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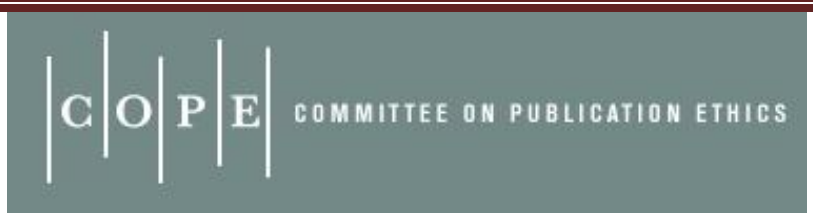


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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-EFFICACY AND ANXIETY AND SPEAKING ABILITY OF IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS

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**Abstract**
Affective factors such as anxiety play important roles in language learning. In order to optimize learners' performance and minimize the negative effect of anxiety, it seems indispensable for teachers to take cognizance of language learning anxiety. Self-efficacy is another affective factor which plays a significant role in learners' performance. It refers to learners' judgments of their own potentials to perform and carry out different courses of actions. In other words, self-efficacy is people's perception of their potentiality and self-concept. This study was intended to investigatewhether there would be a relationship between language anxiety and EFL learners' speaking ability, and whether there would be a relationship between self-efficacy of learners and their speaking skill. To this end, 60 Iranian intermediate EFL learners took part in this correlational study. Instruments such as Interchange Objective Placement test (IOPT), Foreign Language Anxiety Scale, and Language Self-Efficacy Scale, and speaking test were utilized. The results of IOPT showed that the participants were homogeneous. The results of the two scales showed that there was a negative correlation between language anxiety and speaking performance while there was a positive correlation between language self-efficacy and speaking performance. The study can help the language learners and teachers to take a new look toward affective factors such as anxiety and self-efficacy in order to maximize the learning experience.

**Keywords:** affective factor, anxiety, self-efficacy, speaking

## Introduction

The English language has succeeded to establish its status as a medium of communication as well as in educational system around the globe and in Iran as well. As crystal (2000) asserts, English



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language has turned into an international language for business and trade, science and technology, the Internet, tourism and even sports events. In Iran, English has been gaining greater and greater importance in our educational system in a way that it is presented in all educational levels except primary schools. Its importance becomes more evident when Iranian students want to pursue their education at post graduate levels.

Despite prominent presence of English language teaching programs in our national curriculum, there seems to be a great gap between learner and family expectations and the current English education policy. Most Iranian learners are not able to communicate in English due to many reasons one of which is the inefficiency of language teaching programs in Iran. In order to alleviate the problems, it seems necessary to restructure the language teaching system in Iran and shift the attention from focusing on reading and grammar approaches to more communicative and oral based approaches so that the learners will be able to speak the language fluently.

According to Krashen (1985), the acquisition of a language becomes easier if learners have more self-confidence and self-efficacy, high motivation and low anxiety in affective filter hypothesis. In accordance with Yukina's (2003) framework, the external factors lead to a change which instructors are able to change in the object of foreign language acquisition research, the internal factors of second/foreign language learners like age, sex, attribute, learning style, motivation, learning strategy, and language anxiety.

According to Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986), as speaking in the target language appears to be the most threatening aspect on foreign language learning, the current focus on the development of communicative competence imposes particularly great problems for anxious learners. Consequently, foreign language anxiety is one of the deciding factors that would influence the learning effects, especially speaking a foreign language in the language learning classes.

By studying previous experiences and the current situation, it is significant for us to study and investigate if language anxiety plays a significant role for intermediate EFL learners' learning speaking skill. Rogers (1983) believe learning truly takes place when the cognitive and affective domains of the learner are actively involved in the process. It is argued that foreign language anxiety has three components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension is a kind of shyness associated with fear of or anxiety about communicating with other people.

People who generally face difficulty in speaking in groups are most likely to have even greater problem in speaking in the foreign language class where they have no control over the situation and where their performance is constantly monitored. Test anxiety refers to a kind of performance anxiety resulting from a fear of failure. Learners who have high test anxiety often demand more of themselves than they can achieve and worry about their performance. Fear of negative evaluation refers to apprehension about other people's evaluations, avoiding evaluative situations, and expectation that other people would evaluate oneself negatively (Watson & Friend, 1969 as cited in Horwitz et al., 1986). These learners tend to sit passively in the classroom, to avoid active participation in classroom activities that increase their language abilities.

Affective factors play a significant role in the process of language acquisition in a way that they overshadow cognitive factors. Learners of all levels of language achievement and intellectual capabilities are, inevitably, affected by anxiety in language learning. Anxiety exists in different individuals in varying degrees and it is described as emotional feelings of worry, fear, and apprehension. Different individuals show it anxiety in different levels (McDonald, 2001). As learners progress they may experience overwhelming pressure and anxiety level that influence their performance negatively. In order to optimize learners' performance and minimize the negative effect of anxiety it seems to be indispensable for teachers to take cognizance of language learning anxiety.



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Self-efficacy is another affective factor which plays a significant role in learners' performance. It refers to learners' judgments of their own potentials to perform and carry out different courses of actions (Badura, 1997). Fundamentally, it concerns the answer to the question of if a person could do a specific task in a specific situation. In other words, self-efficacy is people's perception of their potentiality and self-concept (Pintrich&Schunk, 1996).

Of course, there is a distinction between self-efficacy and self-concept. According to Bang (2003), self-efficacy is primarily a matter of cognitive judgments of one's own capabilities on the basis of mastery criteria, while the self-concept deals with both cognitive and affective responses toward the self. These two terms can be compared from three different perspectives. First perspective is construct composition and the second is nature of comparison and the last is generality of structure.

As far as language anxiety is concerned, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) came to the conclusion that adult language learners by and large feel anxious during their learning experience and it also hinders their learning. Most recent research studies indicate that anxiety acts as a counterproductive and hindrance that decreases motivation, and interferes with learning experience, and leads to poor performance (Sparks &Ganschow, 2007).Despite the decisive role of affective factors such as anxiety and self-efficacy, little research has been carried out to better understand their impact on Iranian EFL learners' performance. Investigating these factors can help our teachers and learners to better cope with psychological factors so that they get more desirable results from their studies.

The main significance of the study is to come up with some new methods of dealing with learners' affective features that enable and students to better cope with their affective problems and overcome these obstacles to increase their language development especially speaking ability. The findings of the current research can also be of great significant to educational policy makers to take the issues of affective factors more seriously and incorporate them into educations programs. It can be of great importance for both researchers to investigate the issue from different perspectives.

This study will also highlight the importance of recognizing learner's anxiety and self-efficacy and their significant role in educational and career success of our students. The results of the current study can help teachers to move in the direction of lowering anxiety of our learners and strengthening their self-efficacy so that they can handle the issue of language learning more successfully.

The purpose of the current research is to find out whether there is a relationship between language anxiety and speaking ability of EFL learners. The study will focus on the relationship between language anxiety and English language speaking ability.Another aim of the study is to find out if there is relationship between self-efficacy and speaking ability of EFL learners and to show if learners with higher self-efficacy beliefs outperform the learners with lower self-efficacy beliefs.

**Research Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant relationship between Iranian intermediate EFL learners' language anxiety and their speaking ability.
2. There is no significantrelationship between Iranian intermediate EFL learners' self-efficacy beliefs and their speaking ability.
3. There is no significantrelationship between gender and anxiety.
4. There is no significantrelationship between gender and self-efficacy

**Methodology**

***Participants***



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From among EFL learners (N=70) studying English at Azar language institute in GonbadKavoos, 60intermediate EFL learners were chosen based on their performance in an Interchange Objective Placement test (IOPT). They were selected based on their availability. The participants aged within the range of 18-22. Their general English proficiency level was intended to be intermediate learners since according to the scoring guide of the IOPT those who scored between 37 and 49 were considered as intermediate learners. All of the participants spoke English as their foreign language in their classroom. After the placement test had been conducted, ten students were excluded from the study. Sixty of the subjects were considered homogenous since they performed the same on both written and oral placement test.

***Instrumentation***

In order to come up with satisfactory answers to the research questions, the Interchange Objective Placement Test (IOPT), the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale which was developed form Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's (1986) Foreign Language Anxiety Scale, a speaking test and the Foreign Language Self-Efficacy Scale were used. These instruments are explained in detail in the following section.

*Interchange Objective Placement Test (IOPT)*

The purpose of using the IOPT was twofold: First, it was used to measure the participants' language proficiency and to determine if they were all intermediate level EFL learners and second, to establish the homogeneity of the participants. The score range for intermediate EFL learners according to the scoring guideline is between 37 and 49.The IOPT was used to measure the general language proficiency of the participants. This test consists of fifty items with different question formats comprising grammar, vocabulary, and 5 paragraphs of reading texts. There are multiple choice, item matching, and cloze test type items in the test. In each item there is a missing word for which there are four options. Students should find the correct item among these options. All of the 60 chosen participants for the present study were able to pass the test with a score ranging from 37 to 49. Based on the test scoring level chart, those whose scores in the test were between 37 and 49 were considered as the intermediate-level and categorized to be at the same level according to the IOPT results. The reason why the researchers of the study decided to utilize IOPT as the students' measure of proficiency was due to the fact that the test is a standard test of proficiency, and its validity and reliability were assumed to be satisfactory.

*Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)*

The foreign language anxiety scale was developed from Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's (1986). It consists of 33 statements, each to be rated by the respondents on 1 (no anxiety) to 5 (high anxiety) Likert scale. The statements describe language learning situations, which are rated as to the degree of anxiety that respondents perceived they would experience in certain situations. In order to prevent any misunderstanding on the part of learners, a Persian equivalent of this questionnaire was provided for the participants. It was back translated into English.

*Foreign Language Self-Efficacy Scale*

The foreign language self-efficacy scale consisted of 14 items in a Likert format with 1 indicating no confidence in the student's ability to complete a task, to 5 indicating that the learner was very confident in completing a task. This questionnaire which was used in order to assess the participants' self-efficacy in speaking was a new scale for assessing EFL learners speaking self-efficacy based on these three related questionnaires: 1) The Persian Adaptation of General Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Nezami, Schwarzer, and Jerusalem (1996); 2) Morgan-Links Student Efficacy Scale (MLSES) constructed by Jinks and Morgan (1999); 3) Beliefs about Language Learning (BALL) designed by Horwitz (1988). This scale includes fourteen 5-point Likert type items ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" based on the items of the previous questionnaires. A value of 1 is assigned to strongly disagree, and 5 to strongly agree. Cronbach's



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alpha was used to determine the reliability of the scale, and a principle component analysis was used to analyze its construct validity. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.78. In order to prevent any misunderstanding on the part of learners, this scale was also translated into Persian and back translated into English, and the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for it was 0.81.

*Speaking Test*

In order to make sure of the homogeneity of the groups they were given a speaking test. The speaking test was adopted form an interview developed for the intermediate speaking test from the website www.examsreform.hu. The test was in the form of an interview which was rated by two raters based on a specific TOEFL iBT scoring rubric. As it is commonly accepted, TOEFL iBT test is a reliable and valid test to measure the general proficiency level of foreign language learners.

***Procedure***

The participants of the study were 60 intermediate Iranian EFL learners. At the outset of the study, in order to choose and make sure of the homogeneity of these participants in terms of their general language proficiency, the IOPT was run among all the students studying at Azar language institute in GonbadKavoos. It should be said that before administering each questionnaire or running each test, the participants were given enough information about the topic of the questionnaires or tests and also enough procedures on how to complete them. In addition, before administering the questionnaires, the participants were asked whether they were willing to complete the questionnaires or not and they were assured that their information would remain confidential. The students were also told that there was no right or wrong answer for the items in questionnaire, and the items just asked about their personal views. Both questionnaires were distributed among those who agreed to answer. They were instructed to answer the items in the questionnaires at their own pace. This study was carried out during three successive language classes. As the topic of this study suggests, this research was going to study any possible relationship between the learning anxieties, self-efficacy and speaking ability of language learners; therefore, in order to make sure of the homogeneity of the participants, a speaking test was run among them. In the second session of the study, the foreign language classroom anxiety scale was distributed among the participants. Then, the questionnaires were collected for the quantitative analysis of the data. In the third session, the second questionnaire which was a foreign language self-efficacy scale was administered among the participants. The researchers were present while the participants were completing the questionnaires and provided help in case of any questions or ambiguity.

***Data Analysis***

For the statistical analysis of the gathered data, the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 19 was used. Statistical analysis of this study included the descriptive statistics of the result of the anxiety and self-efficacy scales. In this study, the reliability of the instruments was measured by using Cronbach Alpha. The researchers also used Pearson-Product-Moment Correlation for inferential statistics in order to test research hypotheses and describe the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables. Pearson-Product-Moment Correlation was used since it gives a good measure of correlation between the variables.

**Results**

***Results of the Placement Test***

The Interchange Objective Placement Test was given to the participants.Those who scored between 37 and 49were considered as intermediate learners. The test consisted of 50 items. The following table 1 shows the results of mean score of the participants.

Table 1 *Mean score of male and female participants on placement test*

| | | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|



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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Males | 30 | 41.6000 | 2.62087 | .47850 |
| Females | 30 | 41.5000 | 2.44597 | .44657 |

As displayed in Table 1, there is almost no difference between mean scores of the participants on placement test. Males had a mean score of 41.60 while females had a mean score of 41.50. In order to base our judgment on more reliable statistical test, an independent samples t-test was run to make sure of the homogeneity of the participants. Table 2 illustrates the point.

Table 2 *Independent Samples t-test on placement test*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | Sig | .t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | .057 | .811 | .153 | 58 | .879 | .10000 | .65452 | -1.21016 | 1.41016 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | .153 | 57.726 | .879 | .10000 | .65452 | -1.21029 | 1.41029 |

According to Table 2, the sig (2-tailed) is 0.879 which is much higher than the significance level 0.05. Therefore, all the participants were the same proficiency level and homogenous. The next step was administering anxiety questionnaire that was adapted from Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's (1986) foreign language anxiety scale. The scale consisted of 33 statements, each to be graded by the participants as to the degree of anxiety that respondents perceived they would experience in specific situations.

***Analysis of Research Question One***

To detect the relationship between language anxiety and English speaking proficiency through statistical analysis, correlation coefficient was processed based on the language anxiety scores from the FLCAS and English speaking proficiency scores. The results (Table 3) showed a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.333$, $p<0.01$).

Table 3 *Correlation coefficient between language anxiety and English speaking proficiency*

| | Language anxiety | speaking skills |
|---|---|---|
| Language anxiety | 1 | -.333 |
| Speaking proficiency | -.333 | 1 |

According to Table 3, the correlation coefficient is -.333, significance level at 0.05. As Cohen and Holiday (1982) believe, this is a weak correlation. Cohen and Holiday's definition of correlation coefficient if it is below or equal to 0.19 indicates a very low correlation, in case it is between 0.20 and 0.39 signifies a low correlation and between 0.40 and 0.69 proves a moderate correlation and finally if it is between 0.70 and 0.89 indicates a high correlation. On the other hand, a correlation coefficient between -1 to -0.8 shows a negative strong correlation; while between -0.6 to -0.79 signifies a high negative correlation and between -0.4 to -0.59 is an indicator of a modest negative correlation; and between -0.2 to -0.39 shows a very weak negative correlation.



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The negative correlation indicates that learners who have high language anxiety are more likely to achieve low English speaking proficiency and those with low language anxiety are more likely to develop a higher level of speaking proficiency.

In order to scrutinize the different aspect of anxiety and its relationship with language proficiency, the results of descriptive statistics were analyzed. As it was mentioned earlier in the anxiety scale, there were five factors which were included in the scale questionnaire.

Table 4 *Descriptive statistics among six factors*

| | Factor1 | factor 2 | factor 3 | factor 4 | factor 5 | factor 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Average | 2.84 | 2.78 | 3.00 | 2.95 | 3.06 | 2.98 |
| SD | 1.04 | 1.07 | 1.01 | 1.23 | 0.90 | 1.10 |

According to the results of descriptive statistics, the current research showed that the participants had six factors about language learning anxieties. The results were illustrated in Table 4.

From the six factors, the factor number 5, feeling unable to deal with the task of English learning turned out to be the strongest form of anxiety with the mean score of 3.06 and SD=0.91. The next highest form of anxiety was fear of negative evaluation with the mean of 3.00 and SD of 1.02, followed by test anxiety with the mean score of 2.98 and SD of 1.10. Being afraid of making mistakes had the next highest form of anxiety with the mean of 2.95 and SD of 1.23, and speech anxiety with the mean of 2.84 and SD of 1.04 was the next highest form of anxiety and finally the last one was communication apprehension with the mean of 2.78 and SD of 1.07. In other words, the findings showed that the participants in the current study generally believed that feeling unable to cope with the task of English learning was the strongest factor influencing their English speaking proficiency.

According to Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986), the highly anxious learners responded to the 33 items in the questionnaire revealing the point that they suffered from different forms of anxiety such as communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation during their foreign language learning. The 33 items of the questionnaire were categorized into six groups. According to the results, highly anxious learners responded to the 33 items in the FLCAS saying their anxiety in communication apprehension, text anxiety, fear of negative evaluation during their foreign language learning experiences.

***Analyzing the Second Research Question***

The second research question was formulated to check if there was a relationship between learners' self-efficacy and speaking ability. In analyzing the data, some statistical procedures were carried out in this study: (1) Descriptive statistics including Cronbach alphas, means and standard deviations computed to summarize the students' responses to the self-efficacy questionnaire and speaking ability. (2) Pearson correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between the students' self-efficacy and speaking proficiency.

***Descriptive Statistics of Second Research Question***

Table 5 shows the Cronbach Alphas, means and standard deviations of the questionnaire and the test.

Table 5 *Descriptive statistics of the self-efficacy questionnaire and speaking test*

| | Number of items | Cronbach's Alpha | mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self-efficacy questionnaire | 14 | 0.73 | 31.45 | 5.812 |
| Speaking test performance | 50 | 0.69 | 27.63 | 5.18 |



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As illustrated in Table 5, the reliability of the questionnaire was 0.73 and that of speaking test was 0.69 that is satisfactory. Means of the self-efficacy questionnaire and the speaking test were 31.45 and 27.63, respectively.

***Analysis of Correlation between Self-Efficacy and Speaking***

Table 6 shows the correlation between total scores of the questionnaire and the speaking test.

Table 6 *Pearson correlation between the questionnaire and the speaking*

| Self-efficacy | speaking test scores |
|---|---|
| Pearson correlation | 0.78 |
| Significance | 0.03 |

As illustrated in table 6, findings of data analysis using Pearson correlation proved that there was a direct and significant correlation between the participants' self-efficacy beliefs about language learning and their speaking performance. This finding is in agreement with other studies. It specially supports Bandura's (1997) claim that an individual's level of self-efficacy is thought to relate to the individual's choice of activities, effort in those activities, and perseverance in the activities. A paired sample t-test was run to determine if the degree of self-efficacy had any effect on speaking performance. For doing this the participants were divided into two groups. One group consisted of participants with high self-efficacy beliefs and the other group included low-efficacy participants. The total score of self-efficacy was 100. Those whose self-efficacy was above 40 were considered as high group and those with lower than 40 were regarded as low efficacy group. Out of 60 participants, 35 belonged to high efficacy group and 25 belonged to low efficacy group.

Table 7 *Paired samples t-test for high and low self-efficacy*

| | Mean | SD | t | df | sig (2tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 high group | -2.47 | 6.89 | 1.45 | 60 | 0.041 |
| Pair 2 low group | 4.19 | 8.87 | -3.78 | 60 | 0.015 |

As reported in table 7, it became evident that high self-efficacy affected speaking performance significantly and positively, but low self-efficacy had a significant negative effect on their speaking performance. This is in conformity with other studies carried out on the issue.

***Analysis of Results of Research Question Three***

In order to understand other factors which may influence the relationships between foreign language anxiety and speaking proficiency, the researchers measured the gender difference and the reliability of the FLCAS first in order to ensure the accuracy of the data and avoiding other possible factors affecting the result of this research. The following section would present the relationships between foreign language anxiety and the gender difference. Compared to studies by Awan, Azher, Anwar, and Naz (2010) and Jingjing (2011), the present study indicates that there was no significant gender difference between anxiety score and their gender: $t(84)=.70$, $r=-.048$. The mean scores for males ($n=30$) and females ($n=30$) were 98.39 and 95.49, respectively. The standard deviation for males was 27.40, and females was 31.10. The reason of the significant gender difference may be because of Awan et al.'s study, the researchers used the abbreviated version of FLCAS to conduct the study that leads to the gender difference result. And inJingjing's study, the researcher did not provide the Cronbach's alpha value; therefore, we are not sure whether the instruments were reliable or not. With regards to this point, the present study provides a very reliable Cronbach's value (.916). The results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8:*Gender difference*

| Male | female |
|---|---|



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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sample size | 30 | 30 |
| Student age | 18 -22 | 18-22 |
| Cronbach's Alpha | 0.916 | |
| Correlation | r = -0.084 P<0.01 | |

According to Cohenand Holiday's definition, the correlation coefficient between English learning anxiety and gender difference are moderate negative correlation and there is no significance between gender and English oral proficiency. Therefore, the gender difference would not be considered as an influential factor in anxiety study.

***Analysis of Results of Research Question Four***

With regard to research question four, the correlation was utilized. The table showed that girls had higher degree of self-efficacy (t=–2.7; X=35.5; SD=4.5; p=0.006) in English language compared to boys. This finding on the gender differences is similar to many previous studies done on the relationship between gender and self-efficacy. Results have shown that girls are found to show higher self-efficacy in areas related to language (Pajares, 1996). In the study by Pajares, it was stated that students were asked to provide confidence judgments on their academic skills and the girls reported they judged themselves to be better speakers than the boys. This boosted their self-efficacy. Generally, language is associated with feminine orientation and most learners believe that speaking is the domain in which girls outperform boys (Eccles, 1987). In this study, it was found that girls had higher self-regulated learning, which is one of the self-efficacy dimensions (t=–3.7; X=2.38; p=0.000) as compared to boys. According to Noran (1993) the psychological factors in English language learning that girls have higher positive attitude towards the language and a liking for it. However, Bandura's theory does not endow gender or gender beliefs with any genetic properties (Bussey& Bandura, 1999).

**Discussion**

***Discussion on Research Question One***

The findings of this question are consistent and in line with the literature of foreign language anxiety. A number of studies such as Gardner (1997), Horwitz (2001), Park and Lee (2005), Liu (2006), and Atasheneh and Izadi (2012) have concluded that FLCA associates negatively to English achievement. Gardner (1997) examined the relationship between foreign language anxiety and different affective variables and achievement in French. He found that there was a negative relationship in language anxiety and two measures of achievement as objective measures (r=-.66, p=.001, n=102) and French grades (r=-.33, p=.01, n=102). In the Korean situation, Park and Lee (2005) investigated relationship between language anxiety and oral performance. Results indicated an important negative correlation between them(r=-.321, p=.001, n=132).

In a recent study, Al-Shboul, Sheikh Ahmad, SahariNordin and Abdul Rahman (2013) investigated the relationship between foreign language anxiety and achievement. It is prominent that foreign language anxiety affects the students' learning process and results. They concluded that the important negative relationship between foreign language anxiety and achievement mainly array from moderate to strong.

***Discussion on Research Question Two***

Many studies have been done on this issue of self-efficacy in the academic settings. Research findings have indicated that mathematics self-efficacy is a good predictor of mathematics interest and choice of mathematics-related courses (Lent, Lopez, &Bieschke, 1993; Pajares& Miller, 1994). In other studies conducted on science and engineering college students (Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1984), it was reported that high self-efficacy seemed to influence academic persistence necessary



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to maintain high academic achievement. Pintrich and Groot (1990) reported that academic self-efficacy is correlated with academic performances in examinations and quizzes, and Schunk (1984) found that mathematics self-efficacy influenced mathematics performance directly (beta=0.46).

In a related research study, Schunk (1995) stated that when students are engaged in activities, they are affected by personal (e.g., goal setting, information processing) and situational influences (e.g., rewards, feedbacks). These provide students with idea of how well they have learned. Self-efficacy was enhanced when students perceived they performed well. On the other hand, Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996) reported that parents' academic aspirations for their children influenced the children's academic achievement directly or indirectly by influencing their self-efficacy.

***Discussion on Research Question Three***

In general, most studies show that, on average, girls do better in school than boys do. This shows that girls have less anxiety than boys. Girls get higher grades and complete high school at a higher rate compared to boys (Jacobs, 2002). Standardized achievement tests also show that females are better at spelling and perform better on tests of literacy, writing, and general knowledge.

In addition, Aida (1994) reported that females received significantly higher grades than males in Japanese in the final exam, females scoring an average of 89.7%, as against an average mark of 86.1% for males. There was a trend in highly anxious students of both sexes to obtain lower exam scores than more relaxed students. Onwuegbuzie, Bailey and Daley (1999) encountered a statistically significant correlation between gender and foreign language anxiety in Anglophone students of four foreign languages (French, Spanish, German, and Japanese), as measured by course grades: .16* (*p<.05), indicating that in their investigation "low foreign-language anxious students tended to be men" (p. 9).

***Discussion on Research Question Four***

The results of the current study on the gender differences revealed that there is a similar trend among many previous studies carried out on the relationship between gender and self-efficacy. Results have produced evidence that girls are more likely to show higher self-efficacy in language learning settings (Pajares, 1996). In an investigation by Pajares, it was revealed that learners who were asked to make judgments on their academic skills, the female learners judged themselves to be better speakers than the boys. This has led to their higher self-efficacy. Commonly, language is believed to be associated with feminine orientation and most learners are of the opinion that speaking is the domain in which girls perform better than boys (Eccles, 1987). In this study, the same results as previous ones produced. It was found that girls had higher self-regulated learning, which is one of the dimensions of self-efficacy (t=-3.7; X=2.38; p=0.000) as compared to boys. According to Noran (1993), the psychological factors in English language learning that girls have higher positive attitude towards the language and a liking for it. However, Bandura's theory does not endow gender or gender beliefs with any genetic properties (Bussey& Bandura, 1999).

**Conclusion**

Much research in second/foreign language acquisition has been devoted to exploring the relationship between motivation and language learning success. Certainly, most teachers, if asked to identify dominant influences on language learning, would cite motivational factors somewhere on their lists, and Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, and Todesco (1978), suggest that the most successful language learners display a host of characteristics, most of them clearly linked to motivation. The majority of this research, however, has been centered on integrative/instrumental motivations



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while neglecting to explore other motivational theories, such as Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy. Despite the fact that innumerable studies across a host of fields have established a positive correlation between high self-efficacy beliefs and performance, the self-efficacy construct has received comparably little attention in the field of second language learning (Multon, Brown & Lent, 1991; Nicholls, 1979; Pajares, 1997).

Accordingly, this study was conducted to ascertain the correlation between English speaking self-efficacy beliefs and the English speaking performance of Iranian EFL learners. Itwas sought to establish whether or not there was a correlation between high English speaking self-efficacy beliefs and high English speaking performance on end-of-term language assessments. Furthermore, language anxiety has been an important factor which acts as an impediment to language performance. There has been little research that attempted to investigate the correlation between self-efficacy and anxiety and speaking performance of EFL learners. The study was an attempt to fill this gap in the field of language learning.

***Conclusion for the First Research Question***

To conclude, the present study is preliminary research on the effects between English learning anxiety and the English speaking proficiency, but its relevance to the parents' involvement can also be seen. In the quantitative research results sections of the students' FLCAS questionnaire and English speaking proficiency scores, the researchers used SPSS 12.0 Program and Excel 2003 version to analysis the data using descriptive statistics, Chi-Square, and Pearson Correlation as presented in the previous chapter. A major finding is that among the six factors of FLACS, the Feeling unable to deal with the task of English learning is the highest factor. In the qualitative research results sections, the researchers collected the data from the questionnaire which were sorted and analyzed as presented in the previous chapter. The conclusions from above research results will be summarized in this section in response to the research questions proposed in Chapter One. Correlations between foreign language and the English speaking proficiency According to the result of Pearson Product-moment correlation, the result indicates that the significant negative correlation between foreign language speaking proficiency and the foreign language anxiety ($r=-.333$, $p<.01$).

According to the chi-square results of FLCAS, the student participants were feeling very anxious and nervous when they were speaking English and fear of been called by the teacher in the English class. Student participants expressed that they feel anxious when they didn't understand what the teacher said. But according to the FLCAS, students also showed their ambitions to be better than others and they really care about the evaluation from other students. Moreover, the student participants do not feel that their English is worse than other students; it may be because the student's self-esteem is higher than before and they have been given the high expectation from their parents to contribute their fear of negative evaluation from their peers.

The result greatly resembles Jinging's study. Jinging (2011) described this phenomenon in his research: "It is the cultural tradition that Chinese people care much about saving their faces, so they don't like to receive low evaluations or criticism about themselves." The same notion is true about Iranian people because both Chinese and Iranian belong to oriental societies. This is the reason why they experienced more fear of negative evaluation than any other kind of anxiety.

The result of factor 4-being afraid of making mistakes in the English class,the result indicating the student participants would worry about being corrected by the English teacher when they have any grammatical or pronunciation error and it would affect their willingness to speak up in the English class. This result may correlate with the factor 3- fear of negative evaluation. Because of the fear of negative evaluation, when students are corrected by the English teacher when they commit to any grammatical or pronunciation error, it would make the subject student feel that he



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or she has lost their face to contribute their unwillingness to speak up in the English class. The factor 5- feeling uniquely unable to deal with the task of English learning, as the result of all items having significant difference, according to the descriptive statistics, this is also the main anxiety factor of elementary school students (M=3.06, SD=0.91). Although this factor is the main anxiety source, the participants still tend to have positive feedback. It may be because the participants still enjoy learning English and the instructors have enhanced the student's learning motivation.

English is an international language and it has played an increasingly important role in people's work and life. While the importance of the English language is greatly emphasized in Iranian education policy, it is also important to understand what kind of problem students will encounter during the process of language learning. This research study focuses on language anxiety, particularly investigating the relationship between the foreign language anxiety and the interest of Iranian intermediate students in their foreign language speaking proficiency. The result of FLCAS shows that the main factor of students' anxiety is speech anxiety, which explains that no matter whether students' English speaking proficiency is good or not, they still feel anxious when they are speaking in English. However, the result of the FLCAS also shows that there are other anxiety factors that can affect the student's English speaking proficiency besides the six factors of FLCAS when a low correlation coefficient between language anxiety and English speaking proficiency occurs. Therefore, the 15 open-ended questions were generated to detect other anxiety factors which may affect students' English speaking proficiency. In order to increase students' language learning motivation and ability, there is a need to decrease students' language anxiety. It is hoped that this results of this research study can shed some light on language education and bring some insights to English teachers, educators and education policy makers. With all the collaborative efforts contributed to this matter, students will be able to increase the level of their proficiency and really enjoy learning a language.

Neither Bandura's theory of self-efficacy nor this study purports that people can perform given tasks simply because they believe they can, without prerequisite skills. This study suggests, rather, that an individual's perceived confidence positively corresponds to his subsequent behavior. For EFL learners, these behaviors could include the confidence to seek out additional language instruction, apply for a job in an English speaking environment, or participate in a social group – all behaviors that would aid in a more successful language proficiency. Successful integration into target language depends on an individual's ability to realize his goals. On a smaller scale, within our English language classrooms, language instructors have the ability to promote positive self-efficacy beliefs. These, in turn, can ameliorate some of the barriers encountered by EFL learners as they attempt to improve their target language proficiency.

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# THE EFFECT OF HIGHER-ORDER QUESTIONS ON THE SPEAKING ABILITY OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS THROUGH USING CONCEPT MAPPING STRATEGY: A GENDER STUDY CASE

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**Abstract**
This study aimed at investigating the effect of concept mapping strategy on Iranian foreign language learners' speaking proficiency. This work deals with the study of change in learners' speaking ability using concept mapping in the context of foreign language learning and teaching. The main research questions were: 1) Does concept mapping strategy in asking and answering higher-order questions affect the speaking proficiency of Iranian learners? 2) Is there any difference between male and female learners achieving English speaking proficiency using concept mapping strategies in answering higher-order questions? The study utilized a true-experimental method with pre and post-test control and experimental group design. In order to answer the research questions eighty foreign language learners at high-intermediate level at ShamimArghavan Language Academy (SALA) in Shiraz were selected via administering on OPT to 300 language learners. Then they were divided into experimental and control groups through simple random sampling. The experimental group was taught with concept mapping instructional strategy, while the control group was taught with the ordinary method of teaching. The high cognitive questions were used to evaluate meaningful learning. Descriptive and t-test statistics were used for answering the research hypotheses. The results indicate that speaking performance among experimental group learners after the treatment improved as compared to the control group learners. Students' speaking proficiency was also found to be not limited by gender. Therefore, there is a need for teachers, curriculum developers, and teacher training institutions to develop the process of concept map strategy integration in the EFL teaching and learning contexts.

**Keywords:** Concept Mapping, Higher-Order Questions, Speaking Proficiency, Bloom's taxonomy.



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**1. Introduction**

Concept mapping can be used to transform theoretical knowledge and understanding into concrete visual signs and descriptions that are suitable for comparison and measurement. The concept-map strategy can show who is in most need of support and when this support should be given by making the learning process visible. Through communication people discuss and share ideas either orally or in writing. In this study, communication is considered as fluency and accuracy. According to Alam (2013), Oral communication is a bidirectional process between the speaker and the listener which involves the productive skills of speaking and the receptive skills of comprehension (Byrne, 1986).

Stabb (1992) considers listening and speaking as oral communication skills. As he says, "spoken communication abilities mean both speaking and listening to oral language, either process of talking and listening are lifelong activities and probably our crucial communication device". Stabb emphasizes that, while good instructions and lots of practice can help improve listening skills, this won't happen without meaningful talk in the classroom" (p.7). Fundamentally, oral language is concerning communicating with other people. It involves a process of using thinking, knowledge and skills in order to listen and speak effectively. Oral language presents in every part of the school curriculum. The advancement of oral language has gained an importance as great as that of reading and writing skills, at every level, in the lesson planning. Chaney argues that "speaking is the process of making and exchanging meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in different contexts" ( 1998, p. 13).

Today's world says that the goal of teaching speaking should be improvement of students' communicative skills because, only in that way, students will be able to express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules in each communicative situation, appropriately. English speaking proficiency is considered one of these important skills; so the learners should be provided with an overall understanding of speaking skills. In the Applied Linguistics literature, although the word 'proficient' is often used interchangeably with words such as 'good', 'fluent', 'knowledgeable', 'bilingual', 'competent', and so on, it is not always easy to understand what speaking proficiency involves; the term may be applied quite differently from researcher to researcher (Galloway, 1987; McNamara, 1996).

One of the most important educational strategies introduced since the 1970s was concept-mapping. They allow the existing experience and understanding to be taken into consideration when building new concepts into the more noticeable framework. By using concept maps, learners make use of their previous knowledge to understand the new concepts. It establishes a link between unknown and known information that leads to a great knowledge and understanding (Novak, 2010). Gunter and Mintz (2010) state that the teacher -according to Socrates- should help the learners organize their thoughts in order to build new understanding from prior knowledge. Socrates method is learning by process of asking questions and answering perplexing questions.

Concept-mapping is a kind of learning strategy in which writing and drawing have a vital role. Folse (2010) noticed that when you ask people to write about his thoughts relating to a particular topic before speaking about it, either the quantity and/or the quality of discussion will be improved. According to Mayer (2003), concept mapping is used to prepare knowledge to the learners in order to form a mental framework and retain new information for recalling and producing. Questioning techniques used as teaching strategies and their possible impact on learners' learning has led many researchers in this field to examine the relationship between their integration into teaching speaking strategies. As Novak and Canas (2006) state concept maps represent hierarchical tree structure in which the main concept is located at the top followed by



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subordinate words or concepts in less important positions. In other words, to draw a map there needs to be a word or concept as the starting point which represents an answer to a focus question.

According to Smith and Higgins (2006), questioning procedure is one of the most common techniques used by teachers and it is helpful as the main method in which teachers control the classroom interaction. It has been discovered that classroom questions can also be used to motivate students, to review, control, assess, explore, explain, encourage students to give special attention on a particular subject, elicit information, and assess understanding and to monitor behavior (Richards and Lockhart, 1994). Therefore, teachers' most important role is to develop and plan different types of questioning activities that make learning materials meaningful and appealing to students.

Cazden (1988) states that the most common applied method for analyzing classroom interactions was categorizing the teacher's questions based on some cognitive scale. One of the most widely used resources for cognitive questions is Bloom's taxonomy which describes the goals relating to knowledge and intellectual abilities. Bloom's taxonomy was first suggested by Bloom and his colleagues at the University of Chicago in 1956 (Forehand, 2005). Bloom created a taxonomy that could be applied in classifying pedagogical objectives of thinking skills. Researchers have designed experiments which investigate the effectiveness of questions framed at differing levels of Bloom's Taxonomy of School Learning. These levels, arranged in ascending order of complexity, are: (1) knowledge, (2) comprehension, (3) application, (4) analysis, (5) synthesis, and (6) evaluation.

Higher level thinking skills involve application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation; which are important activities in the concept map strategy, because the main goal is to teach the correct ways of thinking (Notar, Wilson, & Montgomery, 2005). This organized hierarchy involved lower level thinking skills such as, memorization, knowledge, and comprehension which require the least amount of skill and thought. According to Bernadowski (2006), questions which are part of lower cognition level make learners just recall the information from memory, focusing on facts; whereas, the skills belonging to higher level category deal with critical thinking skills such as problem-solving, analyzing, creating, or assessing information. Novak and Canas (2006) give a complete definition of concept maps, in which they explain that concept maps are graphical instruments for arranging and representing knowledge. Derbentseva, Safayeni, and Canas (2004) argue that concept maps help the learners to make connections between the previously learnt knowledge to new information. In fact, it is a good way to reveal the students' abilities in remembering, organizing, interpreting, and understanding information about a subject area.

Teacher's In-class Questions and Constructivism Theory

Teachers' in-class questions are mainly used to evaluate the learners' ability to remember facts, but this strategy aims to change the view towards the traditional use of questions and develops using higher-order questions as devices by which active processing and thinking about concepts and using knowledge will be possible. Ellis (2008) proposes that teachers should ask questions which require the learners to participate actively in interactions. According to Novak and Canas (2008), the type of questions has a great influence on the type of responses and consequently on the concept map structures. The instruction of language skills through implementing concept map strategy, involves introducing the topic and asking higher-order questions as a prompt, and then providing a list of general words and phrases related to the topic (Canas, Hill, Carff& Suri, 2003).

Asking higher cognitive questions before actual learning happens, is a helpful strategy that is much better than simple remembering of information. Kauchak and Eggen (1998) believe that teachers should start the lesson with asking lower-order questions and then gradually shift to



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higher-order questions. According to Tajrishi, Alipour, Chapari-Ilkhchi (2013), the role of instructors has shifted from knowledge transfer to the guide and facilitator of learning in the students. The recent changes of teaching and training methods have resulted in making knowledge learning meaningful in exchange for transferring of knowledge and information by teachers and books.

As Novak (2000) states, the concept map strategy is one of the modern approaches used in educational settings, which is directly related to constructivism theory. In constructivism, learning is considered as an internal and active process in which the learning is dependent on the learner in making knowledge visible by linking new information to the previous one. Hay, Kinchin, and LygaBaker (2010) claim that concept mapping is a way of understanding what has been learnt and what is not. Through this strategy, the learners are asked to make a map of their previous knowledge and all of the concepts that are related to the topic. Concept maps used in education can be drawn personally or by a computer software program (Kinchin, 2010). According to Novak (2000), concept mapping strategy has been applied as a supporting tool in meaningful learning and teaching of science, in order to help the learners visualize their inner knowledge and mix it with new information to create new arrangements, and make both previous and new knowledge as an integrated part of their cognitive structure. Noonan (2011) claims that concept mapping is considered as learning and teaching strategy full of energy and ideas that can be performed in combination with, or instead of traditional reading courses to develop higher level of cognition.

Khatib, Sarem, and Hamidi (2013) observed that an educational setting should be planned in a way that help the learners grow and develop their different aspects of intellectual, emotional, and social communication potentials. As Morse and Jutras (2008) state, concept map strategy can be done both at the beginning of the topic discussion courses to evaluate the amount of prior knowledge, or at the end of the course, as an assessment tool in summarizing the learnt information. Concept mapping was first proposed by Novak's (2006) research in Cornell University against rote learning. Novak based his work on Ausubel's cognitive theory who strongly emphasized on the role of prior knowledge in making the learners capable of learning new concepts. In this strategy, the most important factor which has the most effective influence on learning is what learners already know.

According to Ausubel (1978), the thinking structure includes a set of well-planned concepts and information that a person has previously acquired, which creates a pyramid-shape structure with the most general ideas at the top, and more particular and detailed ideas under them. According to Ausubel (2000), two processes are involved in the meaningful learning, including 'reception and discovery' which deal with meaningful verbal learning and concept formation, respectively. Based on his perspective, the new knowledge is constructed and stored in the cognitive structure and will be reconstructed and developed every time the new related information is added

**2. Speaking Proficiency and its Components**

Teaching speaking is the most crucial part of language learning. The ability to exchange information and converse with other people has a lot to do with the success of the learners in using the language in later date in real situations. Instead of influencing the learners to just do the pure memorization, trying to create an environment to implement meaningful learning strategies, and to activate the cognitive structure of the brain is the most desirable pedagogical goal. According to Jeremy Harmer (2008), to become a fluent speaker requires the learners to pronounce phonemes correctly, speak in connected speech as well as using a range of conversational strategies. As Bashir, Azeem, and Dogar (2015) state, students believe that the competence in speaking a language is the end product of the language learning process, but



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speaking is considered the main part of the learning process, as well. So, the successful language teachers develop learning strategies which help the learners use the language in talking about the language.

Kayi (2006) has provided a list of main characteristics and features of successful speaking strategies in pedagogical contexts, based on Nunan's (2003) framework. These features are producing the English speech sounds, stress patterns, and rhythm; selecting the appropriate words and phrases according to the social context, organizing their thought in logical manner, using language as a means of expressing values and beliefs; using the language confidently with few unusual pauses. Kumaravadivelu argues that the best strategy to help the learners in learning a language is to direct their attention to comprehending, working with language, and divert their attention from focusing explicitly on linguistic forms (2003; p.27).

Ellis (2003, 2008) confirms that the idea of second or foreign language performance and competence has been composed of different constituents, and that three features of complexity, accuracy, and fluency belong to the principal dimension of this field of study. Accordingly, complexity, accuracy, and fluency have been the main variables of the research studies in the field of applied linguistics. As Jong (2010) states the common measures of speaking performances are related to the specific features of fluency, lexical repertoire and accuracy. It is believed that accurate speech production includes no errors, or, it is error-free. Range or lexical diversity, refers to the measurement of the percentage of content words used by learners in their speech production. Accordingly, a significantly greater variety of vocabularies is produced by higher proficiency level students.

## 3. Method

### Participants

The subjects of the current study were 47 male and 33 female EFL learners attending a regular course over a two month and a half period during summer in 2015. The participants were selected from non-English majors considered to be prepared enough to handle more complex learning tasks, with arguably lower motivation and higher anxiety towards English speaking. Both groups were mixed in gender; they were classified in terms of their gender since this was one of the aims of the present study. They ranged from 18 to 22 years (Mage=19.97), attending ShamimArghavan Language Academy (SALA) in Shiraz. In order to check their proficiency level, an Oxford Placement test (OPT) was run. According to the result of the test, 80 learners were chosen from among 300 non-English speaking learners, and then assigned to two groups of control and experimental. The students in each group were (n=40).

The participants were all studying English as a foreign language at the high intermediate level in the mentioned English Institute in Shiraz Iran. The logic behind the decision to choose students with upper intermediate level of speaking proficiency was that at levels below that level, students are not still proficient enough to deal with aspects like using speaking proficiency factors, organization and so on. These students can make clear understanding in language learning, and are able to converse with ease and confidence when dealing with usual tasks and social situations of their level.

## 4. Materials

Several instruments were used to collect the required raw data. The instruments used in this study were of five sorts. English book Top Notch was used as teaching material in this study; the placement test, the material for the pretest of the study, material for the treatment of the study, and the material for the posttest of the study. The Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered to the participants for the sake of homogeneity and eighty homogeneous and high



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intermediate students were selected. The material for the placement test comprised 100 questions of the OPT including grammar, and vocabulary. Each section consisted of 50 items about 50 minutes were allocated to complete the test. The participants' responses were scored on a scale of 50 points. Participants' scores ranged between 25 and 45 and based on their performance on OPT, eighty participants who had the score upper 31 were chosen randomly.

To find out if the participants were at the same level of proficiency in terms of oral performance, the second instrument, the speaking section of the IELTS practice test was used for both the pre-test and post-test phases of the study in which the subjects were asked to answer 10 questions and their responses were tape recorded; 10 minutes was allocated for this purpose. To collect the samples' responses, each participant came out of the class individually and went to a separate room with the researcher. Necessary instruction to do the tasks was given to the participants in Persian. They were told that they would be recorded while speaking in English. The researcher of the present study and an experienced rater, who was also an EFL teacher, scored all the test results according to analytic models of scoring. The participants' performance were scored on the basis of three criteria: accuracy, fluency, and lexical diversity. Then they were assigned to control and experimental groups through simple random sampling. The evaluation rubrics for the speaking test were adopted from the IELTS exam.

Finally, the last instrument of the study was the material for the study's treatment consisted of teaching speaking with the participants' ordinary teaching materials in speaking with the higher-level questions adopted from Bloom's taxonomy of questions and concept map strategy for the experimental group and without the mentioned tasks (using the existing methods of teaching speaking) for the control group. The course book Top Notch, and the instructional materials were identical for both groups. In this study, the researcher adopted Bloom's taxonomy to scaffold and enhance speaking and higher-order thinking. The teacher used these questions to help students start a classroom discussion and take the conversation to a higher level of thinking. The following model of concept mapping was used: making vocabulary schema by concept mapping strategy in pre-speaking stage, and working collectively to answer higher order questions during discussion stage.

**5. Design and Procedure**

This study was conducted twice a week over 18 sessions for both groups, between June and August 2015. The present study utilized a pre-test post-test control and experimental group design which involves comparative study that makes it possible for the researcher to evaluate the difference between the control and experimental groups after the strategy instruction treatment and its effectiveness. In order to test the research hypothesis of this study the following steps were taken. To ensure the homogeneity of the participants in terms of language proficiency the Oxford Placement test was run at the outset of the study to 300 Iranian EFL learners. From the 300 students, 80 high intermediate were assigned to two groups of control and experimental who underwent control and experimental conditions. The number of subjects in each group was (n=40) in which the number of male and female learners were not equal; and were different from each other on their gender as well. However, the two groups did not differ with respect to their level and knowledge of language learning.

Both control group and experimental group participated in pretest and posttest IELTS speaking proficiency test. The pre-test and post-test were administered in the first week and during the last week of the research, respectively; both experimental and control groups took the tests before and after the treatment. It was speaking section of English language proficiency test of IELTS, to measure the learners' initial knowledge in two groups; each student in both groups was assessed through this test, to do a thorough comparison of the relative effectiveness of concept map



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strategy training. There was one semester interval between students' pre-test and post-test. The results of the post intervention test helped the researcher to test hypotheses on how experimental students' performance after the treatment could be compared with the control group students after all have been introduced to the concept maps. .

The learners in experimental group received the special treatment and the learners of control group were not exposed to concept mapping but followed the traditional method of practice in learning how to discuss about a topic in the foreign language. Treatment started the following week after the administration of pre-test. The researcher employed concept mapping in the experimental group for eighteen sessions. As the instruction to the first session, the learners were informed that they were going to learn about the concept mapping strategy. During the instructional period, the learners in both groups practiced four skills; however, control group learners did not experience the treatment; in fact, the course was taught traditionally using instructional techniques such as memorization, recall, and drills.

The concept map strategy was applied to the experimental group as integration of concept maps and higher-order questions of Bloom's taxonomy. The students were then taught using teacher-constructed concept map. The students were expected to answer the questions and discuss the topic(s) chosen. Therefore, the researcher decided to use a prompt that supports and encourages the learners' responses. During the instruction course, whenever there was a topic discussion, answering higher-order questions was considered a necessary exercise before the main task which made the learners answer the higher-level questions and write their own ideas and knowledge on a piece of paper. In fact, they were given time to write what comes to their mind before they had to answer the questions and discuss the topic.

The first step, is to define the topic or the focus question; next, is to identify and make a list of the most general concepts related to the main topic; then, to arrange the list of words and order them from top to bottom going from inclusive concepts to the most specific representation of conceptual relationships; once the key words or phrases have been identified, the linking phrases are added with crosslinks that make a connection between subordinate and secondary words or concepts. In addition, discussion and answering to higher-cognitive questions or tasks simplifies the process of comprehending concepts (Mccagg&Dansereau, 1991). Using the open-ended questions like higher-order questions was done to leave room for interpretation and for the learners to respond in different ways. Thus the students noticed and learned about the free form character of concept mapping and different models of connections between ideas.

The rating scale to rate speaking test was the same as the one used to IELTS. The interviews were recorded to be listened to and rated at a later time. The recordings were rated based on the IELTS assessment criteria. They were included Accuracy (error-free units), Fluency (grammatically correct units), and Range (number of related vocabulary to the topic). So, the researcher conducted a careful analysis of test-takers' performances on the post-test in order to see in what ways their performances differ by the intended features that seemed to have an impact on the overall assigned scores. The following measures were used in this study to examine each of the three factors. Fluency: following Mehnert (1998), the total numbers of pauses was calculated by counting the number of pauses during one second or more. Accuracy: the number of error-free clauses was calculated to detect the differences in students' speech and to find out how much the rules of the target language are met. Range: the number of all the words related to the topic.

**6. Results and Analyses**

To understand whether answering higher order questions by concept maps had any significant differences on the speaking proficiency of male and female learners or not, the data on pre-test and post-test scores of 40 students in each group were gathered and analyzed with statistical



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package of SPSS (version 20). In order to gain precise measures the participants' overall speaking proficiency was rated by an experienced language instructor who had done the work for more than 10 years and was familiar with the IELTS speaking band descriptors. Those experts are professors who teach in different universities in Iran, and each one of them has been teaching English for more than 10 years. The learners' scores ranged from 0-9. In order to ensure comparability of the results of the present research study with previous research studies, measures that were already used in similar studies were utilized. The evaluation rubrics for the speaking test were adopted from The IELTS exam.

