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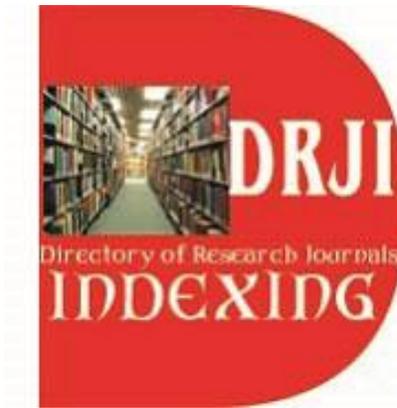
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# THE IMPACT OF CULTURALLY-ORIENTED TEXTS ON THE STUDENTS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION AND THEIR MOTIVATION IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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## **Abstract**

This study was an attempt to investigate whether teaching culturally-oriented texts to Iranian EFL learners has any influence on their listening comprehension. In addition, the study explored the difference between the motivation level of the students exposed to English culture and those who were not. In order to carry out the research, two groups of EFL learners comprised of 35 students studying English in Zaban Sara Institute and Iran Language Institute in Bushehr took part in this study. Two parallel tests of listening comprehension which were heavily culturally-loaded were administered to both groups to examine their cultural competencies. After that, the two groups received another listening test which was culture-free to determine their listening ability. They were also given a motivation questionnaire to examine the impact of culture on their motivation in learning English. Having analysed the obtained data, the results of the statistical tests revealed that teaching cultural elements can have a significant impact on the performance of the language learners in listening comprehension tests. The study also showed that culture learning does not influence the motivation level of the learners.

**Key terms:** Communicative competence, Culture, Cultural background, Extrinsic motivation, Intrinsic motivation.

## **Introduction**

The relationship between language and culture has long been a concern for second and foreign language teachers. There have been positive and negative views to incorporating target language culture into second language teaching. Learning a new language entails new ways of thinking and feeling. It is believed that teaching a foreign language is not limited to learning new vocabularies and syntactic structures. It should also be integrated with some cultural elements of that language. As Krasner (1999) believed linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language. Without the study of culture, teaching second language is inaccurate and incomplete. It is senseless for second language students to know nothing about the people who speak the target language. In other words, the acquisition of a second language is also the acquisition of a second culture. An effective language teaching program should not only enable the learners to be accurate in the foreign language but also to enable them to be culturally competent. People's culture

includes their beliefs, rules of behavior, language, rituals, art, styles of dress, ways of producing and cooking food, and religion. So culture distinguishes one group of people from others. Brown (1994) asserted that culture is like the glue that binds a group of people together.

Iranian EFL learners also need to learn the target language culture along with Persian culture and cultural understanding should be more emphasized in EFL education in Iran. According to Gardener's socio-educational model of learning English language, "students' attitudes to the target culture, their position in the educational situation, their ability to integrate into the target culture and their motivation are connected" (1985, p.65). He maintains that the main factor in this model is motivation. The issue of motivation also plays a major role in the area of EFL/ESL learning, and it is widely accepted as one of the key issues in learning and for over fifty years it has been a significant research topic. In addition, it has been considered significant as a basic ingredient of second language acquisition. Homola (1969) says that "motivation is a general term for all the conditions which determine any human activity" (p.7). Therefore, this study discusses the impact of culture on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension and it also examines the impact of cultural values on the motivation of learners in learning a foreign language.

### **Background of the study**

The topic of teaching and learning culture has been a matter of considerable interest to language educators and much has been written about the role of culture in foreign language instruction over the past four decades such as, Morain, 1986; Grittner, 1990; Bragaw, 1991; Moore, 1991; Byram and Morgan, 1994. The integration of language teaching with culture teaching dates back to the language teaching theory of the fifties and sixties (Stern, 1983). Since the 1960s, many scholars have concerned themselves with the importance and the crucial aspect in foreign language learning, with Hammerly (1982), Seelye (1984), and Damen (1987) being among those who have considered ways of incorporating culture into language teaching. As Thanasoulas (2001) points out, language teaching is culture teaching, and someone involved in teaching language is involved in teaching culture at the same time. As to the relationship between language and culture, Samovar, Porter, & Jain (1981) believe that culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages. Culture is the foundation of communication.

In a study done with ESL readers Johnson (1982) found that prior cultural background knowledge had a significant effect on reading comprehension scores for a test passage related to a familiar American custom, Halloween. Students first experienced some of the most familiar aspects of Halloween, then they read passages in which there were some familiar and some unfamiliar information. Johnson's most important conclusion was that background knowledge helped increase comprehension more significantly than did knowledge of vocabulary. It is proved that the effects of vocabulary difficulty on reading comprehension are not as clear as the effects of background knowledge (Johnson, 1982).

Schmidt-Rinehart (1994) also carried out a study with the main purpose of discovering the effects of topic familiarity on L2 listening comprehension. University students of Spanish at three different course levels listened to two familiar passages, one about a familiar topic and another about a novel topic. The results indicated that the subjects scored considerably higher on the familiar topic than on the new one. On the other hand, all of the students in different levels outscored in listening task of familiar topic. The effect of background

knowledge on listening comprehension was also explored by Sadighi and Zare (2002). Two TOEFL preparation classes allocated to EFL students took part in this study. The experiment group received some treatment in the form of topic familiarity, and their background knowledge was activated. Then a TOEFL test of listening comprehension was administered to both experimental and control groups. The results provided some evidence in support of the effect of background knowledge on listening comprehension. It has been emphasized that without the study of culture, teaching a second language is inaccurate and incomplete.

In a study conducted with intermediate level students from the school of Business and Information Technology, Othman and Vanathas (2004) aimed to find out the impact of topic familiarity on listening comprehension and how far certain aspects of the language are likely to be influenced by topic familiarity. The analysis of the scores of pre-test and post-test indicated that topic familiarity helped learners to better comprehend the listening texts. There is clear evidence that the subjects' answers in the post-test are better than those in the pre-test. The finding of this study also revealed that background knowledge has a significant effect on listening comprehension and it can be improved by providing appropriate instructions. It also established that topic familiarity is an essential factor in the comprehension of unfamiliar texts.

Bakhtiarvand and Adinevand (2010) investigated the effect of cultural familiarity in improving Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension. To achieve this purpose, one hundred and twenty pre-intermediate language learners were selected and, based on systematic random sampling, divided into four groups. Then, the four groups took a listening comprehension test, which included sample authentic listening comprehension materials, as a post-test which was the same as pre-test to see whether or not there were changes regarding their listening proficiency. The results of the post-test showed that the four groups performed differently on the post-test, which was indicative of the fact that greater familiarity to specific culturally-oriented listening materials promoted the Iranian EFL learners' listening proficiency. The experimental group outperformed the control group in their listening comprehension. According to the results of the study, having background knowledge is a key feature of any kind of listening materials, so through having greater exposure to specific culturally-oriented texts, language learners can improve their listening comprehension. The results also indicate that the Iranian EFL course books do not prepare students to cope with the international society.

The significance of learning and teaching culture as an inseparable part of language is pointed out by Abdollahi-Guilani (2011). This study justifies the importance of including culture in the language teaching programs because familiarity with the cultural features of the target language helps the learners to modify their attitude toward other cultures. According to this study, it is important to connect language and culture especially in teaching vocabulary. According to the results, acknowledging that there are cultural differences helps students understand that not only linguistic knowledge but also cultural information is helpful for successful communication.

Karabinar (2012) has questioned the attitudes of language teachers at Turkish universities towards teaching culture. This study investigated the effects of teacher-related variables such as being a native English speaking teacher or non-native English speaking teacher, working at a state or private university, participation in professional development activities on their perception of culture teaching. According to the findings of the study, the topic that is mainly given priority in teaching culture is tangible products of culture such as foods, dresses, types of dwelling and toys. It also showed that the most strongly supported reason for including

culture in FL classrooms is because knowledge of culture is important in a communication and it prevents cultural misunderstanding.

Motivation is one of the most highly studied issues within the field of second language education and it has been long the subject of research of many theoreticians, teachers, and psychologists. Fontana claims that "sufficient learning at school would not take place without motivation" (2003, p. 127). The early work of Gardner and Lambert (1972) posited two major clusters of motivation indices: instrumental and integrative. Integrative motivation, the desire by the student to be liked by people in the target culture, is the major motivational influence on language learning in the school setting.

According to Gardner (1985) individuals with high levels of integrativeness would be expected to view the language learning situation positively, other things being equal and vice versa. And, individuals who are high in integrativeness would also be expected to be high in instrumentality. A number of studies have been conducted to determine the impact of motivation on language learning, such as Gardner (1985), Dornyei (2001), Csizer and Kormos (2008), and Vazquez, Paulina, Guzman and Rodriguez (2010). The majority of the studies in this field showed that increased motivation has a positive effect on EFL learning.

Little, Devitt, and Singleton (1989, p.26) claimed that "authentic texts bring learners closer to the target language culture and make learning more enjoyable and, therefore, more motivating". Peacock (1997) investigated the effect of authentic materials on the motivation of EFL learners. The authentic materials which are used in this research are two poems, some television listening, two short articles, an advice column from a local English-language newspaper, an American pop song, and some English language magazine advertisements. The participants involved were beginner-level students in two classes at a South Korean university EFL institute. Two observation sheets and a self-report questionnaire were used to investigate the study. The results indicated that overall class motivation significantly increased when the learners in this study used authentic materials. It also showed that learners reported authentic materials to be significantly less interesting than artificial materials. It means that the learners were more motivated by authentic materials, but not because they were more interesting.

Target culture interaction and motivation was also the focus of Bongartz & Schneider's (2003) study. Data was obtained in a one-year period from the social interaction of two English-speaking boys, ages 5 and 7, who acquired German in an immersion context. The data revealed that preferred interactional motivation strategies led to differences in linguistic choices and hence to differences in motivation for linguistic practice.

Yet another study which emphasizes the effect of the L2 culture on learner motivation and progress is that of Sasaki (2004). Using multiple quantitative and qualitative data sources, this study investigated possible changes in Japanese students' English-writing behavior over a period of three years and a half. The results revealed that over the observation period, all of the students were able to improve their English proficiency, composition, and fluency and that the experiences of the ESL overseas students were quite helpful in improving their writing strategy, motivating them to write better compositions.

As this review has demonstrated, there are a lot of interesting and challenging works going on about culture learning and motivation research. All in all, considering the aforementioned studies, this paper addresses the following research questions:

1. Do the target-culturally-oriented texts have any effect on the language learners' listening performance?

2. Do the target-culture-free texts have any effect on the language learners' listening performance?
3. Do the target-culturally-oriented texts have any effect on the language learners' motivation level?

Based on the above research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated in this study:

1. Target-culturally-oriented texts have no effect on language learners' listening performance.
2. Target-culture-free texts have no effect on the language learners' listening performance.
3. Target culture learning has no effect on the students' motivation level in learning English.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The participants of this study were selected among a population of 65 students on the basis of the results of a TOEFL test. To select the homogeneous subjects, the researcher administered the TOEFL test to determine the subjects' listening comprehension proficiency. They were all native speakers of Persian and learners of English as a foreign language. They included two groups. The first group consisted of 20 female Iranian EFL students within the age range of 20-28 who enrolled at Zaban Sara Institute of Bushehr, Iran. They had learnt English through different books written by the well-known applied linguist, Jack C. Richards for about 2 years. Since the books are heavily culturally-oriented, language learners were familiar with cultural values of English. The second group consisted of 15 female Iranian EFL students within the age range of 19-26 who enrolled at Iran Language Institute in Bushehr. They had learnt English through different books which are culture free and published by Iran Language Institute. Thus, they were not very familiar with English culture.

### **Instruments**

The instruments used in this study included four data collection instruments in gathering information on students' knowledge of English culture and also to determine their motivation level in listening performance. The two groups became homogenous by administering the listening section of an actual TOEFL. This test was applied to identify the English listening knowledge of the participants. Then, two parallel heavily culturally-loaded tests of listening comprehension were prepared. After that, the two groups received another listening test consisting of 30 items which was culture-free. The tests are piloted before administering to the participants to detect any unforeseen problems and to collect data to test the reliability and validity of the instruments.

The reliability of the tests was calculated by means of the KR-21 formula. The researcher obtained the reliability index of 0.79 for the culturally-loaded test, and the reliability of the culture-free test was calculated as 0.63. In addition, a motivation questionnaire which consists of 30 items was adapted from Gardner's AMTB (1985) and was employed to probe the impact of culturally-loaded texts on learners' motivation level in learning English.

### **Data collection**

Three kinds of tests were carried out in this study. The participants of the study received a TOEFL test for being homogenous and after that the two groups of learners were given a

parallel listening comprehension test focusing on some American cultural values such as holidays, customs, entertainment, celebrations and festivals, etc. In the meantime, they received another parallel listening comprehension test which was culture-free to determine their equality in listening comprehension ability. In the end, the two groups received the motivation questionnaire to determine any possible difference between their motivation levels for learning English.

**Data analysis**

The data gathered on the culturally-loaded test was used to elicit the cultural differences between two groups and it was an analysis of foreign culture competence of those who were familiar with foreign culture and then arriving at some conclusions such as lack of ability in listening performances across cultures for those who were not familiar with foreign culture. In addition to descriptive analysis measures such as means, standard deviation, and percentages, independent sample t-test was also run to explore the possible differences between culture learning and listening ability of the learners. The results of the second test determined both groups' listening comprehension ability in culture-free tests. And by administering a motivation questionnaire, the difference between their motivation levels in language learning was determined. All the statistical procedures were conducted by SPSS software. After gathering the required data and in order to see the possible differences between the performance of the two groups in listening comprehension test, one independent t-test was run. In addition, in order to see both groups' listening ability another t-test was run. A Mann-Whitney U test, which is a test for independent samples carrying ordinal values, was used to compare the motivation levels of the participants in the two groups.

**Results and Discussion**

In order to identify the English knowledge of the participants, a proficiency test (TOEFL) was administered to the participants. Table 4.1 shows the descriptive statistics of the participants' scores on the proficiency test.

**Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics of the proficiency test**

Language institute	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Sum	Minimum	Std. Error of Mean	Maximum
zaban sara	16.7500	20	1.61815	335.00	14.00	.36183	19.00
ILI	16.3333	15	1.44749	245.00	14.00	.37374	19.00
Total	16.5714	35	1.53940	580.00	14.00	.26021	19.00

As can be seen from Table 4.1, the mean of the first group (M=16.75) in this test is a bit higher than the mean of the second group (M=16.33) but the difference is not remarkable. The standard deviations also do not show any great diversity in the distribution of the scores of the two groups. So, according to the results of the proficiency test, they were at the same level of proficiency. Having done the required calculations on TOEFL scores of the subjects, the researcher administered the culturally-loaded test to the participants of the two groups to

see any possible difference in their performance. Table 4.2 shows the descriptive statistics of the first group (Zaban Sara), on the first test which was culture-oriented.

**Table 4.2 Descriptive statistics of the culturally-loaded test for the two groups**

Language institute	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
culturally loaded test 1, 50 scores	20	40.2000	2.14231	.47903
zaban sara ILI	15	22.9333	4.55861	1.17703

According to the results, the mean of the scores obtained from the administration of this test is 40.20 and the standard deviation is 2.14, for the first group. As is observed, the mean of the scores of the second group for this test is 22.93, which is highly different from the first group. And the standard deviation is 4.55, which shows great diversity in the distribution of the scores. Table 4.2 clearly indicates that the means of the two groups are different and as can be seen in this table, the mean score of the first group is higher than the second group. It is depicted that the first group who were familiar with the target culture outperformed the second group who were not familiar with the target culture. The results of the study made this fact clear that culture familiarity had a positive impact on learners' listening comprehension.

As for the purpose of the study, we wanted to seek the effect of cultural background on the performance of the two groups in the listening comprehension test. So, the t-test was conducted to make sure that the difference in the mean scores of the two groups in the listening comprehension test was statistically significant. The results are shown in Table 4.3 below:

**Table 4.3 Independent sample t-test of the culturally-loaded test**

	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
culturally loaded test 1, 50 scores	14.934	33	.000	17.26667	1.15622	14.91433	19.61901

As can be seen from the table above, the results of the t-test indicated that the performance of the first group differed significantly ( $P = 0.00$ ) from the second group. ( $M = 40.26$ ,  $SD = 2.14$ ) ( $M = 22.93$ ,  $SD = 4.56$ ) ;  $t(33) = 14.93$ ,  $P = 0.005$ . In other words, it can be claimed that the participants of the first group who were familiar with the target culture did better on the culturally-loaded test than the second group who were not familiar with the target culture. Therefore, the first null hypothesis of the study which stated that "there is no difference between those students who are familiar with English culture and those who are not, in listening comprehension tests" can safely be rejected and it can be said that there is a

significant difference between the performance of the two groups in the culturally-loaded listening comprehension test. This shows that subjects in the first group performed better in the culturally-loaded test than the second group. It can be stated that culture familiarity has a positive impact on the listening comprehension of the learners.

After that, to examine the subjects' listening ability and to see if the two groups performed statistically differently or not in the listening comprehension test, disregarding their cultural familiarity, another listening test, which was culture-free was administered to both groups. The descriptive statistics are shown in table 4.4. According to this table, the mean score of the first group is 24.75, and the mean score of the second group is 24.20. And the standard deviations also do not show any great diversity in the distribution of the scores of the two groups (1.55 and 1.89).

**Table 4.4 Descriptive statistics of the culture-free test for the two groups**

Language institute	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Sum	Minimum	Std. Error of Mean	Maximum
zaban sara	24.7500	20	1.55174	495.00	22.00	.34698	27.00
ILI	24.2000	15	1.89737	363.00	20.00	.48990	27.00
Total	24.5143	35	1.70417	858.00	20.00	.28806	27.00

In order to find out whether or not this difference is statistically significant, another t-test was employed. Table 4.5 shows the results of this t-test.

**Table 4.5 Independent sample t-test of the culture-free test**

	t-test for Equality of Means						
	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
culture free test 2, 30 scores	.943	33	.352	.55000	.58303	-.63618	1.73618

By looking at this table, it can be seen that the second null hypothesis, "There is no significant difference between the listening ability of the two groups in the culture free test" was verified: Zaban Sara students (M = 24.75, SD = 1.89) and ILI students (M = 24.20, SD = 1.89),  $t(33) = 0.94$ ,  $P = 0.35$ . Therefore, low scores of the second group (on the first test), were not due to their listening comprehension ability; rather, lack of culture familiarity was the reason. The listeners who listened to the culturally-oriented texts did not have to deal with unfamiliar terms in the texts and this resulted in better comprehension. So, the participants in the second group could improve their listening comprehension through having greater exposure to target culture texts as one kind of specific culturally-oriented language listening materials.

The other part of the current study investigated the difference between the motivation levels of the learners who were taught English culture and those who were not. Motivation has

long been a significant research topic due to its vital importance in language learning. As mentioned earlier, in order to find the difference between culture learning and the motivation level of the participants under study, Gardner's Attitude / Motivation Test Battery questionnaire was employed. In order to give a comparative picture of the data, means of the two groups were calculated and are shown in the following table. According to this table, the mean score of the first group who were taught English culture is 88.30 and the mean score of the second group who were not taught English culture is 87.26.

**Table 4.6 descriptive statistics of the questionnaire**

Language institute	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
zaban sara	88.3000	20	4.61234
dimension1 ILI	87.2667	15	2.71153
Total	87.8571	35	3.89678

In order to ascertain whether the difference between the two groups were significant or not in their motivation levels, another statistical analysis was carried out. A Mann-Whitney U test, which is a test for independent samples carrying ordinal values was used to compare the motivation levels for n = 20 students in Zaban Sara versus the n = 15 for ILI students. The results indicated no significant difference between these two groups of language learners, U = 128.5, P > 0.05. Thus the third null hypothesis is not rejected. In other words, it can be stated that the means of the two groups are not statistically different. Surprisingly, the two groups did not differ on their answers to the questionnaire.

**Table 4.7, Mann-Whitney test for the questionnaire**

	questionnaire
Mann-Whitney U	128.500
Wilcoxon W	248.500
Z	-.722
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.470
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.479 <sup>a</sup>

As is observed these two groups are not different significantly in their motivation levels even though they study different textbooks. Therefore, the difference of motivation levels between students who are familiar with English culture and those who are not, is not statistically significant. In other words, the analysis of the results show that the two groups are statistically similar in their motivation level.

Overall, it can be stated that integrating culture into language teaching programs alone doesn't have a motivating effect on the language learners and the learning process, but rather some other factors can influence students motivation. These factors include the popularity of the language institute in which they learn English, the methodology and the integrated system of that institute, and so on.

Based on the results, a significant difference was observed on the listening performance of the two groups, and it can be stated that culture familiarity has a positive impact on the listening comprehension of the learners. As it was discussed in the preceding part of the study, culture and language learning are linked together and cannot be separated and teaching culture to EFL learners is unavoidable.

The findings of the study show that the first group who were familiar with cultural values of the target language had a better performance in their listening comprehension, as compared with the other group who were not, and this better performance in the listening comprehension tests seems to be the result of the culture familiarity of the target language. This familiarity enabled the students in the first group to successfully identify the cultural elements of the listening test. This ability facilitated their understanding of the text which explains why they performed significantly better in the culturally-loaded test. The lack of cultural knowledge has led to problems faced by the students in the second group in comprehending listening texts and this can present an obstacle to comprehension. All these findings, confirm the significant effect of culture familiarity on language learners' listening comprehension performance. It also showed that failure in comprehending the listening texts in cross-cultural communication is seen to be cultural rather than linguistic in nature. The results of the tests leave no doubt that the participants' communication problems mainly stem from their unawareness and lack of knowledge about the English culture. As far as the results obtained from the analysis of the data are concerned, it has been concluded that raising students' cultural awareness is considered an important constituent of every general English course. In other words, knowledge of the cross-cultural patterns is necessary for learning a foreign language and unawareness of cultural barriers may impede learners' success.

The third research question in the study examined whether there is any difference between the learners' motivation levels. Before doing the present study, the researcher supposed that there is a significant difference between the motivation level of the two groups, but based on the results of the questionnaire there was no significant difference between motivation levels of the two groups. Participants' motivation towards the English culture does not seem to be related to the textbooks through which they learn language, since they study completely different textbooks. This explains the fact that students who are familiar with target culture are not generally more motivated than those who are not. Another point to be taken into account is that the books alone do not have the power to motivate students. The results of the questionnaire are in line with Adasko, Britten, and Fahsi (1990) who discovered nothing motivating in using western culture. Overall, it can be stated that integrating culture into language teaching programs does not have a motivating effect on the language learner and the learning process. To sum up, although the participants of the present research studied English through different textbooks, they have the same level of motivation and they are not statistically significantly different in their motivation level.

### **Conclusions and suggestions**

As mentioned earlier, the role of culture learning in the foreign language classrooms has been the main concern of the current study. Based on the results obtained, it was observed that having cultural information had a positive effect on learners' performance in the listening test, and having cultural background could boost their listening comprehension. Cultural familiarization has a significant effect on listening comprehension and this familiarity enabled the students to successfully comprehend and identify the details of the listening test. This ability facilitated their understanding and, therefore, they performed significantly better than the second group. This is consistent with previous studies (e.g Schmidt-Rinehat, 1994) indicating that topic familiarity facilitates listening comprehension. According to Brown (1994), when language is learned, the culture of that language is learned along with it. One of the main reasons for integrating culture into the language program is to raise awareness

about the target language culture. If students have no background knowledge on a special topic, they are not able to comprehend the questions. Acknowledging the cultural differences helps students not only to understand linguistic knowledge but also to help successful communication. According to what is mentioned about the effective role of culture, the findings of the current study are in line with studies of Markham & Latham (1987), Chiang and Dunkel (1992), and Schmidt-Rinehart (1994), since they all claimed that background knowledge and topic familiarity would improve students' performance in listening comprehension. All in all, the finding of the study showed that the first group had a better performance in comparison to the second group in their listening comprehension and this better performance seemed to be the result of the cultural familiarity that the students obtained during their learning English.

By way of conclusion, the main purpose of this study is that culture teaching should become an integral part of the foreign language curriculum. It seems important and necessary to incorporate culture into an EFL curriculum with a view to increasing the cultural awareness. Such a cultural awareness can develop students' understanding of the target culture and, therefore, develop their tolerance for those whose attitudes and values are different from theirs. On the other hand, the other part of the study which investigated the issues of culture and motivation surprisingly shows that although the learners study different textbooks they have the same motivation level. Therefore, those learners who were familiar with the target culture and those who were not, are not statistically different in their motivation level. These results show that the motivation level of the learners of English is not influenced by the textbooks they study. These two groups study two different textbooks, but their motivation levels as measured in this research are not statistically significantly different. In other words, the analysis of the results shows that the two groups are statistically similar in their motivation levels. The results show that the cultural values alone do not influence the learners' motivation and there are some other motivating factors.

Since this study was narrowed down in terms of its participants, genre, age, etc., it seems necessary to point out some further research to be done in this regard:

1. Considering the fact that this study was limited to only 35 participants, it is suggested that similar studies be conducted with more students.
2. More studies could be done to investigate the effect of culture on other skills, since this study investigated the effect of culture on listening skill.
3. This study was conducted with female learners of English. Similar research could be done with male participants to find out if there is any different result in the findings.
4. The need is felt to carry out similar experiments to investigate whether the effect of culture varies among different age groups.
5. As the materials of the study included Interchange Series, as a heavily culturally-loaded textbook, other sources or textbooks which are culturally-loaded are recommended for further studies.
6. Finally, this study could be replicated with learners at higher and lower levels of language proficiency.

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## TRENDS AFFECTING SECOND LANGUAGE CURRICULUM IN THE THIRD MILLINIUM

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### **Abstract**

The new millennium has the potentiality to affect education in general and second language curriculum in particular. Different trends in the 21 century have in one way or another affected the language curriculum design and may continue to impact it in the near future. In the context of the globalization of English language teaching which has been promising and at the same time a challenge for English language teaching at an international status, the consideration of the ongoing reform in the curriculum seems to be inevitable. Therefore, the present article discusses some of influential trends such as the philosophical shift, the postmodern movement, the impact of technology, World Englishes and linguistic imperialism. It also argues that all trends can be seen as elements of a continuum overlapping and affecting each other.

**Key Words:** Curriculum, philosophical shift, the postmodern movement, technology, World Englishes, linguistic imperialism

### **1. Introduction**

Curriculum in general has always undergone changes despite the fact that these changes have sometimes been very drastic and sometimes very subtle. The trend of second language curriculum is no exception. Looking back, we can easily see how foreign and second language teaching has developed over the past few decades. The profession of second language teaching has witnessed the time when there was no curriculum for language teaching and methods imposed their syllabuses to the whole profession. It has moved through the objective curricula under the influence of the linguistics and psychological schools of the time to learner-centered process-oriented syllabuses of the present time. All in all, many trends have affected language curriculum design in the late few decades. However, we are now in 21 century facing issues which are at one hand promising but at the other chaotic. Foreign language education cannot be properly understood and developed without understanding the current state of affairs (Tella, 2004). Even the significance of these changes, as Littlejohn (1998) holds, can lead educationalists to call for a "future curriculum". Therefore, among the whole range of issues affecting the language curriculum in the third millennium the present article discusses the philosophical shift, the postmodern movement, the impact of technology, World Englishes and linguistic imperialism. As it is discussed, all these trends can be seen as elements of a continuum overlapping and affecting each other.

Therefore, discussing all these issues may help one have the current outlook of the roots of the reform in second language curriculum. Each trend will be discussed here.

## **2. Philosophical shift**

Every important decision ever made about curriculum has been under the influence of philosophy and those to be made in the future would be most likely affected by it (Hopkins, 1941, cited in Salamah, 2001). Like other trends in education, different philosophies of education have had effect on the second language curriculum. Among all philosophical views, Classical Humanism and Reconstructionism have been the two major orientations which provided philosophical orientation for the education in general and second language teaching in particular. However, new ideology called Progressivism with its meaning-centered orientation has begun to substitute the former philosophies. Based on this philosophy, learners' responsibility for learning and the development of the individual as the whole person is emphasized (Srijono, 2006). Moreover, bottom up approaches to curriculum are preferred to the former top-down prescribed approaches which were imposed by those specialists who viewed the curriculum design as a product instead of a process. Progressivism offers a learner-centered approach to education which attempts to promote the pupil's development. Based on Vermunt and Verschaffel (2000), this process oriented teaching is important for two reasons

From an epistemological perspective, it is important that teaching is aimed at fostering learning processes characterized by active knowledge construction. From a societal point of view, it is important that education takes care that students learn to self-initiate such types of learning. In this way, students acquire a disposition to keep acquiring new knowledge actively and self-directedly after their formal education has come to an end. (p. 209).

The growth through experience which learners acquire with their creative problem-solving capacities has reshaped the whole education. The philosophical orientation, as Nunan (2001) notes, has affected the whole aspects of the curriculum and the trend has been accompanied by the shift from the transmission model of education to an interactive experiential model with an emphasis on the process of learning. Therefore, as White (1988) states in the new perspective "content is subordinate to the learning process and pedagogical procedures." (p. 46). A process model in English language teaching is represented in task based, needs-based, and learner-based curricula. Such curricula are said to be more flexible and responsive to the needs and interests of the learners they serve (Bolstad, 2004).

## **3. The postmodern movement**

We are moving from a modernist conception of the world to a post-modern conception (Koo, 2002). Proponents of postmodernism rarely agree over what the term 'postmodern' actually means (Finch, 2005). Influenced by diverse disciplines such as phenomenology, existentialism, psychoanalysis, Marxism, and structuralism, Postmodernism, as Pishghadam & Mirzaee (2008) explain, "portrays the human subject as alienated in contemporary society, estranged from his or her authentic modes of experience and being" (p. 91), whether the source of that estrangement is capitalism, or the scientific naturalism. In fact, all forms of postmodernism reject the belief that the study of humanity could be modeled on (objectivity) or be reduced to the physical science (reductionism). Unlike hard sciences, they focus not merely on facts but on the meaning of facts for human subjects. Furthermore, the search for absolute knowledge in science which was the mainstream Western scientific practice is no

longer accepted in postmodernism. Table 1 represents the summary of the characteristics of postmodernism.

*Table 1.Characteristics of postmodernism: Adapted from Finch (2005)*

Characteristics	Description
1. De-colonization 2. Decentralization 3. Deconstruction 4. Eclecticisms 5. relativism/ constructivism	Diversification and regionalism Lateral rather than hieratical decision making questioning traditional assumptions about certainty, identity and truth mixing feature from different fields time, truth and moral values are not absolute

Based on the guidelines and despite varying views on postmodernism, one can find some common points regarding the tenets of postmodernism. In Pishghadam and Mirzaee's (2008) words, "they reject global decisions..., question the notion of expertise..., are against absolutism..., and are constructivists... (p.94).

It should not be forgotten that unlike modernism the field of postmodernism is chaotic and therefore difficult to grasp. Breen (1999) who is well aware of the fact explains that

A postmodern perceptive does not resemble a set of pedagogic principles like the communicative approach to language teaching. In essence, postmodern thinking is not concerned with prescriptions for how we may act. It is more a coming together of diverse ideas which seek to interpret the human condition ... (p. 47).

It seems that Postmodernism have influenced TESOL in the last few decades and has had some implications for second language teaching (Fahim and Pishgadam, 2009). Along with the development of postmodernism doubt was raised about the concept of method which had preoccupied the ELT profession and this concept was put into question. A number of major criticisms that have recently been leveled against "the notion of all-purpose methods" (see Richards and Rodgers, 2001) and the post-method era began to emerge affected by postmodernism. Under such an influence, as Fahim and Pishgadam (2009) note, postmethod pedagogy is motivated by such trends as,

- downplaying the role of experts outside the field;
- disbelieving in grand theories and supermethods, embracing only local and situation-based decisions;
- being subjective, giving more power to the teachers as reflective, strategic researchers are always involved in classroom-oriented action research;
- seeking to dispute the theory/practice dichotomy ;
- celebrating the diversity of the individual learners, rejecting one-size-fits-all philosophy (p. 42).

As to the curriculum design, postmodernism sees modernist models as Tyler's as mechanistic, prescribed, instrumentalistic, behavioristic, and predictable (Pishghadam & Mirzaee, 2008). Based on postmodernist view, such a scientific model of learning is severely limited. Moreover, it takes side with Doll (1993 cited in Bach and Jolly ,2011) who sees a curriculum as a process which is not supposed to transmit what is known to the learners but of exploring what is unknown. Based on such a view, learning and understanding are the

result of dialogue and reflection, the issue which is emphasized in postmodernism. Here, the emphasis is on both the constructive and nonlinear nature of a post-modern curriculum which emerges through the action and interaction of the participants.

**4. The impact of technology**

From the 20 century on, technology has always been with second language teaching; however, in 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the advent of computers and the Internet, technology turned to be an integrated part of lots of English teaching courses. (See Table 2).

*Table 2: Summary of the evolution of approaches and of technology use in the teaching of ESL adopted from Murphy's (2000)*

Point of comparison	20 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY		21 <sup>ST</sup> CENTURY
	»1970	1970°	
<b>APPROACHES &amp; METHODS</b>	Audio-Lingual Method, Direct Method	Communicative Language Teaching	The Digital Approach
<b>TECHNOLOGY USE</b>	Behaviouristic CALL	Communicative CALL	Technology Enhanced Language Learning
<b>THEORY OF LEARNING</b>	Behaviourism	Humanistic influences	Constructivism
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	Traditional	Traditional	Online

Whereas the approaches of the 20<sup>th</sup> century relied on Behavioristic and Communicative CALL which reflected the basic philosophical tenets of behaviorism and humanism and in Murphy's (2000) terms "the computer's role remained marginal or peripheral with technology being used in a disconnected way". (P. 22), the Digital Approach of the 21<sup>st</sup> century depends on Technology Enhanced Language Learning. The distinction between CALL and Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) as Murphy notes is that "the computer simultaneously becomes less visible yet more ubiquitous. The change in emphasis from computer to technology places direct importance on the media of communication made possible by the computer, which itself often remains unseen, rather than on the computer itself" (p. 19).

Based on the Digital Approach, Technology use becomes an integral and necessary part of the learning process and not just something added to language courses to motivate students. Contrary to common prescriptive approaches and methods to second and foreign language teaching, the Digital Approach does not dictate or prescribe specific activities, techniques or

methods. Such an approach mainly relies on the use of online rather than traditional learning environments.

As to the learning theories, the constructivist and sociocognitive approaches have been the influential trends which hastened the use of technology in second language curriculum in the 21 century. Warschauer and Meskill (2000) elaborate on the theoretical foundation provided by these approaches for the application of technology. According to Warschauer and Meskill, technologies which are based on constructivism are those which allow learners' maximum opportunity to interact within meaning-rich contexts through which they construct and acquire competence in the language. Thus, in the new perspective, as Warschauer and Meskill maintain, the internet and online interaction facilitate interaction giving maximum opportunity for authentic social interaction. It provides not only comprehensible input but also gives students practice in the kinds of communication they will later engage outside the classroom (Wang, 2005)

Numerous studies have pinpointed the advantages as well as caveats of the implications of technology into second language curriculum; however, it seems that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. Therefore, as LeLoup and Ponterio (2006) comment, in the new millennium, the question no longer is whether technology should be integrated into the curriculum, but rather how best to do so. Since most of the technologies which are believed to have the potential to improve second language learning are not necessarily invented for this purpose (Zhao, 2005), teachers and learners need to be given enough training in this regard.

### 5. World Englishes

There is no doubt that the English language has spread and developed rapidly around the world as an International Language (EIL). EIL emphasizes that English, with its many varieties, is a language of international, and therefore intercultural, communication. The conceptualization of EIL rejects the idea of any particular variety being selected as a *lingua franca* for international communication. The recognition of world Englishes (WEs) (Sharifian, 2009) is the central themes of EIL. Based on WEs, teaching the standard English is no longer the aim of English language teaching (ELT) courses and some practical issues are posed for the teachers' concern: What standard of grammaticalness and correctness shall we use in the classroom? What pronunciation shall we recommend to the learners, American or British? Why shall we teach English, just to know the English-speaking countries or to make others know us, or both?

Such a conceptualization of the world necessitates that language curriculum design be focused more on teaching and understanding World Englishes (Fang & Yuan, 2009) since, as D. Brown (1991) puts it, "WEs puts a new light on curriculum design and the specific focus of classroom activities, especially in nonnative-English-speaking countries" (p. 250). In line with D. Brown, K. Brown (2008) states that "Attention to a world Englishes perspective in choice of methodology and curriculum design will result in an ecologically sound approach to language education..." (p. 689). Canagarajah (2006) has referred to some of the implications and suggested that those involved in the education as well as curriculum planners have to ensure that intelligibility is sometimes more useful than sounding American or British with standard accent. It has also been determined that in the context of world Englishes, teaching cultural differences to establish "a sphere of interculturality" (McKay, 2003, p. 82) is very important for ELT. Meanwhile, the following implications expressed by different scholars can be referred to

- particular characteristics relating to culture and identity of each variety of English should be incorporated in the design of language curriculum (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Jenkins (2006) believes that “this approach would enable each learner’s and speaker’s English to reflect his or her own sociolinguistic reality, rather than that of a usually distant native speaker” (p. 173).
- teachers and learners have been given insight that none of English varieties has more prestigious stance than others and it has been decided that the variety that best reflects learners’ own language use should be taught;
- teachers in different communities have to devise curricula that have local relevance;
- as to the development of teaching materials, according to Canagarajah (2006), the emphasis is on the localization of the materials and as he adds, “teaching materials have to accommodate the values and needs of diverse settings” (p. 27);
- the material developed is the result of the cooperation between local and outside experts.  
since as Canagarajah argues in the realm of WEs, one can no longer expect to see “the top-down imposition of expertise from outside the community” (p. 27);
- assessment should take care of growth rather than native-like proficiency. (Caine, 2008).

Different educational systems have begun incorporating such insights into their curriculum in the 21 century and some have continued adopting curricula with no relevance to their own context of use.

### **6. Linguistic Imperialism**

Different intellectual, economic, and cultural factors have resulted in the spread of English across the world. With the spread of English language learners experienced some sense of powerlessness and inferiority with respect to culture they have there are some scholars who see the relationship between the native English speaking community and the foreign or second language learning countries a sort of superior-inferior. It seems that ELT has ideological basis which serves to strengthen the superiority of the English to other languages (Phillipson, 1992 cited in Aliakbari, 2003). Standard British English or American English norms are taken as models and the use of authentic materials which is assumed to be produced by native speakers is supposed to enhance communicative competence. This has resulted in what has been called “the linguistic imperialism”. The powerful spread of English reminds us that linguistic imperialism is getting stronger in the new millennium and cannot be overlooked (Viet, 2008). In such a context, the focus of the curricula, textbooks and materials prepared in different countries, is still largely under the influence of the imposed Anglo-American culture(s) (Seidlhofer, 2003). Such a trend has had consequences which would hasten the process of imperialism and may face resistance on the part of the learners and teachers.

There are scholars (e.g., Seidlhofer, 2003) who have warned us against the spread of the linguistic imperialism in the new millennium. As Aliakbari (2003) notes

The worldwide spread of English should by no means be considered as a homogenizing factor, which causes cultural differences to disappear. Rather the ever-increasing use of English throughout the world offers a medium to express and explain these differences (p. 10).

Aliakbari (2003) explains that both native and nonnative speakers towards English should alter their orientations. This may help impede imperialism. McKey (2003) asserts that "It is time to recognize the multilingual context of English use and to put aside the native speaker model of research and pedagogy" (p. 19). On the same page she maintains that it is the time for local educators to "take the ownership of English and the manner in which it is taught".

### 7. Concluding Remarks

The new millennium has brought many changes to the world in which we live. Looking back at the present states of affairs, we can easily see how second language teaching has developed and how different trends such as progress in linguistics and psychology have affected teaching English as a second language; however, there have been other trends which have directly or indirectly affected the language curriculum design and continued to impact it in the near future. It is not difficult to see how all these trends are interrelated in one way or another. All three trends; the philosophical shift, the postmodern movement, and technology enhanced language learning, share a constructivist view which regards learning as a dialogue between the participants. Another example for the integrity of the concepts is the incorporation of technology in the 21 century's curriculum which from one hand seems promising and at the other hand may contribute to the process of imperialism. Therefore, any attempt to develop or modernize curriculum in the 21 century should, among all other factors, take care of the interactive nature of these issues.

