamic Azad University, Damavand Branch
(2) Islamic Azad University, Tehran South Branch
(3) Islamic Azad University, Tehran North Branch
These participants were drawn from a subject pool of 217 learners, 45 of whom were eliminated at different phases of the study for different reasons. It was essential that participants be not familiar with the target structure. Therefore, those who scored above the expected chance score on the pretest were excluded from the study. Participants were also homogenized using the reading and writing sections of a piloted version of Preliminary English Test (PET) (2008) and those who scored between 70 and 95 were selected for this study. This range of scores corresponds to B1 level (intermediate) in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference. The participant were divided into 4 experimental groups (i.e. text reconstruction tasks in explicit and implicit learning conditions; editing tasks in explicit and implicit learning conditions). There were 41, 43, 45, and 43 participants in each of the groups.
Participants were all native speakers of Persian and were between 21 to 27 years of age. From the biodata they provided during the pretest, it was determined that they had more or less similar L2 learning history.

3.2 Materials
3.2.1 Target Grammatical Structures
The present study attempted to investigate the role of two types of tasks in the learning of English grammar under implicit and explicit learning conditions. The selection of target grammatical structures was constrained by a number of factors. First, the target grammatical structures were selected from the grammar syllabus of the abovementioned universities intended to be taught during the semester. Second, these structures are among the ones which are usually instructed to the EFL learners at the intermediate level. Third, through a pilot study, it was found that most learners had problems with these structures and demonstrated little or no familiarity with them. Finally, it was assumed that learning of these grammatical structures was challenging for Iranian learners. In other words, these structures did not seem to be at the lower level of difficulty for the learners.

On the basis of the criteria mentioned above, the four grammatical structures selected for the present study were:
1. Passive voice (simple past)
   *The problem was discovered by the mechanic.*
2. Gerund (after prepositions)
   *I've always been interested in learning about different cultures.*
3. Causative construction
   *I usually get my neighbor to water my plants when I am on holiday.*
4. Conditional sentence type II
   *If I had some money, I would lend you a few dollars.*

The first structure was simple past passive form. This form is used when we want to emphasize the action, what happened rather than who or what performs the action. Simple past passive form is constructed by adding *was* or *were* to the past participle of the verb: *The library was used*/*libraries were used by children last summer.*

The second one was gerund construction. A gerund is a noun that has been formed from a verb. Any verb can be turned into a gerund by adding *ing* to the simple form of the verb. A gerund can be used in different way. One is after a proposition as its object: *My brother is thinking about spending a year in Italy.*

The third was a causative construction, which expresses the idea of someone causing something to take place. Causative constructions are similar in meaning to passive voice. And the forth one was conditional II, which refers to an action in the present time that could happen if the present situation were different.

3.3 Treatment Tasks
In order to present the target grammatical structures, the researcher used two types of tasks: text reconstruction and text editing tasks.

A text reconstruction task is a task in which learners are given a text and are asked to read, take notes, and then reconstruct it. In text editing tasks, the participants are given a text containing incorrect forms, and they are required to recognize and correct them.

In the present study, the original texts for both reconstruction and editing tasks were the same. In case of the text reconstruction task, participants were asked to read the texts and reconstruct them, whereas in case of the editing tasks, first the target structures within the texts were made ungrammatical and then given to the participants to be corrected.

Since it was planned to expose the participants to the target structures on two occasions, it was necessary to include each of the structures in two different texts. As a result, 8 texts were selected and were used both as the reconstruction and editing purposes. Prior to their use, they were examined for their readability to make sure that they were at same level of difficulty and also were appropriate for the intermediate level. The results (Flesch Reading Ease) indicated that the texts were suitable for the learners at the intermediate level of proficiency.

3.4 Instruments
The present study follows a pretest-posttest design. In the pretest phase, the participants received a proficiency test (PET) and a multiple choice test containing the four grammatical structures, aimed at measuring learners’ grammar achievement. PET was aimed at homogenizing the learners at the outset of the study. The posttest was the same as the pretest with the items randomly reordered.

3.4.1 Multiple Choice Grammar Test
In order to measure the grammar achievement of the learners, the researcher developed a multiple choice test on target grammatical structures. The test consisted of 32 items, eight items for each structure. The test was piloted and the reliability index, along with the item difficulty and discrimination indexes, was calculated. The reliability was found to be 0.71, and the item facility indexes ranged between 0.29 and 0.78, with discrimination indexes being between 0.31 and 0.79.

3.5 Procedure
The present study was carried out in 4 sessions, the first session for the pretest and homogeneity purposes, the second and third for the administration of the tasks, and the fourth for the posttest. During the pretest phase, which took place one week before the treatment, the participants were given the PET and a multiple choice grammar test. Based on the findings of the pilot study, the participants were asked to complete the PET and the grammar test in one and half hours and 20 minutes respectively. The grammar test was aimed at determining the initial familiarity of the learners with the structures under investigation.

The treatment took place in tow sessions, one session a week. For the purpose of the study, participants were divided into the following four experimental groups:
Group 1. Text reconstruction, explicit learning condition
Group 2. Text reconstruction, implicit learning condition
Group 3. Text editing, explicit learning condition
Group 4. Text editing, implicit learning condition

Prior to the administration of the tasks in all groups, the researcher provided them with a brief oral introduction of the target structures. Then they were given the tasks and asked to perform them according to the instructions specific to each group.

In Group 1 (text reconstruction, explicit), learners were given a text containing the target structures. They were instructed to read the text, take notes, and then reconstruct it. In order to make the learning condition explicit, following Dekeyser (2003), learners were asked to attend to the target structures and also were provided with an example for each. The same procedure was used in Group 2 (text reconstruction, implicit) with the exception that the learning conditions was implicit. Instead of drawing
the learners’ attention to the target structures and giving them examples, they were just provided with directions on how to perform the tasks.

In Group 3 (text editing, explicit), learners were given a text in which the target grammar structures were grammatically wrong. They were instructed to correct the grammatical errors in the text. Explicitness of the learning conditions was created in the same way as Group 1. Similar procedure was followed in Group 4 (text editing, implicit) with the exception that the learning condition was implicit.

In line with the objectives of the study, learners’ grammar achievement was also measured after the treatment. The posttest was administered in a separate session after the termination of the treatment. It was the same as the pretest, but the items were randomly reordered in order to minimize the practice effect.

4. Results

4.1 Answering Research Question 1

The first research question was aimed at investigating the effects of reconstruction and editing tasks on grammar learning under implicit learning condition.

In order to examine whether task type was an important factor in learning grammar under implicit learning condition, the scores on text reconstruction and editing tasks were compared. Learners’ grammar achievement was measured through a grammar multiple-choice test at both the pretest and posttest phases.

Prior to the use of ANCOVA, the data sets were examined for normality and homogeneity of variances. The results of Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated that data in some sets moderately violated the assumption of normality. However, since ANCOVA is robust to violations of normality (Steinberg, 2011), it was assumed to be appropriate to use ANCOVA, rather than a non-parametric test, to analyze the data.

A one-way ANCOVA along with descriptive and adjusted statistics was employed to analyze data in relation to this question. The ANCOVA procedure made it possible to compare the posttest mean scores of the reconstruction and editing tasks while taking any existing differences at the outset of the study into account. In other words, the pretest scores acted as the covariate in the analysis. Since ANCOVA is calculated using the means adjusted by the covariate rather than the original ones, the statistics regarding the adjusted statistics (estimated marginal means) are only reported.

Table 1 presents adjusted posttest mean scores for reconstruction and editing tasks. Reading the mean column reveals that the posttest mean score for the reconstruction task (M = 19.98) is very close to that of the editing task (M = 19.90). This suggests that reconstruction and editing tasks may not differ in terms of their effects on grammar learning under implicit learning condition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reconstruction</td>
<td>19.984</td>
<td>.599</td>
<td>18.792 - 21.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing</td>
<td>19.904</td>
<td>.569</td>
<td>18.772 - 21.035</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An ANCOVAs was conducted in order to confirm that the two mean scores did not significantly differ from each other (Table, 2). As it is evident, the F-test values [F (1) = 0.008, P = 0.927] indicate that, once the effect of initial difference is taken into account, both tasks had similar impacts on the grammar learning under implicit learning condition. As a result, the related null hypothesis was maintained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>132.754</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>66.377</td>
<td>5.111</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Answering Research Question 2

Question 2 attempted to investigate the effect of task type under explicit learning condition. The related hypothesis was tested using adjusted descriptive statistics and one-way ANCOVA procedure. The posttest mean scores of the text reconstruction task were compared with those of the text editing task in the explicit condition, with the pretest scores acting as the covariate. Adjusted means, presented in Table 3, show that, the mean for the reconstruction task (M = 26.17) is higher than that of the editing task (M = 23.06), suggesting that the reconstruction task was more effective than the editing task in promoting grammar learning by the learners.

Table 3
Estimated Marginal Means for Reconstruction and Editing under Explicit Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reconstruction</td>
<td>26.172*</td>
<td>.630</td>
<td>24.918 - 27.425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing</td>
<td>23.061*</td>
<td>.630</td>
<td>21.807 - 24.314</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The statistical significance of the difference between the two adjusted mean scores was examined though a one-way ANCOVA (Table 4). The F-test values, F (1) = 11.713, P = 0.001, indicates that, when taught explicitly, the reconstruction task has statistically more positive impact on the learning of grammar than the editing task. Therefore, the related null hypothesis was rejected. The Partial Eta Squared value of 0.124, however, indicates a small effect size. Only about 12 percent of the variability (i.e. difference between the means) can be explained with reference to the type of task.

Table 4
ANCOVA Results for the Posttest Mean Scores of Reconstruction and Editing under Explicit Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>233.283</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>116.641</td>
<td>7.113</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>6032.152</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6032.152</td>
<td>367.854</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>100.155</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100.155</td>
<td>6.108</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>192.076</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>192.076</td>
<td>11.713</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>1361.054</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>16.398</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53707.000</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>1594.337</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Answering Research Question 3

Question 3 focused on the effect of reconstruction tasks on grammar learning when conducted in implicit and explicit learning conditions. It was tested by comparing the posttest scores for reconstruction tasks across implicit and explicit learning conditions. For this purpose, a one-way ANCOVA test along with adjusted descriptive statistics was employed. As Table 5 shows, the posttest mean score for the explicit condition (M = 24.42) was higher than that for the implicit condition (M = 19.68). This implied that doing the reconstruction task under implicit condition was not as effective as doing it under explicit condition. The explicitness of the learning condition perhaps draws learners' attention to the form of the language, promoting their final achievement those attended and notices forms.
Table 5
Estimated Marginal Means for Reconstruction Task in Implicit and Explicit Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>24.442</td>
<td>.791</td>
<td>22.844 - 26.040</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6
ANCOVA Results for the Posttest Mean Scores of Implicit and Explicit Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>254.235</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>127.117</td>
<td>9.413</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>2342.522</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2342.522</td>
<td>173.461</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>53.489</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>53.489</td>
<td>3.961</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>234.555</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>234.555</td>
<td>17.368</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>540.184</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13.505</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21827.000</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>794.419</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results from the ANCOVA procedure in Table 6, F (1) = 17.36, P = 0.000, further confirmed that explicit leaning condition was significantly more effective than implicit learning condition in promoting grammar learning through reconstruction task. The hypothesis, therefore, was rejected. The Partial Eta Squared value of 0.303 indicated a medium effect size.

4.4 Answering Research Question 4
Another concern of the present study was to examine whether doing a text editing task under implicit and explicit learning conditions affected grammar learning in the same way or not. Her again, a one-way ANCOVA, along with adjusted descriptive statistics was used. The high mean score for editing task in the explicit condition (M = 21.14), represented in Table 7, suggested that this learning condition was more effective than the implicit condition in promoting learners' acquisition of the English grammar.

Table 7
Estimated Marginal Means for Editing Task in Implicit and Explicit Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>18.266</td>
<td>.876</td>
<td>16.496 - 20.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>21.143</td>
<td>.876</td>
<td>19.373 - 22.913</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ANCOVA results, F (1) = 4.963, P = 0.031, revealed that the difference between the mean scores was statistically significant only at the 0.05 level of confidence. The related hypothesis was rejected; however, there was a small effect size (Partial Eta Squared =0.108), suggesting that only about 10 percent of the difference was attributable to the learning conditions.
5. Discussion
Concerning the first and second research questions, the results indicated that, under implicit learning condition, the reconstruction and editing tasks did not differ in terms of their effect on grammar achievement, but under explicit learning condition reconstruction task had more positive effect. The results for these hypotheses were in partial contradiction with those of García Mayo (2007) and Nassaji and Tian (2010). Comparing five task types concerning their effects on the promotion of the focus on form, García Mayo (2007) found that editing task was more effective than the reconstruction task in promoting LREs. Similarly, examining the effects of editing and cloze tasks on the learning of English collocations, Nassaji and Tian (2010) found that editing tasks were more effective than the cloze tasks in promoting the learning of the target collocations. In other words, the literature suggests that editing tasks are somewhat more effective than the reconstruction tasks.

In relation to the third and fourth questions, it was found that explicit learning condition significantly differed from implicit learning condition in promoting grammar learning by the learners. Explicit learning condition had more positive impact. The results for these questions are compatible with those of Rosa and Leow (2004), Bitchener and Knoch, (2009), Brender, (2002), and Akakura (2012). Rosa and Leow (2004) found that there was a positive relationship between the explicitness of the learning condition, the levels of awareness, and amount of learning. Learners under more explicit conditions reported higher levels of awareness and higher amounts of learning in comparison to those under less explicit conditions. Bitchener and Knoch (2009) examined the effect of explicit instruction on the recall and retention of the articles given as written feedback on picture description tasks. Under the explicit learning condition, the learners additionally received 30 minutes of rule explanation. The explicit learning group significantly outperformed the other group on all posttests. Similarly, Brender’s (2002) study indicated that explicit instruction led to improvement in cloze test scores and less error in essay task. Akakura’s (2012) study examined the effectiveness of explicit instruction on second language learners’ implicit and explicit knowledge of English. Explicit instruction on the generic and non-generic use of English articles was delivered by CALL activities. On measures of both explicit and implicit knowledge, significant effects were found for explicit instruction in relation with both generic and non-generic articles in the immediate posttest.

The results, however, partially contradicted those found by Tashima (2004, as cited in Akakura 2012). Tashima examined the effects of explicit and implicit learning on the learning of English articles. The explicit group received 3 tutoring sessions on grammar explanation and exercises. No statistically significant gains were found after explicit instruction in choosing between definite and indefinite articles. The results of the present study clearly indicate the superiority of explicit teaching of grammar, but this does not invalidate the credibility of implicit learning. According to Ellis (2011), language learning can take place both implicitly and explicitly, but it can be positively influenced by explicit instruction. The explicit learning condition may lead to more focus on form; therefore, learners may become more aware of the target grammatical structures. These explicitly learned structures later can be converted to implicit knowledge and used automatically in speech or writing. The Interface position proposes that these explicit and implicit forms of knowledge are closely related and can be converted to each other in the mind of the learner.

6. Conclusions
An important implication of the findings concerns the types of tasks to which learners were exposed to. This study focused on reconstruction and editing output tasks and the result showed that performing reconstruction tasks was more effective than editing tasks. The results showed that although text reconstruction and text editing tasks did not significantly differ in terms of their effects on grammar learning under implicit learning conditions, text reconstruction tasks had more positive impact under
explicit learning condition. Based on this, it is suggested that teachers plan for using reconstruction tasks instead of editing tasks.

The findings also have some implications for language pedagogy and materials development. Given that explicit learning condition, in the present study, triggered deeper learning processes, it might be advisable for the L2 teachers to knowingly incorporate a variety of explicit strategies in their practice. Explicit teaching strategies may help learners consciously reflect on the language to be learned and form and test hypotheses concerning the rules underlying its structures. On the part of the designers of instructional materials, the shift from meaning-focused materials to form-focused materials seems necessary. Form-focused materials may draw learners’ attention to the form of the target structures in a meaningful context.

Considering the positive effect of explicit teaching of grammar, further studies can be conducted focusing on other linguistic domains, including English phonology and morphology, as well as other syntactic structures.

The results of the present study may appropriately be interpreted as the positive impact of task types on the immediate gains (i.e., recall) of the learners. It would be more illuminating if future studies also take the long-term effects of tasks into account by the inclusion of retention in their design. This way, it can be determined whether achievement of linguistic features have found their way into the existing interlanguage system and long-term memory.

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ERROR CORRECTION AND CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK
IN EFL CLASSES

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ABSTRACT
SOMETIMES LEARNERS MAKE ERRORS WITHOUT BEING AWARE THAT THEY ARE PRODUCING INCORRECT FORMS. AND IN SOME OTHER CASES, STUDENTS DO NOT KNOW THE CORRECT FORMS, SO THEY PRODUCE ERRORS OUT OF NECESSITY. THIS STUDY REVIEWS OTHER STUDIES TO GATHER SOME INFORMATION ABOUT ERROR CORRECTION AND CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK. IT CAN BE REALIZED THAT ERROR CORRECTION IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF LEARNING AND TEACHING; THEREFORE, IT IS NECESSARY FOR TEACHERS TO HAVE RELEVANT ADEQUATE KNOWLEDGE. TEACHERS NEED TO BE AWARE OF THE SIGNIFICANT ROLE THAT CAN BE PLAYED BY CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE LEARNING AND TEACHING PROCESS.

KEY WORDS: ERROR CORRECTION; CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK; EFL CLASSES; TEACHERS

1. Introduction
During recent decades, the focus has shifted from teachers to students and their needs. A number of approaches and techniques are being used to meet different needs of the students. Among these needs, error correction should not be ignored. Rather, it is an important part of learning which needs special attention.

According to Brown (2007), “mistakes, misjudgments, miscalculations, and erroneous assumptions form an important aspect of learning virtually any skill or acquiring information.” (p. 257) Making error is not only rejected as a learning disability but also shows the process of learning. Some teachers have experienced the correcting of the same learners’ errors over and over with gaining little success. “But most teachers and learners feel that it is part of the teacher’s responsibility to let learners know if they have made an error and to assist them in not making a similar error again.” (Brown and Rodgers, 2004, p. 82)

However, teachers need to be careful when they provide corrective feedback to the learners because error corrections have both negative and positive effects. The positive effects of error correction can make language learning effective since it helps the learners to pay attention to their utterance and hear the correct forms or even learn them by the help of the teacher. On the other hand, the negative effects of error correction may make the development of learners’ language difficult. Because learners may forget what they were talking about or even lose their confidence in their classes.

The main aim of this study is to gathers some significant information about error correction, error classification and types of corrective feedback.

2. Literature review
There have always been different attitudes toward error correction. During the past decades, there have been so many changes in language methodologies and materials. Similarly, there has been an important change towards the learners’ errors. Keshavarz (2008) also gave some information about teaching methods and their views regarding the changes in attitudes towards learners’ errors.
So, in early sixties researchers totally changed their negative views towards learners’ errors. “Language learning, like any other learning, is fundamentally a process that involves the making of mistakes.” (Brown, 2007, p. 257) In other words, making mistakes can be considered as a sign of learning a language because as we all know, children also make many mistakes while they are acquiring their L1.

Classification of errors
Researchers usually classify errors in different types. In one classification, errors are divided into two categories: global errors and local errors. According to Keshavarz (2008), “global errors are those that cause a listener or reader to misunderstand a message or to consider a sentence incomprehensible.” (p. 130) An example of a global error can be wrong word order.