Findings from the comparison of data were compared to determine the efficiency of the results. First of all, the normality of the data as the prerequisite for the application of parametric statistics was examined through Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. It was shown that the sample meets the normality requirement in both groups of experimental and control. The variance of the data was also the same throughout the data set. Assuming the data normality (calculated by Histogram chart and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test), as well as the homogeneity of variance in the sample (by Levene's test for t-test), the parametric test were used to investigate and describe the research questions.

**Table 4.1 Case Processing Summary**

| | Cases | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| group * gender | 80 | 100.0% | 0 | .0% | 80 | 100.0% |

The table 4.2 summarizes the group/gender relationship of the participants. The bar chart shows the relationship between group and gender. As it can be seen, there is not much difference in bars. frequency of each groups of experimental and control are as 48.82% and 51.18%, respectively.

**Table 4.2 The Distribution of the Sample According to the Group- Gender**

| | | | gender | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | female | male | Total |
| group | case | Count | 15 | 25 | 40 |
| | | % within group | 37.5% | 62.5% | 100.0% |
| | | % within gender | 45.5% | 53.2% | 50.0% |
| | | % of Total | 18.8% | 31.2% | 50.0% |
| | control | Count | 18 | 22 | 40 |
| | | % within group | 45.0% | 55.0% | 100.0% |
| | | % within gender | 54.5% | 46.8% | 50.0% |
| | | % of Total | 22.5% | 27.5% | 50.0% |
| Total | | Count | 33 | 47 | 80 |



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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % within group | 41.2% | 58.8% | 100.0% |
| | % within gender | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| | % of Total | 41.2% | 58.8% | 100.0% |

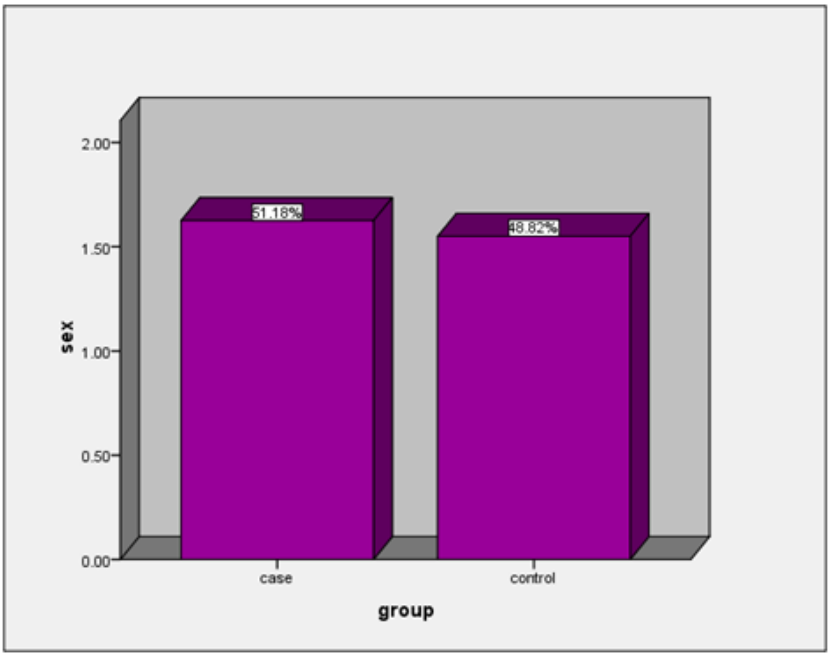


**Figure 1. The relationship between gender and group**

The above cross-tabulation table records the number (frequency) of respondents and the relationship between the variables. To assure the results and avoid any marginal inference, the researcher tried to control the statistical significance of the variables of the cross tabulation table.

The relationship between two independent variable of gender and group was calculated and investigated by Chi-Square test. According to the results (t= 0.464; sig(2-tailed)=0.496>0.05) P-value was greater than the conventionally accepted significance level of 0.05, so it was concluded that there was no signification difference in the proportion of the two variables of gender and group and the distribution of both variables matched each other. The homogeneity of variance across samples was also calculated and it was proved to be homogeneous. Therefore, it was safe to apply the parametric statistical procedures for further data analyses.

**able 4.3 Chi-Square Tests**

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-ided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | .464[a] | 1 | .496 | | |
| Continuity Correction[b] | .206 | 1 | .650 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | .465 | 1 | .495 | | |



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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | .650 | .325 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .458 | 1 | .498 | | |
| N of Valid Cases[b] | 80 | | | | |

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.50.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

The researcher recorded the students' age from their school files at the beginning of the course. T-test was used to measure any statistical differences.

**Table 4.4 Mean Results of Controlling Age Variable**

| group | | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| age | case | 40 | 19.8250 | 2.78169 | .43982 |
| | control | 40 | 20.1250 | 1.43558 | .22699 |

The table 4.4 describes the means and standard deviation of the average of the age for each group. The means represented the average age scores for the groups. The average age for experimental group was 19.82; whereas, for control group is 20.12. However, we cannot arrive at any conclusions that one category is more significantly more different than another category without examining the statistical significant of the age means.

**Table 4.5 T- Test Result of Controlling Age Variable**

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | .997 | .321 | -.606 | 78 | .546 | -.30000 | .49494 | -1.28535 | .68535 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -.606 | 58.399 | .547 | -.30000 | .49494 | -1.29059 | .69059 |



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Table 4.5 describes Independent t-test information to ascertain whether is significant differences between the age groups. P-value (sig.) for the Levene's test (0.321, p>0.05), hence we can assume equal variances and report the first row entitled 'Equal variances assumed'. Below the section of T-test for Equality of means, we focused on the sig (2-tailed) column; the P-value (0.546, P>0.05). This shows that there is not a significant difference at (0.05) level between the experimental and control groups according to the age variable. Given the significant result found, we can now argue that experimental group's age is not statistically different from the control group's age (with t-value: 0.6, df: 78; P value (0.546). In our example, the significance of 0.469 accordingly, means that our distribution is not significantly different from a normal distribution.

With response to Q (1) (i.e. Does concept mapping strategy in asking and answering higher-order questions affect the speaking proficiency of Iranian learners?)

The following hypothesis emerged from this question:

Concept mapping strategy does not affect the speaking proficiency of Iranian learners. To answer this question the researcher firstly calculated the means, and the standard deviation for the pre-test and the post-test, then t-test was performed to determine the differences of these means. Table 4.6 shows the descriptive statistics for participants' scores on pre-test and post-test of speaking proficiency in order to establish whether the means of performances for two independent groups are significantly different from each other.

**Table 4.6 Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Pre and Post-Test by Groups**

| | group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| pre.test | case | 40 | 5.5250 | .55412 | .08761 |
| | control | 40 | 5.4250 | .50064 | .07916 |
| post.test | case | 40 | 7.8250 | 1.73778 | .27477 |
| | control | 40 | 5.4250 | .50064 | .07916 |

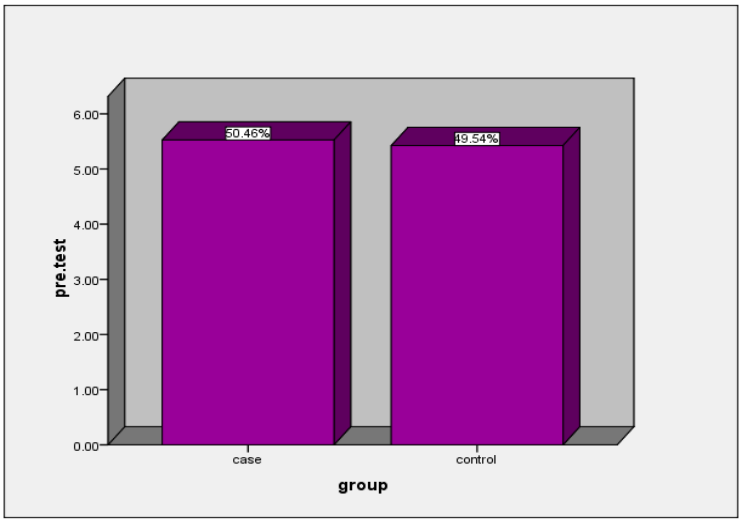


**Figure 2. The experimental and control groups' mean scores on the pretest**



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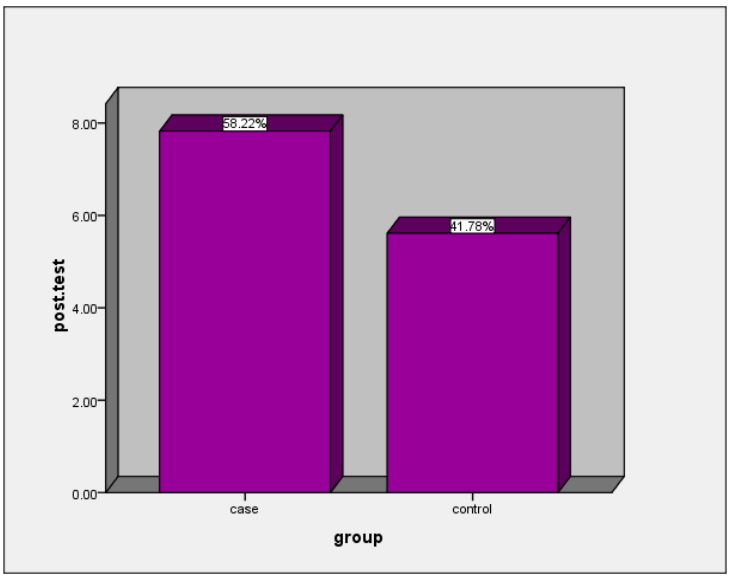


**Figure 3. The experimental and control groups' mean scores on the posttest**

As the Table 6 shows, the participants' mean scores and standard deviation of each group in pre-test and post-test are (Experimental: 5.52; Control: 5.42) (Experimental:7.82; Control: 5.42), respectively. In the pre-test, it is found that there is no significant difference between the groups. In other words, it is assumed that the two groups started out with equivalent means prior the run of treatment. In contrast, the mean scores of each group in post-test indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the two means in favor of the post-test mean.

Table 4.7 shows the results of the Independent sample t-test to find out if the participants' scores on pre and post-intervention are significantly different or not.

**Table 4.7 Independent Samples t-test for the Pre and Post-Test of Control and Experimental Groups**

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | F | Sig. | T | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |



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| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| pre.test | Equal variances assumed | 1.752 | .189 | .847 | 78 | .400 | .10000 | .11808 | -.13507 | .33507 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | .847 | 77.210 | .400 | .10000 | .11808 | -.13511 | .33511 |
| post.test | Equal variances assumed | .781 | .380 | 8.393 | 78 | .000 | 2.40000 | .28594 | 1.83073 | 2.96927 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | 8.393 | 45.429 | .000 | 2.40000 | .28594 | 1.82423 | 2.97577 |

The table shows that, P-value for the Levene's test in pre and post-test, are both greater that 0.05; so, the equal variances are assumed and the first row of the table is reported. It is also evident that the difference between the participants' performance on the pre-test is not significant at 95% confidence interval with (t=0.847; sig(2-tailed): 0.40), indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in the pre-test scores of both groups. In addition, the results of the t-test for independent samples of the post-test scores shows that the scores of the experimental and control groups differed significantly with (t=8.39; P-value< 0.001) indicating that there is significant difference between the post-test scores of both groups, on which the experimental group scored higher than the control group. According to the results in table 4.7, it can be concluded that the computed P-value for the post-test scores was less than the set alpha value (0.05). Therefore, the differences in post-test mean scores among two groups are statistically significant. Thus, it shows that the two groups are not at roughly the same level of speaking ability after the treatment.

**7. Speaking Proficiency of Two Groups through Paired t-test**

This section addresses how the means of the two samples of related data are different before and after the intervention through utilizing Paired Samples t-test. The results windows for the paired samples t-test display the summary statistics of the two samples. In order to compare the differences between two related variables like the speaking proficiency of each group in their pre and-post test scores independently, paired sample t-test was used. The results of the mean difference between the paired observations, the standard deviation of these differences, and the standard error of the mean differences has been given in table 4.8.

**Table 4.8 Descriptive Statistics of the Two Groups Considering Pre-Test and Post-Test**

| group | | | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| case | Pair 1 | pre.test | 5.5250 | 40 | .55412 | .08761 |
| | | post.test | 7.8250 | 40 | 1.73778 | .27477 |
| control | Pair 1 | pre.test | 5.4250 | 40 | .50064 | .07916 |
| | | post.test | 5.6150 | 40 | .52013 | .08224 |

As it is evident from the table 4.8, there is a significant difference in the scores for experimental group (M=5.52, 7.82; SD=0.554, 1.73); while this difference between the pre and post-test of the



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control group is not significant (M=5.42, 5.61; SD=0.50, 0.52). The table 4.8 reflects a higher result in post-test, compares with the pre-test score of the experimental group. The standard deviation of the experimental group on the pre-and-post tests are 0.554 and 1.737, respectively; this shows that the difference among students' pre-test score was smaller than that of the post-test score. Thus, the experimental group' pre-and-post-test mean scores are somewhat different. So, null hypothesis in rejected in this section. In other words, drawing concept mapping by the students had positive effects on speaking proficiency of them.

Table 4.9, shows the results of the comparison of paired scores for pre-test and post-test of control and experimental groups at the level of 0.05, to find out if the participants' scores of each group before and after the run of the treatment are significantly different or not.

**Table 4.9 Results of the Paired Samples t-Test for Both Groups**

| Group | | Paired Differences | | | | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Case | Pair 1 pre.test - post.test | -2.30000 | 1.50555 | .23805 | -2.78150 | -1.81850 | -9.662 | 39 | .000 |
| Control | Pair 1 pre.test - post.test | -.19000 | .07779 | .01230 | -.21488 | -.16512 | -1.448 | 39 | 0.487 |

As evident in the above table, the difference between the experimental group participants' scores is significant with (t=-9.66; P < 0.001) at 95% confidence interval, indicating that the participants in this group had a statistically significant difference between the mean proficiency of pre-test and post-test. On the other hand, the difference between the control group participants' scores is not significant with (t=-1.448; P value=0.487) at 95% confidence interval, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference between the two conditions. Therefore, it can be concluded that both experimental and control groups had an increase in their speaking proficiency, but the mean scores for the experimental group was higher.

With response to Q(2) (i.e. Is there any difference between male and female learners achieving English speaking proficiency using concept mapping strategies in answering higher-order questions?)

The following hypothesis emerged from this question:

There is no difference in male and female Iranian language learners answering higher-order questions.

In order to either confirm or reject the null hypothesis, the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the male and female participants of the experimental and control groups are compared. The descriptive statistic information of the comparisons is summarized in table 4.10. The mean score of male participants on the pre-test is 5.46 and that of female participants is 5.48. This value for the male and female participants on the post-test is 6.65 and 6.81 respectively. Accordingly, female participants had a slightly higher score than the male participants.

Table 4.11 presents the results of independent-sample t-test for male and female participants' mean score on two separate intervals of pre and post-test



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**Table 4.11 Independent Samples t-Test for Male and Female Learners' Mean Scores**

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| pre.test | Equal variances assumed | 1.370 | .245 | .139 | 78 | .890 | .01676 | .12046 | -.22306 | .25659 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | .136 | 63.848 | .892 | .01676 | .12293 | -.22883 | .26236 |
| post.test | Equal variances assumed | 1.166 | .283 | .406 | 78 | .686 | .15680 | .38618 | -.61203 | .92564 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | .365 | 43.230 | .717 | .15680 | .42989 | -.71003 | 1.02363 |

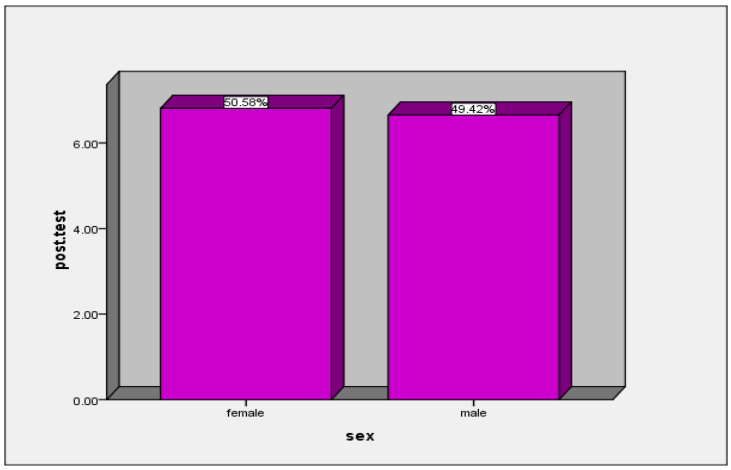


**Figure 4 Male and female learners' mean scores on the post-test**



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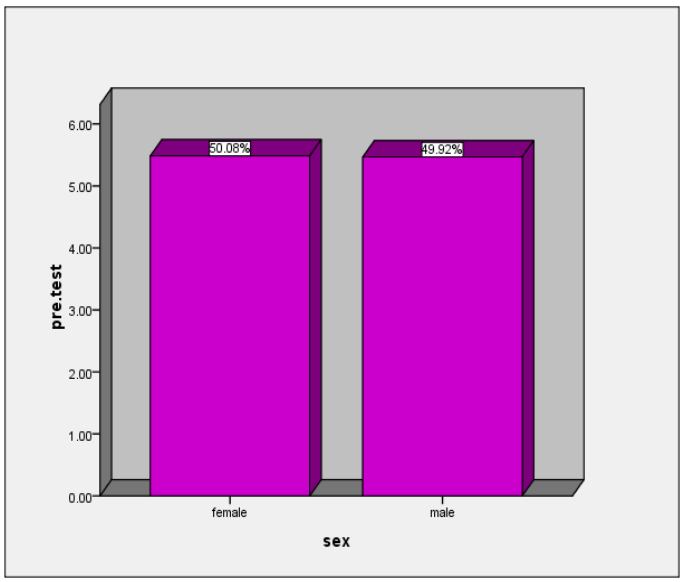


**Figure 5 Male and female learners' mean scores on the pre-test**

The P-value on the Levene's test is printed as 0.24 and 0.28 for pre and post-test, respectively; which is greater than 0.05 for each interval run of tests. Therefore, we rely on the first row of output, Equal Variances Assumed, when we look at the results for the actual Independent samples t-test. The primary t-test reveals no significant difference between the mean pre-test scores on achievement of experimental and control group. Overall result indicates that concept mapping is significantly better than no treatment. According to the table 4.11, P- value for the pre-test of male and female learners is higher than the level of significance 0.05 (t= 0.139; sig.2-tailed= 0.89), which indicates that there is no significant difference between male and female's scores of pre-test. On the other hand, P-value for the post-test of male and female participants is (0.68) which is higher than the conventional value of 0.05, with (t= 0.40; sig.2tailed= 0.68) indicating that the means of two variables are equal after the intervention, as well. Accordingly, the corresponding null hypothesis to the second research question regarding no gender differences between the male and female learners is verified. In this study, both boys and girls seemed to equally benefit while learning English concepts cooperatively.

**8.Discussion of Findings**

In this study, the answers given to two important questions and attributed to the influence of concept mapping strategy use on Iranian EFL learners' speaking abilities and attitudes towards using that strategy were examined. Regarding the first research question, this study began with this assumption that concept mapping strategy does not affect the speaking proficiency of Iranian learners. During this time the researcher employed the strategy and instructed the learners in the experimental group how to apply them in their speaking and answering higher-order questions related to the topic being discussed. The students on the control group, on the other hand, did not receive any instruction in using this strategy in their speaking of foreign languages. After the post-test, the results indicated that the teaching of this strategy did have an effect on the high-intermediate level male and female Iranian language learners' speaking proficiency. The results



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of the post-test confirmed that the concept mapping could be improved through systematic instruction in language teaching contexts. The mean scores on the pre-test were almost the same which suggested the homogeneity of the subjects in the study. But, the mean scores of two groups were different on post-test; in other words, the mean score of the experimental group was higher than that of the control group which indicates the better performance. Namely, the speaking ability of the experimental group learners who had made use of concept map strategy surpassed that of the control group. Therefore, the first hypothesis which states that concept map strategy does not affect the learners' speaking proficiency was rejected; it was revealed that the strategy was pedagogically effective in enhancing speaking abilities. Yezki and Nasrabadi (2004) also maintained that concept mapping strategy promotes meaningful learning and information retention. The findings are also in agreement with findings of Akeju, Simpson, Rotimi, and Kenni (2011) that found significant differences between two groups in favor of concept map group. The findings of this study are in line with the study, worked by Ghonsooly (2009), who concluded that concept maps can be effective for cognitive and instructional objectives. Overall, the results obtained in this study are supported by the studies conducted by Gowin (1981), Ausubel (1968), and Novak and Canas (2008) who stated that reason behind the power of concept map strategy is that it causes better knowledge and vocabulary retention. Regarding the influence of concept mapping strategy on speaking features, like accuracy, fluency, and range, the results obtained in this study are in line with the works of Tavakoly, Dastjerdi, Esteki (2011). Rahmani (2011) came to the result that those students who used note taking followed by graphical maps outperformed to those who used note taking per se.

Finally, the present study seeks to find out whether concept mapping strategy affects male and female learners' speaking proficiency differently. In order to find the answer to this question, the results for the performances of male mad female learners in both groups were compared with each other using an independent t-test and it was revealed that gender plays no significant role in oral use of concept map strategy which is consistent with a study by Sakiyo and Waziri (2015), who found that gender did not affect students' achievement in Biology through concept map strategy. Maleki, and Dabbaghi (2013) in their study showed that there were not any important differences between male and female high school students in using concept mapping

**Conclusion**

The main purpose of this research study had two important parts; firstly, it was an attempt to do the comparison of the performance of the experimental group and control group; and between male and female learners of the experimental group. Based on the students' performance on an IELTS practice as pre-test, the differences between the two groups were not significant and they seemed to belong to a homogeneous group of English language proficiency level. However, the control and experimental group scores at the post-test were compared to indicate the differences between them. The experimental group behaved differently on the post-test. Therefore, it is acceptable to hold the idea that the treatment has served the intended purpose. In order to ensure that the results of the present study were similar in quality to previous research studies, measures which were already applied in similar studies were utilized; fluency was calculated by counting the total number of pauses; accuracy was measured with the amount of error-free clauses; range or lexical diversity was examined with the number of related words to the topic. Overall, grammatically correct responses, fluency, and lexical diversity measures provided evidence that features of the participants' speech production showed significant difference in favor of experimental group participants. In other words, the control group learners were less filled with many pauses, and less related words about the topic. The experimental group learners produced more accurate and diverse vocabulary with faster speech rate.



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The findings of the study proved that the application concept mapping strategy by the learners through the explicit instruction of the study can help them improve their speaking performance. The students demonstrated gains in answering higher-order questions as a result of project. The quality of student responses on in-class interview tasks about higher cognitive questions is higher for the treatment group than for the non-treatment group. The researcher concluded that, the increase in cognitive load with the integration of higher-order questions increased higher-order thinking which led to improve the scores in the experimental group. The results showed that students in the experimental group had a higher achievement score in speaking abilities compared with their control group counterparts. This means that, the students who were taught using the concept mapping strategy performed better than those who were taught using the traditional method. The reason for this enhanced performance by the experimental group was that the students were able to link the new concepts to the relevant concepts they were previously acquired. Therefore, the results of the study revealed that the adoption of relevant instructional strategies will enhance meaningful learning of speaking strategies.

The study found no gender difference in students' achievement in speaking test. The increase in students' scores does not depend on gender, and this means concept mapping is an effective tool for both male and female students. The results of mean scores of pretest and posttest for evaluating dependent variable of gender showed that the differences between the two groups of male and female learners were not statistically significant. In other words, it was found that both male and female participants clearly felt that they could talk more fluently, which meant that they were getting better at using and processing lexical items, sentence structures and delivering their thoughts in a more confident way.

The findings of this study will be highly beneficial to educators, teachers, learners, syllabus designers, and material developers with a better understanding of how higher cognitive questions and concept map strategy can support foreign language learning and cognitive development. Further, the findings of the study will open new grounds for conducting more research on the use of concept mapping in other subject areas, which will be aimed at improving academic performance. Generally speaking, concept map strategy can be considered as both a cognitive and constructivist learning and teaching strategy. Concept mapping needs to be well understood and used by teachers before we can expect students to widely adopt its use. This research is to take into consideration introducing concept map as one of the comprehension and thinking strategies in teaching of speaking skill. For thinking tasks to be effective, teachers must view teaching as a process of developing and enhancing students' ability to learn. From the social constructivist view of learning, teachers are expected to provide scaffolds to support learning, encourage learners to discuss ideas and share understanding (McGregor, 2007). The utilization of concept map will assist to change the complexity of organizing thoughts and ideas and expressing them through words. When students become skillful in thinking and organizing, they will then find it relatively easier to reply the high level questions and discuss their ideas. Research has demonstrated that concept mapping is a skill that requires time for mastery before one appreciates its usefulness (Beyerebach& Smith, 1990; Brandt et al., 2001). Although the present study suggests that the concept mapping strategy has a good effect on high intermediate language learners, there are other areas that need to be studied further. One area for future research is including learning strategies in classroom teaching. Another area for doing research studies is to conduct such studies with a variety of language students, such as school-aged students, and students with different pedagogical backgrounds. There are many other methodologies which need to be explored in order to improve the Iranian learners' speaking abilities; however, the main considerations in eliminating or reducing the speaking difficulties is helping the EFL learners learn well the cognitive aspects of speaking. Since this study is restricted



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to speaking proficiency for the students, it examines other studies to other kinds of tests and other grades or even other levels of study.

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**APPENDIX 1**

**Speaking Section as Pre and Post-test**

Think of at least three related situations; friend/ colleague/ parents
-What is your criterion when choosing a good friend?
-What kind of colleague do you think is easy to work with?
-Think about what criteria are the most important for you when choosing an ideal mate?



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-Why hobbies matters you when you choose your boyfriend?
-How does character affect you when you decide your ideal mate?
-Talk about the reasons why the other criteria are less important or not important?
-Talk about your daily routine
-What type of films do you like best (why)?
-What types of films don't you like (why not)?
-Describe an important event in your life; you should say a)when it happened b)what happened c)whether this event affected other people d) why you feel it was important

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# EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES OF IRANIAN STUDENTS WITH VISUAL LIMITATIONS FOR LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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**Abstract**
The present study aims at investigating the educational challenges that Iranian students with visual impairment face in learning English as a foreign language. In this study, the participants were 4 males and 6 females, at different levels of proficiency in English language. The participants were 6 low vision and 4 totally blind, between the ages of 17 to 26 years old. The study was conducted in Iran and the data were collected by questionnaire. For data analysis, at first the answers of the participants were translated into English and were presented on the basis of research questions. In reporting the information collected, some direct quotations were used. Then, the participants' answers were computed using statistical package for social science (spss). The findings revealed that visually impaired and blind people encounter two serious difficulties for learning English. The findings have implications for teachers, visually impaired students, and schools or language institutes which practice inclusive program.

**Keywords**: inclusive education, visual impairment, special needs

## 1. Introduction

Language is the most important means of human interaction for all individuals suffering from visual disability. Learning a foreign language such as English enhances social integration, with a positive impact on self-esteem and opens new job opportunities which requires equality of access and inclusion for all in the learning process. Many international policy statements support inclusive education of Visually Impaired People (VIP), such as the International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, which includes a section on " Flapship on the Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion" (UNESCO, 2005).

Since 1970, emphasis on language as a means of communication has given a new dimension to the importance of receptive skills in communication. The speech perception system combines visual and auditory information when perceiving speech, rather than relying on



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auditory information alone. The most famous demonstration of multi-modal speech perception is the McGurk effect (Krezel&Bekkering, 2000; McGurk & MacDonald, 1976).The McGurk effect happens when people watch a video of a person talking, but the audio portion of the tape is altered.

Having to use only the auditory channel for communicating, blind and VIP, have problems which are greater than and in some respects different from the problems of fully sighted English learners. For example, infants with visual impairments cannot perceive items that are beyond their grasp or are too large or small (ERIC EC, 1992). Thus, they require contexts in which they can most easily and comfortably learn English in combination with adaptive skills which relate to their needs as people with specific strengths and handicaps. They also need some form of individualized instruction and problem solving specifically adapted to their particular needs.

## 2. Review of The Literature

Inclusion is grounded in the principles of human rights. The Salamanca statement is said to be the first international statement that considered human rights in the education arena. Although inclusion has its roots in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1945 and the 1990, and World Conference on Education for All, the Salamanca Statement (1994) puts inclusion on top of the agenda (Eklindh& Van den Brule-Balescut, 2006). Inclusion is geared in the provision of education that is anchored in improving the education system that will benefit all children regardless of their differences or difficulties. Inclusion is concerned with provision of appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learners in the education settings (Ibid, 2006). Inclusion seems to be important, because studies show improvement in academic performance for students with disability in inclusive settings as compared to special education settings. Also, all children need to build friendships and relationships, respect and understanding of each other, so that they are prepared to be responsible members of the community, inclusion provides this opportunity (Salisbury, 2008).

Most cognitive studies of language acquisition in both natural systems and artificial systems have focused on the role of purely linguistic information as the central constraint. However, we argue that non-linguistic information, such as vision and talker's attention, also plays a major role in language acquisition.

A common conjecture about human lexical learning is that children map sounds to meanings by seeing an object while hearing an auditory word-form. The most popular mechanism of this word learning process is association. Most learning in this framework concentrates on statistical learning of co-occurring data from the linguistic modality and non-linguistic context (see a review by Plunkett, 1997). Smith (2000) argued that word learning traits children's attention so that they attend to the just right properties for the linguistic and world context. Nonetheless, a major advance in recent developmental research has been the documentation of the powerful role of social-interactional cues in guiding the learning and in linking the linguistic stream to objects and events in the world (Baldwin, 1993; Tomasello& Akhtar, 1995). Many studies (e.g., Baldwin, 1993; Woodward & Guajardo, 2002) have shown that there is much useful information in social interaction and that young learners are highly sensitive to that information. Often in this literature, children's sensitivities to social cues are interpreted in terms of (seen as diagnostic markers of) children's ability to infer the intentions of the speaker. This kind of social cognition is called "mind reading" by Baron-Cohen (1995). Bloom (2000) suggested that children's world learning in the second year of life actually draws extensively on their understanding of the thoughts of speakers. However, there is an alternative explanation of these findings to the proposals of "mind-reading." Smith (2000) has suggested that these results



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may be understood in terms of the child's learning of correlations among actions, gestures and words of the mature speaker, and intended referents. Smith (2000) argued that construing the problem in this way does not "explain away" notions of "mind-reading" but rather grounds those notions in the perceptual cues available in the real-time task that young learners must solve.

Meanwhile, Bertenthal, Campos, and Kermoian (1994) have shown how movement-crawling and walking over, under and around obstacles-creates dynamic visual information crucial to children's developing knowledge about space. Researchers are studying the role of social partners in development and problem solving also point to the body and active movement-points, head turn, and eye gaze-in social dynamics and particularly in establishing joint attention. Computational theorists and roboticists (e.g. Ballard, Hayhoe, Pook, & Rao, 1997; Steels & Vogt, 1997) have also demonstrated the computational advantages of what they call "active vision," how an observer-human or robot- is able to understand a visual environment more effectively and efficiently by interacting with it. This is because perception and action from a closed loop; attentional acts are preparatory to and made manifest in action while also constraining perception in the next moment. Ballard and colleagues proposed a model of "embodied cognition" that operates at time scales of approximately one-third of a second and uses subtle orienting movements of the body during a variety of cognitive tasks as input to a computational model. At this "embodiment" level, the constraints of the body determine the nature of cognitive operations, and the body's pointing movements are used as deictic (pointing) references to bind objects in the physical environment to variables in cognitive programs of the brain.

Before imposing any teaching to students with visual impairments, it is very important that a teacher knows how the loss in vision influence the learning process (Sacks & Silberman, 1998). Visual information is crucial in helping children observe and interpret what happens in the environment. It is also an important prerequisite for conceptual development in a student's learning. Malformation and destruction of this part of the body, brings about a reduced amount of sensory data to the learner, leading to deficit or delay in various skills learned through watching and imitation from others. This impacts language development, reasoning skills, problem solving abilities and abstract thinking. This finally causes great impact on the individual's learning and performance, because a student cannot observe and use visual information to interpret various learning situations happening in the environment (Bishop, 1996; Fraser &Maguvhe, 2008; Webster &Roe, 1998). If visual impairment occurs during early childhood, cognitive and language development will be impaired (Bishop, 1996). But if the loss of vision is after five years, below which visual memories cannot be retained, then there will be some visual memories. This visual memory will be very helpful in the learning process through construction and formation of images, and concepts later by relating the new concept and experience acquired earlier in life (Webster &Roe, 1998).

There are basically three ways through which students with visual impairments can get information from the environments. Verbal description is the most important source of information to VISs. However, verbal description provided by others is always incomplete and cannot satisfy the person's needs. Another way is the use tactile stimuli. However, a tactile method is also not effective, because a student needs to feel an object repeatedly in order to grasp the image of the object. Finally, students with visual impairments rely on self-exploration about the world. This way is limited in amount of information that can be accessible to students with visual impairments. All in all, these modalities together cannot effectively compensate visual stimuli; they are there just to reduce the impacts to learning caused by lack of vision (Spungin, 2002). Therefore, a teacher teaching students with visual impairments in inclusive classrooms needs to plan teaching based on these assumptions.



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## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Participants

This study was conducted in Iran. Purposeful sampling was used in this study. Purposeful sampling attempts to select the participants based on the certain characteristics or criteria (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Participants were selected based on two criteria. One of these criteria was participants with visual impairment learning English as a foreign language. And the second one was participants who learn English in an inclusive classroom with the other sighted students.

The participants who were selected to provide information for the current study were 4 malesand 6 females, and learned English at different levels of proficiency in English language. The participants were between the ages of 17 to 26 years old. From 10 participants, 6 of them were low vision and the rest of them were totally blind. All the participants were monolingual and native speakers of Persian language.

### 3.2. Material and Instruments

The instrument that was used to collect the research data included two questionnaires.

#### 3.2.1. Questionnaire

In this study, two questionnaires were used. The first questionnaire had been used by Galetova (2012). It was to measure the sufficiency of the learning materials for the blind people, and the second questionnaire had been used by Makarian (2014)to measure the problems of the blind Iranian students for learning foreign languages. The researcher used these two questionnaires without any change. Thus, the reliability and validity of the questionnaires were ensured. The questionnaires contained 4 parts and 20 questions about the problems that visual impaired or blind people have for learning English. Most of the questions were close ended, some of them were open ended. The number of participants was small, because visually impaired and blind students who learn English in inclusive setting are regarded as a minority.

After the introduction, there was part 1, which was introductory. It consisted of three questions and its goal was to gather statistical data such as sex of the participants, their grade, and type of the participants (low vision / totally blind).Part twowhichconsisted of 10 questions and focused on the availability of teaching/learning materials and frequency of using certain types of materials in teaching and learning English for blind or VISs. The third part consisted of one question about blind people's motivation for learning English in terms of occupational goals, and the last part consisted of five questions and was devoted to the schools, libraries and the other public places thatare related to the blind students' education in order to investigate the services that they offer to the blind people.

### 3.3. Procedure

The questionnaires were distributed among VISs via email, because nowadays it is a common means of communication and it is quicker and more flexible than the distribution of a printed version.The participants were visually handicapped and they could use voice synthesizer to read the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were sent to Gooshkon.ir site. In this site all the blind and visually impaired people in Iran had membership. Ten participants answered the questions from the different cities in Iran.

Immediately followingthe questions, each participant was asked to write any comment or suggestion related to his/her problems for learning English. Then, the participants' answers were checked and were translated into English.

The researcher chose to carry out a qualitative research, because the number of participants was small.



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**4. Data Analysis**

The data analysis which was carried out in the present small-scale research, involved the analytical procedures that were described below.

The answers of each participant were checked and were presented in relation to the research questions. After the information was collected, some direct quotations were used. reporting the direct statement from the research participants is important, because it maintains the flavor of the original data (Cohen, Manion& Morrison, 2007).

The answers of the participants were computed, by using of SPSS.

**5. Results**

**5.1. The Results of Research Question One**

The first research question concerned the sufficiency of learning materials for the blind people in learning English. Questions 4-14 in the questionnaire were related to the availability of learning materials for VISs in learning English. The descriptive statistics for these questions including frequency and percentage was calculated and presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1
*Sufficiency of Learning Materials for Blind People*

| | | | | Noyes | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage | | Frequency | percentage | Frequency | |
| Low vision | Item 4 | 50.0 | 3 | 50.0 | 3 |
| | Item 5 | 83.3 | 5 | 16.7 | 1 |
| | Item 6 | 66.7 | 4 | 33.3 | 2 |
| | Item 8 | 66.7 | 4 | 33.3 | 2 |
| | Item 9 | 66.7 | 4 | 33.3 | 2 |
| | Item 10 | 0.0 | 0 | 100.0 | 6 |
| | Item 11 | 100.0 | 6 | 0.0 | 0 |
| | Item 12 | 83.34 | 5 | 16.67 | 1 |
| | Item 13 | 100.0 | 6 | 0.0 | 0 |
| Totally blind | Item 4 | 75.0 | 3 | 25.0 | 1 |
| | Item 5 | 100.0 | 4 | 0.0 | 0 |
| | Item 6 | 25.0 | 1 | 75.0 | 3 |
| | Item 8 | 50.0 | 2 | 50.0 | 2 |
| | Item 9 | 25.0 | 1 | 75.5 | 3 |
| | Item 10 | 0.0 | 0 | 100.0 | 4 |
| | Item 11 | 100.0 | 4 | 0.0 | 0 |
| | Item 12 | 50.0 | 2 | 50.0 | 2 |
| | Item 13 | 100.0 | 4 | 0.0 | 0 |

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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | Item 4 | 60.0 | 6 | 40.0 | 4 |
| | Item 5 | 90.0 | 9 | 10.0 | 1 |
| | Item 6 | 50.0 | 5 | 50.0 | 5 |
| | Item 8 | 60.0 | 6 | 40.0 | 4 |
| | Item 9 | 50.0 | 5 | 50.0 | 5 |
| | Item 10 | 0.0 | 0 | 100.0 | 10 |
| | Item 11 | 100.0 | 10 | 0.0 | 0 |
| | Item 12 | 70.0 | 7 | 30.0 | 3 |
| | Item 13 | 100.0 | 10 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

By considering the Table 4.1, the following results can be deducted:
Six participants (60%) were satisfied, and four (40%) were dissatisfied with the amount of materials (in shops, libraries, etc. for their English learning, see item 4 in Table 4.1).
Nine participants (90%) had problem to learn a certain topic because of the materials (i.e., they had problem to find suitable material).
Five participants (50%) had a good choice of study materials and 50%of the participants did not have a good choice of study materials **(**see item 6 in Table 4.1).
Six participants (6o%) said that their teacher used other materials in teaching too; one of them mentioned newspaper, and one listed original language films, CD, listening materials like song, and training files.And four participants said that their teacher did not use any other type of material in the class (see item 8 in Table 4.1).
Modern English language textbooks were often supplemented with a CD-ROM, which some teachers like to use in the class.50% of participants said that their teacher used CD-ROM in their lessons (see item 9 in Table 4.1).

Interactive board was not used by teachers in the class (see item 10 in Table 4.1).

Audio materials were available for blind people. In low vision group, 50% of participants and in totally blind group, again 50% of participants said that listening facilities were suitable for them (see item 11 in Table 4.1).
In low vision group, 83.33% of participants said that they could use every book that they need and they usually use audio books. However, loss of vision affects each person in unique ways and presents many challenges. For example, the use of written texts was very difficult for low vision people.

In totally blind group, 50% of the participants said that they could not use every book that they needed (see item 12 in Table 4.1).

The VISs are usually slower in reading, and the orientation in a text is more or less difficult. Thus, VISs need to tape the voice of their teacher in the class. All participants said that their teacher allowed them to tape his/her voice in the class (See item 13 in Table 4.1).

**5.2. Results of the Second Research Question**

In the second research question, the researcher intended to investigate the blind people's motivation for learning English in terms of occupational goal. In order to find the answer of second research question, question number 14 was used. The result of the participants' answers to this question was presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2
*Motivation toward Learning English for Occupational Goal*

| | Low vision | Totally blind | Total |
|---|---|---|---|



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| | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 5 | 83.3 | 2 | 50.0 | 7 | 70.0 |
| NO | 1 | 16.7 | 2 | 50.0 | 3 | 30.0 |
| Total | 6 | 100.0 | 4 | 100.0 | 10 | 100.0 |

In low vision group, 83.3% of participants said that they had enough motivation for learning English in terms of occupational goal and one said that she/he had not any motivation for learning English for occupational goal.

Because of the presence of a negative attitude among employers, blind people haveonly a little chance for employment. In totally blind group, 50% of participants had enough motivation and 50% of them did not have any motivation for learning English for occupational goal

**5.3. Results of Third Research Question**

The third research question was "Does the libraries or other public places related to the education of blind people offer services to them?" Table 4.3 shows the result of the participants' answers to this question.

Table 4.3

*Result of Participants' Answers to the Third Research Question*

| | | Inappropriate | | Fairly appropriate | | Appropriate | | Very appropriate | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| Low vision | Item15 | 3 | 50.00 | 3 | 50.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 6 | 100.00 |
| | Item16 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 50.00 | 3 | 50.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 6 | 100.00 |
| | Item17 | 4 | 66.67 | 2 | 33.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 6 | 100.00 |
| | Item18 | 5 | 83.33 | 1 | 16.67 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 6 | 100.00 |
| | Item19 | 2 | 33.33 | 2 | 33.33 | 2 | 33.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 6 | 100.00 |
| Totally blind | Item15 | 4 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 100.00 |
| | Item16 | 2 | 50 | 1 | 25 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 100.00 |
| | Item17 | 3 | 75 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 100.00 |
| | Item18 | 3 | 75 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 100.00 |
| | Item19 | 2 | 50 | 2 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 100.00 |
| Total | Item15 | 7 | 70 | 3 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 100.00 |



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| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Item16 | 2 | 20 | 4 | 40 | 4 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 100.00 |
| Item17 | 7 | 70 | 3 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 100.00 |
| Item18 | 8 | 80 | 1 | 10 | 1 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 100.00 |
| Item19 | 4 | 40 | 4 | 40 | 2 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 100.00 |

Totally, 70% of participants said that libraries were not suitable for the blind people use, because libraries did not offer them necessary services (see item 15 in Table 4.4).

For a blind person these services include environmental modification and technological products.

As it is seen in item 16 in Table 4.4, it seems that low vision people did not have much problem with the physical environment of their classes. But to a totally blind individual, the physical world presented many challenges.

Visually impaired people need tactile boards or sensitive symbols to find their way through complex environment in the schools or other educational places. As item 17 in Table 4.4 shows, in low vision group, 66.67% of participants, and in totally blind group, 75% of participants said that educational places did not have tactile boards or sensitive symbols for blind people.

About banking system, 83.33% of participants in low vision group and 75% of participants in totally blind group said that city banks were not equipped with listening devices for paying tuition (see item 18 in Table 4.4).

It seems that walking in public area is difficult because of some obstacles. Sometimes these barriers cause the fear to travel independently and decrease the confidence in blind people (see item 19 in Table 4.4).

**6. Discussion**

Concerning the descriptive statistics of research questions, the findings indicated thatalthough it is a fact that there are a limited number of materials for visually impaired students, most of the participants were happy or quite satisfied with the amount of materials available for them. Also, they had enough motivation for learning English for occupational goal. But the libraries in Isfahan don't offer enough services to blind students.

The results of this study were in line with a research project done by Galetova (2012), who measured the sufficiency of learning materials for the blind or visually impaired students. Besides, the study ofKhodadady and Gholamian (2014) in Ferdowsi university of Mashhad aimed to explore whether the motivation of blind students for learning English differ from those of normal students. Their results showed that compared to normal students whose domain of motivation consisted of three genera, (i.e., intrinsic, extrinsic and communicative), blind students' motivation comprises eight, (i.e., intrinsic, Self-Satisfying, Other-satisfying, communicative, Self-Enhancing, extrinsic, socializing, and Self-Encouraging). And the results of investigation on libraries in Isfahan were in line with the results of the research administered by the Center for Investigation on Building and Residence (2014).In the mentioned study, some of the libraries in Isfahan were selected randomly for analysis, considering their structures and services offered to blind people. The findings of this center revealed that only one library in Isfahan offer services to blind students.

**7. Conclusion and Implications**

To sum up, blind learners encountered two serious difficulties for learning English: The first one concerned the adaptation of the instructional materials, which nowadays tend to be highly visual and the other one derived from insufficient knowledge of Braille which would



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affect the learners reading and writing skills in the target language. As statistical results showed, totally blind people had more difficulties concerning the choice of learning materials than low vision group.

The findings of this study has two implications. At first, it helps to those who teach VISs or who are interested in this issue. The work is supposed to provide guidance to the teachers who are beginners in teaching the VISs and offers a list of some basic ideas which may be useful.

Second, based on the challenges identified in the process of learning English in addressing the needs of VIP, the following recommendations could be made:

1) Providing appropriate materials by transforming the text books and the other supplementary materials into Braille, designing a project to get recording materials such as tapes, cassettes, CDs and Braille.

2) Searching for budget allocations or funding to run inclusive program in a better way since schools are deficient on this, this require joint effort from government bodies which support VIP and schools which run inclusive program.

3) Creating better opportunities for VI students: VI students had a lot of problems which require special concern and actions.

In the light of these, the following implications were reflected by participants as a priority:

- To make teachers and the other students aware of the needs of VISs.
- To present some lessons using alternative ways instead of pictures, diagrams and symbols.
- To give attention to the group work in the class. VISs prefer to sit at least with one student who could support them by reading the notes written by the teacher on the board, the reading passage and exercises from the textbook.
- To assign responsibility to the person during tests and exams to read questions and write answers effectively and give extra time while they are taking exams.
- To set exam questions in a form that will be unbiased to VISs.
- To say out every word the teacher puts on the board.
- To make textbooks, handouts, and other materials available in an appropriate form (e.g., regular print, large print, Braille, or cassette).
- To consider alternative activities/exercises that can be utilized with less difficulty by the student, but has the same or similar learning objectives.

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# A REVIEW OF EFL LEARNERS' SPEAKING SKILL AND THE STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

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**Abstract**
Speaking is one of the most significant skills to be developed as means of effective communication. The teaching and learning of speaking skill are a necessary component of any language education classroom. Spoken language presents affordances for learning as the main communicative means of the classroom and it is a significant part of syllabus content and learning outcomes. In this review paper, the researchers define the term speaking, explain the features of speaking, clarify the stages of teaching speaking skill, discuss the strategies for improving speaking skill, and finally offered some useful suggestions for teaching and learning speaking skill. The findings of this review paper indicated that through using appropriate strategies,EFL teachers can provide a friendly environment for EFL learners to improve their English speaking ability effectively and efficiently.

**KEYWORDS**:Speaking, Features, Stages, Strategies, Suggestions

## 1. Introduction

Bueno, Madrid, and Mclaren (2006) said that speaking is one of the most difficultskills that EFL learners encounter. Despite this, it has been forced into the background while EFL teachers have spent mostof their classroom time attempting to teach their learners how to write, read, and listen in the second language. According to Efrizal (2012), speaking skill is more important for people interaction where they speak everywhere and every day by English. A lot of people use English as a means of communication and it makes persons who come from several countries to be easier in making interaction and communication. Speaking is one way of communicatingopinions and messages orally. If we are going to persuadelearners to communicate, we shoulduse the language in real communication. Efrizal (2012) expressed thatspeaking involves speech or sentences with the aim of having intention to be identified by speaker and the receiver processes them to understand their purposes.



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According to Bailey and Savage (1994), the ability to speak English language is equivalent with knowing that language. In spite of that, speaking in English language has been regarded as the most challenging of the four language skills. Brown (1994) stated that speaking is one of the most demandingskill for EFL learners because of contractions, vowel reductions and elision, the utilization of slang and idioms, stress, rhythm, and intonation, and the necessityfor interacting with another speaker. Bailey and Savage (1994) emphasized that the most difficult aspect of spoken English is that it is always performed through interaction with another speaker and because of this many learnersare disappointed when theyusetheir language for the first time in real interaction. Learners are prepared for spontaneous communication and cannot cope with all of its concurrentrequests.

According to Brown and Yule (1999), speaking hinges on the intricacy of the information to be communicated; nevertheless, the speaker occasionally finds it hard to make clear what they are going to say.Efrizal (2012) stated that speaking is the first way in which children acquire language and it is part of the daily participation of many persons with language activities and it is the maintool of language change. Efrizal (2012) continued that speaking prepares our major data for comprehending language contact. Harmer (2007) expressed that human communication is a very complicated process. People require communicationwhen they are going to tell something, transmit information, or need to speak. Speakers usecommunication when they want to inform someone about something. Speakers use language based on their aims; therefore, it is necessary for them to be listeners and speakers simultaneously for effective communication.

L1 speakers use some tools to simplify their speech. These toolsare composed of simplifying the language to make simple structures. Speakersdelete parts of a sentence and use idiomatic expressions to simplify the oral fluency. In order to make up their problems, L1 speakers shouldemend themselves andregulate or rephrase sentences. Spoken English cannot be organized and it is full of repetitions, pauses, incomplete sentences, and hesitations. Speakingrequires the answer of the otherspeaker or listener and it comes into the form of turns and when they are talking they should pay attention to gestures, intonation, stress, or pauses that the other speakers are doing because there are signs to understanding the meaning of what they are attempting to say (Bueno, Madrid, & McLaren, 2006).

Chaney (1998) stated thatspeaking is the process of making meaning by using verbal and non-verbal symbols in different contexts. Speaking skill is a key part of language learning and teaching. Despite its importance in English language teaching and learning, teaching speaking has been underemphasized and EFL teachers have taught speaking just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues. Nevertheless, the objective of teaching speaking is to improve learners' communicative skills because they can express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules that are suitable for communicative situations.

**2. Definition of Speaking**

Burns and Joyce (1997) defined speaking as an interactive process of making meaning that includes producing, receiving, and processing information. Its form and meaning depend on the context in which it happens, the contributors, and the goals of speaking.In this way, learners express themselves orally, logically, fluently, and suitably in a meaningful context to perform both transactional and interactional aims using correct pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary and adopting the pragmatic and discourse rules of the spoken language.