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## THE EFFECTS OF PRAGMATIC INSTRUCTION ON EFL LEARNERS' AWARENESS OF SUGGESTIONS

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### **Abstract**

This study examined the effect of pragmatic instruction on the awareness of suggestions of Persian efl learners. 34 Persian efl learners of English took part in this study, 16 of whom received 10 sessions of awareness-raising instruction on the main head acts and downgraders in suggestions as the experimental group and the rest served as the control group with no instruction on the main head acts and downgraders. All the participants engaged in rating assessment tests before and after the study. The results indicated that the experimental group receiving pragmatic instruction outperformed the control group in awareness of appropriate and accurate suggestions. It became evident that explicit instruction on pragmatic aspects of L2 to foreign language learners could aid both learners and teachers in developing learners' pragmatic competence. The findings of this study imply that integrating specific instructional treatments in foreign language classroom may raise learners' pragmatic awareness in the target language.

**Key words:** pragmatics, awareness-raising instruction, suggestions, efl students

### **1. Introduction**

Learners of all languages, as observations show, tend to have difficulty understanding the intended meaning communicated by a speech act, or producing a speech act using appropriate language and manner in the language being learned. Second or foreign language learners (SLL/ FLL) show significant differences from native speakers in language use, the execution and comprehension of certain speech acts, conversational functions such as greetings, and conversational management such as of back channeling and short responses (see, for example, Bardovi-Harlig, 1999, 2001; Kasper and Schmidt, 1996; Kasper and Rose, 1999).

Speech act behavior has been a central concern for researchers in the field of interlanguage pragmatics in which a major focus of study is the pragmatic difficulties that distinguish the behavior of second language (L2) learners from that of target language speakers (Yu, 2004, p. 102). Although successfully learning a new language does not mean that learners, when employing the L2, have to forego their native language (L1) norms completely and adopt the culture of that new language, the differences in the behaviors of L1 and L2 speakers have engaged researchers in interlanguage pragmatics. Lack of mastery of grammar, combined with sociolinguistic confusion, can make learners appear improper or incompetent. It can also cause misunderstandings or create offense when learners can understand only the literal meaning of words and do not know the rules of use for interpreting those words (Rintell &

Mitchell, 1989). Such differences often contribute to unexpected pragmatic failure and possibly to serious trouble for L2 learners.

## **2. Review of literature**

Research has found that classroom instruction on speech acts can help learners improve their performance of speech acts and thus their interactions with native speakers. Without instruction, differences in pragmatics show up in the English of learners regardless of their first language background or language proficiency. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) points out that advanced nonnative speakers are neither uniformly successful nor uniformly unsuccessful with respect to pragmatic aspects of L2, but the range is quite wide.

What seems to be of significance with respect to pragmatic differences is that, unlike the case of grammatical errors, they are often interpreted on a social or personal level rather than as a result of language learning process. Left on their own devices, i.e. previous knowledge and universal pragmatic properties, with respect to contact with the target language in and out of the classroom, the majority of learners apparently do not acquire the pragmatics of the target language on their own (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Kasper, 2001). Drawing on studies on interlanguage pragmatics (ILPs), it seems that the chief goal of instruction in pragmatics is to raise learners' pragmatic awareness and give them choices about their interaction in the target language. Interlanguage pragmatics is defined by Kasper (cited in Dogancay-aktuna and Kamisli, 1997) as "the branch of second language acquisition research which studies how non-native speakers (NNS) understand and carry out linguistic action in the target language, and how they acquire second language pragmatic knowledge (p. 3). Thus, as claimed by Ellis (1985), interlanguage entails knowledge of language, which is different from both the learner's mother tongue and the target language (TL) system they are trying to acquire.

Bardovi-Harlig (2001) makes a strong case for the necessity of instruction providing evidence that the learners differ noticeably from native speakers in their production and perception of the speech acts in the target language. The need for examining the effects of instruction in pragmatics is further documented by Schmidt's (1993) contention that simple exposure to the target language is insufficient - pragmatic functions and relevant contextual factors are often not salient to the learner and so not likely to be noticed even after prolonged exposure. In addition, research has revealed that noticing a form is the key to beginning the cognitive processes that result in L2 acquisition (Leow, 1997).

To address the need for instructional intervention in interlanguage pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001), there has been a considerable increase in the number and range of studies on instructed ILPs (see Kasper, 2001; Kasper and Rose, 2002; Rose and Kasper, 2001).

Rose (2002) distinguishes three groups of ILP studies, i. e. teachability studies (whether a particular area of pragmatics is at all teachable), instruction versus exposure (whether instruction is better than exposure), and different pedagogical approaches (whether explicit or implicit). The first group of studies have examined the teachability of various pragmatic features including conversational implicature (Safont, 2003; Salazar, 2003), interactional norms (Liddicoat and Crozet, 2001), apologies (Olshtain and Cohen, 1990).

The studies dealing with instruction versus exposure simply tried to determine whether instruction in the target feature is more effective than no instruction (Billmyer, 1990; Bouton, 1994; Lyster, 1994; Yoshimi, 2001). The third group of ILP studies compared the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches, i. e. explicit versus implicit (Kubota, 1995; House, 1996; Tateyama, 2001; Rose and Ng, 2001; Takahashi, 2001; Fukuya et al., 1998; Fukuya and Clark,

2001; Martinez-Flor and Fukuya, 2005). Instruction versus exposure studies represented a wide range of learning targets. Bouton (1994) selected the understanding of implicature as his learning target, while Lyster (1994) examined the use of French *tu/ vous* in informal and formal contexts.

Following the second group of ILPs studies, the present study aims to investigate whether or not pragmatic instruction can lead to an improvement in learners' perception, i. e. awareness, regarding the speech act of suggestion.

Empirical studies dealing with pragmatic transfer have found that learners transfer the linguistic forms for making speech acts in general from their mother tongue to English. The speech act of suggesting is no exception. Developing learners' ability to comprehend and use this particular speech act in the TL would contribute to learners' overall communicative competence. Suggestions belong to the group of directive speech acts. According to Searle (1976), directives are speech acts in which the speaker's purpose is to get the hearer to commit himself to some future course of action. In his view, directives are attempts to make the world match the words. One relevant feature affecting directives in opposition to other speech acts refers to the necessary interaction between the speaker and the hearer in order to have the speech act realized (Searle, 1976).

Compared with other speech acts specifically requests, the speech act of suggestion is not a widely investigated one as far as one is concerned with pragmatic instruction. However, several interlanguage studies have focused on suggestions. The study conducted by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford in 1990 was the first one to address suggestions from a developmental perspective. In fact, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990) were interested in examining authentic conversations between advisors and students in order to pay attention to the status congruence between both parties, that is to say, whether the linguistic forms employed by the two interlocutors were congruent with their respective status. By comparing the linguistic negotiation of status between NSs and non-native speakers (NNSs), these authors concluded that they differed in their pragmatic competence, since NNSs, although highly competent linguistically, did not have the ability to employ the status-preserving strategies in accordance with their status.

Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990) focused on interaction between advisors and students in order to examine whether the linguistic forms used by the interlocutors were congruent with their status or they were noncongruent and as a result, status played no role in the congruence between the interlocutors. Congruence is defined by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990) as, "the match of the speaker's status and the appropriateness of the speech acts given that status" (p. 473). The results of the study indicated that native speakers and nonnative speakers differed in their pragmatic competence. They relate the results to the fact that linguistically competent nonnative speakers lack the ability to employ the status-preserving strategies in accordance with their status.

Taking Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford's (1990) study into account, Alcón (2001, cited in Martinez-Flor, 2005) developed a cross-sectional investigation examining suggestions within the framework of status congruence in an ESL setting. Alcón chose 15 Spanish students and tape 30 sessions of using suggestions and analyzed them considering both their frequency and form. Results of this study showed that, in spite of receiving positive input from teachers, students' percentage of direct forms and the absence of mitigators revealed the lack of pragmatic competence.

In addition to abovementioned interlanguage pragmatic studies, Matsumura conducted two other studies within this area in ESL and EFL contexts. In the first study which was a longitudinal one, Matsumura (2001) compared Japanese ESL and EFL learners' degrees of change that came about over time in perception of social status in advice acts. The results of this study indicated that living and studying in an ESL setting results in the students' pragmatic competence development. Due particularly to the exposition to the authentic target forms of advice; Japanese ESL learners outperformed the EFL group in perceiving social status in advice acts.

Next, among studies dealing with the speech act of suggestion is the one conducted by Martinez-Flor and Fukuya (2005). Martinez-Flor and Fukuya (2005) examined the effects of explicit and implicit instruction on the Spanish learners' production of pragmatically appropriate and linguistically accurate suggestions. For this purpose, 81 intermediate Spanish learners of English were divided into three groups of explicit, implicit, and control. The explicit group was provided with metapragmatic information on the main head acts of the speech act of suggestion. The students' awareness in the implicit group was raised by the use of different activities and tasks. The results of this study indicated that, in comparison to the control group, both the explicit and the implicit groups improved their pragmatic competence considering their production, awareness, and confidence when judging the appropriateness of suggestions.

In the second study, Matsumura (2003) examined learners' pragmatic development on the basis of their approximation to NSs' preferences for advice type depending on different social status. Results of this study indicated that the amount of exposure to the target forms affected learners' pragmatic development to a high degree compared with the level of proficiency.

Because of a widely held attitude among the textbook writers and curriculum developers concerning learning pragmatic formation through contact with the target language and culture over time rather than through instruction, this study addresses the use of instruction, implementing a focus on FormS methodology, to lead learners to notice pragmatic forms and subsequently to produce appropriate and accurate suggestions in a foreign language classroom context. To address the above concerns, the following research question is investigated in this study:

1. Does pragmatic instruction affect Iranian EFL Learners' awareness of appropriate and accurate suggestions?

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1. Participants*

The participants taking part in this study were 34 Persian learners of English (all males). They had studied English for four years with only one of them who stated that he had been to an English speaking country. A test of English proficiency (TOEFL) showed that all the participants had an intermediate level of English language proficiency. The students were randomly assigned to an experimental group (N= 16) and a control group (N= 18). The average age was 18.4 years for the experimental group and 18.7 years for the control group.

#### *3.2. Target Forms*

Following Martinez-Flor and Fukuya (2005), the researcher focused on 12 head acts (HAs) to perform suggestions and seven downgraders to soften the force of this speech act. These

target forms were selected, according to these authors, considering (a) universal pragmatic strategies for speech acts (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996), (b) a politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987), (c) previous ILP studies focusing on suggestions (Hinkel, 1994, 1997; Matsumura, 2001, 2003), and (d) native speakers' oral and written production data. Based on the sociopragmatic factor of status (Brown and Levinson, 1987), these target forms were classified into (1) equal status (equal academic status between a speaker and an interlocutor) and, (2) higher status (higher academic status of an interlocutor than that of the speaker). Table 1 below illustrates the taxonomy of suggestion linguistic realization strategies.

**Table 1.** Taxonomies of suggestion linguistic realization strategies (adopted from Martinez-Flor, 2005, p. 175)

TYPE	STRATEGY	LINGUISTIC FORMS
<b>DIRECT</b>	(1) Performative Verb	I suggest that you I advise you to I recommend that you
	Noun of suggestion	My suggestion (to you) would be / is...
	Imperative	Try using ...
	Negative imperative	Don't try to ... Why don't you...?
<b>CONVENTIONALIZED FORMS</b>	(5) Specific formulae (interrogative forms)	How about ...?
		What about ...?
		Have you thought about ...?
		You can ...
	Possibility/probability	You could ...
		You may ...
		You might ...
	Should Need	You should ...
You need to ...		
<b>Indirect</b>	Conditional Impersonal	If I were you, I would ...
		One thing (that you can do) would be ... Here's one possibility ... There are a number of options that you ... It would be helpful if you ...
	Hints	It might be better to ... A good idea would be ... It would be nice if ... I've heard that ...

3.3. *Instruction*

Over a three-week period, the participants in the experimental group received ten sessions of 2-hour instruction on the use of suggestions in the English. Instruction for the experimental group embodied the focus on FormS approach which is characterized by explicitness and deduction and included the provision of explanation on the use of the main head acts and downgraders which constituted the instructional foci of the study. The control group, taught by a second instructor who was regularly observed, received no identical instruction on suggestions in particular and pragmatics in general. The control group students were studying a general course of English in their syllabus. The experimental group students were exposed to several transcribed situations in which a native speaker of English made a suggestion to another person during oral interaction about computer. Then, the students took part in a series of awareness-raising (i. e. reading tasks on themes in the transcriptions). In the meantime, they received not only explicit instruction on the grammatical accuracy of the target forms, but also metapragmatic information about the appropriate use of the target forms.

3.4. *Instruments*

The data for this study are composed of the experimental and control groups' performances on a rating assessment test. The four situations in the rating assessment pre- and post-tests were distinct in terms of content and themes in order to avoid practice effect.

The rating assessment pre- and post-tests were administered before the and after treatment. The rating assessment test required the students to rate the appropriateness of suggestions made in each situation on a 5-point rating scale (1= inappropriate; 5= appropriate). The tests were constructed in such a way as to offer two appropriate situations and two inappropriate situations. The rating assessment pre- and post-tests were adopted from Martinez-Flor and Fykuya (2005) and are provided in appendix at the end of the paper.

3.5. *Data analysis*

The correct ratings in rating assessment pre- and post-tests for both the experimental and control groups were counted and then compared to determine the degree of improvement. In order to classify these data, the taxonomies for both head acts and downgraders adopted from previous research on the speech act under study (Fukuya and Zhang, 2002; Martinez-Flor and Fukuya, 2005) served as analytical tools.

4. **Results**

Before examining the hypothesis related to the research question, it is important to point out that all the HAs and downgraders from the production data were categorized. In this way, Tables 1 and 2 present, on the one hand, the frequency and percentage of the target forms and, on the other hand, the non-target forms that include the rest of the categorized realizations for both HAs and downgraders, respectively.

**Table 1. Frequency and percentage of the suggestions (HAs) categorized as the target and non- target forms used by the two groups in both the pre-test and post-test**

	Experimental (n=16)				Control (n=18)			
	Pre-test		Post-test		Pre-test		Post-test	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>HAs in target forms</i>	15	23.4	61	95.3	24	33.4	10	13.9

<i>HAs in non-target forms</i>	49	76.6	3	4.3	48	66.6	62	86.1
TOTAL	64	100.0	64	100.0	72	100.0	72	100.0

Note. n = number of forms

**Table 2. Frequency and percentage of the downgraders categorized as the corresponding target and non-target forms used by the two groups in both the pre-test and post-test**

	Explicit (n=24)				Control (n=32)			
	Pre-test		Post-test		Pre-test		Post-test	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>Downgraders as target forms</i>	2	3.1	46	71.9	8	11.2	1	1.4
<i>Downgraders in non-target forms</i>	62	96.9	18	28.1	64	88.8	71	98.6
TOTAL	64	100.0	64	100.0	72	100.	72	100.0

Note. n = number of forms

*Results from rating assessment test*

In order to examine the effects of instruction on pragmatic awareness of the participants, the two groups' ratings were compared. The result of Chi-square conducted (Table 3) on the participants ratings of pragmatic appropriateness in the pre-test revealed that the two groups were not significantly different ( $\chi^2=0.69$ ).

**Table 3: Chi-square results for Awareness in the Pretest**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	.698(a)	4	.952
<b>Likelihood Ratio</b>	.698	4	.952
<b>Linear-by-Linear Association</b>	.069	1	.793
<b>N of Valid Cases</b>	136		

\* Sig. at p<0.05 level

In the post-test, however, the results of a Chi-square (Table 4) indicated an overall effect of pragmatic instruction on experimental group's awareness of appropriate and accurate suggestions.

**Table 4: Chi-square results for Awareness in the Posttest**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	23.363(a)	4	.000
<b>Likelihood Ratio</b>	24.142	4	.000
<b>Linear-by-Linear Association</b>	.059	1	.807
<b>N of Valid Cases</b>	136		

\* Sig. at p<0.05 level

**5. Discussion**

The findings, thus, seem to prove the effectiveness of instruction, since the treatment group significantly improved its awareness of pragmatically appropriate suggestions in the post-

test as compared to the pre-test. This result is in line with previous research that has also focused on the effects of instruction on the production and awareness of a particular speech act (Billmyer, 1990; Olshtain and Cohen, 1990; Martinez-Flor and Fukuya, 2005). Therefore, it may be claimed that the present study widens the learning targets by focusing on suggestions as a pragmatic learning feature that might be teachable in the classroom setting, and specifically in the FL classroom through a focus on FormS mediation in the form of awareness-raising activities.

The findings seem to indicate that the instruction implemented in the present study was effective in enhancing participants' awareness of and sensitivity to the speech act of suggestion in different situations. These findings are in line with previous research that has proved the efficacy of instruction to develop learners' ability to comprehend different pragmatic aspects (Kubota, 1995, cited in Rose, 2005; Martinez-Flor and Fukuya, 2005). After a period of instruction, the experimental learners in Kubota's (1995) study significantly improved their capacity to interpret implicature appropriately when compared to the control group. Similarly, the instructional group in the present study also significantly outperformed the control group in their awareness of appropriate suggestions.

Moreover, the results also seem to support Martinez-Flor and Fukuya's (2005) study on suggestions in which, although being mainly designed to address the effects of two types of instruction, i. e. *Explicit and implicit*, on learners' production of this particular speech act, the authors also examined whether training EFL learners in the use of suggestions would influence their pragmatic awareness. Results from this study were statistically significant in learners' identification of appropriate and inappropriate suggestion forms.

## 6. Conclusion

The primary purpose of the present study was to examine the relative effects of explicit pragmatic instruction on awareness of appropriate and accurate suggestions. This study can be considered to be of practical use especially in a foreign language context where learning English pragmatics in addition to English grammar has become one of the most significant areas of focus, and where exposure to English is limited and where only limited class time is available for teaching English.

The results of the present study indicate that explicit pragmatic instruction in form of consciousness-raising tasks can work when they provide an emphasis on forms and meanings. In this respect, teachers may need to examine the kinds of task they use in their English lessons to see to what extent they provide learners with the opportunity for processing both the forms and meanings of the target features.

The present study suggests that there are several limitations that future research needs to consider. Regarding the mode of testing, it seems essential to add an on-line test in order to measure automatic processing skills. The test should be a timed test, to allow for semantic processing and noticing, but not for conscious reflection.

The present study has demonstrated how a specific type of instruction (i.e. explicit) was operationalised and implemented to promote learners' pragmatic competence in the classroom context. Here, the role of learning strategies and styles may be of significance, an issue which should be further researched.

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## THE IMPACT OF CULTURE-LEARNING ON MOTIVATION LEVEL OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

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### **Abstract**

This study was an attempt to investigate whether culture learning for Iranian EFL learners has any influence on their motivation level. In other words, the study explored the difference between the motivation level of the students who were taught English culture and those who were not. For this purpose and in order to identify the English knowledge of the participants, a general English proficiency test (TOEFL) was administered to 65 EFL learners at two language institutes in Bushehr. After the scores of the proficiency tests were obtained, the mean and standard deviation of the scores were calculated and 35 participants were selected. Then they were divided into two groups according to the institute in which they were learning English. After that, they were given a motivation questionnaire to examine the impact of culture on their motivation in learning English. Having analysed the obtained data, the results revealed that culture learning does not influence the motivation level of the learners.

**Key terms:** Culture, Motivation, Integrative motivation, Instrumental motivation.

### **1. Introduction**

The relationship between language and culture has long been a concern for second and foreign language teachers. There have been positive and negative views to incorporating target language culture into second language teaching. In fact, learning a new language entails new ways of thinking, feeling, and expression. People's culture includes their beliefs, rules of behavior, language, rituals, art, styles of dress, ways of producing and cooking food, and religion. So culture distinguishes one group of people from others. "Language cannot be separated completely from the culture in which it is deeply embedded" (Rivers, 1981, p.315). Teaching culture in today's foreign language teaching pedagogy is considered an integral part of language courses. As Tomalin (1994) suggested, language teachers need to create in their students' cultural awareness and tolerance of other people's culture. The topic of teaching and learning culture has been a matter of considerable interest to language educators and much has been written about the role of culture in foreign language instruction over the past four decades such as, Morain, 1986; Grittner, 1990; Bragaw, 1991; Moore, 1991; Byram and Morgan, 1994. Since the 1960s, many scholars have concerned themselves with the importance and the crucial aspect in foreign language learning, with Hammerly (1982), Seelye (1984), and Damen (1987) being among those who have considered ways of incorporating culture into language teaching. Integrating culture into the language teaching can raise students' motivation. In other words, it can have a motivating effect on language learners and learning process, since they can see similarities and differences among

different cultural groups. It is a widely agreed comment that motivation plays a critical role in academic learning in general and in especial it is true of the "sustained process of mastering an L2" (Dornyei, 2005, p.616).

The issue of motivation which has been studied by psychologists for many years, also plays a major role in the area of EFL / ESL learning and is widely acknowledged as one of the key issues in learning. According to Noels et al., (2001) it is generally accepted that motivation to learn a second language is at least as important as language aptitude for successful acquisition of such language. Interest and motivation is based on many issues that humans are successful in it. Motivation gives force and direction to behavior and people will mobilize to achieve its goals (Gilaninia et al., 2011). Motivation is generally considered to be one of the primary causes of success and failure in second language learning. Today, motivation is probably the most frequently used term for explaining the success or failure of the students. In other words, individuals' success or failure in a task is simply due to the fact that they are motivated or unmotivated (Brown, 1994).

According to Gardner's socio-educational model of learning English language, "students' attitudes to the target culture, their position in the educational situation, their ability to integrate into the target culture and their motivation are connected" (1985, p.65). He maintains that the main factor in this model is motivation which is widely accepted as one of the key issues in learning and for over fifty years it has been a significant research topic. In addition it has been considered significant as a basic ingredient of second language acquisition.

### **1.2 Definition of motivation**

Motivation is one of the most highly studied issues within the field of second language education and it has been long the subject of research of many theoreticians, teachers, and psychologists and has been defined in many different ways by different researchers in psychology and other scientific disciplines. Kleinginna and Kleinginna (1981) present 102 statements referring to the concept of motivation. Therefore, it is not possible to say a simple definition of it. Keller (1983) states "Motivation refers to the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in this respect" (p.389).

Motivation is a key issue in teaching a foreign language as well as other subjects. The term is derived from a Latin word "movare" which means "to move". Homola (1969) says that "motivation is a general term for all the conditions which determine any human activity" (p.7). In his influential definition of language learning motivation, Gardner (as cited by Noels et al., 2001) maintains that motivation is basically the extent of the effort an individual is willing to exert to achieve the goal of learning a language because of a desire to do so and of favorable attitudes toward such language. Fontana claims that "sufficient learning at school would not take place without motivation" (2003, p. 127). Gardner (1985) believed that motivated students have a strong desire to attain their goal, and they enjoy the activities necessary to achieve their goal. They are aroused in seeking their goals, they have expectancies about their successes and failures, and when they are achieving some degree of success they demonstrate self-efficacy, they are self-confident about their achievements. Finally, they have reasons for their behaviour, and these reasons are often called motives. Longman dictionary of contemporary English (2007) defines motivation as: "Eagerness and willingness to do something without needing to be told or force to do it."

Important ideas in the field of motivation are discussed by Gardner and Lambert (1959) in

their work *Motivation Variables and Language Acquisition*. In this article they focused on two types of motivation which are integrative and instrumental. The former was defined as "the willingness to be like valued members of the language community" (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, p. 271) and the latter concerns utilitarian aspects associated with language learning such as career promotion. Integrative motivation, the desire by the student to be liked by people in the target culture, is the major motivational influence on language learning in the school setting. In many situations, individuals might well want to learn a language for purely practical reasons. The notion of instrumentality refers to conditions where the language is being studied for practical or utilitarian purposes. "Motivation is identified primarily with the learner's orientation toward the goal of learning a second language. Integrative motivation is identified with positive attitudes toward the target language group and the potential for integrating into that group, or at least an interest in meeting and interacting with members of the target language group" (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991, pp 471-472). According to Gardner (1985) individuals with high levels of integrativeness would be expected to view the language learning situation positively, other things being equal and vice versa. And, individuals who are high in integrativeness would also be expected to be high in instrumentality.

Studies done by Gardner and his colleagues (1972) showed that integrative orientation contributes more to success in learning the language than instrumental orientation.

Another division of motivation types is known as intrinsic (inner) and extrinsic (outer) motivation. Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura (1989) defined these two kinds of motivation in a very plain way. Simply, if the only reason for doing something is getting something, not just the activity itself, e.g. passing an exam, being paid etc., we speak about extrinsic motivation. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation is related to motivation that comes from oneself internally. Teachers should encourage language use through both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Fontana (2003) defines intrinsic motivation through a commonly accepted hypothesis that people have a natural instinct for curiosity which is not directed towards any particular result. Brown (2001) says that intrinsically motivated activities are those which are not compensated by anything visible, just by the activity itself. Pupils take part in activities spontaneously without outer influences. An intrinsically motivated student will be working on a particular duty, because it looks fun or interesting, or the student will be working on solving a certain problem because the challenge of searching for the solution brings the student pleasure. In both examples the student does not work for any kind of reward (Bainbridge, 2010).

Ur (1991) defines intrinsic motivation as "a common desire to learn for oneself. She also claims that it is tied to pupils' previous attitudes, i.e. they consider learning useful, or they have positive respect towards the target language and to its cultural, political and ethnic components" (p.280). Deci and Ryan (1985) also distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to an inner orientation towards the students' goals while extrinsic motivation originates from factors beyond the students themselves such as school requirements. Gardner (1985) claims that motivation includes four elements - goal, willing behavior, desire to reach the goal and positive approach towards the activity.

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

Over the last twenty years, research on motivation for foreign language learning has evolved considerably from focusing on describing what makes students motivated to a detailed list of suggestions to help teachers promote student motivation. Since then, many researchers

explored the important role of motivation in language learning. A number of studies have been conducted to determine the impact of motivation on language learning, such as Gardner (1985), Dornyei (2001), Csizer and Kormos (2008), and Vazquez, Paulina, Guzman and Rodriguez (2010). The majority of the studies in this field showed that increased motivation has a positive effect on EFL learning. One may believe that a systematic inclusion of cultural components in language courses will increase motivation to study the language or support adaptation to the culture of the people who speak that language. Martin and Laurie (1993) have attempted to improve the state of the art by systematically investigating students' motivation for language and culture study. They investigated the views of 45 students, enrolled in an intermediate level French course at Flinders University in South Australia, about the contribution of literary and cultural content to language learning. They found that the students' reasons for studying French were more related to linguistic than cultural interests, with practical reasons such as oral proficiency, travel plans, and employment opportunities dominating the list. When asked specifically about the role of literature and culture as motivating factors, the "desire to study the French way of life" motivated nearly 90% of students, while "hegemonal aspects of the culture motivated rather less than half" (p. 195).

Many scholars believe that authentic materials motivate learners because they are intrinsically more interesting than non-authentic materials. Little, Devitt, and Singleton (1989, p.26) claimed that "authentic texts bring learners closer to the target language culture and make learning more enjoyable and, therefore, more motivating". Peacock (1997) investigated the effect of authentic materials on the motivation of EFL learners. The authentic materials which are used in this research are two poems, some television listening, two short articles, an advice column from a local English-language newspaper, an American pop song, and some English language magazine advertisements. The participants involved were beginner-level students in two classes at a South Korean university EFL institute. Two observation sheets and a self-report questionnaire were used to investigate the study. The results indicated that overall class motivation significantly increased when the learners in this study used authentic materials. It also showed that learners reported authentic materials to be significantly less interesting than artificial materials. It means that the learners were more motivated by authentic materials, but not because they were more interesting.

Noels et al. (2001) carried out a study in which the authors considered the relations between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the integrative orientation. It investigated 59 French Canadian students studying English in a summer immersion course. The participants had to complete a questionnaire addressing their reasons for L2 learning, perceptions of autonomy and competence, effort expended in language learning, motivation to pursue English studies, and course achievement. The authors argue that they were not surprised when their subjects, who had devoted part of their summer vacation to this experiment, showed a high level of motivation. Among the reasons given were the students' interest in getting to know the English community better and to achieve valued personal goals or tangible rewards, such as jobs or course credits.

However, whereas El-Dash & Busnardo (2001) concentrated on L2 culture stereotypes and motivation, target culture interaction and motivation was the focus of Bongartz & Schneider's (2003) study. Data was obtained in a one-year period from the social interaction of two English-speaking boys, ages 5 and 7, who acquired German in an immersion context. The data revealed that preferred interactional motivation strategies led to differences in linguistic choices and hence to differences in motivation for linguistic practice. In this sense,

linguistic development seemed to depend on social context.

Yet another study which emphasizes the effect of the L2 culture on learner motivation and progress is that of Sasaki (2004). Using multiple quantitative and qualitative data sources, this study investigated possible changes in Japanese students' English-writing behavior over a period of three years and a half. The author also examined the effects of an overseas English-speaking environment on some of the students' writing development. The results revealed that over the observation period, all of the students were able to improve their English proficiency, composition, and fluency and that the experiences of the ESL overseas students were quite helpful in improving their writing strategy, motivating them to write better compositions.

Dwaik and Shehadeh (2010) in their research on motivation aimed at exploring the motivation patterns of EFL college learners. The sample of the study was compromised of 36 male and 91 female college students enrolled in two main programs: English literature at Hebron University and Engineering at Palestine Polytechnic University. The study aimed at investigating the influence of various variables such as students' major field, level of education, desired level of proficiency, and gender on their motivation pattern. A questionnaire of 27 items was used to probe the students' motivation patterns. The questionnaire was followed by an interview of a group of twenty volunteers from the original sample. The whole group of respondents from both universities expressed clear resentment for the target culture and the speakers of the target language. Interview results showed that instead of developing a desire to become familiar with the target culture, students had a strong desire to distance themselves from the target culture, its speakers, and its cultural norms. The results of the research are in contrast with Gardener (1976) and Schumann (1978) who believe that most successful learners are those who like the people speaking the target language, admire the culture and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into the society in which the language is used. The researcher believe that this is due to the political attitude that some English speaking countries have towards the Palestinian people and the Arab-Israeli conflict. None of the participants has displayed an integrative or intrinsic motivation to learn the language. As this review has demonstrated, there are a lot of interesting and challenging works going on about culture learning and motivation research. All in all, considering the aforementioned studies, this paper addresses the following research questions:

4. Does the cultural-learning have any effect on the language learners' motivation level?
5. Is there any difference in motivation level between students familiar with target culture and those who are not?

Based on the above research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated in this study:

1. Culture learning has no effect on the language learners' motivation level.
2. There is no difference in motivation level between students familiar with target culture and those who are not.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Participants**

The participants of this study included 35 Iranian EFL learners who have studied English in Iranian institutes. They were selected among a population of 65 students on the basis of the

results of an actual TOEFL test. They were all native speakers of Persian and learners of English as a foreign language. They included two groups. The first group consisted of 20 female Iranian EFL students within the age range of 20-28 who enrolled at Zaban Sara Institute of Bushehr, Iran. They had learnt English through different books written by the well-known applied linguist, Jack C. Richards for about 2 years. Since the books are heavily culturally-oriented, language learners were familiar with cultural values of English. The second group consisted of 15 female Iranian EFL students within the age range of 19-26 who enrolled at Iran Language Institute in Bushehr. They had learnt English through different books which are almost culture free and published by Iran Language Institute. Thus, they were not much familiar with English culture. In order to encourage the students to answer the questions with special care, the researcher explained the aim of the tests along with other necessary information. Furthermore, they were assured that the researcher would give them the results, and no one else would be informed about their results.

### **3.2 Instruments**

The instruments used in this study included two data collection instruments in gathering information on students' knowledge of English, and also to determine their motivation level in learning English. The participants of the study received a TOEFL test for being homogenous. Then, a motivation questionnaire which consists of 30 items was adapted from Gardner's AMTB (1985) was employed to probe the impact of cultural-learning on learners' motivation level in learning English. AMTB is a multicomponent motivation test which consists of 130 items. This Test Battery helped many researchers in conducting research on motivation as an important variable in language learning. The questionnaire items for this study were chosen on the basis of the 4 major themes. These themes include students' motivation and desire to learn English culture, their attitudes toward learning English culture, and their interest for studying English culture. Students responses to the questionnaire ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. They were asked to choose one of the choices as their preferred answer. Before starting, they were briefed on how to do the task and were assured of the confidentiality of information received by the researcher.

### **3.3 Data collection and Data analysis**

As mentioned earlier, the participants of the study received a TOEFL test for being homogenous and after that the two groups of learners were given a motivation questionnaire to determine any possible difference between their motivation levels for learning English. The data gathered on the TOEFL test was used to elicit the proficiency level of two groups. After the scores of the proficiency tests were obtained, the mean and standard deviation of the scores were calculated and 35 students who scored two standard deviation above and below the mean were selected to participate in the study. And by administering a motivation questionnaire, the difference between their motivation levels in language learning was determined. All the statistical procedures were conducted by SPSS software. After gathering the required data, means of the two groups were calculated and in order to ascertain whether the difference between the two groups were significant or not in their motivation levels, another statistical analysis was carried out. A Mann-Whitney U test, which is a test for independent samples carrying ordinal values was used to compare the motivation levels for  $n = 20$  students in Zaban Sara versus the  $n = 15$  for ILI students.

**4. Results and Discussion**

In order to identify the English knowledge of the participants, a proficiency test (TOEFL) was administered to the participants. Table 4.1 shows the descriptive statistics of the participants' scores on the proficiency test.

*Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics of the proficiency test*

Language institute	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Sum	Minimum	Std. Error of Mean	Maximum
zaban sara	16.7500	20	1.61815	335.00	14.00	.36183	19.00
ILI	16.3333	15	1.44749	245.00	14.00	.37374	19.00
Total	16.5714	35	1.53940	580.00	14.00	.26021	19.00

As can be seen from Table 4.1, the mean of the first group (M=16.75) in this test is a bit higher than the mean of the second group (M=16.33) but the difference is not remarkable. The standard deviations also do not show any great diversity in the distribution of the scores of the two groups. So, according to the results of the proficiency test, they were at the same level of proficiency.

As mentioned earlier, in order to find the difference between culture learning and the motivation level of the participants under study, Gardner's Attitude / Motivation Test Battery questionnaire was employed. In order to give a comparative picture of the data, means of the two groups were calculated and are shown in the following table. According to this table, the mean score of the first group who were taught English culture is 88.30 and the mean score of the second group who were not taught English culture is 87.26.

*Table 4.2 descriptive statistics of the questionnaire*

Language institute	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
zaban sara	88.3000	20	4.61234
ILI	87.2667	15	2.71153
Total	87.8571	35	3.89678

In order to ascertain whether the difference between the two groups were significant or not in their motivation levels, another statistical analysis was carried out. A Mann-Whitney U test, which is a test for independent samples carrying ordinal values was used to compare the motivation levels for n = 20 students in Zaban Sara versus the n = 15 for ILI students. The results indicated no significant difference between these two groups of language learners, U = 128.5, P> 0.05. Thus the first null hypothesis is not rejected. In other words, it can be stated that the means of the two groups are not statistically different. Surprisingly, the two groups did not differ on their answers to the questionnaire.

*Table 4.3 Mann-Whitney test for the questionnaire*

	questionnaire
Mann-Whitney U	128.500
Wilcoxon W	248.500
Z	-.722

Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.470
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.479 <sup>a</sup>

As is observed these two groups are not different significantly in their motivation levels even though they study different textbooks. Therefore, the difference of motivation levels between students who are familiar with English culture and those who are not, is not statistically significant. In other words, the analysis of the results show that the two groups are statistically similar in their motivation level. Thus the second null hypothesis is not rejected either.

Before doing the present study, the researcher supposed that there is a significant difference between the motivation level of the two groups, but based on the results of the questionnaire there was no significant difference between motivation levels of the two groups. Participants' motivation towards the English culture does not seem to be related to the textbooks through which they learn language, since they study completely different textbooks. This explains the fact that students who are familiar with target culture are not generally more motivated than those who are not. Another point to be taken into account is that the books alone do not have the power to motivate students. The results of the questionnaire are in line with Adasko, Britten, and Fahsi (1990) who discovered nothing motivating in using western culture. Overall, it can be stated that integrating culture into language teaching programs does not have a motivating effect on the language learner and the learning process. To sum up, although the participants of the present research studied English through different textbooks, they have the same level of motivation and they are not statistically significantly different in their motivation level.

Regarding the issues of culture and motivation, the results of the questionnaire for the first group are congruent with some experts like Gardner and Lambert (1959 and 1972) who believed that culture learning has a great effect on achieving high motivation, since their textbooks were culturally-oriented. But results of the questionnaire for the second group are contradicted with Gardner and Lambert, since the students of the second group were studying culture-free texts. In spite of lack of culture familiarity, they have as high motivation as the first group. Gardner (1983) believed that motivated students have a strong desire to attain their goal, and they enjoy the activities necessary to achieve their goal, therefore, they are self-confident about their achievements and they have reasons for their behaviour, and these reasons are often called motives. Culture can be considered as one of the motives or reasons to have high motivation level, but not the only one. In spite of lack of culture familiarity, there may be some different reasons for the second group to have high motivation level and the reasons can be related to some unique features of the institute in which they study English (ILI). Motivation is defined by Crooks and Schmidt (1991) as an interest in and enthusiasm for the materials used in class. One of the motives for the second group who are not familiar with target culture, can be the interest in the materials that they study during their course in ILI.

As mentioned earlier, the textbooks which are used in ILI are mostly free from American cultural values and the main focus of these books is on language forms not functions. Thus, students who choose this institute for learning English are those who prefer linguistic competence rather than communicative competence. In other words, learning the lexicon and grammar of English language is the main concern for them. In the Iranian context, as is the case in many other countries, English is a required subject of study at schools and universities and it is taught at all public and private schools and universities. It is also a

major component of college entrance or placement exams and a compulsory requirement for education in Iran. Therefore, some students display a strong desire to learn this international language to satisfy a requirement.

In other words they need English language to be more successful at school or university and to pass this compulsory course, not to communicate with people in the target language. So, they sign up for English courses in order to be able to meet the college or school requirements. As mentioned in the earlier parts, Gardner and Lambert (1972) distinguished integrative from instrumental motivation. An integratively-motivated individual has positive attitudes toward the target language group with a strong desire to integrate into and interact with the target language community. In other words, they admire the target culture, like the people who speak the language and wish to become familiar with or integrate into the target culture and society. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, refers to the learner's interest in learning a language when this interest reflects pragmatic benefits such as a better job or a higher salary.

Generally the types of motivation that students develop are a function of the features of their educational context. One may conclude from the previous discussion that in the case of the first group who are taught English culture, integrative motivation may respond. Since they study culturally-loaded texts, they do focus on communicative competence and they have the desire to integrate into the target culture. On the other hand, the second group can be instrumentally motivated because their textbooks do not contain the cultural norms of the target language and they study English to be linguistically competent not communicatively. In other words their motivation originates from factors such as school or university requirements. All in all, the two groups are motivated but in different ways and for different reasons. Another factor which is specific to ILI and can be considered as a motivating factor for the second group, is the reputation and popularity of this institute in Iran. Since this institute has been working for ages, it has established a good reputation among the other institutes and it can be motivating for the students of the second group. In addition to its reputation and many years of service, it is a state institute not a private one and it has many branches in almost all cities in Iran. Something which is interesting and also motivating for the students is that they do not miss their classes even if they are not in their own cities. Therefore, they can attend the class in different cities of Iran even when they are on vacation. That is because this institute has an integrated system and all the branches follow the same syllabus. Most of the language learners who study English in the institutes are students and they have a very busy schedule during school days. So, they are short of time. ILI has solved this problem for the language learners, because the classes meet twice a week but in other institutes the classes meet three times a week or more. It can be a positive and motivating factor for them, since they have more time to study school subjects.

To sum up, although the participants of the present research studied English through different textbooks, they have the same level of motivation and they are not statistically significantly different in their motivation level. In addition to culture, there are some other factors which influence students' motivation.