“On the other hand, local errors are those that do not significantly hinder communication of a sentence’s message.” (Keshavarz, 2008, p. 130) An example of a local error can be wrong use of tense. Hendrickson (1980) pointed out that local errors must not be corrected since the content is clear and the correction by the teacher may interrupt the flow of communication.

Also a distinction should be made between overt errors and covert errors. According to Brown (2007), “overtly erroneous utterances are unquestionably ungrammatical at the sentence level; while covertly erroneous utterances are grammatically well formed at the sentence level but are not interpretable within the context of communication.” (p. 260) For example, ‘I’m fine’ is grammatically correct. But it is a covert error as a response to ‘Who are you?’ In another type of categorization, all of the errors that learners make can be classified in each of the four parts of a language: phonology, morpho-syntax, lexis, and semantics.

Types of corrective feedback
Teachers are usually the persons who give corrective feedback to the learners’ error. It means teachers try to give reaction in order to help the learners towards their errors. It is worth mentioning to distinguish between implicit and explicit corrective feedback. Teachers can give corrective feedback either without interrupting the learners’ conversation (implicit feedback) or overtly with emphasizing on the incorrect form (explicit feedback). “Generally we tend to correct oral mistakes through speech, but the ‘how’ and ‘when’ obviously requires a great deal of sensitivity on the part of the teacher.” (McDonough and Shaw, 2003, p. 151-152) According to Lyster & Ranta (1997) corrective feedback can be done in six different ways as follow:

1. Explicit correction usually refers to the explicit provision of the correct forms. As the teacher provides the correct form, he or she clearly indicates that what the learner said is incorrect (e.g., ‘Oh, you mean,’ ‘You should say).
2. Recasts include the teacher’s reformulation of all or part of a student’s utterance, minus the error (e.g. Learner: I lost my road / Teacher: Oh, yeah, I see, you lost your way. And then what happened?)
3. Clarification requests indicate to the learners either that their utterance has not been understood by the teacher or that the utterance is ill-formed in some way and that a repetition or a reformulation is required. A clarification request involves phrases such as ‘Pardon me?’
4. Metalinguistic feedback involves comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the student’s utterance, without explicitly providing the correct form (e.g. ‘Can you find your error?’)
5. Elicitation refers to a technique that teachers use to directly elicit the correct form from the student. Teachers elicit completion of their own utterance by strategically pausing to allow learners to ‘fill in the blanks’.
6. Repetition refers to the teacher’s repetition, in isolation, of the learner’s erroneous utterance. In most cases, teachers adjust their intonation so as to highlight the error. (p. 46-48)

The time when error should be corrected
There are two types error correction regarding the time when error should be corrected. These two types include ‘immediate feedback’ and ‘delayed feedback’. Immediate error correction is believed to interrupt the learners’ flow of communication; therefore, it may have negative impact on learners (Vigil & Oller, 1976). However, delayed error correction can be less powerful since time passes between the error and the correction (Chaudron, 1977, 1988; Long, 1977). Kelly (2006) mentioned that the time of correction is connected to many other factors including learner sensitivities, learning intuition, and learning purpose of task type. Therefore, teachers need to be cautious when giving the corrective feedback.

The one who should correct the errors
Some teachers may get confused to decide who should correct the errors. Generally, there are three types of people who can correct the errors: the student who made the error (i.e. self-correction), the teacher and the classmates (i.e. peer correction).

Self-correction is usually the most desirable form which can make the learner understand and correct their own error. The second preference is peer correction. In other words, learners help each other to recognize their error and to correct it. In this way, no affective filter is used for interfering the language skills of the target language (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Finally, teacher’s error correction can be powerful, but it should be used as the last resort.

3. Conclusion
Making error is a part of learning process; therefore, error should not be considered as a sin. Some believe that error treatment is a significant technique for EFL learners while some other believes that error treatment may have negative impacts on the learners. However, it is necessary for teachers to have adequate knowledge regarding error and error correction. In this way, they can deal with error correction more appropriately.

This paper tried to gather some significant information regarding error and error correction. It provides a variety of types of corrective feedback. Teachers should use flexible error treatments by considering the students.

REFERENCES
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS’ WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE AND THEIR SPEAKING FLUENCY, ACCURACY, AND COMPLEXITY

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ABSTRACT

KEY TERMS: WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE, SPEAKING FLUENCY, ACCURACY, AND COMPLEXITY

Introduction
Ellis (1985) argues that most scholars and professionals in the field of second language learning today consent that both the rate and the degree of success in second/foreign language learning are influenced by individual differences. With the appearance of ‘humanism’ in the last quarter of the 20th century, the customary, authoritative teacher-centered instruction was replaced with the learner-centered mode of instruction. Educators began paying attention to the learners’ affective issues that they may bring into the process of learning such as feelings, emotions, interests, motivation, confidence, etc. (Po-Ying, 2006). Kafanabo (2006) believes that one of the well-known distinguishing features of the learner-centered instruction is that teachers have to be trained to consider each learner unique and capable of learning. Looking closely at the teaching process as the facilitator of learning, one could catch the idea that intricate web of factors are spun together to affect how and why one learns or fails to learn a second language. According to Williams and Burden (1997), teachers continuously reflect on the personal factors and by which become accustomed to the personal and cultural values and beliefs of other people and take their advantages when facing with various students.

Among many individual differences influencing second/foreign language learning success, such as personality, motivation, or attitude, it seems that one of the significant factors is the willingness to
communicate (WTC). The idea of WTC was developed from Burgoon’s (1976) concept of unwillingness to communicate which was first hypothesized as a personality characteristic and a trait-like predisposition to account for individual differences in L1 communication. MacIntyre, Dornyei, Clement, and Noels (1998) point out that “willingness to communicate is defined as a learner’s readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2” (p. 547).

Several WTC models have been developed to explicate individual differences in the first language (L1) communication, and now WTC has become as a central factor to account for second language (L2) communication. Three outstanding models of WTC can be considered as: Self-Perceived Communication Competence (SPCC); Communication apprehension (Communication Anxiety)/(CA); Multi layered pyramid model of WTC.

Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) planned a framework of communication competence which is known as ‘the component model of competence’. The model consists of three different scopes of motivation (an individual’s approach or avoidance orientation in various social situations), knowledge (plans of action; knowledge of how to act; procedural knowledge), and skill (behaviors actually performed). This model emphasizes that communication competence be defined by the interdependency of the cognitive component – concerned with knowledge and understanding; the behavioral component – concerned with behavioral skills; and, the affective component - concerned with attitudes and feelings about the knowledge and behaviors.

MacIntyre et al. (1998) clarified SPCC as the emotion that one has the capability to communicate successfully at a particular situation. McCroskey (1982) defined it as one’s evaluation of his or her ability to communicate properly in a specific moment. MacIntyre (1994) explained that the mixture of introversion and communication apprehension (CA) construct SPCC. The majority of direct effect on WTC happened by these two variables.

In this area, MacIntyre (1994) announced that WTC and individual difference variables are interrelated with each other. One of the most important topics in individual differences predisposition is personality-based construct which for the first time it was mentioned by Burgoon (1976, as cited in MacIntyre, 1994). This model consists of communication apprehension (CA), anomie, alienation, introversion, self-esteem, and perceived communication competence (PCC). It has shown that communication apprehension and perceived communication competence, has direct influence on WTC. By this, it can be concluded that individuals with less apprehension can increase their perceptions of communication competence; hence, they improve their WTC. As well, both anomie and alienation has direct relation with WTC.

Richmond and McCroskey (1989) explained that WTC is important for an individual’s well-being. They signify that each person who communicates in high frequency, can be better estimated in various context (for example, social, organization, and school), and each one who communicates in low level, may have WTC dysfunction problem that can diminish one’s social and emotional cheerfulness.

McCroskey and Richmond (1990) recommended that WTC is combination of two variables; lack of anxiety and perceived competence. In this model, they believe that people who are willing to communicate when they are not apprehensive and perceive themselves could be competent communicators.

The Pyramid model of WTC demonstrated that L2 learners’ communication behavior is focus on two factors. Former is situational influences (layer 1, 2, & 3; including desire to communicate with a specific person and state communicative self-confidence) and the next one is enduring influences (layer 4, 5, & 6; including motivation, self-confidence, intergroup attitudes, communicative competence, climate, social situation and personality).

Measurement of language production, in general, and oral production, in particular, is not an easy task. Ellis (2003) asserts that “a major difficulty has been establishing a unit of analysis that can serve as a basis for assessing other, more specific features, for example clausal complexity” (p. 115). Researchers have used a wide range of specific measures to quantify learner production. For instance, Tong-Fredericks (1984) considered the factors like the number of words learners produced per minute of speaking, the moment of self-correcting, and the frequency of turns. Brown (1991) focused on repetitions, rephrasing, prompts, repairs, instructional input, and hypothesizing in investigating task performance of learners. In Measurement of language production, in general, and oral production, in particular, is not an easy task. Ellis (2003) asserts that “a major difficulty has been establishing a unit of analysis that can serve as a basis for assessing other, more specific features, for example clausal complexity” (p. 115). Researchers have used a wide range of specific measures to quantify learner production. For instance, Tong-Fredericks (1984) considered the factors like the number of words learners produced per minute of speaking, the moment of self-correcting, and the frequency of turns. Brown (1991) focused on repetitions, rephrasing, prompts, repairs, instructional input, and hypothesizing in investigating task performance of learners. In
order to investigate task-based production, Newton and Kennedy (1996, as cited in Ellis, 2003) measured specific linguistic features, prepositions, and conjunctions. In analyzing the spoken language, first the spoken data should be transcribed. Then, these transcriptions should be divided into units in order to assess features such as fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Foster, Tonkyn, and Wigglesworth (2000) have divided the units into semantic, intonational, and syntactic broad categories. Each of these broad categories consisted of some sub-categories: semantic units which include proposition, c-unit, and idea unit; intonational units which include tone unit or phonemic clause, idea unit, utterance, clause, and S-node, syntactic units which include sentence, idea unit, t-unit, and c-unit.

T-unit is the most popular unit for the analysis of both written and spoken data. According to Richards and Schmidt (2010), t-unit is “the shortest unit … which a sentence can be reduced to, and consisting of one independent clause with whatever dependent clauses are attached to it” (p. 613). However, Young (1995, as cited in Foster et al., 2000) considered the following elements as one t-unit: a single clause, a matrix plus subordinate clause, two or more phrases in apposition, and fragments of clauses produced by ellipsis. Co-ordinate clauses were counted as two t-units. However, he did not count backchannel cues (e.g., mhm and yeah) and discourse boundary markers (e.g., okay, thanks, or good) as t-units. And false starts were integrated into the following t-unit too. Researchers who take a cognitive view of tasks tend to assess performance in terms of accuracy, fluency, and complexity (Skehan, 1998; Yuan & Ellis, 2003).

Accuracy is the learner’s ability to create error-free utterances. Researchers have measured accuracy in a number of different ways. In a few studies, accuracy has been gauged by specific instruments, such as past tense morphemes (Ellis, 1987, as cited in Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005), plural-s, and target-like verbal morphology (Crookes, 1989; Ortega, 1999; Wigglesworth, 1997). Nevertheless, Skehan and Foster (1999), who believe that specific measures are less sensitive to detecting variations between experimental conditions, have used general measures of accuracy, such as percentage of error-free clauses. The number of errors per 100 words is another general measure which has been used by Mehrert (1998).

In most of the studies, accuracy has been gauged by considering the number of the errors. For example, Bygate (2001) has measured accuracy by calculating the incidence of error per t-unit, i.e., the less the number of errors, the more accurate the language would be. Other studies have analyzed the number of error-free t-units (e.g., Ellis & Yuan, 2005; Foster & Skehan, 1996). However, following Bygate (2001), in this study, accuracy was measured by calculating the number of overall errors and dividing them by the number of t-units.

Fluency refers to the “smoothness of speech in terms of temporal, phonetic, and acoustic features; it may represent proficiency at a macro or micro level; it may mean the automaticity of psychological processes; or it may be expressed as a notion contrasting with the concept of accuracy” (Koponen & Riggenbach, 2000, as cited in Ellis, 2005, p. 254). Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) asserted that measure of fluency has two principal kinds. The first one is temporal variables relating to the speed of speaking/writing. Temporal variables include: speech/writing rate (Ellis, 1990, as cited in Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005), number of pauses (Robinson, Ying, & Unwin, 1995), pause length (Skehan & Foster, 1999), and length of run (Wiese, 1984, as cited in Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). The second type of fluency measure is hesitation phenomena relating to the lack of fluency and involves: false starts, repetition, reformulation, and replacement. Foster and Skehan (1999) have measured fluency by counting the number of these dysfluency features. Skehan and Foster (2005) have measured fluency by considering dysfluency features, filled pauses greater than one second, end-of-clause unfilled pauses greater than one second, and mid-clause unfilled pauses greater than one second. In this study, however, the researcher used only dyfluency features in order to measure the learners’ speech fluency. Dyfluency of L2 production was measured by counting the number of repetitions, false starts, reformulations, and replacements per t-unit and dividing the sum of dyfluency measures by the number of t-units.

The most cited recent theoretical definition of complexity was originally proposed by Skehan (1996) and developed later by Foster and Skehan (1996) and Skehan and Foster (1999). Skehan (1996), like Crookes (1989), distinguishes complexity as a language aspect which “concerns the elaboration or ambition of the language which is produced” (p. 22) to consider learner performance. Therefore, complexity is taken into account as the capacity to use more advanced language and to encode more complex ideas (Ellis & Yuan, 2004). What enables learners to progress and produce more complex language is their willingness and
preparedness to take risks and restructure their interlanguage by experimenting with language (Skehan & Foster, 1999). So, learners’ development in complexity can be observed in progressively elaborated language and an increasing variety of patterns (Foster & Skehan, 1996). As it can be observed, there are few studies which provide any formulation of the concept of complexity and they seem to do it in a wide and open to dispute way. So, the question of what complexity really means and how it can be measured stays unresolved. Hence, in order to use the construct to empirical data and investigate whether there is any development in complexity of the produced language, it should be operationalized. In this study, the complexity of oral production was measured by calculating the number of words and dividing it to the number of t-units. Just nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs were taken into account in counting the number of words.

A number of studies have investigated the relationship between WTC and L2 learners’ success and achievement in different language skills. Baghaei, Dourakhshan, and Salavati (2012), investigated the possible relationship between WTC and its components and success in foreign language learning. For the purposes of their study a WTC scale was correlated with a C-Test, which is a measure of general language proficiency. Results showed that two out of the three subscales of WTC, namely, WTC in the school context and WTC with native speakers of English, were moderately correlated with success in learning English as foreign language as measured by C-Test. The other subscale of WTC, i.e., WTC with nonnative speakers of English was not correlated with success in foreign language learning.

Alemi (2012) examined the extent to which WTC model could explain the relationship between social-psychological and communication variables in the EFL context. The participants in this study were 45 Iranian engineering students who took the TOEFL and subsequently filled out a WTC questionnaire. For data analysis, in addition to descriptive statistics, point-biserial correlation and ANOVA were run. The results revealed that university students’ WTC functions as a trait, and it is low both in and out of the classroom because the students do not need to communicate in English for their basic needs. The results also indicate that no relationship exists between sources of support and components of orientation. Furthermore, in terms of orientation, the learners displayed more integrative than instrumental motivation. Among social support factors, teachers had the main role. In the same line of research, the present study attempted to answer the question whether there was any significant relationship between WTC and speaking fluency, accuracy and complexity among Iranian EFL learners?

Method

Participants

Participants of this study were 57 (22 male and 35 female) intermediate EFL learners at Goldis Institute in Tabriz who were selected from an initial group of 90 (35 male and 55 female) students of four classes after taking the Nelson English Language Test as an English language proficiency test. Therefore, the sampling design of the study was convenience non-probability sampling. Prior to research the Nelson English Language Test was administered to all students in order to select a homogenous sample in terms of L2 proficiency by deleting the outliers. To this end, those test takers whose scores were within the range of one standard deviation below and above the mean were selected. The age range of the participants was 15 to 19. The reason for selection of the participants from intermediate level was that they had been given some preliminary instructions in speaking. The first language of the participants was Azari Turkish.

Instruments

For data collection, the following instruments were employed in the present study:

1) Nelson English Language Test was used as a tool for selecting a homogenous sample. The Nelson English Language Test is a battery including 40 separate tests for ten levels of language proficiency which range from beginner to the advanced. The levels are numbered from 050, 100, ..., to 500. Each test consists of 50 items. In the present study a test in intermediate level – 250A – was used (see Appendix A).

2) Willingness to Communicate Scale was used to elicit the learners’ WTC. This scale, developed by McCreoskey (1992) is composed of 20 items. Eight of the items are fillers and 12 are scored as part of the scale. The scale is designed as a measure of the respondent’s predisposition toward approaching or avoiding the initiation of communication. The 12 items on the scale represent the crossing of three types
of receivers with four types of communication context. Participants were supposed to put the percentage of times they would choose to communicate in each type of situation ranging from 0 for ‘never’ to 100 for ‘always’ (see Appendix B). In the present study students’ scores in overall WTC were considered and other subscales were left out. The participants were given 15 minutes to complete the survey.

3) A Tape Recorder was used to record the oral production of the participants to further investigation and transcription.

Procedure
Prior to the main study, a pilot study was conducted to measure the internal consistency of the items in the Willingness to Communicate Scale through Cronbach’s Alpha which returned a reliability index of 0.87. Nunnally (1978) has noted that a reliability index of 0.70 and above is acceptable. Therefore, the reliability of the Willingness to Communicate Scale scores was desirable.

The process of data collection was conducted in the presence of the researcher. In order to encourage participants to fill the questionnaire and perform the oral task, the aim of the study was explained to them. All of the instructions were given in Persian to ensure that the individuals could easily understand the items as well as to prevent any difficulty related to their lack of foreign language proficiency. Participants were allowed to ask questions about any ambiguous point.

At the first session, the Willingness to Communicate Scale was administered. The time given to completion of the questionnaire was 20 minutes. Then, each student did a picture description oral task. Each student performed the task in isolation and without the presence of other participants and the researcher recorded their voices.

To do the picture description task, they were supposed to tell a story based on a cartoon strip with a clear story. This task was taken from the Heaton (1975). The name of the task was Lost (see Appendix C). Before performing the task, the following guidelines were given to them:

“There is a story in these pictures. Tell it to your partner. Afterwards, tell your partner why you think it is funny or sad.”

When all participants finished their performance and the required data were collected, the students’ speeches were transcribed in order to be measured and scored. The transcriptions were evaluated by two raters and the inter-rater reliability was calculated as 0.82. The unit of evaluation was t-unit. Richards and Schmidt (2010) define t-unit as “consisting of one independent clause together with whatever dependent clauses are attached to it” (p. 613). Fluency of the performances was measured by counting the number of repetitions, false starts, reformulations, and replacements per t-unit. Accuracy was indicated by calculation of the number of errors per t-unit. In fact, the obtained scores indicated the dyfluency and inaccuracy of the learners’ performance and a lower score indicated high accuracy and fluency. Complexity was measured in terms of the number of words per t-unit including just nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Each participant’s final score in fluency, accuracy, and complexity was the average of the numbers taken from the mentioned procedure.