**3. Features of Speaking**

Features of speaking skill should be carefully examined and present some challenges and determine some principles for comprehending this skill and design instructional activities to



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prepare learners to communicate effectively in real life situations. These features are speaking is face to face, speaking is interactive, and speaking happens in real time (Abd El Fattah Torky, 2006). In the following section, the mentioned features are explained in detail.

**3.1. Speaking Is Face to Face**

Many conversations happen face to face which permits speakers to get immediate feedback, i.e. "Do listeners understand? Are they in agreement? (Abd El Fattah Torky, 2006; Cornbleet& Carter, 2001). Therefore, communication through speaking has a lot of advantages like facial expressions, gestures, and body movements. In addition, speaking takes place in situations where participants are present. Thesecomponents make easier communication (Abd El Fattah Torky, 2006; Widdowson**,** 1998; Burns, 1998).

**3.2. Speaking Is Interactive**

Whether we talk face-to –face, or over the telephone to one person or a small group, the wheels of conversation turn smoothly with participants presenting contributions at suitable moments with no undue gaps or everyone talking over each other (Abd El Fattah Torky, 2006; Bygate, 1998; Cornbleet& Carter, 2001). Turn taking as a majoraspect ofinteraction is a subconscious part of normal conversation. Turn takings are used and signaled variously in different cultures andcreatefeasible communication problems in conversation between people of different cultures and languages (Abd El Fattah Torky, 2006; Mc Donough& Mackey, 2000).

**3.3. Speaking Occurs in Real Time**

During conversations, answers are un-predetermined and automatic (Abd El Fattah Torky, 2006; Foster et al., 2000). The time limitationsimpact the speaker's ability to plan, to form the message, and to control the language that is used. Speakers tell something and change their mind which is called a false start. The speaker's statements cannot be as long or as intricate as in writing.Likewise, speakers sometimes forget things they are going to utter or they forget what they have already said and then they repeat themselves (Abd El Fattah Torky, 2006; Miller, 2001).This means that the production of speech in real time inflicts pressures and permits freedoms in terms of making up for these problems**.** The usage of formulaic expressions, hesitancetools, self-correction, paraphrasing, and repetition assist speakers become more fluent and cope with actual time requests ((Abd El Fattah Torky, 2006; Bygate, 1987; Foster et al., 2000; Hughes,2002).Abd El Fattah Torky (2006) continued that exposing learners to these spoken features makes easier their oral production and aids them to make up for the difficulties they face with. This can assists learnersin using language normally and accurately.

**4. Stages of Teaching Speaking Skill**

According toGoh and Burns (2012), there are seven stages for teaching speaking skill. They are 1) focus learners' attention on speaking; 2) provide input and/or guide planning; 3) perform speaking activities; 4) focus on language/skills/strategies; 5) repeat speaking activities; and 6) direct learners' reflection on learning;

**4.1. Focus Learners' Attention on Speaking**

This stage has two primary objectives. They are a) to motivate learners to plan for the development of speaking skill.Learners are given prompts to think about the requests of speaking and how they can make ready themselves for it and b) to get ready learners to carry out a particular speaking activity. Learners try to familiarize themselves with the results of the activity and consider strategies for doing it (Goh & Burns, 2012).



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**4.2. Provide Input and Guide Planning**

Through speaking skill, learners can have a lot ofapprehension and it is significant that EFL teachers provide support for the speaking activity and give learners enough time for arranging what to say and how to say it. The aims of this stage are to teach new language, enable learners to rearrange their developing linguistic knowledge, activatetheir present linguistic knowledge,and reuseparticular language items (Goh & Burns, 2012).

**4.3. Perform Speaking Activities**

The goal of this stage is to help learners practice speaking through communicative activities. These activities should persuade learners to express meaning through using linguistic knowledge, skills, and strategies. That is, this stage motivates learners to develop fluency of expression without paying attention to accuracy of form (Goh & Burns, 2012).

**4.4. Focus on Language, Skills, and Strategies**

The goal of this stage is to create opportunities for learners to improve their language accuracy and increasetheir effective usage of skills and strategies. Teachers draw learners' attention to the chosen parts of fluency activity they have finished. These parts involve pronunciation, grammar, text structures, and vocabulary (Goh & Burns, 2012).

**4. 5. Repeat Speaking Activities**

Learners do the speaking activitiesavailable in Stage 3. The difference between Stage 3 and Stage 5 is that learners have anopportunity to examine and practice the chosen language skills in Stage 4. Thus, they can use this knowledge to improve their performance. Repetitions can be done through repeating parts of the original activity, repeating the whole activity, changing groups, and introducing a new activity similar to the one learners have just done (Goh & Burns, 2012).

**4.6.Direct Learners' Thought on Learning**

Stage 6 promotes learners to self-regulate their learning by monitoring and evaluating what they have learned from the previous stages. Thought can be performedseparately, in pairs, or in small groups. Individual and group thought has a relief effect on learners who are anxious and think that they are the only ones feeling that way. Learners' thoughtcan be directed by various kinds of metacognitive knowledge and can focus on the demands of the speaking activities which they have, become aware of the strategies that are beneficial to meet the demands of the activity, their informal evaluation of their abilities, scopes of their performance that indicate improvement, and plans for making better particularscopes (Goh & Burns, 2012).

**5. Strategies for Improving Speaking Skill**

According to Bashir, Azeem, and Dogar (2015), in communicative output, learners' primary objective is to carry out an activity like obtaining information. To do an activity, learners use the language that teachers haveofferedand they canalso draw on vocabulary, grammar, and communication strategies that they know. In communicative tasks, the success depends on learners'ability to achieve the message and accuracy is not very important unless its lack intervenes with the message.Bashir, Azeem, and Dogar (2015) continued thatdue to the information gap between the participants, spoken exchanges happenin day-to-day communication. Communicative output tasks include real information gap. In order to perform the activity, learners shoulddecrease the information gap. In these tasks, teachers usedifferent activities from different groups of input and output. Learners can benefit from these activities because they are stimulating and they can lead tothe effective language



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learning.Competentteachers teach learners the strategies of speaking that are beneficial to learners toincrease their knowledge of the language and their confidence in employing them.

According to Bashir, Azeem, and Dogar (2015), EFL learners who do not have confidence to take part in oral interaction listen in silence while others try to participate in oral activities. One of the good ways tomotivatethese learners is to help them make minimal responses that they can use in various kinds of exchanges. Such responses arebeneficial to beginners.Minimal responses can be predictedand conversation participants can use them to show comprehension, agreement, and hesitation to what the other speakerssay without planning a responseat the same time. Teachers can help learners develop speaking skill by being aware of the scripts for various situations so that they predict what they will hear and what they will need to say in response. By interactivetasks, teachers can give learners practice in managing the language that different scripts involve.Bashir, Azeem, and Dogar (2015) emphasized that EFL learners are too timid to tell anything when they do not comprehendthe other speakers. Teachers can help learners remove this silence by convincing them that misunderstanding happens in every interaction. Teachers can give learners strategies to use for checking clarity and understanding.Through this process, teachers can create a real environment within the classroom and learners can gain confidence in their skill to do the different communication situations that they face out of their classes.

Khan (2005)expressed that every teacher has some strategiesfor improvinglearners' speaking skill. Traditional and modern technologies can be separately used in English language teaching. Learners learn faster and easier through the use of computer technologies in their classes. Computer technologies provide new possibilities trends for teachers and learners. Web-based learning is one of the fastest tools in teaching and learning. Advances in communication technologies provide opportunities to create well-designed, learner-centered, interactive, effective learning environments. Therefore, it is possible to develop speaking skillthrough the help of the mentioned tools. To make effective communication skill,learners should learn to communicate using computer technologies and environments to support personal and group learning, share information effectively using suitablecomputer technologies and environments, and communicate opinions clearly and effectively to various audiences using these technologies.

Due to the significant role of speaking skill, Bailey (2005) and Goh (2007) offered strategies to improve the development of speaking skill through syllabus design, principles of teaching, kinds of activities and materials, and speaking assessment. According to Bailey (2005), Nunan (2006), Patil (2008), Trent (2009), and Zhang (2009), improving speaking confidence with suitable task designis very useful for the development of EFL/ESL learners' speaking skill. Noon-ura (2008) said that repeated listening to English materialslike listening to music, watching movies, listening to the radio, watching television programs, and using computer technologies are the other elements that can actually help EFL learners develop their speaking skill.

Songsiri (2007) stated that speaking and listening skills areclosely related to the development of language learning. Practice and exposure to both listening and speaking tasks arevery useful means ofimproving speaking confidence.Classroom interaction is a significant strategy to improve speaking skill. The role of interaction in improving speaking skill comes from teacher-learner interaction and learner-learner interaction where negotiation of meaning and the provision of feedback are emphasizing. Classroom interaction includes verbal exchanges between learners and teachers. Teachers should know that EFL learners should do most of the talk to activate their speaking since speaking skillneeds practice and exposure. Some individual activities like speaking on a certain topic for a minute should be assigned to learners in the beginning speaking stages. Students should be given motivation, encouragement, training, reassurance, and counseling for removing their timidity and fear of being laughed at by their



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classmates and their teachers. Teachers should be trained not to demotivate theirlearners and to control the other learners in order to provide a friendly environment in the classroom. EFL learners should be familiar with grammatical structures, vocabulary, and phonetics that are stressed by their teachers in the classes. Students should develop the habits of listening to BBC, CNN and the other programs for improving their speaking skill.

**6. Suggestions for Teaching and Learning Speaking Skill**

There are some useful suggestions for EFL teachers to teach speaking skill effectively. EFL teachers should:

1. provide enough opportunity to EFL learners to speak the language through providing a rich environment that involves group work andreal materials,
2. help learners take part in speaking tasks,
3. increasetheir learners' speaking time and observe them,
4. show positive reactions when explain their learners'answer,
5. ask eliciting questions to motivatelearners to speak more,
6. not correct their learners' pronunciation mistakes directly while they are speaking because direct correction will distract learners from their speech,
7. include speaking tasks in and out of their class activities,
8. move around classes to convince that their learners are on the right track and see whether they need their help while they are workingindividually or whole group,
9. give vocabulary in advance that their learners need in speaking tasks,
10. identifydifficulties encountered by learners who are not able to express in the target language and provide more timesto practice the spoken language,
11. place more emphasis on the quality of learners' books at the very beginning levels,
12. give sufficient time to speaking and phonetic drill of learners,
13. provide a friendly environment for EFL learners to easily participate in speaking activities,
14. develop bravery and confidence in learners to ask more questions in their classes,
15. give motivation for learners to be able to talk, and
16. encourageEFL learners to listen to CNN and BBC.

**7. Conclusion**

In this paper, the researchers discussed the issues of speaking, features, stages, strategies of speaking skill, and finally offered some useful suggestions for improving this important skill of English language teaching. Learning English language through using new strategies makes EFL learners willing to learn the language and improve their capability to speak fluently.Teaching speaking skill is a significant part of English language learning. The ability to communicate in a language effectivelyleads to the learners' success in their learning and their life. Thus, EFL teachers should pay enough attention to the instruction of speaking skill. EFL teachers should provide a friendly and rich environment for EFL learners to be able to communicate efficiently and meaningfully. Different speaking tasks should be provided for EFL learnersthat help themdeveloptheir interactive skills. These tasks helplearners be more active in their learning and make it more meaningful and enjoyable for them.

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# THE EFFECT OF CLIL METHOD ON TEACHING READING COMPREHENSIONTO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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**Abstract**
This study investigated the effect of CLIL (i.e., content and language integrated learning) on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension. 60 students of junior high school in the age of 12 to 14 years who attended language institutions were selected non-randomly. They took part in Oxford Quick Placement Test(OQPT)test to determine their level of proficiency. Based on their scores in the placement test, the students were divided into two groups: High and low achievers. Then they took a pre-test of reading comprehension. Depending on their scores in the pretest, the high level and the low level groups were divided into two subgroups of experimental and control. The experimental groups of high and low achievers were taught through CLIL and the control groups of high and low achievers were taught through intensive reading. After ten sessions of treatment, they took a post-test of reading comprehension. Data were analyzed to compare the high and low achievers with each other to examine the effectiveness of CLIL methodthrough Independent Samples *t*-test. The findings showed a significant difference between the pre and post-test of high and low achievers. Implications of CLIL method could be influential for both high and low achievers in reading comprehension courses.

**Key words:** CLIL, foreign language, EFL, reading skills, high school learners

## 1. Introduction

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) has been initiated in Europe since 1994. According to Mehisto (2012),this term was launched during 1994 in conjunction with the European Commission. Ortiz (2014) stated that it was defined and launched by UNICOM, University of Jyväskylä and the European Platform for Dutch Education in 1994 .Dissatisfied with the outcomes of grammar-focused language teaching and inspired by theories about natural language learning, an alternative method for language teaching was created in the 1960s (Brinton, Snow &Wesche, 1989). This new method of language teaching tries to further language development by eliminating the artificial separation between language instruction and subject matter classes. In other words, a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language could be developed (Mehisto, Marsh &Frigols, 2008).



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According to Solé (1998), reading is a process of interaction between the writer and the reader on a text to get the meaning. The interaction involves two types of knowledge: a previous one established by the knowledge of the linguistic nature; and the schematic one, referring to partial knowledge, structured, that we have in the memory about issues, situations, typical events of our culture. Thus, the meaning is not in the text, which is barely the vehicle of communication between author and reader, but it is suggested by the author and built by the reader. Reading is searching for a meaning, and the reader should have a purpose to find the meaning in the text. You read with a purpose when it has a meaning. The interpretation that the readers made of the text depends mainly on the object that the reading has.

It is possible that two or more readers, motivated by different goals or by a different layout or different information extract from the same text. It can be stated that reading is an experience in which the whole personality of the reader gets into interaction with the text because only the reader develops and extracts the significant potential of it. According to Zurek (2012), to teach language skills especially reading more effectively, CLIL are one of the best methods that has been taught in Europe for many years. CLIL stands for "Content Language Integrated Learning" and its other names are "content- based learning" and "cross- curricular content" (Aldaz, 2013). It is a method that integrates both Content Learning and Language Learning and is the advancement of CLT (communicative language teaching). According to Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010), CLIL is a dual- focused educational approach in which additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language. In CLIL a foreign language is used as a channel in the learning of a subject in which both language and subject have an interaction (Marsh, 2002).

The main objective of this study is to analyze the impact on learners' reading skills involved in a CLIL project and find out if there is a significant advantage over those students at the same grade who are not involved in a CLIL program. Therefore, I formulated the following question: RQ. Do the students who are taught reading comprehension through CLIL, learn and perform better than those who are taught through intensive reading?

**2. Literature Review**

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a new pedagogical model for second language education, developed in Europe in the mid-1990s. To refer to this kind of teaching, the acronym CLIL (content and language integrated learning) has been coined to function as an umbrella term for the numerous expressions used in different countries and educational settings (Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2007). The acronym itself was defined by David Marsh in 1994 and explained as follows: "CLIL refers to situations where subjects, or parts of subjects, are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language" (Marsh, 2002). This means that, in the teaching and learning process, there are two objectives, one linked to learning the particular subject matter (such as science, history or geography), and the other related to the foreign language, which becomes the means for learning content. ''achieving this two fold aim calls for the development of a special approach to teaching in that the non-language subject is not taught in a foreign language but with and through a foreign language.

Even though the term "CLIL" was coined in 1994, the practice of it has been around for a long time with its roots in immersion education from the 1970s and 1980s. Coyle (2007, 2010) points out CLIL are not a form of language education or subject education; it is an innovative fusion of both. CLIL is an educational approach which responds to the contextual needs. CLIL in many contexts is considered to be a solution to the limited amount of hours of the foreign language instruction in the curriculum. Integrating content and language increases the number of contact



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hours with the language and provides more exposure to the foreign language which is one of the necessary catalysts for Language acquisition to occur (Merikivi&Päivi, 2014).

Coyle (1999) developed the 4Cs model to support CLIL pedagogy and in 2006 he mentioned that an effective CLIL lesson combines elements of content (subject matter), communication (language) , cognition (thinking) and culture (awareness of self and 'otherness'). Content refers to the progression in knowledge, skills and understanding that students do related to specific elements of a defined curriculum. Communication is about using language to learn while learning to use the language. Cognition refers to thinking skills which link concept formation (abstract and concrete), understanding and language. Finally, culture refers to the exposure to alternative perspectives and shared understandings, which deepen awareness of others and self. Coyle (2006) considered that 'for CLIL to be effective all 4Cs must be carefully considered in the planning and conceptualization stages of the teaching as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the learning.

Appropriate teaching and learning strategies had not been agreed upon, but were developed by trial and error. Instructors began by focusing on helping learners to understand the L2 (French) and to develop oral communication skills. A more balanced approach that included all four language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing) was introduced once the students' aural and oral skills had developed sufficiently to allow for basic communication. In general, the program was highly successful, which is why the use of immersion teaching began to spread thorough Canada during the 1970s and the 1980s, and involved other languages (e.g. English for French-speaking children). Furthermore, studies on students in Canadian French immersion programs suggested that they are highly motivated and also have a very positive attitude towards French. Pupils who only have regular instruction in French often complain about having too many French lessons. Most of the immersion pupils, on the other hand, say that they like being taught through French and that they want to continue to learn French after school (Cummins & Swain, 1996).

Swain and Lapkin (1995) encouraged immersion pupils who were working in pairs to verbalize their thoughts while completing writing and editing tasks. An analysis of the pupils' talk showed that they were engaged in several reasoning processes such as judging the grammaticality of their production, trying to apply rules, searching for alternatives and assessing these. Based on this and similar studies Swain (1995) concluded that comprehensible output has three important cognitive functions to fulfill, which apparently could not be realized in the input- focused immersion classrooms. These functions are:

- Noticing
- Hypothesis testing
- Conscious reflection on language structure

Following Krashen's (1985) ideas, CLIL students seem to be less inhibited when it comes to using the foreign language. Dalton-Puffer (2008), in her study on discourse in Austrian CLIL classrooms, could observe that pupils do not seem embarrassed if they lack vocabulary knowledge. Rather, they acknowledge their lexical gaps and initiate repair. This is very different from behavior which can be observed in regular language lessons. Dalton – Puffer found out that under CLIL conditions certain aspects of language competence were developed more than others. Areas affected by CLIL were: receptive skills, vocabulary, morphology, creativity, risk-taking, fluency, quantity and Emotive/affective outcomes. Areas that were not affected by CLIL were: Syntax, Writing, Informal/non-technical language, Pronunciation, and Pragmatics (Munoz, 2014). Gefall's (2009) studies on CLIL showed that the students' lack of grammatical knowledge was related to restrictions in input and limited opportunities for interaction and producing output in CLIL classrooms. In other words, certain grammatical structures such as conditional sentences



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and past tense were absent in classroom instruction and therefore could not be acquired. Moreover, Swain (1995) in her output hypothesis argued about the problems of CLIL students in developing a high grammatical competence in the target language. Since processes which seem to be encouraged most in comprehensible reflection, are underused in input-focused CLIL classrooms. Interpreting these results by applying constructivist's concepts revealed that opportunities for constructing grammatical knowledge in the target language are limited in the CLIL classroom. In addition, meaning-focused CLIL classrooms do not seem to cause enough disequilibrium in the pupils when it comes to developing grammar competence in the foreign language.

To teach subjects like history, physics, and chemistry, Divljan (2012) observed that female students showed more progress in learning languages while male students were more successful at learning natural sciences. After teaching through CLIL male students became more fluent in the target language and female students showed more progress in physics and chemistry. Therefore based on his studies and researches, Divljan concluded that using various instructional approaches that can integrate content- and language-learning objectives and applying whole language strategies in a foreign language classroom can definitely facilitate the learning and teaching processes.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Participants

To carry out the study, the researcher selected a sample of80 junior high school pupils within an age range between 12 and 14. This age level was selected since in this age learners are very enthusiastic to learn experience and discover to satisfy their curiosity. All of them were female. Their information about English was what they had learned at school or language institutions. The learners took OQPT to determine their level of proficiency. Thus, 60 learners who took 0 to 36 out of 60 wereselected asthe participants of the study. The learners who got the band score of 0 to 18 were assigned as elementary (i.e., henceforth, low achievers) and the learners who got 19 to 36 were assigned as the pre-intermediate level (i.e., henceforth, high achievers). Then each group was divided non-randomly in two sub-group of experimental and control groups, each included 15 participants. The experimental groups were taught through CLIL method and the control groups received traditional reading comprehension courses.

### 3.2. Instrumentation

To accomplish the objective of the present study, the following instruments were employed:

A placement test: The placement test was OQPT which was used based on which students were homogenized. The students who took scores from 0 to 36 out of 60 were classified into two band scores of elementary and pre-intermediate level of language proficiency. Since OQPT is a standard test, its reliability and validity were reported in some articles.

A pretest was designed based on the participants' text book "*Foresman's Science Book Series*" (Foresman, 2006) for the high achievers and "*Select Readings: Elementary* (Lee, 2011) for low achievers in the experimental and control groups. The pre-tests were reading based and they included 50 multiple-choice items designed based on 12 reading passages in the text-books. The test was taken to evaluate student's ability in revealing their knowledge and enabling the teacher to know the students' reading comprehension scores in the beginning of the course. The reliability of the test was calculated based on KR-21 method as (r=.864).

A post-tests for high and low achievers included 50 multiple-choice items and they were as the same as the pre-test with some modification in format in order to avoid the participants' reminding. They were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the CLIL method on learners' reading



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improvement in both control and experimental groups at the end of the treatment.Its reliability was met through a pilot test regarding the KR-21 formula as (r=.749).

**3.3. Materials**

The materials included reading passages selected from "*Foresman's Science Book Series*" (Foresman, 2006)for high achievers and "*Select Readings: Elementary* (Lee, 2011) for low achievers. For the low achievers in the control and experimental groups, reading passages were selected from "*Select Readings: Elementary*". For the high achievers in the control and experimental groups, the text book "*Foresman's Science Book Series*" were used based on the students' level.

**3.4 Procedure**

To accomplish the purpose of the study and to put CLIL method into practice four groups each consists of 15 students were selected. The placement test was Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) which was used based on which students were homogenized. The students who took 36 out of 55 are classified into high achievers and those who took less than 35 are placed into the low achievers.

The pre-test was extracted from "ESL Photocopiable Activities" (pre-intermediate for high levels and beginner & elementary for low levels) Cambridge University Press were used to enable the teacher to determine the appropriate texts for each group. Students who took above 70 out of 100 were placed in the control groups and those who got less than 30 were placed in the experimental groups. Then both groups were divided into four subgroups (i.e., high and low achievers in the control group and high and low achievers in the experimental group. Both control groups were taught through intensive reading courses. The text book was "*Select Readings: Elementary*". The experimental groups are taught through CLIL and the selected texts were chosen from "*Foresman'sBook Series*". In each class reading was taught three times a week and each session lasted one hour. The classes were held 12 sessions: the first session was devoted to pre-test, 10 sessions were devoted to treatment, and the last session was devoted to post- test. Reading texts should be topic-based to make students expose to abundant comprehensible input of authentic language to facilitate language acquisition and language learning. After the treatment, the modified pre-test was used as a post-test which focused on the same content but different form to avoid the participants' reminding was designed as a reading comprehension exam.

**3.5 Data Analysis**

In order to determine whether CLIL program has any effect on learners' reading improvement, the pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using Independent Samples *t*-test through SPSS version 17.

**4. Results**

Focusing on the effect of CLIL (content and Language integrated Learning) on the improvement of learners' reading comprehension, the statistical calculations and results are presented and then the result of analysis of the null hypothesis will be discussed. Therefore, the results to reject or confirm the research hypotheses will be offered in the following section.

At the beginning of the study two groups were given a pre-test. After the pre-test, each level was divided into two groups as strong group and weak group. After a ten- session treatment in which strong groups were taught through intensive reading, a post test was taken and the obtained results of groups in high levels were compared through Independent Samples*t*-test. The descriptive statistics of pre-test and post-test in high levels are presented in Table1.



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*Table 1.Descriptive Statistics (High achievers)*

| | Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-test | Control | 15 | 40.4667 | 3.39888 | .87759 |
| | Experimental | 15 | 43.8000 | 15.31666 | 3.95474 |
| Post-test | Control | 15 | 65.6000 | 5.47462 | 1.41354 |
| | Experimental | 15 | 87.0667 | 15.13967 | 3.90905 |

Table 1shows that the average means for every two groups was near and the difference between two groups was not significant. To find out whether the difference among the performances of the two groups was statistically significant, an independent sample *t*-test was applied. Table2 displays the results of the statistical operations.

*Table 2. Independent Samples t-Test(High achievers)*

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| Experimental vs. Control | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig.(2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |
| Pre-test | Equal variances assumed | 50.187 | .000 | -.823 | 28 | .418 | -3.333 | 4.0505 | -11.631 | 4.964 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -.823 | 15.37 | .423 | -3.333 | 4.050 | -11.949 | 5.282 |
| Post-test | Equal variances assumed | .699 | .410 | -5.164 | 28 | .000 | -21.466 | 4.156 | -29.981 | -12.951 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -5.164 | 17.60 | .000 | -21.466 | 4.156 | -30.213 | -12.719 |

Table 2 shows that the observed *t* (0.823) is less than the critical *t* (1.701) with df=28. Thus, the difference between the groups is not significant in the pre-test ($p< 0.05$). Since the observed *t* (5.164) is greater than the critical *t* (1.701) with df=28, the difference between the groups is significant in the post-test ($p< 0.05$). After a ten- session treatment in which weak groups were taught through CLIL, a post test was taken and the obtained results of groups in low levels were



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compared through Independent Samples *t*-test. The descriptive statistics of pre-test and post-test in low levels are presented in Table 3.

*Table 3. Descriptive Statistics (Low achievers)*

| | Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-test | Control | 15 | 39.4667 | 10.76945 | 2.78066 |
| | Experimental | 15 | 44.8000 | 11.29602 | 2.91662 |
| Post-test | Control | 15 | 51.3333 | 3.39467 | .87650 |
| | Experimental | 15 | 73.4667 | 13.03767 | 3.36631 |

Table 3indicates that the average means for every two groups is near and the difference between two groups is not significant. To find out whether the difference among the performances of the two groups was statistically significant, an Independent Samples*t*-test was applied. Table 4 displays the results of the statistical operations.

*Table 4. Independent Samples t-test (Pre-test and Post-test)*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | .196 | .661 | -1.323 | 28 | .196 | -5.333 | 4.029 | -13.58 | 2.92 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -1.323 | 27.93 | .196 | -5.333 | 4.029 | -13.58 | 2.92 |
| Equal variances assumed | 1.773 | .194 | -6.363 | 28 | .000 | -22.133 | 3.478 | -29.25 | -15.00 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -6.363 | 15.89 | .000 | -22.133 | 3.478 | -29.51 | -14.75 |

Table 4 shows the observed *t* (1.323) is less than the critical *t* (1.701) with df=28. Thus the difference between the groups is not significant in the pre-test. Since the observed *t* (6.363) is greater than the critical *t* (2.00) with df=28, the difference between the groups is significant in the post-test.

**5. Discussion**

This section elaborates on the results and findings to answer the research question raised earlier in the study will be referred to as follows:Do the students who are taught reading comprehension



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through CLIL, learn and perform better than those who are taught through intensive reading courses?

Results of the study showed that the two experimental groups of high and low achievers could outperform their counterparts. However, high achievers performed better than the low achievers in the post-test of the experimental group. Thus CLIL method could enhance the learners' reading comprehension among both high and low achievers. The results of the present study are in line with some scholars (e.g.,Lightbown&Spada, 2006; Naves, 2010;Saville, 2006) who state that CLIL offers the required conditions for language acquisition to occur, it enables learners to use another language naturally, in such a way that they soon forget about the language and only focus on the learning topic. However, some researchers like stated that CLIL does not guarantee the success in language acquisition unless several important aspects are fulfilled. They identified and described three key aspects of second language that are needed for effective language learning in CLIL contexts: exposure to the input, processing the input, and output.

After analyzing the data, as it is demonstrated in Tables 1 and 3, the results showed that there was not a significant difference among students' performance in the pre-test. However, there was a significant difference among the performance of the control and experimental groups in the post-test. Therefore, it could be observed that students who are taught reading through CLIL got better scores than the control group.

The main reason that the learners who were involved in a CLIL program achieved better results in terms of reading comprehension is that students who dealt with CLIL are much more exposed to reading texts because CLIL lessons are mostly based on reading resources. This agrees with Wolff (2007) who notes that this method gives much input to the learners in a comprehensive way. The underlying rationale is that input and particularly, comprehensible input has a lot of importance in CLIL sessions, specially oral and written input (Dalton-Puffer, 2008). Another reason is that CLIL lessons promote cognition and thinking processes, which means that CLIL pupils can link better concept formation, understanding and language which are in line with Coyle(2006).

The results of the study are also in line withPeeck (1993) who states the reasons that pictures and images facilitate learning, include increasing motivation, focusing attention, depth of processing, clarification of text content, dual-coding theory, distinctive encoding, decreasing interference/decay, processing support for the type of information typically extracted from a specific type of text. Therefore, based on his theory, CLIL which teaches reading through enriched texts including pictures, make reading texts more concrete and tangible for students, facilitates acquiring reading skill and accelerates learning a new subject.Therefore, teaching reading through images and pictures can: (1) facilitate, accelerate and strengthen the perception, comprehension and long retention of vocabularies and concepts of the texts, (2) facilitate reciting, paraphrasing and answering the questions, (3) activate learners' background knowledge, and (4) enhance students' motivation and interest.Moreover, following the findings of this study, CLIL is an innovative approach that deeply and positively influences the learning process regarding pedagogical aspect, i.e. the didactics of language teaching,cognitive aspects, i.e. the way the learner digests the learned material, and met-cognitive aspects, i.e. the way the learners learn how to thinkcritically on the content.

On the other hand, the findings of this study are against Swain (1995) since his research on immersion pupils found out about the problems of grammatical development and analyzed students' learning environment, i.e. their CLIL lessons. He identified several reasons for the limited success of them: (1) The restricted input and output (Due to these restrictions certain cognitive processes are not possible which seem to be necessary in order to develop native-like grammar levels in the target language), (2) The limitation of acquisition opportunity, (3) The lack



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of certain grammatical structures in classroom discourse such as conditional and Past tenses, etc., and (4)limited output which leads to little output and lack of interaction could be observed in the classroom, (5) since a few of grammatical errors which occurred in the students' output were corrected, the learners were not pushed to more accurate language use. Therefore, Swain concluded that comprehension-based classrooms do not pose ideal environments for language learning, despite providing much comprehensible input and conditions which allow for a low affective filter, since the teachers focused solely on meaning. Furthermore, the findings of this study are against.

**6. Conclusion**

The study began with the assumption that students who are taught reading comprehension through CLIL, learn and perform better than those who are taught through intensive reading. The researcher had two classes each includes 30 students (i.e., high and low achievers). After taking the pre-test each groupwas divided into two groups. Therefore, there were four sub groups: two groups of high and two low achievers. Two groups of low achievers were considered as experimental groups and two groups of high achievers were considered as the control groups. After treatment and the post- test, the improvement of two high achievers in the experimental group was significant. The control groups in the high and low achievers showed less improvement in the post-test.It is suggested to implement the method other age levels.The last reason is that the researcher implemented the CLIL method among pre- intermediate learners. It is suggested to implement the method among the learners with upper and lower levels(Mearns, 2012). Lack of appropriate text booksmatched with CLIL method was another problem.

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# USING GRAMMAR TECHNIQUESINTEACHING WH-QUESTIONS TO HIGH SCOOL STUDENTS

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**Abstract**
The current study investigated the impact of focus on form and focus on meaning on the learning of Wh-questions among Iranian senior high schools in a high school in Ahvaz. The participants were 60 out of 100 students who were studying English as a foreign language (EFL). They were at thefirst grade of senior high school in Ahvaz, Iran. Their age was ranging from 15 to 17. In order to have homogeneous groups, the learners were given a pre-test of Wh-questions to determine their proficiency level. The teacher-made pre-test was designed based on the book one of senior high school. Then the participants were assigned into two equalgroups. The experimental group received instruction on meaning but the control group focused on forms including the uses of structural exercises. Both groups received 12 sessions of treatment, each 60 minutes with the same materials; and then they took a post-test at the end of the course. Data were analyzed through Independent and Paired Samples *t*-test. Results indicated that the experimental group scored better than the control one ($p<0.05$). Implications of the study for English teachers suggest that the learners, especially in EFL contexts should focus on form and meaning simultaneously to provide their learners with effective instruction.

**Key Words:**Focus on structure, focus on meaning, teaching grammar

## 1. Introduction

Grammar is important because the good English language knowledge is due to know about language. It is the grammar that gives us names of word types and word groups and enables us to form sentences not only in English but also in any language (Ur, 1988). The language users can put sentences together even as children so it looks like learning grammar naturally. According to Milcic (2014), if the learners want to talk about semantic rules, word groups, rules that they must follow in order to form a sentence, theyalso need excellent grammar knowledge.According to Milcic, grammatical mistakes in a text can easily draw readers' attention away from the content of the writing forcing them to think about grammar in a sentence. Proper grammar allows the reader to relax and focus only on the subject presented in text. He adds that when there is error, it makes the reader focus on your grammar instead of what you are trying to communicate. Inevitably, this will make people think about how well educated the writers can be if they are making mistakes like that. According to Long and Robinson (1998), focus on form can refer to the



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learners' linguistic knowledge for second language acquisition. The other approach, focus on forms in second language learning is to deal with parts of speech and words in the context. Thus the learners focus on meaning rather than on the rules of language. According to (Long, 1991), focus on forms is meant to be a middle path that allows language learners to read and learn at their own pace, stopping to shift focus onto rules as appropriate.

Focus on form (FonF) means that the language learners are aware of the grammatical structures rather than the contextual meaning of the text. The readers know the form of language features that they are already able to use communicatively. Focus on form is an instructional way which draws learners' attention to linguistic forms within communicative contexts. It requires a prerequisite engagement in meaning before achieving successful learning of linguistic forms. In addition, it often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features by the teacher and/or one or more students triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production (Long & Robinson, 1998).

Several authors (e.g., Cowan, 2008 ) claims that grammar is defined as a set of rules according to which words are changed and combined together in a sentence so that a sentence is formed both correctly and meaningfully. It is the grammar which gives us names of word types and word groups and enables us to form sentences not only in English but also in any other languages. According to Milcic (2014), grammatical mistakes in a text can easily draw readers' attention away from the content of the writing forcing them to think about grammar in a sentence. He also adds that proper grammar allows the reader to relax and focus only on the subject presented in text. When there is error, it makes the reader focus on your grammar instead of what you are trying to communicate (Rahimpour&Salimi, 2010).

Focus on structure refers to a method of teaching language typically used for second language acquisition that is meant to be a balance between more extreme approaches. One of the most common methods for teaching language can be referred to as focus on structure, in which an educator teaches parts of speech and words devoid of context. The other extreme from this is an environment in which there is only context and learners focus on meaning rather than on the rules of language. Focus on form is meant to be a middle path that allows language learners to read and learn at their own pace, stopping to shift focus on rules as appropriate (Long & Robinson, 1998).

Focus on form has been noticed as an argument second language (L2) learning over the past two decades. Mastering grammatical structures in L2 can be a demanding issue. The language learners face difficulties when the try to learn grammatical structures as a challenging task in the classroom.Thus the language learners need further instruction on how to write accurate sentences in a meaningful context (Farahani&Sarkhosh, 2012).Furthermore, the linguistic structures need to be used in meaningful context. The learners also need to know the complex nature of L2 pragmatic knowledge whichmay make them new challenges.Several studies (e.g, Ellis, 2009) suggest that explicit instruction promotes L2 grammatical development. For instance, this instruction can be implementedthrough Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as focus on form.

Focus-on-form should be integrated into communicative curricula and that as each student has a point of readiness for focus-on-form and every form may be ideally suited to different degrees and kinds of focus-on-form, teachers should be always aware of learners' interferencesto develop useful grammar instructional tasks. That is, teachers should be careful about students' linguistic development and timing of giving them task. Farrokhi, Rahimpour and Papi (2011) suggest the importance of the combinations of explicit and implicit focus on form and also possibility of crossover from focus-on-form to focus-on-forms. Consequently, selection of forms and timing to focus on them will be important in accordance with learners' linguistic development of L2.



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Focus on form is a broad concept that was a drastic change and it is better to say it was a revolution from focus on forms. However, several Iranian teachers and learners may have been deprived of this change and its contributions. Grammar is a crucial part of language teaching and it plays an important role in language. In order to speak accurately, a person needs to know grammar (Pour Hosseini & Ahmadi, 2011). Teaching grammar by formal instruction can be so easy for teachers, if they feel secure and even the students have feeling of security but it was proved that it is not so much effective (Long, 1991).

The purpose behind the current document was examining the impact of focus on form and focus on meaning on grammar improvement of Iranian EFL learners in general and Wh-questions in particular. Because the students have difficulty how to make question with Wh-questions this study investigates if the learners know the meaning of Wh-questions and their form they can cope with this problem. As some classes have been observed, not only is the focus of teachers on vocabulary but also they teach grammar traditionally (Khatib&Bagherkazemi, 2011). This study aims to investigate the answer to the following research question:
Does focus on meaning or form affect teaching Wh-questions to Iranian senior high school EFL learners?

**2. Literature Review**

Over the past few decades, the focus of classroom tasks has changed through the use of class interactions in a communicative manner rather than focusing on the structural patters (Brown, 2000). According to Long (1991) Focus on Forms (FonFs) is "overtly draws students' attentionto linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (Long, 1991, pp. 45-46). The key element is that the instructionfocuses on meaning but if the learners need structural awareness, the teachers may give necessary structural instruction to clarify the meaning. In other words, the linguistic device is needed for comprehension of meaning. FonF is used whenthe L2 learners' problems can make a breakdown in communication. Theseproblematic areas in linguistics may come into instructional focus to help learners monitor their own utterances. In this case, focus on form is run when thelearners'communicative competence must be enriched by clarified structural input (Ellis, 2009).

The role of grammar instruction in language instruction has been dealt with by many scholars. For instance, Richards and Renandya (2002) mentioned, "Grammar teaching has regained its rightful place in the language curriculum. People now agree that grammar is too important to be ignored and that without a good knowledge of grammar, learners' language development will be severely constrained" (p. 145). Scholars who belong to different schools noticegrammar as the backbone of language knowledge and believe that teaching grammar as a controversial issue which still remains unresolved and it makes the language teaching practitioners to consider teaching grammar as the main issue in second language (L2) instruction (Ellis, 2005).

Long (1991) conceptualized FonF as a type of instruction which mainly focuses on meaning or communication with the learners' attention being briefly drawn to linguistic elements only as they arise incidentally. Ellis (2001) defines it as "any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form". Although the majority of focus on form (FFI) studies deal with the domain of grammar, the term form in FFI actually refers to the formal issues of language such as syntax, morphology, semantic and morphology. Ellis (2001) extends the meaning of FonFto include not only phonological, lexical, and grammatical rules but also to pragmatics and discourse. FonFinstruction intends to argue



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that when students work on their language input, they enhance their language learning (Loewen,2003, 2005).

Ellis (2001) classified FonFinto planned and incidental focus on form. In the former, pre-selected linguistic items are the goal during a meaning-focused activity. They focus on the formsthat can be realized either through input or output (Ellis, 2001). The latter occurs spontaneously, without prior intention throughout meaning-focused drills or linguistic items. Several distinctions have been proposedconcerned with focus on form instruction. Ellis realized the difference between "planned" versus "incidental" focus on form. In the first, the teacher decides on linguistic features that will be targeted within the meaning-focused settings in the lessons. In contrast, in the second, there is not any preparation during the meaning-focused activities.

The syllabus designers have done the same strategy and deign their text books in a communicative manner. To this end, the teachers may need to deal with interactive classroom tasks while they have a look on the accuracy as well. Thus approaches towards a focus on meaning and language use have become important.The primary concern of language teaching is to develop learners' ability to use the second language meaningfully in real life in a communicative and interactive conversation. For language educators (e.g., Ellis, 2003), the language teachers need to design tasks for enabling the learners to learn a language by using and experiencing how they can use in communication.

Panova and Lyster (2002) examined the connection between teachers' incidental feedback on form which is called corrective feedback and learners' repair of errors in communicative situations. English as foreign language classrooms for adults may need more attention since they are not able to participate in informal social setting to receive incidental feedback. Corrective feedback is needed to set the class in an interactive manner. Corrective feedback is an immediate learners or teachers' response to the grammatical mistakes (Lyster&Ranta, 1997). Therefore, grammatical issues could be explicitly or implicitly taught in the classrooms.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Participants

The research sample included 60 students, with the age ranging from 15 to 17, out of 100 students from among four classes of the first grade of senior high school students in Ahvaz, Iran. Their mother tongue was Persian. The participants were selected through non-random convenience sampling method. Then they took part in a Wh-question pre-test which was used as a homogeneity test. The learners whose scores were one standard deviation (SD) above and one SD below the mean were chosen as the participants of the study. They were randomly (i.e., systematic random sampling method) divided into two equal groups, one experimental (i.e., focus on meaning) and one control (i.e., focus on form). The experimental group received focus on meaning while the control group received the focus on form in learning Wh-questions.

### 3.2. Instrumentation

In order to accomplish the objective of the present study, the following instruments were employed:

1. Pre-test: A pre-test which contained the actual test items was administered i.e., based on the classroom materials to the participants before treatment in order to determine how well the participants knew the structures of Wh-questions before the treatment. This test was also used as the homogeneity test to determine the participants' level of Wh-question proficiency. The participants were asked to answer 25 multiple-choice Wh-questions selected from the course passages in 30 minutes. The reliability value of the test was met through a pilot study on eight



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students at the same level before to meet the reliability index. Its reliability was calculated through KR-21 formula as (r= 0.728).

2. Post-test: Following the treatment, 12 weeks later after the end of the course, the instructor gave the post-test which included the items of the pre-test with modified format to avoid learners' reminding the items. All characteristics of the post-test were the same as those of the pre-test in terms of time and the number of items. The only difference of this test to the pre-test was that the order of questions and alternatives were changed. The post-test wasgiven to evaluate the learners' activities under the supervision of the instructor. The reliability value of the test was calculated through a pilot study and its reliability was calculated through KR-21 formula as (r=0.903).

**3.3. Materials**

After dividing the participants into two equal groups of 30 in the control and experimental groups, the treatment began. Grammar points based on senior high school books (book 1) were taught to the learners throughout the term including grammatical points. They were taught to the learners by resorting to focus on form and focus on meaning strategies. They consisted of many exercises which were taught during 12 sessions in one semester. The main content of these exercises was learning grammar points specially Wh-questions. Similar to the pre-test, the final post- test included 25 questions and it was conducted at the end of the treatment.The time of exam was 30 minutes.

**3.4. Procedure**

At first, a teacher-made pre-test was given to focus on Wh-questions knowledge of the learners at the beginning of the study. In the next step, learners were divided into two different equal groups as the experimental and control groups receiving different instructions: the experimental group experienced focus on meaning instruction and the control group on the formal structures. Both groups received the same materials, time allocation and teachers.

In focus on form group being involved in grammatical tasks, the teacher introduced the topic by asking Wh-questions about the text in order to awaken their background knowledge. During reading the texts, the teacher explained the comments of the passages.The control group received form-focused tasks and the experimental group received tasks on the meaning of grammatical structures. They were asked to compare and analyze the different versions they produced. In the second group, there was no focus on meaning trend the teacher taught Wh questions just by explanation, say, in the Grammar Translation Method. Upon the completion of the exercises, learners received communicative, pair/group discussion tasks.

The focus on form and focus on meaning treatment were taught to experimental group whereas the control group was taught in the normal traditional way without resorting to the intended treatment. Put another way, experimental group was treated by focus on form strategy. During the 12 sessions of the treatment, they experienced learning Wh-questions in particular and grammar in general. In simple terms, the fundamental purpose behind the current document was to examine the impact of focus on form and meaning on grammar improvement of Iranian EFL learners in general and Wh-questions in particular. Finally, a teacher-made grammar post-test was given to the learners. It was a modified pre-test which redesigned to avoid the learners; reminding. In order to state the reliability of this test, the pilot study was utilized on a group of eight high school students who were not the members of the sample.



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**3.5. Data Analysis**

In order to determine whether the focus on form or focus on meaning did have any effect on Wh-question learning,the collected data were analyzed through using different statistical procedures. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviations were estimated to describe and summarize the data.The statistical analysis of Paired and Independent Samples *t*-test on the two groups' pre-test and post-test scores indicated that the difference among the means of two groups.

**4. Results**

The results of descriptive statistics are the pre and post-tests are presented in Table 1.

*Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (Pre and Post-tests)*

| Groups | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental-Pre-test | 30 | 3.00 | 19.00 | 11.9667 | 4.61992 |
| Control-Pre-test | 30 | 2.00 | 19.00 | 12.1667 | 5.33100 |
| Experimental-Post-test | 30 | 1.00 | 20.00 | 15.8000 | 5.47974 |
| Control-Post-test | 30 | 4.00 | 17.00 | 12.7667 | 2.58221 |

Table 1 shows the collection of pre and post-test scores in the experimental and control groups. These means may provide a whole picture of the data. Thus the descriptive statistics of each comparison is presented in Table 2.

*Table 2. Descriptive Statistics (Pre-test)*

| Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | 30 | 11.9667 | 4.61992 | .84348 |
| Control | 30 | 12.1667 | 5.33100 | .97330 |

Table 2 shows the obtained means and standard deviations of the experimental and control groups' pre-test. The descriptive statistics are calculated inIndependent Samples *t*-test to discover any significant difference which is presented in Table 3.

*Table 3.Independent Samples t-test (Pre-test)*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | F | Sig. | *t* | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |



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| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Equal variances assumed | .960 | .331 | -.155 | 58 | .877 | -.200 | 1.28 | -2.77 | 2.37 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -.155 | 56.8 | .877 | -.200 | 1.28 | -2.77 | 2.37 |

Table 3 shows that the observed *t* (.155) is less than the critical *t* (1.671) with df=58. Thus the difference between the groups' pre-tests is not significant at ($p<0.05$). In other words both groups are homogenous. Table 4 compares the groups' post-tests.

*Table 4.Descriptive Statistics(Post-test)*

| Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | 30 | 15.8000 | 5.47974 | 1.00046 |
| Control | 30 | 12.7667 | 2.58221 | .47145 |

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of the experimental and control groups' post-test. The descriptive statistics are calculated inIndependent Samples *t*-test to discover any significant difference which is presented in Table5.

*Table 5. Independent Samples t-test (Post-test)*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | F | Sig. | *t* | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | 23.5 | .000 | 2.743 | 58 | .008 | 3.03 | 1.10 | .819 | 5.241 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | 2.743 | 41.2 | .009 | 3.03 | 1.10 | .800 | 5.266 |

Table 5 shows the observed *t* (2.743) is greater than the critical *t* (1.671) with df=58. Thus the difference between the groups is significant at ($p<0.05$). To compare the pre and post-test of each group, the descriptive statistics is shown in Table 6.

*Table 6. Descriptive Statistics (Experimental vs. Control)*

| | | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 | Experimental Pre-test | 11.9667 | 30 | 4.61992 | .84348 |
| | Experimental Post-test | 15.8000 | 30 | 5.47974 | 1.00046 |



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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 2 | Control Pre-test | 12.1667 | 30 | 5.33100 | .97330 |
| | Control Post-test | 12.7667 | 30 | 2.58221 | .47145 |

Table 6 indicated that the mean score of control group which had been12.1667 in pre-test exam and it reached to12.7667 in post-test exam. The table also indicated that the mean score of the experimental group which had been 11.9667 in pre-test exam which is increased to 15.8000 in the post-test exam. The Paired Samples t-test is used to compare the differences within each group in Table 7.

*Table 7. Paired Samples t-test (Experimental vs. Control)*

| | | Paired Differences | | | | | *t* | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | Groups | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Pair 1 | Experimental Pre & Post-test | -3.83 | 5.675 | 1.036 | -5.954 | -1.714 | -3.699 | 29 | .001 |
| Pair 2 | Control Pre and Post -test | -.600 | 6.111 | 1.115 | -2.881 | 1.682 | -.538 | 29 | .595 |

Table 7 shows that the observed *t* (3.699) is greater than the critical *t* (1.699) with df=29. Thus, the difference between the experimental group's pre and post-tests is significant at ($p<0.05$). Moreover, since the observed t (.538) is less than the critical t (1.699) with df=29, the difference between the control group's pre and post-tests is not significant at ($p<0.05$).

**5. Discussion**

This study aimed to investigate the answer to the following research questions. Results showed that the pre and post-tests are different in the results.

Does focus on meaning or form affect teaching Wh-questions to Iranian senior high school EFL learners?

With regard to the above questions, it should be pointed out that based on the data obtained it is logically claimed that the first research question is positively verified. It comes true that there is difference between interactive focus on meaning and traditional focus on meaning in teaching Wh-questions in Iranian senior high school EFL learners. It means that focus on meaning has positively affected learning Wh-questions by Iranian EFL learners at the first grade at the senior high school. Put another way, focus on meaning can be regarded as a good technique in teaching Wh-questions. We can say that just knowing the rules and memorizing them is insufficient. Here findings revealed that the experimental group (focus on form and meaning) registered a significant improvement. We concluded that both form-based and meaning-based instruction is required. Accuracy, fluency and overall communicative skills are probably best developed through instruction that is primarily meaning-based but in which guidance is provided through timely form-focused activities and correction in context.



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Ellis (2005) agrees with the results of the study that discovery activities can assist learners to use explicit knowledge to facilitate the acquisition of implicit knowledge. This means there are some theoretical positions that support the view of discovery learning in focus on form. One of them is deep processing, in which learners are involved, the other one is self-investment since learners need to be motivated both instrumentally and integrative and this can be achieved through approaches which excite the curiosity of learners in relation to a language feature. The results of his study are supported by Nassaji and Fotos (2004) who believe that the positive effect of focus on form and meaning trait instruction on students' post-test was significant compared to the control group. The post-test scores indicated that the focus on form and meaning strategy has been positively gained by the experimental group. The post-test scores of the experimental group indicated that the group had better improvement compared to the control one.

The results of this study are in line with Ellis (2009) who notes that focus on form refers to a method of teaching language is basically on linguistic structures while focus on meaning in teaching grammar of Wh-questions is based on the learners' understanding of grammar. Thus the language teachers should provide the learners with meaningful exposure to rich input and meaningful use of the L2 in context. This can be done implicitly or explicitly. This idea may be supported by Norris and Ortega (2001) who emphasized the teach grammar through focusing on forms in contemporary English language classrooms. Krashen and Terrell's (1983) the Natural Approach agrees on using some content-based ESL instruction and immersion programs which supports the results of this study because they found out that focus on form and forms activities led to better learning of Wh-questions.