## **5. Conclusions**

By way of conclusion, this study which investigated the issues of culture and motivation, surprisingly shows that although the learners study different textbooks they have the same motivation level. Therefore, those learners who were familiar with the target culture and those who were not, are not statistically different in their motivation level. These results

show that the motivation level of the learners of English is not influenced by the textbooks they study. These two groups study two different textbooks, but their motivation levels as measured in this research are not statistically significantly different. In other words, the analysis of the results show that the two groups are statistically similar in their motivation levels and the cultural values alone, do not influence the learners' motivation and there are some other motivating factors.

Therefore, participants' attitudes and motivation towards the English culture do not seem to be related to the textbooks through which they learn language, since they study completely different books. This is a reason for the fact that students who are familiar with target culture are not generally more motivated than those who are not. Another point to be taken into account is that the textbooks alone do not have the power to motivate students. The results of the questionnaire are in line with Adasko, Britten, and Fahsi (1990) who discovered nothing motivating in using western culture. Overall, it can be stated that integrating culture into language teaching programs alone does not have a motivating effect on the language learner and the learning process and some other factors can influence students motivation. These factors include the popularity of the language institute in which they learn English, the methodology and the integrated system of that institute, and the other factors.

It can be concluded that having cultural insights does not have a great effect on the learners' motivation levels. As teachers, we must realize the importance of motivation for our students and teach them in a way that would inspire them to learn. Linnenbrink & Pintrich (2002) suggested that language teachers should tailor their teaching methods and techniques to maximize students' motivation in and outside the classroom and thus enhance the learning experience. It is hoped that the present study has contrived to clarify most of the issues it set out to investigate and has helped contribute to a better understanding of motivation and its importance in the EFL context.

#### 6. Suggestions for further research

Since this study was narrowed down in terms of its participants, genre, age, etc., it seems necessary to point out some further research to be done in this regard:

1. Considering the fact that this study was limited to only 35 participants, it is suggested that similar studies be conducted with more students.
2. This study was conducted with female learners of English. Similar research could be done with male participants to find out if there is any different result in the findings.
3. The need is felt to carry out similar experiments to investigate whether the effect of culture varies among different age groups.
4. As the materials of the study included Interchange Series, as a heavily culturally-loaded textbook, other sources or textbooks which are culturally-loaded are recommended for further studies.
5. Finally, this study could be replicated with learners at higher and lower levels of language proficiency.

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## THE EFFECT OF INTENSIVE VS. EXTENSIVE READING ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' KNOWLEDGE OF COLLOCATIONS

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### **Abstract**

This research studies the effect of extensive vs. intensive reading on Iranian intermediate English Language learners' knowledge of collocations. It aims to determine whether providing students with extensive or intensive reading might have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' knowledge of collocations. To answer the question, 60 intermediate-level language learners from Kish Air language institute in Chalus participated in the study. The subjects took a standard OPT test to demonstrate their English proficiency. The subjects were assigned to two groups (experimental and control), 30 in each group. A collocation pre-test was administered in each group. After 10-sessions of treatment a post-test of collocation was administered. The experimental group received intensive reading, while the control group received extensive reading. The data were analyzed using Independent sample t-test and paired sample t-test. The results showed that both groups were improved, but the experimental group was improved more than control group, which was significantly different.

**Key Words:** Extensive Reading, Intensive Reading, Collocation, , Iranian EFL Learners, OPT.

### **1. Introduction**

In defining reading, it is important to pay attention to both internal and external factors that deal with the text's readability and understanding; that is, reader's intelligence, experience and background knowledge are as important as words, phrases, sentences and grammatical cues. Schmitt (2002) puts these two kinds of factors in line with each other in proposing what an adequate definition should cover:

"A definition of reading requires some recognition that a reader engages in processing at the phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and discourse levels, as well as engages in goal setting, text-summary building, interpretive elaborating from knowledge resources, monitoring and assessment of goal achievement, making various adjustments to enhance comprehension, and making repairs to comprehension processing as needed" (p. 234).

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), Intensive Reading is related to further progress in language learning under the teacher's guidance. It provides a basis for explaining difficulties of structure and for extending knowledge of vocabulary and idioms.

The purpose of extensive reading is to train the students to read directly and fluently in the target language for enjoyment without the aid of the teacher. ER, reading with "large quantities of materials that is within learners' linguistic competence" (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 21) supposedly helps in vocabulary learning by creating opportunities for inferring word meaning in context (see, e.g., Krashen, 2004).

One of the general issues facing both syntax and semantics is the existence of collocations, i.e. constructions in which, unlike in idioms, the idea expressed can be inferred to some extent from the meanings of their constituent parts (cf. Philip, 2011:24-25).

As a subcategory of formulaic language, the notion of collocation has received considerable attention in the field of foreign language learning during the last few decades (Gitsaki, 1999, Webb & Kagimoto, 2009).

The term collocation has been labeled in a variety of ways e.g. prefabs, multi-word units etc. and defined in different manners in both linguistics and language teaching. Collocations have been recognized as one of the ways that differentiate native speakers and second language learners. If a non-native speaker wants to help someone, s/he will say, "Can I help you?" whereas a native speaker will say, "Can I give you a hand?" (Salkauskiene, 2002).

### Statement of the Problem

Collocation is one of the most important and problematic parts for EFL learners. The reason for this is not that L2 learners are incapable of learning collocation, but most likely they have never exposed in formal and explicit way to the lexical and grammatical collocations of target language.

However, learners' problems with L2 collocational use have been repeatedly reported regardless of their level of language proficiency, for examples, Fan (1991) on secondary students, Biskup (1992) on advanced learners, and Farghal and Obiedat (1995) on university students. One of the difficulties lies in the idiosyncratic nature of collocational use. For example, while 'strong' has the same meaning as 'powerful' in 'a strong/powerful argument', 'powerful' collocates with 'car' but 'strong' collocates with 'tea' (Halliday, 1966, p. 160). Another difficulty arises from the fact that collocational use may be markedly different among languages.

As Gitsaki and Taylor (1997) contend, the task of learning collocations can present both intralingual and interlingual challenges. Collocation describes lexical relations and word combinations, but joining words that are semantically compatible does not always produce acceptable combinations. For instance, *many thanks* is an acceptable English collocation but *several thanks* is not. On the other hand, collocations can differ from language to language, e.g., someone who drinks a lot is a *heavy drinker* in English and a *strong glass* in Greek. A lot of collocational errors that learners commit were found to be due to negative transfer from L1, unfamiliarity with the structure of the particular collocations, and the tendency to use generic terms instead of specific ones, e.g., pipe water, instead of tap water. (Fayez-Hussein, 1990 cited in Gitsaki & Taylor, 1997)

Wray (2002) observed that 'in English you run a business, but in German you lead it. In English you smoke a cigarette, but in Hindi you drink it. In English you lie in the sun, but in Russian you lie on it (p. 73)'. Similar to the learning of many other aspects of L2, the biggest problem is the lack of exposure to the target language. Whereas native speakers acquire the knowledge of collocation subconsciously and gradually as they grow up in their speech community, most learners, especially those who learn the L2 only in the classroom environment, do not have this opportunity.

According to Rashidi et al (2011), both IR and ER have an impact on learners' vocabulary size and depth significantly and that the students' vocabulary knowledge in terms of size and depth had increased. Moreover, the students at the intermediate level took more advantage of IR than ER, but in the advanced group the students benefited more from ER than IR.

There are various studies emphasizing the fact that ER leads to language proficiency in general, and vocabulary development in particular. Some researchers such as Coady (1997), Shin & Kyu-Cheol (2003), Nassaji (2003), GU (2003), and Horst (2005) all have found the effect of this approach on vocabulary development.

Zareie and koosha (2002) found that Iranian EFL learners have problems with the production of English collocations. Results showed that Iranian advanced learners of English have serious problems with English collocations (about 55 percent of the time). They concluded that knowledge of collocations was an essential part of achieving native like competence in English.

Several past studies investigating second language acquisition of English collocations have shown that EFL learners' problems are due to different factors (e.g. Fan, 2009; Huang, 2001). One of the major reasons for collocational errors pertains to native language influence (e.g. Bahns, 1993; Bahns & Eldaw, 1993; Fan, 2009; Koya, 2003; Nesselhauf, 2003, 2005; Ying, 2009). Some have also found that learners rely on certain learning strategies, such as synonymy (e.g. Boonyasquan, 2006; Farghal & Obiedat, 1995; Mongkolchai, 2008), repetition and overgeneralization (e.g. Fan, 2009; Granger, 1998; Howarth, 1998; Shih, 2000), etc.

The researcher is going to find if intensive reading vs. extensive reading is more effective in learning collocations by Iranian EFL intermediate students. Due to the huge number of collocations, it is not possible to teach students all types of collocations, therefore, those collocations which are more problematic to the students should be recognized and taught first (Lewis and Conzett 2000). Hence, this study tried to find the effect of extensive vs. intensive reading on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations.

### **Significance of the Study**

The importance of collocational knowledge in L2 competence is beyond dispute. It enables the learners to speak more fluently, makes their speech more understandable and helps them write or sound more native-like (Hunston and Francis, 2000]; Wray, 2002).

The importance of collocations has long been stressed by scholars involved in teaching foreign languages (Xiao & McEnery, 2006). Gitsaki and Taylor (1997) and Wray (2002) point out that an increase in the knowledge of collocations can result in better performance in the learner's oral skills and even in reading speed.

According to Richard Day, one of the primary ways to learn vocabulary is through reading (2011). Reading can serve as a means for vocabulary development because it brings students into contact with new words and repeatedly reinforces the words previously known. Lewis (2000) argued that increasing learners' collocation competence is the way to improve their language as a whole.

## **2. Review Literature**

### **Intensive Reading**

According to Nation (2004), "intensive reading involves the detailed reading of texts with the two goals of understanding the text and learning language features through a deliberate focus on these items" (p. 20).

**Extensive Reading**

Extensive reading, reading with "large quantities of materials that is within learners' linguistic competence" (Grabe & Stroller, 2002, p. 259), purportedly helps in vocabulary learning by creating opportunities for inferring word meaning in context (see, e.g., Krashen, 2004).

**Collocation**

Shehata, (2008) argued that "the origin of the term collocation is the Latin verb *collocare*, which means *to set in order/to arrange*". The term collocation was first introduced by Firth (1957) who is known as the father of collocation and he defined it as "the company that words keep" (p.183) (Shehata, 2008).

Martynska (2004, p.5) argues that although collocation, only recently, has attracted linguistics study, there is no exhaustive and uniform definition or categorization of collocation and it seems to be one of the most problematic and error-generating areas of vocabulary, especially for second language learning. In general, collocations are seen as units consisting of co-occurring words at a certain distance from each other, and a distinction is often made between frequently and infrequently co-occurring words (Nesselhauf, 2005).

**Classification of Collocations**

According to syntactic characteristics, Lewis (2000, p. 51) classifies lexical collocations into six major types:

- Adjective + Noun (*strong tea, major problem, key issue*)
- Noun + Noun (*a pocket calculator, sense of pride*)
- Verb + Noun (*make an impression, set an alarm*)
- Verb + Adverb (*spell accurately, live dangerously, smiled proudly*)
- Adverb + Adjective (*strictly accurate, completely soaked, happily married*)
- Noun + Verb (*companies merged, pose a problem*).

A number of linguists have proposed certain criteria so far for distinguishing different kinds of collocations. Benson, Benson, & Ilson (1997)'s collocation classification is: lexical collocations and grammatical collocations.

**Lexical Collocations**

Lexical collocations are composed of two or more content words, i.e. nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Examples of this kind of collocation is presented below:

adjective + noun: sour milk

verb + noun: conduct research

noun + verb: dust accumulates

adverb + adjective: mentally disabled

verb + adverb or: move freely

adverb + verb: proudly present

**Grammatical Collocations**

Grammatical collocations refer to combinations comprising a content word and a function word, which is usually a preposition, as illustrated below:

Noun + preposition: an increase in

Verb + preposition: elaborate on

Adjective + preposition: familiar with

Preposition + noun: on probation

According to Cowie and Howarth's model (1996) there can be a continuum containing four categories of collocations:

- 1) Free combinations: the meaning of free combination is interpreted from the literal meaning of individual elements (open a window).
- 2) Restricted collocations: a restricted collocation is more limited in the selection of compositional elements and usually has one component used in a specialized context (meet the demand).
- 3) Figurative idioms: a figurative idiom has a metaphorical meaning as a whole that can somehow tell its literal interpretation (call the shot).
- 4) Pure idioms: a pure idiom is a single unit whose meaning is totally unpredictable from the meaning of its components (spill the beans).

### Sources of Collocational Errors

According to different studies the main sources of collocational errors are as follow:

- (1) Overgeneralization: Learners used overgeneralization when the item did not carry any obvious contrast to them. In other words, Overgeneralization is the creation of a deviant structure in place of two regular structures on the basis of students' experience of the target language.
- (2) Ignorance of rule restrictions: Errors of ignorance of rule restrictions were the result of analogy and failure to observe the restrictions of existing structures (Richards, 1973). For instance, *ask you a favor* is a false analogy of the construction of verb+ object+ object.
- (3) False concepts hypothesized: False concepts hypothesized errors result from learners' faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language.
- (4) The use of synonym: The use of a synonym for a lexical item in a collocation is seen as a "straightforward application of the open choice principle" (Farghal & Obiedat, 1995).
- (5) Interlingual transfer: learners' first language influenced their production on collocations and was the common source of errors.
- (6) Word coinage: Word coinage means that students make up a new word to communicate the desired concept.
- (7) Approximation: Approximation means that learners use an incorrect vocabulary item or structure

There are some studies emphasizing the fact that IR results in language proficiency and vocabulary development such as Anderson (1999), Li, Ying (1998), Paran (2003), Fenglin (2004).. Many researchers as mentioned by Paribakht and Wesch 1997 have declared both IR and ER can affect learners' vocabulary knowledge with regard to the depth.

Hugh Roderick Rosszell's (2007) contribution deals with the matter of vocabulary teaching and learning through extensive reading. More precisely, he described a two-condition extensive reading programme conducted for 40 EFL students of a Japanese university which led him to conclude that an approach which couples extensive reading with intensive vocabulary study represents an option that is both more viable and effective for L2 learners. In highlighting the questionable bias against using decontextualised study to help students with vocabulary expansion and the complexities of learning words implicitly through guessing and inferring, the study pointed out that incidental learning is best followed up with intentional learning.

**Research Questions of the Study**

Researcher wants to know if Intensive vs. Extensive Reading has any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations.

RQ1: Does Intensive reading have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations?

RQ2: Does Extensive Reading have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations?

**Hypotheses of the Study**

H1: Intensive Reading has no effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations.

H2: Extensive Reading has no effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations.

**3. Methodology****The Design of the Study**

The design of the study was quasi- experimental .In fact, all approaches involve the control group and the manipulation of three basic characteristics: 1) the pre-test 2) a treatment during the course of study 3) and a final measurement of the treatment (post-test).In this research there were two groups: the experimental group which received the knowledge of collocation through intensive reading for 10-sessions, and the control group which received knowledge of collocation through extensive reading for 10-sessions. Here, intensive reading and extensive reading (treatments) were independent variables and knowledge of collocation was dependent variable

**Participants**

The population from which the participants were selected for this study included Iranian EFL learners whose first language was Persian and who were studying English in a language institute in Chalus. The participants in the current study were 60 EFL learners from Kish Air cultural & educational institute, and they were at the intermediate level. To be certain of the homogeneity of the participants in terms of proficiency, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) as a standard language proficiency test with reasonable validity and reliability measures was used among 100 EFL learners. Participants whose scores were one standard deviation below the mean score of the class were selected. The participants were two groups; each group consisted of 30 students. Both sexes were represented in the classes consisting of 20 male and 40 female students, altogether.

**Instruments**

Two research instruments were used in the study. The first was an OPT (OXFORD PLACEMENT TEST) administered to them in order to homogenize them. The second instrument was a collocation test. The test includes 60 collocation questions that was devised by Al-sibai. Based on split- half reliability criterion, the test was divided into two parts odd and even numbers. Odd numbers for pre-test and even number for post-test were used by the researcher in the control and experimental groups. There are 30 questions in pre-test and 30 questions in post-test, too.

### Procedure

The data needed for this study were collected from classes in Kish Air cultural & educational institute in Chalus. An OPT (OXFORD PLACEMENT TEST) was administered to them in order to homogenize them. This test was paper and pencil test. Participants whose scores were one standard deviation below the mean score of the class were selected. A total of 60 participants were selected and randomly divided into two groups: Experimental group (N=30) and control group (N=30). Both groups took a pre-test of collocations in order to help the researcher to identify their existing knowledge of collocations. Participants' age and gender have not been taken care of in this research. Afterwards, both the experimental and the control group were taught collocations, but with different methods. As an illustration, the experimental group was taught collocation implicitly through intensive reading instruction, while the control group received a treatment of knowledge of collocations explicitly through extensive reading for 10-sessions. Then both groups were given a post-test of collocations. Since the researcher in whose classrooms the research project was conducted was at the same time the instructor, the test was administered at ease and with no tension.

### Scoring

The OPT test which was used in this study was scored on the basis of a standard criterion. The criterion for scoring both the pre-test and post-test was a maximum score of 30.

### Methods of Analyzing Data

The data obtained from the pre-test and the post-test were analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences version 16 (SPSS, 16). The descriptive statistic of the participants and the tests were arranged and the results of both pre-test and post-test were analyzed using the independent sample t-test and paired sample t-test were used in order to compare the means of the two groups.

## 4. Result

### Data Analysis and Findings

#### Descriptive Analysis of the Data

The descriptive analysis of the data was employed to show the number, mean, standard deviation, and standard error of measurement for pre-test and post-test for participants in both groups. The results are shown in table 4.1 and table 4.2. Such analysis was done using the SPSS software.

*Table 4.1. Descriptive analysis of the pre-test scores of the experimental and control group of the study*

Test	N	Minimum	Max	Mean	Std. Error	Std.Deviation	Variance
Pre-exp	30	14	18	16.133	.22861	1.25212	1.568
pre-co	30	13	19	15.500	.30980	1.69685	2.879

According to table 4.1 that shows the descriptive analysis of the pre-test scores of the experimental and control group of the study, there are 30 students in each group (N=30). The mean of the pre-test of the experimental group is 16.13 ( $\bar{X}=16.13$ ), while this value for the control group is 15.50 ( $\bar{X}=15.50$ ). Both groups seem to have mean scores approximately close to each other. This means that two groups of the study are nearly at the same level of knowledge of collocations before administration of the treatment of the study. As shown in the table, the minimum and maximum of scores of the pre-test of the experimental group are 14 and 18, and this value for control group are 13 and 19. The standard deviation of pre-test of experimental group is 1.25 (SD=1.25), while this value for control group is 1.69 (SD=1.69). This may give an image of the participants' pre-test scores of experimental group being more homogenous than those of control group.

*Table 4.2. Descriptive analysis of the post-test scores of the experimental and control group of the study*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
Post-exp	30	17	23	19.7000	.29224	1.60065	2.562
Post-con	30	15	21	17.7333	.28741	1.57422	2.48

Table 4.2 shows the descriptive analysis of the post-test scores of the experimental and control group of the study. There are 30 students in each group (N=30). The mean of post-test of the experimental group is 19.70 ( $\bar{X}=19.70$ ), while this value for the control group is 17.73 ( $\bar{X}=17.73$ ). Both groups seem to have mean scores with difference to each other. This means that two groups of the study are at a different level of knowledge of collocations after administration of the treatment of the study. This meaningful difference; though, very important for the following analysis, is not enough to answer the research questions. As shown in the table 4.2, the minimum and maximum of scores of post-test of the experimental group are 17 and 23, and this value for control group are 15 and 21. The standard deviation of post-test of experimental group is 1.60 (SD=1.60), while this value for control group is 1.57 (SD=1.57). It shows that there is no significant difference between standard deviations of two groups, so it can be proposed that the participants' homogeneity of both groups is the same.

#### **Inferential Analysis of the Data**

This section focuses on the inferential analysis of the obtained data of this study. Such analysis was done using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science). To maintain the effect of intensive vs. extensive reading on Iranian EFL learners' knowledge of collocations, an independent-sample t-test and paired samples t-test was carried out.

In order to see which variable was more effective, a paired-sample t-test was run as well. A paired sample t-test was run to compare the pre-test and post-test scores of each group and to check the effectiveness of different teaching methods (Intensive vs. Extensive Reading) on collocations development in two groups.

4.3. Paired -samples t- test of the pre-test and post-test scores of control group

	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error Mean	t	df	Sig(2tailed)	95%confidence interval Of the difference
							Lower upper
Pos-con pre-con	2.23333	1.07265	.19584	11.404	29	.000	1.83280,2.63387

The results of this procedure has been represented in table 4.3 .As it is shown in table 4.3, which shows Paired samples t- test of the pre-test and post-test scores of control group, the significant level was set at .000 level (sig=.000, Sig<0.05), and Observed- t in control group is 11.40, and the degree of freedom was 29 (df =29). (Observed- t>critical- t,  $t_{crit}=2.04 < t_{obs}=11.40$ ). So, the first null hypothesis is rejected. It shows that the extensive reading had some effects on Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations

4.4. Paired -samples t- test of the pre-test and post-test scores of experimental group

	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error Mean	t	df	Sig(2tailed)	95%confidence interval Of the difference
							Lower upper
Postexp pre-exp	3.56667	1.38174	.25227	14.138	29	.000	3.05072,4.08262

According to table 4.4, , which shows Paired samples t- test of the pre-test and post-test scores of experimental group, the significant level was set at .000 level (sig=.000 ,Sig<0.05) ,and Observed- t in experimental group is 14.13, and the degree of freedom was 29 (df =29). (Observed- t>critical- t,  $t_{crit}=2.04 < t_{obs}=14.13$ ) So, the second null hypothesis is rejected. It shows that the intensive reading had significantly affected Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations. As mentioned before, an independent sample t-test to compare the post- test scores of experimental and control group was carried.

4.5. Independent sample t-test of the post- test scores of experimental and control group

	sig	t	df	Sig. (2tailed )	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95%Confidence Interval of the Difference
							Lower Upper

	F							
COLLOCATIO	.01	.91	4.79	5	.000	1.96667	.40989	1.14619
N	2	2	8	8				,2.78715

(Equal variances not assumed)

Table 4.5. Summarizes the results of calculating the t-value in an independent sample t-test to compare the post- test scores of experimental and control group. The observed-t is 4.79 ( $t_{obs}=4.79$ ), and critical t is 2.00 ( $t_{crit}=2.00$ ), it shows that observed-t is more than critical t ( $t_{obs}=4.79 > t_{crit}=2.00$ ). The level of significance or p- value is .000 ( $sig=.000$ ) that is less than 0.5 ( $sig < 0.5$ ).

Based on data analysis report summarized in this table there is a mean difference of 1.96 between the experimental and control post-test. It indicates that the t-test result supported the meaningful difference between the mean scores of post-test of both groups. So the experimental group performed better than control group, and it shows that intensive reading is more effective than extensive reading at the intermediate level.

### Results of Hypothesis Testing

This study was carried out to investigate the relationship between intensive and extensive reading comprehension by Iranian EFL learners and their knowledge of collocations. To answer the research questions addressed before, we conducted our study in a quasi-experimental design with two groups of control and experimental design that existed in an English institute.

For the purpose of reaching a conclusion about the main purpose of the study, the data gathered from groups' performance were analyzed with an independent sample t-test to compare the post- test scores of experimental and control group and paired sample t-test procedure.

First a pre- test was administered and all the subjects of the study took part in this test while they were asked to answer the questions. The data were gathered and used for analyzing the descriptive statistics of pre-test. The mean, standard deviation and variance from the mean was gathered by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 16). As it is shown in table 4.1, both groups seem to have mean scores approximately close to each other. This means that two groups of the study are nearly at the same level of knowledge of collocations before administering the treatment of the study.

After 10- sessions of treatment, a post-test was administered to see whether extensive vs. intensive reading were effective or not. The experimental group was taught collocations through intensive reading, while the control group was taught collocations through extensive reading. The data were analyzed by SPSS software. Table 4.2 shows the descriptive analysis of the post-test scores of the experimental and control group of the study. The number of subjects in each group, mean, standard deviation and the standard error of each group is illustrated. Both groups seem to have mean scores which are different from each other. This means that two groups of the study are at different levels of knowledge of collocations after administration of the treatment of the study.

The result of this analysis revealed that there was a difference between pre-test and post-test of two groups of the study, but findings indicated that the experimental group who got IR

treatment, while the control group, who got ER treatment, gained the better mean score. The mean score of 19.70, for experimental group who got IR treatment, while the control group, who got ER treatment, gained the mean score of 17.73. If we compare the mean scores of two groups together, we will come to the following conclusions. The experimental group got better mean score than the control group. The difference between the two groups' mean scores can be due to different approaches namely as IR vs. ER. In other words, the students who received IR got better scores in comparison to those with ER treatment.

Independent sample T-test on the basis of students' scores on the post-test is summarized in table 4.3. Based on data analysis report summarized in this table there is a mean difference of 1.96 between the experimental and control group. The level of significance or p-value is .000 that is less than 0.5 (.000 < 0.5). In short, data analysis report shows that both null hypotheses are rejected, and both intensive and extensive reading have effect on learning collocations in Iranian intermediate learners, but intensive reading is more effective than extensive reading.

## 5. Discussion

### General Discussion

The aim of the study was to investigate the effect of intensive vs. extensive reading on learning collocations. The results show that collocations can be learned through reading which is similar to other studies that examined vocabulary acquisition from reading (Dupuy and Krashen, 1993; Horst et al., 1998; Zahar et al., 2001).

The findings of the present study reinforce previous research (Haynes & Baker, 1993) that indicates strong effect of reading techniques on vocabulary acquisition. So, to summarize, reading techniques either intensively or extensively are effective and efficient ways of improving foreign language learners. Given the appropriate situation to learners to do reading as much as they can, teachers also play important roles in so-doing activity namely as teaching process. They are assumed to use some practical ways to encourage students read either intensively or extensively.

In relation to research questions, the study showed that there was improvement in learning of collocation knowledge in both groups which confirms the results of other studies which have investigated the acquisition of several aspects of word knowledge (Pellicer-Sánchez and Schmitt, 2010; Pigada and Schmitt, 2006; Webb, 2007).

The results are complied with a few studies. Many researchers as mentioned by Paribakht and Wesch 1997; Schmidt 1998 have declared both IR and ER can affect learners' vocabulary knowledge.

Contrary to Meara (1996) and Qian's (2002) findings that reading cannot definitely build up the students' vocabulary knowledge. Also it supports Read's (2000) point of view, who states that reading comprehension leads to language proficiency in general and vocabulary acquisition in particular.

It is also complied with another study done by Nurweni and Read (1999) who claimed that learning words through reading results in higher scores on vocabulary test. One can conclude that reading as much as possible both intensively and extensively by paying attention to choose materials appropriate to one's level of proficiency is one of the determining factors in developing vocabulary knowledge.

Several studies which have compared the effects of direct vocabulary learning and learning from context have shown that explicit learning is more effective and more long-lasting than implicit learning (Norris & Ortega, 2000). However, having in mind that collocation and

some other aspects of word knowledge are better learned from context (Krashen, 1989; Nation, 2001), in order to enable learners to gain deeper knowledge of the words, language learning programmes need to include an extensive reading component.

Considering that there was a significant difference between improvement of control group and experimental group in learning collocations. Thus intensive reading can be a valuable means for teaching collocations in L2 classroom, in intermediate level.

The researcher found that Iranian participants in her study had many problems with collocations in pre-test and post-test. This idea has been supported by Fayes (1990) undergraduate third and fourth year Jordanian students majoring in English performed poorly in a multiple choice test conducted by Fayes (1990), who aimed to assess the students' ability to collocate words correctly in English. The multiple choice test consisted of 40 sentences, with each sentence consisting an incomplete collocation (i.e. idioms, fixed expressions, restricted collocations).

As described in the result section, and based on the findings of this study, a relationship between collocation knowledge and reading comprehension does exist in a way that learning occurred through reading both intensively and extensively. The participants in both reading conditions (IR/ER) performed nearly the same in the way that all in both groups benefited from these treatments. As is apparent, the students in experimental group performed better as a result of receiving IR treatment.

#### **Implications of the Study**

Various methods have been developed so far to assess collocation. The teachers study the available resources to select suitable condition, teach through effective techniques, and assess collocations appropriately.

From a pedagogical point of view, it is plausible to recommend language teachers consider different approaches to reading (e.g. Intensive and Extensive). Teachers can implement these important points in the process of teaching collocations and help the learners make significant improvement.

The results of this study are expected to have instructional implications for Iranian EFL students in particular and possibly for EFL learners in general. According to the result of this study, Iranian EFL learners can learn collocations through reading. Intensive reading is a way which in this study is proposed to learn collocations, and Teachers may benefit from the findings of the present study. Teachers can get their students to learn vocabulary more efficiently by presenting words in collocations. Teachers can use intensive reading to improve learners' knowledge of collocation.

Material designers, also, can take advantage of the results of the current study in that they may develop new curricula for teaching collocations at the universities, schools, and institutes or design materials to convey more information in teaching collocations. They can publish new books, pamphlets, or other teacher-made materials based on their specific classroom condition.

#### **Limitations of the Study**

There are some limitations for this study. First, there is no access to enough number of subjects. This study might have had a good chance to recruit more student participants than it actually had.

Second, the current study was done in one institute (KishAir) in chalus, and all the participants were EFL learners, hence making us unable to include ESL learners in the description of findings.

Third, the current study provided estimates of the knowledge of collocations of Iranian EFL learners at the intermediate level in institute .However; it was beyond the scope of the current study to procure the same information in other educational levels.

### Suggesting for Further Research

Studies on collocations have been carried out in the past two decades but our understanding of collocations is still not enough. The participants of the current study were intermediate learners studying English in one institute in chalus (Kish Air); replications should be made using participants of diverse age groups and proficiency levels studying different majors.

Further research should also consider carrying out other studies exploring the effect of intensive vs. extensive reading on other language skills.

After ten sessions this study has been done, it is necessary to investigate similar study in long term. In this study both male and female participated, researcher can compare male and female separately.

Further research is also needed on how collocational knowledge develops in native speakers of English. Such information can be used to compare the routes of development by L2 learners and native speakers in the acquisition of English collocations.

The analysis of collocational errors was not part of this study. However, future research could investigate the misuse of collocations by L2 learners, the possible causes leading to collocational errors, and ways to remedy them.

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## METALINGUISTIC INTUITION IN FLA: A SEMINAL ENTERPRISE DESERVING DEEPER SCRUTINY

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### **Abstract**

This paper reports on a preliminary study designed to investigate the metalinguistic abilities of first- and second-year undergraduate learners of English. In particular, it delves into the relationship between the learners' metalinguistic knowledge, the degree of transfer from their first language (L1), and their level of language proficiency with respect to the biological factor of gender. A metalinguistic assessment task devised by the researchers and an actual paper-based TOEFL test were the major instruments utilized. The participants comprised 116 freshmen and sophomores majoring in English translation at the Islamic Azad University, Roudehen Branch. The findings shed light on an important facet of L2 learning in terms of the relationship between the learners' explicit knowledge of language, their overall language proficiency (with respect to their educational status and gender) as well as the degree to which their L2 performance was affected by the process of language transfer from their L1. The data were submitted to different statistical analyses such as correlational analyses as well as the analysis of variance (two-way ANOVA). The results indicated a moderate correlation between the participants' general language proficiency and their metalinguistic knowledge. However, the findings did not confirm the idea of the transfer of metalinguistic knowledge across the two languages of Persian and English. Ultimately, it became evident that the factors of educational status and gender did not have any significant effect on the learners' performance dealing with the metalinguistic task.

**Keywords:** metalinguistic knowledge, language transfer, language proficiency

### **Introduction**

Correa (2011) refers to metalinguistic knowledge as one of the most controversial topics in Applied Linguistics in foreign language acquisition. The existing literature reveals great controversies between the proponents of metalinguistic knowledge as a facilitative factor for learning (Schmidt, 1990; Ellis & Laporte, 1997; Lightbown, 1998; Herdina & Jessner, 2000) and the opponents who regard it as a negative factor affecting learning in a deleterious manner (Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Stokes & Krashen, 1990).

According to Gass and Selinker (2008), metalinguistic knowledge refers to one's ability to utilize language as an object of inquiry rather than merely as a tool for conversing with others. In other words, metalinguistic awareness stands in opposition with the pure use of language which does not necessarily require thinking about language. As mentioned by Bialystock (1988, cited in Gass & Selinker, 2008), the metalinguistic knowledge, or the ability to think about the language, is often linked with an empowered ability to learn a language. In reference to the field of L1 learning, bilingual children were recognized as being more enriched with metalinguistic knowledge compared with their monolingual counterparts.

However, the picture becomes rather complicated in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) in which the explicit explanation of an L2, particularly in the teaching of grammar, has been regarded as an unavoidable activity. Kellerman and Smith (1986) stated that in some extreme cases the teaching of an L2 was equated with the teaching of the grammar of that language by providing explicit explanations regarding the intended grammatical structures. It is worth remembering that such a perspective regarding SLA and teaching could also be easily traced in the educational system of Iran, in which language teaching was prominently illustrated in the creation of metalinguistic awareness for different linguistic forms. In other words, there has been considerable public concern about the standard of English language teaching and learning in Iran, and it is not bizarre to find comments about various inaccuracies in the learners' use of English in the classroom. Therefore, one area of SLA which is flourished with much debate at the present time is directly pertinent to the students' knowledge about language: Does it seem logical to maneuver language proficiency in terms of the relationship between the learners' L2 proficiency and their knowledge of grammatical rules underpinning their L2? Such a controversial issue could be linked to research carried out by several scholars like Krashen, 1981; Skehan, 1986; Bialystok, 1990; Richmond, 1990; James and Garret, 1991 (cited in Clapham, 1998) regarding the three similar concepts of explicit and implicit language knowledge, the knowledge about language movement, and research into language awareness. Although the role of metalinguistic awareness in predicting the learner's academic performance has been studied by some scholars, its impact on the learner's language achievement has been a neglected area particularly with regard to Persian learners learning English as a foreign language.

In the view of the assumption that the adoption of explicit linguistic awareness could be of benefit to L2 learners, it was of interest to the researchers to delve into the inherent nature of the learners' metalinguistic knowledge with the purpose of finding any possible significant relationship between that type of knowledge and the learners' L2 proficiency level as well as the impact of the learners' L1 (L1 transfer) on their L2 performances with respect to the two languages of English and Persian.

### **Literature Review**

Basically speaking, the learner's Interlanguage encompasses two completely independent systems of knowledge: An implicit knowledge system which is formulated as a result of unconscious acquisition and which includes the unconscious knowledge of language utilized in communicative activities, and an explicit knowledge system or a metalinguistic system produced as a consequence of conscious internalization of knowledge about the L2. Krashen (1981, cited in Tarone, 1988) referred to the second knowledge system as a monitor which could be explicated by the learners in terms of consciously elaborated grammatical rules. However, it is important to consider the fact that "metalinguistic knowledge is available to the learner only as a monitor, and cannot initiate utterances. The monitor can only modify

the utterances generated by the unconscious knowledge system" (Tarone, 1988, p. 28). Schmidt (2010) believed that metalinguistic knowledge of any kind triggers higher levels of awareness referred to as understanding which would be regarded as being facilitative in learning.

The concept of metalinguistic awareness could be elucidated with respect to the kind of knowledge which is accessible to all language users and which becomes more sophisticated as we muster more information about the intricacies of our language in an analytic style and academic fashion. Smith (2004, p.269) shed light on the above-mentioned definition by joining the two concepts of explicit language knowledge and conceptual structure. Here, conceptual structure directly refers to "that part of language we are conscious of".

To have a more transparent perspective regarding the status of metalinguistic knowledge in L2, it seems of paramount significance to provide some information about the inherent and distinguishing properties of the term 'metalinguistic knowledge'. Basically speaking, the concept of metalinguistic knowledge or intuition must be distinguished from the notion of linguistic intuition. According to Marti (2009, cited in Machery, Olivia, & De Blanc, 2009, p.689), "metalinguistic intuitions are judgments about the semantic properties of mentioned words (e.g., their reference) while linguistic intuitions are judgments about the individuals (substances, classes, etc.) described in the actual and possible cases used by philosophers of language." Such a distinction becomes significant if we assume that the two concepts of linguistic and metalinguistic intuitions are incongruent, and only the linguistic knowledge is pertinent for the identification of the correct theory of reference. As a result, we will be involved with the challenge of reformulating the prevalent practices in the philosophy of language. The reason is that the elicitation of metalinguistic knowledge about reference is widespread in this field (Donnellan, 1997; Kripke 1972; Evans, 1973, cited in Machery, Olivola, & De Blanc, 2009).

The concept of metalinguistic knowledge has also been dealt with from the cognitive as well as psycholinguistic perspectives. In fact, we need to be aware of the psychological constraints that limit the utility of metalinguistic knowledge in an L2. Hu (2002) highlighted the existence of three interwoven factors responsible for determining the real time access to explicit linguistic knowledge which are as follows: "Attention to form, processing automaticity, and linguistic prototypicality whether a rule concerns a central or peripheral use of a target structure" (p. 347). Steel and Alderson (1994, p.3) stated that what is meant by explicit language knowledge or knowledge about language requires to be investigated. However, the key issue here is that such an analysis should precisely encompass "a knowledge of and ability" to apply metalanguage succinctly.

As stated by Doughty and Long (2003), the first point of view which was referred to as noninterface position could be lucidly elaborated in terms of the idea stated by Krashen (1982, 1985, 1994, 1990 cited in Doughty & Long, 2003, p. 328) who believed that we should never expect explicit awareness produced as a result of formal instruction to lead to implicit learning. On the basis of the above-mentioned idea, one can conclude that "learned competence does not become acquired competence" (p. 328). The second point of view was prominently maneuvered by Dekeyser 1997, 1998; Hulstijn, 1995, 1999; Mclaughlin, 1978, 1990; Schmidt 1990, 1994, and Swain, 1985 (cited in Doughty & Long, 2003) who regarded explicit learning and practice as being useful for some specified rules. Here, it is the practice that bridges the gap between metalinguistic learning and use.

This study attempts to analyze the significance of the learners' metalinguistic knowledge and its relationship with their general language proficiency. To achieve such a goal, the theory of

grammatical awareness coined by Andrews (1999, cited in Shuib, 2009) was utilized as the major pattern in the way of interpreting and detecting the learners' metalinguistic awareness. Accordingly, the grammatical awareness encompasses four types. It is worth mentioning that each of the four types of grammatical awareness emphasizes a special aspect of explicit language knowledge as well as the pertinent grammatical terminology. Type one deals with the learners' ability to recognize metalanguage which could be clearly detected in their performance as they try to recognize grammatical categories like preposition, noun, and adjective. On the other hand, type two refers to the extent to which the learners are equipped with the ability to produce acceptable metalanguage terms. For instance, it deals with the learners' ability to provide grammatical categories of a given phrase or clause. Type three moves a step further by demanding the learners to not only identify the errors but also write the correct forms as well. At this stage, the learners have to work on ill-formed structures or faulty parts of sentences. Finally, the type four of grammatical awareness expects the learners to provide explanations of grammatical rules which have been violated in the provided structures.

Bialystock (2001) believed that the grammaticality judgment could be classified under the category of the prototypical metalinguistic tasks. However, it is controversial whether or not to assume the standard version of this task (expecting the students to make acceptability judgments about the sentences of their L1) as an instance of a metalinguistic task. Chomsky referred to that type of knowledge as part of the learners' competence. However, a thorough analysis of the related literature reveals the fact that such a paradigm has been frequently used as an indication of explicit knowledge of language and an instance of language proficiency. Some scholars believe that the task of assessing learners' metalinguistic awareness is too complex due to the existence of a fuzzy and vague boundary between the learners' explicit and implicit knowledge. As Sorace (1996, cited in Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p.19) comments:

It can be a complex task to decide about the kind of norm consulted by learners in the process of producing a judgment, particularly in a learning environment that fosters the development of metalinguistic knowledge. It is difficult to tell whether subjects reveal what they think or what they think they should think.