Design
This study was a descriptive, survey-based, correlational research that aimed at assessing the degree of correlation between WTC as independent variable and participants’ speaking fluency, accuracy, and complexity as dependent variables.

Data Analyses and Results
To investigate the relationship between WTC and speaking fluency, accuracy, and complexity three Pearson’s correlation analyses were conducted. The level of significance (alpha level) for the rejection of the null hypotheses was set to 0.05.

Tables 1 and Table 2 present the results of the participants’ scores in WTC and the fluency, accuracy, complexity of their speaking, respectively.
Table 1  
*The Results of the Participants’ WTC*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WTC</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>654.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that the mean score of 57 participants’ WTC scores was 654.42 with the standard deviation of 278.01.

Table 2  
*The Results of the Participants’ Speaking Fluency, Accuracy and Complexity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>.5482</td>
<td>.5999</td>
<td>.579119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>.6142</td>
<td>.7199</td>
<td>.668507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2.6440</td>
<td>2.7348</td>
<td>2.696996</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that the participants’ mean score of the fluency of speaking was 0.5791 with the standard deviation of 0.0131; their speaking accuracy mean score was 0.6685 with the standard deviation of 0.0307 and their mean score of speaking complexity was 2.6970 with the standard deviation of 0.0241.

In order to check the normality of the scores distribution, as a prerequisite to employ Pearson correlation analysis, the researcher ran a One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. Table 3 presents the results of this test.

Table 3  
*One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for All Sets of Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>WTC</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
<th>Complexity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>654.42</td>
<td>.579119</td>
<td>.668507</td>
<td>2.696996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>278.010</td>
<td>.0131074</td>
<td>.0306574</td>
<td>.0241416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is indicated in Table 3, P-value for each set of scores was higher than 0.05. Therefore, all sets of scores had normal distribution and Pearson correlation analysis, as a parametric inferential statistics could be used.

Table 4 shows the results of Pearson correlation analysis to examine the significance of the relationship between WTS and fluency of speaking.
Table 4  
*Pearson’s Correlation between WTC and Speaking Fluency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WTC</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WTC</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Fluency | Pearson Correlation | -0.791** | 1        |
|         | Sig. (2-tailed)     |   | 0.000    |
|         | N        | 57       | 57       |

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

As it is shown in Table 4, since the coefficient value was -0.791 and the p-value approached to zero (p<0.05) it could be concluded that there was a significant relationship between WTC and speaking fluency scores of the participants. It must be noted that the negative value for correlation is because of the fact that in measuring fluency, the number of hesitations and false starts and etc. were counted so that a lower score indicated a higher degree of fluency. Therefore, negative correlation between WTC and dyfluency shows a positive correlation between WTC and fluency. The first null hypothesis regarding the lack of a significant relationship between WTC and speaking fluency among Iranian EFL learners was rejected.

Table 5 shows the results of Pearson correlation between the participants’ WTC and their speaking accuracy.

Table 5  
*Pearson’s Correlation between WTC and Speaking Accuracy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WTC</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WTC</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Accuracy| Pearson Correlation | -0.812** | 1        |
|         | Sig. (2-tailed)     |   | 0.000    |
|         | N        | 57       | 57       |

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

The results indicated a significant negative correlation between WTC and the participants’ speaking accuracy (p<0.05). The negative value for the correlation is because of the fact that the accuracy scores were obtained by counting errors in t-units so that the lower scores indicated a higher accuracy. Therefore, the negative correlation between WTC scores and the accuracy scores indicated a positive relationship between the two variables. The relationship between WTC and speaking complexity of participants was also examined through a Pearson’s correlation analysis. The results are presented in Table 6.
Table 6
Pearson’s Correlation between WTC and Speaking Complexity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WTC</th>
<th>Complexity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WTC</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>57 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.459**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>57 57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

The results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between WTC and the speaking complexity scores.

Discussion
The statistical analyses revealed that the participants’ WTC was significantly correlated with fluency, accuracy and complexity of their oral performance. Williams and Burden (1997) believe that the process of education, as language teaching and learning, is one of the most significant and complicated of all human attempts. In language learning, psychological characteristics play an important role. Learners are different and based on their personality, they communicate with others in various ways. But, language teachers are faced with a common problem in classrooms, that is, the students’ unwillingness to speak. Apparently, learners with high levels of WTC appear better in academic tasks than others. The logic is that, by using such policies on communication and controlling some of psychological including WTC, human can control feelings and manage an excellent connection.

The findings of the present study were consistent with the results of Tousi and Khalaji (2014) who found that there was a statistically significant relationship between Iranian students’ WTC and their speaking efficiency. In addition, the results, to some extent, confirmed the conclusion made by Baghaei, Dourakhshan, and Salavati (2012) who explored the possible relationship between WTC and its components and success in foreign language learning. They revealed that two out of the three subscales of WTC were moderately correlated with success in learning English as foreign language. In contrast, the results of the present study were contradictory with the findings of Alemi (2012) who could not find any relationship between social-psychological and communication variables in the EFL context.

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications
As stated earlier, the purpose of this study was to investigate the probable relationships between Iranian EFL learners’ WTC and the fluency, accuracy, and complexity of their speaking skill. For this reason, three research questions have been proposed and the corresponding hypotheses were investigated: It seems that from the time the learner-centered instruction arose, every English language teaching method with its specific emphasis has been developed to meet students’ different needs, characteristics, or interests. The English language teachers today accept that students bring with them certain strengths, exclusive learning styles, and various learning potentials. So, finding the possible relationships between WTC and fluency, accuracy, and complexity dimensions of speaking skill would help the teachers to establish their teaching procedure based on the degree of various students’ WTC and avoid using fixed methods of teaching and posing same amount of force on all of the students.

In the light of the findings of the present study, the researcher would like to suggest some practical implications which can be useful to students and teachers as well as administrators, material designers, and syllabus planners. The first implication is for students. Since an understanding of WTC can enable students to take control of their learning and attempt consciously to maximize the potential for
communication. Knowledge of one’s WTC level may be beneficial in that the learner will be aware of his or her strengths and weaknesses in terms of communication experiences. Therefore, further language performance may be enriched if the learners maintain their strengths and assets.

The results of this study are also supposed to yield some pedagogical implications for teachers. Findings might aid them in providing a viable educational environment for all students with different levels of WTC in their classes and even in out of class situations. It is expected that teachers become more aware of the students’ differences in WTC level. In addition, teachers should try to develop and strengthen weaker learners’ WTC through easier tasks. Instructors need to assess and understand how to teach all students by understanding how to present information in multiple modes in order to make all students eager to communicate.

The results of this study, may present suggestions to administrators, material writers, and syllabus planners in the English as a foreign language context. Many teachers may not be familiar with the ways to enhance the learners’ WTC; so, the administrators by providing some teacher education programs can solve this problem. The material designers and syllabus planners can develop materials which are most likely to meet with students’ approval. Hence, the pivotal role of the students’ WTC in the actual processes of materials and syllabus design must not be ignored.

REFERENCES


Appendix A

Nelson English Test
Choose the correct answer. Only one answer is correct.

14 Take an umbrella . . . . . it rains.
A in any case     B in case     C because     D for

15 I . . . . have coffee than tea.
A like more to     B prefer     C would rather     D had better

16 He didn’t thank me for the present. That is . . . . . annoyed me.
A the which     B that which     C the thing what     D what

17 I’ll have to buy . . . . trousers.
A a     B two     C a pair of     D a couple of

18 She looks . . . . .
A pleasant     B to be pleasant     C that she’s pleasant     D pleasantly

19 When you . . . . the furniture, please tell me.
A will finish to move     B finish to move     C will finish moving
D have finished moving

20 The reason . . . . . I’m writing is to tell you about a party on Saturday.
A because     B why     C for     D as

21 Don’t make him . . . . . it if he doesn’t want to.
A do     B to do     C doing     D that he do

22 He’s . . . . . to know the answer.
A likely     B probable     C maybe     D probably

23 She came . . . . . because her car has broken down.
A walking     B by foot     C with foot     D on foot

24 That’s the man . . . . yesterday.
A which I was talking to     B what I was talking to
C I was talking to          D with who I was talking

25 I’ve been looking for you . . . . .
A everywhere     B anywhere     C for all places
D in all places

26 . . . . . he was tired he went on working.
A Even     B Yet     C Although     D In spite

27 Send him to the baker’s . . . . the bread.
A to buy     B in order he buys     C for to buy
D for buying

28 Wanda is . . . . . Jane.
A a lot pretty than     B a lot prettier that
C much more pretty that     D much prettier than

29 He didn’t know . . . . . or go home.
A to wait     B if that he should wait
C if to wait     D whether to wait
30. . . . . . . me . . . .
   A Tell/what is this
   B Tell/what is this
   C Say/what is this
   D Say/what is this

31. If you . . . . . help you, you only have to ask me.
   A want me to
   B want that I
   C want I should
   D are wanting me to

32. "I'm going to the theatre tonight." "So . . . . . ."
   A will I
   B I will
   C am I
   D do I

33. How . . . . is it from here to New York?
   A long way
   B long
   C far
   D much far

34. I wish I . . . . what to do.
   A knew
   B have known
   C know
   D would know

35. He likes playing . . . .
   A the football
   B football
   C at football
   D at the football

36. My brother . . . . . . . lives in Iceland, is coming to visit us.
   A which
   B that
   C whom
   D who

37. He's already about . . . . his father.
   A so tall than
   B as tall than
   C as tall as
   D so tall as

38. . . . . him go out if he wants to.
   A Allow
   B Leave
   C Let
   D Permit

39. I didn't hear what he was . . . .
   A telling
   B saying
   C talking
   D speaking

40. I . . . . . . . . watching this programme because it is very interesting.
   A amuse
   B please
   C delight
   D enjoy

41. That student . . . . his hand every time I ask a question.
   A gets out
   B gets up
   C rises
   D puts up

42. I . . . . . . . . hands with him when he came in.
   A gave
   B greeted
   C shook
   D offered

43. He wants to get a better . . . . and earn more money.
   A job
   B work
   C employ
   D employment

44. . . . . . . the children for me while I'm out.
   A Look after
   B Look to
   C Take care
   D Care
APPENDIX B

Willingness to Communicate Scale

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A go</td>
<td>B so</td>
<td>C show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A hall</td>
<td>B call</td>
<td>C fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A freeze</td>
<td>B piece</td>
<td>C please</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A lose</td>
<td>B chose</td>
<td>C rose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A what</td>
<td>B cat</td>
<td>C sat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A fair</td>
<td>B wear</td>
<td>C hear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A days</td>
<td>B says</td>
<td>C ways</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this series of questions, three words have the same sound but one does not. Choose the one that does not.
Willingness to Communicate
Scale (WTC)

DIRECTIONS: Below are twenty situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate. Presume you have completely free choice. Indicate the percentage of times you would choose to communicate in each type of situation. Indicate in the space at the left what percent of the time you would choose to communicate.

0 = never, 100 = always

1. *Talk with a service station attendant.
3. Present a talk to a group of strangers.
4. Talk with an acquaintance while standing in line.
5. *Talk with a salesperson in a store.
6. Talk in a large meeting of friends.
7. *Talk with a police officer.
8. Talk in a small group of strangers.
9. Talk with a friend while standing in line.
11. Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.
12. Talk with a stranger while standing in line.
14. Present a talk to a group of friends.
15. Talk in a small group of acquaintances.
17. Talk in a large meeting of strangers.
18. *Talk with a spouse (or girl/boy friend).
19. Talk in a small group of friends.
20. Present a talk to a group of acquaintances.

*Filler item
Appendix C

Picture Description Task

16 Lost!

[Image: Diagram showing a town map and streets with people looking at a map and pointing.]
A REVIEW: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT?

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ABSTRACT

HUMAN LIFE CANNOT DISPENSE WITH LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT. WITHOUT LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT WE ARE NOT ABLE TO MANAGE OUR MENTAL AND SOCIAL LIVES. IN FACT, LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT HAVE BEEN A LOCUS OF POINT OF STUDY BY BOTH PHILOSOPHERS AND COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGISTS ALIKE FOR MANY YEARS. REVIEWING THE RELATED LITERATURE INDICATES THAT THERE ARE CONS AND PROS ON THE UNIVERSALITY OF ‘LANGUAGE OF THOUGHT’ (‘LOT’) AMONG SPEAKERS OF DIFFERENT LANGUAGES. THE BALANCE OF VIEWS, HOWEVER, SEEMS TO BE IN FAVOR OF THE UNIVERSALITY OF ‘LOT’ IN DIFFERENT SPEAKERS OF LANGUAGES. ACTUALLY, EACH PERSON’S FIRST LANGUAGE IS HIS ‘LOT’ AND IT IS ONLY LATER THAT IT IS MAPPED INTO SOME REPRESENTATIONS IN REAL WORLD, THAT IS THE ‘ORAL LANGUAGE’. THEREFORE, EVERY PERSON’S NATIVE LANGUAGE IS IN FACT HIS SECOND LANGUAGE AS THE FIRST LANGUAGE OF HUMAN BEINGS ALL IS THEIR ‘LOT’. IN OTHER WORDS, ‘ORAL LANGUAGES’ ARE DIFFERENT REALIZATIONS OF ‘LOT’. THIS ARTICLE AIMS TO TOUCH ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVERY PERSON’S FIRST LANGUAGE THAT IS ACTUALLY HIS ‘LOT’, WHAT IS ALSO CALLED THE ‘MENTALESE’ BY FODOR, AND THE SECOND LANGUAGE, THAT IS HIS ‘ORAL LANGUAGE’.

KEYWORDS: ‘LOT’, ‘MENTALESE’, UNIVERSALITY, ORAL LANGUAGE, COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

1. Introduction
1.1. The Difference Between LOT And Oral Languages

The most common form of language is oral communication, in which spoken words are used to express ideas. The ability to speak is equal to produce sounds that are recognized by a group of people for conveying meaning according to established conventions. Accordingly, a language is a finite system of units of sound that are combined in a particular order to form words which serve as symbols that are arbitrarily referred to objects. And combining these words into sentences makes it possible to convey meaning in oral language. Though language is often considered inseparable from thought, it is still important to distinguish the two. Thought means the ability to have ideas but Language indicates a different ability: the ability to encode ideas into signals for the purpose of communication.
'Language of Thought' ('LOT') is a notion proposed by Fodor (1975) and is presumed to be the language the human brain uses by and within itself. Fodor (1975) developed his own idea of Representational Theory of Mind. In the same vein, Fodor and Pylyshyn (1988) support the existence of ‘mentalese’ by referring to the notion of cognitive architecture. The notion is both lionized and criticized by many a scholar from different vintage points. In this regard, cognitive linguistics defined by Richards (2010: 91) as an ‘an approach to linguistics which stresses the interaction between language and cognition, focusing on language as an instrument for organizing, processing, and conveying information’ is a crossroad in which language studies overlaps philosophy of cognition. Therefore, the idea draws on the findings of both philosophy and cognitive sciences. Stillings et. al (1987: 1) in their book Cognitive Science point to the work in the field of cognitive scientists as viewing 'the human mind as a complex system that receives, stores, retrieves, transforms, and transmits information.' It is in referring to this idea of mental processing of information that Beckermann (1994) states that such an information processing paradigm 'leads directly to the paradigm of symbol processing, because a system can, as it seems, only receive, store and process information if it has at its disposal a system of internal representations or symbols, i.e. an internal language in which this information is encoded.' The same idea of information processing as it is concerned with the brain's working appears to such scholars as Peter Hacker (1987: 486f.) as a language system where he argues"... if information is received, encoded, decoded, interpreted and provides grounds for making plans, then there must be a language or system of representation in which this is all done.' And it’s a well-stated fact among the cognitive scientists and as a matter of fact it's a core subject which lies at the very kernel of the new researches in the fields of cognitive psychology and cognitive neurobiology. Finally, Kaye (1993) concludes that even if the Fodor's arguments in favor of ‘mentalese hypothesis’ would be incorrect, there are other arguments i.e., distinctiveness and nativism which verify the existence of ‘mentalese’.

1.2. Is 'LOT' Universal Among Human Beings?

The concept of the universality of ‘LOT’ is a controversial issue and hence there are pros and cons on it. The fact that it is possible to translate an intended meaning from one language to other languages confirms the universality of 'mentalese' or ‘LOT’ in spite of the linguistic differences in different languages (Nick Lund, 2003). In the same vein, Saeed (2003) confirms the independence of thought from language by depicting the evidence of visual thinking, when people do some mental processes that there is no need of language e.g. manipulating or rotating pictures. He further notes that when an individual plans to speak, he translates his ‘LOT’ into the spoken language. Therefore, people speaking different languages have the same ‘LOT’.

2. Related Literature Reviewed

Nick Lund (2003) classifies different approaches to the nature of the relationship between language and thought: Whorfian approach (Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis), the language one speaks determines or influences his way of thinking (the strong and weak version, respectively; Piagedian approach: one's way of thinking determines his use of language; Vygotskyian approach: at infancy, language and thought are independent but gradually they develop interdependency between them; Chomskyian approach: language and thought are completely independent. He further maintains that it seems that the universality of ‘LOT’ exists because different oral languages are translatable to each other. Saeed (2003) also confirms the universality of ‘LOT’ by referring to visual thinking. Discovering that thought contains non-linguistic concepts, Grosjean as cited in Flora (2010 ) too states that thought can be visual and spatial.
and therefore when the person decides to speak, the linguistic factors come into play. Then there is Pinker (1994) who claims that language one speaks doesn't affect how he thinks. People cannot speak because of injury or deprivation, but abstract cognition can happen in their minds. He also adds to this the babies who know about the concepts but they don't know what call them before exposing to a particular language. Before exposing to a particular language, there is a stage where all humans possess the concepts in their minds before expressing them which Fodor (1975) calls it 'mentalese' or 'language of thought'. According to Fodor (1975) when people learn their native languages it is actually considered as their second language because when they learn their native language what they do is assigning that native language words to the concepts of their language of thought.

On the other hand, some researchers reject the universality of ‘LOT’ among language speakers. Boroditsky (2001), experimenting with English and Chinese speakers in an attempt to determine their mental processing of ‘time’, concluded that languages can have an effect on the way we think yet observing such an effect should be restricted to such abstract domains as ‘time’. But, Leva (2011) maintains that bilinguals perceive the world differently while using different languages. In the same vain, Jones (2010) notes that bilinguals show different reactions to the two languages and even they show different personalities when they use different languages. Moreover Luna et al. (2008) go further and claim that for changing from one mental frame to another, bilingualism by itself, isn't enough and biculturalism is necessary as well. And Finally, Flora (2010) proposes that bilinguals have broader thinking in comparison with monolinguals because of having access to another language while they are using one of the languages.

3. Conclusion

‘LOT’, or ‘mentalese’ in Fodor’s term, has been the subject of study by several philosophers for many years, but recently, cognitive psychologists have also debated over this controversial issue. It is clear that thought is manifested by words but the kind of relationship between these two is still blur. The question is whether the people using different languages think differently? Whether an individual speaking English and one speaking Persian would think differently just because of the language they use? Many people ask bilinguals or multi-linguals what language or languages they think in. If they select just one of their languages, people conclude that it must be the language of their ‘inner being’. It seems that thinking is independent of language. When people do their activities e.g., walking, cooking, riding, etc., their thoughts are not in a particular language. The fact that people’s thought are not in a particular language while doing some activities demonstrates that thought is separate from language. Even sometimes people think visually or spatially which verifies that language and thought are separate. Moreover, concepts are translatable in different languages which again confirms the fact that initially there is a stage in brain which is not manifested externally until a particular language mediates and realizes it into the oral form. Consequently, ‘LOT’ is universal or ‘the cognitive architecture’ of all human beings is the same, but it is just realized in different forms of oral languages.