**6. Conclusion**

The results of the present study highlighted the role of focus on forms (i.e., meaning) technique in improving learners' grammatical learning (i.e., Wh-questions) and enhancing their grammar learning achievement. Based on the results of the statistical calculations pursued during this study, the study has yielded the conclusion that focus on forms technique programs are effective in teaching grammar rather than the traditional methods which focus on formal structures among Iranian EFL learners. The results also showed that the participants in the experimental group (i.e., focus on meaning in teaching grammar) has provided with meaningful drills and exercises rather than memorizing formulas. This shows that learning Wh-questions can be enhanced through focusing on meaning since the learners can see the grammatical patterns in a meaningful context rather than in isolated formulas. It seems most likely that the teachers need to meet their goals in teaching grammar in which the following elements are present: principles of grammar, i.e., for instance Wh-questions, can be taught explicitly or implicitly. Then meaningful activities rather than mechanical ones should be followed; and finally assessments either in pairs, peers or class can be taken place for the sake of checking the learners' output.

This study provided a reason to claim that focus on meaning in teaching grammatical structures of Wh- questions is necessary, especially in EFL context in which grammar without any explicit instruction is problematic. The problem is that grammar-based instructions just give some rules which should be followed in the conversations. This was what the teachers had in traditional approaches to language teaching. Thus it is highly recommended that the EFL teachers focus on form in a supplementary manner for meaningful sentences in order to promote grammatical points efficiently. Therefore, there is a need to do research on the rule of meaning-based instruction in other language skills and sub-kills.

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# ACOMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF FIELD DEPENDENCE/INDEPENDENCEON NARRATIVE WRITINGS OF IRANIAN EFL STUDENTS IN JAHAD UNIVERSITY OF AHVAZ

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**Abstract**
The present study explores the effect of field dependence/independence (FD/FI) on English as foreign language (EFL) learners at Jahad University, Ahvaz. The present study focused on the learners' ability in writing narrative essay in two experimental groups. Iran. The participants were 100 learners who enrolled in writing course I. The research population consisted of eighty female English translation students whose band scores were between 30 and 47 were at the intermediate level through Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). Then sixty learners were selected through the standard Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT)which determined the FD/FIparticipants among the eighty students' field dependency. Thenthe students were also asked to write essays on the type of narration including 150 words. The obtained data were subjected to the statistical procedures of Independent Samples *t*-test and PearsonCorrelationAnalysis. The results showed there was a significant difference between the FI and FD groups in writing narrative essays. Field dependent learners outperformed the field independent ones. Implications of the study suggest that teachers should pay attention to field independent learners to provide them with enough exposure outside the classroom.

**Key Words:** Field dependent, field independent, narrative writing, GEFT

## 1. Introduction

The impact of cognitive styles in learning a foreign language has received much attention in recent years. FD/FIis a cognitive style which was introduced by Witkin, Oltman,Raskin, and Karp (1971). According to Hadley (2003), it is the degree to which one thinks analytically or globally.The power of individuals to comprehend the message from the irrelevant informationand restructure the message associated with their field independent characteristics. Field independents have the power to break a complex stimulus into separate elements and to



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give it different structures based on available experiences. If it is impossible to do such it independently, the persons will do it dependently (Mancy & Reid,2004).

One of the main contributions of the study is related to the learning process. If instructors know how field-dependent/independent style affects learning, learners can be informed about their individual styles and the strategies that suit those styles (Zhenhui, 2001). If learners are self-aware of the learning strategies that accommodate their individual styles, they can be able to navigate more efficiently in writing courses and attain comprehension of instructional material at quicker paces. Using the learning strategies with the best fit to their individual styles also result in enhanced efficacy in the sense that learners would learn instructional material with less mental effort and reduced cognitive load. Thus, the learning process can be more effective, leading to enhanced learning outcomes (Tabanlioglu, 2003).

The results of this study can help researchers understand whether awareness of cognitive style is important for writing a narrative. In this regard, this insight can assist the development of effective instruction, which meets the needs of both field-dependent and field-independent learners(Wyss, 2002). If instructional designers have knowledge of cognitive style and how these affect the way people learn, they can enhance their instruction using this knowledge. This study also could be effective to furthering research in the development of writing courses, which can enable different writing modes to be adapted to different individual cognitive styles(Khodadady, 2012).

The present study is, therefore, designed to fill the gap and find out whether field FD/FIhas any effect on narrative writing skill of EFL learners. The significance of this study is that, to the best knowledge of the researchers, few if any studies have investigated the relationship between narrative writing and field-independency/dependency of EFL learners. In the following lines, the research question is mentioned as:Does students' personality of FD/FI have any effect on their narrative writings?

## 2. Background

### 2.1.FD/FIPersonal Styles

FD/FIis a measure of cognitive style developed by Witkin, Oltman, Raskin and Karp (1971) around for over forty years. FD/FIis a study of the process of cognitive styles relating to how an individual functions. FD/FIas cognitive styles is bipolar. The difference between field dependent and field independent learners lies in the strategies they use for learning (Moore & Dwyer, 2001; Witkin, Moore, Goodenough& Cox, 1977). A person's FD/FIa dimension of their cognitive style, or a place on a continuum. A person's FD/FIcan change over time. According to Jonassen and Grabowski (1993), it will change over a life span. They argue that children are typically field dependents, and adults are more often field independent. This would imply that a person's level of FD/FIincreases over time. Jonassenand Grabowski (1993) definedFD/FI learnersas the degree to which they perceive or comprehend the information which is affected by the surrounding or contextual field and describe the factors that FD/FIconsiders as:

1. How much the surrounding framework dominates the perceptions of item within it,
2.How the surrounding organized field influences a person's perception of its components,
3. How a person perceives part of the field as a discrete form,
4.What the organization of the prevailing field determines considering the perception of its components, and
5. The extent to which a person perceives the events analytically.

The results of the way these factors influence learning determine whether a person is field dependent or field independent.



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**2.2.FD/FI in Iran**

In his study Salmani-Nodoushan (2007) investigated the Field Dependency or Independency on systematic variance into Iranian EFL students' task-based reading comprehension tests. He selected a large number of students including university and high school students, majoring in English. He also administered the Group Embedded Figures Test to assess the learners' personality. His study demonstrated that individuals'cognitive styles made a significant difference in their test performance in the proficient, semi proficient, and fairly proficient groups, but this was not the case in the low- proficient group. In addition, this study showed that personality can make a significant difference in the participants' performance on specific tasks such as true-false, sentence completion, outlining, scanning, and elicitation in all proficiency groups.

Nilforooshan and Afghari (2007) did a study on the impact of FD/FI in EFL learners' writing performance.They found that there is a significant difference between FD/FI groups in writing skill in general and narrative writing in particular with Field Independent learners outperforming the Field Dependents.

**2.3. Narrative Writing**

Writing requires thinking and cognitive process requires thinking styles which allows the EFL learners use language for communication. It is a complex activity that requires a linguistic, sociolinguistic and cultural background. It is a process which is heavily influenced by constraints of the text types; these elements have to be shown in learning activities. It is a complex process of thinking, rethinking, organization and reorganization (Harmer, 2004; Raimes, 2002).

A narrative is a time sequence text type which is narrating the events which attracts the readers' attention. The sociolinguistic purposes of narrative essaysare giving information, persuasion and socialization. The structural components of narrative essay are the orientation, the complication and the resolution (Boucher, 2011). Teo (2006) noted that during writing narrative essays, the learners may have difficulties in grammar, main ideas and the content of the passage. Narrative writing is a process essay in which there are time and sequences of events. The events are classified in a hierarchical fashion. The teachers' directions can help the students to follow the narrative essay process. Therefore, in order to help EFL students understand the importance of time and events, the learners can be provided with complete Wh-questions that mostly begin with "Wh" words to generate ideas such as: Who acted as a doer? What did he do? Where was that place?When did they go? Who are the people in the story? Why did they go there? What is the main idea? How did the people in the story solve the problem? These Wh-questions can guide the learners to think coherently about a topic and write their narrative essays coherently. However, that form and style of writing the narrative essay influence the learners' thinking style. When students write narratives, they have a chance to organize their thinking processes in language and go beyond what they have just learned in the classrooms (Raimes, 1983).

Involving the learners in narrative writing needs not only their interests but also their experiences and motivation to follow to the processes in the story. Teachers respond to the learners' writings as the raters who care about formal structures rather than the content. Most EFL learners may avoid writingthe essay they have no background knowledge, experiences, enough vocabularies and mechanics of writing. They are always hesitant to write because they cannot generate ideas and they want not to make any mistakes. Therefore, the learners' process of writing can be improved if they know the components of critical thinking such as ideas, opinions and their relationships with narrative process of writing (Claxton & Murrell, 2003).

There is a need to an approach for teaching narrative essays that make the learners write freely without any anxiety in the classroom. One way to help students to improve their narrative essays



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is to help them with their assignments on writing essays that require the learners to work on main ideas and the develop them in a sequence of time. This can be done through learners' linguistic knowledge which could be related to their personality. These two factors can affect the learners' process of thinking in sequencing of the events in a narration (Lieu, 2000). Thus, the students who use their linguistic knowledge and their FD/FI modes appropriately, they are able to make important critical choices while writing narrative essays effectively. Thus they could be better narrators of their own true or imaginative stories (Abbott, 2002; Boucher, 2011).

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Participants

The population was100 female students who were majoring inTranslation at Jahad University of Ahvaz.They enrolled in Writing Course I. They took OQPT and 80 learners who met the band score (i.e., 30 -47) were chosen as the intermediate level students. Then they took Group Embedded Figure Test (GEFT) to determine their FI/FD. Finally, out of the whole participants who completed the learning style questionnaire (Witkin, Oltman, Raskin& Karp, 1971), two groups including 60 Iranian EFL learners were divided in equal groups of FI/FD were selected to investigate the relationship between their learning styles of FD/FI.

### 3.2. Instrumentation

To carry out the present study, different instruments were used. In order to be assured of the homogeneity of the participants, the learners took Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT)before the treatment. The test consisted of 60 multiple-choice items consisting of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and reading. The listening section of the test was not administered since it was not related to the topic. The time allotted to the proficiency test was 60 minutes.

The GEFT (Witkin, Oltman, Raskin& Karp, 1971) was used for introvert/extrovert participants in the article "On the Validity of the Group Embedded Figure Test (GEFT)".It was used to determine the participants' cognitive style of field in/dependency with the reliability and validity indices of 0.89 and 0.82, respectively as reported by Witkin and his associates (Foel& Fritz, 1994). The allocated time for completing the test was about 15 minutes. The score of each person was ranged from 0 to 15.

The writing ability of the students was evaluated by writing the pre and post-test of a narrative composition. The participant wrote an essay of 150 words on three narrative topics to evaluate their narrative writing abilities at the beginning of the course. Then they started participating in the five sessions to review five units of paragraph writing text book (Zemach& Islam, 2011). After that, the post-test was given similarly to the pre-test and the students were given three narrative topics to write narrative essays about150 words in which they wrote a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, included details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.

### 3.3. Procedure

The data was collected during the fall semester, 2015 in Jahad University in Ahvaz. First, all the participants took part in OQPT test at the beginning of the experiment to homogenize participants' potential proficiency for instruction. Based on the results of this test, those students whose scores were between one standard deviation minus and plus the mean were selected to participate in the study. Second, the Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT) administered to determine their field dependent/independent cognitive styles. Then the students divided into two groups. For scoring and data analysis, the grading scale ranges from 0 to 15. It is assumed that the higher the scores, the more field independent would be. In order to divide the sample into two groups known as Field Dependent (FD), and Field Independent (FI), SPSS software is



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needed. Following the suggestion made by Abraham (1983, 1985), the students who score 7 or below will be identified as field dependent (FD) and those who score above 7 will be classified as field independent (FI) (Abraham, 1985).

Finally, from the 80 students, 47 students of FI and 33 student of FD were selectedand 30 participants of each were non-randomly chosen based on the results of the GEFT test. There were 3 topics of narrative in the pre-test,which students should write about 150 words or 10 lines, we had checklist of writing and then five sessions of teaching narrative writing from the book,Paragraph Writing, developed byZamachand Islam (2011) ,and then there was the post-test. Two writing samples were collected from each student in two different sessions. The students were given some pictures and narrative subjects to write narratives. The pre and post-test were scored by two raters to get the inter-rater reliability of scoring in the pre-test as (r=.758) and in the post-test as (r=.699). The raters used the checklist (Hughes, 2003) to score the essays. The total mark was 20 based on the components in the writing checklist which was used for correction of pre-test and post-test.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed through SPSS software version 17.In this study, Independent Sample *t*-test was used to determine the difference between the performance of FD and FI groups in narrative writings. The inter-rater reliability was checked in this study. In this study, and Pearson Correlation Analysis was used to determine the relationships between the performance of FD and FI groups in narrative essays scores.

## 4. Results

The descriptive statistics of the results (Pre-test, FI vs. FD) and Independent Samples *t*-test (Pre-test, FI vs. FD) isgiven. Then, based on these data Descriptive Statistics (Post-test, FI vs. FD) and also Independent Samples t-Test (Post-test, FI vs. FD) and correlation analysis are reviewed and presented.

*Table 1. DescriptiveStatistics* (*Pre-test*, *FIvs. FD*)

| | VAR | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-test | FI | 30 | 8.6000 | 3.11393 | .56852 |
| | FD | 30 | 8.8667 | 3.13746 | .57282 |

Table 1 shows the mean of FI group was 8.6000 and FD group was 8.8667. The Independent Sample *t*-test was used to show any significant difference between the groups. Results are shown in Table 2.

***Table 2.****IndependentSamplest-Test* (*Pre-test*, *FIvs. FD*)

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | *t*-test for Equality of Means |
|---|---|---|



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| | | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | Sig. | *t* | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | .000 | .984 | -.330 | 58 | .742 | -.266 | .807 | -1.88 | 1.348 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -.330 | 57.9 | .742 | -.266 | .807 | -1.88 | 1.348 |

Table 2 indicates that the observed *t* (.330) is less than critical *t*(1.671) with df=58, the difference between the groups is not significant in the pre- test($p<0.05$). Results of the post-test are presented in Table 3.

*Table 3. DescriptiveStatistics* (*Post-test*, *FIvs. FD*)

| | Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Post-test | FI | 30 | 8.95000 | 3.21366 | .58673 |
| | FD | 30 | 10.7667 | 3.44096 | .62823 |

Table 3 shows that the mean of FI group is 8.95000 and the mean of FD group is 10.7667.The results of Independent Sample *t*-test are shown in Table4.

***Table 4.****IndependentSamples*t-*Test*(*Post-test,FIvs.*FD*)*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | *t*-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | F | Sig. | *t* | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | .107 | .745 | -2.637 | 58 | .011 | -2.266 | .859 | -3.9876 | -.545 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -2.637 | 57.7 | .011 | -2.266 | .859 | -3.987 | -.545 |



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Table 4 shows that the observed t (2.637) is greater than the critical t (1.671). Thus the difference between the groups is significant.In other words, the FD group outperformed the IF group. The difference between FI and FD group is significant. Pearson Correlation analysis was used to find any correlation between FI and FD groups' scores. Results are shown in Table 5.The researchers ran the Pearson Correlation analysis to check the relationship between field-dependent (FD) students' means on the pre-test and post-test questionnaire and their writing performance in Table 5.

*Table 5.Correlation between FI and Narrative Essay Test Score*

| | | FI | Scores |
|---|---|---|---|
| FI | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .580** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .001 |
| | N | 30 | 30 |
| Scores | Pearson Correlation | .580** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | |
| | N | 30 | 30 |

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

The results indicated that there is a moderate significant difference between the FI students' mean scores on the pre-test of narrative writing. Table 5 shows the correlation between the learners' FI personality and the scores which is significant at ($p<0.5$).The results of FD correlation with the participants scores in the post-test are presented in Table 6.

*Table 6. Correlations between FD and Narrative Essay Test Scores*

| | | FD | Scores |
|---|---|---|---|
| FD | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .275 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .141 |
| | N | 30 | 30 |
| Scores | Pearson Correlation | .275 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .141 | |
| | N | 30 | 30 |

The correlation between the learners' FD personality and the scores is not significant at ($p<0.5$).Correlation of field dependent group and their post-test is not significant. It means that, field dependent group did better in writing narrative essays.

**5. Discussion**

This section discusses the results of the study through providing answers to the following research questions.

Does students' personality of FD/FI have any effect on their narrative writings?



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The results of this study revealed that field dependency/independency had an effect on narrative writing of Iranian EFL students. Since they have different characteristics and behaviorism, the teachers try to be active in the classroom and the students passive. Field independents are better in the ESL environments, but, field dependents are better in the EFL environments. Correlation of field dependent group and their post-test is significant and correlation of field independent and their post-test is not significant in writing narrative essay. It means that, field dependent students did their work on the writing narratives better.The other reason is that students do not have enough time tabling and programming for study, out of the classroom, and they have low out of class activity.They rely more on class activities. Students are accustomed just when they are in the classroom to study and out of the classroom they feel free,they have other hobbies and entertainmentout of class environment.

There was a significant difference between the performance of those who were field dependent and those who were field independent.The results of this study revealed that FD students outperformed FI students in writing ability in general.FD/FIstudents were better than field independent students in narrative writing.One of the reasons is that, students are more depending to the teachers and not to themselves, and more like the classrooms of teacher-centered not learner-centered. Students are not familiar with new and modern ways of learner-centered.Learner-centered learning puts students' interests first, acknowledging student voice as central to the learning experience. In a learner-centered classroom, students choose what they will learn, how they will learn, and how they will assess their own learning. This is in contrast to traditional education, "teacher-centered learning", which situates the teacher as the primarily "active" role while students take a more "passive", receptive role. In a teacher-centered classroom, teachers choose what the students will learn, how the students will learn, and how the students will be assessed on their learning. In contrast, learner-centered learning requires students to be active, responsible participants in their own learning and with their own pace of learning. Teachers teach traditionally, and students learntraditionally too. Traditional point of views is all dependent. it means that they like to check all the things in the classroom in the manner of teacher-centered not in the manner of learner-centered.

Nilforooshan and Afghari (2007), support the results of the present research since they did a study on the impact of FD/FIin EFL learners' writing performance.They found that there is a significant difference between Field Dependent/ Independent groups in writing skill in general and narrative writing in particular with Field Independent learners outperforming the Field Dependents.

Abraham (1985) disagrees with the present study since he notes thatFI learners are more successful in deductive processes while FD learners are better in inductive processes. Therefore, it is concluded that FI learnerscan reason inductively and FD learners reason deductively. These two modes of reasoning may have an impact on the strategies the students write in a foreign language as in deductive approach to the process of writing with the emphasis on the development of ideas and inductive approach focusing on the product and form of writing (Allami&Salmani-Nodoushan, 2007). Willing (1988) noted that the FI learners may have better recall from their memory since they activate their mental processing through low-intensity stimuli. However, the FD learners can access to the stored information that is highly associated with high-intensity stimulus to be activated (Town, 2003).

**6. Conclusion**

FD/FI influences EFL learners' writing essays differently in terms of focusing on the whole or on the local points in writing the narrative texts in the present study. FD students outperformed FI students in narrative writing.FD/FIstudents were better than field independent students in



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narrative writing.Students are more accused to the teachers and more like the classrooms of teacher-centered. Students are not acquaintance with modern methods of learner-centered. Learner-centered learning situates students' interests first, acknowledging student voice as central to the learning experience. In a learner-centered classroom, students select what they will learn, how they will learn, and how they will recognize their own learning. This is different fromtraditional education in which teaching process is "teacher-centered learning". This type of teaching putsthe emphasis on the teacher as the primarily role. Thus the learners are more passive and get the receptive role. In a teacher-centered classroom, teachers select what the students will learn, how the students will learn, and how the students will be recognized on their learning. In contrast, learner-centered learning needs students to be not passive, responsible participants in their own learning and with their own way of learning. Teachers teach traditionally, and students learn traditionally too. Traditional perspective is all dependent. They like to check all the things in the classroom in the manner of teacher-centered not in the manner of learner-centered(Bing, 2011).

Cognitive styles influence the strategies applied by learners (Winke, 2005). The learning strategies are the activities learners docognitively and meta-cognitively which are all involved in the process of writing narrative essays as well as other types of texts (Myles, 2002). The teachers need to help the learners to be more self-directed and deal with self-study materials in the process of learning(Kang, 1999) so that they can compensate for their weaknesses using appropriate strategies.

This study was an attempt to compare field dependent students and field independent students other different kind of cognitive styles can be compared in future research.

**6.3. Limitation of the Study**

The researchers faced several limitations in this study including, first, the small size of the research population. The present study only focused on student respondents located in selected Jahad University in Ahvaz, who are academically good. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized to all Universities and students in Ahvaz. It is suggested that future research may check students from various university types with varies academic background so that findings can be generalized across a much larger population. Second, the time allocated to the instructions was so limited. Third, there was a lackof treatment teaching narrative writing classes and enough spaces to FD and FI students in Jahad University.

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# AN INVESTIGATION ON THE COMPARATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF IMPLICIT VS. EXPLICIT CALL-BASED INSTRUCTION ON DEVELOPMENT OF SYNTACTIC KNOWLEDGE OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

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**Abstract**
The present study investigated the effects of implicit vs. explicit CALL-based instruction on development of syntactic knowledge of Iranian EFL learners. The participants of the study were 120 EFL learners selected based on their performance on a validated version of Nelson proficiency test. The participants went through the process of pretesting on grammatical accuracy, intervention, and post-testing. An independent t-test, one-way ANOVA as well as a two-way ANOVA were applied to analyze the collected data. The results of the study demonstrated that explicit group outperformed the implicit group. However, the blended group had the highest mean on the posttest of grammatical accuracy. This was followed by face-to-face and CALL only methods. Finally, it was reported that there was no significant difference between the CALL-based, face-to-face, and blended classes regarding the impact of implicit instruction on grammatical accuracy of the Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The implications of the study are also reported.

**Keywords**: Grammatical Accuracy, Implicit Instruction, Explicit Instruction, CALL

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, computers and computerized systems have undoubtedly established themselves firmly in the contemporary lives of human beings from the world of business and communication to other high-tech friendly fields. The world of education is no exception to this general trend. With the emergence of computerized systems which are cheaper, smaller in size, more adaptable and easier to handle, their appeal for educational purposes increase exponentially (Levy, 2008). Living in a world teemed with plethora of high-tech devices is a strong temptation for learners as well as educators to tap the great potentialities of this enormous ocean for educational purposes.
Unlike the majority of traditional classroom-based instruction, CALL provides a flexible, enjoyable, low-anxiety and interactive language learning environment for language students



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(Blake, 2016; Chapelle, 2016, Chun, 2016; Kreyer&Schaub, 2015). Because of its multimedia features and its connectivity to computerized devices and technologies including the Internet, CALL environment increases learners' exposure to the target language enormously (. In addition, learners can take advantage of the flexibility of CALL and travel through this educational path at any time from any location and at their own pace (White, 2003). Therefore, it is the learner who decides how long to stay in a certain phase of his educational journey based on his interests and difficulty of the stage and other related factors.

**2.Review of Literature**

One can easily notice that modern technologies can be applied to play various educational roles in language learning context. According to Kern and Warschauer (2000), application of CALL originated onthe mainframe as a tutor that delivers language drills or skill practice. With the advent ofmultimedia technology on the personal computers, this technology can serve as a space which explores andcreatively influencesmicro worldsand plays a significant role in the SLA research (Blake, 2016; Chun, 2016).In addition, having developed well, computer networksserve as a medium of local and global communication and a source of authentic materials"(Kern &Warschauer, 2000, p.13).

According to Hubbard (2009), "CALL encompasses any use of computer technology in the domain of language learning" (p. 2).Beatty (2003) asserts that CALL refers to language learning process "in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her language" (p.7).The ever-increasing application of CALL in educational environments has opened up new horizons in teaching language skills by computerized technologies. One of the areas where CALL has penetrated more in comparison to the early higher focus on the communicative CALL is computer-based grammar instruction (Chapelle, 1990 and 2016). Researchers and language practitioners have drawn their attention towards the advantages of CALL in teaching grammar due to several reasons. Many proponents of CALL maintain that applying computerized platforms for teaching grammar results in a more enjoyable activity (Doughty & Long, 2003). Because of its multimedia flavors and higher potentiality of interactive learning, CALL removes some tiresome features of learning grammar in monotonous drill-based traditional approaches for instructing grammar (Egbert& Hanson-Smith, 1999). Multimedia instruction plays a significant role in development of language proficiency among EFL learners (de la Cruz Villegas&Izquierdo, 2014) and as computer-based programs guide users through a series of interactive exercises, they will find such programs both informative and attractive (Kieliszek, 2015).

Although computer-based grammar instruction entails huge potential benefits, the use of computers to teach grammar had not received the same amount of attention as communicative CALL (Hulstijn, 2015).Erben and Castañeda (2009) assert that CALL can provide learners with rich input and learners can go over the explicit grammar explanations at their own pace and without being worried about time limitations. Some scholars maintain that CALL increases the effectiveness of grammar instruction (Chapelle, 2016; Sauro&Smith, 2010; Sotillo, 2016).

Ragan et al., (1993 cited in Garrett, 2009) used multimedia to teach a variety of subjects. Their research revealed that multimedia instruction reduced learning time for the intended grammatical points by 30% compared to the traditional instruction. This study showed that the grammatical achievements of learners increased by CALL since multimedia-based instruction of grammar has characteristics including learner interactivity and learner control over programs which contribute to better processing and deeper learning of grammatical points. Kern and Warschauer (2000) suggest that learners who are learning in a CALL environment can have access to chances for improving their grammatical knowledge which is beyond reach in a



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traditional L2 classroom. Flexibility of CALL application for learners is appealing since they can work at their own pace.

Instructing grammar through CALL creates an interactive environment for learners which is missing in traditional books, tapes, television, and so on. It is argued that interaction via computer facilitates language acquisition (Warschauer&Lepeintre, 1997). Increasing learners' motivation via CALL activities contributes to improvement in grammatical proficiency of learners as well.

McCarthy (1994) examined the application of CALL for grammar drills in a second language. Results of this study revealed that CALL has some specific advantages in areas including organization of materials, display of items, volume of materials and random presentation, feedback, scoring and record-keeping, focused tutorial assistance, graphics and animation and cognitive direction.Nutta (1998, cited in White, 2003) conducted a study to compare computer-based instruction versus teacher-directed instruction in terms of their effectiveness of instructing certain English structures. Analyzing the results, he discovered that the performance of students in the computer-based grammar instruction was significantly higher than that of the teacher-directed students.

Other studies in the ESL and EFL contexts also have come up with similar results (Al-Jarf, 2005;Chen, 2006; Hanson-Smith, 1999;Hubbard, Schulze, & Smith, 2013;Levy&Stockwell, 2006; Sauro, 2001). In line with previous studies,Ngu and Rethinasamy's(2006) study showed that students whoreceived the conventional lesson outperformed those who went through the CALL lesson. In contrast,Mohamad's (2009) study which compared internet-based grammar instruction and conventional pen and board instruction in the in Malaysian context indicated that the students who went through the former performed better and had fewer errors in their essays compared to the latter one. Meanwhile, Sotillo(2016) asserts that as discourse functions and syntacticcomplexity in synchronous and asynchronous communication through virtual media has increased, the novel research should focus on the CALL oriented instructions in the ELT domain.

In sum, one can notice that CALL has been an effective tool to teach L2 grammar and various scholars have looked at it from different perspectives. However, the perspective taken into account in the present study has not been included in any of them. Based on the purpose of the study, the following research questions were posed:

1. Is there any significant difference between explicit and implicit instruction among the Iranian intermediate EFL learners?
2. Are there any significant differences between the CALL-based, face-to-face, and blended classes regarding the impact of explicit instruction on grammatical accuracy of the Iranian intermediate EFL learners?
3. Are there any significant differences between the CALL-based, face-to-face, and blended classes regarding the impact of implicit instruction on grammatical accuracy of the Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

## 3. Methodology

***Design***

A quasi-experimental approach was employed in this study. The explicit instruction of the grammar was conducted in three groups, namely CALL-only explicit instruction, face-to-face explicit instruction and blended explicit instruction. These three groups were formed for implicit instruction as well. Based on the design, the syntactic knowledge manifested in the test performance was considered as the dependent variable and explicit and implicit instruction as the independent variable.



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***Participants***

Purposivesampling was employed and 120female and male Iranian EFL learners in English language institutes in Tehran, Iran participated in this study. The Nelson proficiency test was administered to 153 learners and120 individuals whose scores were ±1SD above and below the mean were considered the main participants in the present study. The selected students were randomly divided into the two explicit and implicit groups in six classes.

***Instrumentations***

The instruments which were utilized in the present study were as follows: 1) *The Nelson* test that assessed the English language proficiency of L2 learners. Reliability of this test, as established against KR-21 measure of internal consistency for the NELSON test, turned out as .89.Nelson test measures ability to recognize correct grammar in standard written English.2) *the teacher-made test of grammatical accuracy;* which was developed and validated by the researcher and used as both the pre and posttests in the study to measure grammatical accuracy of the learners on *Auxiliaries Modal verbs*. The KR-21 reliability indices for this test in the pre and post tests were .76 and .83, respectively.

***Procedure***

The procedure followed to carry out the present study is described in three phases of pre-treatment, treatment, and post-treatment.

***Pre-treatment***

In this phase the participants received the Nelson test for the purpose of subject selection and then the selected participants were randomly put into explicit instruction groups as well as the implicit instruction groups. They received the validated pretest of grammatical accuracy, as well.

***Treatment***

In this phase, different activities and tasks were designed for instructing grammar explicitly and implicitly. The treatment ran for ten weeks in which participants in theexplicit instruction group were involved in tasks whose emphasis was explicit instruction of grammar. Clearly, the medium of instructing grammar explicitly in CALL-only group, the face-to-face group and the blended group differed. In the CALL-only group the explicit instruction of grammar was merely through the Viber application as one of the modern CALL-related platforms. In the face-to-face group, the explicit instruction of the grammar was done through traditional classroom-based instruction, while in the third group, i.e. the blended group, the students made use of both CALL and face-to-face techniques. The explicit grammar instruction included the following tasks (adapted from Macaro and Masterman, 2006): a) direct explanation of the rule on the part of the teacher, b)having students work individually or in pairs composing sentences, c)using the sentences in order to extract and explain the use of rules, d)having the learners do the related exercises taken from a grammar book titled English Grammar in Use, and e) translation. Having done related exercises, learners were asked to write on a topic that required them to use the particular grammar structure. Finally, the learners were provided with the direct form of feedback, that is the teacher underlined the errors and corrected them referring to the rules.To clarify the issue one example can be referred to. In the CALL-only group, after explicit explanting of the application of *could* as a modal verb used for hypothetical situations, participants were asked to write answers to the hypothetical scenario where they had to play the roles of firefighters. Their writings were reviewed by peers and finally by the teacher for comments and corrections.

The other group, however, was exposed to implicit instruction of grammar, which included the following tasks suggested by (Denny Sargent, 2009): a) schema building (showing the grammar in use, not talking about it) by making examples, b) having students watch a related film answering the questions in such a way that they would have to use the targeted structure (in the case a student couldn't use the structure correctly, s/he wasencouraged to produce the correct



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form with the help of peers), and c) providing a text with highlighted forms of the intended grammatical structure.Finally, students were asked to write on the same topic provided for the explicit group, but the feedback was not given directly. The researcher wrote the number of errors the learners had made using the target structures. The learners were then encouraged to compare their own use of the grammar in the paragraph they wrote to its use in the bolded text in order to correct their errors. Needless to state that the application of these implicit techniques differed in CALL-only, face-to-face and blended groups as it was the case with the explicit manner of the instruction. For the implicit CALL-only instruction of grammar, Viber application was used as the medium. If extra information or additional files were required the links were provided via Viber.

Other additional activities were applied in the course of treatment as well: In the implicit instruction of grammar, the emphasis was more on the message rather than the abstract rule while for the explicit groups it was the other way round. In the implicit instruction of grammar, little or no grammar meta-language is used. In the explicit mode, some metalinguistic questions were asked about sentences and participants were supposed to identify rules in the given sentences.

For implicit grammar instruction, before introducing the grammar point, teachers built schema and showed this grammar in use rather than explaining it. In the implicit groups, teachers used students' lives, current events and the like which were interesting to learners. Exemplification was a crucial point for implicit grammar instruction since learners were supposed to be provided with rich context to deduct rules based on lots of examples. In the explicit grammar instruction, grammatical points were explained in details and students were required to practice them in the exercises, whereas in the implicit instruction, teachers asked lots of questions related to using the intended grammatical points while they avoided giving answers unless it was necessary and no students could answer or figure it out. In the implicit grammar instruction, students were provided rich context to discover rules themselves rather than being provided with ready-made solutions. In other words, implicit grammar instruction was considered a discovery learning and suggested discovery results in long term acquisition. In this regard, students could grasp the intended grammatical points in the form of self-correction or experiencing failure in the communication of the message and consequent correction to overcome the problem. Since schema building and comprehensibility of the grammatical input were important in the implicit instruction, learners were involved in negotiating ideas about real information, hobbies, likes and dislikes, experiences, food preferences, sports they played, the real needs they had (shopping, going to the doctor, finding a job) and other real and relevant life experiences.

Activities such as word scramble, diagrams with words, cooperative writing, editing activities, cloze exercises, error correction, surveys of all kinds about the natural world, out of class interviews and observations, sensory description writing assignments, writing/speaking about nature, role-plays, info gap games, class surveys, group games, group writing tasks (posters, FAQs, op-ed letters), targeted creative writing, individual projects (family tree, auto-biography), and journaling were among other activities practiced in the implicit grammar instruction.

***Post-treatment***

Having practiced ten sessions of treatment, the participants in all groups took the teacher-made test of grammatical accuracy as the posttest. The researcher intended to measure learners' likely improvement as a result of treatment by comparing their pretest and posttest scores.

**4. Results**

After the data collected through the administration of the instruments, the data were analyzed using SPSS software version 24 and measures ofindependent t-test,one-way ANOVA, two-way



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ANOVA, and post-hoc Scheffe's tests. As all these measures have a main assumption; i.e. normality. The normality of the present data was probed through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) and skewness and kurtosis ratios and in both cases the normality of the data was confirmed.

***NELSON General Language Proficiency Test***

The NELSON test was administered to 153 cases. Based on the mean (M = 57.65) plus and minus one standard deviation (SD = 14.35), 120 cases were selected to participate in this study. The KR-21 reliability index for the NELSON test was .89 (Table 1).

Table1: *Descriptive Statistics; NELSON Test*

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Variance | KR-21 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NELSON | 153 | 57.65 | 14.357 | 206.111 | .89 |

***Pretest of Grammatical Accuracy***

A two-way ANOVA was run to compare the explicit and implicit CALL only, face-to-face and blended groups' means on the pretest of grammatical accuracy in order to prove that they were homogenous in terms of their grammatical accuracy prior to the main study. Before discussing the two-way ANOVA results it should be mentioned that the groups enjoyed homogenous variances on the pretest of grammatical accuracy. As displayed in Table 2 the Levene's F-value of 1.77 was not significant (P > .05).

Table 2: *Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances*

| F | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.777 | 5 | 114 | .123 |

As displayed in Table 3 the CALL only (M = 27.50, SE = 1.10), face-o-face (M = 26, SE = 1.10) and blended methods (M = 26.55, SE = 1.10) showed almost the same means on pretest of grammatical accuracy.

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics; Pretest of Grammatical Accuracy by Groups*

| Group | Mean | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| CALL Only | 27.500 | 1.106 | 25.309 | 29.691 |
| Face-to-Face | 26.000 | 1.106 | 23.809 | 28.191 |
| Blended | 26.550 | 1.106 | 24.359 | 28.741 |

Based on the results displayed in Table 4 (F (2, 114) = .47, P > .05; $\eta^2$ = .008 representing a weak effect size) it can be concluded that there was not any significant difference between CALL only, face-to-face and blended groups' means on the pretest of grammatical accuracy. Thus, it was claimed that they were homogenous in terms of their grammatical accuracy prior to the main study.

Table 4: *Tests of Between-Subjects Effects, Pretest of Grammatical Accuracy by Groups by Types of Instruction*

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | 46.067 | 2 | 23.033 | .471 | .626 | .008 |
| Instruction | 73.633 | 1 | 73.633 | 1.505 | .222 | .013 |
| Group * Instruction | 26.867 | 2 | 13.433 | .275 | .760 | .005 |
| Error | 5577.400 | 114 | 48.925 | | | |
| Total | 91164.000 | 120 | | | | |



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As displayed in Table 5 the implicit group (M = 27.46, SE = .90) showed a higher mean than the explicit group (M = 27.46, SE = .90) on pretest of grammatical accuracy.

Table 5: *Descriptive Statistics, Pretest of Grammatical Accuracy by Types of Instruction*

| Group | Mean | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Explicit | 25.900 | .903 | 24.111 | 27.689 |
| Implicit | 27.467 | .903 | 25.678 | 29.256 |

Based on the results (F (1, 114) = 1.50, p > .05; $\eta^2$ = .013 representing a weak effect size) it was concluded that there was not any significant difference between explicit and implicit groups' means on the pretest of grammatical accuracy. Thus, it was claimed that they were homogenous in terms of their grammatical accuracy prior to the main study. Finally, there were not any significant interaction between the groups and types of instruction on pretest of grammatical accuracy (F (2, 114) = .27, p > .05; $\eta^2$ = .005 representing a weak effect size) (Table 6).

Table 6: *Descriptive Statistics; Interaction between Group * Instruction*

| Group | Instruction | Mean | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| CALL Only | Explicit | 27.000 | 1.564 | 23.902 | 30.098 |
| | Implicit | 28.000 | 1.564 | 24.902 | 31.098 |
| Face-to-Face | Explicit | 25.600 | 1.564 | 22.502 | 28.698 |
| | Implicit | 26.400 | 1.564 | 23.302 | 29.498 |
| Blended | Explicit | 25.100 | 1.564 | 22.002 | 28.198 |
| | Implicit | 28.000 | 1.564 | 24.902 | 31.098 |

**Research Question 1**

An independent t-test was run to compare the first and second experimental group's means on the posttest of writing fluency in order to probe the second research question. Based on these results (Table 7) it can be concluded that the explicit group (M = 38.05, SD = 7.09) had a higher mean than the implicit group (M = 35.67, SD = 7.01) on the posttest of grammatical accuracy.

Table 7: *Descriptive Statistics, Posttest of Grammatical Accuracy by Groups*

| Group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Explicit | 60 | 38.05 | 7.094 | .916 |
| Implicit | 60 | 35.67 | 7.017 | .906 |

The results of the independent t-test (t (118) = 1.55, p > .05, r = .16 enjoying a weak effect size) (Table 8) indicated that there was not any significant difference between the two groups' mean scores on the posttest of grammatical accuracy. Thus the first null-hypothesis was supported. The negative lower bound 95 % confidence interval, i.e. -.168 indicated that the difference between the two means can be zero. Thus the conclusion as supporting the null-hypothesis was correctly made.

Table 8: *Independent Samples t-test, Posttest of grammatical Accuracy by Groups*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | t-test for Equality of Means |
|---|---|---|



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| | F | Sig. | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Equal Vs. assumed | .024 | .877 | 1.850 | 118 | .067 | 2.383 | 1.288 | -.168 | 4.934 |
| Equal vs. not assumed | | | 1.850 | 117.986 | .067 | 2.383 | 1.288 | -.168 | 4.934 |

It should be noted that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met (Levene's F = .02, p > .05). That is why the first row of Table 8, i.e. "Equal variances assumed" was reported.

**Research Question 2**

A one-way ANOVA was run to compare the CALL only, face-to-face and blended groups on the posttest of grammatical accuracy after receiving explicit teaching method. Before discussing the one-way ANOVA results it should be mentioned that the groups enjoyed homogenous variances on the posttest of grammatical accuracy. As displayed in Table 9 the Levene's F-value of .31 was not significant (P > .05).

Table 9:*Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances*

| F | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|
| .311 | 2 | 57 | .734 |

As displayed in Table 10, the blended group (M = 41.85, SD = 6.31) had the highest mean on the posttest of grammatical accuracy. This was followed by face-to-face (M = 37.80, SD = 6.51) and CALL only methods (M = 34.50, SE = 6.74).

Table 10:*Descriptive Statistics; Posttest of Grammatical Accuracy by Groups*

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | | |
| CALL Only | 20 | 34.50 | 6.740 | 1.507 | 31.35 | 37.65 | 24 | 48 |
| Face-to-Face | 20 | 37.80 | 6.518 | 1.457 | 34.75 | 40.85 | 20 | 48 |
| Blended | 20 | 41.85 | 6.310 | 1.411 | 38.90 | 44.80 | 30 | 52 |
| Total | 60 | 38.05 | 7.094 | .916 | 36.22 | 39.88 | 20 | 52 |

The results of one-way ANOVA (F (2, 57) = 6.36, p < .05, $\omega^2$ = .15, representing a large effect size) (Table 11) indicated that there were significant differences between the three groups' means on the posttest of grammatical accuracy after receiving explicit method.

Table 11:*One-Way ANOVA; Posttest of Grammatical Accuracy by Groups (Explicit Teaching)*

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 542.100 | 2 | 271.050 | 6.366 | .003 |
| Within Groups | 2426.750 | 57 | 42.575 | | |
| Total | 2968.850 | 59 | | | |



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Although the F-value of 6.36 indicated significant differences between the means of the three groups, the post-hoc Scheffe's tests should be run to compare the groups two by two. Based on the results displayed in Table 12 it was concluded that;

A: There was not any significant difference between CALL only (M = 34.50) and face-to-face (M = 37.80) groups' means on the posttest of grammatical accuracy (MD = 3.30, p > .05).

B: The blended group (M = 41.85) significantly outperformed the CALL only group (M = 34.50) on the posttest of grammatical accuracy (MD = 7.35, p < .05).

C: There was not any significant difference between blended (M = 41.85) and face-to-face (M = 37.80) groups' means on the posttest of grammatical accuracy (MD = 4.05, p > .05).

Table 12:*Multiple Comparisons; Posttest of Grammatical Accuracy by Groups*

| (I) Group | (J) Group | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Blended | CALL Only | 7.350* | 2.063 | .003 | 2.16 | 12.54 |
| | Face-to-Face | 4.050 | 2.063 | .155 | -1.14 | 9.24 |
| Face-to-Face | CALL Only | 3.300 | 2.063 | .286 | -1.89 | 8.49 |

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

**Research Question 3**

A one-way ANOVA was run to compare the CALL only, face-to-face and blended groups on the posttest of grammatical accuracy after receiving implicit teaching method. Before discussing the one-way ANOVA results it should be mentioned that the groups enjoyed homogenous variances on the posttest of grammatical accuracy. As displayed in Table 13 the Levene's F-value of 1.60 was not significant (P > .05).

Table 13:*Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances*

| F | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.603 | 2 | 57 | .210 |

As displayed in Table 14, the blended group (M = 38.40, SD = 5.52) had the highest mean on the posttest of grammatical accuracy. This was followed by face-o-face (M = 35.10, SD = 7.66) and CALL only methods (M = 33.50, SE = 7.10).

Table 14:*Descriptive Statistics; Posttest of Grammatical Accuracy by Groups*

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | | |
| CALL Only | 20 | 33.50 | 7.104 | 1.589 | 30.17 | 36.83 | 20 | 44 |
| Face-to-Face | 20 | 35.10 | 7.663 | 1.714 | 31.51 | 38.69 | 24 | 48 |
| Blended | 20 | 38.40 | 5.529 | 1.236 | 35.81 | 40.99 | 28 | 48 |
| Total | 60 | 35.67 | 7.017 | .906 | 33.85 | 37.48 | 20 | 48 |

The results of one-way ANOVA (F (2, 57) = 2.68, p > .05, $\omega^2$ = .053, representing an almost moderate effect size) (Table 15) indicated that there were not any significant differences between the three groups' means on the posttest of grammatical accuracy after receiving implicit method.



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Table 15:*One-Way ANOVA; Posttest of Grammatical Accuracy by Groups (Implicit Teaching)*

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 249.733 | 2 | 124.867 | 2.680 | .077 |
| Within Groups | 2655.600 | 57 | 46.589 | | |
| Total | 2905.333 | 59 | | | |

Based on the post-hoc Scheffe's tests displayed in Table 16, itwas concluded that;
A: There was not any significant difference between CALL only (M = 33.50) and face-to-face (M = 35.10) groups' means on the posttest of grammatical accuracy (MD = 1.60, p > .05).
B: There was not any significant difference between CALL only (M = 33.50) and blended (M = 38.40) groups' means on the posttest of grammatical accuracy (MD = 4.90, p > .05).

Table 16: *Multiple Comparisons; Posttest of Grammatical Accuracy by Groups*

| (I) Group | (J) Group | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Blended | CALL Only | 4.900 | 2.158 | .085 | -.53 | 10.33 |
| | Face-to-Face | 3.300 | 2.158 | .318 | -2.13 | 8.73 |
| Face-to-Face | CALL Only | 1.600 | 2.158 | .761 | -3.83 | 7.03 |

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.
C: There was not any significant difference between blended (M = 38.40) and face-to-face (M = 35.10) groups' means on the posttest of grammatical accuracy (MD = 3.30, p > .05).

**5. Discussion and Conclusion**

Although there wasno significant difference between the two groups' mean scores on the posttest of grammatical accuracy, the mean of the explicit groups was higher than that of the implicit group which showed higher gain for this group as a result of the treatment. Regarding the lack of significance difference between the effectiveness explicit and implicit instruction of grammar on the improvement of the grammatical accuracy, some arguments can be made.

The present study findings show that implicit instruction of the grammar is as important as the explicit way on instructing grammar. As Nassaji and Fotos (2004) implicit instruction of grammar can be as effective as the explicit instruction of the grammar provided that a learning environment created for learners is enriched with the target features. In the present study, in the implicit groups lots of opportunities were provided for the learners whereby they were able to get involved in the enriched environment to learn the intended target structures but without drawing learners' explicit attention to them.From this perspective, the results of this study confirms those of a study by Chiu and Chien (2011) which showed that both implicit and explicit instruction of grammar can be equally effective in the instruction of L2 grammar.The results of a one-way ANOVA to compare the CALL only, face-to-face, and blended groups on the posttest of grammatical accuracy after receiving explicit instruction of grammar showed difference of gains in means of these three groups as a result of the treatment. Furthermore, the results indicated different modes of explicit instruction bring about different effects in development of grammatical knowledge of the participants in the study. In terms of explicit instruction of the grammar, these results seem to be vindicated since in the explicit instruction, teachers try to explain the grammatical rules to learners and various modes of presenting materials affect the amount of explicit explanation. In other words, as Ellis (2008) asserts face-to-face, CALL-only and blended environments result in various doses of explicit materials presented to learners.



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Analyzing questions related to explicit instruction, one can understand that there was not any significant difference between CALL only and face-to-face groups' means on the posttest of grammatical accuracy. However, the blended group significantly outperformed the CALL only group on the posttest of grammatical accuracy. It was also shown that there was not any significant difference between blended and face-to-face groups' means on the posttest of grammatical accuracy. Main reason for better performance of the blended group in explicit instruction in comparison to the CALL-only and face-to-face groups was that in the blended group, participants made use of techniques of both face-to-face and CALL-only groups, so they had higher degree of maneuverability. This difference was easily noticeable in better performance of the blended group in comparison to the CALL-only group. The results showed the relative advantage of making use of CALL techniques together with traditional face-to-face classes.

It can be argued that since CALL provided various opportunities in terms of explaining the grammatical points directly, it did not result in comparison to the face-to-face instruction of grammar. The same was true for the comparison between blended and face-to-face groups. Results of one-way ANOVA manifested no significant differences between the CALL-based, face-to-face, and blended classes regarding the impact of implicit instruction on grammatical accuracy of the Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

The participants appreciated that the content was well organized and that grammar rules were presented in an informative and easy–to–understand manner in instruction of grammar through CALL techniques applied in CALL-only classes and blended classes. Findings of this research indicate that there is a strong positive effect of the computer-based grammar instruction on learners' knowledge of the target structures that were the focus of this study. For learners, CALL-supported grammar instruction means that they have more tools to choose from to improve their knowledge. Similar to Zhang et al. (2004) and Gilby (2004), in the present study,participants reported they tend not to ask questions in class in fear of slowing down the rest of the students. For these participants, the availability of CALL-based materials could mean additional help without losing their dignity.

The CALL-based instruction also seem practical from another perspective. In line with Tse's(2000) finding, the present study proved that CALL-instruction includes elements that give the chance for slower students to go over materials in a repetitive fashion in the implicit learning so it can be as good as face-to-face classes where materials are presented with some time-factor limitations. As a result, CALL-based instruction for grammar either in a pure format or a blended format can be as effective as the face-to-face implicit instruction of grammar.

In a similar vein, having access to call-based materials in the implicit instruction is more convenient than looking for the same information in the book or trying to contact teachers outside of their office hours. Therefore, learners make the learning process more comfortable which contributes to the effectiveness of the CALL-only and blended implicit instruction of grammar as much as the face-to-face one. The next factor which contributed to effectiveness of applying in instructing grammar implicitly and explicitly was the fact that computer-based grammar instruction affords individualized learning. The ability to cater to individual differences in learning has often been considered one of the main advantages of computer-based learning (Dodigovic, 2005; Heift& Schulze, 2007). Learners like the idea that they can access the CALL-based materials from anywhere, and they can pace the materials as they wish.

Although grammar always plays an important role in language learning, the rigid grammar instruction approaches that characterizes language instruction in many face-to-face traditional classes can be eradicated by making use of the multimedia features of CALL for instructing grammar. Therefore, CALL-based grammar instruction can be as effective as face-to-face



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instruction. Due to this very fact, the difference of effectiveness of teaching grammar in CALL-based groups in this study was as high as the face-to-face classes.

The findings of the present study demonstrate that CALL can be an effective tool for explicit and implicit grammar instruction and most learners appreciate what such a tool can afford. In theoretical terms, the computer-based grammar instruction can serve as an "explicit jumpstart" (DeKeyser&Juffs, 2005, p. 442) by offering a systematic view on grammar topics by means of deductive rule-based explanation. In line with R. Ellis's (2002) idea of a parallel option of grammar teaching, when form-focused activities are taken out of an overall meaning-oriented instruction, these tutorials can take grammar instruction outside of class, offering learners an ability to study grammar according to their individual learning preferences.