To shed light on the different facets of the model provided by Andrews (1999, cited in Shuib, 2009), it seems beneficial to reflect upon several existing research projects investigating the relationship between the learners' explicit knowledge and their L2 proficiency status. As stated by Roehr (2006), the existing research proposals encompass longitudinal studies like the one carried out by Klapper and Rees (2003, cited in Roehr, 2006) as well as the cross-sectional ones like those conducted by Alderson *et al.*, 1997; Bialystok, 1979; Elder *et al.*, 1999; Green and Hecht, 1992; Renou, 2000, and Sorace, 1985 (cited in Roehr, 2006).

The results obtained from all these research projects were centralized on four prominent findings: First, a comparison of the learners' performance on the correction tasks and the ones in which they were expected to provide explanations regarding the violated grammatical structures revealed the fact that they were not well-equipped with the knowledge of the rules they had been taught explicitly despite the fact that they could fulfill the correction tasks (regarding faulty sentences) successfully. Second, it was reported that some specific pedagogical rules were acquired and used more effectively compared with the

others. Third, the result of several large-scale studies presented variability of explicit linguistic knowledge among the learners as well as some degrees of variable application of such knowledge across tasks. The fourth and perhaps the ultimate result revealed positive correlations between the learners' L2 proficiency and their levels of metalinguistic awareness. Furthermore, it is interesting to know that the results of the study conducted by Bloor (1986, cited in Borg, 2003) regarding the assessment of the students' metalinguistic knowledge presented that "the only grammatical terms successfully identified by all students were verb and noun, and that students demonstrated 'fairly widespread ignorance' on the question asking them to identify functional elements such as subject and object" (P. 96).

There are several controversial issues regarding the benefit that metalanguage awareness may pose for L2 acquisition. The modern era of bilingual research was ushered in by a considerable amount of investigations monitoring the effect of teaching focus on second language learner accuracy. In other words, teaching focus has been one of the most important concerns of the field. Accordingly, language instructors who prefer teaching with an emphasis on meaning, give peripheral attention to form. However, those who stress grammatical accuracy deemphasize fluency of communication. Correa (2011) believes that teachers' inclination to support one or the other side of the extreme is directly related to the role that metalinguistic knowledge is assumed to have in language acquisition. Accordingly, some scholars like Krashen and Terrel (1983) believe that metalinguistic intuition does not play a substantial role in language acquisition. In contrast, some other scholars like Ellis and La-porte (1997) and Herdina and Jessner (2000) confirm the beneficiary role of explicit instruction in L2 acquisition.

It is interesting to note that most of the studies related to metalinguistic assessment are on the basis of experimental analyses involving pre-tests, treatments, and posttests. However, the following paragraphs provide a summarized description of some studies related to metalinguistic and explicit knowledge and foreign language accuracy with no instructional treatment. The studies document mixed results.

The results of the study conducted by Alderson, Clapham, and Steel (1997) showed a significant correlation between linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge with proficiency in French dealing with first-year undergraduate learners of French. They stated that metalinguistic knowledge and language proficiency may constitute two separate factors of linguistic ability. Han and Ellis (1998) monitored the relationship between explicit and implicit knowledge and general language proficiency by advanced adult learners of English in the United States. They found that metalanguage plays only a trivial role in general language proficiency. However, they also recognized that analyzed explicit knowledge may play a significant role. Finally, they concluded that "teaching explicit knowledge might more profitably emphasize the development of analyzed knowledge than metalanguage" (Han & Ellis, 1998, p. 19).

Macaro and Masterman (2006) investigated the impact of a grammar course on grammatical knowledge and writing proficiency in French. The results of their study put in question the belief that explicit metalinguistic explanation of grammatical rules would lead to successful internalization of the selected rules. Correa (2011) studied the relationship between metalinguistic knowledge and subjunctive accuracy by learners of Spanish at three levels. The findings documented a positive correlation between the learners' metalinguistic knowledge and their degree of accuracy in using this complicated structure.

Robinson and Ellis (2008) adopted a positive view toward explicit teaching by stating the idea that the benefits of explicit teaching become transparent if we assume that the major

goal of language teaching is to foster rich networks to grow in the mind of our learners. In other words, by endowing learners with metalinguistic awareness in different fields of an L2, we would provide them with an opportunity to compensate for their lack of input in an L2 which would consequently enable them to make accurate generalizations. Additionally, Lightbown and Spada (2006) mentioned the idea that the two factors of cognitive maturity and metalinguistic awareness specialized to adult language learners, act as facilitators for being engaged in tasks like problem solving and discussions about language. Furthermore, Saville-Troike (2006) believed that “cognitive and metalinguistic advantages appear in bilingual situations that involve systematic uses of the two languages, such as simultaneous acquisition settings or bilingual education” (p. 93).

Perhaps, one of the major considerations of this piece of research is to examine the degree to which metalingual awareness in the field of L1 syntax can be transferred into the domain of the learners’ L2 learning. The existing research projects regarding the issue of language transfer confirm the complexity of quantifying the degree of language transfer related to the different language levels. However, it seems more logical to assume that the existence of language transfer is more palpable in the areas of pronunciation, lexis, and discourse compared with syntax. Ellis (1994) provides a solid reason supporting such a justification by highlighting the degree of the development of the metalinguistic awareness in different fields of SLA. It is probably true to believe that the learners’ metalingual awareness is more enriched in case of phonological, discourse, and pragmatic properties compared with syntactic property. Such an empowerment enables the learners to monitor their choice of grammatical forms more strictly in comparison with the other fields of language. Consequently, linguistic properties become less prone to be transferred to the field of SLA.

### **Research Objectives**

It is important to note that the participants of this study did not receive any experimental treatment. Therefore, teaching methodology could not be regarded as a variable. In other words, like the study conducted by Correa (2011), this study monitored specifically verbalizable metalinguistic knowledge (as the ability demonstrated by the participants of the study to identify the specified grammatical forms as ‘direct’ and ‘indirect object’ and ungrammatical sentences, as well as to provide grammar rules).

Basically speaking, this piece of research was founded on a three-fold objective. Initially, the researchers attempted to provide further insight into the probable relationship between the participants’ explicit knowledge of language and their L2 proficiency level. Furthermore, they tried to pinpoint the traces of probable L1 transfer in the participants’ metalinguistic descriptions in L2. The ultimate goal of this study was devoted to the analysis of the hypothesized components of the participants’ metalinguistic awareness in terms of the operationalization of the construct which was assessed through analyzing the learners’ ability to provide correction, description, and explanation of ill-formed sentences (with regard to two different variables of ‘educational status’ and ‘gender’).

### **Research Questions**

- 1) Is there any relationship between the learners’ metalinguistic knowledge in L2 and their performance on the TOEFL test?
- 2) Does the learners’ metalinguistic knowledge in L1 have any significant effect on their L2 performance?

- 3) Considering the variables 'gender' and 'educational status', is there any significant difference between the performance of the freshmen and sophomores on the English metalinguistic task?

**Method**

**Participants**

A total of 137 female and male Iranian EFL freshmen and sophomore learners at the Islamic Azad University, Roudehen Branch majoring in English Translation who were recruited on a volunteer basis from five classes, constituted the participants of this study. In order to have approximately an equal number of freshmen and sophomores with respect to the variable of gender, 21 students who were supposed not to take the tests seriously were excluded from the study. Ultimately, there were 116 respondents (61 freshmen and 55 sophomores) left and the data gathered from this group were analyzed.

**Instruments**

Two tests were used in this study including a metalinguistic assessment task and an actual paper-based TOEFL test.

**Metalinguistic Assessment Task**

The metalinguistic assessment task was devised by the researchers and it comprised two sections. In section 1, the participants were provided with seven English sentences. Each sentence included a grammatical error. The participants were initially expected to make grammaticality judgment. Secondly, they were expected to provide the correct form of the unacceptable forms, and finally, they were asked to elaborate on the syntactic rule that had been violated. In section 2, the participants were provided with three sentences including one simple sentence in English, one simple sentence in Persian, and one complex sentence in Persian. They were asked to identify the three elements of subject, direct object, and indirect object. Three experts in TEFL (one professor and two Ph.D colleagues) were consulted for the validity of the metalinguistic assessment task. This study mainly adopted Andrew's (1999) theory of grammatical awareness which comprised four types of analyses: the ability to recognize metalanguage, the ability to produce suitable metalanguage terms, the ability to identify and correct errors, and the ability to expound grammatical rules.

**TOEFL Test**

A TOEFL test as a sample of a standardized test of assessing general language proficiency was administered to the participants. It included three sections. Section I- Listening Comprehension – included 50 items; section II- Structure and Written Expression – included 40 items; and section III – Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary – included 50 items. Due to the time limitations as well as practical considerations, with the exclusion of the listening section, just the second and the third sections of the test were administered to the participants. To estimate the reliability of the TOEFL test, the Kuder-Richardson formula was used ( $r = 0.81$ ). The results related to the descriptive statistics and the reliability coefficient of the TOEFL test are presented in Table 1.

*Table1. Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of the TOEFL test*

Test	N(Items)	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Variance	Reliability
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TOEFL	90	116	49	9	58	33.13	10.27	105.60	0.81
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**Procedure**

The tests were administered in two separate sessions. Initially, the students were provided with the TOEFL test under the standard procedures. They were given 25 minutes to answer section II and 55 minutes to do section III. After one week interval, the participants were provided with the metalinguistic assessment task. They were given 30 minutes to accomplish the tasks demanded by the test.

**Results and Discussion**

The descriptive statistics for the TOEFL test, the metalanguage test, and the subsections of the metalanguage test including correction and description/explanation tasks are displayed in Table 2. To make comparison possible, the means are reported in percentages.

*Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the TOEFL and metalanguage tests*

	TOEFL test	Metalanguage test	Correction	Description/Explanation
No (Participants)	116	116	116	116
No (Items)	90	14	7	7
Mean score	33.13	4.05	3.42	.64
Mean % Correct	37	29	49	9
Standard deviation	10.277	2.442	1.720	1.190
Minimum	9	0	0	0
Maximum	58	12	8	5

Table 2 shows that the metalinguistic task with the mean score of 29 is more challenging in comparison with the TOEFL test with the mean score of 37. The results in Table 2 show that the obtained mean score for the correction task as 49 is significantly higher than the mean score for the description task as 9. The findings may denote that although the students could successfully accomplish the correction task, they faced great difficulty in providing sufficient metalinguistic descriptions to fulfill the description/explanation task. In fact, the results show that the description/explanation task was the most complicated one in comparison with the other tasks for the participants of the study. Table 3 presents the results related to the correlational analyses between the TOEFL test and the metalanguage test scores.

Table 3. Correlations between the TOEFL and metalanguage test scores

	Correction	Description/Explanation	Metalanguage test	TOEFL
Correction	1	0.37**	0.89**	0.57**
Description/Explanation	0.14	1	0.76**	0.39**
Metalanguage Test	0.79	0.57	1	0.59**
TOEFL test	0.32	0.15	0.34	1

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 3 reveals that the scores obtained for the two measures of language proficiency test and the metalanguage task moderately correlate with each other as  $r = 0.59$ . However, the comparison of the correlation coefficient results between the TOEFL test and the subsections of the metalinguistic task as 0.57 for the correction task and 0.39 for the description task imply the idea that it is probably difficult to make any reliable predictions regarding the respondents' performance on the description task by referring to their general proficiency ability. Furthermore, the result of the correlation coefficient analysis between the two subcomponents of the metalinguistic task as 0.37 can be used as a solid piece of evidence, supportive of the idea that the participants' success dealing with the correction task does not necessarily guarantee their success in accomplishing the metalinguistic description task with respect to the same grammatical items.

To evaluate the effect of the participants' L1 metalinguistic knowledge on their L2, the results related to the identification task (involving the identification of the 'direct object' in the three English and Persian sentences) were investigated by calculating the facility value relevant to each sentence.

Table 4. FVs - Direct object

		English (SES)	Persian (SPS)	Persian (CPS)
Direct object	N	69	80	36
	%	60%	69.5%	31.5%

FVs = Facility Values    Key: SES = simple English sentence    SPS = simple Persian sentence    CPS = complex Persian sentence

The results in Table 4 show that the two simple sentences in English and Persian are approximately identical with the facility values of 60% and 69.5% considering their level of difficulty. However, the facility value of the 'direct object' in the complex Persian sentence as 31.5% is much lower which suggests that the participants had considerable difficulty in finding 'direct object' in the complicated Persian sentence. As it is evident, the individual responses in Table 5 are inconsistent.

Table 5. Inconsistencies across the three sentences

Sentences	Consistent			'Direct Object' (n=115)						Inconsistent		
	EPC	EPC	Total	EPC	EPC	EPC	EPC	EPC	EPC	EPC	Total	
R or W Answers	///	xxx		//x	/x/	/xx	xx/	x/x	x//			
Number of students	25 (22 %)	13 (11.5%)	38 (33 %)	24 (21 %)	5 (4.5%)	14 (12 %)	3 (3 %)	20 (17.5%)	11 (9.5%)	77 (67%)		

Key: Sentence E= Simple English Sentence      /=Right  
 Sentence P= Simple Persian Sentence      X=Wrong  
 Sentence C= Complex Persian Sentence

The ticks and crosses in Table 5 are pertinent to the three sentences SES, SPS, and CPS (simple English sentence, simple Persian sentence, and complex Persian sentence). However, the numbers beneath the ticks and crosses resemble the number of students belonging to each category of right and wrong sentences. For instance, the X// group encompasses those respondents who identified the direct object in the simple and complex Persian sentences but failed to identify the same grammatical item in the simple English sentence. As Table 2 shows, the largest group of participants (/X= 21%) who were successful in the identification of the 'direct object' in the two simple English and Persian sentences, failed to identify the same grammatical item in the complex Persian sentence. In the middle of the extreme, we observe a minority of participants (XX/= 3%). The participants in this group failed in their attempt to find the 'direct object' in the simple English and Persian sentences. Surprisingly, they were successful in identifying the same item (direct object) in the complex Persian sentence. It is interesting to note that the results regarding the observed inconsistencies are in accordance with the findings of Clapham (1998). Therefore, it is not too far-fetched to justify these inconsistencies as being the consequence of the impact imposed by the context including the targeted grammatical item (direct object).

However, we cannot suffice to such a justification as the main source of variability. The reason is that we have 9.5% of participants who failed to recognize the 'direct object' in the simple English sentence despite the fact that they could detect it in both simple and complex Persian sentences. The obtained piece of evidence in this case resembles the fact that the language of the sentence could be regarded as a factor affecting the identification rate. The results in terms of the inconsistencies can possibly denote the idea that the participants of this study had only partial understanding of the term 'direct object'.

To monitor the participants' metalinguistic knowledge in a new context, the researchers attempted to analyze the respondents' answers dealing with the first section of the metalinguistic task. In this section, the participants were expected to fulfill the task by correcting the wrong sentences and providing metalinguistic explanations for the faulty English structures. To achieve the above-mentioned goal, the performances of the participants (36 students = 31% of the participants) who successfully detected the 'direct

object' in two or three sentences in the second section of the metalinguistic task were scrutinized. Such an analysis was carried out with respect to the first section of the task in which the participants were expected to correct the faulty structures and, subsequently, provide explicit explanations for the ill-formed sentences. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Inconsistencies across the two sections of the metalinguistic task

			First section (Correction/Description)				
			N	%	N	%	
Second section (Recognition)	Number of students						
	(/// & X//)	36	31%	15	41.5 %	4	11%
	(XXX & /XX)	35	31%	17	48.5%	3	8.5%

/// = all right    xxx = all wrong

Table 6 shows that of the 36 students (31% of the whole sample) who could precisely identify the 'direct object' in two or three sentences (/// & X//), 15 students were successful in correcting the faulty sentences with respect to the position of object and only four could provide acceptable metalinguistic descriptions for the same item. The findings suggest that the description task was considerably challenging even for those learners who were successful dealing with the recognition and correction tasks. Therefore, the data may be representative of the failure of our educational system in providing the students with sufficient and/or effective amount of metalinguistic information regarding the simplest grammatical items in English. Additionally, the results present the fact that from among 116 participants of this study, 35 (%31) failed to accomplish the recognition task successfully. However, it is surprising to know that from among these students, 17 could accomplish the correction task in the first section and only three students succeeded to provide appropriate metalinguistic descriptions regarding the term 'direct object'. Therefore, the obtained piece of data could be suggestive of the idea that the degree or more precisely the probability of language transfer from Persian to English was weak dealing with the participants of this study on the basis that those who could not accomplish the recognition task related to the Persian sentences were successful with respect to the correction task in English.

The absence of language transfer could be justified in terms of the idea proposed by Ellis (1994) regarding the fact that the existence of transfer is more tangible in the areas of pronunciation, lexis, and discourse compared with syntax. Ellis (1994) explicated such a case by stating the idea that the learners' metalingual awareness is less enriched in the field of syntax compared with the other fields. Consequently, learners monitor their choice of grammatical forms more strictly. This process decreases the chance of language transfer in this area. Perhaps, it does not seem logical to make straightforward judgments regarding the complex nature of the L2 learners' metalinguistic knowledge on the basis of the findings of a single study like this.

To answer the third research question, the results (descriptive statistics) related to the respondents' gender and educational status (with respect to the English metalinguistic task) are displayed in Table 7.

*Table 7. Descriptive statistics for the English metalinguistic task considering the participants' educational status and gender*

	Mean	N	SD	Variance	Min	Max
Male	4.43	56	2.319	5.37	1	12
Female	3.70	60	2.52	6.34	0	10
Freshman	3.75	61	2.55	6.52	0	12
Sophomores	4.38	55	2.28	5.24	0	10

As Table 7 shows, the male participants enjoy a higher mean score compared with their female counterparts with reference to their performances related to the metalinguistic task. Furthermore, as it was expected, the sophomores obtained a higher mean score in comparison with the freshmen. To recognize whether or not the differences in mean score for the two independent variables of 'gender' and 'educational status' are significant, a two-way ANOVA analysis was conducted. The results are presented in Table 8.

*Table 8. Results of ANOVA (two-way), a gender-based comparison between the freshmen and sophomores*

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Educational status	8.30	1	8.30	1.41	.23
Gender	11.89	1	11.89	2.02	.15
Between groups	4.24	1	4.24	.72	.39
Total	2590.000	116			

R Squared = .041 (Adjusted R Squared = .015)

The ANOVA table presents that the two independent variables of 'gender' and 'educational status', with the level of significance of 0.23 for educational status and 0.15 for gender with no interaction between them (*sig.* = .39) do not have any significant effect on the dependent variable. In other words, the results related to the difference between the freshmen and the sophomores as well as the male and female participants of this study were not reported to be significant with regard to the metalinguistic task.

### **Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Further Research**

The investigation and discussion of the language learners' metalinguistic ability will be pedagogically valuable considering its role in L1 and L2 performance, in case of being supported by a firm theoretical foundation. The findings of this study could be beneficial to teachers with respect to their teaching focus. In other words, teachers should refresh their

minds regarding the degree to which they should rely upon the learners' metalinguistic knowledge as a real representation of their general language proficiency. Such a perspective becomes meaningful if we regard explicit knowledge of language as an important component of education and literacy which would act as a trigger for taking appropriate measures in the way of improving foreign language learners' linguistic competence. Thus, the vital question for language teachers is how to prime the pump sufficiently and appropriately for the language acquisition to take place.

The results could further suggest that one form of a measure could be crystallized in terms of a greater emphasis on grammar exposure in our educational curriculum. In fact, the present study was conducted with the hope of stirring an extension of research into textbook designers' awareness and understanding of the role of metalinguistic intuition in SLA. Succinctly speaking, the major pedagogical implication of this study could be highlighted dealing with teachers, course book designers, and materials developers as the main beneficiaries.

It is needless to say that the findings of this study alone do not suffice the requirements for making an outstanding qualitative and quantitative improvement in our educational programs. Further studies considering needs analysis as well as the learners' cognitive styles and personality factors should be taken into account (providing a comparative view) to be able to make judicious decisions and judgments regarding the learners' metalinguistic knowledge. It is important to mention that the findings of this study are limited to the investigation of the EFL learners' metalinguistic knowledge, without considering the teachers' metalinguistic knowledge as one of the sources of transferring explicit language knowledge in different educational settings. According to Gudart (1998, cited in Shuib, 2009), "it is sufficient for just a few teachers to lack the competence for the rest of TEFL teachers to be tarnished with the same brush" (p. 44). Therefore, the scope of this piece of research could be expanded by including the evaluation of teachers' metalinguistic awareness as well which serves as a prominent issue worthy of scrutiny for future investigations.

### **Conclusion**

The correlation coefficient results between the total scores on the different components of the metalinguistic task and the test of English proficiency were predictive of the existence of a moderate correlation between the learners' metalinguistic knowledge and their linguistic proficiency. The results stand in accordance with the findings of Roehr (2006) who reported a fairly strong correlation between the linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge of university learners. Furthermore, the results are consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Correa (2011) who documented a positive correlation between the learners' metalinguistic knowledge and their accuracy in using Spanish subjunctive as an instance of a complex structure. However, the findings of this study stand in contrast with the results reported by Macaro and Masterman (2006). They hypothesized that explicit metalinguistic explanation of grammatical rules would not lead to successful internalization of the selected rules.

The analysis of the participants' responses considering the three tasks of recognition, correction, and explanation rejected the probability of language transfer. The data could be interpreted in terms of the idea that the students' success in fulfilling the recognition task (dealing with the English sentences) was primarily due to the instructional treatments to which they were exposed (concerning the differences between the two terms of direct and indirect object) in their English courses in different periods of their academic and nonacademic educational experiences. However, they failed in their attempt to provide

satisfactory metalinguistic explanations for the same items. The participants' failure in this regard could be related to different factors like lack of sufficient amount of explicit instruction or the poor quality of the instructional activities provided by the teachers. In other words, the results implied that the provided metalinguistic explanations were ineffective. Generally speaking, the above-mentioned failure could be pertinent to the quality of the instructional materials in our educational system. Explicit metalinguistic instructions are primarily directed to instructional activities limited to exercises in which the learners have to recognize the expected grammatical items or correct the faulty structures (forms) without having a transparent awareness and understanding of the rules generating those forms.

It may be worth recalling that this study considers the students' metalinguistic knowledge rather than what they actually have been taught. Therefore, as Correa (2011, p. 54) succinctly mentioned "it is still possible that what has been taught is not learned and what is learned has not been taught." As MacWhinney (1997, p. 279) stated, "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink". Thus, it seems illogical to assume that that all learners benefit from the tools provided to them by their teachers in different educational settings.

Furthermore, the results regarding the Persian sentences triggered the idea that compared with English, the participants in this study did not have a clear understanding of the difference between direct and indirect object in Persian. The logical reason is that they could easily recognize the target item (direct object) in the simple Persian sentence but failed to find the same item in the complex Persian structure. Such a case could be justified in terms of the idea that their understanding of the term 'direct object' was limited to the concept of object in general without grasping the distinction between the two terms of direct and indirect ones. The results stand in partial conformity with the findings of Clapham (1997) who conducted a similar study with respect to English students studying French as their L2.

The absence of language transfer between Persian and English could be elaborated in reference to the idea proposed by Ellis (1994). He mentioned that learners monitor their choice of grammatical forms more strictly due to the fact that their metalinguistic awareness is less enriched in syntax compared with the other fields of language like pronunciation, lexis, and discourse. As a consequence, language transfer is less palpable in the field of syntax in comparison with the other fields.

Ultimately, the two-way ANOVA analysis of the study presented no significant difference between the freshmen and sophomores with respect to their gender. Thus far, the findings denoted two facts regarding the learners' metalinguistic assessment and knowledge: First, assessing the learners' metalinguistic knowledge is much more complicated and bewildering than it is expected. Second, in devising efficient metalinguistic tasks as half the battle, the first step to take is to conduct a contrastive analysis of the item under investigation in both languages involved in the study, if we feel strongly about detecting any probable traces of language transfer effectively. The existence of such a comparative view would be helpful in recognizing the syntactic distinctions encompassing the semantic and syntactic saliency of the target form with respect to the context in which it occurs. Furthermore, the researchers need to consider the order and frequency of occurrence, the level of complexity as well as the degree to which the learners' metalinguistic knowledge (at different levels of language proficiency) is enriched considering the specific item or items under investigation. However, we can only make these assumptions tentatively on the basis of the limited evidence we have obtained. All in all, there is still much we do not know about how metalinguistic knowledge affects SLA and how it should be dealt with in our teaching programs. Perhaps, this study

was conducted with the hope of providing a starting point for better understanding of the role it plays in SLA.

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# THE EFFECTS ON LISTENING STRATEGIES AND LISTENING ANXIETY BY LISTENING TRAINING PROGRAM AMONG EFL SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN TAIWAN

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## **Abstract**

The study mainly focused on investigating English as Foreign Language (EFL) listening anxiety and listening strategy comparing genders and language proficiency levels. The participants chosen for the study were 124 participants from a highly competitive senior high school in Taiwan. The data collection was carried out in two stages. The first investigation was conducted at the beginning of the semester. The final investigation was conducted at the end of the semester after the participants had received the listening comprehension strategy training. The participants were asked fill out the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) and Listening Comprehension Strategy Inventory (LCSI) questionnaires to explore the differences between the pre-test and post-test. The results of this study have stated that the scores participants got from FLLAS and LCSI were statistically negatively correlated. Regardless of gender group, the conclusion was that the degree of listening anxiety had been reduced and that their listening strategy levels had improved after receiving the listening comprehension strategy instruction. Also, the listening strategy instruction did have an impact on all of three metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategy uses and reduced the listening anxiety for the lower and intermediate proficiency level students. With respect to the high proficiency level students, results also showed no statistically significant difference on FLLAS. Results also showed a statistically significant difference on LCSI at the high proficiency level in the cognitive, socio-affective domain respectively, but not for the metacognitive domain. Implications for EFL educators to recognize the directions of instructional practices for enhancing listening comprehension are presented.

**Key words:** listening anxiety, listening strategies, EFL senior high school students

## **1. Introduction**

There is no denying that English listening plays the key role in acquiring a language because it is a main source of language input. According to Vandergrift (2004), listening also plays a significant part in the learning of ESL (English as second language) or EFL (English as foreign language). This is because it gives the learners information from which to set up the knowledge necessary for using the language. Besides this, Mendelsohn (1994) mentions that listening is a vital role in communication. In terms of the total time spent on communication, listening takes up 40-50 %; speaking, 25-30%; reading, 11-16%; and writing, 9%. Although the instruction of listening comprehension has long been "somewhat neglected and poorly taught aspect of English in many EFL programs" (Mendelsohn, 1994, p.9), listening is

currently viewed as much more significant in EFL classroom. Lu (2008) has shown that 93% of the students thought that the English listening strategy was more vital than the other three skills (speaking, reading, and writing). However, Taiwan uses exam-oriented methods of instruction in senior high schools and no English listening exam section is included in the college entrance exam. Because of this, students are lacking in listening skills training in the classroom and in their daily lives, so most Taiwanese senior high school students' listening skills are far from adequate and that probably has a great influence on their English listening comprehension. Also, lacking English listening strategies might have an influence on English listening learning anxiety. For instance, Vogely (1998) mentioned listening comprehension anxiety and what strategies can be adopted to help learners cope with this anxiety more effectively, and that the use of listening strategies could help reduce student anxiety toward a listening comprehension activity. This study aimed to explore the effects of a listening training program on listening strategy usages and listening anxiety of the senior high school students. The results of this study will be the valuable references for both English teachers and learners to evaluate their instruction and learning listening experience in the classroom and the application in daily communication.

This study aimed to explore answers to the following questions:

1. Is there any relationship between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listening anxiety and listening strategies used by the senior high school students?
2. What are the effects of listening strategy instruction on EFL senior high school students' listening anxieties and strategies in terms of gender (male and female)?
3. What are the effects of listening strategy instruction on EFL senior high school students' listening anxieties and listening strategies used in terms of various language levels (high, average, low)?

## **2. Literature Reviews**

### **2.1 Listening Comprehension Processing Models**

Mendelsohn (1994) defines listening comprehension as follows: "listening comprehension is an active and conscious process in which the listener constructs meaning by using cues from contextual information and from existing knowledge, while relying upon multiple strategic resources to fulfill the task requirement" (p.19). Anderson (2002) states that a language learner will go through three stages of processing the input resources: the perceptual, the parsing, and the utilization phrases. In the perceptual phrase, listeners receive the sounds and intonations by a speaker and from an image in their short-term memory, immediately transferring the information from echoic memory to short-term memory to deal with the sounds for meaningful mental representation and meaning. In the parsing phase, listeners reorganize the messages into meaningful words and representations that can be stored in short-term memory. Lastly, in the utilization phase, listeners use long-term memory to link the textual information to their background knowledge. In conclusion, it is believed that listening comprehension is not only the process of a recursive receiving of audible symbols, but an interactive process (Brown, 2001). In addition to this, Wilson (2003) states that listening is not as passive as it has been claimed to be as it demands a number of complicated and complex processes be performed by learners. Generally speaking, there are three kinds processing models in listening comprehension: the bottom-up processing, the top-down processing, and the interactive processing models (Wilson, 2003). The bottom-up processing involves constructing meaning from the smallest unit of the spoken language (e.g., words and sentences) to the largest one in a linear mode. The top-down processing, on the other

hand, refers to interpreting meaning as intended by the speakers by means of schemata or prior knowledge in the mind. The interactive processing combines the characteristics between the bottom-up processing and the top-down processing. Chiu (2006) claimed that listening comprehension was not only top-down but also bottom-up processing. Lu (2008) concluded that the EFL researchers believed the listeners not only utilized bottom-up but also top-down processing models.

## **2.2 The Discussions between Listening Learning Strategy and Listening Learning Anxiety**

In terms of listening comprehension strategies, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) classified learning strategies into three categories depending on the type of processing involved: cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies. Cognitive strategies consist of strategies of elaboration, inferencing, and translation. Metacognitive strategy refers to thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring learning, and evaluating comprehension. Social strategies include cooperative learning and asking questions. Listening strategies can aid learners to improve their English listening comprehension. For example, Yang (2002) suggests the following strategies that would aid improving English listening comprehension: using pre-listening activities, guessing the meaning from the context, assessing contextual cues, linking visual aids to a listening text, among others. Wang (2006) also indicates that the following strategies could help improve English listening comprehension: Listening for key words, reading options in advance, and concentrating. Moreover, Sun (2002) noted that the following elements and factors might have an impact on EFL listeners' comprehension: prior knowledge, deficient linguistic knowledge about the target language, speech speed, anxiety level, and so forth.

According to Bacon (1992), since listening is a complicated skill, students have the fear of understanding the message and interpreting it correctly. Why many language learners complain about the difficulties and challenges of listening in foreign language might also depend on feelings of inadequacies or lack of confidence (Dunkel, 1991). Foreign language anxiety may intervene in successful foreign language learning experience and in successful foreign language meaning experience and these factors may cause tension and fear while listening to the foreign language. In addition to this, the use of unfamiliar and difficult topics or unfamiliar and difficult vocabulary in the listening text was another cause for foreign language listening anxiety (Vogely, 1998). Vogely (1998) showed many potential sources of listening comprehension anxiety based on students' reports: input that is not clear or that is given too fast, and students' belief that they have to make sense of every single word. Also, the nature of the listening comprehension practice and insufficient listening time were other reported causes for listening anxiety. As mentioned above, the causes of foreign language listening anxiety might come from many sources including of internal and external reactions to a listening task.

With respect to the relation between listening comprehension and anxiety, some researchers have conducted some studies in this field, such as Kim (2000), and Yang (2000). Kim (2000) conducted a Korean anxiety study specifically related to listening strategies, and stated that there is a negative correlation between listening anxiety and listening performances. In addition to this, his study has also shown that tension and worry over English listening and a lack of self-confidence in listening comprehension were the main anxiety sources. According to Yang's (2000) finding, anxiety is significantly and negatively correlated with listening achievement. A few empirical studies have explored the relationship between foreign language listening anxiety and listening strategies, but more research should be done to look

into the nature and influence of listening anxiety, especially in Taiwan. On the other hand, listening strategy instruction is believed to be significant for the improvement of L2 learners' listening ability and performances (Vandergrift and Tafaghpdari, 2010). Graham and Erneso (2008) also stated that the amount of strategy training may also positively influence the learners' listening task performance. As mentioned above, teaching listening strategies is effective to listener development and to what students would not recognize unless instructed should be taught in the training programs.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Participants**

The participants chosen for the study were 124 participants from three English listening classes of a highly competitive senior high school in Taiwan. They were 17-18 years of age. They all had studied English in junior high school as a compulsory foreign language for three years prior to enrolling in the senior high school. There were 52 male and 72 female participants in total. The English listening comprehension placement exam was measured by a test that was patterned on a basic level mock GEPT (General English Proficiency Test). It was made up of three sections. The first section explored the understanding of pictures and was followed by a section of listening comprehension questions and responses while the last section evaluated the listening comprehension of general conversations between speakers in short conversations. There were a total of thirty questions in the listening comprehension exam, and the testing time was around 30 minutes. The total possible exam score was 100 points. Based on the results of exams, students were classified into three listening proficiency levels: low, intermediate, and high. 46 participants who received scores below 60 points were classified into the low level group; 55 participants who scored between 60-80 points were classified into the intermediate level group; and 23 participants who obtained a score above 80 points were classified into the high level group.

#### **3.2 Instruments**

For the purpose of finding out whether there is any relationship between EFL listening anxiety and RFL listening strategy use by the participants, the Chinese version of two quantitative instruments were employed: Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) (See Appendix A) and Listening Comprehension Strategy Inventory (LCSI) (See Appendix B). FLLAS was originally developed by Kim (2000). It is a 5-point Likert type scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) consisting of 33 items. To measure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated and it was found to be .86. This finding indicated that this instrument had high reliability and could be used for the purposes of the study. LCSI was originally developed by Cheng (2002). It is a 5-point Likert type scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) consisting of 30 items, and the questionnaire was divided into three parts. Statements 1-10 looked into metacognitive strategies, which consisted of pre-listening planning strategies, as well as listening monitoring strategies, and post-listening evaluation strategies. Statements 11 to 24 were designed to explore listeners' cognitive strategies (cognitive formal practicing strategies, bottom-up strategies, and top-down strategies). Statements 25-30 were social-affective strategies. To measure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated and it was found to be .81. This finding indicated that this instrument had high reliability and could be used for the purposes of the study.

### 3.3 Data Collection

The data collection was carried out in two stages. The first investigation was conducted at the beginning of the semester. The participants were asked fill out the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) and Listening Comprehension Strategy Inventory (LCSI) questionnaires. Then, they were taught how to use metacognitive listening strategies in order to reduce listening anxiety as well as increase listening strategy usage during 32 hours of English reading lectures. During the course, students were given lectures that related to fundamental pedagogical stages of metacognitive listening strategy instruction, including planning/predicting stage, first verification stage, second verification stage, final verification stage, and reflection stage (Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari, 2010). Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010, p.475) explain about stages of strategy instruction in this model, and the specific instructional procedures and metacognitive listening strategies were as follows:

1. After students have been informed of the listening topic and text type, they predict the types of information and possible words they may hear; this stage included planning and directed attention strategies
2. Students verify their initial hypotheses, correct as required, and note additional information understood; this stage included selective attention, monitoring and evaluation strategies.
3. Students compare what they have understood/written with peers, modify as required, establish what still needs resolution, and decide on the important details that still require special attention; this stage included monitoring, evaluation, planning, and selective attention strategies.
4. Students verify points of earlier disagreement, make corrections, and write down additional details understood; this stage included selective attention, monitoring, evaluating, and problem solving strategies.
5. Class discussion in which all class members contribute to the reconstruction of the main points of the text and the most pertinent details, interspersed with reflections on how students arrived at the meaning of certain words or parts of the text; this stage included monitoring, evaluating, and problem solving strategies.
6. Students listened specifically for the information revealed in the class discussion which they were not able to decipher earlier; this stage included selective attention, monitoring, and problem-solving strategies.
7. Based on the earlier discussion of strategies used to compensate for what was not understood, students wrote goals for the next listening activity; this stage included evaluation and planning strategies.

On the whole, the master teacher taught these reading strategies in the class for an entire semester to raise the students' awareness of metacognitive listening processes and strategies.

In the second stage, after the instruction of these metacognitive listening strategies at the end of the semester, the participants were given the same two kinds of questionnaires to fill out again. They were informed that this data was not related to their course grades, and that their anonymity was ensured to increase the probability of honest responses.

### 3.4 Data Analyses

In order to determine whether there is any relationship between Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) and Listening Comprehension Strategy Inventory (LCSI) among these participants, a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was calculated. A Paired-sampled t test was conducted to examine the differences between FLLAS and LCSI to various

genders in the pre-test and post-test. A One-way ANOVA was adapted to explore the differences between FLLAS and LCSi to various language proficiency levels in the pre-test and post-test. The data was analyzed to obtain descriptive and inferential statistics, the results of which are reported below.

#### 4. Results

Question one: Is there any relationship between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listening anxiety and listening strategies used by the senior high school students?

To find out whether there is a relationship between FLLAS and LCSi among all participants, a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was calculated. The scores participants got from FLLAS and LCSi were statistically correlated and the correlation coefficient was found to be  $-.49$ . The negative correlation between two variables indicated that when students' listening anxiety level increased, their use of listening strategy use decreased. The results revealed that there was a significant negative relationship between the listening anxiety and metacognitive, cognitive, social -affective listening strategies with a correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of  $.25$  ( $p < .05$ ),  $.42$  ( $p < .0001$ ), and  $.41$  ( $p < .0001$ ) respectively. Their percentage of variance being  $r^2 = .06$ ,  $r^2 = .17$ ,  $r^2 = .16$  respectively. This indicated that the correlation coefficient of listening anxiety and metacognitive, cognitive, social -affective listening strategies can explain 6%, 17%, 16% of the variations respectively. This implied that most of the participants preferred to use cognitive, social -affective listening strategies compared to metacognitive strategies after receiving the listening strategy instruction. Learners such as these in this study tended to learn by using not only bottom-up but also top-down processing models.

Question two: What are the effects of listening strategy instruction on EFL senior high school students' listening anxieties and strategies in terms of gender (male and female)?

The following results showed the mean scores on FLLAS and LCSi in the pre-test and post-test of male and female participants. A Paired-sampled t-test was conducted to examine the effects on listening anxiety and listening strategy on the mean score between the pre-test and post-test on each group, and the effects of each domain was statistically significant at the  $.0001$  probability level. According to the analyses of Paired-sampled t-test, there was a difference between male and female groups, because  $t(123) = 8.59$ ,  $p < .0001$ . On the average, the male group had lower mean score in the post-test ( $M = 2.28$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ) in terms of their degrees of anxiety. On the other hand, The male group had higher mean score in the post-test ( $M = 3.59$ ,  $SD = 0.38$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M = 2.62$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ) in the metacognitive strategy domain. It also showed that higher mean score in the post-test ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M = 2.85$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ) in the cognitive strategy domain. Interestingly, it also identified that higher mean score in the post-test ( $M = 3.40$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M = 2.57$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ) in socio-affective domain. The female group had lower mean score in the post-test ( $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ) in terms of their degrees of anxiety. On the other hand, The female group had higher mean score in the post-test ( $M = 3.64$ ,  $SD = 0.39$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ) in the metacognitive strategy domain. It also showed that higher mean score in the post-test ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 0.30$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M = 2.68$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ) in the cognitive strategy domain. Interestingly, it also identified that higher mean score in the post-test ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M = 2.64$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ) in socio-affective domain.

Regardless of male or female group, it is concluded that their degrees of listening anxiety had been reduced and their listening strategy degree usage increased after receiving the listening comprehension strategy instruction. It is obvious that the listening comprehension strategy instruction has an effective influence on male and female groups.

Question Three: What are the effects of listening strategy instruction on EFL senior high school students' listening anxieties and listening strategies used in terms of various language proficiency levels (high, average, low)?