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ASIAN EFL LEARNERS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY AND WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN WRITTEN AND SPOKEN TASKS

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ABSTRACT
CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT TRANSACTIONAL COMMUNICATION IS FUNDAMENTAL IN ANY ACADEMIC SETTING, IN THIS CASE LEARNING A LANGUAGE, SHEDDING LIGHT ON VARIABLES INFLUENCING SUCH AN INTRICATE PROCESS IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE. AS A CONSEQUENCE, THE CURRENT STUDY WAS CONDUCTED WITH THE AIM OF INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EFL LEARNERS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY (FLCA) AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE (WTC) IN SPEAKING AND WRITING TASKS. TO THIS END, 155 MALE AND FEMALE EFL LEARNERS, RANGING FROM 12 TO 45 YEARS OF AGE, WERE SELECTED THROUGH A CONVENIENCE SAMPLING TO COMPLETE THE SCALES FOR FLCA AND WTC INSIDE THE CLASSROOM. THE NON-PARAMETRIC DATA WERE COLLECTED WITHIN EIGHT SESSIONS BEFORE THEY WERE ANALYZED WITH STATISTICAL PACKAGE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE (SPSS) 21. THE RESULTS OBTAINED FROM THE SPEARMAN'S RANK ORDER RHO CORRELATION INDICATED THAT THE LANGUAGE LEARNERS' FLCA NEGATIVELY CORRELATES WITH THEIR TOTAL WTC AND WTC IN SPEAKING AND WRITING TASKS. TAKEN TOGETHER THESE FINDINGS, FLCA IS CONSIDERED TO BE A PREDICATOR OF WTC IN ACADEMIC SETTINGS.

KEYWORDS: FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY, WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE

1. Introduction
Today, as man's lifestyle is moving forward to socialization, the role of communication is becoming more and more salient. Our knowledge today is based on the findings of our ancestors and what has enabled them to transfer such knowledge is communication. For a long time communication has been considered as vital to human beings as it enables them to transfer their skills, findings, and knowledge from one generation to another. As a result, one can assume that communication is a key component of knowing and learning. In this respect, language, a God-given gift, is what differentiates human communication from those of other beings. Through language, whether it is presented in the form of oral words, written symbols, or signs, individuals externalize and internalize their thoughts and ideas for others and for themselves.

Communicating and understanding the sender's intended message is a delicate process in which the receiver has to cross out thousands of possible meanings in order to determine what the sender's intended meaning is. As stated by Heath and Bryant (2012), individuals become members of different zones of meaning when they learn about their physical and social environments. A zone of meaning refers to "a shared understanding or view of some phenomenon. A zone is the meaning structures that people create and share as they attempt to create meaningful bases for shared thought and interaction" (Heath & Bryant, 2012, p. 257). This could imply that for foreign language learners, the process of communication is somehow painful because originally they belong to different zones of meaning. In fact,
along with grammatical and semantic rules, they need to be aware of the physical and social worlds of the target language which are not formally taught in their classes.

Having a sufficient repertoire of language does not necessarily kindle a person's interest to initiate a conversation or engage in a communicative act. In addition to individuals' ability to utilise a foreign language, their psychological readiness to enter into discourse has an intense effect on their communication. As MacIntyre, Burns, and Jessome (2011) stated, within the context of second language learning, communication is considered to be a complex process that holds a dynamic interplay between the context of learning and the psychology of learners. Among myriad variables influencing individuals' tendency toward or away from a communicative encounter, the concept of willingness to communicate (WTC), which has been at the heart of scholars' attention in the last decades, is worth mentioning. Cao (2011) stated that "WTC is a direct predicator of frequency of communication" (p. 477). Munene (2015) considered WTC as "the most immediate antecedent for the actual initiation of a conversation" (p. 188) and claimed that as individuals' levels of WTC increases, they use L2 in and outside their classes more frequently and this is an essential factor in enhancing individuals' communicative proficiency. Kang (2005) explained that having high levels of WTC is a factor to change ordinary learners into autonomous who attempt to learn through communication without receiving any assistance from their teacher.

Providing students with task-based language instruction which focuses mainly on functional purposes of using a language entails understanding the interaction between learners and tasks. WTC, in this case, is a factor that mediates such an interaction (Weaver, 2007). L2 WTC extends beyond speaking a second language and deals with other modes of communication including learners' willingness to write (Weaver, 2005). Writing and speaking tasks have a wide range of forms that are similar to real-world activities. Giving a short speech, greeting people, interviewing, and writing a diary are all examples of these tasks. Utilising any opportunity to talk or to write, students use the second or foreign language more actively in their classes and therefore have greater chances to receive feedback and improve their language proficiency.

Bearing the importance of WTC in and outside language classes, it is indispensable to consider factors that might be influential. In the same vein, Kęblowska (2012, p. 158) asserted that "affect" is not in opposition to the intellect and cognitive side of learning and to have successful learning both factors go hand in hand and complements one another. Learners' affective characteristics such as anxiety, motivation, and the like have a key instrumental role in the process of learning a foreign language. According to Horwitz (2010), for example, it is intuitive that anxiety which is a multi-faceted concept hinders the process of second language learning and production. Anxiety refers to "the apprehensive anticipation of future danger or misfortune accompanied by a feeling of worry, distress, and/or somatic symptoms of tension "(American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 818). Spielmann and Radnofsky (2001) defined tension as "an unstable phenomenon that may be generated by any situation or event and may be perceived differently by each individual experiencing it" (p. 1). They believed that tension has dysphoric and euphoric effects in learning a foreign language. The former is assumed to have a detrimental effect while the latter is said to have a beneficial role. Accordingly, while there are researchers who believe that anxiety interferes with learning negatively, there are those who find it as a constructive factor that facilitates learning. Related to the scope of this study, there is a type of situation-specific anxiety that some learners bring with themselves to their language classes in response to learning and using an L2 which is called "foreign language anxiety" (FLA) or simply language anxiety (Horwitz, 2010). Similar to the notion of anxiety, it is stated that initial studies on FLA considered it as a facilitative factor; however, the recent ones have revealed that individuals' achievement is inhibited and frustrated by FLA (Alshboul, Sheikh Ahmad, Sahari Nordin, & Abdul Rahman, 2013). In the same sense, Tran and Moni (2015) expressed that FLA can be both positive and negative. Individuals should learn to work with it rather than reducing it. Therefore, finding ways to effectively manage and control FLA is said to be the ultimate goal of anxiety-related studies. Reducing negative effects of FLA and taking advantage of its positive effects is suggested to be an optimum approach to manage FLA.

The fact that individuals' cultural background influences their foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) is amplified with that Asian language learners are among those who experience the highest levels of anxiety and the least levels of foreign language enjoyment (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) and this
necessitates paying more attention to factors influencing their desire to initiate communication inside language classes. Correspondingly, to the best of researchers' knowledge, no clear-cut relationship has yet been observed between learners' FLCA and their WTC when they come to speaking and writing tasks. Given this lacuna, this study investigated this possible relationship. The researchers intended to indicate whether FLCA has the predictive power of L2 WTC and if should teachers consider it as a facilitative factor in language learning context.

2. Literature review
2.1 Foreign language classroom anxiety
The term "anxiety" has been considered as an affective factor influencing individuals' failure or success. Because anxiety is by nature too general, scholars have proposed different expressions to indicate different aspects of the phenomenon. The use of the term "academic anxiety" by Cassady (2010), as "a unifying formulation for the collection of anxieties learners experience while in schools" (p. 1), is an example. Dealing with the same issue in second or foreign language literature, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) defined foreign language anxiety as "a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process" (p. 128). More simply, it refers to a type of "anxiety which is experienced by L2 learners in L2 classrooms" (Rassaei, 2015, p.100).

There are certain areas in a human brain that are influenced by anxiety. In a functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) study, it was indicated that the neural mechanisms underlying L2 communications are sensitive to individuals' levels of anxiety. As individuals' L2 anxiety levels increase, the activation in the orbitofrontal cortex that includes left insula decreases. Language learning anxiety hinders appropriate neural responses and prevents learners from monitoring and producing utterances (Jeong et al, 2015). Apart from brain areas involved in L2 communication, scholars and academics have attributed the concept as the outcome of some other factors. Trang, Baldauf, and Moni (2013) found that anxiety is a learned response to less favourable learning conditions and situations in which foreign language learning goes beyond learners' control and they cannot adapt to changes. Moreover, it was revealed that pedagogy, assessment, student-teacher relationships, and curriculum structure influence foreign language anxiety.

One of the first studies related to foreign language anxiety is the one conducted by Horwitz et al (1986). They have proposed three performance-related anxieties including "communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation" as the building blocks of foreign language anxiety (p. 127). The first component of foreign language anxiety, communication apprehension refers to "a type of shyness characterized by fear of anxiety about communicating with people" (Horwitz et al, 1986, p. 127). The second component, which is test anxiety, is derived from the fear of evaluation and failure. This type of fear is defined as "an unpleasant feeling or emotional state that has both physiological and behavioural concomitants and is experienced by the anxious learner when taking formal tests or other evaluative situations" (Lucas, Miraflores, & Go, 2011, p. 102). The last component, the fear of negative evaluation, is defined as "apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectations that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (Watson & Friend, as cited in Horwitz et al, 1986, p. 128).

Although the above-mentioned anxieties play a significant role in influencing individuals' language anxiety, such an intricate factor cannot be limited to what Horwitz et al (1986) had in mind. Other researchers mentioned some other components of foreign language anxiety. Liu and Chen (2013), for example, claimed that FLA is composed of two major factors including learners' general worry regarding language-related performance and their low self-confidence in speaking ability. As explained by Kondo and Yang (2003), English language classroom anxiety is made up of three constituents including individuals' anxiety about their low proficiency, speaking activities, and peer evaluation. Lucas et al (2011) considered teachers and teaching styles as other factors that influence students' foreign language anxiety.

Whatever the cause and components of foreign language anxiety are, no one can overlook its detrimental role in affecting the process of language learning. FLA has revealed its debilitative effects on various
aspects of language learning. Jeong et al. (2015) argued that language-related anxiety hinders proper neural responses during L2 communication. Yan and Horwitz (2008) claimed that students with FLA are not able to find effective learning strategies in certain interviews and feel that there is a large gap between their language learning abilities — including comprehension, memorization, and logical abilities — and those of their peers. Al-shboul et al. (2013) in their systematic review of literature on FLA and its relationship with other factors, concluded that FLA influences students' learning process, outcomes, and achievement. Williams and Andrade (2008) conducted a study on Japanese learners and found that FLA is mostly associated with the output and processing stages and when encountering anxiety-provoking situations, these learners' most common emotional reaction was the fact that their mind went blank. Ghorbandordinejad and Moradian Ahmadabad (2015) explained that learners suffering from high levels of anxiety are less competent to obtain their desired goal in language learning achievement. The researchers also found that FLA is a kind of mediator between autonomy and language achievement. Therefore, they concluded that FLCA is at play in the predictive power of learners' autonomy with regard to English achievement.

Research on the distinctive nature of FLA has also indicated the relationship between FLA with other factors. Negative correlations have been reported between foreign language anxiety and test performance (Salehi & Marefat, 2014), between foreign language anxiety and second language achievement, language learning interest, and motivation (Yan & Horwitz, 2008). In a very large scale study of multilingual adults around the world, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) found that individuals who have achieved higher levels of foreign language proficiency and education, those who felt more proficient than their peers, and those who knew more languages have lower levels of FLCA. In addition, in the same study, the researchers noticed that female participants obtained higher scores on their FLCA.

2.2 Willingness to communicate (WTC)

It is said that "where there is a will, there is a way". This implies that even less proficient language learners may initiate a conversation if they are willing. With the aim of improving individuals' communicative skills, research involving communication and related concepts such as willingness to communicate has been at the center of many scholars' works. Kang (2005) defined willingness to communicate as "an individual's volitional inclination towards actively engaging in the act of communication in a specific situation which can vary according to interlocutor(s), topic, and conversational context, among other potential situational variables" (p. 291). Kang's work puts emphasis on the dynamic role of situational WTC that fluctuates during communication.

In spite of the fact that WTC was traditionally considered as an individual difference variable that influences the communicative process, MacIntyre et al. (2011) endeavoured to expand the notion of WTC to give an account of the moment-to-moment dynamics of the social circumstances and the role of the communicative partner. In other words, WTC should be scrutinized both through the individual differences approach and the dynamic dialogue approach. Recently, more attention has been paid to the dynamic, situational, and contextual aspects of the phenomenon and this has led to the emergence of different models of WTC such as the one which was proposed by Kang (2005) entitled situational willingness to communicate model. According to Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2015), the essential features of L2 WTC lie in its diverse conceptualizations that range from a personality trait to a context-based factor. It merges all psychological, linguistic, educational, and communicative aspects of language together that have been examined separately in the previous literature.

Cao (2011) stated that situational L2 WTC emerges from joint effects of some characteristics that include individuals' "self-confidence, personality, emotion and perceived opportunity to communicate, classroom environmental conditions such as topic, task, interlocutor, teacher and group size, together with linguistic factors" (468). As specified by Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2015), WTC is affected by factors such as "the topic, planning time, cooperation and familiarity with the interlocutor, the opportunity to express one's ideas, the mastery of requisite lexis, the presence of the researcher, and a host of individual variables" (p.1). In addition to what has been said, situational and personal constrains affect individuals' willingness to communicate. As situational constrains, McCroskey and Richmond (2005) paid attention to factors such as the high temperature of the classroom, the evaluative behaviour of
the teacher, and students' dislike of the subject matter and suggested that these factors make students unwilling to communicate. As personal constrains, they mentioned that factors such as students' health, students' lesson preparation, and questions that require self-disclosure answers have abundant impact on their WTC. It is stated that other factors such as studying abroad (Kang, 2014), EFL learners' perception of the discipline strategies utilised by their teachers (Khodarahmi & Motallebi Nia, 2014), visualization together with goal setting (Munezane, 2015) enhance individuals' tendency to approach a communicative encounter.

In an attempt to examine the objectives of the current study, the following research questions were posed:

Q₁. Is there any relationship between EFL learners' foreign language classroom anxiety and their willingness to communicate?

Q₂. Is there any relationship between EFL learners' foreign language classroom anxiety and their willingness to communicate in speaking tasks?

Q₃. Is there any relationship between EFL learners' foreign language classroom anxiety and their willingness to communicate in writing tasks?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

One hundred and fifty-five EFL learners, aged 12 to 45, were selected through a convenience sampling method in order to form the sample in the current study. Of these, 17 participants were private institute language learners and the rest were university students majored in English translation. All the participants were native speakers of Farsi (153 were Iranian and 2 were Afghans). Both male and female learners took part in the study; however, the majority were female (approximately 87%).

3.2 Instruments

The quantitative data were collected through employing two self-rating questionnaires. Firstly, being the most functional instrument in measuring language learners' classroom anxiety, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), developed by Horwitz et al (1986) was utilised. In terms of the reliability of the instrument, it is shown that the internal reliability is .93 and the test-retest reliability over eight weeks is .83. The questionnaire featured 33 items with corresponding 5-point Likert-Scale response options. The participants had to elucidate the extent to which each statement was true about them by choosing from the five alternatives ranging from 1 (corresponding to strongly disagree) to 5 (corresponding to strongly agree). Moreover, the instrument made it possible to gain sub-scores on different types of anxiety and apprehension that individuals suffer from in language classes including communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and anxiety in the English class.

Secondly, learners' willingness to communicate was operationalized through obtaining scores from L2 WTC questionnaire designed by Weaver (2005). The questionnaire establishes individuals' level of willingness to communicate across different speaking and writing tasks or situations. The alternatives of this four-point Likert Scale include (1) definitely not willing, (2) probably not willing, (3) probably willing, and (4) definitely willing. It consists of 34 items in general. Seventeen items measure students' willingness to speak English and 17 items ask them about their willingness to write.

3.3 Procedure

The data were collected within eight sessions in 2015. The two questionnaires regarding students' level of FLCA and WTC in speaking and writing tasks were administered in a pencil-and-paper form to whole classes and students were asked to answer all the questions precisely within 40 minutes. They were told that no answers would be right or wrong and that the questionnaires were only indicators of their level of anxiety and willingness to communicate. Moreover, the participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and that they would only be used for research purposes. The collected data were then submitted to Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21 for data analysis.
3.4 Design
The study aimed to probe the relationship between EFL learners’ FLCA and their WTC in speaking and writing tasks. Considering the fact that it is attempted to describe the existing relationship among the variables, the current study was accomplished through a descriptive correlational research method.

4. Results and discussion
Following the process of data collection and in order to achieve the main purpose of the study the collected data were submitted to the SPSS version 21. Subsequently, the Spearman’s rank order rho correlation and the Mann-Whitney U test were run to compute, analyze, and interpret the raw data.

4.1 Foreign language classroom anxiety and willingness to communicate
Due to the fact that the collected data by means of the two Likert-Scales were ordinal, the nonparametric equivalent of the Pearson formula, that is, the Spearman's rho was utilised to portray the possible relationships between foreign language classroom anxiety, willingness to communicate, and the correspondent subcategories. The results are indicated in Tables below.

Table 1. Correlations between foreign language classroom anxiety and willingness to communicate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman's rho</th>
<th>WTC</th>
<th>FLCA</th>
<th>Communication apprehension</th>
<th>Fear of negative evaluation</th>
<th>Test anxiety</th>
<th>English class anxiety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.356**</td>
<td>-.313**</td>
<td>-.275**</td>
<td>-.308**</td>
<td>-.387**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

The results, as shown in Table 1, revealed that the Spearman’s rank order correlation is as weak as -.356 but significant at the <.01 level for a two tailed prediction. It is noteworthy to mention that all the subcategories of FLCA negatively correlate with WTC. The spearman's rho correlation test statistics for the participants' WTC and their communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and anxiety of English class are -.313, -.275, -.308, and -.387, respectively. Such results indicate that the participants' subcategories of FLCA correlate negatively with their level of WTC. However, in all cases the amounts of correlations are considered to be low.

As the researchers intended to provide more details to the associations between FLCA and WTC across different speaking and writing tasks, Tables 2 and 3 were employed.

Table 2. Correlations between foreign language classroom anxiety and willingness to communicate across speaking tasks and situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman's rho</th>
<th>WTC</th>
<th>FLCA</th>
<th>Communication apprehension</th>
<th>Fear of negative evaluation</th>
<th>Test anxiety</th>
<th>English class anxiety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.223**</td>
<td>-.187*</td>
<td>-.168*</td>
<td>-.158</td>
<td>-.270**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

As the result of Spearman’s rho indices, presented in Table 2 indicated, the participants' WTC within speaking tasks does significantly, but negatively (r_s = -.223) correlate with their FLCA. This amount of correlation is significant but low since the level of significance is .005 which is less that the P-value <.05. Considering the FLCA subcategories, it is observed that apart from individuals' test anxiety, all the other subcategories of FLCA negatively correlate with their WTC across speaking tasks. In this respect, the correlation coefficients between individuals' WTC and their communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and anxiety of English class at P-value <.01 and <.05 levels for a two-tailed
prediction are -.187, -.168, and -.270, correspondingly. As it can be seen the correlations between individuals' FLCA subcategories and their willingness to speak, though low in strength, are significant.