The results of the study demonstrated that grammar instruction through CALL can be at least comparable to traditional face–to–face instruction. Lightbown and Spada (2006) posed the question "How can classroom instruction provide the right balance of meaning-based and form-focused instruction?" (p. 180). The study presented here affords one possible answer to this question: The use of computer-based grammar instruction could certainly be a viable method of providing such a balance. Computer-based grammar instruction can provide learners with opportunities for conscious learning and help them establish a solid systematic base for language acquisition without compromising the overall meaning-focused orientation of the language classroom(Hubbard, et al., 2013).Further, this study provides sufficient grounds to believe that learners welcome CALL-based grammar instruction because such learning tools can be adjusted to fit their individual learning styles. It is welcomed because it can offer more opportunities for individualized learning. All things considered, at a time when educators are looking for new ways to improve learners' accuracy both in mainstream language learning and in computer-assisted language learning, computer-based grammar instruction has a strong chance to make its comeback as a valuable tool for language learners.

In conclusion, the results of this study suggest that grammar instruction by means of CALL is as effective as the teacher-directed face-to-face grammar instruction.According to interactionist approaches to SLA (Long, 1996 cited in Low &Sweller, 2005), interaction is the most important way in which learners obtain data for language learning. Moreover, interactionists argued that in addition to manipulation of input through interaction, learners need be opportunities to receive corrective feedback to able to better regulate language production or output. The finding of the study may indicate that both traditional classroom teacher-directed group and CALL group had similar quality of input of the target structure as well as effective interaction that are both crucial for the language acquisition process. Because of this, no significant difference was noticed between CALL-only explicit grammar instruction and face-to-face instruction.

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# THE EFFECT OF INTERACTIVE SPEAKING ACTIVITIESON DEVELOPINGEFL LEARNERS' SPEAKING ACCURACY AND FLUENCY AMONG PRE-INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS

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**Abstract**
The present study investigated the effect of interactive speaking activities on developing English foreign language(EFL)learners' speaking accuracy and fluency among intermediate learners. 36 female language learners of Farikhtegan institute in Sarbandar, were selected. Then, they were non-randomly divided into three equal groups of two experimental (i.e., fluency and accuracy) and a control group. The participants took apre-test of speaking proficiency. The teacher focused on interactive speaking activitiesbut in the fluency group,the teacher focused on the ability to produce speech at normal rate and without hesitation. The control group received traditional method of speaking activities.After the treatment,a post-test was administered to the three groups. Data were analyzed through One-way ANOVA and Post-hoc Scheffe tests and the findings showed significant differences between the groups. The learners in the fluency group outperformed the other groups.However,the learners in the accuracy group outperformed the learners in the control group. Implications of the study for teaching speaking fluency and accuracy can be practiced through interactive speaking activities at theintermediate level.

**Key Words:** Interactive speaking activities,speaking skill, accuracy, fluency

## 1. Introduction

For students who are studying English in a non-English speaking setting, it is very vital to experience real communicative situations in which they will learn how to show their own ideas and thoughts, and to develop their speaking fluency and accuracy which are very necessary for the success of foreign language communication. Pourhossein (2014) states classroom interaction is essential and useful as an educational strategy to improve learning because it creates opportunities for the classroom community to develop knowledge and skills. Khadidja (2010) expresses the concept of classroom interaction performs a vital role in the process of second language learning because many classroom activities which occur between teachers and learners and among learners, will finally shape individual learners' improvement. In fact, the considerable interest in the role of interaction in the context of learning became a significant aspect for the researchers of this field, because it makes opportunities for the classroom community to develop



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knowledge and skills. This is best accomplished when the students are correctly motivated by accepting interactive speaking activities.

Interactive speaking activities supply opportunities for students to utilize the target language in a communicative way for meaningful activities. Mackey (2012) states that interaction provides second language learners with learning opportunities during exchanges of communication. She expresses that the input and output processes, feedback and modification of utterances during interaction, have vital role in processing form-meaning relationship during conversation, learners also have chances to pay attention to and compare differences between their utterances of target language and language utilized by native and non-native speaking conversational partners.Hughes (2003) says fluency talks about the production and it is normally assigned for speech. In fluency linking components of speech easily and without hesitation is very significant. Fluency has been viewed as a major feature in judging non-native speakers' proficiency (Riggenbach, 1991). Accuracy is using the correct grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. The student's fluency can be developed by producing classroom activities in that learners must negotiate meaning, utilize communication strategies, correct misapprehensions, and work to avoid communication breakdowns (Richards, 2008).

One of the strategies which can be very effective in improving speaking fluency and accuracy and seems to be neglected in the case of Iranian EFL learners is interactive speaking activities. Thus, there is an urgent need to study this aspect in order to see if speaking fluency and accuracy will be influenced by the use of interactive speaking activities in Iranian EFL intermediate learners.This thesis specifically attempted to reflect on the following research questions: (1) Do interactive speaking activities develop intermediate EFL learners' speaking fluency? (2) Do interactive speaking activities develop intermediate EFL learners' speaking accuracy? And (3)Is there any significant difference between intermediate EFL learners' speaking fluency and accuracy through applying interactive speaking activities?

## 2. Review of the Related Literature

### 2.1. Classroom Interaction

Interaction has long been regarded vital in language learning. Kramsch (1987) indicated that "it may be quiet; it may be noisy; it may be alert and dynamic; it may accomplish in large groups, small groups or pairs" (p. 18). It will make learners extremely involved in activities that draw on their creativity. Teachers should express these features to learners to aid them succeed their barriers and fear of embarrassment. Richards and Rodgers (2001) noted that second language learning is simplified when students are motivated in interaction and meaningful communication. Rivers (1987) expressed "Interaction is an elicitation of willing learner participation and initiative which needs a high degree of interpersonal communication skills" (p. 10). It related to the interchange of information between the teacher and the learners or between the learners. Brown (2001) considered that sending and receiving messages, interpreting them in a context, negotiation meanings, and collaborative to perform certain aim is the ways that people utilize to communicate together; all of them are the base of interaction. He has founded that the best method to learn to interact is through interaction itself

Lee (2004) indicated that developing interactive activities looks to be an alternative means to assist the second language learners to get the target language in a meaningful way. He said that by means of interaction, second language learners can develop their linguistic competence and utilize proper strategies to change and negotiate meaning in spite of their inaccurate and incomplete speeches.Also, the concept of interaction has a vital importance in the classroom; it is a significant part in learning and teaching processes. Allwright and Baily (1991) indicated that interaction is something people can achieve together i.e. collectively. According to Richards, Platt,



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and Platt (1992), "classroom interaction refers to the patterns of oral and non-oral communication and the kinds of social relationships which happen within classrooms that may be a part of studies of classroom discourse, teacher talk and second language acquisition "(p. 150). Briefly, classroom interaction can be a classroom process in which teachers and learners debate during the class time for particular goals. It can be measured by dialogues and free debates in the classroom.

**2. 2. Fluency and Accuracy**

As far as accuracy and fluency are focused, different researchers have given various definitions. To define fluency: some researchers focus only on some aspects of speech like words or syllables per minute and the length or number of pauses (Lennon, 1990). Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) noted fluency as "the creation of language in real time without inappropriate pausing of hesitation" (p.139). Hughes (2003) regarded fluency as the capacity to represent oneself in a comprehensible, rational and correct way without too much hesitation otherwise the communication will interrupt because listeners will lose their interest. To do this aim, the teachers then should train students to utilize their personal language freely to represent their own opinion and then avoid imitations of model of some kind. Brown (1991) noted "fluent means flowing naturally and fluency may be an initial aim in language teaching" (p. 254). Thornbury (2005) expressed that speed and pause are vital feature in fluency, because speakers require taking breath. Skehan (1998) defined fluency as the capacity to speak or read rapidly, accurately, and without undue hesitation. Thornbury (2005) defined speaking fluency includes connecting words together without interrupting. Richards (2008) indicated "the learner's fluency can be developed by creating classroom activities that learners must negotiate meaning, utilize communication strategies, correct misapprehensions, and work to prevent communication interrupts" (p. 14).

Stein and Schools (1999) expressed the term accuracy refers to correct use of linguistic structures (i.e., grammatical accuracy), proper use of register (sociolinguistic accuracy), exactitude of vocabulary (semantic accuracy), and appropriate use of cohesive devices (i.e., rhetorical accuracy). TavakoliandRezazadeh (2014) noted the interaction strategy training expressed highlighted the significance of speaking in teaching and learning the foreign language. They stated that EFL teachers may help the learners develop their oral performanceby means of knowing how to go about planning a second/foreign language lessons during the course of study. There is greater agreement among researchers with measures of accuracy (Shen, 2013).

**2.3. Interactive Speaking Activities**

Interactive speaking activities prepare opportunities for students to employ the second language in a communicative way for meaningful activities.In order to see the effect of interaction strategy training in developing speaking skills a research was conducted by Lourdunathan and Menon (2005). The first aim of the study was to find how interaction strategy training might effects the improvement of verbal competence.They also considered the frequency and the types of interaction strategies utilized and the effectiveness of interaction strategy utilize after training. The important findings of this study were that: (1) training or explicit instruction in interaction strategies develop group interaction, (2) training resulted in more frequent and varied use of interaction strategies. They also indicated that a small range of vocabulary or limited language proficiency of the learners affected the successful use of interaction strategies (Pourhossein,2014).Some researchers (e.g.,Kusnierek, 2015;M'mbone, Kemboi&Andiema, 2015) draw attention to interactive teaching approaches todevelop verbal communication skills in learners. They maintain that by providing enough opportunities for practicing the language and



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promoting students' willingness to communicate in the classroom their confidence to take part in class discussion will be raised up(Askari&Langroudi, 2014).

**3. Methodology**

**3. 1. Participants**

The present study was conducted with the help of 36 students who were selected out of 60 EFL students from Farikhtegan English institute in Sarbandar. They were all females and ranged in age from 16 to 19 years old.Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) was used to measure the homogeny of the participants.Their level of English language proficiency was determined on the basis of their scores on the OQPT. Based on the students' scores, the students who were in levels 40-47 (intermediate) were selected as the participants of this study. Then, they were randomly divided into three groups of 12; two experimental groups (i.e., fluency and accuracy) and one control group.

**3.2. Instrumentation**

Four different instruments were used in the process of the development of the present research. Initially, theOQPT (2010) was used to determine the students' homogeny level.It consisted of 60 questions. This test was utilizedto determine the students' proficiency in English language. The OQPTtest contained sixty multiple choice questions which needed 30 minutes to conduct. According to OQPT, those who were at levels 40-47 (out of 60) were considered as intermediate learners.

The second instrument of this study was a pre- test. It included 3 topics that each participant talked about one of them. They were designed by teacher by using the Interchange book1 (Richards, 2008). It was scored through a speaking check list proposed by Hughes' checklist (2003). The students' performances were scored by two raters at the same time. The inter-rater reliability of this test was computed through Pearson Correlation formula as (r =0.871) to calculate the reliability of the test scores.

The third instrument of this study wasa post-test. It was done to determine the effects of treatment;interactive speaking activities (role-play,a topic and questionand answer) on participants' speaking fluency and accuracy. Moreover, the post-test includes the same topics in the pre-test.It was scored through the speaking checklist (Hughes, 2003).The speaking post-tests werescored by two raters at the same time. The inter-rater reliability of this test was computed through Pearson Correlation formula as(r=0.696) to calculate the reliability of the test scores.

Finally, the checklist of speaking (Hughes, 2003) was used in both the pre-test and post-test to measure speaking fluency and accuracy abilities of participants. This checklist had six componentsincluding fluency, comprehension, communication, vocabulary, structure and accent.

**3. 3. Materials**

Considering eight sessions for the three classes at the English institute, the researcher was able to select three lessons of "Interchange, book 1"(Richards, 2005)that were related to participants' proficiency English language level. The lessons were selected based on the participants' pre-test scores and the consultant received by two other instructors. They assigned that the level of Interchange' book 1 was appropriate for teaching students based on the results of the pre-test.

**3.4. Procedure**

This study was conducted at Farikhtegan English institution in Sarbandar. The first step was to make sure of the students' homogeneity. A week before the instruction, the researcher administered OQPT (2010) to 60 female participants in order to select 36 participants. Those participants that were at levels 40-47 were selected and divided into three groups randomly; two



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experimental groups (i.e., fluency and accuracy) and one control group. The three groups included 12 participants. Before starting the instruction,thepre-test was administered to discover the students' levels of speaking proficiency at the beginning of the research period. It related to speaking purpose. It was a face-to-face interview. Each student had an interview in 2 minutes. After introducing themselves, the students weregiven 3 general topics, students spoke about one of them base of their favorite topic. Each production was recorded by a MP3 player and then was scored according to the checklist Hughes (2003) by two ratersat the same time.Experimental groups received interactive speaking activities (i.e., role-play, a topic and question and answer) on developing speaking fluency and accuracy. The control group received traditional (conversational) method at speaking activities;the activities are based on the "Interchange, book 1".

The treatment lasted eightsessions, 45 minutes a session, twice aweek. During the treatment, in each session, the researcher applied interactive speaking activities in the experimental groups. As it was mentioned before, during each session, three types of techniques including suggesting a topic for each lesson, question and answers and role-play were used for speaking purpose. The only difference between the two experimental groups wasthat in the fluency group,the teacher focused on the ability to produce speech at a normal rate and without hesitation and the teacher did not attend ungrammatical sentences but in the accuracy group,the teacher focused on grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation and the teacher was as an assessor of accuracy as learners attempt to pronounce the words; as a corrector of pronunciation; as an organizer in giving instructions of their activities. The same lessons were taught tothe control and experimental groups.The control group received traditional (conversational) method for speaking and the teacher had an authority role. In the experimental groups, norms werenot defined only by the teacher, but the teacher was as a facilitator. After the treatment period, the post-test of speaking achievement was administered to the three groups.The Post-test was the same for all control and experimental groups.The topics for the pre and post-test were the same. Each production was recorded by the MP3 player and then was scored according to the checklist developed by Hughes (2003) by two raters at the same time. Finally, the results of the tests were compared to each other to know the importance of interactive speaking activities in speaking fluency and accuracy.

**3. 5. Data Analysis**

In order to determine the effect of interactive speaking activities on developing speaking fluency andaccuracyof Iranian intermediate EFL learners, once the scores of the pre-test and post-test were obtained, then the data werecompared to each other through One-way ANOVA and Post-hoc Scheffe test to reach the effectiveness of the treatment on teaching interactive speaking activities and tofind out whether the differences between the three groups were statistically significant.

**4. Results**

This section deals with the results obtained throughout the research and analytically scrutinizes the three groups' performance in the study. Since the number of the participants was 12 in each group, the KS test was used to check the normality of scores. Arriving at the normality of scores distribution, the researchers did the parametric statistics on the data. Descriptive statistics of the pre-test by all the three groups is presented in the Table 1.

*Table1.Descriptive Statistics (Pre-test)*



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| Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | | Min. | Max. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | | |
| Fluency | 12 | 10.3333 | 2.30940 | .66667 | 8.8660 | 11.8007 | 4.00 | 12.00 |
| Accuracy | 12 | 11.8333 | 3.73761 | 1.07895 | 9.4586 | 14.2081 | 3.00 | 17.00 |
| Control | 12 | 11.1667 | 3.15748 | .91149 | 9.1605 | 13.1728 | 5.00 | 18.00 |
| Total | 36 | 11.1111 | 3.09634 | .51606 | 10.0635 | 12.1588 | 3.00 | 18.00 |

Table 1 shows that in the present study, there were 12female students in each of the three groups. The result of the pre-test showed that the mean score of the fluency group was 10.33. The mean score of the accuracy group was 11.83. The mean score of the controlgroup was 11.16. The total mean of the three groups was 11.11.In order to understand the degree of proximity among the pre-tests, One-way ANOVA was administered.The results of the statistical operations are presented in Table 2.

*Table 2. One-way ANOVA (Pre-test)*

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 13.556 | 2 | 6.778 | .695 | .506 |
| Within Groups | 322.000 | 33 | 9.758 | | |
| Total | 335.556 | 35 | | | |

Table 2 shows that since the observed F (.695) is less than the critical F (2.87) with df= 2/33, the difference between the pre-test in the three groups is not significant ($p<0.05$). Descriptive statistics on the post-test is presented in Table 3.

*Table 3. Descriptive Statistics(post-test)*

| Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | | Min. | Max. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | | |
| Fluency | 12 | 16.7500 | 1.35680 | .39167 | 15.8879 | 17.6121 | 15.00 | 19.00 |
| Accuracy | 12 | 16.9167 | 1.31137 | .37856 | 16.0835 | 17.7499 | 15.00 | 19.00 |
| Control | 12 | 14.4167 | 1.56428 | .45157 | 13.4228 | 15.4106 | 12.00 | 17.00 |
| Total | 36 | 16.0278 | 1.79660 | .29943 | 15.4199 | 16.6357 | 12.00 | 19.00 |

Table 3 shows that the mean score of the fluency group was 16.75. The mean score of theaccuracy group was 16.91 and the mean score of the control group was 14.41. The total mean of the three groups was 16.02.Since the present study investigates the effect of interactive speaking activities on the EFL learner's speaking fluency and accuracy achievement, the performance of the participants of each group was taken into consideration. Therefore, One-way ANOVA was used



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to determine whether the observed F was significant at the 0.05 level. The results of the One-way ANOVA are presented in Table 4.

*Table 4.One-way ANOVA (post-test)*

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 46.889 | 2 | 23.444 | 11.707 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 66.083 | 33 | 2.003 | | |
| Total | 112.972 | 35 | | | |

Since the observed F (11.707) is greater than the critical F (2.87) with df 2/33, the difference between the groups is significant ($p<0.05$). It means that the three groups are different due to the treatment of the present research. Results of the Post-hoc Scheffe test determine the exact difference between the groups. Theresults of the Post-hoc Scheffe test are presented in the Table 5.

*Table 5. Post-hoc Scheffe test, Multiple Comparisons*

| | | Mean Difference | | | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (I) Tests | (J) Tests | (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Fluency | Accuracy | -.16667 | .57771 | .959 | -1.6474 | 1.3141 |
| | Control | 2.33333* | .57771 | .001 | .8526 | 3.8141 |
| Accuracy | Fluency | .16667 | .57771 | .959 | -1.3141 | 1.6474 |
| | Control | 2.50000* | .57771 | .001 | 1.0192 | 3.9808 |
| Control | Fluency | -2.33333* | .57771 | .001 | -3.8141 | -.8526 |
| | Accuracy | -2.50000* | .57771 | .001 | -3.9808 | -1.0192 |

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

Table 5 shows the Scheffe test analysis.It made clear that there is a significant difference among the three groups in the post-test. Post-hoc Scheffe test was performed to show the multiple-comparison of the three groups. It shows that, the difference between the fluencygroup and thecontrol group was significant. Also, there is a significant different between the accuracy group and the control group. The difference between the fluency group and the accuracy group was not significant.

**5. Discussion**

This section elaborates on the results andfindings presented in the previous section through providing answers to the followingresearch questions.

RQ1. Do interactive speaking activities develop intermediate EFL learners' speaking fluency?

The results of the pre-test and post-test showed thatthe mean scores of both groups (fluency and control) improved and the mean scores betweenthe fluency group and the control group were



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significantly different.The mean of thefluency group in the post- test was more than the mean of the control group.As a whole, the study showed that interactive speaking activities had moreeffective role in enhancing EFL learners'speaking fluency achievement in the fluency group at the intermediate level of English language compared to the control group. The results can be more approved by this evidence that there were significant differences between the means of the pre-tests andpost-tests of both fluency and control groups.That is to say, the learners in the fluency group outperformed the learners in the control group with the focus on interactive speaking activities in the classroom.Therefore, the first research null hypothesis was rejected. This is in agreement with the findings of Choudhury (2005) and Nugroho (2011) who reported similar results with regard to the positive effect of interactive activities in improving speaking skill.

It was also noticed that role-play, a topic and question and answer, with the teacher and with the whole class made the students active and maximized their interest and involvement in interactive speaking activities, resulting in the enhancement of speaking fluency. So, it decreased the number of students' hesitations and pauses to monitor their performances. This is very much compatible with the results of the research conducted by M'mbone, Kemboi and Andiema (2015). Their experiment discovered that interactive teaching approaches were important in the development of verbal communication skills in learners. Also, the results of this study are in line with the study thatPourhosseini (2014) did. It was designed to indicate whether exposure toclassroom interaction wasbeneficial to develop speaking skills

RQ2. Do interactive speaking activities develop intermediate EFL learners' speaking accuracy?

There were significant differences between the means of the pre-tests and post-tests of both accuracy and control groups. That is to say, the learners in the accuracy group outperformed the learners in the control group with the focus on interactive speaking activities in the classroom. So, participants in the accuracy group showed a significant improvement in the speaking accuracy achievement ($p<.05$).Therefore, the second research null hypothesis was rejected.The finding of this study is supported by Khadidja (2010).It was designed to indicate that, during regular interactions in the classroom; students can decrease their speaking errors, create new grammatical forms and vocabulary and thus strengthen their language abilities. The study found that using interactive speaking activities is a valuable approach to whole language teaching. Moreover, this study found that the using of interactive speaking activities improvedlearners' speaking accuracy. So, the finding was compatible with the result of Mohammadi, Gorjian, and Pazhakh (2014)which showed positive correlation between interactional speaking strategies and speaking accuracy.

Using interactive speaking activities such as role-play, a topic and question and answer had made the students feel more interactive and confident; they became self-aware, self-motivated, enthusiastic and developed initiative in the learning. This explanation is supported by Assia and Said (2014) who indicated that interaction is important to help learners particularly to ascertain how well they are learning the type of the task-based grammatical structure in the class and it had an influential impact on developing EFL learners' speaking accuracy performance.

RQ3: Is there any significant difference between intermediate EFL learners' speaking fluency and accuracy through applying interactive speaking activities?

The finding of this study showed the use of interactive speaking activities had the same role in improving speaking accuracy and speaking fluency in both groups (accuracy and fluency).It was designed to indicate that, classroom interaction can be improved through interactive activities for developing accuracy or fluency and controlled alternately by a teacher and students. The study found that using interactive speaking activities is a valuable approach to teaching speaking fluency and accuracy. Moreover, this study found that the using of interactive speaking activities



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improved learners' speaking fluency and accuracy. So, the finding was compatible with the results of Choudhury (2005) who indicated during interactions in the classroom, learners can reduce their speaking mistakes, produce new phrases and utterances, thus strengthening their language ability.

**6. Conclusion**

The present study investigated the effect of interactive speaking activities on developing intermediate EFL learners' speakingfluency andaccuracy. This study began with threeassumptions: (1) the first was that interactive speaking activities could enhance intermediateEFL learners' speaking fluency, (2)the second assumption was that interactive speaking activities could enhanceintermediate EFL learners' speaking accuracy, and (3)the third assumption was that there is not any significant difference between intermediate EFL learners' speaking fluency and accuracy through applying interactive speaking activities.The result of research indicated that interactive speaking activities affected intermediate language learners' speaking fluency and accuracy. Both fluency andaccuracy groups outperformed in the post-testbut thecontrol group did notdevelop much in the post-test. In short, interactive speaking activities could be used for EFL students in teaching speaking fluency and accuracy.

To sum up, the results of this research showed the use of interactive speakingactivities such as role-play, a topic and question and answer helped learners to improve their speaking fluency and accuracy.Learners who studied English as a foreign language took part in this study. Also, the same study can be replicated in other situations such as English second language situations and even in native speakers' contexts.Furthermore, this research was conducted on intermediate EFL learners at Farikhtegan institute in Sarbandar. Other levels of language proficiency can also be the participants of further studies if researchers wish to make generalizations about language learners at different proficiency levels by consideringtwo personality traits. Eventually, the study lasted for one month. Succeeding studies can allocate more time to study the effects of interactive speaking activities on EFL learners' speaking fluency and accuracy.

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# THE ROLE OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN EFL LEARNERS' ORAL PERFORMANCE

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**Abstract**
This study explored the effect of interpersonal communication skills on Iranian English as foreign language (EFL) university students' oral communication apprehension. 90 second -year students who were studying at Islamic Azad University of Abadan were selected out of 120. The students were chosen based on two tests of a self-report communication apprehension questionnaire and a pre-test of speaking proficiency. The participants were non-randomly divided into three equal groups. They included two experimental groups (i.e., student-student interpersonal communication and teacher-student interpersonal communication) and a control group. They met for 10 sessions (i.e., each an hour, twice a week). Then, the three groups were given a speaking pre-test of speaking and aself-reportquestionnaire. During the treatment, three groups covered three units of "Four Corner" (Richards, 2007). The experimental group of student-student received instructions on why, when, and how to use the interpersonal communication. The second experimental group of student-teacher had the same instruction.The control group received traditional instructions including question and answer and discussion. After the treatment sessions, the participants took the post-tests including the self-report questionnaire and the speaking post-test.Data were analyzed through One-way ANOVA and findings showed thestudent-student group outperformed the other groups in both level of communication apprehension and oral performance.

**Key Words:** Interpersonal communication, oral communication, apprehension

## 1. Introduction

Emphasis in linguistics has turned linguists and language teachers to deep structures of language and a holistic approach to language learning on the basis that true human interpersonal communication learning is both cognitive and affective (Adler, Proctor & Rosenfeld, 2011). While cognitive domain works with concepts such as knowledge, comprehension, and critical thinking on a particular topic, affective domain describes the way human being s emotional reactions and their ability to feel other living things' pain or joy. Since then, the affective domain of learning gained more prominence because human was considered as a whole rather than merely the focus of observable behavior (Argaman, & Abu-Rabia, 2002). The term 'communication apprehension' was used by McCroskey (1977) and is defined as a level of fear or anxiety of an individual



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connected with either real or anticipated interaction with another person or persons. Communication apprehension has been frequently found in speech classrooms, school meeting, and drama productions. It is a kind of anxiety, established often in the elementary grades, which can deeply influence much or all of a student's oral communication, social skills, and self-esteem.

A number of research studies (Segrin& Taylor, 2007) have discovered that students rarely use social and affective factors such interpersonal skill, pair work; therefore, they face a feeling of apprehension to communicate .although this apprehension seems to be a universal factor among language learners, EFL learners seem to suffer more than English as second language (ESL) learners. The importance of communication skills is however increasing in the world, as English language is becoming a world language. The Lack of these natural communication skills in the society as well as teacher- fronted classes has distilled the opportunity from EFL learners to overcome their anxiety in foreign language classrooms. Consequently, EFL learners attend classes with the desire to communicate orally but feel anxious due to shortage of interpersonal skills; therefore, the present study is to investigate the possible effects of interpersonal communication on learner's oral communication apprehension.The present study proposes the following research questions: Do interpersonal communication skills (i.e., teacher-learner or learner-learner) affect EFL university students' oral performance?

**2. Background**

Foreign language scholars have always been concerned with investigation of answers to find the reasons for the great difficulty encountered by a number of students when learning a foreign language where others find it less difficulty (Ganschow, Sparks, Anderson, Javorshy, Skinner & Jon, 1994). Students who face difficulty learning a foreign language are often described as underachievers, or lacking in motivation, or as having language learning disabilities (Huba& Freed, 2000).

Brown (2000) defined the affective domain as "the emotional side of human behavior" (p.143). The term affect is taken from psychology and is related to emotions or feelings. The affective domain is related to the emotional side of human behavior. Understanding human beings feeling, reactions and believing to achieve self- esteem is an important facet of a theory of second language acquisition. It's hard to significantly describe the affective domain because large numbers of variables are derived in light of the emotional side of human behavior in the second language learning process including self-esteem, inhibition, empathy, attitude, motivation and anxiety (Brown, 2000). The affective side of the learner can probably play a very important role in language success or failure (Oxford, 1999). Chastain (1988) claimed that the affective factors play a larger role in developing second/foreign language skills than do the cognitive ones because the emotions control the will to activate or to shut down the cognitive function. She also suggested that fluency depends less on the practice than it does on the emotional side.

A very important aspect of Krashen's (1982) theory is the AffectiveFilter Hypothesis. One of these affective factors is anxiety among attitude and motivation that has received much attention as a variable which has a devastating effect on performance in oral communication. Anxiety is seen in psychology as either a trait (relatively stable personality trait), or as a state (a temporary situation). Thethird type of anxiety is the anxiety which is specific to a situation. It refers to a specific place in which someone is anxious (Horwitz, 2001; MacIntyre& Gardner, 1993) and research in the field of languages have shown that learning a foreign language can be classified as a specific situation. Furthermore, many researchers have insisted that speaking in the target language may make anxiety for EFL learners (e.g., Aida, 1994; Bailey & Savage, 1984; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope,1986). Language learning anxiety may have negative effect on language learning.



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**2.1. Different Aspects of Personality Factors**

Even though we all know what anxiety is and we all have experienced feeling of anxiousness, anxiety is still not easy to define in a simple sentence (Brown, 2000). Anxiety, as defined by Scovel (1978), is related to feelings like restlessness, uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension or worry. Anxiety is generally seen as a psychological concept. Brown (2000, p. 151) made a distinction between" debilitative" and "facilitative" anxiety, and what Oxford (1999) called "harmful" and "helpful" anxiety. Brown (2000) states that "facilitating anxiety helps learners to overcome the obstacle, to get the job done; it can even simply push students to complete their homework while debilitating anxiety causes the learner to avoid the learning task in order to avoid the source of anxiety" (pp. 151-152).

The relationship between anxiety and education has been established throughout the research world for years (e.g., Gardner &MacIntyre, 1993; Horwitz, 2001; Horwitz &Young, 1990, 1991). Topics like test anxiety are commonplace in today's classrooms. While for many years society has recognized anxiety in certain fields of study like science and mathematics, the relationship between foreign language studies and situational anxiety only started gaining significant attention twenty years ago. Brown (2000) expressed that the acquisition of a new language is quite interesting though gigantic enterprise, encompassing a wide range of variables that may stem from neurological to psychological, cognitive and affective domains. Human learning is so complicated an issue that is extremely difficult to determine exactly the process taking place during learning. As such, it may seem rather difficult to decide upon a theory of learning. In fact, cognitive, emotional, biological, and other variables influence one's success or failure in learning. Therefore, a theory of learning should consider all the factors and variables affecting the process of learning

**2.2. Interpersonal Communication**

Interpersonal communication skills are part of everyone's daily life personally and professionally. Interpersonal communication skills have impact on individual experience and improve individual and group outcomes in life and work. Interpersonal communication can play an important role in fulfilling several human needs, like the need to belong, the need for competence and the need for autonomy (Baumeister& Leary, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2008). There is large body of research that shows that lack of adequate interpersonal communication skills is related to psychological suffering (e.g., DiTommaso, Brannen-McNulty, Ross &Burgess, 2003; Wenzel, Graff-Dolezal, Macho, &Brendle, 2005).Interpersonal communication skills have a broad range of applications. As with childhood and adolescence, children who develop good interpersonal communication skills perform better academically (Graziano, Reavis, Keane & Calkins, 2007).

**3. Method**

**3.1. Participants**

The study 120 second-year students, who were studying at Islamic Azad University of Abadan, were selected of 150 learners through non-random convenience sampling method. Then 90 students were chosen based on two pre-tests of an anxiety test and a speaking proficiency. All EFL learners were majoring in English Translation including males and females. The Participants were sophomore that means all have passed Conversation and Listening I Course. Then they were divided into three equal groups non-randomly. They were one control (i. e., traditional listening and speaking class) and two experimental groups (i.e., teacher-student and student-student).

**3.2. Instrumentation**



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The instruments included personal report of communication apprehension (PRCA-24), speaking pre and post-test.The PRCA-24 was developed by McCroskey (1977).Including 24 items whose reliability was reported as (alpha regularly >.90) and it has predictive validity as well. The same questionnaire was used as a post-test.An interview to examine their prior interpersonal communication based on IELTS (Ramezanee&Hakimi, 2004) was recorded to meet its inter-reliability. Thus a checklist developed by Hughes (2003) was used and rate by two scorers in both speaking pre and post-tests. The inter-rater reliability of the pre and post-tests were calculated through Pearson Correlation Analysis as (r=.697) and (r=.841) respectively. The post-test aimed to make sure that there was any change in the oral communication apprehension comparing with the pre-test.

**3.3. Materials**

The following research materials were implemented in the study:

a) A personal report of communication apprehension (PRCA-24) was administered to measure the extent of participants' communication apprehension and the prior interpersonal communication, it is highly reliable (alpha regularly >.90) and it has very high predictive validity. The items positively worded; the higher the score the higher the degree of communication apprehension.to measure to what extent participants feel communicatively apprehended , a 24-item Likert-type foreign language class anxiety scale developed by McCroskey (1977) was implemented. The questionnaire was given to the students after the oral interview.

b) The next was an oral interview based on IELTS test of speaking which was recorded. The test began with asking general questions including: introduce themselves, talk about their jobs, family, and hobbies, etc. The interview continued by giving them a topic and then they talked about it. In other words we discussed about the given topic. The interviews were recorded on an MP3player and then scored by two scorers according to scale Hughes (2003) for the sake of inter-rater reliability. The MP3 player was used to record the participants' voice for the raters.

**3.4. Procedure**

In this study, the data were collected by means of anxiety questionnaire (McCroskey, 1977), an oral interview which was based on the speaking test of IELTS (Ramezanee&Hakimi, 2004). First, a pre-test of speaking was administered through a planned interview which was 2 or 3 minutes for each participant. At the same time, the anxiety questionnaire was given to the participants. Then there were 10 one -hour sessions of teaching speaking skills. The participants were exposed to activities such as pair work and group work. The control group took ordinary treatment such as class discussion, question and answer and answering the exercises but the other two experimental groups were taught based on the students- students' interpersonal communication skills and the other one was taught based on teacher-studentsinterpersonal communication. In fact, in the teacher- student class, the students had no control over their own learning, this was the teacher that initiate the talk, assigns student homework, solve their problems, traditionally this kind of classes were called teacher centered while, in the student-student class teacher attended the class teaching the student the interpersonal kills the first session and the kind of skills they had to master. From the following sessions, the teacher monitored the students' activities which were previously explained to them. Therefore, learners attended their class without the fear of the teacher asking them their homework. In the student-student class student were divided into groups of five and every activity was done in groups.

The interview topics were according to the topics they study in their books. It began with asking general questions about their personal life, for example, introduce themselves and talk about



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their jobs, family, and hobbies and so on. The learners were asked to talk about the topics in pair or as group of three members. At the end of the interview, they were asked some questions about the given topic. The interviews were recorded on an MP3 player and then scored by two scorers. The total score was 20 based on the Hughes' (2003) speaking checklist. The reliability of the interview scoring was calculated through inter-rater reliability coefficient.

Exactly, after the speaking post-test, they were asked to answer the PRCA-24 questionnaire again. The questionnaire copies were coded to observe the students' privacy. It should be noted that oral performance post-test focused on the proficiency level of the students' oral interviews conducted face to face interaction in an isolated situation to minimize the degree of interference coming from unknown sources (i.e., interruption, making noise by other students, etc.). The data were collected for further analysis.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

In order to determine if interpersonal communication skills have any impact on EFL learners' oral communication apprehension at the sophomore level, the collected data was analyzed by using One-way ANOVA to show the mean differences between the groups. Then a Post-hoc Scheffe test was used to show the significant effect of the variables in developing vocabulary learning of Iranian English foreign language learners at the sophomore level.

## 4. Results

This section describes the process of analyzing the collected data, statistical computations.The anxiety questionnaire of the three groups was analyzed throughone sample Kolmogrov-Smirnov (KS) Test on the pre and post-tests to meet the normality of test distribution.

*Table1.One sample Kolmogrov-Smirnov Test (Pre and Post-tests)*

| | | Student-student anxiety pre-Q | Student-student anxiety post-Q | Teacher-student anxiety pre-Q | Teacher-student anxiety post-Q | Control anxiety pre-Q | Control anxiety post-Q |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| Normal Parameters[a,,b] | Mean | 82.6667 | 41.0667 | 84.7667 | 77.8333 | 86.8333 | 85.0000 |
| | Std. Deviation | 16.85503 | 14.84618 | 17.80679 | 14.60298 | 19.73459 | 16.40017 |
| Most Extreme Differences | Absolute | .237 | .260 | .151 | .292 | .108 | .147 |
| | Positive | .132 | .172 | .151 | .178 | .086 | .100 |
| | Negative | -.237 | -.260 | -.139 | -.292 | -.108 | -.147 |
| Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z | | 1.299 | 1.422 | .828 | 1.601 | .590 | .805 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | | .068 | .035 | .500 | .012 | .877 | .537 |

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

Table 1 shows the data was calculated to make sure the distribution is normal. Normal distribution is used when the data could be calculated through parametric statistics such as One-way ANOVA. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics in the pre-test of the three groups.

*Table 2.Descriptive Analysis of Self-report QuestionnairePre-test*



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| Groups | N | Mean | SD | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Intervalfor Mean Lower Bound | Upper Bound | Min. | Max. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student-student | 30 | 82.66 | 16.85 | 3.07 | 76.37 | 88.96 | 30.00 | 110.00 |
| Teacher-student | 30 | 84.76 | 17.80 | 3.25 | 78.11 | 91.41 | 50.00 | 120.00 |
| Control | 30 | 86.83 | 19.73 | 3.60 | 79.46 | 94.20 | 38.00 | 125.00 |
| Total | 90 | 84.75 | 18.04 | 1.90 | 80.97 | 88.53 | 30.00 | 125.00 |

Table 2 shows the number of the students in each of the three groups is 30. Initially, each student's pre-test score on the anxiety test was obtained. Then descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation of each group were calculated. Results indicated that the average means for every three groups was near and the difference among the three groups' was not significant.

*Table 3.One-way ANOVA of Self-report QuestionnairePre- test*

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 260.422 | 2 | 130.211 | .394 | .675 |
| Within Groups | 28728.200 | 87 | 330.209 | | |
| Total | 28988.622 | 89 | | | |

Table 3 shows that the observed F (F=.394) is less than critical F (F=3.11) with df=2/87. Thus the difference between the groups is not significant at ($p<0.05$)on the pre-test.It shows that the participants were closely at the same level of anxiety at the beginning of the course.The descriptive statistics for the three groups on the post-test are presented in Table 4.

*Table 4.Descriptive Statistics for the Self-report Questionnaireon the Post-test*

| Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean Lower Bound | Upper Bound | Min. | Max. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student-student | 30 | 41.06 | 14.84 | 2.71 | 35.52 | 46.61 | 24.00 | 80.00 |
| Teacher-student | 30 | 77.83 | 14.60 | 2.66 | 72.38 | 83.28 | 50.00 | 100.00 |
| Control | 30 | 85.00 | 16.40 | 2.99 | 78.87 | 91.12 | 50.00 | 120.00 |
| Total | 90 | 67.96 | 24.56 | 2.58 | 62.82 | 73.11 | 24.00 | 120.00 |

Table4 shows that the mean in the student-student group differs significantly from two other groups, and also the mean for teacher-student group shows a difference to some degree from the control group. The mean for student-student, teacher-student, and control groups were 41.06, 77.83and 85.00 respectively. To describe the statistical significance of the three groups' means, One-way ANOVA was applied, and the results of the test were interpreted from two points: Level of significance and F-ratio. The results of the statistical operations are analyzed in Table 5.



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*Table 5.One- way ANOVA of the Self-report QuestionnairePost-test*

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 33332.867 | 2 | 16666.433 | 71.161 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 20376.033 | 87 | 234.207 | | |
| Total | 53708.900 | 89 | | | |

Table 5 indicates that the observed F (F=71.161) is greater than critical F (F=3.11) with df=2/87, the difference between the groups is significant at ($p<0.05$).Thus the results of the post-test showed that the participants' scores rejected the null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance which shows that the differences among the means were significant. To clarify which group outperformed other groups in the post-test, the Post-hoc Scheffe test was conducted to compare the specific mean effectiveness among the three groups. Data are illustrated in Table 6.

*Table 6.Multiple Comparison of Self-report QuestionnairePost-test (Post-hoc Scheffe test)*

| (I) VAR00020 | (J) VAR00020 | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student-student | Teacher-student | -36.766* | 3.953 | .000 | -46.60 | -26.92 |
| | Control | -43.933* | 3.95 | .000 | -53.77 | -34.09 |
| Teacher-student | Student-student | 36.766* | 3.95 | .000 | 26.92 | 46.60 |
| | Control | -7.166 | 3.95 | .199 | -17.00 | 2.67 |
| Control | Student-student | 43.933* | 3.95 | .000 | 34.09 | 53.77 |
| | Teacher-student | 7.16667 | 3.95 | .199 | -2.67 | 17.00 |

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

Table 6 shows that student-student group is significantly different from control group at the 0.05 level. The teacher-student group is not significantly different from the control group. The results shows that the student-student group shows the greatest difference in comparison with the control group and it shows that the interpersonal instruction had the most influence on the results of communication apprehension on post-test and learners' scores.

*Table 7.Descriptive Analysis of the Participants' Oral Performance Pre-test*

| Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean Lower Bound | Upper Bound | Min. | Max. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student-student | 30 | 14.20 | 1.84 | .33 | 13.51 | 14.88 | 12.00 | 18.00 |
| Teacher-student | 30 | 13.53 | 1.67 | .30 | 12.90 | 14.15 | 12.00 | 17.00 |
| Control | 30 | 13.53 | 2.28 | .41 | 12.68 | 14.387 | 10.00 | 17.00 |



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| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 90 | 13.75 | 1.95 | .20 | 13.34 | 14.163 | 10.00 | 18.00 |

Table 7 provides the descriptive statistics of the three groups speaking test in terms of number of participants (n), means, standard deviations (SD). Three groups of 30 students participated in this research. Their speaking scores (both males and females) ranged from 12 to 18 out of 20. There were not considerable and significant differences in demonstrated speaking level in the pre-test.

***Table8.****One-way ANOVA of the Participants' Oral Performance Pre-test*

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 8.889 | 2 | 4.444 | 1.166 | .317 |
| Within Groups | 331.733 | 87 | 3.813 | | |
| Total | 340.622 | 89 | | | |

Table 8 shows the observed F (F=1.166) is less than critical F (F=.3.11) with df=2/87, the difference between the groups is not significant at ($p<0.05$).It indicates that the groups were homogenies in the oral performance pre-test.Descriptive analysis of oral performance post-test is presented in Table 9.

*Table 9.Descriptive Analysis of Oral Performance Post-test*

| Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | | Min. | Max. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | | |
| Student-student | 30 | 17.60 | 1.10 | .20 | 17.18 | 18.01 | 15.00 | 19.00 |
| Teacher-student | 30 | 14.26 | 1.59 | .29 | 13.6 | 14.86 | 12.00 | 18.00 |
| Control | 30 | 13.40 | 2.17 | .39 | 12.58 | 14.21 | 10.00 | 18.00 |
| Total | 90 | 15.08 | 2.46 | .25 | 14.57 | 15.60 | 10.00 | 19.00 |

Table 9 shows that there is a great difference in mean scores of the groups' means of the post tests. However, to know how much these scores differ fromthe means, Post-hoc Scheffe test is run in Table 10.

*Table 10. One- way ANOVA of Oral Performance Post-test*

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 295.022 | 2 | 147.511 | 52.112 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 246.267 | 87 | 2.831 | | |
| Total | 541.289 | 89 | | | |



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Since the observed F (F=52.112) is greater than critical F (F=3.11) with df=2/87, the difference between the groups is significant at ($p<0.05$). The significant difference in speaking test is shown in this table because the observed F is greater than the critical. However,to clarify which group outperformed other groups in the post-test, the Post-hoc Scheffe test again was conducted to compare the specific mean effectiveness among the three groups. Data are illustrated in Table 11.

*Table 11.Post-hoc Scheffe Test of Oral Performance Post-test*

| (I) VAR00020 | (J) VAR00020 | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Student-student | Teacher-student | 3.333* | .434 | .000 | 2.251 | 4.415 |
| | Control | 4.200* | .434 | .000 | 3.118 | 5.281 |
| Teacher-student | Student-student | -3.333* | .434 | .000 | -4.415 | -2.251 |
| | Control | .866 | .434 | .143 | -.215 | 1.948 |
| Control | Student-student | -4.200* | .434 | .000 | -5.281 | -3.118 |
| | Teacher-student | -.866 | .434 | .143 | -1.948 | .215 |

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

Table 11 shows that the student-student group outperformed better compared to control and teacher-student group; however, teacher-student did not show a great difference regarding the mean difference with the control group.

**5. Discussion**

The results showed that there was not a significant difference among students' performance in pre-test, but in contrast there was a significant difference among the performances of the three groups in the post-test. It could be also observed that students who were helped to run the class in student-student instructiongot better scores and their performance was better than the both groups of teacher-teacher instruction and the control group. The reasons behind this result could be discussed in terms of the effectiveness of interpersonal communication skills on oral communication apprehension. The participants attended classes keeping in mind that the purpose of learning was to communicate and this communication was resulted only if the exchange of information among other classmates could take place. In addition, discussing, creating, and thinking in a group reduced the participants' anxiety level and motivated the learners to cooperate in class activities.

The teacher-student interactive classroom different have several weaknesses including lack of rapport, social distance between the teachers and students which affect language learning in general and learning speaking skill in particular. One way to modify this traditional pattern of speaking skills is to give students more participation for interactive learning. Some teachers may establish an atmosphere for friendly learning and this makes the students motivated to learn better (Webb & Baird, 1968). The concept of a student-student approach has been fruitful based on the results of this study. Teachers need to encourage students to rely more on themselves and less on the teacher. Students should be self-motivated with an inquiring nature. The teacher was the ultimate power to provide the students with the authentic language any error was corrected immediately , therefore , learners were afraid to participate in class freely; therefore, the second null hypotheses is not rejected and teacher-teacher interpersonal communication does not affect student oral communication apprehension.



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Many language teachers in EFL contexts treat learners in a traditional way that is they dominate the whole time of the class and lees attention is given to the students' interaction. Moreover, in teacher-centered classes where the students have a passive role in learning, teachers are considerably remiss in teaching paramount component of language, overlooking the insight that they can give language learners by using language learning strategies in general and cognitive strategies in particular. Teachers need to encourage students to rely more on themselves and less on the teacher. Students should be self-motivated with an inquiring nature. As teachers, they should endeavor to abandon taking the full responsibility of teaching and engage the learners in the process of learning and bring up independent and autonomous language learners.

**6. Conclusion**

The results indicated that the instruction of using interpersonal communication skills did affect the learners' oral communication apprehension in the student-student class the most. EFL learners should participate in class interactions and take more responsibility for their learning and rely less on teachers and adopt cooperative learning. Learners' autonomy is the ultimate goal of language teaching. Learners' autonomy implies that in the absence of language teachers and classes, language learners continue their learning. If learners rely on their teachers, as soon as they are left by themselves, they easily quit learning. Interpersonal commination among students all kinds of interactions are useful ways to eliminate this problem. Interpersonal communication is the path through which learner autonomy can appropriately be achieved. As a result, the language learners are also suggested that to be more active in innovative conversations, especially ones that help them interact in everyday life which can reduce their apprehension. A future study is essential in which the immediate and delayed post-tests are conducted at different time intervals to show the effectiveness of semantic relation in shorter and longer periods.

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# A REVISION STRATEGICMEDIATIONQUESTIONNAIRE: ASSESSMENT AND VALIDATION WITHIN SOCIOCULTURAL FRAMEWORK

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**Abstract**
This paper deals with the process of developing and validating a writing revision strategies and strategic mediation questionnaire including four categories: artifact-mediated, rule-mediated, community-mediated, and role-mediated strategies. Three types of evidence regarding the validity of the questionnaire were accumulated: content, reliability, and construct. Content validity was obtained from expert judges, and cronbach's alpha was used to measure the internal consistency reliability of the questionnaireand each subscale. A principal component anlysis (pca) was used to assess the construct validity of eachsubscale. Regarding pca results, a new subcategorization of strategic mediation is suggested and potential problems and limitations are pointed out. The authors conclude the triagulation of the different data sources in the validation process provides not only information on the validity of the instrument but also valuable insights into developing a more valid questionnaire.

**Key words:** validation, revision strategies, strategic mediation, sociocultural theory

**Introduction**
Revision has a long history in the field of composition and has been understood and measured in various ways (Fitzgerald, 1987). The importance of revision in writing is universally recognized. Experts see the need for student writers to learn how to revise more effectively (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996, cited in Sengupta, 2000; Leki, 1992). Murray (1991, cited in Cameron Horn, 2009) describes the relationship between writing and revision by declaring, "Writing *is* revising, and the writer's craft is largely a matter of knowing how to discover what you have to say, develop, and clarify it, each requiring the craft of revision" (p. 2).
Application of mediation analysis and Activity Theory has recently mushroomed in writing research (e.g., Prior, 2001; Prior and Shipka, 2003; Villamil and deGuerrero, 1996), in tandem with

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the increasing popularity of sociocultural research in SLA and language learning strategies (e.g., Donato and McCormick, 1994; Lantolf, 2000, 2006; Parks andRaymond, 2004).

To further extend sociocultural research in L2 writing, Lei's (2008) study explores EFL learners' writing strategy use in a general academic setting by drawing on Activity Theory. According to Activity Theory, writing strategies, as a kind of higher mental function, are mediated. To distinguish them from other higher mental functions and capture their peculiar features, writing strategies are defined as mediated actions which are consciously taken to facilitate writers' practices in communities.

**2. Literature review and research rationale**

2.1. A classic model of writing and revision processes

Within the traditional cognitive framework, writing is regarded as a ''non-linear, exploratory and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning'' (Zamel, 1983, p. 165), and during writing, writers use strategies such as planning, translating, reviewing, monitoring, generating ideas, organizing, goal-setting, evaluating, and revising (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987; Flower and Hayes, 1980, 1981; Grabeand Kaplan, 1996, cited in Lei, 2008). However, as Prior (2006 cited in Lei, 2008) points out, the cognitive paradigm is ''too narrow in its understanding of context and was eclipsed by studies that attended to social, historical, and political contexts of writing'' (p. 54).