A One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was generated to compare the mean scores between the impacts of FLLAS and LCSi on various proficiency levels. Results showed a statistically significant difference on FLLAS in the low proficiency level with  $F(2, 43)=266.66$ ,  $p<.0001$ , intermediate proficiency level with  $F(2, 52)=1816.87$ ,  $p<.0001$  respectively. The low proficiency group had lower mean score in the post-test ( $M=3.41$ ,  $SD=0.27$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M=4.15$ ,  $SD=0.15$ ) in terms of their degrees of anxiety. The intermediate proficiency group had lower mean score in the post-test ( $M=2.89$ ,  $SD=0.23$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M=3.19$ ,  $SD=0.15$ ) in terms of their degrees of anxiety. On the other hand, the low proficiency group had higher mean score in the post-test ( $M=3.53$ ,  $SD=0.39$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M=1.77$ ,  $SD=0.33$ ) in the metacognitive strategy domain. It also showed that higher mean score in the post-test ( $M=3.41$ ,  $SD=0.35$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M=2.14$ ,  $SD=0.36$ ) in the cognitive strategy domain. Interestingly, it also identified that higher mean score in the post-test ( $M=3.37$ ,  $SD=0.15$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M=2.73$ ,  $SD=0.18$ ) in the socio-affective domain.

The intermediate proficiency group had higher mean score in the post-test ( $M=3.60$ ,  $SD=0.38$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M=2.94$ ,  $SD=0.21$ ) in the metacognitive strategy domain. It also showed that higher mean score in the post-test ( $M=3.64$ ,  $SD=0.30$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M=2.96$ ,  $SD=0.30$ ) in the cognitive strategy domain. Interestingly, it also identified that higher mean score in the post-test ( $M=3.43$ ,  $SD=0.50$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M=2.90$ ,  $SD=0.64$ ) in the socio-affective domain. As mentioned above, it is clear that the listening strategy instruction did have an impact on all of three metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategy uses for the lower and intermediate proficiency level students.

With respect to the high proficiency level, results showed no statistically significant difference on FLLAS, due to  $p>.0001$ . Results showed a statistically significant difference on LCSi in the high proficiency level with  $F(2, 20)=99.32$ ,  $p<.05$  in the cognitive domain, with  $F(2, 20)=15.21$ ,  $p<.001$  in the socio-affective domain respectively, except for the metacognitive domain because of  $p=.637$ . It also showed that higher mean score in the post-test ( $M=3.79$ ,  $SD=0.36$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M=3.50$ ,  $SD=0.53$ ) in the cognitive strategy domain. Interestingly, it also identified that higher mean score in the post-test ( $M=4.40$ ,  $SD=0.45$ ) than that in the pre-test ( $M=3.57$ ,  $SD=0.52$ ) in the socio-affective domain. It is obvious that the listening strategy instruction did have an impact on cognitive and socio-affective strategy uses for the high proficiency level students.

## 5. Conclusions and Discussions

The scores participants got from FLLAS and LCSi were statistically correlated and the correlation coefficient was found to be negative in this study. The negative correlation between two variables indicated that when students' listening anxiety level increased, their use of listening strategy use decreased. The findings of this study correspond with Gonen's finding (2009). No one can deny that listening anxiety plays an important role in listening comprehension. A harmonious and relaxed atmosphere should be created in EFL listening

classroom settings. For example, teachers could select some humorous movies to help them relax. A harmonious and relaxed atmosphere benefits students by reducing their listening anxiety and increasing their receiving comprehension input. Movies are an affective teaching media to develop the EFL learners' listening strategies and stimulate their imagination simultaneously. Because of their capacity to arise the listeners' learning motivation and their potential to engage the listeners in a variety of fruitful activities they can function as a vital content of the listening curriculum and instruction (Sommer, 2001). In addition to this, Eken (2003) also mentioned that creative exploitation of the movies can increase listeners' potentials by improving the acquisition of listening strategies. More recently, as suggested by Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010), providing the various authentic listening texts, such as movies can make the process of listening more motivating and interesting.

The findings of this study implied that most of the participants preferred to use cognitive, and social -affective listening strategies compared to metacognitive strategies after receiving the listening strategy instruction, especially for the lower and intermediate proficiency level students. Learners such as these in this study tended to learn by using not only bottom-up but also top-down processing models. The finding is partly consistent with O'Malley and Chamot (2001). Based on O'Malley and Chamot (2001), there are three kinds of strategies: metacognitive strategy, cognitive strategy, and social-affective strategy; the social-affective strategy influenced learning immediately. On the other hand, it is obvious that the listening comprehension strategy instruction has an effective influence on male and female groups. In other words, after receiving the listening comprehension strategy instruction, their listening degrees of anxiety had been reduced and their degrees of listening strategy usage increased. It is suggested that listening comprehension strategy instruction can help EFL learners have more positive perception of the task of learning listening comprehension. Teaching EFL listeners how to adapt these strategies in efficient and effective ways requires striking a balance between the top-down and bottom-up approaches. According to Vandergrift (2004), EFL listeners can benefit from an integrated (the combination between the top-down and bottom-up) method in terms of listening strategy instruction.

#### **6. The Research Limitations**

First of all, one limitation of the present study was the small number of participants which was 124 senior high school students, and the results can not be generalized to all Taiwan EFL senior high school settings. Second, the questionnaires used for collecting data on listening anxiety and listening strategy were a quantitative instrument which can be subjected the impact of response bias. Some deeper results of these findings might be generated if a qualitative instrument such as a think-aloud protocol is used. Finally, it is difficult to measure affective variables on a certain period, and it would also be useful to conduct a longitudinal study to explore learning and test anxiety over time.

#### **7. Directions for Future Research**

Some directions for future research emerge as the results of this study are taken into consideration since the results leave some questions to explore further. How does EFL listening anxiety affect EFL learners' listening comprehension performance on an exam? How does EFL listening strategy affect EFL learners' listening comprehension performance on an exam? among others.

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### Appendix A: Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Questionnaire

When listening to English:

1. I get stuck with one or two unfamiliar words.
2. I get nervous if listening test passages are read just once.
3. It is difficult to understand people with English pronunciation that is different from mine.
4. I worry that I might not be able to understand when people talk too fast.
5. I am nervous when I am not familiar with the topic.
6. It is easy to make guesses about the parts I missed.
7. I worry that I might have missed important information while I was distracted.
8. I am worried when I can not see the lips or facial expressions of the person.
9. I get nervous and confused when I don't understand every word in listening test situations.
10. It is difficult to differentiate words.
11. I feel uncomfortable listening without a chance to read the transcript of the speech.
12. I have difficulty in understanding oral instruction.
13. It is difficult to concentrate on and hear a speaker I do not know well.
14. I feel confident in my listening skills.
15. I often get so confused that I can't remember what I have heard.
16. I fear I might have an inadequate knowledge about the topic.
17. My thoughts become jumbled and confused in listening for important information.
18. I get worried when I have little time to think about what I have heard.
19. I often end up translating word by word without understanding what I am listening to.
20. I would rather not listen to people talking in English.
21. I get worried when I can't listen at the pace I am comfortable with.
22. I tend to think that other people understand the content well enough.
23. I get upset when I am not sure whether I have understood well.
24. I am worried I might not understand when the person lowers their voice while speaking in English.
25. I have no fear of listening to public speeches in English.
26. I am nervous when listening to English over the phone or when imagining myself listening over the phone.
27. I feel tense when listening to, or imagining myself listening to, a lecture.
28. I have difficulty when the environment around me is noisy.
29. Listening to new information makes me uneasy.

30. I get annoyed when I come across new words.
31. English stress and intonation patterns are familiar to me.
32. It often happens that I do not understand what English speakers say.
33. The thought that I may be missing key words frightens me.

**Appendix B: Listening Strategies Questionnaire**

1. I clarify the objectives of an anticipated listening task and/or propose strategies for handling it.
2. Before listening, I prepare my mind to concentrate.
3. Before listening, I request myself to make progress.
4. While listening, I don't understand if I am unfamiliar with speakers' accents.
5. While listening, I will check what part of content I don't understand.
6. While listening, I will double check again for my answer.
7. I am aware of my inattention and correct it while doing listening test.
8. After listening, I reflect on my problems, such as the key words that I don't understand.
9. After listening, I evaluate how much I could understand.
10. I will write down the words I don't know after the listening tests and look up the dictionary.
11. I will practice English listening actively in daily lives, such as listening to English radio, English songs, talking to foreigners.
12. While listening, I try to translate words or sentences into Chinese.
13. While listening, I can apply the new vocabulary, phrases, or grammar I have learned to understand the content.
14. While listening, I will notice the information questions with who, how, when, where, and what in the content.
15. While listening, I try to understand each word.
16. While listening, I repeat words or phrases softly or mentally.
17. While listening, I piece things together from the details.
18. I listen for main ideas first and then details.
19. I predicted or make hypotheses on tests by titles.
20. I can guess the meaning based on the context.
21. I try to think in English instead of Chinese.
22. While listening, I form pictures mentally to help me comprehend texts.
23. I collect the contents of listening to my personal experiences.
24. If I don't understand what someone says in English, I ask them to repeat what they said.
25. After listening, I ask my classmates or teachers questions I don't understand.
26. I hope teachers can teach me more skills to improve my listening comprehension.
27. While listening, I can keep calm and not be nervous.
28. I am confident in understand the whole contents.
29. I encourage myself through positive self-talk.

# THE EFFECT OF USING CALL ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION OF THE INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS

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## **Abstract**

The use of technology in teaching and learning environments is an important aspect which has received considerable attention in recent years. In a similar vein, the use of computer software to increase effectiveness of instruction has been acknowledged through a number of experimental studies carried out so far. The present study attempted to discover the impact of using CALL software on the improvement of the listening comprehension of the intermediate EFL learners. After administrating a listening comprehension pre-test all 44 participants of the study were randomly selected to form the experimental and comparison groups of the study. In the experimental group the participants were taught the listening skill using computer software (the Rosetta Stone language learning software), while the participants of the comparison group were given a placebo (traditional method of teaching listening was used). After the instruction a post-test was administered to both groups. The result of the study indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the groups. Therefore, it was concluded that the use of CALL software could improve the learners' listening skill.

**Key words:** Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), listening comprehension, computer software.

## **1. Introduction**

The rapid evolution of information and communication technology (ICT) has affected English teaching in many different ways. A large number of studies have been carried out to measure the effectiveness of CALL. Many of these studies report no difference between traditional face-to face instruction and CALL but, as Burnston (2003) stated, these inquiries are concerned about final outcomes and conclusions are almost always made in a theoretical vacuum without considering the cognitive and/or second language acquisition processes underlying reported linguistic performance. In assessing the impact of technology on

curriculum, it is important to take into account that more aspects need to be measured than immediate learning outcomes (Burnston, 2003).

Research on CALL effectiveness can be presented from different perspectives. For example, in a Meta analysis, Felix (2005) specified three lines of research on the effectiveness of CALL. The first line includes early positive reports from the authors of several large meta-analyses of CALL, where Basena and Jamieson (1996, p. 19) stated that “the newer technologies show promise to be able to provide feedback in multiple modes, such as listening and reading”. The second line of inquiry involves dismissive, unsubstantiated comments such as: “Study after study seems to confirm that computer-based instruction reduces performance levels and that habitual Internet use induces depression” (Noble, 1998, p. 1). The third line and the most often cited collection of research results showed no difference between face-to-face instruction and CALL. At the end of her article, Felix (2005) explained common problems in the effectiveness research including misleading titles, poor choice of variables to be investigated, poor description of the research design, failure to investigate previous research, and overambitious reporting of results. In the following part we have selected a number of recent process oriented studies which are related to the scope of the present study, those that investigate teachers and students’ perception of the use of CALL.

Shin & Son (2007) examined Korean secondary school EFL teachers’ perceptions and perspectives on the use of the Internet for teaching purposes. A total of 101 teachers participated in a survey and responded to the questions of how they think about Internet-Assisted Language Teaching (IALT), how they use the Internet, and what types of resources they use on the Internet. The findings of the study suggest that there are three key factors affecting the use of the Internet in the classroom: teachers’ personal interest in Internet use; teachers’ abilities to integrate Internet resources into classroom activities; and computer facilities and technical support in schools. Kim (2008) examined 10 ESL/EFL teachers’ teaching beliefs and perceptions about the role of computers in their classrooms. The grounded theory method was employed to understand these teachers’ perceptions of computers in their classrooms. For data collection, each participant was interviewed for 50 minutes. The findings suggested that these teachers’ perceptions and expectations of computers favored their use as instructional tools.

In another study by Park and Son (2009) some Korean EFL teachers’ perceptions of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) were explored. The results of the study indicated that the teachers have positive and favorable attitudes toward the use of the computers. They consider computer technology as a useful teaching tool that can enhance ways of teaching by offering students a variety of language inputs and expanding students’ learning experiences in real and authentic contexts. Wang & Wang (2010) investigated the perceptions of EFL Taiwanese university students on a collaborative CALL environment. The participants were 112 intermediate proficiency English as a foreign language Taiwanese third-year university students. The results of the study provided encouraging evidence to show that the participants generally perceived that they benefited from the whole process of a collaborative computer assisted language learning program to have positive perspectives on the implemented CALL course itself, advance their English linguistic knowledge, to construct associated content knowledge, and foster their affective attitudes towards learning language via a collaborative CALL environment. Lin et al. (2011) explored EFL students’ perceptions of learning vocabulary collaboratively with computers. From the qualitative data, more than 70% of the participants in the computer group reported a positive attitude and anticipation to learning vocabulary in such an environment.

Ballester (2012) reported on a 2-year empirical study of intermediate level learners' perceptions of the use of a web-based multimedia program with authentic video clips and its effectiveness as a language-learning tool. Students believed that the learned culture and vocabulary enhanced their listening skills. At the same time, Sophocleous (2012) explored student teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of new technologies in their learning and the participants believed that they could be excellent tools to use in their teaching with their students.

Similarly, a number of studies have been carried out in Iran on the way the use of CALL could affect the development of learners' language skills. For instance, Shabani (2001) investigated the advantage of using CALL on vocabulary learning of Iranian EFL learners, and Hatam (2004) found the positive impact of internet-based tasks on the development of interactional competence of Iranian EFL learners.

The importance of listening cannot be underestimated since as Celce-Murcia (1991) mentioned, listening is used far more than any other single language skill in normal daily life. She further argued that on average we can expect to listen twice as much as we speak, four times more than we read, and five times more than we write. According to Richards and Renandya (2002), some applied linguists argue that listening comprehension is at the core of second language acquisition and therefore demands a much greater prominence in language teaching.

Given the importance of listening in language learning and the opportunities that CALL provides the present study addresses the following questions:

Does using CALL have any significant effect on the improvement of the intermediate EFL students' listening comprehension?

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Participants**

The subjects of this study were 44 male and female EFL learners who were studying English at the elementary level in a language school in Mashhad, Iran. They were between 13 and 18 years old.

### **2.2. Instrumentation**

The following instruments were used to gather data at different stages of this study:

1. A language proficiency test, a modified version of KET, consisting of 25 listening questions, 50 reading questions, and the writing section in which students were supposed to write a description of their house in one paragraph. The time limit for answering the test was 110 minutes.
2. A listening comprehension pre-test, another version of KET was used at the beginning of the study to be sure that all participants are homogeneous in terms of listening comprehension. The test included 25 listening questions, 15 questions were in the multiple-choice format and 10 questions were in the table completion format.
3. A listening comprehension post-test, the listening section of another version of KET was adopted.

### **2.3. Material**

The Rosetta Stone language learning software was the main material of this study. It utilizes a combination of images, sounds, texts at difficulty levels increasing as the student progresses, in order to teach various grammatical functions, listening comprehension and

vocabulary terms. Instruction takes the form of a unit of lessons. Within each lesson there are sets of exercises testing listening, speaking, and reading. With a mark/sound chosen by the reader from the options menu, the program indicates whether the right or wrong choice has been selected.

#### **2.4. Procedure**

The procedure will be reported in the following stages:

##### **2.4.1. Participants Selection and Homogenization**

In order to homogenize the participants upon their level of proficiency and their listening ability, first a KET (described in full earlier) was administered to all the 44 available students. They were then randomly divided into experimental and comparison groups. The comparison group consisted of 22 students, 10 males and 12 females, and the experimental group consisted of 22 students, 11 males and 11 females.

##### **2.4.2. Administrating the Listening Pre-test**

As it was mentioned earlier, the experimental and comparison groups, were selected from among a population of students whose proficiency level was examined to be at the same. However, since the study concentrated on listening skill, a listening test, adapted from KET sample tests, was administered to both groups to ensure that they were also homogenous in terms of listening ability.

##### **2.4.3. Intervention**

During the instruction, while the participants of the experimental group was taught listening with the help of the computer software, the comparison group was taught in the traditional way, which was limited to listening to the tape and answering some questions from their book. Each participant of the experimental group used a computer to do the listening exercises related to the vocabulary and grammar that they were taught each lesson. They were supposed to listen to a sentence and choose the correct pictures.

The contents of listening lessons taught to the comparison group were similar to those of the experimental group. That is the pictures were printed to them, and they were supposed to listen to the tape and choose the correct picture.

##### **2.4.4. Administrating the listening Post-test**

After ten sessions of teaching, a listening post-test, similar to that of pre-test was administered to both groups in their final examination. It is worth mentioning that the listening post-test was different from listening pre-test.

### **3. Results**

After administrating the KET to 44 students, descriptive statistics was obtained. Table 1 demonstrates the descriptive statistics of the language proficiency test that was used for the homogenization of the participants. The mean and the standard deviation equaled 52.58 and 11.41, respectively. They were then randomly divided into experimental and comparison groups.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Homogeneity Test

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Total Valid N	44	44	48	86	62.35	11.41	108.27	.65	.30	.13	.68

Since the study concentrated on listening ability, and to check the homogeneity of the experimental and comparison groups at the beginning of the experimentation, a listening test was administered to both groups as a pre-test, and an independent *t*-test was performed on the two groups test scores. Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Two Groups on the Listening Pre-test

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Comparison	22	10.50	2.33
Pre-test Experimental	22	11.05	3.14

Regarding the mean scores of two groups there was no significance difference, but in order to be sure of close homogeneity of two groups, a *t*-test was run. It showed that there was no significant difference between the experimental and comparison groups in terms of their listening comprehension. Table 3 manifests the results:

Table 3. Comparison between Variances and Means of the Two Groups on the listening Pre-test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	t critical	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Pre-test Equal variances assumed	103	.001	0.35	42	2.02	0.55	.095	-3.54	2.74

As it has been shown in table 3, the *t*-observed value for the comparison of the means of two groups was 0.35 at 42 degrees of freedom, which was lower than the *t*-critical of 2.02. Thus it

could be claimed that the two groups were not significantly different in terms of listening comprehension before undergoing the treatment.

After ten sessions of instruction, both groups were given a similar post-test. Table 4 summarizes the descriptive statistics.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of the two Groups on the Listening Post-test

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Post-test Comparison	22	15.02	3.15
Experimental	22	19.25	3.23

To see whether the treatment was effective or not, the means of two groups were compared through a *t*-test. As it has been shown in table 5, the *t*-observed value was 4.26 at 42 degrees of freedom which was higher than the *t*-critical of 2.02. Thus, it was concluded that the students' achievement of listening in the experimental group was significantly greater than that of the comparison group.

Table 5. Comparison between variances and Means of the Two Groups on the Listening Post-test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	F critical	T	Df	t critical	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Post-test Equal variances assumed	0.02	4.10	4.26	42	2.02	4.23	2.30	-6.94	-1.46

**4. Discussion**

The present study indicated that using computer software offered interesting advantages to the experimental group as compared with the comparison group. It can be suggested that using computer software helped learners to be familiar with real language use. Since learners had not had any classes in which computer software were used, they showed high enthusiasm towards this class. Furthermore, interaction between learners was one of the advantages of multimedia environment which was completely absent in the comparison group.

**5. Conclusion**

In the past twenty years or so, language teachers have been called upon to adopt a whole range of technical devices: teachers who themselves have mastered a foreign language with the aid of nothing more technical than a book, blackboard and chalk are now expected to be able to use slide projectors, overhead projectors, language laboratories, video recorders, and

now computers (Jones & Fortescue 1987). With the development of new technologies, there has been an attendant interest in applying these technologies in education. The present study proves that using CALL has a significant impact on the improvement of the listening ability. Therefore, it is suggested to all language teachers to use computer technology for better teaching. Accordingly, attempts should be made to move towards computerized language skills instruction, as teaching through multimedia programs might make learning a more enjoyable and memorable experience for learners.

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## EXTROVERSION / INTROVERSION AND BREADTH OF VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE

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### **Abstract**

This research is broadly concerned with the differences among language learners. In fact, it is an endeavor to unravel the enigma of vocabulary teaching in EFL environment by scrutinizing the effect of the personality factors of extroversion/introversion on the learners' breadth of vocabulary knowledge. Furthermore, it tries to investigate the relationship between the learners' passive and productive levels of vocabulary knowledge. The research participants constituted 94 juniors from the Islamic Azad University, Roudehen Branch. They were administered four types of tests: The 1000 frequency level, the passive version of the Vocabulary Levels Test, the productive version of the Vocabulary Levels Test, and the Eysenck extroversion/introversion questionnaire respectively. The *t*-test analysis of the study indicated that extroverts outperformed their introverted counterparts in both fields of passive and productive vocabulary. In addition, the results of the correlational analyses between the participants' passive and productive vocabulary at different levels and as a whole were indicative of the idea that growth in passive vocabulary does not necessarily lead to growth in the learners' active vocabulary.

**KEYWORDS:** Extroversion, Introversion, Active vocabulary, Passive Vocabulary, Eysenck

### **Introduction**

We use language for communication, and so naturally one key issue in lexical studies is how much vocabulary is necessary to enable this communication. In fact, the answer depends on one's learning goals. "If one wishes to achieve native-like proficiency, then presumably it is necessary to have a vocabulary size similar to native speakers" (Schmitt, 2010, p.6). Fortunately, foreign language learners do not need to obtain native-like vocabulary. However, they need to possess a rich size of vocabulary to satisfy the various forms of communication in English. Schmitt (2010) reported that 8,000-9,000 word families are required to read a wide variety of texts without having difficulty in understanding novel words. In fact, a good reason supporting the significance of lexical acquisition and vocabulary breadth is the oft-repeated observation that learners carry around dictionaries and not books related to the other sub-skills like grammar. The upshot is that English

language learners need to possess a large size of lexical items to operate effectively and functionally across a variety of domains.

According to Alderson, 2005 (cited in Schmitt, 2010, p. 5), "the size of one's vocabulary is relevant to one's performance on any language test, in other words, that language ability is to quite a large extent a function of vocabulary size." Augustin Liach (2011, p.19) believes that "in L1 and L2 acquisition, vocabulary represents the onset of language development and plays a central part in it. Therefore, finding out how vocabulary acquisition proceeds is of extreme relevance to the field of SLA." Additionally, Chacon-Beltran, Abello-Contesse, and Torreblanca-Lopez (2010) stated the fact that vocabulary has suffered a lower status in comparison with the other fields of L2 acquisition, primarily grammar. One reason for such a blatant negligence was the apparent dominance of structuralism, language teaching methods and approaches depicting language as a closed system of manageable grammar rules rather than an open-ended system, referred to as vocabulary.

According to Schmitt (2010), we have a galaxy of empirical investigations regarding vocabulary acquisition and its significance since the blossoming of research which Meara initially noted in 1987. However, in recent years there has been an increasing awareness of the necessity in second language research to examine personality factors that have an undeniable effect on language learning and teaching. Affective factors have received some attention, but there has been a neglect of certain traits within the typology of personality factors. Affective/temperament traits as personality indicators like extroversion-introversion have been researched in different areas of SLA (e. g., Moody, 1988; Mac Intyre & Charos, 1996; Carrell, *et al*, 1996; Kiany, 1997; Oxford, 1997; Dewaele & Furnham, 1999 as cited in Sharp, 2004). Although the role of personality traits in predicting the academic performance has been studied by some scholars, the impact of the affective factors of extroversion/introversion on the learner's vocabulary breadth has been a neglected area particularly in non-western cultural groups. This short article describes some preliminary research which intends to go some way in correcting this omission by evaluating the effect of the personality factors of extroversion/introversion on the learners' vocabulary breadth in FLA.

If we were to devise theories of second language acquisition and teaching methods which were only based on cognitive considerations, we would be omitting the most fundamental aspect involved in second language acquisition as the learner's personality factor. From another perspective, learners are unrealistically assumed to learn only what teachers intend to teach them. Referring to such an implication regarding language learning, we leave no room for the kinds of individual differences that naturally exist among individuals. Accordingly, we have to be alert to make a general distinction between overt behavior - what learners appear to be doing - and covert learning processes that cannot be scrutinized easily. Apparently, as teachers we would wish to bring these two aspects in line as closely as possible to provide the students with more effective teaching and learning atmospheres. Thus, any investigation analyzing the learner's personality factors (e.g., extroversion/introversion) may be helpful in grasping the distinction between the learners' overt and covert behavior.

Perhaps, research on personality factors is a developing area that is beginning to contribute to our understanding, and one to which teachers, with their rich knowledge of classrooms and learners, have much to contribute. Any investigation pertinent to the learners' personality factors and vocabulary acquisition would be helpful in grasping how lexical acquisition proceeds and where it does not proceed smoothly. Additionally, any analysis

evaluating the link between the learners' personality factors and their degree of lexical achievement may be helpful in formulating new theories regarding the structure of L2 mental lexicon. Therefore, the general idea of this research is primarily focused on evaluating the effect of the learners' personality trait of extroversion/introversion on their breadth of vocabulary knowledge.

### Literature Review

Different personality factors as tolerance of ambiguity, empathy, self-esteem, inhibition, and intelligence have also been addressed by SLA research, but it is also argued that extroversion/introversion is regarded to be one of the most important factors affecting L2 acquisition. According to Wakamoto (2009), research interest in individual differences like extroversion/introversion corresponds to a simple pedagogical question: Why are some learners more prone to success in language acquisition than others, even if they all experience the same learning and teaching conditions.

The two terms of introvert and extrovert (extravert) as two methods of processing information were coined by Carl Jung (1913) for the first time. Jung viewed these two terms from the perspective of preferred orientation with which we all as human beings are well-equipped. In this multi-dimensional field, introverts resort to their inner thoughts and feelings in the way of searching meaning. However, extroverts prefer the outside world of object, people, and activities, despite the fact that both attitudes are present in each person. Extroversion/introversion stands out among the other learning styles as a continuum but as mentioned by Eysenck and Chan (1982, p.154, cited in Ellis, 1994, p.520), it is possible to identify idealized types. "Extraverts are sociable, like parties, have many friends and need excitement; they are sensation-seekers and risk-takers, like practical jokes and are lively and active. Conversely, introverts are quiet, prefer reading to meeting people, have few but close friends and usually avoid excitement."

Extroversion has been frequently studied with respect to cognitive processing. According to Tobacyk, Driggers, and Hourcade, 1991 (cited in Matthews, 1997), the perceptual/cognitive information processing preferences associated with extroversion, intuition, and perceiving complement high self-monitoring, while the processing preferences associated with introversion, sensing, and judging complement low self-monitoring. The introverted type withdraws into himself, seeing the world from his own subjective view. In this way he prefers his internal world of thoughts, fantasies and dreams. This is of course not because of being shy or misanthrope but is related to the fact that he feels more comfortable as he becomes involved with a sort of inner contemplation.

There are several studies devoted to the analysis of extroversion/introversion in EFL and ESL. The results of the study conducted by Farely (1967) showed greater vocabulary achievement for introverts compared with their extroverted counterparts. Busch (1982, as cited in Wakamoto, 2009) examined the relationship between the extroversion and English proficiency of 185 Japanese learners of English as a foreign language. The results indicated a weak negative correlation between extroversion and the sections pertinent to grammar and vocabulary ( $r = -.18$ ,  $p < .057$ ,  $n = 80$ ), and reading ( $r = -.16$ ,  $p < .069$ ,  $n = 80$ ).

Astika, Carell, and Monetal (1996) investigated the relationship between personality types as measured by MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, 1962) and English proficiency of 76 English majors from an Indonesian university EFL context. They reported a weak negative relationship between extraversion and vocabulary as well as the composite course scores ( $r = -$

.19,  $p < .05$ ). However, they did not find any relationship with other measures of English proficiency.

Strong (1983, cited in Ellis, 1994) reviewed 12 studies related to extroversion or similar traits. In 8 of these studies with 'natural communicative language' as a measurement base, 6 studies reported extroversion as an advantage. Van Daele, Housen, Pierrard, and Debruyne (2006) explored the effect of extroversion on L2 oral proficiency among 25 Dutch-speaking students learning English and French as foreign languages. The findings of the study indicated that the extroversion had little impact on the oral speech production of L2 learners of English and French.

Gan (2011) examined the relation of one dimension of personality trait, extroversion and introversion, with the L2 oral performance dealing with fluency, accuracy, and complexity in task performance. The findings of the study showed no significant relation between the degree of extroversion/introversion, 'assessment scores', and 'discourse-based measure'.

Equally, though, being able to harmonize both orientations within one self is important for healthy psychological development toward one's own individual maturity as well as appreciating the internal and external aspects of everything in our world. Now, the question which obtrusively invades our minds regarding the behavior of extroverts/introverts in the area of language learning revolves around the size of their passive and productive vocabulary knowledge as they smoothly glide toward the state of being proficient language learners. Vocabulary size has received attention given the more representative picture of the overall state of the learner's vocabulary.

Despite the facts that clear definitions on what to know a word means exist, they seem unpractical from the assessment perspective. The significance of the question becomes transparent as we refer to our occupational requirements as teachers. As EFL teachers at some point of our professional practice, we may have to measure general language knowledge, make decisions on the constructs to be assessed, and administer a test where vocabulary is used as a component to determine the level of proficiency a learner has in both oral and written context. In all the cases described above, sound theoretical knowledge on active and productive vocabulary assessment and a basic understanding of the impact of the personality factors of extroversion/introversion on vocabulary learning may be helpful in drawing more objective inferences on a learner's performance on different fields of language proficiency.

Laufer and Paribakht (1998, p. 369) stated that "the relationship between an L2 learners' passive and active vocabularies remains interesting but unexplored; statements about this relationship have been vague and unsubstantiated. Most writers have assumed that passive vocabulary is larger than active; however, no one has conclusively demonstrated how much larger it is, or whether growth in passive vocabulary automatically results in growth in active vocabulary, or whether the gap between the two remains stable or changes overtime." According to Schmitt (2010), one of the difficulties in monitoring receptive and productive mastery and the relationship between the two lies in the complexity of measurement. It may be worth recalling that one of the major concerns of this research is related to the relationship between the learners' productive and passive vocabulary levels.

As mentioned by Nation (1993), all those learners who wish to apply language have to be familiar with the first 1000 words of English. This domain mainly includes words like the, and, or, them, and because. Of course these words make up fewer than 150 of the 1,000 words and they form the essential basis for simplified teaching material. Schonell *et al.*, (1956 as cited in Nation, 1993) expressed that the most frequent 1000 words in spoken English

make up for the 94% of the running words in informal conversation. In the same way Carrol (1971) reported that 74% of written text is covered by the first written words. Nation (1993) made a close connection between vocabulary size, coverage of the vocabulary in a text, and the ease a learner will have dealing with the language of the text. To have a clear perspective regarding the importance of vocabulary knowledge in language learning, first we have to make a clear distinction between the high and the low frequency words. Nation (1993) believed that the 2000 word level could be applied as a boundary between high and low frequency words. Accordingly, the academic word list will be considered as belonging to high frequency words especially for those who follow academic purposes. Teachers provide learners with different types of treatments regarding high and low frequency words. Therefore, it is crucial to have a vivid picture of the learners' level of vocabulary knowledge at each level. The reason is that the high frequency words deserve repeated attention although the low frequency words are not maneuvered by teachers directly.

In a similar way, Beck and Kucan (2002, as cited in Pearson, Hiebert, & Kamil, 2007) believed that vocabulary falls into three tiers: In the first tier, they set high-frequency words like "happy", "some" or "go" that do not need to be taught. The second vocabulary tier receives the greatest importance on the basis that it characterizes the vocabulary of mature language users when they read and write. This category resembles academic vocabulary and the lexical items used in a variety of domains (Nisbet, 2010). The formal instruction should be focused on this group of words. "They are best taught of as less common labels for relatively common concepts: Stunning in place of pretty, pranced instead of walked, astonished but not surprised" (Pearson, Hiebert, & Kamil, 2007, P.291). By the third tier, they refer to rare words which are specialized to particular fields of study like "chlorophyle", "xylum" or "photosynthesis".

Here, it seems logical to have a clear perspective regarding the term 'vocabulary breadth' as the major cornerstone of this study compared with the term 'vocabulary depth'. Breadth is thought of as the number of words a learner knows. However, depth could be simply defined as a continuum ranging from some familiarity with a lexical item to a full understanding of various forms and meanings associated with that specific word as well as the ability to employ that word in various contexts properly (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2010).

To assess the learners' vocabulary breadth, we can refer to a model of vocabulary testing provided by Nation (1993) as one of the most valid and reliable samples of vocabulary testing. It is important to note that despite the existence of several methods of assessing vocabulary size, the Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) proposed by Nation (as a measure of learners' breadth of lexical knowledge in 1983 and revised version in 1993) is regarded to be the most widely used tool. In fact, "the test provides a profile of a learner's vocabulary, rather than a single figure estimate of overall vocabulary size" (Schmitt, Schmitt, & Clapham, 2001, p. 58). Furthermore, Laufer and Nation (1999) provided two main reasons regarding why it is useful to view vocabulary knowledge as consisting of several series of levels based on their frequency of occurrence. First, words are strikingly different on the basis of their frequency of occurrence. For instance, "the most frequent 1000 words account for around 75% of the running words in formal written texts and around 84% of informal spoken use. By contrast, the tenth 1000 most frequent words account for much less than 1% of the running words in a text" (Laufer & Nation, 1999, P.35). The second reason refers to the idea that we are dealing with an immense number of words in English. Thus, any English teacher would be able to focus on only a small portion of this vast field by choosing carefully what words to centralize on.

The above-mentioned elaborations provide a lucid picture regarding the importance of vocabulary knowledge in the field of second language acquisition from the perspective of personality traits. Some researchers believe that there is no priority between extroverts and introverts in case of their language achievement, and that the teacher should consider the needs of both groups. However, the results of some research like the one carried out by Wakamoto (2000, cited in Adamopoulos, 2004) presented that extroverts resort to "functional strategies" and "social affective strategies" more than their introverted counterparts. He concluded that extroverts have more chances to develop their interlanguage, due to the fact that they are more inclined to ask for clarification compared with their introverted counterparts. Furthermore, Brown (2001) believed that extroverts are prone to focus on meaning rather than form. It is important to note that this strategy is often linked with success in L2 acquisition.

On the basis of the above-mentioned clarifications, we may conclude that the personality factors of extroversion/introversion have some undeniable effects on the quality of the learners' engagement with L2 words. "In essence, anything that leads to more and better engagement should improve vocabulary learning, and thus promoting engagement is the most fundamental task for teachers and materials writers, and indeed, learners themselves" (Schmitt, 2008 as cited in Schmitt, 2010, p. 29). However, we have a few empirical investigations assessing the effect of the personality type of extroversion/introversion on the learners' vocabulary breadth in FLA.

We all as language teachers have an intuitive sense regarding the fact that some students become proficient language learners faster and easier in comparison with the others. Greater achievement in the field of second language learning could be assigned to different factors like cognitive styles, motivation, personality factors as well as many other facets which are beyond the scope of this research. To sum up, the major purpose of this empirical study is to monitor the impact of the affective factor of extroversion/introversion on the learners' breadth of vocabulary knowledge as a personality trait which ebbs and flows in complex ways in response to different learning and teaching situations.

### **Objective of the Study**

The title of this investigation begs a prior question on the label, the effect of the personality traits of extroversion/introversion on the students' breadth of vocabulary knowledge. With respect to this question, several answers from several perspectives could be provided based on the research carried out in the past. There have been a limited number of research studies to date, and none has identified clearly the effect of extroversion or introversion on English vocabulary achievement. Besides, the approval of these ideas is a matter of conjecture and will, therefore cast doubt on the validity of the assumed conception. In other words, research has yet to be able to identify the impact of introversion/extroversion on the learners' success in second language acquisition (particularly with regard to the field of vocabulary achievement).

The present study tried to evaluate the effect of these two factors -- extroversion/introversion-- on the basis of an empirical research and shed light on the direction it was headed. Furthermore, the researchers attempted to elaborate on the unsubstantiated and vague statements about the relationship between L2 learners' passive and active vocabulary by analyzing the relationship between the two variables at five different levels and as a whole.

### Research Questions

The study set out to seek answers to the following research questions:

- 1) Is there any significant difference between the extroverts and introverts concerning their active vocabulary knowledge?
- 2) Is there any significant difference between the introverted/extroverted groups dealing with their productive vocabulary knowledge?
- 3) What is the relationship between the learners' passive and active vocabulary knowledge (at the levels proposed by the VLT and as a whole)?

### Methods

#### Participants

The participants of this study were 94 juniors at the Islamic Azad University, Roudehen Branch majoring in English Teaching. They were the students of four intact classes (all native-speakers of Persian). Five students were eliminated from the study at the beginning of the research program due to their weak performance on the 2000 level of the Vocabulary Levels Test. Moreover, 12 students were omitted because they were measured as being neither extroverts nor introverts (flawed questionnaires) reducing the number of participants to 77. Additionally, 17 students were excluded because they had either not taken the tests seriously or they were absent in the session of the passive vocabulary test administration. Finally, there were 60 informants left and the data obtained from this group were analyzed.

#### Instruments

Four types of tests were administered in this study: The 1000 frequency level, Nation's Vocabulary Levels Test (version1), the productive version of the Vocabulary Levels Test, and the Extroversion/Introversion questionnaire.

#### The 1000 vocabulary Levels Test

The 1000 Word Level Test was developed by Nation (1993). The test includes 40 items. Each item is in the form of a full sentence accompanied with a picture. This test measures the knowledge of content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs). The respondents should write T if a sentence is true, N if it is not true and X if they do not understand the sentence.

#### Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT)

The first version of the Vocabulary Levels Test, revised and validated by Schmitt *et al.*, (2001) was used in this study to measure the students' comprehension of the most basic and frequent meanings of the target words. This test encompasses samples from five levels of frequency including the 2000 most frequent words, the 3000 most frequent words, the 5000 thousand, the University Word list, and the 10000 most frequent words.

Learners in this study were expected to match groups of three words out of six with their paraphrases as follows:

- |              |                  |
|--------------|------------------|
| 1. Birth     |                  |
| 2. Dust      | _____ game       |
| 3. Operation |                  |
| 4. Row       | _____ winning    |
| 5. Sport     |                  |
| 6. Victory   | _____ being born |

It is worth mentioning that the major purpose of this test is to measure the learners' sight vocabulary (the number of words they understand without any contextual clues). The test consists of five separate sections to measure each of the five frequency levels. Each section includes 8 items which gives the maximum score of 90 on the whole test package. In this study, dichotomous scoring was assigned to the answers with one point to each correct answer and zero to incorrect or blank ones.

#### *The Productive Version of the Vocabulary Levels Test*

This test was developed by Laufer and Nation (1999) to measure the learners' productive vocabulary size. The major difference between this test and VLT is that items are not provided but rather elicited in short sentences. However, the first letters of the target word are provided to avoid the elicitation of non-target words which may fit the sentence context. The following example provides further clarification regarding the structure of the test.

She earns a high sal..... as a lawyer.

Like the previously mentioned test, VLT, this test also consists of five frequency levels, each comprising 18 items, with a maximum score of 90. In this study, the items were scored dichotomously in that each correct response received one point and each incorrect or blank one received zero. Furthermore, items with incorrect grammatical form (e.g., present instead of past) or unobtrusive errors were marked as correct.

#### *Eysenck Extroversion Questionnaire*

The Eysenck questionnaire was administered to divide the students into two groups of extroverts/introverts. The questionnaire includes 57 questions and three scales based on which the degree of extroversion and introversion becomes clarified. The L scale encompasses 9 items and the E scale comprises 24 items. Those students who have answered above 53 percent of the items (equal to raw score of 13) would be regarded as extravert and the score below 53 percent would indicate the introversion.