Table 3. Correlations between foreign language classroom anxiety and willingness to communicate across writing tasks and situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman's rho</th>
<th>WTC Writing</th>
<th>FLCA Communication apprehension</th>
<th>Fear of negative evaluation</th>
<th>Test. Anxiety</th>
<th>English class anxiety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- .362**</td>
<td>- .321**</td>
<td>-.285**</td>
<td>-.333**</td>
<td>-.383**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Based on the outcome of the statistical analysis presented in Table 3, one could infer that learners' FLCA negatively correlates with their WTC with respect to writing tasks. The presented results show that the correlation coefficient between the two constructs is -.362 which is low but significant at the P-value <.01. In addition, Table 3 reveals that all the subcategories of FLCA negatively correlate with individuals' WTC concerning writing tasks and in all cases the amounts of correlations are low. Considering the results of the statistical analyses presented in Table 2 and 3, it is observed that FLCA correlates negatively with WTC both in speaking and writing tasks. Meanwhile, the amount of correlation is stronger in writing tasks and students suffer from higher levels of FLCA and have lower levels of WTC. Taking the subcategories of FLCA into account, it is worth mentioning that except for the relationship between willingness to speak and test anxiety, all the other subcategories of FLCA correlate negatively with individuals' willingness to speak and write. In addition, individuals' English class anxiety shows the greatest amount of correlation with their WTC in both task types.

4.2 Willingness to communicate in participants with high and low levels of foreign language classroom anxiety

The Mann-Whitney U test was the next statistical test which was run to find more details about the subjects. Tables 4 and 5 show the results on different levels of WTC and FLCA. Having the data collected through filling out the related questionnaire, the researchers divided the participants into two groups with high and low levels of foreign language classroom anxiety.

Table 4. Ranks of WTC in speaking and writing tasks, and WTC total in students' with low and high levels of FLCA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LowFLCA, HighFLCA</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WT Speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LowFLCA</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>88.22</td>
<td>688.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HighFLCA</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>67.65</td>
<td>520.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTC Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LowFLCA</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>91.56</td>
<td>714.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HighFLCA</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>64.26</td>
<td>494.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTC Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LowFLCA</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>92.35</td>
<td>720.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HighFLCA</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>63.46</td>
<td>488.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 illustrates the mean ranks of WTC in students' with low and high levels of FLCA. As it can be seen, the mean ranks for the participants' WTC total, WTC in speaking tasks, and WTC in writing tasks in students with high levels of FLCA are 63.46, 67.65, and 64.26 correspondingly, while in students with low levels of FLCA they are 92.35, 88.22, and 91.56, respectively. As such findings cannot contribute to the existence of a significant meaningful difference between these two groups, Table 5 is utilised.
Table 5. Comparing general level of WTC and WTC in speaking and writing tasks in students' with low and high levels of FLCA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mann-Whitney U</th>
<th>WTC Total</th>
<th>WTC Speaking</th>
<th>WTC Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1883.500</td>
<td>2206.000</td>
<td>1945.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilcoxon W</td>
<td>4886.500</td>
<td>5209.000</td>
<td>4948.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>-4.008</td>
<td>-2.855</td>
<td>-3.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen in Table 5, the Z observed are -4.008, -2.855, and -3.789 at the p-value < .05. As the results of the Mann-Whitney U test demonstrate a statistically significant difference exists among the two groups of high and low FLCA with regard to their WTC total and WTC across speaking and writing tasks.

5. Conclusion

Developing language learners who are able to conquer communication limitations that are imposed on them from their native language and culture is among the basic aims of foreign language learning and teaching. Being the case, in addition to having an ample supply of linguistic, paralinguistic, and non-linguistic repertoire, it is a necessity for a language learner to be psychologically ready and willing to communicate beyond the borders of their classroom. The first steps of involving foreign language learners who are not only able, but also willing to communicate are taken in language classes through engaging them in class activities. Learners’ willingness to communicate is one of the main factors to function in another language. By the same token, it is important to consider factors influencing it.

The present study, thus, was conducted to portray the possible relationship between EFL learners’ FLCA and their WTC which contribute to a deeper understanding of students’ low cooperation in class activities. Addressing the hypothesis, the researchers found that individuals’ FLCA subcategories negatively correlated with their WTC. This implies that the more anxious the language learners are, the less tendency they show to engage in foreign language tasks either they are in written forms or oral. In other words, whether individuals decide to engage in the act of communication is determined by the fluctuation between FLCA and WTC. It can be explained based on the overall context of language learners’ classes. Correcting every mistake that individuals make in front of their peers and classmates may help them to improve their language proficiency, but it negatively influences their affection toward language learning. Providing students with united and encouraging situations in which errors are considered as a part of the learning process rather than negative evaluations makes them less apprehensive learners. As Liu and Chen (2013) asserted, decreasing learners’ tension, language teachers should make learning a positive experience by increasing students’ involvement, create an understanding atmosphere and be sensitive to students’ anxiety as they make mistakes, and generally maintain a non-threatening environment.

Not surprisingly, it was found that students who suffer from high levels of FLCA are less willing to engage in speaking tasks and activities. As it was shown in Table 2, this can be explained in terms of the anxiety that students have in English classes which is more significant in comparison with other subcategories. Students’ self-expression is very high within speaking tasks and this may also increase their vulnerability. Accordingly, teachers should pay more attention to the strategies they employ to approach students’ errors and mistakes. Liu and Chen (2013) stated that individuals’ general worry about
their language performance together with their low self-confidence in speaking form the foundation of language anxiety. In the same vein, Phillips (1992) found that anxious learners indicated negative attitude toward oral tests and the more language anxiety students had, the lower test performance they gained on their oral tests.

The study, also, indicated the existence of a negative relationship between FLCA and WTC across writing tasks and situations. This is in line with what previous researchers have reported. Xiao and Wong (2014) maintained that while from the four language-based activities, writing arouses more anxiety and among the three subcomponents of writing anxiety -including somatic anxiety, avoidance behavior, and cognitive anxiety- avoidance behaviour is more noticeable. Chen and Lin (2009) indicated that a significant negative correlation existed between foreign language writing anxiety and writing achievement. Taken these findings into accounts, it seems plausible to say that the negative relationship between writing anxiety and writing achievement is due to students' low desire and tendency to cooperate in writing tasks. In other words, students' high language anxiety and low willingness to engage in writing tasks lead them not to put what they have learnt into practice and therefore receive no affective feedback from their teachers to improve their achievement.

Comparing Table 2 and 3, one could infer that individuals experience more anxiety in writing tasks rather than those in speaking. As there is a must to work on learners' productive skills in academic settings, it is suggested that language teachers manoeuvre over speaking tasks which are generally less anxiety provoking than those of writing. Exposing students to words and chunks they need and engaging them in meaningful interaction might give direction to their writing and makes it less stressful and more appealing. In addition, learning English as a foreign language, students encounter some limitation to practice speaking outside their language class. To make up for the limited time that teachers and students have in language classes, it might be better to spend this precious time on speaking tasks and work on writing tasks as do-it-at-home activities.

A more precise look at Table 1, 2, and 3 reveals the fact that among all subcategories of FLCA, anxiety of English class is a star player in influencing students' total WTC and their WTC across speaking and writing tasks. This indicates that teachers are at play in influencing learners' anxiety and willingness. According to Lucas et al. (2011), anxiety of English class mainly involves teachers and teaching styles. In a study conducted by Williams and Andrade (2008), the researchers found that learners mostly ascribed the cause of their anxiety to other people including their teachers and instructors. Bearing this in mind and encountering anxious students, class activities should be modified to manage learners' anxiety to the extent possible. In this case, it is believed that recasts and metalinguistic corrective feedback, both, are beneficial elements for learners with high and low FLCA (Rassaei, 2015). Yet, another way to reduce learners' FLCA is the authenticity of the virtual environment and the interaction that occurs in there (Grant, Huang, & Pasfield, 2014). According to Gregersen, Meza, and MacIntyre (2014), evading restraining forces, facilitating reinterpretation of physiological cues, helping learners to deal with anxiety and planning an instant escape route, utilising the power of preparation, planning, and rehearsal, all in all, can be employed to cope with either positive or negative emotions. Atas (2015) claimed that employing the techniques of drama influences students' emotional quality of foreign language classroom and reduces their speaking anxiety as well. This is achieved by making them feel better, getting rid of the prejudice they have about English classes, and making them eager to come to foreign language classes.

Considering the data presented in Table 4 and 5, it can be concluded that individuals' levels of total WTC and their WTC in speaking and writing tasks were statistically significantly higher in the group who experienced lower levels of FLCA. This suggests that lower levels of FLCA can contribute to higher levels of WTC in a meaningful way and if the real aim of learning a second or foreign language is to enable individuals communicate efficiently, one should not condone the deterrent effect of FLCA.

Although over the last few decades research on communication has been at the locus of academics' attention, more needs to be done to crystallize factors that influence learners' communication in academic environments. As observed in the present study, instructors' teaching styles are the main source of learners' foreign language classroom anxiety. However, there is still a need to throw light on specific teaching styles, learning strategies, and appropriate contexts that relieve learners' anxiety and foster language practice and usage.
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THE EFFECT OF TEACHING PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' PRONUNCIATION ACCURACY

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRONUNCIATION IS UNDENIABLE AND IT INEVITABLY DETERMINES THE MAJOR PART OF THE ORAL LANGUAGE. THE AIM OF THIS STUDY WAS TO INVESTIGATE WHETHER THE TEACHING PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION HAS EFFECT ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' PRONUNCIATION ACCURACY. THE RESULT OF THE STUDY CONFIRMED THE FINDING OF PREVIOUS RESEARCHES THAT FOCUSED ON THE IMPORTANT ROLE THAT TEACHING PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION PLAYS ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' ACCURACY. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY ARE DISCUSSED. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH ARE ALSO MADE.

KEY WORDS: TEACHING PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION EFL LEARNER; INTERMEDIATE; PRONUNCIATION; TEACHING PRONUNCIATION

1. Introduction

In order to comprehend spoken messages, the learners should acquire how the sounds pronounced. Listener may to comprehend need to phonetic, phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic information. Harmer (1993) stressed on the need for gaining certitude that language learners can always be understood and says what they want to say. Students need to master “good pronunciation”, not perfect accents. Lundsteen (1979) have stated that listening is the first language skill to be appeared. Chronologically, children listen before they speak, speak before they read, and read before they write. Like reading, listening is member of receptive skills, and it is the basis for other skills, and also is necessary for second language as well as first language acquisition. Listening and speaking can’t be separable; they are two sides of a coin.

2. Statement of the Problem

Among the four skills of foreign language learning, listening is an important part of social interactions, and it has been discovered that people understand new messages more efficiently via listening than reading (Luo, 2008). Pronunciation and listening comprehension are connected together by a unified system, within which individual sounds are regularly related. That is why pronunciation is receiving more attention in many English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, and it is believed that students should primarily acquire it as a fundamental skill due to its effect on accuracy and comprehension (Derwing et al., 2006). In other words, pronunciation teaching and language learning strategy may develop students' competence (Varasarain, 2007). Pronunciation practice is very important in second language learning and teaching, because as Ahangari(2014) mentions“On the one hand, confidence with renunciation allows learners to interact with native speakers that is so essential for all aspects of their linguistic development. On the other hand, poor pronunciation can mask otherwise good language skills.
condemning learners to less than their deserved social, academic and work advancement” (p. 82). Adams-Goertel (2013) further claimed that second language pronunciation can improve to be near native-like with the implementation of certain criteria such as the utilization of prosodic elements. However, Field (2008) discovered that English function words are identified significantly less accurately by L2 listeners, regardless of level or L1, than are content words.

3. Research Question of the Study
This study aims to seek answer to the following question:
RQ: Does teaching phonetic transcription have any effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pronunciation accuracy?

4. Hypothesis of the Study
HQ: Teaching phonetic transcription has no effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pronunciation accuracy?

5. Methodology
5.1. Subjects
The total population in this study was 200 students in Lahijan Safeer Language Institute. By applying OPT (Oxford Placement Test) the researcher selects 60 intermediate TEFL who were homogeneous based on the OPT scales. The researcher then randomly divided them into two EG and CG groups. Each group consisted of 30 participants. The students who participated in this study were assigned as intermediate level students, but in order to make sure of the homogeneity of the selected groups, a test of OPT was administered. The Oxford Placement Test measures a test taker’s ability to communicate in English. It gives the information needed to find out about a person’s language level. The results approved that there was little difference in the performance of the students.

5.2. Materials
5.2.1 OPT (solution Placement Test)
OPT (Oxford Placement Test) was employed in this study for homogenizing the participants groups. For the purpose of this study the researcher needed 60 homogeneous intermediate EFL learners at Lahijan Safeer Language Institute. The Oxford Placement Test measures a test taker’s ability to communicate in English. It gives the information needed to find out about a person’s language level. The results approved that there was little difference in the performance of the students.

5.2.2. Passive pre and post tests
The students who participated in this study were assigned as intermediate level students, but in order to make sure of the homogeneity of the selected groups, a test of OPT was administered. The Oxford Placement Test measures a test taker’s ability to communicate in English. It gives the information needed to find out about a person’s language level. The results approved that there was little difference in the performance of the students. After assigning the homogenized participants into experimental and control groups, both groups took a pretest in which each of the students read 5 words selected from Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English(2009) containing the target sounds and their voices were recorded. After 20 sessions of the treatment for the experimental group, again both groups sat for the post-test which was the same test that had been used as the pre-test. This time their voices were recorded again. The experimental group received the treatment in which the students in this group were asked to look at the some images and to keep the same position for their tongue and lips in order to produce the target sounds. The recorded voices were evaluated using computer software called Rosetta stone in order to measure the proximity of their pronunciation to the pronunciation of native speakers. The company was founded in 1992 on the core beliefs that learning to speak a language should be a natural and instinctive process, and that interactive technology can activate the language immersion
method powerfully for learners of any age. Since 2013, Rosetta stone has expanded beyond language and deeper into education-technology with its acquisitions of Livemocha, Lexia Learning, Vivity Labs, and Tell Me More. Rosetta Stone is based in Arlington, VA, and has offices around the world.

6.4. Procedures
The researcher of this study selected 60 intermediate homogeneous participants by applying SPT (solution Placement Test). Their age range was from 16 to 23 years old with a mean age of 19 years. All of the participants were female. These participants were then randomly divided into two EG and CG groups. A pretest of pronunciation accuracy was administered to both EG (Experimental Group) and CG (Control Group). Then the EG participants had the advantage of being treated by phonetic transcription, whereas the participants in the CG could only benefited their regular method of Safeer Language Institute. At the end of the treatment sessions a posttest of pronunciation accuracy was administered to both EG and CG. To see if any change has occurred for both groups between their pretest and posttest separately, one-way ANOVA was calculated.

7. Data Analysis
The researcher analyzed the data obtained via calculating a t-test between the post- tests of pronunciation accuracy scores of the experimental and the control groups of the study and One-way ANOVA between the pre- tests and post- tests of the experimental and control group of the study to see any progress happened from pre-test to the post-test or in fact during the treatment period. As mentioned in the procedure, three tests were employed in this study. Firstly, a proficiency test based on Oxford placement Test was administered to homogenize the groups in their language proficiency. Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics of the proficiency test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error of Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control Group, proficiency test</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25.4000</td>
<td>8.9002</td>
<td>1.6249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group, proficiency test</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26.6333</td>
<td>4.9722</td>
<td>.9078</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to find out whether the participants consisted homogeneous groups at the onset of the study, a two-tailed t-test (p<.05) was conducted between the means of the proficiency tests in two groups which is displayed in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scores of proficiency tests</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>-.663</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the results represented in Table 2, one can conclude that since the p-value is above .05, the null hypothesis (HO) considered in this t-test is retained and the difference between the means of the proficiency tests in two groups is found not to be significant at .05 level of significance, that is, the two
groups were probably homogeneous in their proficiency level in English at the onset of the study. To investigate pronunciation accuracy, a pretest of pronunciation accuracy was conducted before the treatment for both the control and the experimental groups. Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics of pre-tests' scores in the control group and the experimental group.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the pre-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control Group, pre-test</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6.3667</td>
<td>2.8826</td>
<td>.5263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group, pre-test</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6.4333</td>
<td>2.5688</td>
<td>.4690</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The investigation of the results in tables 3 and 4 reveals that the p-value, being above .05, the difference between the means of the pre-tests in two groups is not significant at .05 level of significance. In other words, the two groups can be considered as having almost the same level of knowledge in pronunciation accuracy, too. Then, the treatment, phonetic transcription, was implemented for the experimental group teaching the same material. After the treatment, a post-test of pronunciation accuracy related to the same content taught during the course was administered to examine whether the treatment had any influence on the experimental group displayed in table 5.

Table 4. T-test between scores of pre-tests between two groups (p<*.05)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t-test for Equality of Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scores of pre-tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The investigation of the results in tables 3 and 4 reveals that the p-value, being above .05, the difference between the means of the pre-tests in two groups is not significant at .05 level of significance. In order to see whether there would be a difference between the means of the post-test between the two groups, that is, to see whether the treatment for the experimental group was beneficial, a t-test was also run to determine the difference between the two groups of learners in their scores. Table 6 reveals the statistics.

Table 5. T-test between scores of pre-tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control Group, post-test</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13000</td>
<td>5.3379</td>
<td>0.9746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group, post-test</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24.2333</td>
<td>6.6834</td>
<td>1.2202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The investigation of the results in tables 3 and 4 reveals that the p-value, being above .05, the difference between the means of the pre-tests in two groups is not significant at .05 level of significance. In order to see whether there would be a difference between the means of the post-test between the two groups, that is, to see whether the treatment for the experimental group was beneficial, a t-test was also run to determine the difference between the two groups of learners in their scores. Table 6 reveals the statistics. The analysis of the results of table reveals that the difference between the means of the pre-test and post-test in two groups was significant. That is, the statistics supports that of the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of pronunciation accuracy, which rejects the null hypothesis.
8. Discussions
According to Wells (1996), transcribing a word or an utterance in a language such as English illustrates a direct specification of its pronunciation and enables the language learner to obtain precise and explicit information on pronunciation. It is a good method to reinforce what the learner may have received imperfectly by ear. That is, it provides a good aid to correct misperceptions. One important and preliminary aspect in trying to make appropriate use of phonetic transcription in the classroom is deciding when to use phonetic symbols. Since pronunciation habits are formed early, it seems obvious that it is at that point when accuracy is neglected, the result will be fossilized pronunciation errors so the development of a good pronunciation from the beginning should be emphasized. Phonetic transcription should be used frequently, especially with beginners. They should be a constant presence in the EFL environment - on wall posters, textbooks and handouts (Ricardo Schütz). According to Baker (1992), pronunciation is very important and learners should pay close attention to pronunciation as early as possible. Otherwise, the result will be that advanced learners find that they can improve all aspects of their proficiency in English except their pronunciation, and mistakes which have been repeated for years. It is impossible to eradicate it. Students have little opportunity to practice their English pronunciation outside the classroom, while if this happens, it will increase their chance of improvement. Yet the teacher’s role is to facilitate learning and enhancing students’ capabilities to improve on their own by empowering them with self-teaching strategies for their use in private.