The cognitive process model of writing and revision proposed by Flower et al. (1986) has become a classic proposal in analyzing students' writing and revision process in both the native language (Beach, 1976; Faigley and Witte, 1981) and the second language (Zamel, 1985). In this model, writing and revision were portrayed as cognitive processes influenced by the writer's knowledge and intentions for the text, accounting for how feedback influences revision by way of a writer's goals for the piece and interpretation of the feedback. Processes of revision include reading the text, detecting problems, selecting a strategy, and revising the text (Herrington, 1992, cited in Lee and Schallert, 2008). As Faigley (1986, cited in Lee and Schallert, 2008) stated, as much as the cognitive model's contribution to the current views of what a writer experiences needed to be acknowledged, such a view reflected an individualistic perspective on writing that did not address the greater social and cultural meaning of writing and revision acts. It lacked the sociocultural turn that educational researchers were beginning to take, influenced by Lev Vygotsky (1978). In the field of writing, this sociocultural framework has become influential since 1980s.

2.2. Writing and revision processes from a sociocultural perspective

Vygotsky (1978) viewed learning as a sociocultural process in which the learner acquires new knowledge and skills by interacting with a more expert person and comes to be ableto perform a task under guidance that could not be achieved alone (Lantolf, 2000). In Vygotsky's view, knowledge is not transmitted from an expert to a novice or constructed by individuals on their own. Rather, it is socially constructed amongindividuals facilitated by the learner's reciprocal contributions to the process.

According to Lave and Wenger (1991, cited in Lei, 2008), learning is a way of being in the social world; learners acquire knowledge and skills through actual practice and, in this way, gain access to their communities. Prior and Shipka (2003) argue that writing is deeply laminated by the dispersed, fluid chains of writing places, time, people, and artifacts. From these studies, we can see that cognition, as applied in writing, and context are intertwined and interact so closely that their boundaries are blurred, and we need a dialectical approach to studying them in a holistic way. The centrality of activity in sociocultural research is reflected in Leont'ev (1981, cited in Lim and Chai, 2004) assertion:



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''Human psychology is concerned with the activity of concrete individuals, which takes place whether in a collective – that is, jointly with other people – or in a situation in which the subject deals directly with the surrounding world of objects – e.g., at the potter's wheel or the writer's desk – if we removed human activity from the system of social relationships and social life, it would not exist …. The human individual's activity is a system in the system of social relations. It does not exist without these relations'' (pp. 46–47).

The unit of analysis allows one to observe the actual learning processes in context, where the context is the activity system. It integrates the subject (individual participant), the object, the tools, and the dynamic nature of human activities (Lim and Chai, 2004). Drawing upon Vygotsky's (1978) higher and elementary mental functioning, ''unmediated'' (elementary) functioning occurs along the base of the triangle, while ''mediated'' (higher) functioning are interactions between the subject (individual) and object (task) mediated by tools. However, this basic mediational triangle (figure 1) fails to account for the collective and dynamic nature of activities.

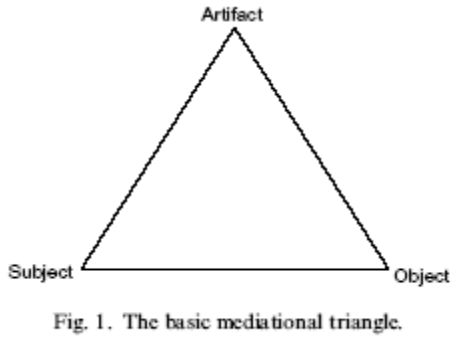


Figure 1. The basic mediational triangle
(Engestro¨m, 1987, cited inLecusay et al., 2008)

The expanded version adds the crucial components of community, rules, and division of labor to the classical mediational triangle (see figure 2). Individuals exist in communities where there is division of labor with the "continuously negotiated distribution of tasks, powers, and responsibilities among the participants of the activity system" (Cole and Engestrom, 1993, p. 7, cited in Lim and Chai, 2004). The relations between the individual (subject) and community are mediated by the community's collection of mediating tools, and rules. Rules, according to Cole and Engestrom (1993, cited in Lim and Chai, 2004) are "the norms and sanctions that specify and regulate the expected correct procedures and acceptable interactions among the participants" (p. 7).

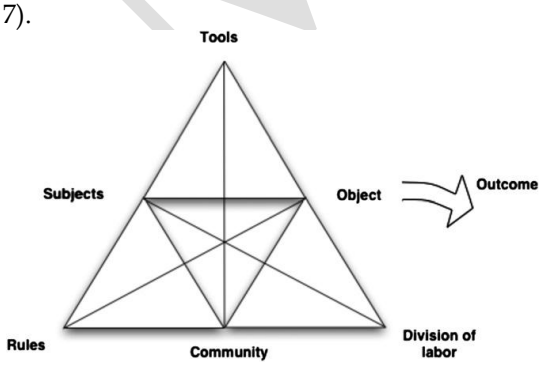


Figure 2. The expanded version of activity triangle (Engestro¨m, 1987, cited inLecusay et al., 2008)



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With the recent shift from the cognitive to the sociocultural paradigm in both SLA and writing studies shedding new light on second language (L2) writing and its relationship with context, the necessity of reconceptualizing writing strategies within the sociocultural framework is brought into prominence (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). Viewing writing from a sociocultural perspective, Murphy (2000) views it as inherently a social and cultural construction, as "discourse reflecting writers' mediations in the social and cultural world" (Sperling, 1998, cited in Murphy, 2000).

Lei (2008) explored a sociocultural approach to studying writing strategies, an approach whose fundamental tenet is " to understand the inner mental processes of human beings, we must look at human beings in their sociocultural context'' (van der Veer, 2007, p. 21). In Lei's (2008) study, in a writing activity, subjects' actions towards objects are mediated by four interrelated factors: mediating artifacts (e.g., computers and languages), rules (e.g., norms and sanctions), community (e.g., disciplinary community and discourse community), and division of labor (e.g., writers and readers).

2.3. Questionnaire validation

Before making any claims based on questionnaire data, one needs to present theoretical and empirical evidence supporting the adequacy and appropriateness of the inferences one draws from such data (Dornyei, 2003; Hatch and Lazaraton, 1991; Messick, 1989). This is referred to as the process of questionnaire validation, "the process of building a case-articulating an argument and collecting evidence" in support of the particular interpretations and inferences one makes based on questionnaire data (or any other measure) (Bachman, 2004, p. 262; Messick, 1989). Few L2 studies, however, have collected and reported validation data for the questionnaires they use (e.g., Block, 1998; Petric and Czarl, 2003; Sakui and Gaies, 1999; Wintergest et al., 2001). It is important to know how and why items are constructed, how they are trialed and revised, and how they performed (Dornyei, 2003; Hatch and lazaraton, 1991). In addition, it is important to demonstrate that the questionnaire measures the intended construct and that it does so consistently (i.e., reliability evidence).

Below we describe the process of developing our questionnaire. The participants in the study and present three types of evidence concerning its validity are explained and discussed: content-related, construct-related, and reliability evidence.

**3. Methodology**

3.1. Developing the item pool

Lei (2008) investigated how two learners strategically mediated their writing processes with diverse resources and identified four types of writing strategies, namely, artifact-mediated, rule-mediated, community-mediated, and role-mediated strategies. Subcategories were specified within each category to further explicate the learners' strategy use. She reconceptualized writing strategies from a sociocultural perspective by using qualitative method of data collection. The present researchers decided to develop a questionnaire on writing revision strategies based on Lei's study and validate it, so that it can be administered quantitatively on a large number of students in future sociocultural and writing strategy research. Moreover, such an instrument would enable researchers to compare findings in different contexts.

A 31-item questionnaire was drafted, scrutinized, and re-worded several times (see Appendix A). Care was taken to ensure that the language used in the questionnaire was suitable for the students at an intermediate level of language proficiency and above. In our efforts to accomplish this, the items went through many reiterations that typically involved parting them down, clarifying the intent, and removing any unnecessary and/or complex phrases, e.g., in the first draft, "my essay" was used while after reading the questionnaire critically, we decided to substitute "essay" with "writing" in all the relevant items (Table 1).



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Table 1
An example of rewording an item in the phase of developing the item pool.

| First draft | Final draft |
|---|---|
| 1. I used the internet to revise my essay. | 1. I used the internet to revise my writing. |

In spite of our efforts to carefully craft each item, one is never totally confident that the choices made are the right ones. This is where piloting and reliability testing of the items can increase confidence levels. We asked 10 participants to read the items and provide us with a feedback on the face validity. We made a number of modifications accordingly. We optimized the qualitative characteristics of the instrument from the participants' points of view (e.g., using bigger font sizes and preparing a separate answer sheet). Having seen the questionnaire before its administration, the participants were excluded from the study.

3.2. Participants

We collected data from two groups of participants: 4 expert judges who provided judgments of the content validity of the questionnaire and students who provided responses to the final version of the questionnaire (see Appendix B for the final version of the questionnaire). Students were asked to respond to each item using a 5-point Likert scale, with 5 indicating 'not at all, not really, …' (see Appendix C for the answer sheet).

3.2.1. Expert judges

The judges considered as 'content experts' (Henk and McKenna, 2004, p. 211, cited in Spada et al., 2009) included four English instructors virtually experienced in teaching writing.

3.2.2. Questionnaire respondents

The questionnaire respondents were 40 students who studies English Literature or English Translation at BA level. Essay writing is an obligatory course for them to complete their BA studies. The questionnaires were administered during classroom time, taking no more than 25 minutes to fill out. The students' individual responses to each item on the questionnaire were entered into a database. To conduct the various analyses described below, the respondents with missing data on any of the 23 questionnaire items were excluded, resulting in a sample of 36 students out of the original sample of 40.

3.2.3. Data analyses

A number of statistical analyses were carried out on the dataset. First, to examine the content validity of the questionnaire, we conducted the formal expert review of all the items. The content aspect of construct validity includes evidence of content relevance and representativeness. Both of these were appraised by the experts using the critical feedback survey and their professional judgments captured in the written comments.

Second, to assess the reliability of the subscales, Cronbach Alpha index was used to determine the degree to which a scale is internally consistent, or reliable (Spada et al., 2009). *Alpha if item deleted* was also computed for each subscale. We decided to keep items if an item's deletion failed to increase alpha for its respective subscale by at least .01. *Cronbach Alpha if item deleted* indicates that deleting these items increases the internal consistency reliability of their respective scales.

Third, our main strategy to empirically demonstrate our questionnaire is measuring what we claim it is measuring, i.e., construct-related validity, was to perform a principal component analysis (PCA) on the questionnaire items. PCA is a statistical technique often used in questionnaire development to determine if groups of items go together to form a component or a construct (Wintergerst et al., 2001).

**4. Results**

4.1. Content validity



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Establishing content validity was an essential step in the construction of the questionnaire. The first 31-item draft was given to three experts, including teachers of academic writing in English, to obtain expert opinions on the relevance of items to the objectives of the questionnaire, possible wording and interpretation problems, and the instructions. Simultaneously, the instrument was also read by ten members of the target population, who were asked to give a feedback on the face validity of the questionnaire. The qualitative characteristics of the instrument was optimized from the participants' points of view. As a result of the content validity check, some major changes were implemented, of which the most important ones were eliminating ambiguous, irrelevant, and repeated items, and correcting a number of wording problems. Moreover, we added an example to the instructions on the answer sheet because the experts found it helpful for the participants (see Appendix C). At this phase of the study, 8 items were eliminated from the questionnaire. Table 2 reports expert opinions.

Table 2
Expert opinions and their agreement on the items.

| **Deleted items** | **Deletion justification(s) based on expert opinion** | **Percentage of expert agreement** |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | It can be merged with item 2 and form one item because books include grammar books. | 100% |

Table 2(continued from last page)

| Deleted items | Deletion justification(s) based on expert opinion | Percentage of expert agreement |
|---|---|---|
| 9 | It is synonymous with item 11 and repeated. Both ask about grammar and grammatical structure of writing. | 100% |
| 15 | It is irrelevant to strategy studies. One of the experts believed that it might be relevant. | 75% |
| 16 | The answer to the question can be inferred from item 17, so it is repeated. | 75% |
| 18 | It is synonymous with item 20 and repeated. | 100% |
| 19 | It is synonymous with item 20 and repeated. | 100% |
| 27 | The answer to the question can be inferred from item 29, so it is repeated. Besides, the answer does not guarantee strategy use. | 75% |
| 30 | It is ambiguous. It can be related to either self-assessment or strategy application, or may be both. | 100% |

4.2. Reliability

Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire is .77. Tables 3,4,5,6 (see Appendix D) report Cronbach's alpha for each subscale. Also included in these tables is *Cronbach's Alphas if item deleted* for each subscales. Alpha measures the internal consistency of the scale, meaning how well items in a scale vary together in a sample. *Alpha if item deleted* indicates the effect of eliminating an item on



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the overall alpha coefficient for that scale. In other words, it indicates whether deleting these items increases the internal consistency reliability of their respective scales.

Table 3 illustrates that by removing item 7, alpha does not change. Since this item checks an important issue in writing, i.e., thinking in the target language during the writing process, the researchers decided to keep it. In Tables 4, 5, and 6, we can see that the omission of items 13, 22, 28, and 31 does not decrease alpha. As the inclusion of these items is in line with the theory of mediation, and they load considerably on the relevant components, they were modified but not deleted.

4.3. Construct validity

As noted above, a principal components analysis (PCA) was performed on the questionnaire items to assess whether the questionnaire is measuring what we claim. PCA was performed to estimate the number of components. Kaiser's rule of keeping components with eigenvalues greater than 1 was utilized.

We used the Principle Component extraction technique and Varimax rotation procedure. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (1996, cited in Spada et al., 2009), an item is considered to load on a component if the absolute value of the loading will be equal to or greater than 0.30.

In Table 3, item 1 loads on both components 1 and 2. Before piloting, the researchers labeled this item as the internet-mediated strategies. Based on the data analysis, it was observed that it is related both to informative tools- mediated strategies and the internet-mediated strategies. Item 14 asks about the logical development of the writing (Table 4). The data analysis shows that this item loads both on rhetoric mediated strategies and fluency mediated strategies. Before piloting, we categorized the items into two groups regarding community-mediated strategies: campus community-mediated strategies and society-mediated strategies. Factor analysis does not prove this classification. According to PCA, items 21 and 23 load on component 2 labeled class environment-mediated strategies. The rest of the items can be classified as society or outside class-mediated strategies (Table 5). After data analysis, the classification is changed into inside-class environment-mediated strategies and outside-class (or society) mediated strategies.

**5. Discussion and conclusion**

The main finding of this research is that the final 23-item version of the questionnaire is a reliable measure and can be used in other contexts for both research and pedagogical purposes. The analyses to determine the reliability and validity of the questionnaire revealed its success in measuring the intended constructs: artifact, rule, community, and role mediated strategies.

Considering the results obtained from PCA, the subcategorization of the items was somehow changed (see Appendix E).

The present research suggested a new reconceptualization and subcategorization of the revision mediated strategies from a sociocultural perspective and has contributed to the growing corpus of sociocultural research.

Anderson (2005) used ''orchestration,'' and Oxford (2001) coined the term ''strategy chain'' to describe the connectedness in L2 learning strategy use. As shown in the findings, the students employed cultural artifacts (e.g., the internet, L1, L2, dictionaries, and books), applied rules related to accuracy and fluency of writing, socialized with people from different communities, and fulfilled their social roles as a writer and learner. All these mediated actions were components of their writing processes that helped them write and revise their essays.

In addition, mediated actions are oriented toward conscious goals. Setting revision of their writings as their goal, the participants employed different mediated strategies. The interaction between these strategies within and across the four categories can be investigated in the future studies. Therefore, it is suggested that this sociocultural approach to writing strategy research should capture both writers' mediated actions and the context in which these mediated processes



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are applied. In sum, as Lei (2008) stated writing strategy use involves not only the strategic mediation of diverse resources in the world, but also the fulfillment of writers' goals in the society.

Potential users of this questionnaire will need to collect and report evidence about the quality of the data they obtain because validity and reliability are relative and context dependent (Bachman,2004). Such studies will contribute to further evaluation and improvement of the questionnaire.

One of the objectives of developing such questionnaires was to describe the process of development and validation of a questionnaire for use in L2 research. Although the results indicate some success in measuring the intended constructs, there are many challenges involved in defining and quantifying the revision strategies within the sociocultural framework.

The next phase of our research includes a quasi-experimental study to investigate the relationship between revision mediated strategies and teacher feedback. Our development of a questionnaire that has been shown to be a valid measure of revision mediated strategies gives us the confidence to move forward in our research.

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# LANGUAGEPEDAGOGYANDDISCOURSE ANALYSIS: THE MOVETOWARDSA DA-ORIENTED TEFL

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**Abstract**
Nowadays,what hasbrought amore functionallysignificant bearingforlanguage useas asocio-linguistic meansisthenow-thriving'cda'.the centrallocus-pointproposed bysucha view is thatlanguage can beused manipulatively to pursuecertainhidden endsand further personally sustainedinterests.the field of language teachingcan alsoavail itselfof thetheoreticalas well asthe practicalbearingsof such anextra-linguisticfield andits oncomingimports.therefore, bringingthelanguagestudentsinto contactwith the pedagogicalgroundsandpracticalimplicationsof the'cda'is a needin today'sclassroomenvironments both withregard to its theoreticalbenefitsas wellas the functionalramificationsit might havefor 'tefl'byteachinghow to uselanguageandits lingua-culturalsubtletiesin order fora certainextra-lingualobjectiveto be met. The present articlegoes througha review ofthe main tenetsunderlyiing'da' towards a 'da-orientedapproach'to 'TEFL'.

**Key words:**extra-linguisticfunctions, 'da','cda',discourse-oriented approach,'tefl'

## 1. Introduction

The main relational bond between Discourse Analysis and Teaching English as a Foreign Language is their common concern with the field of speech acts or language as acting. The application of DA in TEFL concerns the pedagogical trend which aims to inform the language practitioners on how to know and use the functional capabilities of language as a socio-linguistic means. As such, DA-oriented TEFL concerns itself not only with analyzing the socio-functional features of language as a discursive product but also with trying to bring under study the process by which a language practitioner does so and with how such a process can be taught to language learners. To do this, the DA-oriented TEFL endeavors to carry out such process-targeted discourse-analytical studies by placing the language as a socio-linguistic product within the context of use in an attempt to infer the socio-functional regularities and discursive patterns from the contextual material. Of major importance in this regard is the weight the spoken language gains in such discourse-analytical studies. Language as such is a more authentic version of natural discourse.



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In trying to demarcate the field of Discourse Analysis studies, M. McCarthy (1991: 5) sees DA's territory to be concern with 'the study of the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used.' Therefore, Discourse Analysis is the study of linguistic distribution of some elements in the context of use and the influences of contextual and cultural factors in that particular use. In their Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, Richards and Schmidt (2010: 174) define the term 'discourse' as 'a general term for examples of language use, i.e. language which has been produced as the result of an act of communication. In their definition, while grammar refers to the rules a language uses to form such grammatical units as clause, phrase, and sentence, it is discourse which normally refers to such larger units of language as paragraphs, conversations, and interviews. As theon van Dijk (1997), a major figure in discourse analysis, maintains, discourse is as well agreed by discourse analysts to be 'a form of language use.' In fact, according to Paul Chilton (2005) 'many of Foucauldianauthors would, however, accept that discourse, understood as language-use, is but one (if perhaps the most salient) manifestation of social action.' In this regard, the purpose of discourse analysis is to analyze natural discourses to end up with a regularity or some norms in language use.

What Discourse Analysis in its various fronts is trying to convey is the persistence on the fact that language as a communicational product of human mind is but a form of social-action and this is probably the most important tenet amongst the proponents of this newly-established sub-discipline of applied linguistics. However, as far as it concerns the field of Discourse Analysis, what is meant by social action carried out through discourse is the implementation of socio-linguistic functions intended by the language users, what lies between the lines and is only retrievable through a reading-between-the-lines approach provided by the DA methodological formulations. Therefore, those working and formulating such DA methodology manuals, if it can be called so, have fostered and proceeded, though to a greater or lesser extent, on the assumption that the nature of language as a manifestation of social action intended by a speaker/writer can be illuminated, even unveiled, by various kinds of linguistic analysis. However, we may go on to speak also of a latter trend of discourse analysis that is CDA or critical discourse analysis which aims and endeavors to push the realm of DA a step forward toward the goal of language being exploited as a means of manipulation of political goals which are mainly associated with relations of power.

**2.A Glance At Related Literature**

One can distinguish and differentiate between several sub-tendencies of discourse analysis, however, the major trend of DA draws on what is historically called the field of Critical Linguistics in the literature. The proponents of Critical Linguistics are those whose early works drew on such works as George Orwell's writings for inspiration as well as those of Michael Bakhtin, and of course to a lesser extent, on the ideas of such philosophical figures as Habermas and to an even lesser extent, on Foucault for its social theory. For its linguistic theory, this trend drew at first on Chomsky's early versions of transformational grammar (Hodge & Kress 1993 [1979]). This choice was later replaced by Halliday's so-called systemic-functional grammar (Fairclough 1989: 13–14; Fowler 1996: 11).

There is also a second, language-oriented trend, chronologically speaking, which is called Critical Discourse Analysis, and that is most commonly associated with Fairclough, Wodak and van Dijk (cf. van Dijk 1993; Fairclough 1995; Fairclough &Wodak 1997; CaldasCoulthard&Coulthard 1996). Fairclough, in particular, is influenced by Foucault, especially in his use of the notions of 'order of discourse' and 'discourse formation'. Wodak's approach to the analysis of language in use ('discourse' is understood by all of these authors to be language) comes from various strands of sociolinguistics and ethnography (cf. Reisigl&Wodak 2001: Chapter 2). However, this latter trend



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pushes the realm of DA a step forward toward the idea of language being used as a means of manipulating the political goals and in association with power relations.

With an eye to pedagogical application of discourse analysis, M. McCarthy (1991: 12) highlights a communicative language teaching which emphasizes the functions or speech acts and underlines that in such an approach certain 'pieces of language perform overlaps in an important sense with the preoccupations of discourse analysts.' Further on he speaks of the significance of natural language, whether in the form of spoken or written output, upon which we may 'base our teaching, the teaching materials, what goes on in the classroom, and the end products of our teaching. In this regard, Josep M. Cots (1996: 78) writes of not exclusively reducing the act of bringing discourse analysis into the language classroom 'to the adoption of a series of new categories and analytical techniques,' and points to the necessity for both teachers and language learners to adopt a different point of view, which mostly narrows the main focus of study on communication not language. He further states that 'The communicative approach to language teaching has succeeded in making us aware of some factors, which were not taken into account previously, but it has failed to integrate those factors into a new way of looking at language in use.' Placing discourse-based language teaching at the center, McCarthy and Carter (1994), as cited in Cots (1996), propose five main principles for this as follows: (i) The contrastive principle: comparing and contrasting different situations/texts in the foreign language and in the learner's first language; (ii) The continuum principle: The series of texts produced by a speech community constitute a continuum in which the freedom of the user has a very important role with regard to linguistic manipulation; (iii) The inferencing principle: it is necessary to devote some effort not only to teaching culture but also to teaching actual procedures to infer meaning; (iv) Familiar to unfamiliar principle: This principle states that effective learning takes place when the starting point is discourse practices with which the learners are familiar, discourse practices which are more complex, elaborated and decontextualized in later stages; (v) The critical principle: Language is also given status as a means of manipulation and creation of ideology for those who traditionally have more access to the media for verbal communication such as governments, bureaucracies, teachers etc. hence, empowering the students and helping them to become freer educated citizens through developing their critical capacity to look for traces of ideology beyond language itself.

**3. Conclusion**

DA-based TEFL came into appearance with the emergence of discourse analysis to provide the language learners with how to know and use the functional aspects of language as a socio-linguistic means. Furthermore, the TEFL scholars and language pedagogy experts are on a far legitimate ground in terms of authenticity if they base their linguistic descriptions and discursive evaluations upon what goes on in the classroom in the form of natural language. This way, the findings of discourse, discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis can help us avail ourselves and our students with the 'philosophy' behind and 'why' of interweaving linguistic and extra-linguistic elements just to create lingua-cultural intricacies within a text as a piece of discourse.

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# THE ROLE OF NEEDS ANALYSIS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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**Abstract**
This research is intended to deal with the Role of Needs Analysis in English Language Teaching. However, all language teaching in general and English language teaching in particular should be based on learner needs. Today, needs analysis is rarely carried out in the general English language and it is associated more with English for SpecificPurposes. The data for this study were 226 students in the age range of 18 to 30 at under graduate level at four universitiesin Bushehr city, Iran as EFL learners participated in this paper. The Students' Questionnaire(Needs Analysis Test) for this research was designed to find out about general English language needs of the students from the four universities. The outcome of this study showed that there is a significant difference based on the general English students in the four English language skills; Iranian EFL learners have different ideas in promoting their English knowledge through the four English language skills; andthere is a significant difference between the Iranian learners' needs to acquire the knowledge of English language.

**Key words:**needs analysis, Iranian EFL learners, English language teaching and learning, English as foreign language

## 1. Introduction

This project was based on a study of Englishfor general purposeof EFL learners at four Iranian universities: Bushehr University of Medical Sciences; Persian Gulf University; Islamic Azad University; Payamnoor University in Bushehr city in south of Iran. Today, English language has emerged not only as the international language communication but it is now used as international language of science and business and medicine over the world. In other words, the role of English language is intimately linked with particular uses of English in different subjects of specialized knowledge. Khansir and Pakdel (2014, p. 1) mentioned that "analysis of language learners' needs is seen as the first step towards preparation of language course ".Richards (2001)argued that needs analysis is a procedure to collect information about learners' needs. In the history of needs analysis, we come back toMichael West (1926)as father of needs analysisknown in the field of second language acquisition; however, needs analysis re- emerged during the 1970s as a result of intensive studies conducted by the Council of Europe team. Needs analysis as educational programs was introduced into language teaching through the English Specific Purpose movement. Richterich and Chancerel(1978)mentioned that the identification of learners' needs is undertaken by three separate bodies: the learner himself, the teaching establishment, and the user institution.Kaur (2007)believed that in the field of second language acquisition, if teachers and instructors of language do not know about their students and their



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needs, developing a curriculum becomes a challenge causing many problems in learning and teaching the second language. The role of needs analysis of the English learners in acquiring and improving their target language has always played a crucial role in EFL settings. According to this definition, Brown (1995) argued that needs analysis can be used as the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to satisfy the language learning requirements of the students within the context of the particular institutions involved in the learning situation.Richards ( 2001) identified the purposes for needs analysis in language teaching : a) "to find out what language skills a learner needs in order to perform a particular role, such as sales manager, tour guide, or university student; b) to help determine if an existing course adequately addresses the needs of potential students; c) to determine which students from a group are most in need of training in particular language skills; d) to identify a change of direction that people in a reference group feel is important; e) to identify a gap between what students are able to do and what they need to be able to do; f ) to collect information about a particular problem learners are experiencing"(p.52).

In this discussion of English for Specific Purpose and General English, we need to know what distinction between English for Specific Purpose and General English is, and Hutchinson and Waters (1987)answered this question : "What distinguishes ESP from General English is not the existence of a need as such but rather an awareness of the need"( P.53).They added that" if the learners, sponsors and teachers know why thelearners need English, that awareness will have an influence on what will be acceptable as reasonable content in the language course and, on the positive side, what potential can be exploited. Thus, although it might appear on the surface that the ESP course is characterized by its content (Science, Medicine, Commerce, Tourism etc.),this is, in fact, only a secondary consequence of the primary matter of being able to ready specify why the learners need English. Put briefly, it is not so much the nature of the need which distinguishes the ESP from the General course but rather the awareness of a need "(p.53).Strevens (1980) indicatedthatthere is distinction between English for Specific Purpose and General English; he believed that English for Specific Purpose is based on a close analysis of the learners' communicative needs for a specific occupation or academic activity, as well as a detailed analysis of the language of that occupation or activity. The researcher believed that there are many differences between English for Specific Purpose and General English. He argued that the syllabuses of the both groups of ESP and GE are different, and thus; ESP students need appropriate materials and methodology based on their needs in learning their language, but the syllabuses and methodology of General English differ little from each other, the syllabuses of GE is not designed vary based on the learners' needs in learning their language. The syllabuses of General English is designed in order to get general aims whereas syllabuses of ESP are designed based on particular needs of the English learners relating to their designated areas of study, occupation or vocation with an appropriate selection of language content and skills needed .

In discussion of statement of problem, with the emergence of English language as an international language over the world, the emergence of English language is directly linked with changes in social and educational needs of foreign and second language learners in the world. Iranian educational system is not exception of the changes. Iranian felt that they needed English language as communication language with other nations in the field of knowledge and technology, their attitude towards English language became positive, thus; they accepted English as foreign language.One of the most important reasons that the research has been done is thatresearcher felt that general English language has not been considered as an important research in foreign languagesetting, especially in Iran. In Iranian educational system, general English language (English for general purpose) is taught in all subjects: science, business, medicine and etc., in Iranianuniversities. Khansir and Dashti (2014) mentioned that Iranian



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English students learn English as a foreign language from middle (Guidance) school.The Iranian undergraduate and graduate students should pass English for general purpose in order to promotion.However, the students have been facing problems in using of the skills of English language in their real life situations and they have not ability to use English to communicate with each other, however; a few of them seldom use written and spoken English language in daily work. According to this research, the researcher has taught general and specific English languageat the Iranian universities. However, the researcher visited the universities, and discussed with English teachers in order to get more information on his research project. Therefore, the investigator consideredthe purpose of the research in order to find out the Iranian learners' needs to acquire the knowledge of English Language; identify difficulties or problems of the general English of Iranian students regarding to the skills of English Language and finally, get information about their attitude towards English language. In addition, the researcher followedmany questions and hypotheses as follows:

1. Are there problems of the general English of Iranian students in the four English language skills?
2. Are there differences of the Iranian learners' needs to acquire the knowledge of English language?

1. There is a significant difference of problems of the general English students in the four English language skills;
2. There is a significant difference between the Iranian learners' needs to acquire the knowledge of English language.

**2. Literature review**

Watanabe (2006) selected 1384 high school students from a private school in Tokyo,Japan. The outcome of this research showed that high school graduates need the ability in order to carry out simple daily conversations plus the ability to express or exchange thoughts, feelings, and opinions about daily issues. Kaewpet (2009) investigated the English for Specific Purposes needs of Thaien engineering students who were studying the English for Specific Purpose in a foreign language setting. The result of this paper examined existing knowledge, making it a potentially suitable framework for use in other ESP, EFL and ELT contexts. In addition, the role of context can be used to investigate the Thaien engineering students' communication needs and learning needs. Hun (2006) examined a needs analysis for an ESL business English course in Korea. The aim of this research paper was to improve learners' general English communication skills. The results of this research provided a sound basis and valuable implications for curriculum developers and teachers in developing business English courses.

**3. Methodology**

The main aim of this paper was to investigate students' needsfor learningEnglish. The methodology adopted in this research paper consists of the processes such as a) Data collection and b) Data analysis.

**3.1 Participants**

The subjects for this study were 226 students in the age range of 18 to 30 at undergraduate level in universities of Bushehr city, Iran as EFL learners.The participants of this paper were comprised of 122 females and 104 males who were selected for computer analysis from four universities after they took Students' Questionnaire Test (Needs Analysis Test).These universities were used to collect data: 1.Bushehr University of Medical Sciences; 2.Persian Gulf University; 3. Islamic Azad University; 4. Payamnoor University.

**3.2 Materials**



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The instruments utilized in this study were: Background Questionnaire, and Students' Questionnaire (Needs Analysis Test) .The background questionnaire for this study was designed to elicit information on the students' subjects. The questionnaire developed by the researcher consisted of 8 questions which were related to their universities; faculty, age, language use, information about the parents, details about siblings, language attitude, etc.The Students' Questionnaire for this research was designed to find out about general English language needs of the students of Bushehr Universities, Iran. This test comprised of 2 items:Language Attitude, and English language needs. The questionnaire developed by the present researcherin order to collect data in this study.

**3.3 Procedure**

In order to achieve the aim of this work, the procedures were adopted: Development of the background questionnaire;and its administration; Development of the students'needs analysis questionnaire; and then its administration, and finally, analysis of collected data. Before focusing on the needs analysis test (Students' Questionnaire) which plays the crucial role in this project, the researcher developed and administered the background questionnaire and then developed and administered needs analysis test as the main test of this study. Thebackground test was administered to the Iranian students at the four universities in this research. The time limit was, therefore, set. Thus, before the collection of data, we have completed the ethics procedure in order to do this research and collect data from the participants of the universities. I made proposal of my research and submitted to the Bushehr University of Medical Sciences committee. The members of the committee have reviewed and then they approved their consent for completing this project. To probe the consent of other universities, this study required of the present researcher to visit the universities, discuss with principals and chairpersons of English departments to help the researcher to complete his project.Thesubjects were informed that the aim of the project was to examine a research work (needs analysis) and the result of this research would not affect their examination results. The Students' Questionnaire (Needs Analysis Test) for this research was designed to find out about general English language needs of the students of Bushehr Universities in Iran. The test was administered to the students at the four universities. The researchercleared the students' doubts during the test. In addition, 226 Iranian learners were selected in order to answer to the students' questionnaire. 122 of them were females and the rest of them were males who were selected for computer analysis from the four universities after they took Students' Questionnaire Test (Needs Analysis Test).

**4. Results and Discussion**

An attempt is made here to classify and find out about general English language needs of the Iranian EFL learners who studying general English language at Bushehr universities in Bushehr city, Iran**.**The first category of the Students' test was 'Language Attitude;' the question of this item: what is your attitude towards English Language?

According to answer to question on language attitude, 123 of the Iranian students selected strongly agree which came to 55.2and 79 of the studentsselected agree English language which came to 35.4;3 of them chose disagree which came to 1.3 and only 2 of them chose strongly disagree the English language which came to .9; therefore, 16 of the studentschose tolerate which came to 7.2. In general, their attitude towards English is that they like the language. The following table shows after analyzing language attitude among the Iranian EFL learners:

**Table 1: Language Attitude by Iranian EFL Learners**



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| Language Attitude | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 123 | 55.2 |
| Agree | 79 | 35.4 |
| Tolerate | 16 | 7.2 |
| Disagree | 3 | 1.3 |
| Strongly disagree | 2 | .9 |
| Total | 223 | 100.0 |

**English Language Needs**

**1. Which of the four major skills are the most important for you?**

In this category, the Iranian students responded the above question, according to their response to this question, they chose speaking item as the most important skill among the four skills. The number of the Iranian learners chose speaking item was 160 which came to 71.1. Writing as one of the language skills was less important for them. The number of the learners chose this item was 13 which came to 5.8. Another item was considered by the Iranian learners was listening. The number of the Iranian students chose listening item was 22 which came to 9.7. The last number item in this question was reading. The number of the Iranian EFL students chose reading item was 30 which came to 13.3. This category is presented in the following table.

**Table 2: Which of the four major skills are the most important for you?**

| Item | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Reading | 30 | 13.3 |
| Writing | 13 | 5.8 |
| Speaking | 160 | 71.1 |
| Listening | 22 | 9.7 |
| Total | 225 | 100.00 |

**2. Which of ways of learning English language is helping you in improving your English language?**

According to responses to question number 2, the first item was conversation; The number of Iranian learners chose agree and strongly agree respectively to conversation item was 56 which came to 25.1 and 144 which came to 64.6. They chose strongly agree to conversation item as the most important item among the other items in this question. The result of this question indicated that the Iranian EFL learners was strongly agree to conversation item, this item helps the researcher focusesmore on the conversation item for the Iranian EFL learners. Mohan and Banerji(2002) argued that the best practice for conversation in conversation itself. The number of the Iranian EFL students chose tolerate was 15 which came 6.7. The number of the Iranian EFL students chose dis agree and strongly dis agree respectively to conversation item was 7 which came to 3.1 and 1 which came to .4. The second item was video. The number of Iranian EFL students chose agree and strongly agree respectively to video item was 88 which came to 39.5 and 91 which came to 40.8. The number of the students chose tolerate was 31 which came to 13.9.



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The number of the students chose dis agree and strongly dis agree respectively to video item was 10 which came to 4.5 and 3which came to 1.3. Video as one of the powerful tool for formal instruction can be used in order to record sound and film for presentation, and it can help English foreign language learners to record lectures by English teachers, specialist, eminent linguists, etc., to increase and improve their English language in and out of classroom settings. The third item was considered by the Iranian learners in this question was grammar. Grammar has always played a crucial role in EFL classroom. The number of Iranian learners chose agree and strongly agree respectively to grammar item was 91 which came to 41.0 and 40 which came to 18.0. The number of the Iranian students chose tolerate was 59 which came to 26.6. The number of the students chose dis agree and strongly dis agree respectively to grammar item was 25 which came to 11.3 and 7 which came to 3.2. Another item in this test was homework. Home work as one of the important item of group discussion used to teach language. Mohan and Banerji(2002, p. 67) indicated "the term group discussion is used to refer to a situation in which a small number of persons meet face-to face and, through free oral interaction among themselves exchange information or attempt to reach a decision on shared problems". The number of Iranian EFL students chose agree and strongly agree respectively to homework item was 95 which came to 42.8 and 62 which came to 27.9. The number of the students chose tolerate was 38which came to 17.1. The number of the students chose dis agree and strongly dis agree respectively to homework item was 21 which came to 9.5 and 6 which came to 2.7. Pair works was another item was considered in this question. Pair works as one of the key leaning activity factors which involves learners working together in pairs. One of the advantage of pair works is that it can motivate and give more confidence to learners in learning language; because, motivation and confidence are often used as psychological variables in learning and teaching language in EFL classroom. The number of Iranian learners chose agree and strongly agree respectively to pair work item was 86 which came to 38.4 and 93 which came to 41.5. The number of the Iranian students chose tolerate was 27 which came to 12.1. The number of the students chose dis agree and strongly dis agree respectively to pair work item was 12 which came to 5.4 and 6 which came to 2.7. Learning vocabulary was another item was used by the Iranian EFL learners in this research. Every language has words and according to Linse (2005) vocabulary is the collection of words that an individual knows. He added that "vocabulary should be integrated into teaching the four skills-listening, speaking, reading and writing "(p. 122). In addition, every word in every language may be used in a formal situation, but, its equivalent in the other language may be used in an informal situation. The number of Iranian students chose agree and strongly agree respectively to vocabulary learning item was 97which came to 43.3 and 98 which came to 43.8. The number of the Iranian students chose tolerate was 22 which came to 9.8. The number of the students chose dis agree and strongly dis agree respectively to vocabulary learning item was 4 which came to 1.8 and 3 which came to 1.3. Another item was used by the Iranian EFL students in this test were reading. Iranian students have always focused on reading English texts in their classroom. Reading language has played a vital role in learning and teaching English language in EFL classroom in Iran. In general English language, reading as one of the most important material has been uesd in Iranian educational system. Lines (2005) argued that" reading is a set of skills that involves making sense and deriving meaning from the printed word"(p.69). The number of Iranian EFL students chose agree and strongly agree respectively to reading item was 103 which came to 46.0 and 93which came to 41.5. The number of the students chose tolerate was 21 which came to 9.4. The number of the students chose dis agree and strongly dis agree respectively to reading item was 6 which came to 2.7 and 1 which came to .4. Writing was another item was considered in this question. The number of Iranian learners chose agree and strongly agree respectively to writing item was 97 which came to 43.3 and 57 which came to 25.4.



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The number of the Iranian students chose tolerate was 45 which came to 20.1. The number of the students chose dis agree and strongly dis agree respectively to writing item was 19 which came to 8.5 and 6 which came to 2.7. Sokolik(2003) argued that" writing is a combination of process and product" (Khansir, 2012, p. 280).Myles (2002) argued that "academic writing requires conscious effort and much practice in composing, developing, and analyzing ideas"( Khansir, 2012, p. 280). Another item was used in this test was listening to cassettes. Listening is one of the four language skills is called as receptive skill along with reading because the focus is on receiving information from outside source. It is oral skill. Listening comprehension skills can help EFL and ESL learners develop reading comprehension skills in classroom. Listening to cassettes as one of the language techniques can help learners increase and improve their target language. The number of Iranian students chose agree and strongly agree respectively to listening to cassettes item was 83 which came to 36.7 and 77 which came to 34.1. The number of the Iranian students chose tolerate was 47 which came to 20.8. The number of the students chose dis agree and strongly dis agree respectively to listening to cassettes item was 17 which came to 7.5 and 2 which came to .9. Computer is another itemwas used by Iranian EFL students in this test. The number of Iranian learners chose agree and strongly agree respectively to computer item was 87 which came to 38.8 and 80 which came to 35.7. The number of the Iranian students chose tolerate was 46 which came to 20.5. The number of the students chose dis agree and strongly dis agree respectively to computer item was 8 which came to 3.6 and 3 which came to 1.3. This category is presented in the following table.

**Table 3: which of ways of learning English language is helping you in improving your English language?**

| Subjects | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Tolerate | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | VP | F | VP | F | VP | F | VP | F | VP |
| Conversation | 114 | 64.6 | 56 | 25.1 | 15 | 6.7 | 7 | 3.1 | 1 | .4 |
| Video | 91 | 40.8 | 88 | 39.5 | 31 | 13.9 | 10 | 4.5 | 3 | 1.3 |
| Grammar | 40 | 18.0 | 91 | 41.0 | 59 | 26.6 | 25 | 11.3 | 7 | 3.2 |
| Homework | 62 | 27.9 | 95 | 42.8 | 38 | 17.1 | 21 | 9.5 | 6 | 2.7 |
| Pair works | 93 | 41.5 | 86 | 38.4 | 27 | 12.1 | 12 | 5.4 | 6 | 2.7 |
| Learning Vocabulary | 98 | 43.8 | 97 | 43.3 | 22 | 9.8 | 4 | 1.8 | 3 | 1.3 |
| Reading | 93 | 41.5 | 103 | 46.0 | 21 | 9.4 | 6 | 2.7 | 1 | .4 |
| Writing | 57 | 25.4 | 97 | 43.3 | 45 | 20.1 | 19 | 8.5 | 6 | 2.7 |
| Listening to cassettes | 77 | 34.1 | 83 | 36.7 | 47 | 20.8 | 17 | 7.5 | 2 | .9 |
| Computer | 80 | 35.7 | 87 | 38.8 | 46 | 20.5 | 8 | 3.6 | 3 | 1.3 |

**3. Please evaluate your ability and knowledge of English in the following areas:**

Question number 3 revealed that the Iranian students have ability and knowledge in the four language skills. Writing was the first skill of this test, the number of Iranian students selected very good and good respectively to writing skill was 24 which came to 10.7 and 78 which came to 34.7. The number of the learners selected satisfactory to writing skill was 74 which came to 32.9. The number of Iranian students selected very poor and poor respectively to writing skill was 26 which came to 11.6 and 23 which came to 10.2. Another language skill was used by the participants in this test was speaking. The number of Iranian learners selected very good and good respectively to speaking skill was 19 which came to 8.5 and 63 which came to 28.1. The



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number of the learners selected satisfactory to speaking skill was 76 which came to 33.9. The number of Iranian learners selected very poor and poor respectively to speaking skill was 35 which came to 15.6 and 31 which came to 13.8.The third language skill was considered in this question was listening. The number of the learners selected very good and good respectively to listening skill was 20 whichcame to 9.0 and 73 which came to 32.7. The number of the learners selected satisfactory to listening skill was 70 which came to 31.4. The number of the learners selected very poor and poor respectively to listening skill was 24 which came to 10.8 and 36 which came to 16.1. The last language skill in this test was reading. The number of the students selected very good and good respectively to reading skill was 31 which came to 13.9 and 105 which came to 47.1. The number of the students selected satisfactory to reading skill was 65 which came to 29.1. The number of the students selected very poor and poor respectively to reading skill was 10 which came to 4.5 and 12 which came to 5.4. In this question, the students gave more priority to reading language skill and they showed their ability andknowledge in the reading skill was more than the other skills. One of the reasons that the learners selected have knowledge in reading skill is that the Iranian students read more reading text books in their classroom. According to Khansir and Tabande (2014, p. 71-72), "Building up the student's vocabulary and reading comprehension ability is the main purpose of the present Iranian English text books. Grammar is taught deductively and there is less and almost no, emphasis on listening and speaking skills. There is little attention paid to pronunciation and oral drills". The results of this test indicated that the students have not good ability in speaking and listening.

**Table 4: Please evaluate your ability and knowledge of English in the following areas:**

| Subjects | Very Good | | Good | | Satisfactory | | Very poor | | Poor | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | VP | F | VP | F | VP | F | VP | F | VP |
| Writing | 24 | 10.7 | 78 | 34.7 | 74 | 32.9 | 26 | 11.6 | 23 | 10.2 |
| Speaking | 19 | 8.5 | 63 | 28.1 | 76 | 33.9 | 35 | 15.6 | 31 | 13.8 |
| Listening | 20 | 9.0 | 73 | 32.7 | 70 | 31.4 | 24 | 10.8 | 36 | 16.1 |
| Reading | 31 | 13.9 | 105 | 47.1 | 65 | 29.1 | 10 | 4.5 | 12 | 5.4 |

**5. Conclusion**

The outcome of this study showed that there is a significant difference based on the general English students in the four English language skills. The first hypothesis was accepted. The findings of this study indicated the Iranian learners as English foreign language learners in acquiring general English language have different ideas in promoting their English knowledge through the four English language skills. In this paper, the second hypothesis also was accepted. The result of this paper showed that there is a significant difference between the Iranian learners' needs to acquire the knowledge of English language.However,This research showed that the teachers, syllabus designers or every educational Ministry such as Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Higher Education should have more responsible for promoting knowledge of English language learners in their EFL settings classrooms.

Based on the results of this study, the researcher believe that the all Ministries such as Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Higher Education can use of the best English language experts and linguists, have good experiences in language learning strategies in order to help their English language students learn English language scientifically in ELT classroom.

**6. Limitations of the study**

In discussion of limitation of the study; thispaper was limited to the examination of Needs Analysis and General English Language and it was not concerned with Needs Analysis and English for specific purpose in EFL setting. This study wasonly focused on English EFL learners



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as participations and neglected to consider the role ofEnglish teachers as the participants in this study. This research has been done in EFL setting in Iran and ithas not been done in ESL setting.

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# A STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADAPTIVE-MALADAPTIVE PERFECTIONIST EFL LEARNERS AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN CLASSROOM

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**Abstract**
As a multidimntional construct, perfectionism has always been a controversial issue among psychologists. The current study aimed at investigating the correlation between the two aspects of perfectionism, namely, adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism, and EFL learners' willingness to communicate (WTC). To this end, a sample of 20 EFL learners from Safir Language Academy of Gorgan, Iran was examined.Upon homogenizing through Nelson English Proficiency Test, the researcher divided the participants into two groups of adaptiveperfectionist students (APS, n=10) and maladaptive perfectionist students (MPS, n=10) based on their scores in The Clinical Perfectionism Questionnaire (CPQ) and Positive and Negative Perfectionism Scale (PNP). The two groups of APS and MPS were placed in two different classes to be observed. The data was gathered in a period of two months through observation and recording the discussions. Analysis of the data indicated that APS had higher students' talking time (STT) than MPS did, that is, they were more willing to take part in classroom discussions than MPS.

**Keywords:**Adaptive Perfectionist Students (APS), EFL Learners, Maladaptive Perfectionist Students (MPS), Perfectionism, Student's Talking Time (STT), Willingness to communicate(WTC)

## 1. Introduction

"Too many people spend too much time trying to perfect something before they actually do it. Instead of waiting for perfection, run with what you go, and fix it along the way…"

Paul Arden

Various observations have proved the fact that students are different in their tastes and speed of learning as well as in their learning characteristics. Therefore, as teachers, we may face different output or expect different learning performance from them. These traits may be environmental or personal. Among the personal characteristics, perfectionism has a close relationship with students' learning performance.



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Despite extensive research, significant differences remain regarding how the construct of perfectionism is defined (Shafran&Mansell, 2001). According to Frost (1990) perfectionism is considered as setting and striving for excessively high and often unrealistic standards accompanied by frequent thoughts focused on attainment of these standards and overly critical self-evaluation.

Considering the multidimensional characteristics of perfectionism, there are two types of perfectionist learners. According to Rice et al (2015), healthy (adaptive) perfectionists strive for goals that are attainable. Conversely maladaptive perfectionists set goals that are unrealistic and strive for superior performance. They also describe maladaptive perfectionists as having immense fear of criticism, concern about making mistakes, overemphasis on order, and desiring complete admiration.

Just like everything else, perfectionism has its own pros and cons. In its adaptive form, perfectionism can drive people to accomplishments and provide the motivation to persevere in the face of discouragement and obstacles. Roedell (1984) argues that in a positive form, perfectionism can provide the driving energy which leads to great achievement. The meticulous attention to detail, necessary for scientific investigation, and the persistence which keeps great artists at their easels until their creation matches their conception all result from perfectionism (Roedell, W.C.1984).

Beside its profound effect on clinical disorders like anxiety, depression, eating disorders, etc. perfectionism plays its own fair share in non-clinical situations as well. It can be an educational situation, which is the focus of the current study. With the emergence of more student centered classes in the educational system, the students' role has become bolder than it used to be. The relationship between perfectionism and the learning process is revealed when students are producing the language. This whether it is in written form, that is, routine exams, or orally in form of interviews, presentations, role playing, pair/ group works, classroom discussions, all embedded in their classroom participation in form of speaking. Classrooms provide a setting in which students' intelligence and abilities are put on display (Urdan&Midgley, 2001) and their performance is constantly evaluated whether formally or informally. This is where perfectionism represents itself. The concern about reaching some standards, an excessive concern about what others will think if the standard is not met, and a self-image that is built by external achievements and recognition are all features of perfectionism that can be observed in classroom settings.

This study investigated perfectionism construct, both in its positive and negative function, in an academic situation to see whether it is related to students' performances or not.

**Research question**

Is there any difference between adaptive and maladaptive perfectionist EFL learners in terms of their willingness to communicate?

**Research Hypothesis**

There is no difference between adaptive and maladaptive perfectionist EFL learners in terms of their willingness to communicate.