In this study, the participants were expected to provide their prompt answers (with no deep reflection) by crossing out the yes-no options in answer sheets. Furthermore, the researchers attempted to convince the participants that there was no wrong or right answer to the questions but their answers to each question must be a real representative of their initial reaction. The obtained Cronbach's alpha as 0.83 was considered as the sign of the reliability of the questionnaire.

#### **Procedure**

The tests were administered in four sessions. The 1000 frequency level test was used at the initial stage of this research program. In a separate session, the participants were provided with the Eysenck extroversion questionnaire. Based on the obtained results, the participants were divided into two groups of extroverts/introverts. Next, the receptive version of the test was administered. Participants scoring lower than 27 at the 2000 level of the Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) were excluded due to their poor knowledge of vocabulary. Finally, after five weeks interval, the productive version was provided. To estimate the reliability of the VLT, the participants were provided with the whole package of the test for the second time after two weeks interval. The obtained correlation coefficients as .90 for the passive version and .92 for the active version were considered as the sign of the reliability of the test. The raw scores obtained from the questionnaire and the tests were fed into the computer

implementing the SPSS program. Ultimately, scores for different parts were computed and codes were assigned to the extroverted/introverted groups.

**Results**

The first step toward assessing the results was to measure the students' passive and active vocabulary levels. The measurement task was accomplished by using the procedure adopted by Laufer (1998).

The following formula developed by Laufer (1987) was employed for estimating the students' passive vocabulary level.

Passive Vocabulary level

$$\{(2000 \text{ passive score} * 2) + 3000 \text{ passive score} + \text{Academic vocabulary score} + 5000 \text{ passive score} + [(3000 \text{ passive score} + 5000 \text{ score}) / 2] + [5000 \text{ passive score} + 10000 \text{ passive score}) / 2 * 4] + 10000 \text{ passive score}\} / 330 * 10000$$

The following formula adopted by Laufer (1987) was employed in the way of measuring the students' active vocabulary level.

Active Vocabulary Level

$$\{(2000 \text{ active score} * 2) + 3000 \text{ active score} + 5000 \text{ active score} + \text{University word List score} + [(3000 \text{ active score} + 5000 \text{ active score}) / 2] + [(5000 \text{ active score} + 10000 \text{ active score}) / 2 * 4] + 10000 \text{ active score}\} / 198 * 10000$$

The results related to the participants' active vocabulary with the separation of the personality factors of extroversion/introversion are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Extroverts/introverts and active vocabulary level

Personality factor	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	SD	Variance	N
Extroverts	1313	4469	2848.90	843.21	711007.8	31
Introverts	1035	3737	2351.83	664.89	442084.5	29
Total	1035	4469	2608.65		634080	60

Table 1 elucidates that extroverts with the mean score of (2848.90) enjoy a higher level of active vocabulary compared with their introverted counterparts with the mean score of (2351.83). Table 2 presents the results pertinent to the t-test analysis of the study monitoring the difference between the two groups of extroverts/introverts with respect to their active vocabulary knowledge.

Table 2. Independent sample t-test between extroverts/introverts and their active vocabulary

Mean (Difference)	F	t-value	df	Sig (2-tailed)
-497.076	3.07	-2.524	58	.014

As table 2 shows, the independent sample *t*-test result with (df =58) and (p = .014) is significant. Figure 1 graphically displays the difference between these two groups in terms of their active knowledge of vocabulary.

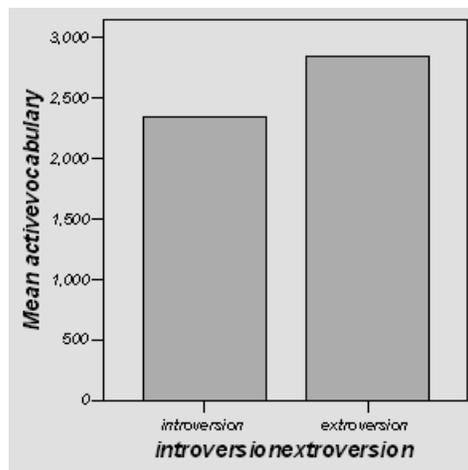


Figure 1. Introverts/extroverts and active vocabulary levels

The descriptive statistics for the participants' passive vocabulary with regard to the learning styles of extroversion/introversion are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Extroverts/introverts and their knowledge of passive vocabulary

Personality factor	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	N
Extroverts	3484	6363	4846.58	680.745	463413.3	31
Introverts	2727	4106	3531.93	387.871	150443.9	29
Total	2772	6363	4211.17	863.679	745942.0	60

The results in table 3 reveal the fact that the extroverted participants of this study gained a higher mean score (4846.58) compared with their introverted rivals with the mean score of (3531.93). The results of the independent sample *t*-test between the two groups are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Independent sample *t*-test between extroverts/introverts and passive vocabulary

Mean (Difference)	F	t-value	df	Sig (2-tailed)
-1314.650	7.233	-9.264	48.21	.000

The results of the independent sample *t*-test with ( $df = 48.21$ ) and ( $p = .000$ ) in Table 4 show that dealing with passive levels, too, the extroverted participants outperformed their introverted counterparts. Figure 2 shows the difference between extroverts and introverts in terms of their passive vocabulary levels graphically.

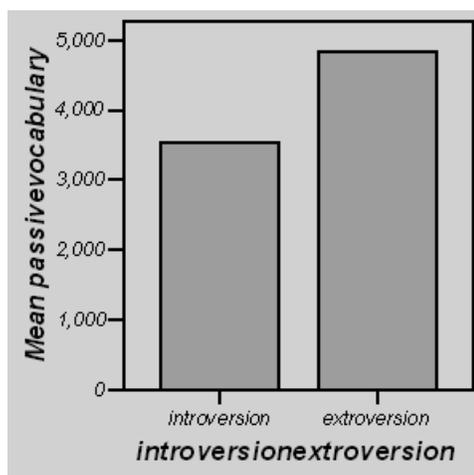


Figure 2. Introverts/extroverts and passive vocabulary levels

To answer the third research question the correlation coefficients between the students' passive and productive vocabulary as a whole and at five different levels of the 2<sup>nd</sup> 1000 word level, the 3<sup>rd</sup> 1000 word level, the 5<sup>th</sup> 1000 word level, the academic word level, and the 10<sup>th</sup>000 word level were calculated. Table 5 shows the results.

Table 5. Correlations between participants' active and passive vocabulary at different levels assessed by VLT& as a whole.

Tests	Passive Vocabulary				
	1	2	3	4	5
Active Vocabulary	.35**				
1) 2 thousand level	.33**				
2) 3 thousand level		.30*			
3) 5 thousand level			.20		
4) 10 thousand level				.14	

5) Academic level

.26\*

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

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

The results in Table 5, using Pearson's correlation coefficient present that at all levels the correlational relationships between the participants' passive and productive vocabulary enjoy moderate to weak effect sizes. They are .33 for the 2000 level, .30 for the 3000 level, .20 for the 5000 level, .14 for the 10,000 level, and .26 for the academic level. This indicates that as the participants' passive vocabulary knowledge increased at each separate level, their active vocabulary did not increase as well. Furthermore, the measured correlation coefficient as ( $r = .35$ ) between the participants' passive and active vocabulary levels as a whole does not confirm a strong relationship between the two dependent variables. As table 5 shows, moderate correlations exist between the scores related to the lower levels of the receptive and productive versions (the 2<sup>nd</sup> 1000 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> 1000 word levels). However, the correlational relationships between the two versions emaciate at higher levels assessing the learners' knowledge of more complicated and less frequent words (the 5<sup>th</sup> 1000 and the 10<sup>th</sup> 1000 word levels). The results related to the academic level show a weak relationship between the two receptive and productive versions.

The findings could be justified in terms of the idea that an increase in the learners' passive vocabulary levels does not necessarily lead to a growth in their active vocabulary levels. As Table 5 shows, the participants' performances related to the receptive version of the test (at five different levels) are not predictive of their performances on the productive version of the test considering the same five levels. Figure 3 depicts the results graphically.

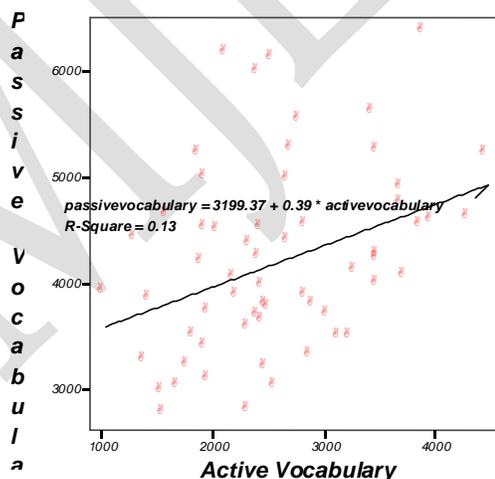


Figure 3. Participants' passive and active vocabulary levels

**Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Further Research**

The implications of this study for English teaching in classroom environment lie in the following three perspectives: The first is relevant to vocabulary learning strategies for students in which useful strategies for effective vocabulary learning is taught. Introverts might be trained in strategies used by extroverts encouraging the practice of English vocabulary in real or quasi-real communication.

The second implication is pertinent to the modes of learning. The findings of this study showed a significant difference in favor of extroverts regarding their breadth of vocabulary. This may imply that introverts need to be treated differently compared with their extroverted rivals in different pedagogical situations. In other words, introverts may have a better performance and more fruitful language achievement in stress-free situations involving less excitement. For creating a low-risk classroom climate in favor of introverts, the first thing to do is to make small groups and get learners to practice or try various kinds of vocabulary activities and strategies through shared communications where students feel less risk or tend not to fear making mistakes. Accordingly, the students will be given the opportunity to enrich both their active and passive vocabulary. The next thing to consider is how to make groups, that is how to combine students. One implication of this study is to think about making groups from the perspective of personality traits. Further research is needed, but one possibility is combining the extroverts and introverts and offering them the chance to learn new words from their respective characteristics.

The ultimate implication is also concerned with modes of learning. The introverted participants of this study were found to be less successful in vocabulary achievement. Thus, the results could be helpful in determining a more appropriate mode of learning for the introverts. In terms of risk taking, speaking in person undeniably involves risk and students get nervous. Besides, teachers as well as students seem to attach great importance to vocabulary learning with the emphasis on speaking as a sign of communicative language teaching. This is right in putting stress on communication but wrong in overlooking possibilities in communication through writing. Especially in the so-called internet era, communication through e-mail is now within reach of every one and opens the road to improving knowledge of vocabulary in the shape of an easy communication through writing. Learners do not have to feel pressured to speak or be worried about the appropriateness of their choice of vocabulary. They can just sit in front of the computer, read the messages received, reflect on what they want to say in case of appropriate words and concepts, and take their time to type in their ideas. This must be good news for every one, especially for introverts. We can count this as one mode of communication and one mode of English class. Perhaps, better results may be obtained if the researchers explore the effect of the personality factor of extroversion/introversion from the perspective of specific interactions between the two personality types under several instructional conditions which serves as a topic worthy of investigation for future research.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The researchers embarked upon working on this piece of research with this idea in mind that a knowledge and awareness of personality type on the part of the students will allow the development of natural strengths and predisposition. On the part of teachers, this type of understanding and awareness acts as an aid in methodological choices and nurtures teacher-student understanding

The results of this study presented the fact that extroverts outperformed their introverted counterparts in both facets of productive and passive knowledge of vocabulary. The findings could be interpreted with this idea that extroverts learn foreign languages better because of their willingness to interact with others and because of their reduced inhibitions. In fact, the theoretical interpretations provided by some scholars like Ehrman and Oxford (1995), and Wakamoto (2009) could be used to buttress up the findings in favor of the extroversion. Accordingly, extroverted learners are more likely to prefer activities and tasks involving communicative and interactive role-plays and group work. Such an inherent inclination would be helpful in developing different aspects of language proficiency including vocabulary Knowledge. In contrast, introverted personalities do not have many friends, and have a preference for working in pairs or smaller groups. They may prefer individual activity, perhaps with one evident purpose, working in groups may well be less successful, because of a reluctance to participate in speaking activity. Thus, they have a more limited chance to grow the size of their vocabulary knowledge due to their inner propensity to learn alone, and to avoid social context, spontaneous situations, and conversational risks in comparison with their introverted counterparts.

Schmitt (2010) believes that anything that leads to a deeper and better engagement would lead to success in vocabulary learning. Therefore, the most fundamental task for learners and teachers is to promote engagement. On the basis of the obtained results, we may hypothesize that extroversion may lead to better engagements with lexical items as a personality trait irrespective of the properties associated with teaching situations and teaching materials.

However, the results in favor of the extroverted group of this study stand in contrast with the results reported by Farely (1968) who found greater vocabulary achievement for introverts over extraverts. Additionally, the findings stand in opposition with the results reported by Busch (1982) and Astika, *et al*, (1996) who found a weak negative relationship between the personality trait of extroversion/introversion and the learners' vocabulary knowledge. Yet, the results of this brief study could be generally supported by the findings of Strong (1983, cited in Ellis, 1994) who reviewed 12 studies related to extroversion or similar traits. In 8 of these studies with 'natural communicative language' as a measurement base, 6 studies reported extroversion as an advantage. Many classroom teachers are convinced that extroverts are more successful in second or foreign language learning than introverts, particularly in terms of communicative ability. However, the existing contradictions prevent a consensus in our understanding of the impact of the personality trait of extroversion/introversion on second or foreign language achievement.

Laufer and Paribakht (1998) referred to the relationship between passive and active vocabulary as being vague and unexplored by inserting the idea that no one has conclusively elaborated on the size of the two or explicated the flexibility or changeability of the gap between passive and productive vocabulary. It is logically assumed that receptive vocabulary sizes are larger than productive ones due to the fact that receptive knowledge of vocabulary precedes productive knowledge. In fact, assessing the learners' receptive and productive vocabulary is a multi-dimensional task involving great intricacies.

In this study, the correlation coefficient results between the learners' passive and productive vocabulary at five different levels related to VLT did not confirm a strong relationship between the paired levels of active and productive vocabulary knowledge. Furthermore, the obtained correlation coefficient as ( $r = .35$ ) between the two facets of vocabulary knowledge as a whole, implies the idea that growth in passive vocabulary levels does not automatically result in growth in the active ones. The results stand in contrast with the findings reported by

Golkar and Yamini (2007) who found high correlations between the learners' active and passive vocabularies as a whole and at each separate word-frequency level.

According to Schmitt (2010), one of the difficulties in explicating receptive and productive mastery and the link between the two lies in the complexity of measurement. In fact, the relationship between the two primarily depends on the measurement devices used. Thus, the analysis may lead to totally different results under different assessment procedures.

As a coda to this section, it could be concluded that although no one would doubt that an increasing understanding of the effect of the learners' personality factors of extroversion/introversion can have significant practical implications, it is questionable whether research in the area of personality factors in general has reached a level of sophistication that would allow researchers to translate research results into straightforward educational recommendations.

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# THE IMPACT OF USING NOTICING - REFORMULATION TASKS ON IRANIAN LOW- INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' RETENTION OF COLLOCATIONS

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## **Abstract**

The present quasi-experimental study reports the classroom tasks that encourage noticing and conscious attention to collocations, which were a strand of an English language school spoken course in Iran. The study follows a two-group pretest, treatment, post-test design and focuses on the different ways in which Noticing-Reformulation tasks are provided and their relationship with the retention of collocations. The study documented 40 low-intermediate Iranian EFL learners with the same proficiency level measured by an OPT test and two non-native English teachers. The participants were randomly assigned to an experimental and control group which were exposed to Noticing-Reformulation tasks along with stimulated recall session and traditional methods respectively to determine whether there was any development in the long-term retention of collocations. Analysis of the data obtained from independent sample t-tests along with the Pearson correlation coefficient tests indicates that the participants of the experimental group noticed the mismatches between their interlanguage and the target language, and that there were significant quantitative and statistical differences in the output of participants from the two different groups, with learners who participated in the experimental group outperforming and incorporating significantly more retention of collocations in the immediate and delayed post-test than learners from the control group.

**Key Words:** Noticing, Reformulation, Collocation, Retention, Output, OPT.

## **1. Introduction**

For anyone teaching or learning a foreign language, collocation is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating challenges that they will encounter, but nevertheless can be frustrating at times. Equally, for those who are into researching foreign language collocation knowledge,

learning and retention. Within the last few years learning collocations has become of paramount significance and the focus of an overwhelming majority of research studies. The pivotal aim of the researches carried out in the field had to be investigating the factors and variables which contribute to successful collocation learning, and ways of storing the most possible collocations in long-term memory for further usage.

A little while back, there have been growing bodies of researches on EFL learners' knowledge of collocations. Further, wide-ranging volumes of research in collocation learning have been published in the last 20 years or so, but not all of them have reported sufficient collocation knowledge among EFL learners and have rarely embraced dedicated studies investigating into the role of Noticing-Reformulation technique on collocation knowledge and retention.

A problem students usually encounter regarding collocations can be growing accustomed to learning single vocabulary items rather than their collocations. Collocations are of prime significance and students need them in their language production, but nonetheless learners' limited collocation proficiency has always made it a daunting challenge to produce and comprehend them. It seems the main problem regarding learning collocations is that collocations do not attract learners' attention well and effectively.

It is probably safe to say that not everyone would deny the significance of noticing in converting input into intake. Regarding the aforementioned issue, learning collocations is what always sustains defeat. My motive for investigating this issue was that learning collocations that is of great significance and will help learners to speak and write in a more natural way. Moreover, vocabulary in general is an essential component of successful communication. Some scholars argue that the heart of language comprehension and use is the lexicon. Nearly the same idea was shared by Lewis (2000) who expresses that "the single most important task facing language learners is acquiring a sufficient large vocabulary". I am of the opinion that we had better not ignore the significance of collocations, nonetheless, there appears to be a chaos among vocabulary acquisition and learning studies.

One of the chief assumptions of my study is that a teacher's knowledge of how to teach collocations is a very influential factor in foreign language vocabulary learning and retention. It is also a criterion which should not be eliminated from the process of learning. Here I shall mention that my proposal does not contradict the findings of learners' autonomy in language learning. I only see when our students fail to learn; the balance of failure is shifted one way and only rests on our students' shoulders.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the last decade, English collocations have gained popularity and have become of major concern in EFL learning and teaching context. A growing body of researchers has become aware of the significance of collocations and the necessity of teaching collocations in EFL courses. They mentioned some of the advantages of collocations which include but not limited to: ameliorating language learners' language and communicative competence as well as improving their fluency and accuracy. As a result, teaching and learning collocations is necessary in EFL courses.

Many of the previous studies (Farghal & Obiedat, 1995; Shei & Pain, 2000) reported that EFL learners made collocation errors in their writing and speaking as a result of paucity in their collocational competence. Unfortunately, little research has been conducted in EFL and ESL context to tackle this issue. The review of the literature on collocations reveals that no study to this date has looked into the impact of using Noticing - Reformulation tasks on the retention of English collocations.

Several scholars have reported that the problem with collocations learning is that collocations do not catch learners' attention effectively (Woolard, 2000), but no treatment has ever been suggested. Unfortunately, collocations have not yet been presented in specialized context within Noticing-Reformulation tasks to be attended and learnt better. They have never been taught as a separate subject in language classes although it plays a substantial role in foreign language learning. Accordingly, it makes learners' oral and written language production more native-like and decreases foreignness.

Occasionally, Iranian EFL learners complain about the difficulty of remembering the natural co-occurrence of words. In writing, for example, they show to be weak in using the appropriate collocations. This study is conducted to give the chance to EFL teachers and learners to be able to learn collocations better and retain them for a long time. The present study aims at considering the effect of using Noticing- Reformulation tasks on the retention of collocations.

### **Significance and Purpose of the Study**

Owing to its paramount significance, English language learning plays an important part in educational curriculum in Iran. Special attention has long been given to it in our country and many are interested in it. The findings of the present study can be both theoretically and practically significant to those interested in the field. Such a study can also be used at macro level and micro levels and can provide information to language planners, policy makers, textbook developers, curriculum designers, language teachers, language learners and their parents.

To make the present study more significant, no study has so far been carried out to investigate the effects of using Noticing- Reformulation technique on the retention of English collocations. Moreover, no study has ever investigated the issue in an EFL context like Iran. Particular attributes of language learning in Iran makes the research in this area valid and important. To put it more straightforwardly, an overwhelming majority of EFL learners in Iran have substantial problems with learning collocations due to manifold of reasons. Teachers spend most of the class time teaching grammar or single words disregarding collocations needed for successful communication. That is why students use collocation equivalents translated from Persian into English as they do not know what exactly they should use.

In our language schools, learners' problem with collocations is still unsolved. It is usually transferred from lower levels to higher levels. To exacerbate the problem language teachers also disregard teaching collocations. That might be why language learners usually report serious problem using collocations although they seem not to have as much problem understanding them.

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

### **Feedback Research in SLA**

Feedback on EFL/ESL students' writing has long been a matter of concern to both language teachers and researchers. In the growing empirical literature, many methods of providing feedback for L2 writing have been challenged. These methods include: peer review (Mendoca and Johnson, 1994; Paulus, 1999; Zhang, 1995), teacher written corrections (Hedgecock and Lefkowitz, 1994), and teacher-learner oral writing conferences (Hyland, 2000). The aforementioned studies have questioned the validity of assumptions about second language writing. Some researchers questioned the usefulness of traditional feedback, claiming that it

can be discouraging to L2 learners (Hyland, 1998). Papers given back to students are covered by marks making them seem overwhelming, and not every teacher is able to truly balance positive and negative feedback (Hedgecock and Lefkowitz, 1994). In traditional feedback methods, teachers mark only what is incorrect in learners' work and provide them with only negative evidence (Kassen, 1988) ignoring the positive evidence necessary for refining Interlanguage Hypothesis.

The role of interactional feedback in Second language Acquisition has recently become of prime significance and the focal of much SLA research. Interactional feedback is defined as the feedback that is generated through different modification strategies. Such modification strategies occur while dealing with communication problems. (Gass, 1997). William (2003) argues that "the goal of feedback is to teach skills that help students improve their writing proficiency to the point where they are cognizant of what is expected of them as writers and are able to produce it with minimal error and maximum clarity" (p. 1).

### **The Noticing Hypothesis and SLA**

Schmidt is the scholar who has tied many findings from cognitive psychology into SLA theory. According to N. Ellis "Schmidt is one of the few linguists who have adopted the conceptual and experimental rigours of experimental psychology in answering questions concerning the role of consciousness in L2 acquisition" (1994, p. 10). Schmidt proposed his *Noticing Hypothesis* after reviewing the psychological literature on consciousness. In his controversial study prior to his other definitions Schmidt argues that "noticing refers to private experience, although noticing can be operationally defined as availability for verbal report, subject to certain conditions" (1990, p. 132). In the strong version of the hypothesis Schmidt argues that "noticing is the necessary and sufficient condition for converting input into intake" (1990, p. 129). Gass and Selinker (2008) pointed out that "what is noticed ... interacts with a parsing mechanism which attempts to segment the stream of speech into meaningful units for the learner" (2008, p. 482). *Intake* as described by (Gass, 1988) refers to "a process that mediates between target language input and the learner's internalized set of rules" (p. 206). Some researchers may prefer a weaker version of noticing hypothesis claiming that noticing is helpful but may not be necessary for learning.

The two versions of the hypothesis can be considered in another respect. In the weak version of the hypothesis learners are just required to be aware of the input in a global sense; they do not have to notice any details of its form. There have been copious amounts of studies on the issue of noticing in SLA. This part will review some of these studies.

Schmidt's Noticing hypothesis is specifically a rejection of subliminal learning. He questioned the validity of claims regarding subliminal learning, but has separated it from that of implicit learning and incidental learning claiming. According to him, "incidental learning is certainly possible when task demands focus attention on relevant features of the input" (Schmidt, 1990, p. 149). He also argues that "recent psychological theory suggests that implicit learning is possible, but is best characterized as the gradual accumulation of associations between frequently co-occurring features, rather than unconscious induction of abstract rule systems" (Schmidt, 1990, p. 149).

The role of noticing for language learning in EFL context has been acknowledged by several researchers. For instance, Eliasi and Vahidi Borji (2013) carried out a cross-sectional case study to examine the effects of noticing along with task repetition to destabilize learners' erroneous utterances. The participants of their study were thirty two Iranian upper-intermediate learners. They were divided into two groups, an experimental and a control

group. Both groups' voices were recorded while delivering a prepared speech. The participants in experimental group were given the recorded presentation to be transcribed and compared with the original text they used, while the control group didn't receive feedback of any type. The experimental group submitted a draft to their teacher who checked the papers and later asked them to prepare themselves for another prepared speech in the future. The comparison of the erroneous utterances in both groups lent support to the effectiveness of task repetition and noticing on destabilization of learners' oral output. The aforementioned study substantiates the effectiveness of noticing in learning a foreign language.

### **Noticing, Awareness and Attention in Learning Collocations**

Marton (as cited in Bahns, 1993) proposed that "mere exposure to the target language is not sufficient for the advanced learner to acquire the knowledge of conventional, which equate with collocations." (p. 58). He argued that in order for teachers to guide their advanced learners towards a native-like command of the foreign language, they are to pay "special attention to their effective learning of conventional syntactic and grammars" (p. 58).

According to Schmidt's (1990) noticing hypothesis, in order for input to be further processed for intake, it should be first noticed by learners. In other words, learners must consciously pay attention to the material to be learned. Nation (2001) also mentions that three psychological processes must be met for successful vocabulary learning: noticing, generating, and retrieving. There have been manifold of suggestions to increase learners' awareness and noticing of collocations in input. For instance, Hill, Morgan Lewis, and Michael Lewis (2000) presented a list of useful task-based activities which can be used by teachers in classrooms to enhance learners' awareness and thereof facilitate the acquisition of collocations. Not many experimental studies have investigated the effects of awareness and noticing on the acquisition of collocations. For example, Bishop (2004) conducted a research to find out if the use of textual highlighting (highlighting and red font) affects learners' selection of vocabulary and formulaic expressions for glossing. The results indicated that in unenhanced condition learners select more unknown words than formulaic sequences for glossing. But in the enhanced condition (i.e., highlighted and red font) the result was reversed.

Rassaei and Karbor (2013) examined the merits of exploiting three types of awareness raising techniques on learning of a number of English collocations by Persian EFL learners. These techniques viz. textual enhancement, input enrichment, and form comparison required learners to pay different levels of attention to collocations in the input. The results of their study indicated that while form comparison and textual enhancement led to the acquisition of collocations, input enrichment didn't. The findings also revealed that paying attention to collocations in the input have some unfavorable effects on processing content.

### **Vocabulary Retention**

Teaching English collocations to EFL learners with the greatest potential for long-term benefits appears to be the most logical and beneficial method vocabulary instruction. However, if learners are not likely to notice or attend their words until later in development, then long-term benefits might be questioned.

Vocabulary retention is "the ability to recall or remember things after an interval of time. In language teaching, retention of what has been taught (e.g. grammar rules and vocabulary) may depend on the quality of teaching, the interest of the learners, or the meaningfulness of the materials" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 457). It is axiomatic that in the area of

vocabulary learning, the problem is not just in learning second language vocabulary items; rather in remembering them. Bahrick (1984) argues that how well people remember something depends on how deeply they process it. As a result, manifold of procedures have been suggested for successful vocabulary retention.

Concentration on features of the new word may be one important way to facilitate retention. Learning in context depends on several issues like: repeating, re-cycling, and re-presenting vocabularies as well as re-noticing. It may be true to say that retention depends in some way on the amount of mental and emotional energy used in processing a vocabulary item and readers have developed certain strategies that could assist emotional and mental processing such as meta-cognitive strategies.

Although learners are advised to learn words in a context, retention should not be confused with comprehension. Learning the word's meaning implies more than comprehending it. The meanings of a word as well as its collocations have to be retained in the long-term memory.

### **Research Questions of the Study**

In the line of the research direction that has investigated the scope of noticing in the teaching of collocations, the present study seeks to investigate the following research question:

1. Is there any significant difference between learning and retention of collocations presented in Noticing-Reformulation tasks and traditional ways?

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

The present study concentrates on the following research hypothesis:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference between learning and retention of collocations presented in Noticing - Reformulation tasks and traditional ways.

## **3. Methodology**

### **The Design of the Study**

An analytical research methodology was utilized in this study. The study was carried out within a two-group pre-test, treatment and post-test design. It employed a quasi-experimental design since the participants were not chosen randomly. In the present study conducted at a private for-profit English language school based in Iran, the implementation of Noticing-Reformulation tasks (independent variable) will be monitored, and the short-term retention along with the long-term retention of collocations (dependent variable) will be measured. The pre-tests and the post-tests were designed to be the same.

The design of the study includes: 1) Selecting the subjects via administering an OPT proficiency test, 2) administering the self-report and collocation pretest, 3) Teaching a lesson from the book *English collocation in Use* (McCarthy, M. J. and O'Dell, F., 2005) to the control group via the existing methods of teaching collocations, 4) exposing the participants of the experimental group to the reformulated version of their original text in the pre-test, 5) asking the experimental group to deliver a prepared speech using the reformulated text available to them, 6) administering the immediate collocation retention post-test in both groups, 7) administering the delayed collocation retention post-test of both groups.

### **Participants**

The participants of the current study were 40 female low-intermediate EFL learners and two non-native English language teachers. The participants were selected from among 45 language learners who were learning English in an intensive EFL programme in a language

school context in Iran and could be the representatives for the study. Based on the levels of their courses and the results of their in-house language placement test including written and oral interviews taken by the supervisor of the language school the learners had enrolled in.

The total number of the participants was 45, but the authentic number of participants for the present study was 40 because some participants did not satisfy the conditions of an appropriate OPT proficiency test score. To ascertain the participants' proficiency as a criterion for taking part in the study; an Oxford Placement Test was administered. In the OPT test, forty participants were scored as Low-intermediate (i.e. band score 3-4 on the scale of 0-9).

All participants were from the same L1 background (i.e. Persian). They were 40 females and their ages ranged from 15 - 28 years. A great majority of the learners had started English language learning at or after the age of 9 (97%), with an average of English language learning of 7 years. The participants had to be present in all study and testing sessions and those who were absent in one session had to be excluded from the rest of the study.

The participating teachers were two (one male and one female) EFL teachers whose ages were 29 and 25 years respectively. They were both M.A. candidates of TEFL and had taught adult and teenage EFL learners at both elementary and low-intermediate levels. Their approach to language teaching which was determined by the language school curriculum at micro and macro levels was communicative language teaching. They were interested in the aforementioned approach and were in favor of the role of noticing in language learning.

### Materials

Based on the parameters concluded from the exercises of the book *English Collocations in Use* (McCarthy, M. J. and O'Dell, F., 2005), the detailed plans and materials of the study were designed. To promote the discovery-learning in the treatment of the experimental group, three stages of tasks had to be taken into account when selecting a task from among a host of tasks in the book. First, noticing and awareness of collocations were taken into account in setting the context. Next, the tasks to be chosen had to be discovery-based to encourage learners to use their noticed collocations to express their remarks and finish the task. Finally, the three parts: *practicing, using what you have noticed and taking a step beyond* had to be designed in the study to encourage participants of the experimental group to move from controlled to free language activities. There were mainly five materials utilized in this study which are going to be described in detail.

### Testing instruments

The present research applies a quantitative approach to the study. To ascertain the participants' potential knowledge of the target collocations, collocation retention and learning, two types of instrumentations for data collection were used. The aim of the first test, self-report test (see Read, 2000, pp. 165-167), was to ascertain the participants' potential and prior knowledge of the target collocations and to make sure that the collocations to be learnt were unknown to all participants.

The pre-tests and the post-tests of the study were the same. The tests were of integrative test type focused on supplying collocations that fit into the blanks of a given text.

The self-report and the collocation pre-test were used to measure the level of the pre-treatment collocation knowledge of the participants, and the two post-tests, immediate and delayed, were used to measure the effects of using noticing the gap and reformulation

technique on the participants' short-term and long-term retention of collocations. In all of the abovementioned tests the participants were required to sit a fill in the blank collocation test. The self-report test was prior to all tests in the study. The pre-test was administered during the first session after presenting the target collocations (a few sessions before providing participants with the reformulated versions of their original writing), the first post-test was given immediately after the stimulated recall session and the delayed post-test was administered three weeks later. Here is the description of all tests of the study.

### Procedure

This section presents the procedures of the current empirical research carried out over a period of 8 language school weeks in which the participants attended the class two sessions a week. Each session lasted for 90 minutes. Data collection took place as a part of the participants' regular class time. The experiment involved five main stages. But prior to all these stages was a paper-and-pencil OPT test to measure the participants' proficiency. The time allocated to the participants to take the OPT test was 70 minutes as indicated by the test itself. The participants were to answer the questions in an answer sheet given to them. Followed by the OPT test were the following six stages: 1) a self-report and collocation pre-test, 2) a comparison session for the experimental group and a traditional instructional session for the control group, 3) a stimulated recall session for the experimental group, 4) an immediate collocation retention post-test, 5) a delayed collocation retention post-test as well as questionnaire completion.

In the comparison session the participants of the experimental group were given a reformulated version of their original text and were asked to compare them with each other. All three testing sessions were done in a paper and pencil style and took about thirty minutes. During the testing time the participants were not permitted to use dictionaries or exchange information to each other. The researcher was the first rater and the teachers were asked to check for the second time to avoid any mistakes. The reformulated version of the pre-test was given to just experimental group. Table 3.1 shows the data collection procedure during the experiment.

*Table 3.1. Data collection procedure of the study*

Time	Action
Week 1	Self-report/ Pre-test / comparison
Week 2	Instructional treatment/ Stimulated recall session
Week 3	Immediate collocation retention post-test
Week 4	Rest
Week 5	Rest
Week 6	Rest
Week 7	Rest
Week 8	Delayed collocation retention post-test/ questionnaire

### Scoring

The OPT test exploited in this study was scored in accordance with the standard criteria given by the test itself. The scoring criterion in this study was 0-9 for the OPT proficiency test. The tests of the study were also scored from the band score of 0 - 20. There were 10 items in each test and each item had two points.

**Data Analysis and Findings**

**The descriptive Analysis of the Data**

The results for the basic descriptive analysis of the pre-test and post-tests of the reformulation group and composition group are shown in table (4.1).

*Table 4.1. Group Statistics for the Delayed Post-test*

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	20	7.500	.606	.135
Control	20	1.150	.745	.166

As indicated in table (4.1) the number of participants was 20 in each group ( $N_{EXP} 20$ ;  $N_{CON} = 20$ ). There was no missing value and all participants took part in this strand of the study. The mean score of the experimental group was 7.500 and the mean score of the control group was 1.1500. As for the standard deviations obtained from the groups, there appears to be more variability among the post-test scores of the control group than that of experimental group.

*4.2. Group Statistics for immediate post-test*

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	20	7.600	.502	.112
Control	20	2.000	1.169	.261

As it is shown in table (4.2) the number of participants taking part in the immediate post-test was 20 for each group. There has been no missing value which marks the point that all participants took part in this section of the test. The mean of the experimental group was 7.600 whilst the mean of the control group was indicated to be 2.000. As for the standard deviations obtained from the groups (Experimental = 0.5026 and Control = 1.169), there appears to be more variability among the post-test scores of the control group than that of experimental group. This statistical analysis is considered as a token of the experimental group's improvement after being exposed to Noticing-Reformulation tasks along with stimulated recall session.

Pearson correlation coefficient determination test was used to measure the relationship or association between the variables. Shown below are the outputs for Pearson correlation coefficient determination.

*4.3. Correlations Between the Pretest and Delayed Post-test of Experimental Group*

		EXP. Pre	EXP. Del
EXP. Pre	Pearson Correlation	1	.814**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
EXP. Del	Pearson Correlation	.814**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	20	20

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

In table (4.3) the top box on the right and the bottom box on the left represent the crossing between the pre and delayed post-test of the experimental group. It is observed that the

number of participants for each variable is 20 and there is no missing value. The significance (2tailed) is .000 and the Pearson's r for the correlation between the pre-test and delayed post-test of the experimental group is 0.814. The Pearson's correlation is close to 1 and the significance (2tailed) is 0.000 that is less than 0.05. Accordingly, there is a statistically significant correlation between the pre-test and the delayed post-test of the experimental group.

**4.4. Correlations Between the Pre and Delayed Post-test of Control Group**

		CON. Pre	CON. Del
CON. Pre	Pearson Correlation	1	.908**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
CON. Del	Pearson Correlation	.908**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	20	20

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

Table (4.4) indicate that the strength of association between the variables is very high ( $r = 0.908$ ), and that the correlation coefficient is very highly significantly different from zero ( $P < 0.001$ ).

**4.5. Correlations Between Pre and Immediate Post-test of Experimental Group**

		EXP. Pre	EXP. Imm
EXP. Pre	Pearson Correlation	1	.836**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
EXP. Imm	Pearson Correlation	.836**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	20	20

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

As indicated in table (4.5), A Pearson correlation coefficient was run to determine the relationship between the pretest and the immediate post-test of the experimental group. The data showed no violation of normality. There was a strong, positive correlation between the pre and immediate post-test which was statistically significant ( $r = 0.836$ ,  $N = 20$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ).

**4.6. Correlations Between Pre and Immediate Post-test of Control Group**

		CON. Pre	CON. Imm
CON. Pre	Pearson Correlation	1	.841**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
CON. Imm	Pearson Correlation	.841**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

	N	20	20
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\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table (4.6) shows the SPSS output for pretest and immediate post-test of the control group. Looking at the top right box, Pearson's r is 0.841, representing a relatively strong increasing relationship. The second figure is the p-value which is 0.000. The p value is less than 0.005. It is clear that the correlation is not zero. The third figure represents the number of participants in this part of the study (N = 20).

**Inferential Analysis of the Data**

**4.7. Independent Sample t-test for Immediate Post-test**

		Levene's Test For Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		f	sig	t	df	Sig.2 tailed	Mean Dif.	Std. Error Dif.	95% Confidence	
									lower	upper
Score.	Equal variances Assumed	16.594	.000	19.670	38	.000	5.600	.284	5.023	6.176
	Equal variances Not Assumed			19.670	25.874	.000	5.600	.284	5.014	6.185

Regarding the long-term retention of collocations a significantly beneficial effect of Noticing-Reformulation tasks along with stimulated recall session is found. The *f* value for Levene's test is 16.594 with a Sig. (*p*) value of .000 (*p* < .001). Since the Sig. value is less than our alpha we reject the null hypothesis (no difference) for the assumption of homogeneity of variance and conclude that there is a significant difference between the two group's variances. This means that the assumption of homogeneity of variance hasn't been met. The t-test obtained from the analysis also shows that the difference in scores on the delayed post-test between experimental group (M = 7.60, SE = 0.112) and the control group (M = 2.00, SE = 0.261) is highly significant, *t* (38) = 19.670., *p*<0.05.

The confidence intervals shown in table (4.7) which are all positive also lend support to rejection of the null hypothesis of the study indicating that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the immediate post-test.

**4.8. Independent Sample t-test for Delayed Post-test**

		Levene's Test For Equality of		t-test for Equality of Means						
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		Variances								
		f	sig	t	df	Sig.2 tailed	Mean Dif.	Std. Error Dif.	95%Confidence	
									lower	upper
Score.	Equal variances Assumed	.174	.679	29.548	38	.000	6.350	.214	5.914	6.785
	Equal variances Not Assumed			29.548	36.506	.000	6.350	.214	5.914	6.785

Likewise, the abovementioned independent sample t-test was conducted to evaluate whether the experimental and control group differ significantly in the delayed post-test. The Levene's Test for Equal variances yields a p-value of 0.679. This means that the homogeneity of variance assumption has been satisfied, the difference between the variances is statistically insignificant and the statistics in the first row should be used for statistical analysis. It is axiomatic that Noticing-Reformulation tasks have a positive impact on long-term retention of learnt collocations. That is on the delayed post-test, the participants of the experimental group who were taught through Noticing-Reformulation tasks along with stimulated recall session significantly outperformed the participants of the control group who were taught via traditional methods as the mean of the former was about 6 times higher than that of the latter group ( $M = 7.50$ ,  $SE = 0.135$  and  $M = 1.15$ ,  $SE = 0.166$ , respectively, the observed  $t$ , with 38 df, is 29.5, and the  $p$  value is .000. Since  $p < .05$ , this test is statistically significant.