9. Conclusion
This study proved that the teaching phonetic transcriptions practice can have a significant effect on EFL learners’ pronunciation accuracy. The findings of the study also revealed that the treatment was effective only on the experimental group. However, the control group did not develop its pronunciation accuracy significantly from pretest to posttest. This is due to no specific focus on improving pronunciation accuracy within two months. The findings of the present study suggested that the Iranian EFL learners’ pronunciation improved due to letter-sound correspondence instruction.

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INVESTIGATING THE NOTION OF DEMOTIVATION AMONG A COMMUNITY OF EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT
THE CURRENT STUDY INVESTIGATED THE DEMOTivating FACTORS IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE, THROUGH SURVEYING 24 EFL LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVES IN ONE LANGUAGE SCHOOL IN MASHHAD, IRAN. FOR THIS PURPOSE, A SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW WHICH INCLUDED ONE UMBRELLA OPEN ENDED QUESTION ALONG WITH THREE SUB CATEGORIES, CENTERING ON MAIN SOURCES OF DEMOTIVATION (“FAMILY AND FRIENDS”, “EDUCATIONAL SETTING” AND “EFL TEACHERS”) WERE RUN TO GATHER THE REQUIRED DATA. THE OUTCOME OF THE ANALYSIS RESULTED IN THE EMERGENCE OF SOME COMMON FACTORS AMONG MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS WITH ONLY CASES OF SUBTLE DIFFERENCES.

KEY WORDS: DEMOTIVATION, DEMOTIVATING FACTORS, LANGUAGE LEARNING, QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY, EFL LEARNERS

1. Introduction
According to Koiso (2003, p. 96), motivation is considered to be one of the main determining factors of success in developing a second or foreign language (As cited in Razmjoo and Moiinvaziri, 2014). Following the work of Gardner and other renowned researchers and linguists in the realm of language learning, motivation has turned into one of the chief fields of investigation and enquiry for language teachers and policy makers as well as lots of others who are involved in how well learning can take place! Through time, this issue has turned into a concern and has had language specialists think of motivation from different angles of view (Alavinia & Sehat, 2012; Hirvonen, 2010; Hu, 2011; Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009; Kim, 2011; Sahragard & Alimorad, 2013; Sakui & Cowie, 2011; Seo & Kim, 2012; Tabatabaei & Molavi, 2012; Tuan, 2011). Therefore, the concept of demotivation gradually, peeped into the field of motivation research. Rashidi, Rahimi and Alimorad (2014) define demotivation, “the dark side of motivation”, (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 148) as “various negative influences that cancel out existing motivation” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 149). However, since majority of the available investigations have relied mostly on quantitative psychometric approaches of looking into the matter, a complementary qualitative study in an EFL context will considerably add to the value of the previous findings.

After all, there has been a large amount of research regarding the issue of motivation concerning language learners and the learning process, and most of the research in relation to motivation center on motivational factors, however demotivating factors have not received this much attention. As the literature on demotivation is relatively scarce, there seems to be a need for a more in depth look at its underlying reasons especially among communities in which English is taken as an FL such as Iran.

2. Literature Review
Motivation has been found to be one of the most influential factors of the individual differences in language learning. Therefore, as cited by Razmjoo and Moiinvaziri (2014, p.43) “having a clear understanding of motivation is of vital importance for language teachers, because it is one of the key driving forces in language learning success” (Dörnyei, 2001).

There have been numerous studies related to motivation and language learning to some of which a reference is given in this research. For instance, Razmjoo and Moiinvaziri (2014) investigated demotivating factors affecting some Iranian undergraduate learners of non-English majors studying general English. The study was a mixed method approach, utilizing an interview and a questionnaire. Applying principal factor analysis, their research has brought forth the shared perception of demotivating factors in language learning among Iranian university students and documented them as a five-factor model in which the factors of “setbacks in system of education” and “lack of extrinsic motivation” were the most and the least influential ones, respectively. The other factors also included “methods and personality of teachers”, “lack of self-esteem and intrinsic motivation”, and “lack of given importance in society”. As they stress, “Dörnyei (2001) has contributed a lot to increasing the awareness towards demotivation” (p.44). Dörnyei defines demotivation as “specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action” (p. 143). Dörnyei (1998, as cited in Dörnyei, 2001, p. 151) conducted a research on fifty secondary school students in Budapest, Hungary who were studying English or German as a foreign language and identified nine demotivating factors as follow:

1) Teachers’ personalities, commitments, competence, and teaching methods
2) Inadequate school facilities (very large classes, not the right level, or frequent change of teachers)
3) Reduced self-confidence due to their experience of failure or success
4) Negative attitude towards the foreign language studied
5) Compulsory nature of the foreign language study
6) Interference of another foreign language that pupils are studying
7) Negative attitude towards the community of the foreign language spoken
8) Attitudes of group members
9) Course books used in the class

The notion of demotivation has also absorbed many researchers’ attention span in other countries, including that of Kikuchi and Sakai (2007) which was run among Japanese’s students! They developed a 35-item questionnaire which focused on gathering data with regard to demotivating factors among Japanese high-school students. The sample population in this study included one hundred and twelve students from private universities in Eastern Japan and course books, inadequate school facilities, test scores, non-communicative methods, teachers’ competence and teaching styles were extracted as the five demotivating factors.

After all, the previously mentioned attempts in the field of demotivation depict varied results, however, since demotivating factors are considered to be dependent on variety of factors including context and are believed to be closely influenced by different social and cultural contexts, presentation of a close investigation of these factors in an EFL context can be of great importance in finding the most suitable remedy for the de-motivational problems of Iranian students, specifically those at younger ages. Besides, Kumaravadivelu (2006), in his new post-method theories in language teaching and learning, has stressed the fact that conducting regional studies can be of great importance not only to get familiar with the sociocultural context of each region but also to try to develop new views and theories as well (cited in Razmjoo and Moiinvaziri 2014).

3. Methodology
3.1. Research Questions
The present research tries to report on demotivating factors in the process of learning English as a Foreign Language, through a qualitative approach towards the data elicited from the participants. Therefore, the researchers attempt to address this issue through the following research questions:

1. What factors result in demotivation in the view of Iranian EFL learners?
2. Do male and female Iranian EFL learners have different views on factors resulting in demotivation?

3.2. Participants and Setting
From among four FCE and CAE classes at the language school, 24 (12 male, 12 female) informants participated in the study based on a purposeful selection. Majority of these participants (19) had already taken part in B.A. English-only entrance examination and based on the average outcome of their final exams during the last several terms, all possessed an English proficiency of very good and above. The other five participants were of the same level of English proficiency and were studying the fourth grade of high school, preparing for English entrance examination. Also, based on the bio-data to which the researchers had access through the institute, they all had spent over 25 conversation semesters in the language school. Additionally, the students’ enduring language learning experience and going deep down for the language, its features and challenges helped them as well as the researchers to better take each step all the way through the research.

3.3. Instrumentation

Since the present study was carried out under the facets of a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were the mean of data collection. The interview included an umbrella open ended question with three sub-categories, the main focus of which was on participants’ English language learning perspectives which had a negative influence, leading to their demotivation or a reduction of their motivation in the process. Altogether, twenty four individual interviews, each about fifteen minutes long, were conducted and recorded. Since these participants’ English proficiency was quite well and neither the researchers nor the students considered it as a kind of hindrance, the interviews were run in English as the main medium. Students were encouraged to voice any critical incidents they faced in their daily lives which, wanted or not, had put their motivation under influence. In order to establish rapport, the researchers did their best to set a 5 minute small friendly talk at the beginning of each interview so to break the ice and then start the interview phase. In this way, the researchers tried to create a trusting atmosphere while the balance was also maintained. The semi-structured interview question and its three subcategories were as follows:

1. What do you believe are the demotivating factors of learning a foreign language?
   1.1. Those related to your family members and friends.
   1.2. Those related to the teachers you have had so far.
   1.3. Those related to the educational setting in which you are studying i.e. school or language institute.

3.4. Procedure

Data collection was launched in September 2015 and was a gradual, step by step process of collecting and analyzing the data.

All the twenty four interviews were examined together in order to cross-refer to the various available data sources which enabled the researchers to move back and forth in the data whenever the need was immediate. As part of the data analysis, the transcription of the interviews was a significant and complicated aspect of the study. In order to transcribe interviews, the researchers first listened carefully to each interview and then transcribed all the details and whatever had been exchanged as exactly as possible in order not to miss any part of the data. After transcribing the accumulated data, all of them were coded thematically and a range of common key themes which contributed to the learners’ demotivation construction emerged and were consequently discussed in the teaching learning process.

Data analysis was carried out according to thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) i.e. for the first step, the three sub-categories of this research (friends, teachers and educational setting), a deductive approach was used; that is, generation and categorization of codes resulted from established theory and prior research findings. Afterwards, raw data themes, from the transcribed interviews, were identified and coded and instances for each category were identified and determined. Finally, the reliability of codes and coding was determined. In order to achieve reliability, an external researcher (a second mentor and experienced teacher at the institute), familiar with qualitative research, checked the codes and coding process as well as the extracted ideas and their instances. Throughout the study, ongoing analyses (Rossman & Rallis, 1998) were also conducted with the assistance of a peer debriefer (the second author who is an expert in the field), and notes were made concerning the raw data. These ongoing analyses included meetings with the second researcher, knowledgeable on qualitative methodology, to examine both methodological procedures as well as approaches to the interpretation of the data (Patton, 1990).
Moreover, in order to check the validity of the transcripts and the data accumulated through them, each student was asked to verify his/her interview by reading its transcription two to five days after the interview had been conducted and further revisions and modifications were done if mentioned by any of the participants of the study.

4. Data Analysis and Results

Once the transcribed interviews were analyzed and appropriate coding and then categorization were done and the reliability and validity of the extracted categories were double checked and proved by two researchers familiar with qualitative methods of enquiry, the following themes were found to be the most distinguishable ones for each of the interview questions:

4.1. Demotivating Factors Related to Friends and Family

Majority of the participants (16 out of 24) repeatedly stressed that parents as well as friends keep telling them that taking part in English classes for years is both a waste of time and money. Also, great majority of them believed they are being humiliated by friends who find them studying English too often or in case they make simple mistakes when using the language (English). For instance, Kiarash believed that; “I would choose the English class and then …. That`s why I was dubbed “The wet blanket”…. In addition, my father started nagging me after a while; He tried to convince me that it didn’t worth what it cost and I was supposed to withdraw”.

Next, were also other demotivating factors named by both male and female participants such as not having any family members or enough friends with whom they can converse in English or the rare chance of traveling abroad and using the language in real context. After all, they also gave reference to having friends whose level of English might be far better or far worse than them and thus either of the cases will result in losing their appetite.

4.2. Demotivating Factors Related to English Teachers

Data analysis for this question resulted in the emergence of two major themes; those demotivating factors related to teachers’ attitudes towards teaching and those related to teachers’ own personal features.

Teachers’ Attitudes towards Teaching

The participants counted teachers’ way/style of teaching as the most distinctive demotivating feature mainly because they push students memorize series of useless issues or correcting students’ mistakes on the spot and in front of peers (direct correction)! Besides, they pictured teachers as the ones who firmly believe there should be failing students in each class, and all passing the course seems odd! They also pointed to the scoring system teachers employ and consider it as an absolute unfair judgment. Finally, students stressed that teachers just perform as far as they have to and never go one step beyond the textbook to teach us few more demanding new materials. For instance Kimia claimed that; “The most impressive factor of demotivation is the teacher. In some cases, the teacher might discourage the students to take the courses less serious by inappropriate way of teaching and false treatments which include unfair judgments…..this way, pupils lose the desire to participate in classes and the environment will turn into an exasperating one”.

Teachers’ Personal Features

From among the pointers under this category, majority of the participants (16 out of 24) considered teachers who are either too strict or too easy going as the most demotivating and devastating issue! They claimed a good teacher should be capable of having enough control over when and to what extent to be serious or friendly in class and being an extremist in either of these approaches would definitely result in introverted students. Next after this, came the highlighted fact that teachers tend to discriminate between students of higher and lower proficiency and competency levels and behave distinguishably different towards them. For instance, Mohammad stated that; “……moreover, there are some other teachers who explicitly admire one of the students in front of the others. This can have a demotivating effect on other pupils and leads to under-achievement”.

Among other reasons, existed issues such as teachers as being demotivated members of the teaching profession and their not being able to involve all students equally in the learning process and bring the balance to the learning environment. Besides all, teachers’ lack of mastery over the teaching material and...
at the same time having high expectations from students were the next two demotivating factors in students’ perspective!

4.3. Demotivating Factors Related to Educational Settings
In response to the last question, participants referred to motivation killers both relevant to their schools as well as the language institutes they had studied in. Therefore, common themes for both settings were extracted.

The first factor went to schools’ and institutes’ lack of facilities as well as being physically in a poor condition i.e. being cramped, small, and dark or having uncomfortable chairs and lack of educational facilities like up to date TVs or DVDs or up dated course books. Next came the schools’ or institutes’ strict rules and regulations which make students always worry about any probable failure.

Most importantly, students expressed dissatisfaction with the teachers employed at schools. They believed majority of these teachers do not have enough mastery over what they teach. Also, they believed the textbooks employed are poorly written and not perfectly up to date. For instance, Sara asserted that; “At schools, teachers are not qualified enough, books are really old & students are not in the same level. So no more information & knowledge can be added to ours ….. Therefore, students won’t be willing to learn the language. In Iran, schools are not good places to rely on for learning a new language”.

Finally, inappropriate class times that do not go with class times at school, high costs per term, lots of terms to pass and school English teachers’ discouraging students to take part in English classes of institutes were also among other demotivating factors mentioned by students.

4.4. Gender Differences Concerning Demotivating Factors
In order to shed light on the second research question; the difference in demotivating factors when it comes to gender, a close investigation within and among themes were carried out, and there existed more of a similarity index rather than a differentiating one i.e. the number of male and female students, in mentioning the discussed demotivating factors, were closely the same. Thus, male and female students shared equal and similar perspectives when it comes to being demotivated in learning English.

However, very tiny and subtle differences surfaced in only one or two of the previously discussed factors. For instance, the idea of “English classes being taken for years is a waste of time”, was highlighted mostly by female students than male ones. Also, those who were mainly concerned about schools’ or institutes’ strict rules and regulations and fear of failing as the result, were all female students not male ones! Finally, as for demotivating factors related to teachers, these were the girls who gave reference to demotivated teachers as the most devastating and demotivating factor!

5. Discussion and Conclusion
The current study intended to investigate the existing demotivating factors among EFL male and female students studying in language schools in Iran. The analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of almost common factors among male and female students (educational settings’ lack of facilities and poor physical condition, strict rules and regulations being employed both at schools and institutes, teachers’ not being moderators in class etc.). Similarly, for the second research question and the gender differences, there came to be minute differences which went to the female participants. Generally speaking, some issues were stressed by female participants more than male ones, which was a clear indication of their sensitivity towards those factors. Finally, these were the girls who gave reference to demotivated teachers as the most devastating and demotivating factor!

Although the current research has been a case study of advance EFL students of language schools in one city in Iran, the outcomes of the study are to a great extent in line with those of renowned researchers both inside and outside Iran which were also referred to in literature review. The results are well supported by Razmjoo and Moiinvaziri (2014), who also gave reference to “methods and personality of teachers” as a demotivating factor in their study among university students. In the same way, some of the demotivating factors listed by Dorneyi (2001) were also highlighted by the participants of this study such as “Teachers’ personalities, commitments, competence, and teaching methods” etc. However, apart from some previously mentioned differences extracted in the themes and ideas presented by the participants of this
study, the main distinction lies in the fact that very few of the studies mentioned in the literature review paid close attention to gender equalities or un-equalities of ideas when it comes to demotivating factors, specifically through employing a qualitative approach which needs a close scrutiny of ideas as well as the great time consuming nature of explaining and extracting the similarities or the differences. Moreover, since carrying out a pure qualitative study is a long term process which demands ongoing data analysis and collection, majority of the studies mentioned in literature review have used either a mixed method design or very limited number of participants, but the researchers in this study have tried their best to focus on a larger scope of participants to better illustrate the sample and make the generalizability of the results to other similar contexts a more valid one. The implications of the study could be relevant to teachers, learners, stake holders, and textbook and curriculum designers. As EFL teachers and researchers, the importance of taking students’ needs and application of appropriate stimulus which undoubtedly result in motivation into account should not be diminished. This is the point which has been repeatedly stated by Kumaravadivelu (2006) as claiming that “conducting regional studies can be of great importance not only to get familiar with the sociocultural context of each region but also to try to develop new views and theories as well”. Therefore, the results can be considered as an awareness for teachers so as to run similar case studies, action or classroom researches to actively construct and reconstruct the underlying expectations and needs of their learners to adjust their teaching style according to the learners’ needs. Moving in the same line, it is worth noting that motivating and demotivating factors can have the same influential or detrimental effect on learners’ process of language learning. Thus, neither of them should be given the priority! Once learners are demotivated due to any of the mentioned factors and any other regional one, the cyclic process of encountering increased numbers of these demotivated students would be undeniable. Moreover, demotivation can also be threatening since peer influence is an un-resistible fact and consciously or not it will put the teacher, the class environment and the learning outcome under its immediate effect!

Finally, since this research has been carried out on limited regional scope as well as with limited number of participants, suggestions for further research would be of great benefit in case similar studies be carried out in higher educational settings or doing the same study while shifting the focus on EFL teachers rather than on students, and then a comparison of ideas would be a relevant and fruitful one for EFL teaching learning context. Above all, as EFL teachers, practitioners, curriculum designers, teacher trainers or even as teacher students, let us not forget the crucial issue that our teaching process would never meet its end product if learners’ motivation is not considered as a priori. As teacher researchers we should investigate through various practical ways of increasing pupil’s motivation in language learning and do away with the old saying that “my students are not motivated in their language learning”!

REFERENCES


SELF- REGULATED LEARNING STRATEGY USE IN LANGUAGE LEARNING: EXAMINING THE ROLE OF AGE AND PROFICIENCY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT
THE PRESENT STUDY WAS AIMED TO IDENTIFY THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED SELF-REGULATED LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG IRANIAN LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND EXAMINE THE EFFECT OF AGE AND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ON THE FREQUENCY OF THE USE OF THESE STRATEGIES. THE RESPONSES OF 257 LANGUAGE LEARNERS TO THE SECOND PART OF MLSQ, WHICH DEALT WITH SELF-REGULATED LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES, WERE ANALYZED. THE FINDINGS INDICATED THAT METACOGNITIVE SELF-REGULATION, ELABORATION, AND CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGIES WERE THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED STRATEGIES. IT WAS ALSO FOUND THAT ADULTS ONLY USED MORE ORGANIZATION SRL STRATEGIES COMPARED TO YOUNG ADULTS. FINDINGS ALSO POINTED TO THE EFFECT OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ON THE USE OF SELF-REGULATED LEARNING STRATEGIES. THE EXAMINED GROUPS WERE SIMILAR IN THE USE OF METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES BUT DIFFERENT IN THE USE OF COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIOR STRATEGIES.