**2.Review of the Related Literature**

**2.1 Perfectionism**

Perfectionism is defined as a multidimensional construct that makes one undergo a practice of "demanding of oneself or others a higher quality of performance than is required by the situation" (Hollender, 1965, p.94) and trying hard for total success in a specific task. It consists of two dimensions, *adaptive* and *maladaptive*, as well as two famous models of measurement, Frost et al.'s model (FMPS) and Hewitt and Flett's model (MPS), as suggested by Jean M. Kim (2010). The



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construct of perfectionism has undergone various changes through years (figure 2.1). The traditional view on this construct thought of it as a negative aspect resulting only in negative outcomes. The perfectionists were considered as "all or none" while leading to perfectionism or failure (Beck, 1976; Hamachek, 1978). In this aspect, they were taken as individuals without self-confidence experiencing a negative feeling that they should always surpass their present achievement (Missildine, 1963). From this perspective, perfectionism took a unidimensional form. However, Hamacheck (1978) changed this unidimensional view of perfectionism by presenting a two-faced description of it: Normal and Neurotic. From this point of view, it was believed that normal perfectionists seek to make proper use of the construct that leads to the successful consequences, whereas the neurotic ones confine themselves in a domino effect resulting in a constant fear of failure in their performance. By the end of 1980, the construct of perfectionism faced a great change. It wasn't a two-faced issue anymore, but a multidimensional construct involving many factors in it. The present studies on perfectionism can be outlined in relation with major dimensions of self and social contexts.

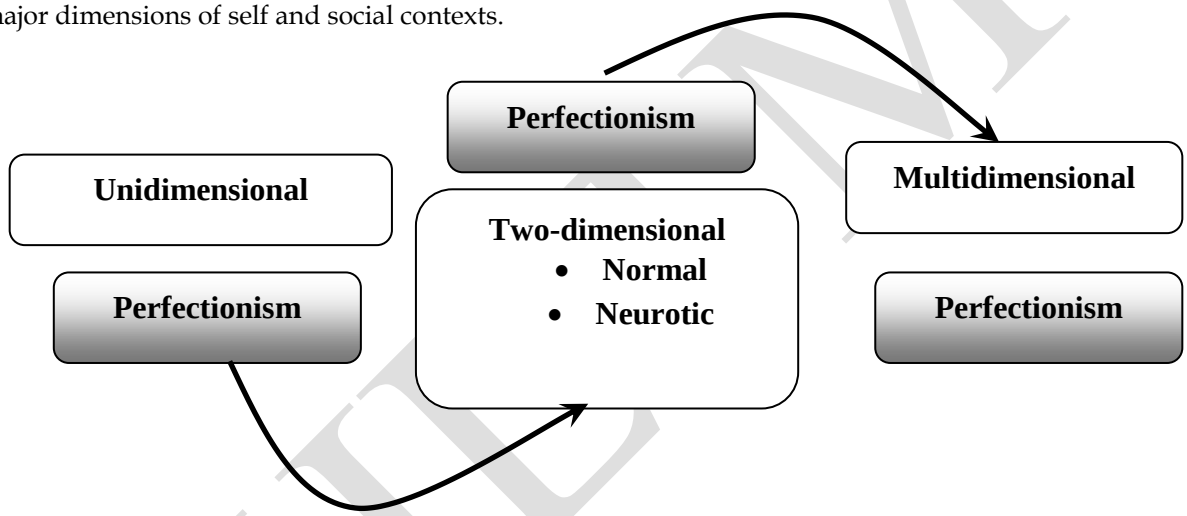


Figure2.1. Pictorial Representation of Perfectionism Evolution

**2.2.Willingness to communicate**

Speaking in an L2 has occupied a peculiar position throughout much of the history of language teaching (Bygate, 2001). In recent decades there has been a great emphasis on the importance of growing communicative competence in L2 learners (Canale& Swain, 1980). Then it was the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in which the classroom organization has been "increasingly characterized by authenticity, real-world simulation, and meaningful tasks" (Brown, 2001). The old traditional way of teaching which had the teacher at the center has now been replaced by more teacher-student and student-student interaction. Therefore, learners' willingness to speak is crucial to their second language learning and acquisition. The concept of "willingness to communicate" (WTC) was originally developed by McCrosky and his colleagues (McCroskey& Baer, 1985;McCroskey& Richmond, 1990) to capture the trait-like personality that individuals display in L1 communication.

**2.3. Perfectionism and Willingness to communicate**

Regardless of the fact that whether the students are adaptive or maladaptive, the relationship between this personality trait and their learning process is revealed when they produce the language. This production can best be observed and evaluated in their classroom participation in



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form of speaking. Jack C. Richards and Thomas S. C. Farrell (2011)highlight the role of students in the class when, in their book *Practice Teaching*, they point to the fact that "… teaching is much more than a performance by a teacher, a successful lesson makes the learners-rather than the teacher- the focus of the lesson". Similarly, McKeachie (2002) believes that students retain and understand the material better if they participate in class. However, teachers sometimes face some students who only sit passively showing no willingness to participate in class discussions.
Several researchers have investigated and had a lot in common about the factors influencing this willingness or tendency towards using L2 for communicating inside the class. A study by Burka and Yuen (1983) discovered a linkage between the participants' perfectionism and their procrastination, that is, the delay in presenting what they are suppose to. They found that procrastinators were likely to display perfectionistic tendencies. Similarly, Solomon and Rothblum (1984) showed that the majority of reasons for procrastinating amongststudents were related to fear of failure resulting from perfectionism.There's also a study by Reihanishargh (2013) who explored the construct of perfectionism in relation with two other factors of willingness to communicate (WTC) and gender. The result showed that the participants' perfectionism had a reverse relationship with their WTC inside the class. However, no significant difference between male and female students regarding their scores of perfectionism and WTC was observed.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Participant

A sample of 20 female English studentswas recruited from Safir English Language Academy of Gorgan, Iran. They were all native Farsi speakers whose age ranged from 18 to 30, and level of English language proficiency wasfound to be intermediate as suggested by their scores in the placement test.All participants came from the same social class and were homogeneous regarding their religion and education.

### 3.2. Instrumentation

#### 3.2.1 The Proficiency Test (Nelson English Proficiency Test)

In order to achieve the maximum possible homogeneity among the subjects regarding their general English proficiency, the validated and reliable Nelson English Proficiency test (section 100 A); (Coe & Fowler, 1976, p.22) was used. The test consisted of 50 multiple choice items and was given to the subjects in the first step of the research before administration of the other two questionnaires. The validity and reliability of the Nelson test had been estimated several times before by other researchers and it was considered as highly valid and reliable test of English proficiency (Shahivand and Pazhakh, 2012, p. 18).

#### 3.2.2 The Clinical Perfectionism Questionnaire (CPQ)

The Clinical Perfectionism Questionnaire (CPQ), a 12-item questionnaire designed by Fairburn, Cooper, and Shafran (2003) was distributed among the participants in order to divide perfectionist students from those who were not. The questionnaire contained some instruction to the participants which (a) informed participants that the questionnaire was concerned with perfectionism, (b) defined perfectionism as "trying to meet really high standards whether or not they actually succeeded in reaching them" (disregarding standards for eating, weight, or appearance), and (c) asked participants to what degree the 12 items described them over the past months with participants' responding on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*all of the time*). Cronbach's alpha for this questionnaire was estimated to be0.90.

#### 3.2.3 Positive and Negative Perfectionism Scale (PNP)



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The Positive and Negative Perfectionism Scale (PNP)(Terry-Short et al., 1995), assessed perfectionism from a functional or behaviorist perspective. Two subscales that represented the different types of reinforcers a person could experience, with positive perfectionism (PP) treated as resulting from linking positive reinforcements with antecedent perfectionistic behaviors, while Negative Perfectionism (NP) was linked to negative reinforcements.It consisted of 40 Likert scale questions, with responses ranging from ''strongly disagree''—1, to ''strongly agree''—5. Cronbach's alphas for the PNPhad been reported as 0.85 and 0.86 respectively (Burns &Fedewa, 2005).Using this scale helped the researcher distinguish adaptive perfectionists from maladaptive ones.

#### 3.2.4 Observation

Since the factor to be analyzed were students' talking time in classroom discussions to see how willing they were to communicate in the class, there would be a need to observe each session. The topics of the discussions were chosen according to the topic of the part which was going to be taught from the course book on that session.

Assessing and testing speaking is time-consuming due to the fact that speech is temporary and a teachernormally needs to conduct the assessment immediately at the time the student is talking and very often rely on his/her memory to provide an accurate evaluation and feedback (Jankowska, 2014). Accordingly, a voice recorder was used as a tool to record the discussions for more accurate analysis of the students' performance.

### 3.3. Materials

#### 3.3.1Course Book

The participants of the study were taught the intermediate level of Touchstone (Michael McCarthy, 2014) as their main source. The book contains 12 units of four parts, among which only the last three were worked on. Each unit discussed one specific topic with its various aspects which made the starting point and prepared the context for the discussions.

#### 3.3.2 Supplementary Books and Movie

Ten units of Oxford Word Skills (Gairns and Redman, 2008) were taught to extend the vocabulary knowledge of the learners. Each session the students were supposed to read one chapter of the short story called Oliver Twist (Charles Dickens, 1999) and tell the summary of it in pairs or groups. Some movie sessions were also used to encourage students to talk and to provide them with more speaking opportunities.

#### 3.3.3 Worksheets and handouts, and pictures

Depending on the topic of the lesson, each session the teacher took some worksheets, handouts, or pictures to the class. These worksheets and pictures brought personalization and contextualization to the class, motivated the students, and engaged them in the subject of the study.

### 3.4. Procedure

The study was carried out around the period of two months. Before starting the research, a placement test was administered to ninety participants, in order to identify their level of general English from basic to advanced levels. Forty fiveof the participants were found to be in the intermediate level who later underwent the Nelson Proficiency Test for the purpose of homogeneity. After making sure about their homogeneity, the researcher distributed The Clinical Perfectionism Questionnaire (CPQ) to them in order to separate perfectionist students from non-perfectionist ones. To this, based on the scores received from each student, the total mean was calculated for the questionnaire. Consequently, 25 students with scores lower than the mean were considered as non-perfectionists, hence, excluded from the study, and the other 20 students with



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scores higher than the mean were put in perfectionist group as the main subjects of the study. In the next step, the 20 remaining perfectionists answered Positive and Negative Perfectionism Scale (PNP), which later divided them into two groups of adaptive perfectionist students (APS) and maladaptive perfectionist students (MPS). The questionnaire contained two series of positive and negative questions (see table 4.1), so that each participant would have two scores, one for positive questions and the other for negative ones. For each participant the two scores was compared, the student with the higher score for positive questions than that of negative questions, was considered as an APS, while another student withthe higher score in negative questions than positive ones, was put in MPS group. Finally, they were put in two different classes with each class accommodating 10 students. In order to answer the question of the study, both classes were observed and recorded during a term of 20 sessions, so that the WTC of the APS and MPS based on their classroom participation were compared with each other.

## 4 Data Analysis

As it was explained in the procedure, the study made use of two questionnaires and 20 sessions of observation to seek the answer for the question of the study, and to accept or reject the null hypothesis accordingly. The results of the questionnaires and the observations are statistically shown and discussed below.

### 4.1 Results for CPQ

As it turned out after calculating the data received from the answered questionnaires, the total mean for CPQ was 2.40. The students whose mean was higher than 2.40 were considered as perfectionists and those with the mean lower than 2.40 were non-perfectionists.Moreover, based on the students' scores on each item, the mean for every 12 items of the CPQ was calculated separately. It ranged from 2.05 to 2.60. Figure 4.1 below shows that perfectionist students had higher mean in all the items than non-perfectionist students.

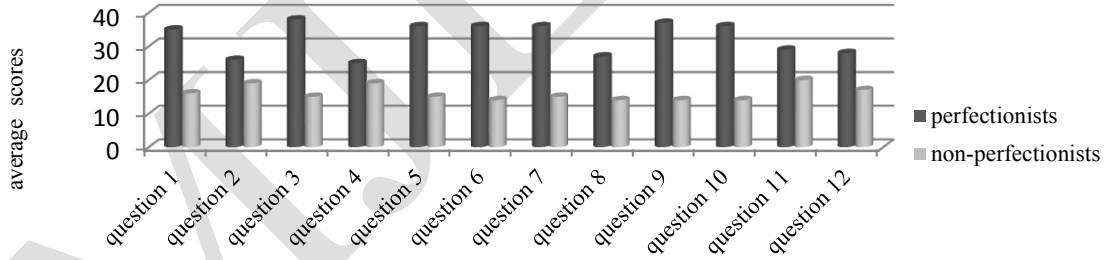


Fig.4.1 Comparison between Perfectionists and Non-perfectionists' Means in CPQ

### 4.2 Results for PNP

Based on table 4.1, whoever scored more in the questions related to positive perfectionism (the first row) than in questions related to negative perfectionism (the second row) was considered as an adaptive perfectionist, and whoever scored more in negative perfectionism questions than in positive perfectionism questions, was considered as a maladaptive perfectionist.

Table 4.1. Questions related to positive or negative perfectionism

| | Number of questions |
|---|---|
| **Positive perfectionism questions** | 2, 3, 6, 9, 14, 16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35, 37, 40 |
| **Negative perfectionism questions** | 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 20, 22, 26, 27, 31, 33, 36, 38, 39 |



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As table 4.2 suggests, APS had a higher mean for positive perfectionism questions (P 81.8 > N 63.9) while MPS had their higher mean for negative perfectionism questions (P 50.9 <N 84.5). You can also see the figurative comparison in figure 4.2.

Table 4.2. Scores of perfectionists from PNP

| | Mean | | SD | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Positive perfectionist questions** | **Negative perfectionist questions** | **Positive perfectionist questions** | **Negative perfectionist questions** |
| **APS** | 81.8 | 63.9 | 3.45 | 3.95 |
| **MPS** | 50.9 | 84.5 | 1.91 | 2.01 |

**4.3 Results for students' perfectionism and WTC**

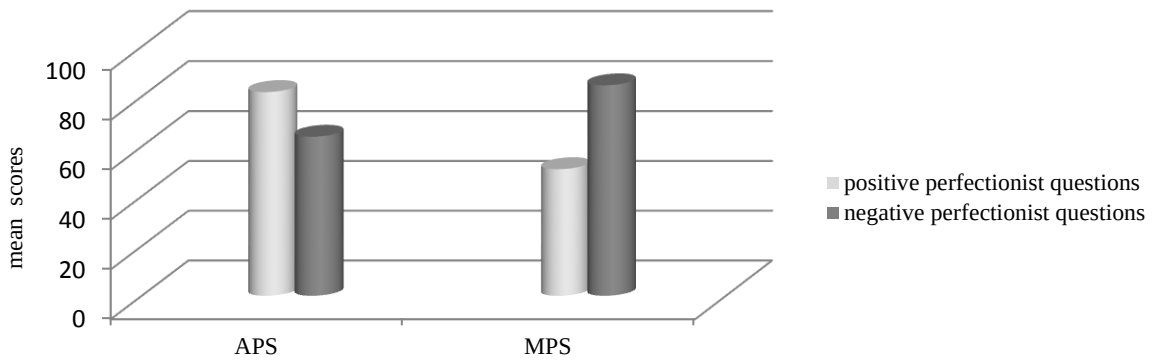


Fig 4.2. Comparison between Adaptive and maladaptives mean scores in PNP

Table 4.3 below shows the descriptive statistics for the students' STT which finally represents students' WTC. As it can be seen, the mean and the standard deviation are 3730.80, 654.266 for adaptive students, and 2894.45, 544.284 for maladaptive ones respectively.

Table4.3. STT Descriptive Statistics

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| **AdaptiveSTT** | 3730.80 | 654.266 | 20 |
| **MaladaptiveSTT** | 2894.45 | 544.284 | 20 |



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In order to see the relationship between adaptive-maladaptive perfectionism and students' WTC, Pearson-Product Moment Correlation was used which is represented in the table 4.4.below. The table shows the correlation between perfectionism and students' WTC. As it can be seen, *r*=.788 and sig= .01<05.which shows a significant difference between the STT of the adaptive students with that of the maladaptive one. Therefore, it can be concluded that since in APS class we observed higher STT than in MPS class, APS were found to be more willing to communicate than MPS.

Table 4.4 Pearson correlation between perfectionism and students' WTC

| | | AdaptiveSTT | MaladaptiveSTT |
|---|---|---|---|
| **AdaptiveSTT** | **Pearson Correlation** | 1 | .788** |
| | **Sig. (2-tailed)** | | .000 |
| | **N** | 20 | 20 |
| **MaladaptiveSTT** | **Pearson Correlation** | .788** | 1 |
| | **Sig. (2-tailed)** | .000 | |
| | **N** | 20 | 20 |

## 5 Discussion and Conclusion

Speaking a foreign language has always been a controversial issue and been regarded as an important and challenging stage for EFL learners. Therefore, a common concern among the EFL learners is about the amount of time and effort needed for them to be able to talk. Unfortunately the suffering fact in EFL context is their poor performance or unwillingness of the learners in their speaking, regardless of their level of English proficiency. To respond to their concern, they should be aware of the involved factors influencing the time and effort they need to take into consideration. Among numerous factors influencing learners speaking and how willing they are to communicate, the construct of perfectionism has its own faire share. As a result, the purpose of the present research was to explore the fact that how this construct is related to students' willingness to speak and communicate with others.

The findings of the study resulted in a positive answer to the question of this study. The results showed that the amount of STT was found higher in adaptive perfectionist class than that of in maladaptive perfectionist students'. It results from the fact that adaptive students were less afraid of making mistakes, being humiliated, and therefore more willing to participate in classroom discussions than maladaptive ones, consequently, the teacher gave the opportunity to the learners to make the most of their time in the class and did not stop them unless she wanted to correct them, comment on their speech, give them some hints, etc. However, the exact opposite situation was observed in the maladaptive group. As a result, it can be concluded that negative perfectionism acts as a deterrent in the process of speaking, since the adaptive students were eager to talk because their perfectionism pushed them towards quick progress, while the maladaptive students were hampered by their fear of failure.

The result of the current study is in line with the findings of the two following studies mentioned before in the review of the related literature. The lower STT of maladaptive perfectionist students than adaptive ones agrees with the study by Burka and Yuen (1983). The procrastination examined in their study was observed in the current study as well, which resulted in less STT of maladaptive perfectionists than that of adaptive ones. Furthermore, there is the correspondence



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between the results of this study and that of Reihanishargh (2013). Her study aimed to investigate the relationship between perfectionism and foreign language learners' willingness to communicate inside the class. The results of the study, which corresponded with the results obtained in the current study, showed that the participants' perfectionism had a reverse relationship with their willingness to communicate inside the class.

The entire community of curriculum developers, syllabus designers, materials developers, and EFL educators/instructors can benefit from the illuminating and promising pedagogical implications of the findings. In the first place, curriculum planners are advised to make a huge effort to prone their deep-rooted scholastic perspectives and consider the emotions, personality traits, and individual differences of the learners as one of the prime determiners of their academic progress. Much in the same trend, Educators are strongly recommended to encourage students to set a challenging but reasonably achievable goal, rather than persevering to achieve unrealistically high personal standards (Shim et al, 2013).

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# EFFECTS OF TASK-BASED VS. EXPLICIT TEACHING OF GRAMMAR ON LEARNING CONDITIONAL SENTENCES AMONG IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

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**ABSTRACT**
This study aimed at investigatingthe effectiveness of explicit instructionand task-based teaching ofconditional sentence type 2among iranian intermediate efl learners. Aquasi-experimental design was employedamong the intermediate learners studying englishat a language institute located in Isfahan, iran. After the implementation of a placement test 90 learners were chosen as the participants of the study. The learners were then categorized into three groups:task-based language teaching group (tbltg), explicit instruction group (eig), and control group (cg). The participants in the three groups were askedto take a grammar pretest. While the tbltg and eig learners were exposed to their treatments, the cg learners received traditional grammar instruction. The learners in the three groups were asked againto take a grammar posttest. Spss softwarewas used to run paired-sample t testand one-way between groups anova on the data obtained from the pretests and posttests of the three groups. The results indicated that (a)the learners in the two experimental groupsobtained significantly better results thanthe control groups learners, (b) both tbltg and eig learners' conditional sentences type 2improved significantly frompretest to posttest, and (c)task-based instruction was significantly more effective thanexplicit instruction for teachingstructure under investigation. Implications of the study suggest that the application of both tblt and ei, especially the former, in l2 teaching classes could provide fruitful outcome.

**Key words*:*** task-based language teaching, explicit instruction, grammar, conditional sentences

## 1. Introduction

Recent studies in SLA have led to a reconsideration of the importance of grammar in the L2 classroom (Beames, 2012; Praise & Meenakshi, 2014; Wei, 2010). There are at least four reasons for the reconsideration of grammar as an essential constituent of language instruction. First, the 1980s hypothesis that language can be learned without some degree of explicit instruction has been theoretically doubted. Schmidt (1990, 1993) suggested that drawing attention to form, or what he calls "noticing," is an essential condition for language learning (Leow, 2001; Rutherford, 1987; Tomlin & Villa, 1994). The second reason for the renewed appeal in L2 grammar instruction



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is evidence that L2 learners go through developmental processes. Established upon practical evidence from German learners of English, Pienemann (1984, 1987, 1998) developed what has been known as the teachability hypothesis, which suggests that while certain developmental sequences are static and cannot be changed by grammar teaching, instruction can be beneficial for other structures whenever they are taught. A third reason for renewed interest in grammar instruction is the result of numerous studies that emphasize the shortcomings of teaching methods where the concentration is largely on meaning-focused communication, and grammar is not addressed (Oosthuizen, 2005; Pishghadam, Khodadady, & Rad, 2011). A fourth reason for the reconsideration of grammar teaching in the L2 classroom is evidence for the positive effects of grammar instruction. This evidence is the result of a great number of laboratory and classroom-based studies along with widespread reviews of studies on the effects of instruction over the course of 20 years (Ellis, 1985, 1994, 2001; Long & Larsen-Freeman, 1991).

Task-based language teaching is a teaching approach established upon the use of communicative and interactive tasks as the most important units for the planning and delivery of instruction. Such tasks provide an effective basis for language learning since they: a) involve meaningful communication and interaction, b) involve negotiation, and c) enable the learners to acquire grammar because of engaging in authentic language use (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Task-based language teaching has reinforced the following principles and practices. The practices and principles are: a) a needs-based approach to content selection, b) an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language, c) the introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation, d) the provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language, but also on the learning process itself, e) an enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning, and f) The linking of classroom language learning with language use outside the classroom (Nunan, 2006).

Explicit teaching is an approach in which information about a language is given to the learners directly by the teacher or textbook (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Explicit instruction is described as a series of supports whereby learners are directed toward the learning process with apparent statements about the purpose and rationale for learning the new skill, clear explanations, and demonstrations of the instructional target, and supported practice with feedback until independent mastery has been achieved (Archer & Hughes, 2011).

Task-based language instruction involves learners in doing tasks related to their future career, it fosters learners' motivation and does not underline linguistic issues in the primary levels. Language analysis is integrated only after learners have accomplished a task that depends on their needs, which becomes obvious only after performance. Task-based language learning seems to grant meaningful use of language and can encourage self-directed learning. Furthermore, it suggests meaningful use of language and provides safe atmosphere for learning. However, this approach has not been unanimously accepted by English language practitioners and linguists because of ambiguities in evaluating learning results (Ellis, 2003). Therefore, an attempt has been made in this study to investigate the effects of applying task-based and explicit methods in the class for teaching conditionals and compare these two methods with each other.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Task-based Approach

By the emergence of the communicative language teaching approach in the early 1980s and much stress on learners' communicative abilities over the last two decades, the term Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) came into widespread use in the field of Second Language Acquisition in relation to developing process-oriented syllabi and designing communicative tasks to improve learners' real language use. Within the different elucidations of TBLT related to



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classroom practice, current studies present three recurrent features. The features are as follows: (a) TBLT is in agreement with a learner-centered educational philosophy (Ellis, 2003; Rodgers & Richards, 2001), (b) it contains specific factors, such as goal, procedure, specific outcome (Murphy, 2003; Nunan, 2004), and it supports content-oriented meaningful activities instead of linguistic forms (Beglar & Hunt, 2002).As Leaver and Willis (2004) pointed out, several very important research results changed the course of EFL language teaching instruction in the 20th century. These can be summarized as follows:

1. Language learning develops separately from instruction even in a classroom situation; 2. Learners obtain language in accordance with their own inherent internal syllabus, in spite of the sequence in which they are exposed to specific structures and irrespective of their first language influences; 3. Teaching does not and cannot verify the way that the learner's language will develop (cited in Skehan, 1998); 4. Learners do not essentially learn what teachers teach (cited in Allwright, 1984); 5. Learners do not first acquire language as a structural system and then learn how to use this system in communication, but rather actually discover the system itself in the process of learning how to communicate. (cited in Ellis, 2003, p. 14) 6. Motivation is one of the key issues in language learning and that skills to motivate learners are crucial for language teachers (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 1); and 7. Learners learn more in groups than individually, since cooperative social interaction produces new, elaborate, advanced psychological processes that are unavailable to the organism working in isolation (Vygotsky, 1989, p. 61).

Brown (2001) believes that in task-based instruction, the focus is not on the small separate parts of language, but somewhat the pragmatic purposes for which language must be used. While content-based instruction concentrates on subject matter content, task-based instruction focuses on tasks that are used in real world. In addition, there are different sources of input for tasks, such as speeches, conversations, narratives, public announcements, cartoon strips, interviews, oral descriptions, etc. He also maintains that task-based curricula are different from content-based, theme-based, and experiential instruction since in task-based courses whereas objectives are more language based. While in task-based instruction the focus is on communication, purpose, and meaning, the goals are linguistics in nature. In contrast with the traditional viewpoint that just focuses on grammar or phonology, task-based courses include maintaining the centrality of functions like greeting, expressing opinions as well.

**2.2. Definition of Task**

As Morley (1991) noted, The notion of "task" has developed out of communicative teaching and materials production. Task-oriented instruction is defined as teaching which provides real meaning. The general objective in task-based classes is to make the students use the language. At first, the learners have to understand then produce some verbal or non-verbal responses by their comprehension. In task-based classes, syllabus content and instructional processes are chosen dependent upon communicative tasks, which would be necessary for learners outside the classroom.Different scholars give various definitions regarding the term task. Long (1985, p. 89) argues, "a target task is a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book, taking a driving, test, typing a letter, weighing a patient, sorting letters, making a hotel reservation, writing a cheque, finding a street destination and helping someone across a road. In other words, by 'task' is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play and in between."

Nunan (2006) defines task as a piece of classroom work involving learners in a understanding, directing, producing or interacting way in the target language while the students' attention is focused on activating their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and



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in which the aim is to express meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of wholeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, middle and an end.Ellis (2003, p. 16) provides a composite definition:A task is a work-plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills, and also various cognitive processes.Ellis (2003) also discusses from a psycholinguistic perspective. He believes a task is a mechanism that directs learners to participate in specific types of information processing that are supposed to be prominent in efficient language use and/or for language acquisition from some theoretical perspective. Ellis (2006) asserts that tasks decrease the cognitive or linguistic demands placed on the learner.Samuda and Bygate (2008) asserted that "a task is a holistic activity, which engages language use in order to achieve some non-linguistic outcome while meeting a linguistic challenge, with the overall aim of promoting language learning, through process or product or both" (p. 69).

**2.6. Characteristics of Task-Based Instruction**

While advocates of Task-Based Instruction naturally diverge in their emphases and beliefs, according to Swan (2005), and other scholars named underneath, there is a general agreement on the following principles:

a) Instructed language learning should mainly include natural or naturalistic language use, and the activities are concerned with meaning rather than language.
b) Instruction should be learner-centeredness instead of teacher-centered.
c) Learners learn language by interacting communicatively and decisively while involved in the activities and tasks.
d) Since purely naturalistic learning does not normally lead to target-like accuracy, engagement is essential in order to promote the acquisition of formal linguistic elements while keeping the perceived advantages of a natural approach.
e) This can be done best by providing opportunities for focus on the form, which will draw students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose prime focus is on meaning or communication.
f) Communicative tasks are a particularly appropriate tool for such an approach.
g) More formal pre- or post-task language study may be useful. This may contribute to acquisition by leading or increasing noticing of formal features during communication.
h) Traditional approaches are ineffective and undesirable, especially where they involve passive formal instruction and practice separated from communicative work.
i) During the task, the learners are allowed to use whatever language they want, freeing them to focus entirely on the meaning of their message. This makes it closer to real-life communicative situation, which is a way of bringing the real world into classroom.
j) The emphasis is on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language (Nunan, 1991).
k) The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation (Nunan, 1991).
l) An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom (Nunan, 1991).
m) Errors are not necessarily the result of bad learning, but are part of the natural process of interlanguage forms gradually moving towards target forms (Ellis, 1994).



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n) In task-based learning, "meaning is primary…the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome" and that task-based learning is not "concerned with language display" (Skehan, 1998).
o) The difficulty of a task depends on a range of factors including the previous experience of the learner, the complexity of the task, the language required to undertake the task, and the degree of support available (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).
p) Speaking and trying to communicate with others is considered the basis for second language acquisition in task-based learning; hence, the majority of tasks that are proposed within TBL involve consideration (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

**2.3. Advantages of Task-based Learning**

Task-Based Language Teaching is an application of second language teaching informed by the most recent research findings on second language acquisition. As such, it plays a key role in recent language instruction (Solares, 2006). A task-based lesson usually provides an active role for the learner to participate and create the activities, and as a result increases their incentive for learning. A task-based lesson provides more opportunities for the students to show their ideas through their actions. The teacher can also be more open to the needs of the students. TBL enables learners to use the knowledge they have learned and operate it effectively in the task context (procedural knowledge). This pragmatic experience helps learners to realize why particular academic questions are significant and provide an empirical substrate for the development of a further academic discourse.

Taylor (1983) suggests task-based activities provide the opportunity for the learners to interact with target language directly and use it authentically. Learners obtain authentic experiences, learn the language, and experience the communicative process.Brumfit (1984) states that task-based activities help learners solve problems in real situations by concentrating on target language. Learners foster their competence in real situations. In addition, Ellis (1984) believes that task-based activities emphasize communicative strategies, such as paraphrasing, circumlocution, and miming. Learners utilize these strategies when they do not understand the target language or when they need to use language beyond their proficiency. With experience and language skill, they are able to select and use language naturally.Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993) attach importance to task-based learning since it manages language teaching by providing opportunities for learners to cooperate with each other and their teacher. This sharing of information and opinions encourages them to achieve their goals. Performing task-based activities actually helps learners grasp the target language.Willis (1996) asserts that the task-based learning framework, joined with tasks and texts, provides learners copious exposure to language along with opportunities to use it by themselves. During the task cycle, emphasis is on learners' comprehension and articulating meaning to achieve tasks.

The task usually needs the selection of some goals as a result. This can provide an opportunity for which learners can collaborate. In the process, different participants, including peer learners in the team and the tutor, can propose different opinions about the same situation and create meaningful discussion on the subject. The task will normally produce objects that are also open to cross group evaluation. The students can present their own products and evaluate others. Everyone can participate in assessing the strong and weak points of the work produced within the classroom community. This will cause reflection plus the development of critical awareness in the students (Ki, 2000).Task-based learning provides several benefits in teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) because it offers language experience in the classroom. Task-based learning concentrates on using language naturally by learners in pairs or groups work and allowing them to share thoughts (Nunan, 2004).



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Ellis (2003) proposes supplementary advantages of a task-based course. First, it is based on the theoretical viewpoint that instruction must be harmonious with the cognitive processes contained in second language acquisition. Second, the value of learner' engagement is emphasized. Third, a task acts as a proper unit to specify learners' needs and can be used to design the specific purpose of courses. Moreover, Ruso (1999) emphasizes interaction on an individual level and within group work.Pica et al. (1993) value task-based learning because it controls language teaching by providing opportunities for learners to work with each other and with their teacher. This sharing of information and opinions supports them to achieve their goals. Performing task-based activities actually helps learners grasp target language. As Taylor (1983) implies, task-based activities give learners the opportunity to interact with target language directly and use it authentically. Learners obtain authentic experiences, learn the language, and experience the communicative process.

**2.4. Studies Done In the Field of Task-Based Teaching/Learning**

Jaccobs and Navas (2000) investigated the clarity of three task categories for a group of Philippines teachers of English as a second language working in the Philippines. The goal was to shed lights on the usefulness of these classifications as intervention points to be included in language teacher education. Thirty three in-service teachers of English in the Philippines participated in this study; they were attending a course on language instruction at the Philippines Normal University in Manila. The findings of the study showed that the term "task-based language teaching" was new to most participants; most participants seemed to feel that the categories were at least moderately useful in their teaching.

Carless (2002) explored the implementation of task-based teaching in three primary classrooms in Hong- Kong. He reviewed six issues (teachers' understanding of tasks, their attitudes, and the classroom time available for task-based teaching, teacher preparation of resources, the influence of textbook, and topics, and the language proficiency of students) which were found to impact on how teachers approached the implementation of the communicative tasks in their classroom. The subjects of this case study were three female English teachers implementing task-based innovation over a seven-month period in their own primary one or primary two classrooms with students aged six to seven. The findings in terms of the six issues, which emerged from the data, indicated that there was a certain amount of interplay between different issues.

Rattanawong (2004) studied the effects of teaching the English language communicative ability with the task-based learning approach on PrathomSuksa 6 learners. The participants of the study consisted of 98 PrathomSuksa 6 learners at AnubarnPraNakorn Sri Ayutthaya School. The learners were divided into an experimental group and a control group with 49 learners in each group. The experimental group was treated by the task-based learning approach, while the control group was treated by regular methods. Both groups were treated three times a week for 10 weeks. Three types of instruments were used for evaluation. The first item was an English language communicative ability test. The second item was the students' self-report. The third instrument was a questionnaire for obtaining the learners' opinions towards the task-based learning method. The results revealed that the learners in the experimental group gained significant higher mean scores in the four language skills in comparison with the control group.

Lopez (2004) cited in Ismaili (2013) performed a study based on task-based instructions instead of presentation-practice-production (PPP) approach for teaching English in two classes in a private school in the south of Brazil. He realized that learners who used task-based instructions (TBI) were more successful English learners because they were using the language to do things- to access information, solve problems, and to talk about personal experiences. The students who



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were treated by real language materials were able to handle real-life situations when they faced them outside the classroom. He also expressed that teachers who come from a different background, based on the amount of relativity to teaching approaches, should be trained before operating TBLT in the classroom.

Wichitpisan (2005) cited in Sae-Ong (2010) examined learners' English speaking ability via task-based learning. The participants of the study were 11 MattayomSuksa 3 learners. Lesson plans, a pre-post speaking test, observation form, students' self-report, and foreign traveler's inquiring about their opinions were the instruments used in the study. The results implied the learners' speaking ability was significantly improved by the task-based learning. Furthermore, learners had significant positive opinions about studying English speaking ability through the task-based learning course.

**3. Research Questions**

1. Does task-based teaching have any significant effect on learning conditional sentences type 2 by Iranian intermediate EFL learners?
2. Does explicit teaching have any significant effect on learning conditional sentences type 2 by Iranian intermediate EFL learners?
3. Which method of teaching (task-based vs. explicit teaching) is more effective on learning conditional sentences by Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

**4. Method**

**4.1. Participants**

The participants were 90 female intermediate EFL learners studying English at one language institute in Isfahan. The participants were chosen non-randomly by applying a general English placement test (Oxford Placement Test hereafter called OPT) among over 120 EFL learners in order to make sure that the participants were homogeneous with regard to their language proficiency. The learners whose scores according to OPT rating chart in the test were from 35 to 40 (i.e. rating 4-5), were considered as the intermediate-level participants of this study. They have been studying Interchange series (3rd edition) for 2 years. All participants were native speakers of Persian, who study English as a foreign language for general purposes. Their ages were between 20 and 30.

**4.2. Instrument and Materials**

**4.2.1. Placement Test**

The first instrument that was used in this study was the Oxford Placement Test (OPT).The test contained 50 questions where the participants had to choose the correct answers among the alternatives that were provided. After conducting the test, the results were collected and the participants whose scores in the placement test were recognized as the intermediate level were selected to partake in the study. The participants whose scores were between 35 and 40 were recognized as intermediate learners.

**4.2.2. Pretest**

The pretest, which was a multiple-choice test, was designed to evaluate the grammatical knowledge (conditional sentences knowledge) of the participants. The final version of the pretest was made after it was judged by three professors to express their opinions about its validity. In addition, the test was administered to a pilot group of learners for estimating its reliability using the Kr-21 formula ($r$ = 0.82). The pre-test consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions in which the participants were asked to select the correct answer among the conditional structures based on the information that was given in the test.

**4.2.3. Posttest**



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The post-test of the study consisted of the multiple-choice items used in the pretest of the study. Since the study here was aimed at indicating the degree of progress from the pretest to the posttest in the experimental groups of the study, a post-test was administered to both the experimental and the control groups. The post-test was similar to the pre-test with the same questions. In order to eliminate the test practice effect, the order of questions was changed to be different from the pretest.

**4.2.4. Selecting and Designing an Interactive Tasks**

There are a number of key considerations regarding the selection and design of the interactive tasks for this study. The first is to develop tasks so that they complement the content and the existing materials used in the course. In this case, the course is a general English program with a focus on speaking, vocabulary, and listening. It is the researcher's intention therefore to select and design tasks that facilitated oral communication and use of specific grammar and in this case conditional sentences.The researchers assumed that an ordering and sorting task that involved sequencing and categorizing pictures related to the use of conditional sentences were most suitable. The researcher then developed a story-telling narrative that consisted of six pictures relating to the content of the course. The story involved a man who bought a lottery ticket and won the lottery, then later lost his lottery ticket and wallet when he was out celebrating with his friends. The author considered this task-type desirable because learners were required to communicate in the L2 to sequence the pictures in the correct order. Furthermore, stories involved the use of conditional sentences, therefore enabling the task to elicit the targeted form.

**4.3. Procedure**

To carry out this study, the following procedures were followed: first, a general proficiency exam (OPT test) was administered to all learners who were supposed to be at intermediate level at one language institute in Isfahan. The participants were chosen non-randomly from among those who scored the ratings of 4-5 based on OPT. Then the participants were divided into three homogeneous groups, containing two experimental and one control group where each group had 30 participants, and a pretest was given to them. After assigning the participants in the three mentioned groups, in order to make sure that the three groups were homogeneous, an ANOVA test was run on their OPT scores. In addition, in order to make sure of the groups' homogeneity regarding grammatical proficiency, the means of the scores of the three groups on the pretest were compared to identify if there was no significant difference among three groups.

After the administration of the pretest, the researcher carried out the treatment. A different form of treatment was used for each group of the study. In the control group, the participants received the regular teaching method for learning the conditional sentences. By the regular method, it means the method, which was proposed by the course book, was used for conducting the treatment. First, some examples containing the conditional structures were provided to the learners by the researcher and the participants repeated each example. Then, the participants practiced with one another in the form of asking and answering questions based on the conditional structure taught in that section. Finally, they answered the exercises of the book and their answers were checked and corrected by the researcher. In the experimental groups, one group was taught by the explicit method and the other group was taught by the task-based method. In the explicit group, grammatical patterns were directly introduced to the learners and they were asked to memorize the patterns and then practice them through answering related questions to the point.The treatment, which was used for the task-based group, consisted of three phases:

**4.3.1. Pre-Task Cycle**

The pre-task stage involved the teacher giving the instructions of the task to the class. Within each group, each learner was allocated one picture and was told to describe the picture, but not



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show it to the other members of the group. The teacher provided some vocabulary on the whiteboard for each group to use in the task. The teacher also encouraged the learners to try to use conditional sentences when describing and sequencing the pictures. For instance, in one picture, there was a young man who wanted to buy a sports car but he did not have any money. The participants were asked to make conditional sentences based on the picture. One of the answers was as follows: *if he had a million dollars, he would buy the car*.Finally, to prevent the groups from using their L1 to complete the task, the teacher informed the class that each group has a different story, and that each group had to present their unique story in which the conditional sentences were used to the rest of the class in English after they completed the task. It was therefore important for all of the learners to speak only English during the task.

**4.3.2. Task Cycle**

The first part of the task cycle involved the learners describing their pictures and then sequencing them in the correct order. The purpose of this initial stage of the cycle was to allow learners to engage in free L2 communication to agree on the sequence of the photos. During this stage of the lesson, the teacher served as facilitator, monitoring each group's performance and providing assistance when necessary. In the second part of the task cycle, one learner from each group narrated the story to the rest of the class. First, the groups were allowed few minutes of planning time to practice telling their story in the L2. This gave the learners the opportunity to use the vocabulary provided in the pre-task and to practice using the conditional sentences correctly. Then one learner from each group was nominated to perform their narration.

**4.3.3. Language Focus**

During this stage of the lesson, learners' attention was drawn to the correct use of conditional sentences. After writing a summary of their story, the learners worked in pairs, examining their texts and editing any errors that they notice. The teacher also provided feedback about the correct use of conditional sentences. The learners then orally practiced their narration in pairs before rewriting an improved version of their text. This process led to improved use of the targeted form.

**5. Results**

**5.1. Effectiveness of TBLT and EI in the Acquisition of Conditional Sentences Type 2**

In order to answer the first research question, the pretest and posttest scores of the TBLTG learners were compared using a paired-samples *t* test. The same statistical test was conducted to help the researchers arrive at the second research question of the study. Table 4.1.presents the descriptive statistics for the pretest and posttest scores of the TBLTG and EIG.

Table 1
*Paired Samples t Test Results Comparing Pretest and Posttest Scores of the TBLTG, and EIG*

| | Paired Differences | | | | | *t* | *df* | *Sig.* (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | *Std.* Deviation | *Std.* Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| TBLTG Pretest – TBLTG Posttest | -6.10 | 1.78 | .32 | -6.76 | -5.43 | -18.68 | 29.000 | |
| EIG Pretest – EIG Posttest | -4.53 | 2.33 | .42 | -5.40 | -3.66 | -10.56 | 29.000 | |

For the TBLTG pretest-posttest comparison, the *Sig.* (2-tailed) value represents a *p* value lower than the significance level (.000 < .05), which means that the difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the TBLTG learners had been statistically significant. Likewise, for the pretest-



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posttest comparison of the EIG learners, the same result was obtained. That is, the *p* value was found to be less than .05. This means that the grammar posttest scores of the learners in both TBLTG and EIG improved significantly due to the treatment they received.

**5.2. Results for the Third Research Question**

To find out the possible differences among the three groups of learners in this study, one-way between groups ANOVA was conducted twice: once for the comparison of the grammar scores of the three groups at the beginning of the study and a once again for comparing these groups' grammar scores after the experiment was conducted.

Table 2
*Results of One-Way ANOVA for Comparing TBLTG, EIG, and CG Mean Scores on the Pretest*

| | Sum of Squares | *df* | Mean Square | *F* | *Sig.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 1.26 | 2 | .63 | .18 | .83 |
| Within Groups | 295.23 | 87 | 3.93 | | |
| Total | 296.50 | 89 | | | |

Table 2 reveals that there was not a statistically significant difference in the pretest scores for TBLTG (*M* = 10.76, *SD* = 1.92), EIG (*M* = 10.73, *SD* = 1.99), and CG (*M* = 11.00, *SD* = 1.57) because the *p* value under the *Sig.* column was greater than the specified level of significance (i.e. .83 > .05). This indicates that the three groups did not significantly differ in terms of their knowledge of grammar at the outset of the study.

Table 3
*Results of One-Way ANOVA for Comparing TBLTG, EIG, and CG Mean Scores on the Posttest*

| | Sum of Squares | *df* | Mean Square | *F* | *Sig.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 256.200 | 2 | 128.100 | 83.98 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 132.700 | 87 | 1.52 | | |
| Total | 388.900 | 89 | | | |

As it is shown in Table 3, the difference in the posttest scores among TBLTG (*M* = 16.86, *SD* = 1.25), EIG (*M* = 15.26, *SD* =.98), and CG (*M* = 12.76, *SD* = 1.43) reached statistical significance because the *p* value under the *Sig.* column was smaller than the specified level of significance (i.e. .000 < .05). This shows that the three groups significantly differed in terms of their knowledge of grammar at the end of the experiment, which might be attributable to the treatments they were exposed to. There is still one thing unanswered: whether the significant difference was between TBLTG and EIG, TBLTG and CG, EIG and CG, or even among all the three groups of learners. Pairwise comparisons of these groups are presented in the LSD post hoc test in Table 4.

Table 4
*Results of the LSD Post Hoc Test for Comparing TBLTG, EIG, and CG Mean Scores on the Posttest*

| Groups | | Mean Difference | *Std.* Error | *Sig.* | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| TBLTG | EIG | 1.60000* | .31888 | .000 | .9662 | 2.2338 |
| | CG | 4.10000* | .31888 | .000 | 3.4662 | 4.7338 |
| EIG | TBLTG | -1.60000* | .31888 | .000 | -2.2338 | -.9662 |



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| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | CG | 2.50000* | .31888 | .000 | 1.8662 | 3.1338 |
| CG | TBLTG | -4.10000* | .31888 | .000 | -4.7338 | -3.4662 |
| | EIG | -2.50000* | .31888 | .000 | -3.1338 | -1.8662 |

In the top row, it could be seen that the TBLTG ($M$ = 16.86) was significantly different from the EIG ($M$ = 15.26) since the $p$ value in front of this comparison was .000, which is less than .05. Similarly, TBLTG differed significantly from CG ($M$ = 12.76) as $p$ = .000. In addition, the difference between EIG and CG was of statistical significance ($p$ = .000). This would mean that TBLG learners significantly outperformed EIG learners, who, in turn, significantly outperformed CG learners. In other words, the two experimental groups had better performances than the CG, and among the experimental groups, task-based teaching group benefited more than the explicit instruction group from its treatment.

**6. Discussion**

To test the first research hypothesis: *Task-based teaching does not have any significant effect on learning conditional sentences type 2 by Iranian intermediate EFL learners,*the pretest and posttest scores of the task-based language teaching group learners were compared using a paired-samples $t$ test. The analysis of the results pointed to the significant improvement of posttest scores compared to pretest ones meaning that the treatment through this method was effective. Therefore, the first research hypothesis could be safely rejected.

The positive impact of task-based instruction could be due to the influential characteristics of this recent approach to teaching. As Swan (2005) stated task-based instruction mainly include natural or naturalistic language use, and the activities are concerned with meaning rather than language. Instruction is basically learner-centered instead of teacher-centered. Learners learn language by interacting communicatively and decisively while involved in the activities and tasks. Since purely naturalistic learning does not normally lead to target-like accuracy, engagement is essential in order to promote the acquisition of formal linguistic elements while keeping the perceived advantages of a natural approach. This is done by providing opportunities for focus on the form, which will draw students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose prime focus is on meaning or communication. Traditional approaches compared to this more recent one are ineffective and undesirable, especially where they involve passive formal instruction and practice separated from communicative work. The emphasis is on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language, and materials are authentic (Nunan, 1991). Errors are not necessarily the result of bad learning, but are part of the natural process of interlanguage forms gradually moving towards target forms (Ellis, 1994).

To test the second hypothesis: *Explicit teaching does not have any significant effect on learning conditional sentences type 2 by Iranian intermediate EFL learners*, the pretest and posttest scores of the explicit instruction group learners were compared using a paired-samples $t$ test. The analysis of the results indicated that explicit teaching of the target structure can also lead to significant improvement of the learners' performance. Therefore, the second research hypothesis could be safely rejected as well. The logic behind such finding can lie in the merits of explicit instruction. Explicit grammar instruction supplies the declarative knowledge of grammar, it creates awareness and leads to conscious learning and noticing (Schimidt's noticing hypothesis, 1990). It ends up with automatization. Explicit grammar instruction is conducive for "knowing the rules" of a language. In addition, it provides a solid knowledge of grammar and syntax In other words, this all amounts to mastering how the language works. It is useful for pointing out the particularities of a language, the exceptions. For example, overtly discussing word order and irregular verbs in the English language results in a greater awareness of the intricacies of the



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language. It seems to be the case that some people are just better explicit learners. Logical, mathematical, and verbal types of intelligence seem to be more readily inclined to learn and adopt grammar explicitly. Our capacity to acquire new languages declines as we age. As a result, this also means that explicit grammar instruction becomes more relevant as we get older as well. "Formal" language learning seems to be a better approach for adult learners (Longhurst, 2013).

To test the third hypothesis: *There is no significant difference between the two mentioned instructional methods as far as their effect on learning conditional sentences by Iranian intermediate EFL learners is concerned,* one-way between groups ANOVA was conducted twice: once for the comparison of the grammar scores of the three groups at the beginning of the study and comparing these groups' grammar scores after the experiment was conducted. The analysis of the results uncovered that the three groups significantly differed in terms of their knowledge of grammar at the end of the experiment, which might be attributable to the treatments they were exposed to. To precisely understand about the differences Pairwise comparisons of these groups in the LSD post hoc test was made. Finally, the results demonstrated that the two experimental groups had better performances than the CG, and among the experimental groups, task-based teaching group benefited more than the explicit instruction group from its treatment.

As it was mentioned, task-based language teaching is an approach which offers students materials which they have to actively engage in order to achieve a goal or complete a task (Skehan, 1998). Much like regular tasks that people perform everyday such as making the tea, writing an essay, talking to someone on the phone, TBLT seeks to develop students' interlanguage through providing a task and then using language to solve it. TBLT provides favorite situations for developing the second language (Rahimpour, 1995, 1999; Robinson, 1995). While carrying out communicative tasks, learners are said to receive comprehensible input and modified output, processes believed central to second language acquisition and which ultimately lead to the development of both linguistic and communicative competence (Doughty & Williams, 1998).

**7. Conclusion**

Undoubtedly, teaching grammatical structures is one significant goal of all language teaching programs. It is believed that L2 learners' communicative competence involves grammatical competence as one essential component. By the emergence of the communicative language teaching approach in the early 1980s and much stress on learners' communicative abilities over the last two decades, the term Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) came into widespread use in the field of Second Language. Therefore, an attempt was made in this study to compare task-based teaching of conditionals as the target structure with explicit instruction of them to determine the degree of effectiveness of these two approaches to teaching grammar.

After performing the experiments and doing the necessary statistical an analysis it was found that: there was a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the learners in the task-based group, and that the learners in this group had improved significantly owing to the treatment they experienced. In addition, explicit group learners improved significantly from pretest to posttest, and also the learners in the two experimental groups obtained significantly better results than the control group learners. Additionally, it was shown that task-based instruction was significantly more effective than explicit instruction when it came to teaching/learning conditional sentences type 2.