Further, since upper and lower bounds of the confidence intervals have the same sign (+5.914 and +6.785) the difference is statistically significant. This means that the null finding of zero difference lies *outside* of the confidence interval.

### Results of the Hypothesis Testing

In this section, the results of the hypothesis testing of the study has been presented and described. To facilitate a detailed analysis, the results of study (see sections 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 here) were used to support or reject the hypothesis of the study.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference between learning and retention of collocations presented in noticing – reformulation tasks and traditional ways.

The hypothesis of the study which targeted the effect of using noticing-reformulation tasks on low-intermediate Iranian EFL learners' retention of collocations was rejected here. The evidence for rejecting the hypothesis of the study came from the fact that the two tailed level of significance calculated by the SPSS 19 software programme was 0.000. This is lower than 0.05 and indicates that using noticing-reformulation tasks along with stimulated recall session would outweigh traditional methods of teaching collocations such as composition writing and increase the participants' retention of collocations.

The rejection of the null hypothesis of the study can also be supported by the experimental group's progression from the pre-test to immediate post-test and more significantly to the delayed post-test.

## **5. Discussion**

### **General Discussion**

The findings of the present study lent support to the idea that using noticing reformulation tasks along with stimulated recall sessions in teaching collocations would yield better results among low-intermediate Iranian EFL learners. These findings of this study seem to be in the line with the studies carried out by Eliasi and Vahidi (2013a) regarding positive effects of using the tasks triggering learners' noticing the gap. The results of the study can reconcile language pedagogy and cognitive psychology which have been partially put aside in designing tasks for classroom use.

Furthermore, the results of this study can be considered a nominal support to Schmidt's (1990, 1993, 1995, 2010) studies regarding the significance and essentiality of noticing and attention in language learning.

### **Implications of the Study**

The results of this study have some implications for foreign language learners, teachers as well as scholars in the field of cognitive psychology. The results of the study suggest that the Noticing-Reformulation technique along with the stimulated recall session can be effective in promoting the retention of both lexical and grammatical collocations.

Implementing Noticing-reformulation tasks in EFL classrooms is twofold – first, it can be a great boon to teachers set their sights on teaching collocations to EFL learners and second, it can equip foreign language learners to capitalize on the technique outside the classroom. Learners could give their undivided attention to the way they say something and compare it with a model to notice any mismatches between their interlanguage and the target language.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There were some nominal limitations to this research that might have declined the external validity of the study. First, the net results of this study are not generalizable to all language learning contexts and students, even though a labored attempt was made to intensify the external validity of the current research study by a relatively large number of participants. Nonetheless, a similar study could be carried out with more participants chosen from a wider population, which would make it possible to generalize in detecting the effect of using noticing-reformulation tasks on the retention of English collocations.

Second, the participants' short-term and long-term retention of collocations were measured merely by banked fill in the blank tasks which mainly concentrated on lexical collocations. Other assessment techniques could be used to provide a more comprehensive picture reflecting more aspects of collocation knowledge. Moreover, the number of collocations being tested was rather low, which might have negatively influenced the statistical analysis of the study.

Third, the present study tried to get some feedback regarding the participants' attitude to learning collocations utilizing new noticing-reformulation tasks, chiefly for feasibility reasons, it didn't investigate into the participants' individual differences or their beliefs toward learning collocations, which could itself provide a better insight into the factors affecting collocation learning and retention.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

For feasibility reasons the population size of the present study is slightly limited. Nonetheless, some unpredictable emerged in this study deserve more detailed investigation.

The participants of this study were all at low-intermediate level with an average English language learning experience of 7 years. The investigation can be repeated using the same methods of teaching collocations with students of a disparate level of language proficiency. More emphasis can be put assessing the long-term retention of collocations within a wider time span. The participants can even have more exposure to both lexical and grammatical collocations on several more occasions in different contexts other than one stimulated recall session.

As a result of the participants' individual differences and different learning style preferences, more features and circumstances should be taken into account when designing the framework of the study. The limited framework of the present study hasn't allowed broad generalizations of the results. The study could be carried out with more participants from a wider, more varied population of Iranian EFL or even non-Iranian EFL learners of English. Also more research is required to shed light on the significance of noticing-reformulation tasks in different proficiency stages foreign language proficiency vocabulary learning.

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## THE EFFECT OF INTENSIVE VS. EXTENSIVE READING ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' KNOWLEDGE OF COLLOCATIONS

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### **Abstract**

This research studies the effect of extensive vs. intensive reading on Iranian intermediate English Language learners' knowledge of collocations. It aims to determine whether providing students with extensive or intensive reading might have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' knowledge of collocations. To answer the question, 60 intermediate-level language learners from Kish Air language institute in Chalus participated in the study. The subjects took a standard OPT test to demonstrate their English proficiency. The subjects were assigned to two groups (experimental and control), 30 in each group. A collocation pre-test was administered in each group. After 10-sessions of treatment a post-test of collocation was administered. The experimental group received intensive reading, while the control group received extensive reading. The data were analyzed using Independent sample t-test and paired sample t-test. The results showed that both groups were improved, but the experimental group was improved more than control group, which was significantly different.

**Key Words:** Extensive Reading, Intensive Reading, Collocation, , Iranian EFL Learners, OPT.

### **1. Introduction**

In defining reading, it is important to pay attention to both internal and external factors that deal with the text's readability and understanding; that is, reader's intelligence, experience and background knowledge are as important as words, phrases, sentences and grammatical cues. Schmitt (2002) puts these two kinds of factors in line with each other in proposing what an adequate definition should cover:

"A definition of reading requires some recognition that a reader engages in processing at the phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and discourse levels, as well as engages in goal setting, text-summary building, interpretive elaborating from knowledge resources, monitoring and assessment of goal achievement, making various adjustments to enhance comprehension, and making repairs to comprehension processing as needed" (p. 234).

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), Intensive Reading is related to further progress in language learning under the teacher's guidance. It provides a basis for explaining difficulties of structure and for extending knowledge of vocabulary and idioms.

The purpose of extensive reading is to train the students to read directly and fluently in the target language for enjoyment without the aid of the teacher. ER, reading with "large

quantities of materials that is within learners' linguistic competence" (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 21) supposedly helps in vocabulary learning by creating opportunities for inferring word meaning in context (see, e.g., Krashen, 2004).

One of the general issues facing both syntax and semantics is the existence of collocations, i.e. constructions in which, unlike in idioms, the idea expressed can be inferred to some extent from the meanings of their constituent parts (cf. Philip, 2011:24–25).

As a subcategory of formulaic language, the notion of collocation has received considerable attention in the field of foreign language learning during the last few decades (Gitsaki, 1999, Webb & Kagimoto, 2009).

The term collocation has been labeled in a variety of ways e.g. prefabs, multi-word units etc. and defined in different manners in both linguistics and language teaching. Collocations have been recognized as one of the ways that differentiate native speakers and second language learners. If a non-native speaker wants to help someone, s/he will say, "Can I help you?" whereas a native speaker will say, "Can I give you a hand?" (Salkauskiene, 2002).

### Statement of the Problem

Collocation is one of the most important and problematic parts for EFL learners. The reason for this is not that L2 learners are incapable of learning collocation, but most likely they have never exposed in formal and explicit way to the lexical and grammatical collocations of target language.

However, learners' problems with L2 collocational use have been repeatedly reported regardless of their level of language proficiency, for examples, Fan (1991) on secondary students, Bisk up (1992) on advanced learners, and Farghal and Obiedat (1995) on university students. One of the difficulties lies in the idiosyncratic nature of collocational use. For example, while 'strong' has the same meaning as 'powerful' in 'a strong/powerful argument', 'powerful' collocates with 'car' but 'strong' collocates with 'tea' (Halliday, 1966, p. 160). Another difficulty arises from the fact that collocational use may be markedly different among languages.

As Gitsaki and Taylor (1997) contend, the task of learning collocations can present both intralingual and interlingual challenges. Collocation describes lexical relations and word combinations, but joining words that are semantically compatible does not always produce acceptable combinations. For instance, *many thanks* is an acceptable English collocation but *several thanks* is not. On the other hand, collocations can differ from language to language, e.g., someone who drinks a lot is a *heavy drinker* in English and a *strong glass* in Greek. A lot of collocational errors that learners commit were found to be due to negative transfer from L1, unfamiliarity with the structure of the particular collocations, and the tendency to use generic terms instead of specific ones, e.g., pipe water, instead of tap water. (Fayez-Hussein, 1990 cited in Gitsaki & Taylor, 1997)

Wray (2002) observed that 'in English you run a business, but in German you lead it. In English you smoke a cigarette, but in Hindi you drink it. In English you lie in the sun, but in Russian you lie on it (p. 73)'. Similar to the learning of many other aspects of L2, the biggest problem is the lack of exposure to the target language. Whereas native speakers acquire the knowledge of collocation subconsciously and gradually as they grow up in their speech community, most learners, especially those who learn the L2 only in the classroom environment, do not have this opportunity.

According to Rashidi et al (2011), both IR and ER have an impact on learners' vocabulary size and depth significantly and that the students' vocabulary knowledge in terms of size and

depth had increased. Moreover, the students at the intermediate level took more advantage of IR than ER, but in the advanced group the students benefited more from ER than IR.

There are various studies emphasizing the fact that ER leads to language proficiency in general, and vocabulary development in particular. Some researchers such as Coady (1997), Shin & Kyu-Cheol (2003), Nassaji (2003), GU (2003), and Horst (2005) all have found the effect of this approach on vocabulary development.

Zareie and koosha (2002) found that Iranian EFL learners have problems with the production of English collocations. Results showed that Iranian advanced learners of English have serious problems with English collocations (about 55 percent of the time). They concluded that knowledge of collocations was an essential part of achieving native like competence in English.

Several past studies investigating second language acquisition of English collocations have shown that EFL learners' problems are due to different factors (e.g. Fan, 2009; Huang, 2001). One of the major reasons for collocational errors pertains to native language influence (e.g. Bahns, 1993; Bahns & Eldaw, 1993; Fan, 2009; Koya, 2003; Nesselhauf, 2003, 2005; Ying, 2009). Some have also found that learners rely on certain learning strategies, such as synonymy (e.g. Boonyasquan, 2006; Farghal & Obiedat, 1995; Mongkolchai, 2008), repetition and overgeneralization (e.g. Fan, 2009; Granger, 1998; Howarth, 1998; Shih, 2000), etc.

The researcher is going to find if intensive reading vs. extensive reading is more effective in learning collocations by Iranian EFL intermediate students. Due to the huge number of collocations, it is not possible to teach students all types of collocations, therefore, those collocations which are more problematic to the students should be recognized and taught first (Lewis and Conzett 2000). Hence, this study tried to find the effect of extensive vs. intensive reading on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations.

### **Significance of the Study**

The importance of collocational knowledge in L2 competence is beyond dispute. It enables the learners to speak more fluently, makes their speech more understandable and helps them write or sound more native-like ([Hunston and Francis, 2000]; Wray, 2002).

The importance of collocations has long been stressed by scholars involved in teaching foreign languages (Xiao & McEney, 2006). Gitsaki and Taylor (1997) and Wray (2002) point out that an increase in the knowledge of collocations can result in better performance in the learner's oral skills and even in reading speed.

According to Richard Day, one of the primary ways to learn vocabulary is through reading (2011). Reading can serve as a means for vocabulary development because it brings students into contact with new words and repeatedly reinforces the words previously known. Lewis (2000) argued that increasing learners' collocation competence is the way to improve their language as a whole.

## **2. Review Literature**

### **Intensive Reading**

According to Nation (2004), "intensive reading involves the detailed reading of texts with the two goals of understanding the text and learning language features through a deliberate focus on these items" (p. 20).

**Extensive Reading**

Extensive reading, reading with "large quantities of materials that is within learners' linguistic competence" (Grabe & Stroller, 2002, p. 259), purportedly helps in vocabulary learning by creating opportunities for inferring word meaning in context (see, e.g., Krashen, 2004).

**Collocation**

Shehata, (2008) argued that "the origin of the term collocation is the Latin verb *collocare*, which means *to set in order/to arrange*". The term collocation was first introduced by Firth (1957) who is known as the father of collocation and he defined it as "the company that words keep" (p.183) (Shehata, 2008).

Martynska (2004, p.5) argues that although collocation, only recently, has attracted linguistics study, there is no exhaustive and uniform definition or categorization of collocation and it seems to be one of the most problematic and error-generating areas of vocabulary, especially for second language learning. In general, collocations are seen as units consisting of co-occurring words at a certain distance from each other, and a distinction is often made between frequently and infrequently co-occurring words (Nesselhauf, 2005).

**Classification of Collocations**

According to syntactic characteristics, Lewis (2000, p. 51) classifies lexical collocations into six major types:

- Adjective + Noun (*strong tea, major problem, key issue*)
- Noun + Noun (*a pocket calculator, sense of pride*)
- Verb + Noun (*make an impression, set an alarm*)
- Verb + Adverb (*spell accurately, live dangerously, smiled proudly*)
- Adverb + Adjective (*strictly accurate, completely soaked, happily married*)
- Noun + Verb (*companies merged, pose a problem*).

A number of linguists have proposed certain criteria so far for distinguishing different kinds of collocations. Benson, Benson, & Ilson (1997)'s collocation classification is: lexical collocations and grammatical collocations.

**Lexical Collocations**

Lexical collocations are composed of two or more content words, i.e. nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Examples of this kind of collocation is presented below:

adjective + noun: sour milk

verb + noun: conduct research

noun + verb: dust accumulates

adverb + adjective: mentally disabled

verb + adverb or: move freely

adverb + verb: proudly present

**Grammatical Collocations**

Grammatical collocations refer to combinations comprising a content word and a function word, which is usually a preposition, as illustrated below:

Noun + preposition: an increase in

Verb + preposition: elaborate on

Adjective + preposition: familiar with

Preposition + noun: on probation

According to Cowie and Howarth's model (1996) there can be a continuum containing four categories of collocations:

- 1) Free combinations: the meaning of free combination is interpreted from the literal meaning of individual elements (open a window).
- 2) Restricted collocations: a restricted collocation is more limited in the selection of compositional elements and usually has one component used in a specialized context (meet the demand).
- 3) Figurative idioms: a figurative idiom has a metaphorical meaning as a whole that can somehow tell its literal interpretation (call the shot).
- 4) Pure idioms: a pure idiom is a single unit whose meaning is totally unpredictable from the meaning of its components (spill the beans).

### Sources of Collocational Errors

According to different studies the main sources of collocational errors are as follow:

- (1) Overgeneralization: Learners used overgeneralization when the item did not carry any obvious contrast to them. In other words, Overgeneralization is the creation of a deviant structure in place of two regular structures on the basis of students' experience of the target language.
- (2) Ignorance of rule restrictions: Errors of ignorance of rule restrictions were the result of analogy and failure to observe the restrictions of existing structures (Richards, 1973). For instance, *ask you a favor* is a false analogy of the construction of verb+ object+ object.
- (3) False concepts hypothesized: False concepts hypothesized errors result from learners' faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language.
- (4) The use of synonym: The use of a synonym for a lexical item in a collocation is seen as a "straightforward application of the open choice principle" (Farghal & Obiedat, 1995).
- (5) Interlingual transfer: learners' first language influenced their production on collocations and was the common source of errors.
- (6) Word coinage: Word coinage means that students make up a new word to communicate the desired concept.
- (7) Approximation: Approximation means that learners use an incorrect vocabulary item or structure

There are some studies emphasizing the fact that IR results in language proficiency and vocabulary development such as Anderson (1999), Li, Ying (1998), Paran (2003), Fenglin (2004).. Many researchers as mentioned by Paribakht and Wesch 1997 have declared both IR and ER can affect learners' vocabulary knowledge with regard to the depth.

Hugh Roderick Rosszell's (2007) contribution deals with the matter of vocabulary teaching and learning through extensive reading. More precisely, he described a two-condition extensive reading programme conducted for 40 EFL students of a Japanese university which led him to conclude that an approach which couples extensive reading with intensive vocabulary study represents an option that is both more viable and effective for L2 learners. In highlighting the questionable bias against using decontextualised study to help students with vocabulary expansion and the complexities of learning words implicitly through guessing and inferring, the study pointed out that incidental learning is best followed up with intentional learning.

**Research Questions of the Study**

Researcher wants to know if Intensive vs. Extensive Reading has any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations.

RQ1: Does Intensive reading have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations?

RQ2: Does Extensive Reading have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations?

**Hypotheses of the Study**

H1: Intensive Reading has no effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations.

H2: Extensive Reading has no effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations.

**3. Methodology****The Design of the Study**

The design of the study was quasi- experimental .In fact, all approaches involve the control group and the manipulation of three basic characteristics: 1) the pre-test 2) a treatment during the course of study 3) and a final measurement of the treatment (post-test).In this research there were two groups: the experimental group which received the knowledge of collocation through intensive reading for 10-sessions, and the control group which received knowledge of collocation through extensive reading for 10-sessions. Here, intensive reading and extensive reading (treatments) were independent variables and knowledge of collocation was dependent variable

**Participants**

The population from which the participants were selected for this study included Iranian EFL learners whose first language was Persian and who were studying English in a language institute in Chalus. The participants in the current study were 60 EFL learners from Kish Air cultural & educational institute ,and they were at the intermediate level. To be certain of the homogeneity of the participants in terms of proficiency, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) as a standard language proficiency test with reasonable validity and reliability measures was used among 100 EFL learners. Participants whose scores were one standard deviation below the mean score of the class were selected. The participants were two groups; each group consisted of 30 students. Both sexes were represented in the classes consisting of 20 male and 40 female students, altogether.

**Instruments**

Two research instruments were used in the study. The first was an OPT (OXFORD PLACEMENT TEST) administered to them in order to homogenize them. The second instrument was a collocation test. The test includes 60 collocation questions that was devised by Al-sibai. Based on split- half reliability criterion, the test was divided into two parts odd and even numbers. Odd numbers for pre-test and even number for post-test were used by the researcher in the control and experimental groups. There are 30 questions in pre-test and 30 questions in post-test, too.

### Procedure

The data needed for this study were collected from classes in Kish Air cultural & educational institute in Chalus. An OPT (OXFORD PLACEMENT TEST) was administered to them in order to homogenize them. This test was paper and pencil test. Participants whose scores were one standard deviation below the mean score of the class were selected. A total of 60 participants were selected and randomly divided into two groups: Experimental group (N=30) and control group (N=30). Both groups took a pre-test of collocations in order to help the researcher to identify their existing knowledge of collocations. Participants' age and gender have not been taken care of in this research. Afterwards, both the experimental and the control group were taught collocations, but with different methods. As an illustration, the experimental group was taught collocation implicitly through intensive reading instruction, while the control group received a treatment of knowledge of collocations explicitly through extensive reading for 10-sessions. Then both groups were given a post-test of collocations. Since the researcher in whose classrooms the research project was conducted was at the same time the instructor, the test was administered at ease and with no tension.

### Scoring

The OPT test which was used in this study was scored on the basis of a standard criterion. The criterion for scoring both the pre-test and post-test was a maximum score of 30.

### Methods of Analyzing Data

The data obtained from the pre-test and the post-test were analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences version 16 (SPSS, 16). The descriptive statistic of the participants and the tests were arranged and the results of both pre-test and post-test were analyzed using the independent sample t-test and paired sample t-test were used in order to compare the means of the two groups.

## 4. Result

### Data Analysis and Findings

#### Descriptive Analysis of the Data

The descriptive analysis of the data was employed to show the number, mean, standard deviation, and standard error of measurement for pre-test and post-test for participants in both groups. The results are shown in table 4.1 and table 4.2. Such analysis was done using the SPSS software.

*Table 4.1. Descriptive analysis of the pre-test scores of the experimental and control group of the study*

Test	N	Minimum	Max	Mean	Std. Error	Std.Deviation	Variance
Pre-exp	30	14	18	16.133	.22861	1.25212	1.568
pre-co	30	13	19	15.500	.30980	1.69685	2.879

According to table 4.1 that shows the descriptive analysis of the pre-test scores of the experimental and control group of the study, there are 30 students in each group (N=30). The mean of the pre-test of the experimental group is 16.13 ( $\bar{X}=16.13$ ), while this value for the control group is 15.50 ( $\bar{X}=15.50$ ). Both groups seem to have mean scores approximately close to each other. This means that two groups of the study are nearly at the same level of knowledge of collocations before administration of the treatment of the study. As shown in the table, the minimum and maximum of scores of the pre-test of the experimental group are 14 and 18, and this value for control group are 13 and 19. The standard deviation of pre-test of experimental group is 1.25 (SD=1.25), while this value for control group is 1.69 (SD=1.69). This may give an image of the participants' pre-test scores of experimental group being more homogenous than those of control group.

*Table 4.2. Descriptive analysis of the post-test scores of the experimental and control group of the study*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
Post-exp	30	17	23	19.7000	.29224	1.60065	2.562
Post-con	30	15	21	17.7333	.28741	1.57422	2.48

Table 4.2 shows the descriptive analysis of the post-test scores of the experimental and control group of the study. There are 30 students in each group (N=30). The mean of post-test of the experimental group is 19.70 ( $\bar{X}=19.70$ ), while this value for the control group is 17.73 ( $\bar{X}=17.73$ ). Both groups seem to have mean scores with difference to each other. This means that two groups of the study are at a different level of knowledge of collocations after administration of the treatment of the study. This meaningful difference; though, very important for the following analysis, is not enough to answer the research questions. As shown in the table 4.2, the minimum and maximum of scores of post-test of the experimental group are 17 and 23, and this value for control group are 15 and 21. The standard deviation of post-test of experimental group is 1.60 (SD=1.60), while this value for control group is 1.57 (SD=1.57). It shows that there is no significant difference between standard deviations of two groups, so it can be proposed that the participants' homogeneity of both groups is the same.

#### **Inferential Analysis of the Data**

This section focuses on the inferential analysis of the obtained data of this study. Such analysis was done using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science). To maintain the effect of intensive vs. extensive reading on Iranian EFL learners' knowledge of collocations, an independent- sample t-test and paired samples t-test was carried out.

In order to see which variable was more effective, a paired-sample t-test was run as well. A paired sample t-test was run to compare the pre-test and post-test scores of each group and to check the effectiveness of different teaching methods (Intensive vs. Extensive Reading) on collocations development in two groups.

4.3. Paired –samples t- test of the pre-test and post-test scores of control group

	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error Mean	t	df	Sig(2tailed)	95%confidence interval Of the difference
							Lower upper
<b>Pos-con pre-con</b>	2.23333	1.07265	.19584	11.404	29	.000	1.83280,2.63387

The results of this procedure has been represented in table 4.3 .As it is shown in table 4.3, which shows Paired samples t- test of the pre-test and post-test scores of control group, the significant level was set at .000 level (sig=.000, Sig<0.05), and Observed- t in control group is 11.40, and the degree of freedom was 29 (df =29). (Observed- t>critical- t,  $t_{crit}=2.04 < t_{obs}=11.40$ ). So, the first null hypothesis is rejected. It shows that the extensive reading had some effects on Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations.

4.4. Paired –samples t- test of the pre-test and post-test scores of experimental group

	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error Mean	t	df	Sig(2tailed)	95%confidence interval Of the difference
							Lower upper
<b>Postexp pre-exp</b>	3.56667	1.38174	.25227	14.138	29	.000	3.05072,4.08262

According to table 4.4, , which shows Paired samples t- test of the pre-test and post-test scores of experimental group, the significant level was set at .000 level (sig=.000 ,Sig<0.05) ,and Observed- t in experimental group is 14.13, and the degree of freedom was 29 (df =29). (Observed- t>critical- t,  $t_{crit}=2.04 < t_{obs}=14.13$ ) So, the second null hypothesis is rejected. It shows that the intensive reading had significantly affected Intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of collocations. As mentioned before, an independent sample t-test to compare the post- test scores of experimental and control group was carried.

4.5. Independent sample t-test of the post- test scores of experimental and control group

								95%Confidenc e Interval of the Difference
				Sig.	Mean	Std. Error		

	F	sig	T	d f	(2tailed )	Differenc e	Differenc e	Lower Upper
COLLOCATIO N (Equal variances not assumed)	.012	.912	4.798	58	.000	1.96667	.40989	1.14619 ,2.78715

Table 4.5. Summarizes the results of calculating the t-value in an independent sample t-test to compare the post- test scores of experimental and control group. The observed-t is 4.79 ( $t_{obs}=4.79$ ), and critical t is 2.00 ( $t_{crit}=2.00$ ), it shows that observed-t is more than critical t ( $t_{obs}=4.79 > t_{crit}=2.00$ ). The level of significance or p- value is .000 ( $sig=.000$ ) that is less than 0.5 ( $sig < 0.5$ ).

Based on data analysis report summarized in this table there is a mean difference of 1.96 between the experimental and control post-test. It indicates that the t-test result supported the meaningful difference between the mean scores of post-test of both groups. So the experimental group performed better than control group, and it shows that intensive reading is more effective than extensive reading at the intermediate level.

### Results of Hypothesis Testing

This study was carried out to investigate the relationship between intensive and extensive reading comprehension by Iranian EFL learners and their knowledge of collocations. To answer the research questions addressed before, we conducted our study in a quasi-experimental design with two groups of control and experimental design that existed in an English institute.

For the purpose of reaching a conclusion about the main purpose of the study, the data gathered from groups' performance were analyzed with an independent sample t-test to compare the post- test scores of experimental and control group and paired sample t-test procedure.

First a pre- test was administered and all the subjects of the study took part in this test while they were asked to answer the questions. The data were gathered and used for analyzing the descriptive statistics of pre-test. The mean, standard deviation and variance from the mean was gathered by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 16). As it is shown in table 4.1, both groups seem to have mean scores approximately close to each other. This means that two groups of the study are nearly at the same level of knowledge of collocations before administering the treatment of the study.

After 10- sessions of treatment, a post-test was administered to see whether extensive vs. intensive reading were effective or not. The experimental group was taught collocations through intensive reading, while the control group was taught collocations through extensive reading. The data were analyzed by SPSS software. Table 4.2 shows the descriptive analysis of the post-test scores of the experimental and control group of the study. The number of subjects in each group, mean, standard deviation and the standard error of each group is illustrated. Both groups seem to have mean scores which are different from each other. This means that two groups of the study are at different levels of knowledge of collocations after administration of the treatment of the study.

The result of this analysis revealed that there was a difference between pre-test and post-test of two groups of the study, but findings indicated that the experimental group who got IR treatment, while the control group, who got ER treatment, gained the better means score. The mean score of 19.70, for experimental group who got IR treatment, while the control group, who got ER treatment, gained the mean score of 17.73. If we compare the mean scores of two groups together, we will come to the following conclusions. The experimental group got better mean score than the control group. The difference between the two groups' mean scores can be due to different approaches namely as IR vs. ER. In other words, the students who received IR got better scores in comparison to those with ER treatment.

Independent sample T-test on the basis of students' scores on the post-test is summarized in table 4.3. Based on data analysis report summarized in this table there is a mean difference of 1.96 between the experimental and control group. The level of significance or p-value is .000 that is less than 0.5 (0.000 < 0.5). In short, data analysis report shows that both null hypotheses are rejected, and both intensive and extensive reading have effect on learning collocations in Iranian intermediate learners, but intensive reading is more effective than extensive reading.

## 5. Discussion

### General Discussion

The aim of the study was to investigate the effect of intensive vs. extensive reading on learning collocations. The results show that collocations can be learned through reading which is similar to other studies that examined vocabulary acquisition from reading (Dupuy and Krashen, 1993; Horst et al., 1998; Zahar et al, 2001).

The findings of the present study reinforce previous research (Haynes & Baker, 1993) that indicates strong effect of reading techniques on vocabulary acquisition. So, to summarize, reading techniques either intensively or extensively are effective and efficient ways of improving foreign language learners. Given the appropriate situation to learners to do reading as much as they can, teachers also play important roles in so-doing activity namely as teaching process. They are assumed to use some practical ways to encourage students read either intensively or extensively.

In relation to research questions, the study showed that there was improvement in learning of collocation knowledge in both groups which confirms the results of other studies which have investigated the acquisition of several aspects of word knowledge (Pellicer-Sánchez and Schmitt, 2010; Pigada and Schmitt, 2006; Webb, 2007).

The results are complied with a few studies. Many researchers as mentioned by Paribakht and Wesch 1997; Schmidt 1998 have declared both IR and ER can affect learners' vocabulary knowledge.

Contrary to Meara (1996) and Qian's (2002) findings that reading cannot definitely build up the students' vocabulary knowledge. Also it supports Read's (2000) point of view, who states that reading comprehension leads to language proficiency in general and vocabulary acquisition in particular.

It is also complied with another study done by Nurweni and Read (1999) who claimed that learning words through reading results in higher scores on vocabulary test. One can conclude that reading as much as possible both intensively and extensively by paying attention to choose materials appropriate to one's level of proficiency is one of the determining factors in developing vocabulary knowledge.

Several studies which have compared the effects of direct vocabulary learning and learning from context have shown that explicit learning is more effective and more long-lasting than implicit learning (Norris & Ortega, 2000). However, having in mind that collocation and some other aspects of word knowledge are better learned from context (Krashen, 1989; Nation, 2001), in order to enable learners to gain deeper knowledge of the words, language learning programmes need to include an extensive reading component.

Considering that there was a significant difference between improvement of control group and experimental group in learning collocations. Thus intensive reading can be a valuable means for teaching collocations in L2 classroom, in intermediate level.

The researcher found that Iranian participants in her study had many problems with collocations in pre-test and post-test. This idea has been supported by Fayes (1990) undergraduate third and fourth year Jordanian students majoring in English performed poorly in a multiple choice test conducted by Fayes (1990), who aimed to assess the students' ability to collocate words correctly in English. The multiple choice test consisted of 40 sentences, with each sentence consisting an incomplete collocation (i.e. idioms, fixed expressions, restricted collocations).

As described in the result section, and based on the findings of this study, a relationship between collocation knowledge and reading comprehension does exist in a way that learning occurred through reading both intensively and extensively. The participants in both reading conditions (IR/ER) performed nearly the same in the way that all in both groups benefited from these treatments. As is apparent, the students in experimental group performed better as a result of receiving IR treatment.

#### **Implications of the Study**

Various methods have been developed so far to assess collocation. The teachers study the available resources to select suitable condition, teach through effective techniques, and assess collocations appropriately.

From a pedagogical point of view, it is plausible to recommend language teachers consider different approaches to reading (e.g. Intensive and Extensive). Teachers can implement these important points in the process of teaching collocations and help the learners make significant improvement.

The results of this study are expected to have instructional implications for Iranian EFL students in particular and possibly for EFL learners in general. According to the result of this study, Iranian EFL learners can learn collocations through reading. Intensive reading is a way which in this study is proposed to learn collocations, and Teachers may benefit from the findings of the present study. Teachers can get their students to learn vocabulary more efficiently by presenting words in collocations. Teachers can use intensive reading to improve learners' knowledge of collocation.

Material designers, also, can take advantage of the results of the current study in that they may develop new curricula for teaching collocations at the universities, schools, and institutes or design materials to convey more information in teaching collocations. They can publish new books, pamphlets, or other teacher-made materials based on their specific classroom condition.

### Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations for this study. First, there is no access to enough number of subjects. This study might have had a good chance to recruit more student participants than it actually had.

Second, the current study was done in one institute (KishAir) in chalus, and all the participants were EFL learners, hence making us unable to include ESL learners in the description of findings.

Third, the current study provided estimates of the knowledge of collocations of Iranian EFL learners at the intermediate level in institute. However; it was beyond the scope of the current study to procure the same information in other educational levels.

### Suggesting for Further Research

Studies on collocations have been carried out in the past two decades but our understanding of collocations is still not enough. The participants of the current study were intermediate learners studying English in one institute in chalus (Kish Air); replications should be made using participants of diverse age groups and proficiency levels studying different majors.

Further research should also consider carrying out other studies exploring the effect of intensive vs. extensive reading on other language skills.

After ten sessions this study has been done, it is necessary to investigate similar study in long term. In this study both male and female participated, researcher can compare male and female separately.

Further research is also needed on how collocational knowledge develops in native speakers of English. Such information can be used to compare the routes of development by L2 learners and native speakers in the acquisition of English collocations.

The analysis of collocational errors was not part of this study. However, future research could investigate the misuse of collocations by L2 learners, the possible causes leading to collocational errors, and ways to remedy them.

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## THE EFFECT OF INCIDENTAL LEARNING OF GRAMMAR ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' PARAGRAPH WRITING

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### **Abstract**

This study was conducted to investigate the effect of incidental learning of Grammar on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' paragraph writing. For these purpose 40 learners of English at a language institute participated in this study. Having being homogenized by a TOEFL test, they were randomly assigned into two groups of 20, control and experimental. Then both groups sat for a pre-test which was a paragraph writing test. The purpose of this test was to measure the learners' initial subject knowledge of paragraph writing ability. Afterwards, the experimental group received treatment based on incidental learning of Grammar. However, the control group received no treatment and approached the traditional way of teaching. The treatment procedure took 10 sessions. Finally at the end of the course both groups sat for the post test of paragraph writing. Then the statistical analysis was run through ANCOVA. It was explored from the study that learners' paragraph writing improves more when they are provided with incidental learning of grammar. However, this study provides a significant contribution in curriculum innovation and policy with respect to the learners' paragraph writing development.

**Key Words:** Incidental Learning Of Grammar, Paragraph Writing

### **Introduction**

In language teaching in general, and that of grammar in particular, there exist two popular methods, both of which are utilized across the globe in language classes. The deductive approach to language learning is a method in which the grammatical rules are explicitly presented to students followed by practice applying the rule. As a reaction to this way of teaching grammar, other alternatives are proposed, such as inductive learning, discovery learning, noticing and conscious-raising (Fortune, 1992; James, 2001). The results of applying these approaches to teaching grammar have not been consistent in different situations, nor for individuals (Fortune, 1992; James, 2001). Consequently, the concept of incidental learning comes into vogue. It is crucial for learners to acquire or learn some amount of data without intention. The importance of the present study lies here. Through the results obtained, one

can hope to depict whether it is more appropriate to learn grammar incidentally or explicitly by concentrating on the rules.

According to Lankard (1995), incidental learning, to a noticeable extent, increases specific knowledge, skills and understanding. Incidental learning includes learning from mistakes, learning by doing, and learning through a series of interpersonal experiments. On the other hand, intentional learning means learning as a result of purposeful activity; i.e. when a person is going to learn something.

The common idea of incidental teaching is that they do not start with overt introduction of a rule; but as one can gather from the titles, the learner is encouraged to discover the rules from the texts and the milieu of instruction.

In this study, an endeavor is made to investigate the role of incidental learning of grammar in reading tasks as compared to the effect of explicit teaching of grammar.

### **Statement of the problem**

Over development and learning, we acquire a considerable amount of information incidentally. Natural language offers perhaps the most striking example of such incidental learning. Implicit learning is typically defined as "acquisition of knowledge about the underlying structure of a complex stimulus environment by a process which takes place naturally, simply and without conscious operation" (Ellis 1994b: 1). Many authors use the terms of incidental and informal learning almost as synonyms (Marsick and Watkins, 2001; Stangl, 2004) and define incidental learning as a subcategory of informal learning which is characterized as a frequently unconscious by product of some other activity. This tightly connects incidental learning and implicit learning which is defined as unconscious learning (Stangl, 2004). For adults intentional and incidental learning are still of major importance: Many skills, rules and facts concerning the professional situation (e.g. unwritten social rules, hidden agendas, important facts about staff, but also shortcuts on the computer, etc.) are not formally instructed but are acquired incidentally.

The term incidental learning is used, in applied linguistics, to refer to the acquisition of a word or expression without the conscious intention to commit the element to memory, such as "picking up" an unknown word from listening to someone or from reading a text. Incidental learning stands in contrast to intentional learning. This refers to a deliberate attempt to commit factual information to memory, often including the use of rehearsal techniques, like preparing for a test in school or learning a song by heart. commit factual information to memory, often including the use of rehearsal techniques like preparing for a test in school or learning a song by heart.

For the most part, within the classroom, any mention of grammar causes the student moments of discomfort and sometimes even terror. Many teachers have tried to make grammar teaching a non-threatening, imaginative and useful activity within the English curriculum. There are many types of difficulties faced by students and teachers with regard to grammar instruction in an ESL/EFL context. Identifying such difficulties and being consciously aware of them will help teachers find ways of overcoming them and provide effective grammar instruction. The teachers employ theoretically recommended methods without necessarily taking into account their own and their learners' potential difficulties. They may not be conscious of difficulties which are serious and may thus hinder students' learning of English grammar, and do not choose the method of instruction that would pose fewer difficulties and problems to their learners. In teaching grammar, three areas have to be considered: grammar as rules, grammar as form, and grammar as resource. For many L2

learners, learning grammar often means learning the rules of grammar and having an intellectual knowledge of grammar. Teachers often believe that this will provide the generative basis on which learners can build their knowledge and will be able to use the language eventually. For them, prescribed rules give a kind of security. In terms of motivation and learner success with languages, grammar has been seen to be a problem and to stand in the way of helping learners to communicate fluently. The hard fact that most teachers face is that learners often find it difficult to make flexible use of the rules of grammar taught in the classroom. They may know the rules perfectly, but are incapable of applying them in their own use of the language. Many learners have difficulty in internalizing grammar rules, although these have been taught intensively. While incidental learning is often dismissed, it is an important concept because it often has a motivating effect with the learners that lead to 'discovery' learning. So unless other considerations prevent it, it can be worthwhile to detour from the primary objectives to take advantage of an unplanned teachable or trainable moment. For example, if I'm instructing the learners to operate forklifts and are discussing safety concepts, one or more of the learners might become interested in a safety concept that is unrelated to the operation of forklifts. However, if possible I should try to help them with the unrelated concept, which in turn should help to motivate them with the related safety concepts pertaining to forklifts. In addition it could lead one or more of them to be more interested in the safety program and perhaps lead them to become more involved with it.

A general problem with the operational definition of incidental vocabulary acquisition is that it seems to suggest that incidental learning occurs unconsciously. As Gass (1999) notes, however, defining incidental vocabulary acquisition as the 'side-effect' of another activity neglects the active role of the learner in this process. The fact that learning occurs a byproduct of reading does not automatically imply that it does not involve any conscious processes. The seeming equation of 'incidental' with 'unconscious' is also criticized by Ellis (1994a: 38), who states that incidental vocabulary acquisition is non-explicit in so far as it does not involve an explicit learning intention (the overall goal of the learner is text comprehension), but that neither the process nor the product of such learning is necessarily implicit in it the sense of non-conscious. The term implicit will be equated with 'non-conscious' in the sense of unaware, while incidental will be equated with 'un-intentional'. Incidental vocabulary acquisition can be regarded as non-explicit in so far as it does not involve an explicit learning intention (i.e. the overall goal of the learner is text comprehension and not vocabulary acquisition).

While we learn 'formally' only in some very specific situations and periods our life (school, formation) incidental and informal learning are much more important for most of the skills and knowledge we learn during the vast majority of life. As a matter of fact in learning is seen today as the normal way of learning for children in non-scholar context they appropriate themselves with much knowledge and skills "en passant" (Reischmann 1986) as a by-product of seemingly not aimed but self guided activity with a high intrinsic.

Many authors define incidental learning as a subcategory of informal learning which is characterized as a frequently unconscious by product of some other activity.

Ghabanchi (2010) studied the effect of incidental teaching of grammar to Iranian students and concluded that incidental learning of grammar is not very productive in all situations. It would have appeared that the use of incidental teaching predicted SL proficiency scores if other variables had not been considered. Relevant student variable must also be taken into

account in a control treatment design assessing use of incidental teaching versus no use of incidental teaching.

### **Research Question**

In order to tackle the problem of the research in a very consolidated way, a research question has been formulated as follows:

Q: Does Incidental learning of grammar have effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' paragraph writing?

### **Research Hypothesis**

To answer the research question of the study, a research hypothesis has been formulated as follows:

H0: Incidental learning of grammar does not have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' paragraph writing.