KEY WORDS: SELF REGULATED LEARNING, SELF REGULATED LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES, PROFICIENCY LEVEL

1. Introduction
Research in the field of language learning has always been concerned with identification and examination of the factors that have the greatest contribution to learning. Among the three major components of learning, namely individual, instructional, and contextual variables, many research studies have been concerned with examination of individual variables which are considered the most accountable ones in determining the success or failure of language learners. Among individual variables, the most frequently investigated variables appear to be affective variables (e.g. anxiety, motivation) and cognitive factors (e.g. language aptitude, learning strategies), and self-regulated learning strategies, which are among cognitive factors, have been researched widely (Boekaerts, 1996; Pintrich, 2000; Zimmerman, 2001). Self-regulated strategies entail goal setting, behavior monitoring and evaluation to minimize the discrepancy between the current situation and the goals set. Attention to self-regulated learning strategy use in an EFL context, where there might be a shortage of adequate exposure to comprehensible input, reduces the need for explicit instruction in the long term. Moreover, an understanding of the differences in the use of self-regulated learning strategies between young adult and adult EFL learners across different language proficiency groups will provide valuable information about learning strategies at different stages of language learning, which in turn leads to designing and incorporating effective strategy training courses. To this end, the present study attempts to identify the most frequently used self-regulated learning strategies and examine the effect of age on the use of these strategies among learners with various proficiency levels. The implications of the study are intended to contribute to the progress of educating self-regulated EFL learners of different proficiency levels and ages.

2. Review of the literature
2.1 Self-regulated learning
Pintrich (2000) defined self-regulated learning as “an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment” (p. 453). Although there are several definitions of SRL, they all share the following features: (a) purposive use of specific processes, strategies, or responses, (b) self-oriented feedback loop during learning, (c) motivational factors (Zimmerman, 2001). From a theoretical perspective, most definitions need “a purposive use of specific processes, strategies, or responses by students to improve their academic achievement” (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 5). SRL definitions founded on cognitive theories such as constructivism emphasize the covert processes, whereas operant theories, rooted in behaviorism, accentuate the role of overt responses. The second shared feature of most SRL definitions is “a self-oriented feedback loop during learning” which is defined as a cyclical process in which students monitor the effectiveness of their learning methods or strategies and respond to this in a variety of ways ranging from covert changes in self-perception or overt changes in behavior such as replacing one learning strategy with another. (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 5)

The third integral feature of SRL definitions is the motivational aspect of self-regulated learning. The motivational aspect involves the reasons for and the manners in which a learner chooses or engages in a particular process, strategy and response. SRL definitions vary with regard to their stance on the motivational spectrum.

Self-regulation processes mediate between personal and environmental characteristics and achievement to improve learning (Pintrich, 2004) by monitoring the effectiveness of their learning methods or strategies and responding through making “covert changes in self-perception or overt changes in behavior such as replacing one learning strategy” (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 5). According to Zimmerman, self-regulated learning (SRL) is neither a mental ability nor a performance skill. It is rather a “proactive process” that involves "self-directive processes and self-beliefs that enable learners to transform their mental abilities, such as verbal aptitude into an academic performance skill, such as writing” (Zimmerman, 2008, p. 166). These self-directive processes are used by learners “to acquire academic skills”, such as setting goals, selecting and deploying strategies, and self-monitoring one’s effectiveness” (p. 166).

SRL has proved to be important in both individual forms of learning, such as self-directed learning, and social forms of learning, such as interaction with a peer or teacher to learn (Zimmermann, 2008). The distinctive characteristic of SRL; thus, is not the social dimension but rather “whether the learner displays personal initiative, perseverance and adaptive skill in pursuing it” (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 1). In fact, self-regulated learners are active participants of the learning experience, employing different types of learning strategies, creatively structuring the learning environment to enhance learning, and adjusting the amount and quality of instruction needed. Successful self-regulation, according to Zimmerman (2001), is influenced by the learners’ metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral participation in the learning process.

2.2 Models of SRL
Pintrich (2004) refers to two contrasting perspectives in theories of self-regulated learning: SAL (student approaches to learning) and IP (information processing) approaches. SAL approaches are bottom-up and are “derived from in-depth qualitative interviews with students about their own actual motivation, learning, and studying in real college and university contexts” (Pintrich, 2004, p. 386). IP approaches are “derived in a top-down manner from psychological constructs and theories in cognitive and educational psychology and then applied to college student learning using quantitative methods” (Pintrich, 2004, p. 386). IP approaches have been replaced by SRL (self-regulated learning) models, which reflect current advancements in theory and practice and, hence, as Pintrich (2004) maintains, are descriptively “richer” and strive to take a more “inclusive” approach by accounting for motivational, affective and contextual factors in addition to cognitive elements (p. 386).

Self-regulated learning models principally account for how motivational feelings, beliefs and metacognitive strategies affect the learning experience. Zusho, Pintrich, and Coppola (2003) stressed the role of will and skill in the learners’ academic success. Will signifies motivational processes at work and skill comprises of self-regulatory strategies employed to enhance the learning experience. Inquiring into the nature of the
mechanisms that govern learning in relation to motivation, cognition, behavior and context, several researchers including Boekaerts (1996), Pintrich (2000), Pintrich et al. (1991), Vollmeyer, Rheinberg, and Rollett (2000), and Zimmerman (2000) developed models of self-regulated learning which are concerned with the way learners use cognitive strategies, metacognition, volition, and motivation to control the learning process (Vollmeyer & Rheinberg, 2006).

The first stage of the SRL cycle is self-evaluation where learners engage in appraising their current level of functioning before proceeding to the goal setting and strategic planning phase. The second stage of the cycle entails task analysis where learners set learning goals and engage in deciding on task-specific strategies to make their set goals achievable. The third phase involves strategy implementation and monitoring where learners operationalize the strategies and proceed to monitor the strategies application and progress towards the set goals. The last stage encompasses performance outcomes evaluation through the appraisal of the effectiveness of the strategies employed in the preceding stage.

Models of SRL can be generally conceptualized as a matrix of interactive cells where regulatory mechanisms work across four areas: cognition, motivation/affect, behavior, and context. There are also four phases that cut across these four areas or domains: forethought, planning and activation; monitoring; control; reaction and reflection. To put it in simple terms, a self-regulated learner engages in regulatory phases of forethought, planning, activation, monitoring, control, reaction and reflection in areas of cognition, motivation/affect, behavior, and context. Pintrich (2004) notes that although individuals go through the four phases in a generally “time-ordered sequence” (p. 389), we cannot strongly assume that phases represent a strict hierarchical or linear structure. In fact, Pintrich (2004) postulates that learners can be dynamically engaged in regulatory phases of monitoring, control, and reaction simultaneously as they “progress through the task with the goals and plans being changed or updated” (p. 389).

There are three most frequently used SRL measurement instruments. Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI), Self-regulated Learning Interview Scale (SRLIS) and Motivated Strategies Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). All these instruments measure metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral constructs. In the present study, MSLQ (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, McKeachie, 1991) was used which is built on a social-cognitive theoretical framework assuming that “motivation and learning strategies are not traits of the learner, but rather that motivation is dynamic and contextually bound and that learning strategies can be learned and brought under the control of the student” (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005, p. 117). The MSLQ is an 81-item self-report comprising two main scales: motivation and learning strategies. These scales are further divided into several subscales. The subscales of motivation include measures of valuing, expectancy, and affect. The learning strategies section of the MSLQ is comprised of cognitive and metacognitive strategies including rehearsal, elaboration, organization, critical thinking, and metacognitive self-regulation. Although the behavioral construct does not constitute a major section in the MSLQ, it is accounted for in the learning strategies section under the resource management subsection including behaviors such as managing time and study environment, effort management, peer learning, and help seeking. Respondents are required to answer each question on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “very true of me” to “not at all true of me”. The MSLQ was originally designed for college students. Researchers in the field of language education have also showed interest in the application of the MSLQ. The validity of the MSLQ in an EFL context was examined by, Ayatollahi, Rasekh, and Tavakoli (2011) who conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the learning strategies module of the instrument and found identical factor structures for EFL and general education contexts; they suggested that MSLQ is a valid measurement instrument in determining EFL college students’ study strategies as well. Huang (2008) also studied the reliability and applicability of the MSLQ to foreign language learning contexts and reported that “in spite of some inherent uniqueness, L2 learning is similar to other subjects in the school environment and the MSLQ has the potential to be applied to L2-related studies” (p. 529).

2.3 SRL Research

As an important predictor of academic motivation and achievement, self-regulated learning requires learners to actively plan, monitor, and evaluate the process of learning (Zumbrunn, Tadlock, & Roberts, 2011). Harris, Graham, Mason, and Saddler (2002) assume SRL as a primary determinant of learning outcomes and persistence through challenging tasks. Similarly, Cobb (2003) maintains that when students get
involved in “some aspects of metacognition, they tend to report planning, monitoring, and regulating and they also do better in terms of actual achievement” (p. 47). Cobb reports a direct relationship between regulation of learning and achievement where motivation and use of learning strategies appeared to be important factors in determining academic achievement. The findings, Cobb asserted, are in line with the studies conducted by Pintinch and Johnson (1990) and Weinstein and Underwood (1985), reporting a direct relationship between motivational and learning strategies on one hand and learning outcomes on the other hand.

Reviewing the SRL literature, Artino (2008) states, “Self-regulation is important, if not essential, for effective learning and performance” (p. 43). Bernard-Brak, Lan, and Paton (2010) maintain that learners who engage in self-regulating activities “appear to achieve more positive academic outcomes than individuals who do not exhibit self-regulated learning behaviors” (p. 61). Furthermore, Montello and Torres (2004) assert that research has shown self-regulated learners generally display certain characteristics compared to the learners who do not regulate learning. These characteristics include but are not limited to their knowledge of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, certain motivational beliefs and adaptive emotions, time and effort management skills, and volitional strategies. Moreover, research findings discussed by Smith (2001) suggest that self-regulating learners possess a set of distinguishing qualities such as “conscious selection and control of critical thinking and learning strategies, and continuous self-assessment of learning effectiveness and progress” (p. 665). These self-regulatory processes are “the learners’ attributions, goals, and monitoring strategies used during the learning process” (p. 670). Zumbrunn et al. (2011, p. 4) summarized the researched benefits of SRL maintaining that it can help students

- Create better learning habits and strengthen their study skills,
- Apply learning strategies to enhance academic outcomes monitor their performance, and
- Evaluate their academic progress

Duncan and Mckeachie (2005) noted that, “the empirical links among motivation, learning strategies and performance are well-established” (p. 120). Similarly, investigating the research concerning the link between learning, motivation, and self-regulation, Schunk (2005) asserts, “students who display more adaptive self-regulatory strategies demonstrate better learning and higher motivation for learning” (p. 88). Schunk (2005) also notes that research “supports the predictions of the conceptual framework by showing linkages between motivation, self-regulation, and academic learning” (p. 89).

Zimmerman (2000) maintains that compared to learners with poorer self-regulatory skills, those who have stronger self-regulatory skills are more self-efficacious. The reason is that self-regulatory skills facilitate the self-evaluation process whereby learners form judgments about the status of their progress and adjust the learning process in order to maintain self-efficacy. Additionally, Pintrich and Schunk note that successful users of self-regulatory skills form a positive self-conception by attributing success to “ability and effort and difficulty to use of ineffective strategies (as cited in Schunk, 2005, p. 87).

Duckworth, Akerman, MacGregor, Salter and Vorhaus (2009, p. ii) summarize the key findings of review of literature on self-regulated learning as follows:

- There is a positive overall relationship between self-regulation and academic attainment.
- Individual elements of self-regulated learning, such as attitudes towards learning, attention and persistence, in academic achievement of the learners influence academic achievement.
- The size of the effect of self-regulation on attainment, however small, exists independently of prior attainment.
- Metacognition, i.e. understanding one’s own cognitive skills including memory, attention, and problem solving are key driving factors in self-regulation.

These studies have been conducted in mainstream educational context; studies examining self-regulated learning in language learning settings will be reviewed in the following section.
2.4 Studies on Self-regulated Learning in Language Learning Contexts

McDonough (2001) argued that although the phrase ‘self-regulated learning’ is “virtually absent” from the field of foreign language learning, other terms such as “self direction”, “self instruction”, and “autonomous learning” appear to be prevalent (p. 323). Similarly, Oxford (2013) noted that L2 models of self-regulation have been called by names, such as learner self-management, learner self-direction, self-regulated or autonomous L2 learning, and mediated learning.

In a model called The Strategic Self-Regulation Model of Language Learning, Oxford (2013) integrated the results from previous research into language learning strategies (LLS) to provide a “closer integration of LLS research into the mainstream of applied linguistics and educational psychology in terms of theorizing and empirical research” (p. 11). In her model, self-regulated L2 learning strategies are consciously deployed, involving four elements of consciousness, namely awareness, attention, intention, and effort.

Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1990) investigated the SRL strategies of the gifted (N= 95) and regular students (N= 90) and found that gifted students reported a greater use of organization and transformation strategies than the regular students. Girls used more goal setting and planning strategies than boys and monitored themselves more. Gifted students were more willing to seek assistance from peers and adults. Mezei (2008) studied the self-regulation and motivational dispositions of two successful adult language learners at different proficiency levels in order to find out how motivational self-regulation and self-regulatory mechanisms shape their language learning behavior. The findings of the study suggested that self-regulatory capacity might be a function of proficiency and/or individual difference factors. Wang, Quach, and Rolston (2009) examined the Chinese ESL learners’ self-regulated learning, collecting data from multiple resources, such as interviews, observations, reading and writing tasks, and school documents. The study results suggested that Chinese ESL learners reported more strategies in reading than in writing activities.

In another study, Ismail and Sharma (2012) studied goal orientation and self-regulated learning strategies as predictors of EFL students’ GPA. The results suggested that the two variables were valid predictors of the students’ achievement. However, there was no significant relationship between goal orientation and the GPA. In multiple qualitative case studies, Zahidi (2012) explored how six English Language learners used self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies to complete language learning tasks and cope with the challenges of learning and using English as a second language. The findings suggested that personal and environmental factors influence self-regulated learning strategies used in language learning. Language learners used SRL strategies in unique and varying degrees.

More recently, Tsuda and Nakata (2013) studied the factors involved in self-regulated language learning of Japanese senior high school students to identify different types of self-regulated English learners. They found that Japanese EFL learners are affected by complex internal factors, and as a result categorizing the students as good, bad, successful, or unsuccessful learners is a simplistic approach. Rose and Harbon (2013) also investigated how students of the Japanese language regulate the learning of Kanji, Japanese written characters over the course of one year. The findings suggested that many students are unable to control their emotions, manage commitments, and control boredom and procrastination in learning Kanji. Interestingly, advanced learners were found to be “more prone to a loss of self-regulation due to frustration caused by a lack of progress in learning, or due to self-criticism over an inability to reach goals” (p. 96). Wang, Schwab, Fenn, and Chang (2013) investigated the relationship between self-efficacy, self-regulated learning strategies and English proficiency scores among the Chinese and German EFL learners. They reported statistically significant relationships between self-efficacy, use of SRL strategies, and English language test scores. Moreover, they noted that Chinese students reported a lower level of self-efficacy beliefs, but their English proficiency was not significantly different in comparison to German students. In addition, female students reported higher levels of self-efficacy beliefs while gaining lower scores on the English language test in both countries.

In a closely related study, Yusri, Rahimi, Shah and Wah (2013) investigated cognitive and metacognitive strategies in learning oral Arabic in Malaysia. They used a self-regulated learning framework consisting of rehearsal, elaboration, organization, critical thinking, and metacognitive strategies. Examining the level of cognitive and metacognitive strategies used among students, the effect of prior experiences on the use...
of strategies, and the role of gender in the use of strategies, they found that students used cognitive and metacognitive strategies at a moderate level, and those who had prior experience with learning Arabic scored significantly higher than the students without prior experience in all five components of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Additionally, it was found that females used more rehearsal, organization, and metacognitive strategies than males.

Finally, in the most recent and pertinent to the purpose of the present study, Seker (2015) examined the use of self-regulation strategies by foreign language learners and its role in language achievement. She interviewed 51 teachers and examined 222 undergraduate foreign language learners’ reported use of SRL, and their predictive power in foreign language achievement in Turkey. The findings indicated that despite moderate to low levels of SRL use among the participants, SRL is a significant predictor of foreign language achievement. As the review of the literature shows no study has examined the particular learning strategies used by more successful language learners and the influence of age or language proficiency on the use of these strategies; therefore, the current study addresses these concerns.

3. The present study
3.1 Research questions

The present study is an attempt to highlight the significance contribution of self-regulation strategy use in foreign language learning contexts by addressing the following questions:

1. What are the most frequently used self-regulated learning strategies among Iranian EFL Learners?
2. Is there any significant difference in the use of self-regulated learning strategies of young adult and adult EFL learners?
3. Is there any significant difference in the use of self-regulated learning strategies EFL learners use across language proficiency groups?

3.2 Participants

The present study examined the strategy use among a group of 280 participants, who were learning English at one of the branches of Iran Language Institute (ILI) located in northeastern Tehran. Further screening procedures eliminated those participants who had not filled out the questionnaires completely. Upon the completion of the screening procedure, 257 participants’ responses were analyzed. All enrolled students took an English Placement test prepared by the testing unit of the institute and accordingly were placed in at appropriate proficiency levels. The participants were classified into four groups based on the proficiency levels in which they had already been placed by the language institute.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants in Proficiency Groups</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High intermediate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Instruments

The instrument employed in the study is the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ); the second part of the MSLQ was used to collect information concerning the use of different learning strategies by language learners. The learning strategies scale part, which is based on a general cognitive model of learning and information processing, has three subscales: cognitive, metacognitive, and resource management. The questionnaire was developed on a seven-point Likert Scale format. It included the following strategies: rehearsal (4 items), elaboration (6 items), organization (4 items), critical thinking (5 items), metacognitive self-regulation (12 items), time/study environment management (8 items), effort
management (4 items), peer learning (3 items), help seeking (4 items), totaling in 50 items. The configuration of the self-regulated learning strategies questionnaire and the number of items under each subscale are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Components of Self-regulated Learning Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Strategies Scales</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive self-regulation</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time/study environment management</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort management</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer learning</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help seeking</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of items</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Procedures

The criterion for classification of participants into different proficiency levels was the institutional classification. Participants representing pre-intermediate, intermediate, high-intermediate, and advanced levels were requested to take part in the present study. Data from basic and elementary levels were not collected as they had limited experience in language learning and were not familiar with language learning strategies. The participants were briefed on the purpose of the survey and were instructed to fill out the questionnaires solely based on their initial impression of the statement without deliberation so as to minimize response bias.

3.5 Findings

First, the internal reliability of the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient. The results indicated that the data set was suitable to conduct further statistical tests (α = 0.93). In order to identify the most frequently used self-regulated learning strategies among EFL learners in the present study context, the components of the self-regulated learning strategies in the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of Self-regulated Learning Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Minimum Statistic</th>
<th>Maximum Statistic</th>
<th>Mean Statistic</th>
<th>Std. Deviation Statistic</th>
<th>Skewness Statistic</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Skewness Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive Self-Regulation</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>4.9048</td>
<td>.85978</td>
<td>-.219</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>4.8077</td>
<td>1.09095</td>
<td>-.350</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>4.7634</td>
<td>1.18761</td>
<td>-.464</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help Seeking</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>4.7449</td>
<td>1.16531</td>
<td>-.434</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>4.7140</td>
<td>1.30615</td>
<td>-.229</td>
<td>.154</td>
<td>.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time/Study Environmental Management</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>6.88</td>
<td>4.6691</td>
<td>1.04545</td>
<td>-.259</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort Regulation</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>4.5833</td>
<td>1.32175</td>
<td>-.204</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>4.4444</td>
<td>1.38966</td>
<td>-.262</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Learning</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>3.5204</td>
<td>1.44449</td>
<td>.148</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>.153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valid N (listwise)
As seen, the most frequently used strategies are metacognitive self-regulation (M=4.9) followed by elaboration (M=4.8) and critical thinking (M=4.7).

To obtain more information about the self-regulating strategies, the descriptive statistics for each individual strategy were examined. Items 76, 41, and 35 were the most frequently used strategies. These strategies pertain to metacognitive self-regulation and time/study environmental management. As seen in Table 4, the most frequently used strategy is related to determining which concepts are hard to understand. This is concerned with thinking about ones’ learning, which is a category of metacognitive strategies. The second most frequently used strategy, i.e., “When I become confused about something I'm reading for this class, I go back and try to figure it out”, is a metacognitive self-regulation strategy.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics of the Individual Self-regulated Learning Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q76</td>
<td>When studying for this course I try to determine which concepts I don't understand well.</td>
<td>6.0781</td>
<td>1.23739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q41</td>
<td>When I become confused about something I'm reading for this class, I go back and try to figure it out.</td>
<td>5.9219</td>
<td>1.47985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35</td>
<td>I usually study in a place where I can concentrate on my course work.</td>
<td>5.7704</td>
<td>1.50968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q73</td>
<td>I attend this class regularly.</td>
<td>5.6260</td>
<td>1.52641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q75</td>
<td>I try to identify students in this class whom I can ask for help if necessary.</td>
<td>5.5529</td>
<td>1.71954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36</td>
<td>I try to play around with ideas of my own related to what I am learning in this course.</td>
<td>5.3953</td>
<td>1.57419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q64</td>
<td>When reading for this class, I try to relate the material to what I already know.</td>
<td>5.3898</td>
<td>1.51464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q57</td>
<td>I often find that I have been reading for this class but don't know what it was all about.</td>
<td>5.3071</td>
<td>1.86718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q65</td>
<td>I have a regular place set aside for studying.</td>
<td>5.2756</td>
<td>1.88683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q39</td>
<td>When I study for this class, I practice saying the material to myself over and over.</td>
<td>5.2646</td>
<td>1.72528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q69</td>
<td>I try to understand the material in this class by making connections between the readings and the concepts from the lectures.</td>
<td>5.2126</td>
<td>1.53035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q74</td>
<td>Even when course materials are dull and uninteresting, I manage to keep working until I finish.</td>
<td>5.2008</td>
<td>1.71573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q42</td>
<td>When I study for this course, I go through the readings and my class notes and try to find the most important ideas.</td>
<td>5.1362</td>
<td>1.75026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q68</td>
<td>When I can't understand the material in this course, I ask another student in this class for help.</td>
<td>5.1190</td>
<td>1.88349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q54</td>
<td>I try to relate ideas in this subject to those in other courses whenever possible.</td>
<td>5.0817</td>
<td>1.94181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q59</td>
<td>I memorize key words to remind me of important concepts in this class.</td>
<td>5.0791</td>
<td>1.75754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q33</td>
<td>During class time I often miss important points because I'm thinking of other things.</td>
<td>5.0739</td>
<td>1.88082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q62</td>
<td>I try to relate ideas in this subject to those in other courses whenever possible.</td>
<td>5.0196</td>
<td>1.60081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q38</td>
<td>When I study for this course, I set goals for myself in order to direct my activities in each study period. (reverse coded)</td>
<td>4.9222</td>
<td>1.83120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q78</td>
<td>I try to apply ideas from course readings in other class activities such as lecture and discussion.</td>
<td>4.8968</td>
<td>1.69287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q81</td>
<td>I try to apply ideas from course readings in other class activities such as lecture and discussion.</td>
<td>4.8706</td>
<td>1.84938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q67</td>
<td>When I study for this course, I write brief summaries of the main ideas from the readings and my class notes.</td>
<td>4.8477</td>
<td>1.93731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q58</td>
<td>I ask the instructor to clarify concepts I don’t understand well.</td>
<td>4.8425</td>
<td>1.87315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q51</td>
<td>I treat the course material as a starting point and try to develop my own ideas about it.</td>
<td>4.8242</td>
<td>1.71851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q70</td>
<td>I make sure that I keep up with the weekly readings and assignments for this course.</td>
<td>4.7402</td>
<td>1.81436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q63</td>
<td>When I study for this course, I go over my class notes and make an outline of important concepts.</td>
<td>4.6772</td>
<td>1.92911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q46</td>
<td>When studying for this course, I read my class notes and the course readings over and over again.</td>
<td>4.6706</td>
<td>1.83613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q79</td>
<td>If I get confused taking notes in class, I make sure I sort it out afterwards.</td>
<td>4.6392</td>
<td>1.90813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q51</td>
<td>I make good use of my study time for this course.</td>
<td>4.6109</td>
<td>1.94191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q80</td>
<td>I rarely find time to review my notes or readings before an exam.</td>
<td>4.4466</td>
<td>2.07262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q47</td>
<td>When a theory, interpretation, or conclusion is presented in class or in the readings, I try to decide if there is good supporting evidence.</td>
<td>4.4466</td>
<td>1.76668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q31</td>
<td>I try to think through a topic and decide what I am supposed to learn from it rather than just reading it over when studying for this course.</td>
<td>4.3715</td>
<td>1.86772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22</td>
<td>I make lists of important items for this course and memorize the lists.</td>
<td>4.3307</td>
<td>1.90280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q71</td>
<td>Whenever I read or hear an assertion or conclusion in this class, I think about possible alternatives.</td>
<td>4.1627</td>
<td>1.73588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q52</td>
<td>When studying for this course, I often try to explain the material to a classmate or friend.</td>
<td>4.0118</td>
<td>1.95316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25</td>
<td>I find it hard to stick to a study schedule.</td>
<td>3.9449</td>
<td>2.11827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q40</td>
<td>Even if I have trouble learning the material in this class, I try to do the work on my own, without help from anyone.</td>
<td>3.8549</td>
<td>1.99570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q72</td>
<td>I often feel so lazy or bored when I study for this class that I quit before I finish what I planned to do.</td>
<td>3.6693</td>
<td>2.01449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q49</td>
<td>When studying for this course, I take simple charts, diagrams, or tables to help me organize course material.</td>
<td>3.6549</td>
<td>1.97587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q34</td>
<td>When studying for this course, I often try to explain the material to a classmate or friend.</td>
<td>3.6250</td>
<td>2.00587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q53</td>
<td>When I study for this class, I pull together information from different sources, such as lectures, readings, and discussions.</td>
<td>3.5296</td>
<td>1.85274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q77</td>
<td>I often find that I don’t spend very much time on this course because of other activities.</td>
<td>3.1451</td>
<td>1.98779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q50</td>
<td>When studying for this course, I often set aside time to discuss course material with a group of students from the class.</td>
<td>2.9063</td>
<td>1.81254</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valid N (listwise)
3.6 The use of self-regulated learning strategies among young adults and adults

To find out whether the use of self-regulated learning strategies differs among young adult and adult language learners, participants were first divided into young adults and adults. Those in the age range of 13-19 were regarded as young adults and those above 19 were considered adults. This resulted in 118 young adults and 90 adults. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics for Categories of Self-regulated Learning Strategies among Young Adult and Adult Language Learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adults</td>
<td>4.8686</td>
<td>1.36841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>4.5278</td>
<td>1.31406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adults</td>
<td>4.8757</td>
<td>1.12263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>4.6926</td>
<td>1.09045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adults</td>
<td>4.4470</td>
<td>1.40658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>4.4750</td>
<td>1.41622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adults</td>
<td>4.9288</td>
<td>1.28383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>4.5089</td>
<td>1.08438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive Self-Regulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adults</td>
<td>5.0247</td>
<td>.82749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>4.7481</td>
<td>.94611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time/Study Environmental Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adults</td>
<td>4.8072</td>
<td>1.06301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>4.5125</td>
<td>1.03061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort Regulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adults</td>
<td>4.8475</td>
<td>1.27099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>4.2417</td>
<td>1.39091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adults</td>
<td>3.7062</td>
<td>1.40354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>3.1667</td>
<td>1.44845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help Seeking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adults</td>
<td>4.8792</td>
<td>1.21629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>4.5889</td>
<td>1.21629</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of MANOVA in Table 6 show that except for rehearsal, elaboration, and organization strategies, young adults and adults are different in the use of self-regulated learning strategies. A look at the descriptive statistics in Table 6 shows that adults only used organization strategies more than young adults.

Table 6
MANOVA Results for the Effect of Age on the Use of Self-Regulated Learning Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>pendent Variable</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>5.932</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.932</td>
<td>3.278</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>1.712</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.712</td>
<td>1.392</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.887</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>9.003</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.003</td>
<td>6.234</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metacognitive Self-Regulation</td>
<td>3.905</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.905</td>
<td>5.035</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time/Study Environmental Management</td>
<td>4.434</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.434</td>
<td>4.029</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effort Regulation</td>
<td>18.737</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18.737</td>
<td>10.687</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.7 The use of self-regulated learning strategies across proficiency levels

To find out the differences in self-regulated learning strategies among different proficiency levels, a MANOVA was run. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 7. As seen, the pre intermediate language learners used cognitive, metacognitive, and behavior/context self-regulated leaning strategies more than the other groups.

Table 7
Descriptive Statistics of Self-Regulated Strategies across the Proficiency Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Metacognitive</th>
<th>Behavior/context regulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre Intermediate</td>
<td>4.8743</td>
<td>5.0579</td>
<td>4.5549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>4.7698</td>
<td>5.0144</td>
<td>4.5444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hi Intermediate</td>
<td>4.5578</td>
<td>4.8671</td>
<td>4.2731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>4.4296</td>
<td>4.6167</td>
<td>4.0490</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen in Table 8, there are differences between participants representing different proficiency levels in the metacognitive and behavior context groups in the use of self-regulated learning strategies.

Table 8
MANOVA Results Examining the Differences in Self-Regulated Learning Strategies among Different Proficiency Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>6.452</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.151</td>
<td>1.994</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>6.289</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.096</td>
<td>2.723</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The implicit direction in using MANOVA is that the level of proficiency is a cause in strategy use rather than an outcome. This will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

4. Discussion

Oxford (1999) notes, “That which is called autonomy in the foreign and second language field is often known as self-regulation in the psychology field.” (p. 111). Through planning, monitoring, and regulating cognitive strategies, self-regulation helps language learners transfer, modify, and extend the knowledge and skills attained in one situation to another. Self-regulation has been frequently discussed in foreign language teaching and learning over the last few decades; it has become of interest mainly because of its close link to improvements in foreign language learning and its relationship to the development of autonomous learners (Wang, 2004; Lin, 2004; Bown, 2006, 2009; Majid, 2007; Mezei, 2008; Wang, Quach, &
The present study was conducted to identify the self-regulated learning strategies among young adult and adult language learners on the one hand and the differences in the use of self-regulated learning strategies among proficiency levels on the other hand. The results indicated that EFL learners use metacognitive self-regulation, elaboration, and critical thinking self-regulated learning strategies more frequently than other strategies. This finding is significant in that it shows that metacognitive strategies that are related to learning in general are used more often than cognitive strategies that are task specific. Metacognitive strategies are mainly concerned with organizing, managing, monitoring and evaluation of learning; the high frequency of these strategies shows that participants tend to reflect on the learning process. The second frequently used strategies were elaboration strategies that aid in the integration and connection of new information with prior knowledge by storing information into long-term memory and building internal connections. These strategies include note taking, paraphrasing, summarizing, and creating analogies. Reporting the results of a longitudinal study, Chamot and Kupper (1989) identified the language learning strategies of effective and ineffective language learners. As they noted, elaboration strategy was important for all language tasks analyzed, especially when used as a remediation strategy to bridge the gap between current knowledge level and the task at hand. Critical thinking strategies were the third frequently used self-regulated strategies. These strategies are used to analyze and evaluate a situation and attempt to solve the problem by applying previous knowledge. Critical thinking is at the heart of success in the ever-changing world of adaptation and integration of new material. Additionally, cultivating critical thinking skills can help learners in “self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking” (Paul and Elder, 2009, p. 4), and meaningful effective education requires educators to foster in learners the cognitive and metacognitive skills associated with critical thinking. Critical thinking, according to Liu (2011), involves two components: cognitive skills and disposition. In this definition of critical thinking, disposition is viewed as “attitudes or habits of mind, [that] include open- and fair-mindedness, inquisitiveness, flexibility, a propensity to seek reason, a desire to be well-informed, and a respect for and willingness to entertain diverse viewpoints” (p. 2).

There are not many studies examining the self-regulated learning strategies of EFL learners; however, the few available ones (Green and Oxford, 1995, Bremner, 1999; Bown, 2006; Wang, Quach, and Rolston, 2009; Zahidi and Binti, 2012) support that self-regulated learners use a number of strategies more than others. As awareness of these strategies can help teachers help less self-regulated learners; based on the findings, teachers are encouraged to find out what are the strategies of self-regulated learners that are not used by less self-regulated learners. Then, they can incorporate self-regulation training into their course early in the syllabus design and material development process.

The second objective of the present study was to examine the role of age on the use of self-regulated strategy use. The results showed that except for rehearsal, elaboration, and organization there are significant differences in the use of all categories of self-regulated learning strategies that young adult and adult language learners report using. The comparison of the means for the two groups indicated interesting patterns. Young adults were found to use more critical thinking, metacognitive self-regulation, time/study environment management, effort regulation, peer learning, and help seeking than adults. In fact, adults only used organization strategies more frequently than young adults. This contrary to expectation finding might be a reflection of the educational system of the country. Young adults needing to pass the highly competitive nationwide university entrance exam need more self-regulated language learning strategies than adults who do not have such pressing needs. With respect to age effects in the context of language learning strategies, in her study, Oxford (1990) noted that students of different ages and learning stages employed different strategies; older or more advanced students used some strategies more frequently than younger or less advanced students. However, the findings of the present study do not accord with those assertions of Oxford for language learning strategies. In the present study, however, young adults used self-regulated learning strategies more frequently than adults. This might be a reflection of the reform in the educational system in Iran, whereby the students are encouraged to get more involved in taking control of their learning by critically evaluating the outcomes. The findings of the present study are also different from those of Devlin (1996) who compared the learning and study
strategies employed by adults (23 years or older) and young students (22 years or younger) with older learners using the metacognitive strategy more efficiently than younger learners. The results of the present study also are different from the findings of Yusri, Rahimi, Shah, and Wah (2013), who used the MSLQ to investigate the cognitive and metacognitive strategies in learning oral Arabic. They investigated the level of cognitive and metacognitive strategies with respect to different prior experiences and found that cognitive and metacognitive strategies are used by all participants at a moderate level, but students with prior experience used more strategies than those without prior experience in all five components of cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

When the self-regulated strategy use was compared across proficiency levels, it was found that the four groups differ significantly in the metacognitive and behavior/context regulation strategies but not in the use of cognitive strategies. The comparison of the mean of the groups indicated that pre-intermediate groups used these strategies more than the other groups implying that pre-intermediate learners are more willing to apply their previous knowledge to new situations in order to make critical evaluations, solve problems, and reach decisions. As it is reported in the previous section, the level of proficiency is a cause in strategy use rather than an outcome. The level of proficiency, however, only affects the use of metacognitive and behavior/context regulation strategies but not the cognitive strategies, implying that learners of different proficiency levels did not use cognitive strategies significantly more frequently. Learners of the pre-intermediate level, however, were significantly more active in the frequency with which they used the metacognitive and behavior/context regulation strategies. These results might be indicative of the notion that as the pre-intermediate level is a transition point where the learners attempt to gain more control of the learning process, they employ more strategies to advance to the higher level.

Previous studies examining the role of language proficiency on the use of self-regulated learning strategies are limited to Wang, Schwab, Fenn, and Chang (2013), Bremner (1990), Green and Oxford (1995). Wang, Schwab, Fenn, and Chang (2013), who examined the relationship between self-efficacy, self-regulated learning strategies and English proficiency scores among the Chinese and German EFL learners, found that Chinese students reported a lower level of self-efficacy beliefs. They did not use SRL strategies differently from their German peers. Oxford and Green (1995) and Bremner (1999) also found a significant association between some of the language learning strategies and level of proficiency. Unlike the current study, Bremner found that the use of cognitive strategies is significantly associated with proficiency levels although speculating a relationship between the frequency of cognitive strategy use and proficiency level is difficult because “it appears that many of the cognitive strategies could either be contributors to the acquisition of proficiency or, alternatively, be made more possible by increased proficiency” (p. 502).

Mezey (2008) found that self-regulatory capacity might be a function of proficiency and/or individual differences; the present study findings indicated that the metacognitive and behavior/context dimensions of self-regulated strategies use are affected by language proficiency. This suggests that instructors need to take necessary measures to ensure that language learners are exposed to a learning environment where they can become familiar with these self-regulated learning strategies. Bremner (1999) believes that while claiming a causal relationship between level of language proficiency and use of learning strategies might seem elusive, encouraging students to use strategies “to increase proficiency would appear to be a more logical and fruitful aim” (p. 504)

5. Conclusion
In foreign language learning contexts where exposure to comprehensible input is limited, explicit instruction and the use of self-regulated learning strategies are extremely important. In such contexts, there are many challenges for language teachers. They need to equip language learners with certain strategies to become more successful. Seker (2015) reiterates, “in contexts where English language learning and teaching still face big challenges, incorporating SRL into the curricula and language teacher training programs may facilitate the creation of autonomous and lifelong language learners.” (p. 16)

The present study aimed to explore self-reported SRL strategies use by young adult and adult language learners across proficiency levels. The SRL strategies were studied in the present study using the second part of MSLQ as a measure of SRL strategies. The findings indicated that metacognitive self-regulation,
elaboration, and critical thinking SRL strategies were used more frequently than other types of SRL strategies.

It was also found that the only SRL strategy that adults used more often in comparison with young adults was organization strategy implying organizing and connecting information. Findings also pointed to the effect of language proficiency on the use of certain self-regulated learning strategies. The examined groups were similar in the use of cognitive strategies but different in the use of metacognitive and behavior/context regulation strategies.

6. Limitations of the study

There were several limitations to the present study which should be considered. First, the participants were female language learners, and hence the results of the current study reflect inquiry into individual differences in female EFL learners. Further consideration can be given to the examination of the role of gender in the use of self-regulated learning strategies. Additionally, the present study was ex-post facto in design, and it was not possible to draw cause and effect relationships. Therefore, it is suggested that future research in the use of learning strategies be pursued with an experimental design, and interested researchers examine the effect of training sessions and practice on SRL strategies use on learners’ language achievement. Also, researchers can use qualitative methods such as interviews with language learners and observation of learning in the classroom context to obtain rich information on factors that might be involved in influencing self-regulated strategies use at different proficiency levels. Finally, because of the descriptive nature of the study, self-report instruments were utilized. As self-report instruments yield information on participants’ beliefs and attitudes, the obtained information is the product of how the participants generally behave at the time of filling out the report. This is an inherent bias of self-report studies which needs to be addressed in interpretation of the findings.

REFERENCES