### **Review of literature**

The common idea of incidental teaching is that they do not start with overt introduction of a rule; but as one can gather from the titles, the learner is encouraged to discover the rules from the texts and the milieu of instruction. Many teachers have long known that students often don't learn the grammar they are taught; they only internalize those grammar features that they are ready to learn and they learn each feature very gradually, passing through a series of transitional stages. "Learning is a relatively permanent change in a behavioral tendency is the result of reinforced practice" (Kimble and Garmezy, 1965, cited in Brown, 1994.

According to Lankard (1995), incidental learning, to a noticeable extent, increases specific knowledge, skills and understanding. Incidental learning includes learning from mistakes, learning by doing, and learning through a series of interpersonal experiments. On the other hand, intentional learning means learning as a result of purposeful activity; i.e. when a person is going to learn something.

Learning something without the intention to learn it or learning one thing while intending to learn another is called incidental learning. This can be contrasted with intentional learning. In incidental learning, subjects are not told in advance that they will be tested after treatment.

The importance of incidental learning for language acquisition has been shown in a significant number of studies. Language learning in a pedagogical context has been shown to rely on incidental and implicit (unconscious) learning than on intentional and explicit learning (for an extensive review see Elley, 2005). Several studies have shown that the acquisitions of vocabulary, of spelling and of grammar rules are strongly promoted by incidental learning if the context is highly motivating. This holds for first language learners as for second language learners, for small children as for adults. Some studies even showed that intensive grammar training in a traditional way has almost no effect on a better understanding of these rules (Harris, 1962, Elley, 1982, Hillocks, 1984).

Concerning the role of incidental learning, Schmidt (1990) maintains that incidental learning is certainly possible when the task demands focusing attention on relevant features of the input. In addition, Ellis (1994, p. 139) stresses that "many formal language lessons are not directed at properties but rather at enabling the learners to use features they have partly acquired with greater accuracy".

In support of the incidental teaching view, Long (2000, p. 95) cites. "Given adequate opportunities, older children, adolescents, and adults can and do learn much of the grammar of a second language incidentally while focusing on meaning or communication." This position is also backed by Lightbown (2000, p. 432) who maintains that "classroom research has provided additional support for the conclusion that some features are acquired incidentally without intentional effort or explicit guidance". However, he does not show which feature can be acquired incidentally.

Richard w. Schmidt (1990) studied the role of consciousness in second language L. found that What learners notice is constrained by a number of factors, but incidental certainly possible when task demands focus attention on relevant features of the input. This suggests a fruitful area of research for those who are interested in task-based language teaching. To supplement research that has been carried out to determine the degree to which task characteristics affect message comprehension.

Incidental learning in another sense, picking up target language forms from input when they do not carry information crucial to the task, appears unlikely for adults. Paying attention to language form is hypothesized to be facilitative in all cases, and may be necessary for adult acquisition of redundant grammatical features. In general the relation between attention and awareness provides a link to the study of individual differences in language learning, as well as to consideration of instruction in making formal features of the target language more salient and facilitating input encoding.

Hulstijn (2011) investigated the incidental learning in second language acquisition it found that incidental vocabulary learning is not necessarily more effective than intentional learning nor is intentional vocabulary learning more effective than incidental learning and an incidental task (i.e., a task without forewarning that a retention test will follow) allowing learners to process new vocabulary only superficially or even skip new words altogether will produce little knowledge of new words. In contrast, one could think of an intentional task (i.e., a task with forewarning of an upcoming retention task) forcing learners to process new vocabulary elaborately (e.g., 'read the following text look up the meaning of any words you don't know in your dictionary, summarize the text's contents in about five sentences, and learn the new words looked up.

## **Methodology**

### **Introduction**

As it is said earlier, the present study was conducted to ameliorate the pedagogical and practical effect of incidental learning of grammar on learners' paragraph writing. So this part aimed at paying attention to the methodology of the research as follows: the design of the study, participants of the study, materials, procedures and the statistical analysis.

### **Design of the study**

The design of the study is quasi-experimental design which is a pre-test and post-test design.

### **Participants**

The participants of the study were 100 intermediate students both male and female. After administration of OPT test, 40 intermediate students whose scores were between 31 and 50 were selected. They were divided into 2 groups control and experimental group. Both groups sat for the pre-test of paragraph writing to take their initial knowledge of writing ability.

Then the control group received no treatment. However, the experimental group received treatment via short stories and based on the following incidental guided paragraph writing strategies by Frodesen(1992): text analysis: an incidental guided paragraph writing strategies in which students practice some features of the grammatical structure in a particular context. Text elicitation: an incidental guided paragraph-writing strategies in which instructor gives a topic of composition and a grammatical construction which are supposed to be used in it. Text conversion: an incidental guided paragraph writing strategies in which students are given short text or paragraph that they are supposed to rewrite change grammatical features. Text completion: an incidental guided paragraph-writing strategies in which a passage with the number of blanks is given to the students to fill up. Sentence recombination: an incidental guided paragraph writing strategies in which sentence structure, paragraph structure, punctuation, coherence are practiced by students in conjunction with critical thinking skills to cluster and organize their ideas and concepts. Reconstruction: an incidental guided paragraph-writing strategies in which the whole composition is written so as to preserve as many meaning as possible. Reformulation: an incidental guided paragraph-writing strategies in which students' work is corrected by directly providing words, spelling, punctuation, or by providing a phrase or a sentence, which in turn the students are asked to produce a clean copy of their work.

The whole project took for 10 sessions. After treatment both groups sat for a post-test exactly the same as pre-test.

### **Materials**

This research scheme takes advantage of three types of tests for the sake of data collection. An OPT (Oxford placement test) not released and publicized in order to measure the subjects' current status of proficiency level. The test covered the areas of writing, and grammar proficiency (see Appendix A). The subjects in both groups were screened and equated as far as their proficiency levels were concerned. A pre-test of writing was given to the subjects to measure the subjects' initial differences in paragraph writing. And finally a post test of writing was administered to both groups to find out the effectiveness of the treatment.

### **Procedure**

The procedure through which this study is conducted includes different stages of application which embraces the selection of the subjects, instrument and materials. Basically three types of test will be used in this study, one is OPT test which is used to make the subject homogeneous and the next one is pre-test which is used to assess the initial knowledge of the subject under investigation and the last one is the post-test used to assess the subjects' ability on the specific treatment program.

### **Statistical analysis**

The data of the study was computed based on computer assisted program (SPSS) software. ANCOVA was used to present the analysis and result of the study based on the hypothesis of the research.

### **Data analysis and result:**

#### **Introduction**

This study investigates the effect of Incidental learning of grammar on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' paragraph writing. The researcher tries to find out whether Incidental learning

of grammar has any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' paragraph writing ability or not. In this chapter the descriptive statistics will be handled through measuring mean and standard deviation (SD). Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) will be used to test the hypotheses.

**Descriptive Statistics**

Before starting the treatment, a test of OPT was employed to establish the homogeneity of the subjects in terms of language proficiency. Initially, 100 male and female students participated in the study.

After administration of OPT test, 40 intermediate students whose scores were between 31 and 50 were selected. Then they were randomly classified into two groups. One of them was considered as the control group and the other one as the experimental group. A descriptive statistical analysis was done on the collected data of OPT test. The results are shown in Table (4-1).

*Table (4-1). Descriptive Statistics for the Proficiency Test*

N	Mean	SD
100	32	10.32

Table (4-2) shows the number of students who took the pre-test and post-test. It should be mentioned that no one excluded.

*Table(4-2). Number of Students Participated in Pre-test and Post-test*

Cases	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
	Pre-test*group	40	100.0%	0	0%	40
Post-test*group	40	100.0%	0	0%	40	100.0%

*The descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test is shown in table (4-3).*

Group		Pre-test	Post-test
Experimental	Mean	59.9	68.4
	N	20	20
	SD.	4.8	4.7

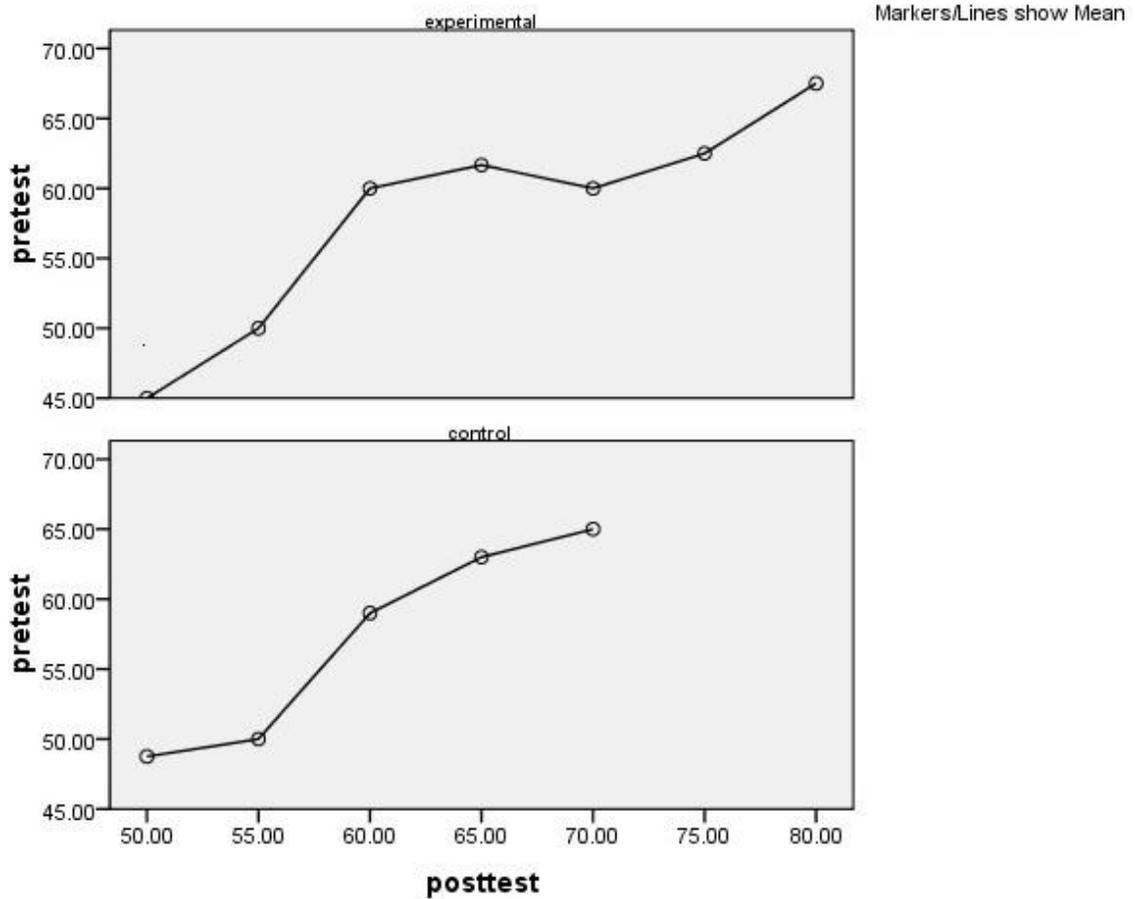
Control	Mean	58.45	58.1
	N	20	20
	SD	5.64	5.2
Total	Mean	59.15	63.25
	N	40	40
	SD	5.216	7.121

### Interpretive Statistics

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) is particularly appropriate when subjects in two or more groups are found to differ on a pre-test or other initial variable. In this case the effects of the pre-test and/or other relevant variables are partialled out, and the resulting adjusted means of the post-test scores are compared. Through ANCOVA differences in the initial status of the groups can be removed statistically so that they can be compared as though their initial status had been equated.

In this study, in order to investigate the research hypothesis " Incidental learning of grammar does not have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' paragraph writing" , the differences between mean scores of pre-test and post-test of control and experimental group were calculated through ANCOVA. Before running ANCOVA, the following hypotheses were examined:

1. Linear relationship between variables (pre-test and post-test )
2. Equality of Variances
3. Homogeneity of regression
  1. The linear relationship between pre-test and post-test was examined through spread plot, graph (4-1):



As graph (4-1) shows, because the regression lines are parallel, so there is a linear relationship between the two variables, pre-test and post-test. It means that the relationship between the two variables in both groups is the same.

2. In order to examine the equality of variances, Levin's Test of Equality of Error Variances was run. It tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

Table(4.4) *Levine's Test of Equality of Error Variances*

F	df1	df2	Sig
.26	1	38	.61

According to table (4.4) the calculated F is not meaningful. So there is equality of variances and ANCOVA can be run.

3. The data in table (4.5) are related to test of homogeneity of regression. Before running covariance, between-subjects effects of pre-test-group should be investigated.

**Table (4.5) Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Source	Type III Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1879.82	3	626.61	230.95	.00
Group (a)	17.86	1	17.86	6.6	.015
Pretest(b)	802.97	1	802	295.95	.00
Group*pretest(a*b)	.41	1	.41	.15	.7
Error	97.68	36	2.71		
Total	46200	40			

As table (4.5) shows, between –subjects effect (a\*b) is not significance (F=0.15 , Sig=0.7). It shows that the data supports homogeneity of regression. Therefore, covariance should be run just for between –subjects effect of post-test and group to show whether mean scores of two groups are the same or not. The results of this analysis are demonstrated in table (4.6).

**Table(4.6) Mean and Corrected Mean of Paragraph Writing Ability**

Source	Post-test		Corrected Mean	
	M	SD	M	SE
Experimental	38.4	4.7	37.77	.36
Control	28.1	5.11	28.72	.36

Table (4.6) shows the corrected means of dependent variable paragraph writing ability. The data demonstrate that the means of experimental group are upper than control group. Sum of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of paragraph writing ability in experimental and control group after eliminating between-subjects effect is demonstrated in table (4.7):

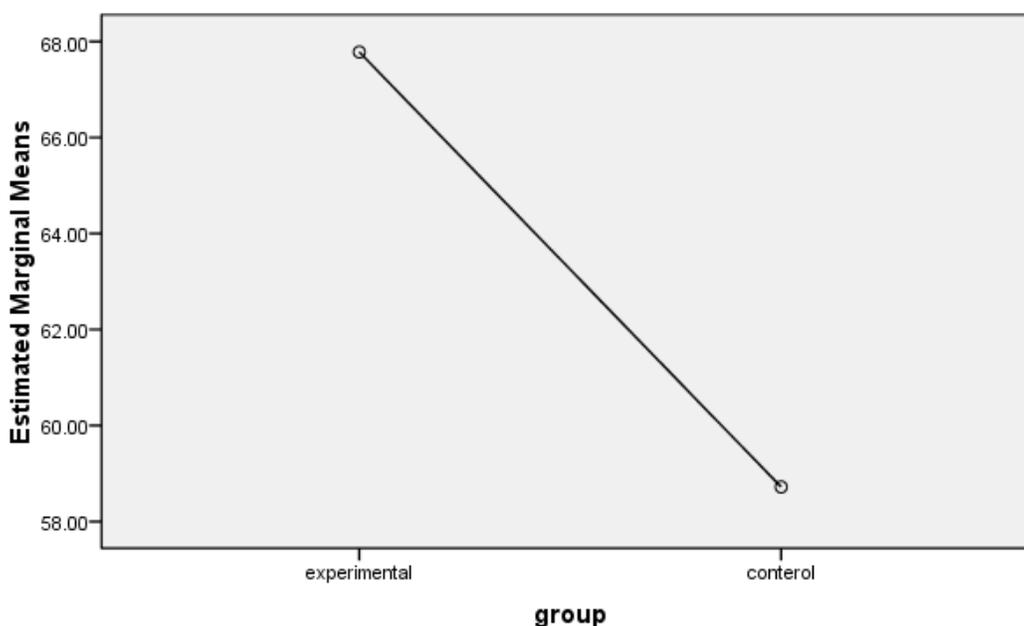
**Table (4.7) Sum of Analysis of Covariance**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1879.415	2	939.71	354.48	.00	.95
Pre - test	818.52	1	818.52	308.76	.00	.89
Group	805.48	1	805.48	303.84	.00	.89

Error	98.08	37	2.65
Total	46200	40	

As it can be seen, the corrected model ( $f=00$ ,  $F=354.48$ ) is statistically significant. The results ( $F=303.84$ ,  $f=.00$ ,  $Eta=.89$ ) shows that there is a difference between two groups. It means that there is significance difference between experimental and control group. As a result, the null hypothesis "Incidental learning of grammar does not have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' paragraph writing" will be rejected, so it can be concluded that Incidental learning of grammar has an effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' paragraph writing ability.

To clarify the result, the data will be demonstrated in graph (4.2). The vertical axis represents the post-test and the horizontal axis represent experimental and control group.



The graph shows that there is a significant difference between paragraph writing ability of experimental and control group. It clearly shows that the experimental group who received treatment on the basis of Incidental learning of grammar had better scores on post-test.

**Implication**

Over the past two decades there has been an open discussion about the role of teaching grammar and the main focus of L2 instructional research has shifted from whether or not instruction makes a difference to what types of instruction are most effective for fostering second or foreign language learning in formal contexts. The debate has led to theoretical issues such as how grammar should be taught: implicit or explicit grammar (called by Scott (1989) implicit exemplification and explicit explanation respectively). McDermott (1999: 32) points out that "implicit teaching is not or at least should not be the opposite of implicit learning. The teacher should know what s/he is doing and why, and s/he should remember what s/he did so s/he can either repeat or avoid it the next time.

Implicit teaching is simply providing opportunities for language use without any attention to form". In relation to explicit teaching, he states that it "is teaching that overtly points out some feature of the language". In DeKeyser's words (1994:188), implicit teaching of grammar means that no rules are formulated; explicit means rules are formulated (either by the teacher or the student, either before or after examples/practice).

It is worth noting that, according to Ellis (1997: 84), "explicit and implicit instructions are not to be confused with explicit and implicit learning". On the contrary, explicit and implicit instruction means it involves intentional learning on the part of learners -they are aware they are learning grammar. Consequently, both explicit and implicit instruction imply explicit learning -while implicit learning ascribes to 'learning that takes place without intention and, possibly, without awareness'.

On the one hand, support of the implicit method of grammar instruction has been made on the basis that the development of the grammar competency needed to communicate effectively -from exposure to comprehensible, meaningful linguistic input- is done naturally. Krashen's distinction between learning (a conscious process) and acquisition (a subconscious process) provides the basis for his theory of implicit teaching strategies. He states that "second language acquisition can take place in the classroom without any explicit study of grammar if the students are exposed to enough comprehensible input" and adds that "the conscious study of grammar does not aid in the natural acquisition process" (Scott, 1989, p. 14).

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# OUTPUT COLLABORATIVE TASKS, NOTICING, AND DYADIC LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF IRANIAN ADVANCED EFL LEARNERS' USE OF MULTI-WORD VERBS

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## **Abstract**

The present study reports on the effects of output collaborative tasks which trigger conscious attention and noticing to multi-word verbs in pedagogical tasks. Forty Iranian EFL learners took part in this study. The participants were randomly assigned to an experimental and control group. The experimental group carried out a pair comparison task followed by a stimulated recall session in which they worked collaboratively to complete word-building tasks. The tasks encouraged participants to autonomously identify a mismatch between two contexts in which particular words were differently combined together. The participants in the control group were taught the same multi-word verbs explicitly and simultaneously completed the word building task individually. Records of their noticing and subsequent use of multiword verbs were tracked within two separate sessions and analyzed via an independent-samples t-test lending support to the hypothesis that collaborative noticing tasks + stimulated recall session in peer works lead to producing more targetlike and natural combination of words in students' written output.

**Key words:** Pair work, dyadic learning, task, noticing, multi-word verbs

## **1. Introduction**

The present article aims at looking into the outcome of using a set of tasks in teaching multi-word verbs at a language school spoken course in I. R. Iran. It also means to find out whether interactionally modified input in a context would yield better acquisition of multi-word verbs and retention results among Iranian Advanced EFL learners than using outdated explicit teaching of multi-word verbs in paper-based texts through bilingual word lists and mechanical exercises. In our language schools one of the most important language-learning problems is remembering various features of a foreign language learnt inside the classrooms. In this respect the crucial problem is that of pair work and noticing paucity, which means learners' newly observed input is not always internalized. It is probably safe to say that not everyone would deny the significance of noticing in converting input into intake.

## 2. Literature Review

This section is going to provide an overview of the theoretical background of the study and uses the results of cognitive psychology research to discuss psycholinguistic processes in vocabulary learning and acquisition. Vocabulary learning studies in recent years have been based on cognitive interactionist theories of psycholinguistics and SLA. These theories emphasize on the significance of input, interaction and output in SLA processes (Singleton, 1999; Schmidt, 2000). It is proposed that if learners apperceive and comprehend second language input, they can integrate it into their knowledge system (Gass & Selinker, 1994). The first step within this process is noticing input, which depends on the alignment of attentional resources to input. Not attending a piece of information makes it likely for it to go unnoticed and unready for further acquisition processes. Here it seems to be of prime significance to describe what we mean by noticing.

### 2.1. Attention and Noticing in SLA

The controversial issue of noticing hypothesis evolved from Schmidt's (1990) cognitively oriented works. As N. Ellis points out, "Schmidt is one of the few linguists who have adopted the conceptual and experimental rigours of experimental psychology in answering questions concerning the role of consciousness in L2 acquisition" (1994, p. 10). Reviewing the psychological literature on consciousness led Schmidt originate noticing in 1990. There he stated that noticing or conscious awareness is a necessary and sufficient condition for learning which itself meant converting input into intake (Schmidt, 1990). Indeed, Schmidt (1990, p. 139) argued strongly against any intake of input that the learner has not noticed. To him, Noticing occurs as a result of attending to particular linguistic features in the input: "If noticed, it becomes intake" (Schmidt, 1990, p. 139). To support the noticing hypothesis Schmidt drew on works of attention and appeared to equate noticing with attention plus awareness (1990, p. 132; 1993, pp. 209-212). He also cited a diary study of his own personal attempts to learn Portuguese.

Both Gass (1988, 1997) and Schmidt (1990, 1993, 2001) consider attention as one of the most important factors that determines whether something in input will be noticed or not. Schmidt further argues noticing is necessary before something can serve as intake. Gass (1997, p. 4) uses the concept of apperception. According to Gass, apperception is the process of understanding through which newly observed qualities of an object are related to past experiences. To Gass, apperception is a primary device for learning. While Schmidt believes noticed input automatically becomes intake, Gass argues that all apperceived input do not become intake automatically.

On the other hand, many researchers such as Tomlin and Villa (1994) examined the role of attention in SLA from the perspective of cognitive psychology and critiqued the coarse-grained analysis of the role of attention in language learning. They proposed a functionally-based analysis of attention in which attention comprises three components. Among them were also Posner and Petersen (1990) who used neuroanatomical evidence to described attention in terms of three networks: Alertness, orientation and detection. Alertness is the general state of readiness to receive incoming stimuli or data. Orientation refers to the direction of attentional resources to a certain type of stimuli. Detection that is the most significant network of attention refers to the cognitive registration of a stimulus. When a stimulus is detected, it becomes ready for further processing. Schmidt (2001) used the term

registration to refer to stimuli that are detected without awareness. Although none of the networks of attention requires awareness, detection is the one closest to awareness.

Tomlin and Villa (1994) who divide attention into three networks of alertness, orientation and detection argue the significant role of detection in the acquisition of grammar. In their model, detection is closely related to the operationalization of attention that I have discussed in this article: "Once [a] grammatical alternation is detected or, more precisely, once a token or instance of a grammatical alternation is detected, it is then available for further processing" (p. 198). As mentioned before, this is not different from Gass's (1997) view of apperception (noticing): "Apperception is conceptualized as a priming device. It prepares the learner for the possibility of subsequent analysis" (p. 23).

However, Simard and Wong (2001) argue against Tomlin and Villa's (1994) theoretical treatment. They claim that the three attentional functions (alertness, orientation, and detection) and awareness are not generalizable to the SLA context. According to Simard and Wong, it is reasonable to view these functions "as coexisting and interacting in graded levels" (p. 119). In spite of the fact that arguments over the concept of attention is still in a chaos not everyone has ignored the role of attention in the acquisition of an L2. Different researchers have merely begun to investigate the numerous variables that affect the extent to which attention may be relevant to L2 acquisition. For instance, Shook (1994) investigated varying levels of attention in moving input to intake. His study embraced English speakers learning Spanish present perfect verb tenses and Spanish relative pronouns. Learners were provided input through written passages presented in one of three ways: (a) one group's attention was directed to the specific grammatical items of concern in the reading passage by printing them in boldface type using uppercase letters; (b) a second group also saw the items of concern presented in boldface type and uppercase letters, but this group was also instructed to focus on the particular grammatical structures presented in this distinctive way and to attempt to come up with a rule for their use; and (c) the control group received no special instructions, and the reading passage was presented to them with no attention drawn to the grammatical items of concern. Shook found a significant effect for the attention conditions. He also found an important effect for the grammatical items he used; the participants did better on the present perfect tasks than on the tasks involving relative pronouns. He attributed this to the fact that more meaningful features of input (present perfect) are processed before less meaningful features (relative pronouns).

Not everyone can ignore the concept of awareness while talking about noticing and its related issues. Awareness as illustrated by Schmidt (1994a) is one of the four dimensions of consciousness. It refers to the learner's knowledge or subjective experience that he or she is attending the stimuli. Schmidt (1994b) defines noticing as the "registration of the occurrence of a stimulus event in conscious awareness and subsequent storage in long term memory..." (p. 179). Considering the abovementioned discussion it may be possible to present Schmidt's definition as follows: noticing= detection+ awareness. It should be noted that Schmidt distinguished noticing from understanding which represents a deeper level of awareness than noticing (Schmidt, 2001, p. 5). He defines understanding as "recognition of a general principle, rule or pattern" (1995, p. 29).

To provide a better understanding of some of the above-mentioned attentional definitions especially the three networks of attention and attention as a limited capacity system, I briefly reviewed some research about the nature of attention. The notion of attention as a limited capacity system was proposed by Sperling (1960). Five participants were presented with nine letters which were arranged in three rows for 50 milliseconds per trial. When they were

asked to recall all letters, participants' average recollection was 4-5 letters. In order to rule out the possibility that incomplete recollection was related to visual limitations, the participants were directed to recall a particular (upper, medium, or lower) row after the letters were removed from the display. This procedure led to almost perfect recollection of each row. These findings suggest that attention is limited in terms of orientation rather than detection. One influential attentional study in SLA was conducted by VanPatten (1990). He investigated the notion of attention as a limited resource (Broadbent, 1958, as cited in Robinson, 1995; Wickens, 1980). The study examined whether learners were able to consciously attend to both form and meaning when processing input. Two hundred and two participants in university Spanish classes were divided into four groups. All groups were presented with an audio recording of a 3-minute text and were asked to listen for content. The control group did nothing else but content. The other groups performed one of three additional tasks: (1) listening for the content word *inflaci?n* (lexical); (2) listening for the definite article *la* (form); and (3) listening for the verb morpheme *-n* (morphology). Their Performance was assessed using a free written recall. The Results illustrated that the content only and lexical groups greatly outperformed the form and morphology groups. This led VanPatten to reach to the conclusion that it was difficult, especially for beginners, to notice content and form at the same time. Furthermore, he mentioned that learners would notice meaning before form, since their primary objective is to understand the propositional content of utterances.

## **2.2. Collaborative Pair work tasks**

Pair work has become a significant component of communicative approach and has got a strong pedagogical and theoretical support. From a pedagogical view, the use of small group work accords with the communicative approach to L2 instruction (Savignon, 1991). From a theoretical view, the use of pair work is supported by two major theories of language learning: the psycholinguistic theory of interaction (Long, 1983; 1996) and the sociocultural theory of mind (Vygotsky, 1978). Long's (1983) theory of interaction that emphasizes on the significance of comprehensible input to L2 learning (Krashen, 1981) postulates that interaction between learners can facilitate second language learning if we provide learners with comprehensible input. From a sociocultural theoretical perspective, which was noted by Vygotsky (1978), human cognitive development takes place in social interaction between individuals in society. Originally, it was proposed that the interaction is between an expert like a parent and a novice like a child while the expert carefully provides the assistance to meet the novice's needs. This careful assistance has been referred to in the literature as 'scaffolding' (Wood et al., 1976). Studies in the field of second language research have shown that such scaffolding can occur in peer interaction, when learners work in groups or pairs. Studies by Storch (2002; 2005) have lent support to 'collaborative scaffolding' in which learners use their linguistic resources to solve their language-related problems.

Moon (2000) defines pair work as follows: "to organize students in a way that will maximize opportunities for learning" (p. 53). Pair work means that students work together to accomplish a particular task and achieve its goals. According to Lightbown and Spada (1999) children are able to improve to higher levels of knowledge and performance, provided that they are in an interactive environment. Such works may be helpful in establishing meaningful interactions between students which may itself lead to their high interests. Lightbown and Spada (1999) lend support to this idea stating that "positive attitudes and motivation are related to success in second language learning". Nunan (2003) discusses exploitations of pair works and notes that " pair work..... activities can be used to increase

the amount of time that learners get to speak in the target language during lessons". Several researchers have talked pair work's advantages over. Harmer (2001, as cited in Baleghizadeh, 2009)) lists the advantages of pair work as follows:

" It dramatically increases the amount of speaking time each individual gets in class.

" It allows students to work and interact independently without the necessary guidance of the teacher, thus promoting learner autonomy.

" It enables teachers to work with one or two pairs while the other students continue working.

" It recognizes the old maxim that 'two heads are better than one', thereby allowing students to share responsibility rather than having to bear the whole weight themselves.

" It is relatively quick and easy to organize.

Beside pedagogical advantages, the use of pair works improves collaborative learning. 'Collaboration' means two people laboring together with the purpose of making something new that could not have been created otherwise (Watkins, Carnell, and Lodge, 2007). Johnson and Johnson (1991) defined four characteristics for collaborative learning: (a) positive interdependence; (b) individual accountability; (c) cooperation; and (d) evaluation.

Despite the advantages, the use of pair work tasks may be a little problematic. One problem is, as Harmer (2001) states, "students in pairs can often veer away from the point of an exercise, talking about something else completely" (p. 116). Another possible problem, as mentioned by Harmer (2001), is that pair work tasks may be problematic when students work and interact with peers who are linguistically weaker than them. Some other researchers have also claimed that not all peer interaction provides an occasion for learning (e.g., DiNitto, 2000; Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Nelson & Murphy, 1993).

Baleghizadeh (2009) reported on a study that was conducted to look into the effect of pair work on a word-building task in two EFL classes. Forty Iranian adult students participated in his study. The participants in his experimental group completed the word-building task in pairs following the Think-Pair-Share technique, whereas the participants in his control group did the same task individually. Results of the data analysis showed that the participants in the experimental group achieved significantly higher scores on the given task than the participants in the control group. It indicates that the students' joint efforts while collaborating with each other are likely to result in co-construction of morphological knowledge (p: 1).

Storch (2007) investigated the merits of pair work by comparing pair and individual work on an editing task and by analysing the nature of pair interaction. His study was conducted in four intact ESL tertiary classes. Students in class A completed the task in pairs and in class B individually. In classes C and D students were given the choice of completing the task in pairs or individually. In class A all pair talk was audio recorded. Analysis of the edited texts showed that there were no significant differences between the accuracy of tasks completed individually and those completed in pairs. Analysis of the transcribed pair talk showed that most pairs engaged actively in deliberations over language and tended to reach correct resolutions. The results of his study showed that although pair work on a grammar-focused task may not lead to greater accuracy in completing the task, pair work provides learners with opportunities to use the second language for a range of functions, and in turn for language learning.

Yule and Macdonald (1990) found that different-proficiency pairs were able to work successfully when each member was given an appropriate interactive role. They noticed that, when the lower-proficiency member was in charge of the more dominant role, there was

more negotiation of meaning and a successful resolution of referential conflicts. When the higher-proficiency member played the more dominant role, however, there was little negotiation, and the higher-proficiency members appeared to ignore their lower-proficiency partners' contributions, while the lower-proficiency partners often assumed a passive role.

### **2.3. Synonymy strategy**

Many studies of L2 English collocation acquisition have justified that synonymy has appeared to be a common learning strategy in language learners. A case study which can support synonymy strategy adopted by learners would be that of Howarth (1998) who found that L2 learners seemed to draw an analogy between collocates of two synonyms, therefore, making errors in their L2 language production. For instance, the participants produced the deviant combination \*adopt ways, which was might have been caused by analogy with the correct collocation adopt an approach (Howarth, 1998, p. 41).

### **2.4. Repetition and overgeneralization**

One more strategy which is specifically found among L2 learners with low knowledge of multi-word verbs may be repetition and overgeneralization. According to Howarth (1998) one reason for repetition may be due to learners' lack of confidence in producing L2 lexicon through analogy. To put it more straightforwardly, the do not want to take the risk of using unfamiliar L2 lexicon. Overgeneralization which is another learner strategy in learning vocabulary is described by Zughol & Abdul-Fattah (2001) as the extension of the use of a certain L2 feature to another. This has been found as a source of incorrect use of L2 English multi-word verbs. The participants in their study were confused by the words shame and ashamed . as a result they extended the use of ashamed while the other word (shame) was intended.

In the light of the above-mentioned studies which all lent support to the fact that a majority of EFL learners have different problems with learning and using multi-word verbs, the researcher of this study integrate noticing and pair work tasks at the same stage followed by stimulated recall sessions to find out if it would be a remedy for Iranian EFL learners' collocation learning problems.

## **3. Methods**

Considering the inconsistency of the findings of the small body of research on the efficacy of pair work tasks and noticing on learning multi-word verbs, there is axiomatically a need for further research in this area especially with a different type of pair work task that leads learners notice particular features of the target language. Moreover, in the majority of EFL/ESL collocation studies, students were simply taught multi-word verbs implicitly or explicitly. So, there is a need to make students' role more important. The present study, therefore, sets out to investigate the effect of pair work and noticing on a three stage pair work task involving pair work comparison and two stimulated recall sessions that include word building tasks. Thus the study aimed to answer the following research question: Do students who notice, think, pair, and share their ideas in the three stage pair work task outperform those who are just given traditional explicit instruction for collocational conscious rising?

### 3.1. Participants

The participants of this study were 40 Iranian advanced EFL learners. The learners were studying at an English language school in Nowshahr, Iran. Based on the levels of their course they enrolled on advanced level. They were from the same L1 background (Farsi). There were 20 males and 20 females and their age ranged from 18 to 27 years. The majority of the learners began learning English via the communicative language teaching method at or after the age of 9 (89%) with an average English language learning of 8 years. Their participation in this course at the language school was voluntary. Their course met for two 1.5 hour per week for 10 weeks. These participants who were studying at the language school were chosen from among 100 students via an OPT test (Oxford Placement Test). Before the test was administered, the students were told that they are going to take a test whose results will be used for educational purposes. As a result, they were more likely to take it more seriously and cooperate fully with the researcher. The participants (N: 40) who scored 30 - 39 in the test were labeled as advanced students.

### 3.2. Task

The tasks used in this study were of two types. One task was chosen from a lesson of the book *Oxford Word Skills - Idioms and Phrasal Verbs* to be utilized in the control group. The other one which was partly designed and compiled by the researcher consisted of a comparison task and two word building tasks within two stimulated recall sessions. The tasks were designed in a way that could draw students' attention to (make students notice) the target lexicons (multi-word verbs) in texts. The comparison task consisted of two texts including 10 unmarked multi-word verbs adopted from a lesson of *Oxford Word Skills - Idioms and Phrasal Verbs*. The texts merely differed in their targeted phrasal verbs. It means one of them included natural co-occurrence of words while the other covered the same multi-word verbs mentioned in a way that is commonly mistaken by Iranian EFL learners and naturally do not co-occur with each other. The subjects were to work in pairs and notice the gap between them. The texts word building tasks included 10 numbered gaps and 10 given multi-word verbs. The participants were required to work collaboratively to fill in the gaps with the correct form of the given multi-word verbs.

### 3.3. Data collection procedures

The participants in the control group merely received traditional explicit instruction of multi-word verbs via the book *Oxford idioms and phrasal verbs*. The teacher entered the class and asked the participants to open their books on a particular page. After that either the teacher or the participants read through the texts involving collocational words which were written in bold. The teacher explained the meaning of each term in English and sometimes provided Farsi equivalents. The teacher attempted to make the students aware of the fact that the words naturally co-occur with each other in English. When they finished, the students were asked to work individually and to use their own knowledge of multi-word verbs or look at their newly taught lesson in the previous page to complete the given task which was designed by the author of the book. The teacher's aim was just making students aware of the multi-word verbs.

When students completed the task the teacher asked them to read through the task loudly, so he was able to check their answers and provide them with oral corrective feedback. In the end, the students were told to go home and prepare themselves for a collocation quiz. The

students were told that the test would require them to write the equivalence of the given multi-word verbs in Farsi (their mother tongue). The next session (5 days later) the students took the quiz and everything finished with the lesson.

The participants in the experimental group, however, were asked to form self-selected dyads and attempt the comparison task in pairs. The task involved exactly the same multi-word verbs as the control group. While the participants in each pair were given two copies of the task, they were asked to submit one final copy. As a result the data for the study consisted of 7 copies completed by the pairs and 14 copies completed by students working individually.

By the time the task started, the participants in the experimental group not only had been taught pair work techniques but also had been made aware of basic collaborative skills such as asking for clarification, listening attentively, giving reasons, etc. To put it more straightforwardly, they had been taught that they were to:

1. Think about the items individually
2. pair up with their partner, explain the gaps they noticed in the text, and listen to their partner's comments carefully
3. Share their ideas and come up with a joint answer for each item of difference they noticed between the two texts.

The participants were given as much time as they would need to complete the task. The control group devoted 20 minutes to complete the task while the experimental group spent 29 minutes on doing the task.

At the end of the course, both groups (control and experimental) were given a multiple choice test in which they were supposed to complete the sentences with a word from among the other given words. This was considered to be the post test of the study.

### 3.4. Data analysis

The data obtained from the present study were analyzed via SPSS 19 software programme. Here is presented the detailed results of the data analysis.

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Experimental	20	9.600	.402	.109
	Control	20	3.000	1.157	.259

Table (1) shows that the number of participants in this stage of the study was 20 (N=20) for each group with no missing value. The mean score of the experimental group is 9.600 and the mean score of the control group is 3.000. As for the standard deviation there is more variability in the scores of the control group than that of experimental group.

An independent samples t-test was used to illustrate if there was a significant statistical difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group. The independent samples t-test presented here also gives us more information about the performance of the two groups.

Table 2. Independent samples t-test

		Levene's Test For Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		f	sig	t	df	Sig.2 tailed	Mean Dif.	Std. Error Dif.	95%Confidence	
									lower	upper
Score.	Equal variances Assumed	3.49	.000	1.611	37	.000	4.550	.2736	4.012	5.166
	Equal variances Not Assumed			1.655	24.25	.000	4.601	.2736	4.003	5.174

Table (2) shows that There was a significant difference in scores for experimental group (M = 9.60, SD = .40) and control group (M = 3.00, SD = 1.157;  $t(37) = 1.61, p = .000$  two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 4.55, 95% CI: 4.01 to 4.16) was very small. This shows that the participants of the experimental group outperformed their counterparts in the control group.

**4. Conclusion**

Based on the data derived from the study it can be concluded that using noticing + pair work tasks followed by stimulated recall sessions would yield better results than using traditional explicit instruction of multi-word verbs in Iranian advanced EFL classes. The results showed that when the participants of the study conducted the output tasks collaboratively, they were much more successful at completing the tasks than when they did them alone. The findings of this study regarding the effects of output collaborative tasks or pair work are consistent with the results of many of the previous studies that have shown that engagement in collaborative tasks can improve task performance in terms of the accurate production of the target forms (Lapkin & Swain 2001).

Further investigation is still needed to find out how collaborative pair work tasks could be designed or implemented more effectively. Opportunities for interaction and attention to form may also be enhanced by including post-task activities.

In conclusion, the findings of the present study have been a great boon to the research that has investigated the effectiveness of collaborative noticing tasks. The findings revealed that collaborative noticing pair work tasks led to better task completion but not necessarily better learning of the target multi-word verbs. More research is still needed to investigate the effectiveness of these tasks along with other tasks for learning multi-word verbs and also other language forms.

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