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# THE EFFECT OF E-ASSESSMENT ON WRITING SKILL OF IRANIAN UPPER INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS

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**Abstract**
This study investigated the effect of e-assessment on writing skill of Iranian upper-intermediate efl learners'. To achieve this goal, a group of 60 females and males efl students (aged between 14 to 30 years old) participated in the free paragraph writing course based on their scores on a writing placement test. Participants were divided into two control (n=30) and experimental (n=30) groups. In both control and experimental groups, two tests including a writing placement test and quick placement test were administered before and after the treatment to check the participants' progress or regress. A quick placement test questionnaire was developed and completed 60students in language teaching institutes in Fars province, iran. A quasi-experimental, intact group, pretest and posttest design was employed in the current study. The results of the study revealed that the knowledge of e-assessment has got a significant impact on learners' writing skill.

**Keywords:** e-assessment, writing skills, efl learners

## 1. Introduction:

Besidethrough the promptingdynamics of task, and test-taker features in performance assessment, the collaborative component of rater and ranking scale has received a considerable devotion in diverse models of presentation assessment (Kenyon, 1992; Fulcher, 2003; McNamara, 1996; Skehan, 1998; Weir, 2005). Within the communicative background of language instruction, the proficiency of writing enjoys special status. There is no reservation that writing is the most problematicproficiency for EFL learners to principal.Writing is a distinctive method of communication because of the information that it is an activity which is obviouslyfurtherserious than the other three means of communication, i.e. listening speaking, and reading (Hobson &Schafermeyer, 1994). According toBean (1998), in direction to identify and demonstrate the connection between good and good writing,rational, we must not see information as something other than separate bits of information to be studied and stored in memory. Students must think



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about knowledge and the world in a critical way in order to judge and estimate information and influence an accomplished opinion about it, not only accept it at face value. Critical thinking means to reflectproperly about importantinformation and the world. It is to reflect in upper order enabling the person to evaluator, estimate and assess correctly. It is to think sensibly, skillfully, reflectively, and correctly (Schafersman, 1991).

Beside through the prompting dynamics of task, and test-taker features in performance assessment, the collaborative component of rater and ranking scale has received a considerable devotion in diverse models of presentation assessment (Kenyon, 1992; Fulcher, 2003; McNamara, 1996; Skehan, 1998; Weir, 2005). Within the communicative background of language instruction, the proficiency of writing enjoys special status. There is no reservation that writing is the most problematic proficiency for EFL learners to principal.

**1.1 Purpose of the Study**

This study seeks to investigate the effect of E-assessment on writing skill of Iranian EFL Learnersamong EFL learners.

**1.2 Research Question**

This study attempts to answer the following question:

1- Does E-assessment have any significant impact on EFL learners' writing skill?

**1.3 Limitations of the Study**

The students in this research were all in the upper intermediate level of expertise which limits the generalizability of the result merely to this expertise level. Also the time period for the investigation is limited to merely one term of institutes, about three months which may affect the generalizability or external validity of the result. Because of the rare number of learners in each group the generalizability or external validityof the study may be affected. Also because of the incapacity of the researcher to randomly select the participants of the research the results are limited in the degree of their generalizability as is also obvious in the choice of the design of the study anexperimental design. This research is incomplete to paragraph writing specifically aggressive writing.

**2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**2.1Writing Assessment**

In this study writing assessment has involved a considerable amount of attention in school, universities and colleges because they link learning, teaching, and assessment within the control and through controls in the universityprogram. Hamp-Lyons &Condon (2000) claim that the "highest theoretical and practical strength of an assessment used as an assessment tool, is the way it reveals and updatesinstruction and education" (p.4).Within an effort to provide a more valid image of the concept of writing ability, there has been a mainchange in language testing towards the improvement and use of show tests within the past periods. In this innovativeapproach of assessment student writing is evaluated by raters spending some kind of assessmentscale which creates it different from the traditional fixed response assessment. This kind of assessment offers the benefit of directly measuring candidates' creative language skills. In this concern, different models have identified the features that affectpresentation (e.g. Fulcher, 2003; Kenyon, 1992; McNamara, 1996; Skehan, 1998, Weir, 2005).

As Knoblauch and Brannon (1984) point out, good writing is independent of rhetorical conventions. There is no formula for writing. In other words, writing skill is not a skill to be trained, but it is the result of explicit and conscious thinking. Individuals do not write to cover techniques or models of writing; they write since they want to communicate important thought and to make meaning. Teachers should not only create motivation and contexts for thinking, but also they should encourage students to systematize their experience by means of language.



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According to Zimmerman and Reisemberg (1997), writing has been described as linear and simplistic, task based on early models of it. Today, however, researchers know that the write must cope with the rules and techniques of writing such as framework, organization, form and characteristics, purposes, audience perspectives, needs of audience, etc. (Bereiter&Scardamalia, 1987; Haris& Graham, 1992, 1996).Allami and Salmani-Nodoushan (2007, p. 67) mention that writers should try to change their discourse to communicate their desired meaning in order to solve the problem of interaction with their audience. This is the time when teachers should create "productive thinking" in their students through promoting suitable strategies based on which the writers can get closer to their intended meaning. They involve their pupils in various tasks and encourage them to practice different techniques or procedures.

As McNamara (2000) points out: "This methodproblems the need for assessment to be combined with the aims of the curriculum and to have aninnovative relationship with learning and teaching". It means considering, learning,teaching and E-assessment as an assimilated and interdependent series of result (Lee, 2007).The techniques used within this modelcontain, journals, checklists, logs, audiotapes, and, videotapes, self-evaluation, teacher observations, conferences, portfolios, books, self-assessments, E-assessment, writing skills and peer-assessments (Brown and Hudson 1998). These methods have been named alternatives in Assessment (Brown, 2004) as faced to traditional assessment methods such as dictation multiple choice, cloze test, etc.

**Table (1)According to(Brown, 2004, p.13)introduces the key differences between the two approaches.**

***Table1. Alternative and traditional assessment:***

| TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT | ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT |
|---|---|
| Standardized exams, one shot, | Continues long-term assessment |
| Multiple choice design, programmed | Untimed, free-response format |
| Marks suffice for comment | Individualized feedback and washback |
| Standard- referenced scores | Criterion referenced scores |
| Effort on the "right" answer | Open-ended , creative answers |
| Summative | Formative |
| Learning to product | Oriented process |
| Non- collaborative performance | Interactive performance |
| Promotes extrinsic inspiration | Fosters intrinsic motivation |

There have been variousmethods in the history of teaching writing; process approach, product approach, English for theoretical purposes (Silva, 1990). They have come and gone and in spitefulness of these changes writing is still a problematic task for students and teachers and investigators are still frustrated with these methods. Today alternative assessments such as E-assessment, portfolio, conferencing, peer assessment and self-assessment are used as an alternative to put an end to one report traditional assessment. The key problem of traditional methods was that they just motivated on writing as a product, while alternative assessments emphasize both product and process. That's why when E-assessment familiarized it increasedimportance among teachers (Burch, 2000; Hirvela and Sweetland, 2005).



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Benefits of E-assessment exist in a large number in literature (e.g. Brown, 2004; Burch, 2000; Genesee and Upsure, 1996; Nezakatgoo, 2005, Song and August, 2002). Brown (2004) classifiedpossible advantages of E-assessment as:

•Responsibility, foster intrinsic motivation, and ownership,Teacher interaction with teacher as facilitator, promote student,
•Celebrate the uniqueness of each student, and individualize learning,
•Provide noticeablesuggestion of a student's work,
•Revision process, and facilitate critical thinking self-assessment,
•Suggestion opportunities for cooperative work with peers, and
•Certificate assessment of multiple measurements of language learning (p257).

E-assessment can contain a range of materials like, reports, essays, audio or video, homework, peer and self-assessment (Brown, 2004). In this study, the students' portfolios include self-assessment. Learners must think about knowledge and the world in a critical way in order to judge and evaluate information and reach an educated opinion about it, not merely accept it at face value. Serious thinking means to think appropriately about relevant knowledge and the world. It is to think in advanced order allowing the person to judge, evaluate and assess responsibly. It is to reflect practically, seriously, sensibly, and expertly (Schafersman, 1991).To study the value of E-assessment as a tool for students' provision of micro-level skills for their final examinations, Nezakatgoo (2005) made a contrast between E-assessment based and non-portfolios based writing classroom. The result of the study exposed a significant between the two groups. The procedures of E-assessment in his class assisted improve students' their learning of the procedures and final examination score.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Participants and Setting

The participants in the present study to answer the research question, included 60 male and female upper intermediate EFL learners (32males and28 females) whose age in both the control and the experimental groups ranged from 27 to 45, Learning English at Kazeroun English Language Institutes, Fars Province, Iran took part in the study. In order to homogenize the participants and to make sure about their level of general proficiency, a quick placement test version 2 was administered to the participants. The criterion for passing the test was scoring between 40 and 47 (equal to upper-intermediate level) based on the quick placement test version 2. Then it was administered a Passage required to take the third edition of Interchange/Passages Writing Placement Test Form C developed by Lesley, Hanson, and Zukowski (2005). The criterion for passing the test was scoring between 6 and 7 (equal to upper-intermediate level) based on the public version of IELTS Writing Band Descriptors, Task 2. Then, it was administered among the participants who scored between 6 and 7 to see whether were also homogenous writing skill or not. The number of the participants who took the quick placement test in Navid institute was 30 male and female learners who were mostly taking or had taken different levels of Interchanges 2,3, or passages. Also, 30 male and female learners in Ava institute took the quick placement test, and almost all test-takers were participating or had participated in Interchange 2,3, or passage classes. Finally, two group of 30 female students were selected as the participants of the study, one group in Navid Institute (the experimental group), and the other one in Ava Institute (the control group). All the participants of the study were Persian native speakers who were studying English as a foreign language and who never lived in a foreign country.

### 3.2 Instrumentation



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The instruments used in this study were employed characteristics ofquick placement test in Fars Province EFL learners. The quick placement test consisted of 60 questions with. The time allotted to answering the creativity test was 30 minutes. The quick placement test questionnaire involved in two parts: Part One (Questions 1-40) All students and Part Two (Questions 41-60).The participants were same levels in groups, control group and experimental group. The learners were asked to mark their opinions about writing questionnaire on the questionnaire within 30 minutes.

For the purposes of the present study, two instruments were used:

Lesley et al.'s (2005) Writing Placement Test form C of the third edition of the Interchange/Passages Evaluation Package wasapplied to place all the students at the upper-intermediate level of writing ability in order to choose two nearly homogenous groups and to make sure about the comparability of the experimental and the control groups.The Interchange Writing Placement Test required the students to write a paragraph about one of the three topics offered to them within 30 minutes. The students' writings in both experimental and control groups were related by three raters that were to be involved in the scoring of Writing Placement Test in order to add valuable input to the process. The raters rated the students' writing based on the public (general) version of the IELTS Writing Band Descriptors, Task 2. After the three raters rated each written paragraph, in order to determine the consistency of the ratings, the inter-rater reliability of the scores was estimated via calculating the average score of the raters'. The average score of the three raters' scores was compared to the IELTS Writing Band Descriptors, Task 2, in which the suitable band for upper-intermediate level was between 6 and 7.

Since this study aimed to assess the writing ability of the students, the same Writing Placement Test Form C of the third edition of Interchange/Passages was used not only as a test of homogeneity, but also as a pretest and as a posttest in the experimental and control groups. In fact, having taken the pretest, the students received the posttest after a three-months-period study during which the learners in both control group and experimental group were taught via E-assessment received treatment through E-assessment. Comparing the results of the pretest and the posttest in each of the experimental and control groups, the researcher was able to understand if there was any change regarding the writing skill of the students in each group. One important point was that based on the IELTS Writing Band Descriptors, Task 2, the students' writing scores in the pretest (that was administered both as a pretest and as a test of homogeneity) ranged from 6 to 7, Writing Placement Test form C of the third edition of the Interchange/Passages Evaluation Package, the students' writing scores in the pretest (that was administered both as a pretest and as a test of homogeneity) ranged from 6 to 7, and the learners who got below 6 or above 7 were crossed out of the study; Another important point was the paragraph written by the students (in both the control and experimental groups) in the posttest were scored in the same way they were rated in the pretest.

**3.3 Procedures**

This study aimed to examine the effect of E-assessment on writing skill of Iranian upper intermediate EFL Learners. In order to investigate the purpose of the study, the following procedures took under consideration:

***3.3.1Participant selection:*** The researcher decided to do the research in two Language institutes of Navid and Ava in Fars Province, Kazeroun, Iran. He spoke with the institutes administrators and made them aware of the purpose of the study. After the administrators of both institutes agreed on holding free twenty- session paragraph writing course, they advertised for the course in their institutes, and as the researcher had asked them, they mentioned in their advertisement that, preferably, the students who were taking or had taken Interchange 2, 3, or Passages could



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register for the course. Since the researcher was going to do the research on EFL upper-intermediate learners, he wanted to make certain that all the students were at the upper-intermediate level of writing skill, and because the syllabuses of both institutes were based on the third edition of Interchange System that was adopted from Short et al. (1997). The students who registered in the course were required to take Lesley et al.'s (2005) Writing Placement Test Form C of the third edition of the Interchange/Passages Evaluation Package. Then, among the learners who took the Interchange Writing Test in two institutes. The researcher chose randomly one group of the students as the control group (Talash Language Institute) and the other group of the learners (Navid Language Center) as the experimental group. The students in both the control and the experimental groups participated in the writing course for course for 3 months, one session each week. The day and the time of the class different in each group.

***3.3.2 Pretest:***The researcher considered the same Interchange Writing Placement Test both as test homogeneity and as one of the pretest of the study in both control and experimental groups. The students (in both control and experimental groups) were also administrated the same Quick Placement Test for test Proficiency was scored 40 to 47. The Writing Placement Test was scored based on the public version of IELTS Writing Band Descriptors, Task 2 (in the "instrumentation" section, it was completely explained that how the Writing Placement Test was scored). The suitable scale for passing the Writing Placement Test was between 6 and 7.

***3.3.3Post Posttest:***After three-month study, twenty sessions, the researcher (in both the control and the experimental groups) administered two posttestes (the same pretests) including Lesley et al.'s (2005) Writing Placement Test Form C of the third edition of Interchange / Passages Evaluation Package. Three raters scored the WritingPlacement Test based on the public version of IELTS Writing Band Descriptors, Task 2 (the way through which the writing test was scored, was explained in the "instrumentation section").The students' scores were below 6, between 6 and 7, and above 7.

***3.3.4 Study Design***

The participants of the study were selected from two populations in two Language institutes using the same educational system in the same town (Kazeroun). The researcher placed the students of both the control group and the experimental groups in the writing classes based on the researcher criterion scores ( 1 to 20) and they obtained in the third edition of Writing Placement Test developed by Lesly et al. (2005). The data collection started in September 2015 and lasted for a fall semester at the institutes in Fars Province, Iran. The instrument was administered to EFL learners from some English Language Institutes in Kazeroun, Iran which were particular based on availability of the researchers.

In addition, as Mackey and Gass (2005) have pointed out, quantitative researches cope with gathering and analyzing quantitative data based on statistics. Thus, according to what Mackey and Gass (2005) mentioned, this research was going to be a quantitative one that was done through an experimental design.

***3.3.5 Data analysis procedures***

The data analyzed were completed the 19th version of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Accordingly, Mann-Whitney Test, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, Independent-Samples T-Test, and Paired-Samples T-Test were estimated based on the results of One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test that made clear the normality and non-normality of the data. Moreover, the researcher applied descriptive statistic of the data. In command to analyze the data, SPSS software was used to assess descriptive and inferential statistics. A set of T-test was



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carried on to identify different relationships. Also an independent sample t-test was used to investigate the Gender seams.

**4. DATA ANALYSIS**

Having collected the data, the researchers decided to conduct an analysis by using SPSS (19.0). Data analysis is vital to test the null-hypotheses formulated by researchers. First of all, it is a key to test the normality of the data distribution.

**4.1 Results of normality**

To test the normality, Smirnov-Kolmogrov test was conducted. The null-hypothesis of this test indicates that the data distribution is normal. If the observed p-value is more than .05 then the null-hypothesis is accepted which indicates the normality and the researcher is allowed to conduct parametric tests.

Table 1

*One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test*

| | | Pretest | posttest | QPT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | | 60 | 60 | 60 |
| Normal Parameters[a] | Mean | 14.2833 | 15.8667 | 43.3167 |
| | Std. Deviation | 1.74756 | 2.38971 | 2.21315 |
| Most Extreme Differences | Absolute | .136 | .149 | .143 |
| | Positive | .098 | .149 | .124 |
| | Negative | -.136 | -.149 | -.143 |
| Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z | | 1.050 | 1.156 | 1.109 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | | .220 | .138 | .171 |

a. Test distribution is Normal.

1. As Table 1 shows p-value for all data including pretest (p=.22>.05), posttest (p=.13>.05), and QPT (p=.17>.05) is more than .05, therefore the null-hypothesis of One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test indicating that the data distribution is normal is accepted.

**4.2 Results of QPT**

Quick Placement Test (QPT) was administered at the outset of the study as a homogenizing instrument. Table 2 shows results of independent samples t-test which was conducted to compare the means of the two groups.

Table 2

*Results of independent samples t-test for QPT*

| Group | N | M | SD | Df | t | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cont. | 30 | 43.10 | 2.20 | 58 | .75 | .45 |
| Exp. | 30 | 43.53 | 2.23 | | | |

As Table 2 shows there is not statistically significant difference (df=58, t=.57, sig=.45) between control (N=30, M=43.10, SD=2.20) and experimental (N=30, M=43.53, SD=2.23) groups in QPT. The result is the participants' homogeneity, i.e. only upper-intermediate were selected based on QPT.

**4.3 Results of pretest**



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Performance of control and experimental groups in the pretest was compared by conducting independent samples t-test. Results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
*Results of independent samples t-test for pretest*

| Group | N | M | SD | Df | T | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cont. | 30 | 14.43 | 1.61 | 58 | .66 | .51 |
| Exp. | 30 | 14.13 | 1.88 | | | |

Table 3 confirms that there is not any significant difference (df=58, t=.66, sig=.51) between control (N=30, M=14.43, SD=1.61) and experimental (N=30, M= 14.13, SD=1.88) groups in the pretest. Accordingly, participants had the same level of proficiency in writing prior to implementing the treatment.

**4.4 Results of posttest**

To test the null-hypothesis formulated by the researchers "E-assessment does not have any significant effects on EFL learners' writing ability" independent samples t-test was conducted (Table 4

Table 4
*Results of independent samples t-test for posttest*

| Group | N | M | SD | Df | T | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cont. | 30 | 13.80 | 1.34 | 58 | 13.57 | .000 |
| Exp. | 30 | 17.93 | .98 | | | |

As Table 4 shows, participants in the experimental group (N=30, M=17.93, SD=.98) significantly (df=58, t=13.57, sig=.000) outperformed those in the control group (N=30, M=13.80, SD=1.34) in the posttest. Therefore the null-hypothesis formulated by the researcher was rejected and positive significant effects of e-assessment on writing ability among upper-intermediate EFL learners were confirmed.

In line with the present finding are those obtained by YastibasandYastibas (2015) who conducted a review to find out the effectiveness of e-portfolio-based assessment in improvement of students' self-regulated learning it was found that e-portfolio-based assessment can be employed to develop students' self-regulated learning in English language teaching since it emphasizes upon students. According to Broady (2015), worldwide, in order to be able to technologically navigate careers to employ technology, all students—ESL and EFL alike—need to employ technology in English classes. Technology skills expand when utilizing e-assessments occurring under time pressure and grades are at stake and learners are provided with the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills in situations in which real life pace is imitated.

**5. DISCUSSION**

This study aimed at investigating the effect of E-assessment on the writing skill of Iranian EFL learners. Writing skill shows an essential role to develop learners' contact and proficiency for the purpose of statement and communication. Considering the information that not enough study has been done to compare the effect of E-assessment on writing skill in Iran as an EFL learners', the researcher felt the necessity for further study. When we participate learning, teaching and assessment, our assessment instrument develops a kind of knowledge instrument that benefits our students to study and develop their writing skill. The participants of the study were in the



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upper immediate level of proficiency so further researches should investigate other level of ability in respect to the application of self-assessment in writing classrooms. This study sheds light on the way that self-assessment in the writing supports learners English Essay Writing, mainly in the EFL upper intermediate context. If self-assessment implemented in upper intermediate, and advanced level, students can gain knowledge in English Essay Writing.In order to investigate the impact of E-assessment on writing skill of the participants through the performance of the control group and experimental groups, the participants were required to take the same test twice as the pre -test and post- test of the study.

**6. CONCLUSION**

The present study focused on the effects of using e-assessment on Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' writing ability. Results of t-test confirmed significant effects of e-assessments implemented throughout the course. Electronic assessment, thanks to recent developments in electronic area, can be implemented in EFL settings where teachers and students alike can send and receive written products in a short period of time. These contexts, in which there is no face-to-face interaction, can facilitate the process of teaching and learning. Recently, according to Ho (2012), with the employment of networked computers and word processing/editing software, many writing teachers have employed synchronous or asynchronous peer review to teach their students. Electronic or computer-mediated peer review (CMPR) has several advantages over traditional face-to-face peer review (FFPR). For instance, CMPR decreases learners' anxiety in oral communication and provides teachers and students alike with flexibility because it can be conducted anywhere at any time with a networked computer (Chang, 2012; DiGiovanni&Nagaswami, 2001; Liang, 2010; Tuzi, 2004, as cited in Ho, 2012).

Recently, with the advances in digital area and introduction of social networks such as Telegram, Line,Viber, and so on into EFL setting, EFL teachers are recommended to implement this kind of assessment to enhance their students' achievement and engage them in an effective web-based communication. EFL students can also take benefits from e-assessment through sharing their knowledge with their teacher on one hand and with their peers on the other hand. Curriculum designers should incorporate electronic materials into EFL instructional settings in order to gradually shift from the tradition to the modernity. Further research is suggested to examine the effects of different modes of e-assessment such as electronic peer assessment, electronic teacher assessment, and electronic self-assessment on different language skills.

The results of this studyrevealed that the knowledge of E-assessment has got a significant impact on students' writing skill. Being able to think writing skill and applying it in their E-assessment can offer learners with better techniques for a more successful life.The participants of the first experimental group were asked to afford E-assessment of their questionnaire during the course and after each question they were invented to assess themselves and answer a quick placement test questionnaire. The pre- and post-tests were tests based on the materials covered in the class. The students in this research were all in the upper intermediate level of expertise which limits the generalizability of the result merely to this expertise level. Also the time period for the investigation is limited to merely one term of institutes, about three months which may affect the generalizability or external validity of the result. Because of the rare number of learners in each group the generalizability or external validity of the study may be affected. Also because of the incapacity of the researcher to randomly select the participants of the research the results are limited in the degree of their generalizability as is also obvious in the choice of the design of the study an experimental design. This research is incomplete to paragraph writing specifically aggressive writing.

7. **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**



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Based on the findings of this research, some suggestions for further studies are made:
In the present study all the participants were male, and sex and age were not reflected. Another study seeing these two variables gives further insight in this area. All the participants were at upper intermediate level of language proficiency. Other levels of study or the impact of learners in this process can be considered. Other researches can be done to compare the effect of other alternative assessment techniques on writing skill. Studying the effect of alternative assessment techniques on other skills speaking, listening and reading is suggested. Investigating theimpact of alternative assessment methods on learners' motivation and autonomy is commended.
It would be motivating to study the effect of alternative assessment method on writing proficiency of TOFEL and IELTS examiners. Further researches can be done to investigate the impact of alternative assessment techniques in schools and institutes.

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# THE EFFECT OF USING COLLIGATIONAL CORPUS-BASED INSTRUCTION ON ENHANCING THE PRAGMALINGUISTIC KNOWLEDGE OF SPEECH ACT OF APOLOGY AMONG IRANIAN INTERMIDIATE EFL LEARNERS

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**Abstract**
This study investigated the effectiveness of colligational corpus-_bassed instruction on enhancing the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech act of apology among intermidiate efl learners. The research question is whether providing students with on-line corpora through using colligational instruction have any effect on enhancing their pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech act of request. A total sum of sixty subjects, two groups, from institutions in mazandaran province participated in the study. The subjects were all intermidiated-level students, consisted of thirty in each group. The purpose was to observe any probable progress in learner's speech act using abilityfrom the beginning to the end of the program. The subjects took a standard opt test to demonstrate their English profecieny. Then they were randomly divided into two groups, experimental and copntrol group. An mdct pre-test was administered in each group to test their ability and knowledge in using speech act of apology. After fifteen session of treatment< a post-test of mdct was administered. The experimental group received corpus-based instruction through colligational practices while the control group practiced learning the same speech act through traditional and old methods of learning acts like textbooks, audios, videos and, etc.the data were analysed using paired and independent sample t-test.in order to increase the validity of the results, the researcher used observation and interveiw,too. The results have shown how the quality of speech act learning can improve by using corpus-based instruction.

**Keywords:** colligation, corpus-based instructio,speech acts,mdc.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, English as a lingua franca has emerged as a means of communication between speakers with different languages, which drives English teaching to become increasingly important in non-English speaking countries. At the same time, EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers are trying to improve English learners' language competence comprehensively so that English learners can communicate with English speakers effectively based on polite and proper verbal exchanges. However, despite being able to speak English



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fluently there is often a pragmatic dissidence in various speech acts that may reduce the communicative intent (Cortazzi&Jin, 2008; Goh &Kwah, 1997; Rao, 1996, 2002). In other words, a good-willed speech act in one culture may be considered ill-mannered in another, with a potential consequential result of misunderstanding or breakdown of an intercultural conversation, or may even cause offence to the other side. Hence, it is believed that an effective and successful communication between interlocutors rests upon proper and polite speech acts. Cohen (2008) considers speech acts to be aninteresting part of pragmatics due to the possible misfit between what is said orwritten and what is meant. Thus, successful speech act realization involves bothsociocultural and sociolinguistic ability (Cohen, 1996) and/or pragmalinguistic andsociopragmatics aspects (Thomas, 1983). Although having siociopragmatic knowledge of speech acts are necessary both in theory and practice, but it is not enough. Studies show that increasing the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech acts can be very influential in EFL settings, too. Learning grammar in context will allow learners to see how rules can be used in sentences. Language is context-sensitive. This means that, in the absence of context, it is very difficult to recover the intended meaning of a single word or phrase (Thornbury, 1999. p.69). But pragmalinguistic is part of pragmatics knowledge that focuses on the role of grammar in the context of use. Callies (2009a) draws attention to the pragmalinguistic component of pragmatics and its interplay with grammar. He examined advanced L2 learners' comprehension and use of focus constructions, i.e. pragmatically-motivated variations of the basic word order. Outlining that knowledge of the principles of information organization in discourse, and the use of linguistic devices for information highlighting clearly relates to L2 pragmatic knowledge, Callies (2009) suggests that further research into L2 learners' abilities at the syntax-pragmatics interface may also be a rewarding enterprise with respect to the interplay of grammatical and pragmalinguistic knowledge, an important yet unresolved issue in ILP.

Among different types of speech acts, Apologies are universal in the general human need to express regret over offensive acts and they have accompanied human communication from the oldest times up to the present, with the potential number of addressees ranging from one to innumerable. As remedial interchanges contributing to linguistic etiquette, apologies have long been the focus of attention for philosophers of language (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), sociolinguists (Goffman, 1967, 1971; Gumperz, 1982), ethnographers of communication (Hymes, 1974) and conversational analysts (Coulmas, 1981; Tannen and Öztek, 1981; Blum -Kulka et al., 1989), not to mention the series of manuals on "How to shine in society" dating back to the 18th century. In the later studies, Butler (2001) found that context is a very important factor in evaluating the appropriateness of an apology, in that contextual clues are the ones that determine what type of apology to use in a give situation. His conclusion was that understanding how native speakers perceive apologies in English is a good tool in teaching such speech acts to learners of English as a second language.

What is important here is that learners still have problem in understanding and learning of these acts. Researches show neither the use of speech acts in context nor can familiarity with linguistic forms by itself improve learners' pragmatic knowledge and the traditional approaches to speech act teaching are not helpful anymore there with potential limits (Aston, 1995, p. 261). Another important issue concerning this topic is the role of instructional materials. Traditional approaches and materials are not responsive of the huge and vast diversities of the pragmatic knowledge in different situation. For this reason, corpora and concordancing programs have been used by second language learners and teachers in classroom exercises. Stefanowitsch and Gries (2011) and Hoey (2005) suggested to teach the standard grammar structures and the learner gradually acquires the rest of what native speakers know over time through continued exposure. Textbooks and other traditional pedagogical materials cannot provide such a vast source of exposure. But



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corpora can provide this situation through colligation. Colligation as a corpus-based approach to grammar is based on the notion, introduced by Firth (1968, p. 182) as a term for relations between grammatical categories. In corpus linguistics, the term is typically taken to refer to the co-occurrence of words with particular grammatical categories (Hoey, 2000, p. 234). Where it is used, it is typically operationalized in terms of word classes occurring in a particular position relative to a node word, i. e. as collocation at the level of part-of-speech. Hoey's notion of colligation is broad enough to include many studies of lexico-grammatical phenomena. Mair (2003) worked on gerundial and infinitival complements after begin and start and on infinitival complementation in general (Mair, 1990). Noel (2003) worked on infinitives, accusatives and that- clauses and the results of these studies support the usefulness of using colligation for enhancing the quality of learning lexico-gramatical aspects of language.

The present study is intended to investigate whether using on-line corpora and practicing pragmalinguistic aspects of speech act of apology through corpus-based colligations, as an alternative to the traditional teaching approaches, can solve the problems concerning learning of speech acts or not.

**2. Reviewof related Literature**

Pragmatics is a relatively young linguistic discipline – compared to, for example, phonetics and syntax – which began to establish itself as an independent area of linguistic research only about 40 years ago. Linguistic pragmatics has its foundation in language philosophy and developed as a result of ideas concerning the functions and use of language by philosophers such as Wittgenstein (1953, 2004), Austin (1962), Searle (1969, 1975, 1976) and Grice (1968, 1975). The term pragmatics itself goes back to another philosopher, Peirce (1905), and his work on pragmatism. The first definition of pragmatics that is generally quoted was developed by Morris (1938, p. 6), who defined pragmatics as 'the study of the relation of signs to interpreters'.But Pragmatics is generally defined asthe study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication. (Crystal, 1985, p. 240). The study of pragmatics as a field of inquiry within Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research is usually referred to as Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP). ILP is commonly defined as "the study of nonnative speakers' comprehension, production, and acquisition of linguistic action in L2" (Kasper, 2010, p. 141). Interlanguage Pragmatics theory thus has predominantly been concerned with speech act theory (speech act types such as requests, apologies, refusals, complaints, compliments and compliment responses, and the use of internal and external modification to these speech acts), conversational implicature theory, and politeness theory in general and deixis and presupposition in a more specific way (Levinson, 1983). The focus is on the ways NNS' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge differs from that of native speakers (NS) and among learners with different linguistic and cultural background.

Over the recent years there has been a large diversity of studies on the speech act of apology. The greatest number of these studies looked at the way one apologizes in English, both with native and non-native speakers. Nonetheless, there are other studies that investigated the perception and production of apologies in different languages. But the role of corpus-based studies and colligational approaches by focus on linguistic aspects in the context of real communication was very influential in learning this act. An extensive analysis on apologizing in British English was conducted by Deutschmann (2003). The author examined the forms and functions of apologies, as well as their social and conversational variation as they appeared in the British National Corpus, which consists of recordings of a great variety of over 1700 speakers in different contexts and situations, from formal to informal. The results of this study show that the frequency of strategies that imply speakers trying to minimize their responsibility was four times greater than those that



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imply assuming responsibility.Válková (2004, 2012) studied various manifestations of politeness theory, namely at the processes of apologizing and complimenting and their results, i.e. overt language entities of different sizes and various structural configurations that can be perceived (or negotiated) as apologies and compliments through corpora. These are treated within the framework of a modified model of speech act set theory, with corpus ‐based samples discussed to verify the validity of the theoretical findings. The results show that rather than single speech acts, apologies and compliments should be treated as speech act sets opening up space for identifying more delicate, partly universal and partly language specific scenarios, by means of which cross ‐cultural similarities and differences can be considered. The consequences for SLA are also obvious: the lack of pragmatic competence in producing appropriate speech reactions diminishes the possibility of accomplishing the intended communicative goals.

Investigating Internet chat room communication, Szymańsk(2009) focuses on expressions used in selected speech acts including apology. In fact Szymański studied speech acts through colligation, nominalization tendency, realized in the performance of certain speech acts. It is a pragmalinguistically oriented research using Polish chat room conversations. The study was conducted with the use of corpus linguistics methodology. For the purpose of this study, a corpus of Internet text-based chats was used. Having studied the chat room lexis, especially lexical items used in selected speech acts (greetings, farewells, thanks and apologies), a number of word-formation process were detected, namely nominalization that was useful in learning the speech acts. The researched corpus provides a number of derivatives from this English borrowing. In the source language, the word *sorry* is an adjective. Poles, however, maintain a trend to treat this word as a noun. Concordance analysis of sorry proved that none of its instances in the analyzed samples does denote features of nouns.

Sabaté and CurelliGotor's (2007) also studies socio pragmatic and pragmalinguistic type of transfer in speech act of apology among Catalan learners. Findings suggested that the low-proficient Catalan learners exhibited more sociopragmatic transfer, while the advanced and the intermediate ones exhibited more pragmalinguistic transfer, in English-L2 apologies.

In summary, the use of corpora can be a natural and fundamental part of the teaching and learning process. Despite the vital role that textbooks and other instructional materials play in teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Iran, there is limited research conducted to corpus-based materials and approaches. The present study tried to investigate the effect of this type of corpus-based instruction on learning speech act of apology.

**3. Research Question**

1. Does colligational online corpus-based instruction have any effect on enhancing the pragmalinguist knowledge of speech act of apology among Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

**4. Hypothesis**

H0: Colligational online corpus-based instruction has any effect on enhancing the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech act of apology among Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

**5. Method**

***5.1. Design***

The design of this study is the experimental design. In this study on-line corpus is the dependent variable that is practiced through colligation, and pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech acts of apology is the independent variable. Samples were selected from a target population and after administrating OPT and selecting scores between 120 -149, they were assigned into experimental and control groups. There are two groups, experimental and control groups. A DCT was administered to groups as the pretest. Then the experimental groups were exposed to treatment which was corpus–based instruction of speech acts of apology. The control groups did not



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received corpus-based instruction, but they were taught in traditional teaching methods for speech acts. After a semester, 15 sessions, a post test was administered. The results of the post tests were analyzed to see whether treatment had any impact or not.

***5.2. Participants***

The subjects of this study were students of English-Language institutes in Mazandaran province. They were selected from the target population of intermediate EFL learners. There was no age and sex limitation. The criterion for selection was an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) in which scores between 120-149 in four language skills were selected for the purpose of the this study based on OPT table. 60 participants, based on Krejcie and Morgan's table for random sample size (1970) with 95% confidence interval, were randomly selected and randomly divided into two experimental and two control groups, thirty in each group. The intermediate level was selected because they are familiar with grammatical concepts and they are cognitively ready to receive metacognitive instruction, do grammatical analysis and process speech act tasks.

***5.3. Materials***

The materials in the present study were of two types- those used in traditional classes and the ones used in corpus-based classes

***5.3.***1. In traditional classes, the students had several sources of authentic materials to observe and analyze speech act samples. They listened to audios, watched filmed scenes and reviewed their transcripts for the speech act of apology studied during the semester. The class also studied EFL textbooks taught in these institutes about American culture and communication in order to understand the cultural context that shapes how speech acts are performed. The approximate level of these textbooks, as defined by the publisher, was consistent among all eight books: intermediate to upper-intermediate.

***5.3.***2. In corpus based classes:

a. Corpus like Communicator that is called dialogue corpora, with Date and Dipper as its concondarcers, were used. These corpora are speech act- special and contain topics concerning speech act practice. It is a keyword-based parser and seems to be adequate for this first stage of parsing task. So for cool construction analysis keywords are used for providing information concerning speech acts. The validity and reliability of this corpora had been substantiated through a pilot study done on 4 students to make sure it is suitable for intermediate level students.

b. CARLA site was also be used as a source for exercises and practicing speech acts. This database contains bibliographic information for all publications and presentations that have come out of the projects at the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition. This work has been created by an interdisciplinary and intercollegiate working group of faculty from the University of Minnesota in the fields of second language acquisition, second language pedagogy, and other disciplines dealing with linguistic issues. This website offers information about speech acts and how they can be learned and taught. (www.iles.umn.edu/introspeechacts).

***5.4.Instruments***

Several instruments were employed in the present study:

***5.4****.1*. As for the proficiency test, OPT test was employed. The test has been developed by the "Languages and Linguistic Faculty" members and therefore, enjoys the construct validity crucial to any developed test.

***5.4.2***. Krejcie and Morgan's table for random sample size (1970).

*5.4.3.* Two 20- item MDCT (multiple choice discourse completion test) for speech act apology and colligation as the pre-test and the other as the post test was used in this study. So the reliability and validity of these tests is confirmed beforehand; all of these situations are adapted from the previous studies.



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***5.4.4***. Blum &kulkas' coding scheme (1997) for scoring apology DTC. Two criteria were used here for coding speech acts of apology through colligation: Conveying the illocutionary force and grammatical go-togetherness of speech act elements. It is called Mood derivable where the grammatical mood of locution and its colligation determine its illocutionary force.

***5.4.***5. Taggers like such as CLAWS (linguistics) and VOLSUNGA were also introduced. Also CLL-Tagger allows the user getting a text annotated with POS tags. It works on a well-known bi-directional inference algorithm according to which a POS tag is assigned to a token depending on POS tags of tokens to the right and to the left of current token. As a result CLL-Tagger works much faster than its immediate analogue, a tagger developed by the Japanese scientists (T&T tagger) that employs the same algorithm and also American National Corpus (ANC).

***5.4***.*6.* As alternatives to DATE and DIPPER Scheme for COMUNICATOR corpus, there are two commercially available corpus software, such as Wordsmith Tools (Scott, 1999) and Monoconc Pro (2000), which any average home computer user can manipulate with relative ease. They were also suggested and used for additional practice.

***5.4.***7. In addition devices like videos, audio containing situations containing interviews and meetings with celebrities, computers and internets were employed for the instruction.

***5.5.Procedures***

The subjects were selected from the target population of intermediate EFL learners. An Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered with 200 questions, fifty for each skill and 60 subjects with scores between 120 to 149 were selected for the purpose of this study and randomly assigned into two groups (i.e. experimental and control groups). A pre- test of MDTC was administered to determine their primary speech act knowledge. Then the treatment started and lasted for one semester, 15 sessions twice a week. Each treatment session lasted an hour and a half. The researcher started with Pre-presentation warming up, presentation explicit–metapragmatic instruction, Teacher-Fronted discussion of various meanings conveyed by an utterance, presenting socio-cultural contexts, linguistic knowledge, semantic and syntactic, formula and strategies that were needed to realize the intended speech act. Colligation was introduced and practiced in experimental group. The type of material was also different in which corpora were used in these classes. They were exposed to dialogues and different examples containing different forms of speech acts in different real life situations from dialogue corpora. The researcher explained what colligation is and some examples were shown through corpora. Taggers and concodancers were introduced. The subjects became familiar with their application and use. These applications were installed by the researcher beforehand. As an alternative, the way online corpora can be downloaded and practiced was also trained. The subjects were asked to find some examples of these speech acts and the co-occurrence of words with particular grammatical categories (Hoey, 2000, p. 234). Dialogue corpora is key word- based .The key words were given, and the speech acts used in different situation appeared on the screen. Then taggers analyzed then into grammatical categories. The subjects observed how, in frequent example, a special word can co-occur with a certain grammatical category. For each speech act, this was practiced separately. Dialogue corpora also exist online. The subjects can download and use it in this way. In the present study, this type of corpora was used when the subjects become proficient enough in determining part-of-speech later. After enough practicing through corpora, the students started working on the speech acts through role play because it is an integrated skill and all skill is practiced through it. Then some exercises taken from CARLA website were given to the subjects to see whether they were able to use and write the speech acts lexically and grammatically correct or not.



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But the control groups practiced the speech acts through traditional methods of teaching through speech act related materials extracted by researcher from EFL textbooks, audios and videos CDs. All the Subjects were given:

1. Awareness activities.
2. Authentic language samples as examples or models.
3. Production activities.

At the end of each class session the researcher gave some exercises taken from CARLA website. The subjects were required to do the exercises for more practice. By the end of the semester a post-test of MDTC was administered with questions specified speech act of apology to see whether there would be any difference between traditional and corpus group or not. Then, data was analyzed and codified based on the cross-cultural speech act realization pattern,(CCSARP; Blum-Kulka&Olshtain, 1984), the move derivable one, in which they identified some patterns utilized in apologizing. In order to increase the validity of result, field notes that were based on Observations and interview was also used.

***5.6.Data Analysis***

The participants' scores both on the pretest and posttest were analyzed by SPSS software. Then two types of data analysis statistical procedures are used: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. As an inferential statistical procedure, paired sample T-test was used to see the subjects' improvement from pre-tests to post tests. Independent sample t-test using subjects' scores in posttest was used in order to ensure any significant difference between participants' responses to the situations in posttests.

**6. Results**

In this study separate tests were administered to examine whether there were any significant differences between the control and experimental groups or not. Students' responses were observed and analyzed concerning the changes and differences displayed in their speech act improvement after they used the on-line dialogue corpora. After analyzing on the basis of students' scores on the pre-tests and the post tests, two statistical computations of the data were carried out, descriptive and inferential .What follows shows the results of the analyses to examine whether using colligation as a corpus based approach had any effect on enhancing the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech acts of apology and hence pragmatic knowledge of the subjects of study or not.

**Table 6.1. Descriptive analysis of the pre-test and post test scores of the control group**

| | | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Con1 | pre | 12.00 | 30 | 3.50 | .63 |
| | post | 12.11 | 30 | 3.64 | .66 |

Table 6.1) shows the descriptive analysis of pre-test and post test scores of the control groupof the study. In the output presented above, there are 60 participants with the mean of 12, standard deviation of 3.50 for the pre-test and mean of 12.11 and standard deviation of 3,84 for the post-test. The standard error of measurement for the control group is .63 and for the experimental group is .66. As the table shows, the mean difference is not too large from pre-test to post- test.

**Table 6.2. Descriptive analysis of the pre-test and post test scores of the experimental group**

| | | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EXP | pre | 11.83 | 30 | 3.29 | .60 |
| | post | 13.40 | 30 | 3.63 | .66 |



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Table 6.2) shows the descriptive analysis of pre-test and post test scores of the experimental group. In the output presented above, there are 60 participants with the mean of 11.83 standard deviation of 3.29 for the pre-test and mean of 13.40 and standard deviation of 3,63 for the post-test. The standard error of measurement for the control group is .60 and for the experimental group is .66. As the data shows, the mean has increased a lot from pre-test to post-test. This means the treatment was effective.

**Table6.3. Paired sample t-test between pre-test and post test scores of control group**

| | Paired Differences | | | | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Pair 1 pre- post | .11 | .50 | .09 | .30 | .07 | 1.27 | 29 | .02 |

Table6.3) shows the results of Paired sample t-test SPSS analysis between pre-test and post test scores of control group with the mean difference of .11, standard deviation difference of .50, standard error mean difference of .09 and observed –t of 1.27.The significance level here is 0.00 and the observed-t is less than the critical-t. It shows there was no improvement in post test scores after using traditional teaching methods for teaching speech acts.

**Table 6.4.Paired sample t-test between pre-test and post test scores of experimental group**

| | Paired Differences | | | | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Pair 1 pre - post | 1.56 | 1.27 | .23 | 2.04 | 1.08 | 6.71 | 29 | .000 |

Table6.4) shows the results of Paired sample t-test between pre-test and post test scores of experimental group with the mean difference of 1.50, standard deviation difference of 1.27, standard error mean difference of .23 and observed –t of 6.71 which is larger than the critical-t(2.04) The significance level is 0.00. So the treatment was influential.

**Table 5.5. Independent Samples T-Test between post test scores experimental and control group**

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| post2 | Equal variances assumed | .041 | .840 | 3.12 | 58 | .02 | 3.06 | .94 | 2.96 | .82 |



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Table 6.5) also summarizes the independent sample T-test to compare the post-test scores of experimental and control group with a mean difference of 3.06 and Standard Error difference of .94. As the output shows, the observed-t is 3.12 which is more than the critical –t which is 2.00 (3.12 > 2.00). The p-value (two- tailed) is also .02. It is less than .05.It con be concluded that the treatment was influential in experimental group.

So the first null hypothesis that colligational on-line corpora have no effect on enhancing the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech act of request among Iranian intermediate EFL learners is rejected.

**7. Discussion**

This research was an effort to probe the impact of colligational corpus-based instruction on enhancing the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech acts of apology intermediate EFL learners. Considering the research question, the findings of the paired-samples t-test that was between pre-test and post-test scores of each group and independent sample t-test which was between the post test scores of experimental and control group showed that the participants' could improve their ability in speech act of request through using corpus-based instruction. The observed-t in independent sample t-test was more than the critical-t (3.12 > 2.00). the level of significance was also less than .05.So the results were not by chance and the null hypothesis that colloconstructional corpus-based instruction has no effect on enhancing the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech act of request of the subjects of this study is rejected. The findings of this study is consistent with study done by Deutschmann (2003) who examined the forms and functions of apologies, as well as their social and conversational variation as they appeared in the British National Corpus. The results of this study show that the frequency of strategies that imply speakers trying to minimize their responsibility was four times greater than those that imply assuming responsibility.

It also support the findings of Válková (2004, 2012) who studied various manifestations of politeness theory, namely at the processes of apologizing and complimenting through corpora. These are treated within the framework of a modified model of speech act set theory, with corpus‐based samples discussed to verify the validity of the theoretical findings. The results show that rather than single speech acts, apologies and compliments should be treated as speech act sets opening up space for identifying more delicate, partly universal and partly language specific scenarios, by means of which cross‐cultural similarities and differences can be considered. The consequences for SLA are also obvious: the lack of pragmatic competence in producing appropriate speech reactions diminishes the possibility of accomplishing the intended communicative goals.

Szymańsk (2009) study is also in line with the results of the present research by focus on expressions used in selected speech acts including apology. In fact Szymański studied speech acts through colligation, nominalization tendency, realized in the performance of certain speech acts. It is a pragmalinguistically oriented research using Polish chat room conversations. The study was conducted with the use of corpus linguistics methodology. For the purpose of this study, a corpus of Internet text-based chats was used. Having studied the chat room lexis, especially lexical items used in selected speech acts (greetings, farewells, thanks and apologies), a number of word-formation process were detected, namely nominalization that was useful in learning the speech acts. The researched corpus provides a number of derivatives from this English borrowing. In the source language, the word *sorry* is an adjective. Poles, however, maintain a trend to treat this word as a noun. Concordance analysis of sorry proved that none of its instances in the analyzed samples does denote features of nouns.



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Although some researchers believe in the role of other factors, like Ghanami (2014) who focused on the role of gender differences, or Birjandi and Karimi (2014) who emphasized on the importance of language proficiency, but the present study confirm the effectiveness of using colligational corpus-based instruction on enhancing the pragmalinguistic knowledge speech act of apology. The results of observation and interview were also rewarding for the use of corpora and the experimental group was satisfied with this teaching method.

**8. Conclusion**

This study presented findings concerning the impact of on-line corpora on enhancing pragmalinguistics knowledge of speech acts of apology among Iranian Intermediate EFL learners. The findings indicated that there was difference between the corpus-based instruction of (experimental) and traditional teaching methods of speech acts (control) in terms of teaching methodology and instructional material as measured by post-tests. It is clear that students understand speech acts better when they have the context in which the word is used in while in traditional method, they did not have the chance. It also prove the fact that colligation as a corpus-based teaching approach, can enhance the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech act of apology and hence their pragmatic knowledge.It can have a lot of implications in educational settings asa corpus-based approach gives authentic examples by providing students opportunities to be explorers (Dodd, 1997). With authentic examples, learners will see the true use of language. Flowerdew (1993) cautions against using fabricated examples due to the possibility that students may see a "distorted picture of actual use." Concordances can demonstrate the organization of lexical items, the relationships they have with other word, and the collocations of different types. Colligation and parsing the structure of speech acts lead to their reinforcement: the representations of the lexical items as well as the general syntactic constructions become stronger. Although the current study has made findings in employing corpus-based language learning in an EFL setting, there are limitations to the research as it did not have a large enough sample size for an experimental research designed for statistical significance tests. Also the control of the subjects was not managed as scheduled. This issue is related to the first limitation: the sample size issue. In addition, controlling of confounding variables like age, sex, intelligence, and psychological factors that may affect the results of the study can be mentioned. The main limitations of this study is the implementation of limited computer technology resources and lack of computer-assisted language learning method in the classes in which only traditional ways are worked on. Based on the results and the limitations of the current research, recommendations can be made for future research to better understand the employing of a corpus-based research in speech act learning. First, since this study focused on speech act of apology, the question, then, might be whether the use of corpora in other speech acts can also be helpful. The second point is the emphasis of this study on the pragmalinguistic knowledge of speech acts. It was found that corpus-based instruction and using colligation a corpus-based and grammatical approach can improve the quality of learning by providing example from authentic contexts and leads to having a more meaningful and comprehensible product. The same study can be done by a sociopragmatic concentration. The third point is concerned with the subjects' level of study in which intermediate levels were chosen for the purpose of this study. A research can be done on advanced levels to see whether this approach is effective in this level or not. The same study can be replicated in other settings by other subjects



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of different ages, levels, sexes and the future researchers con extend this study in the field of psychology or other fields of studies.The final point is pragmatics itself in which is not confined to speech acts. Researchers can use corpus-based instructions in other areas of pragmatics like conversational implicature, deixes and conversational structural studies with the same or different methodology to test its effectiveness or ineffectiveness.

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# EFFECT OF HOMONYMS INSTRUCTION ON VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION OF IRANIAN YOUNG FEMALE ELEMENTARY EFL LEARNERS THROUGH CALL-MEDIATED TASKS

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**Abstract**
English language has been riddled with many problematic words like homonyms, which are worth investigating. Also, due to the immense and tremendous revolution in technology, the medium of computer is applied in every aspect of human life, and language learning field is not exempted from this axiom. Therefore, the present quasi-experimental research was developed in Iran language institute (ILI) with 64 young female elementary learners to determine the impact of homonyms instruction on their vocabulary development and retention. After signing the assent form, four intact classes of 9-10 year-old learners were given a proficiency test to be homogenized. They were assigned into two groups of Call-Mediated, and Traditional ones. Both groups enjoyed the concurrent and simultaneous homonyms instruction, while the former one favored the medium of computers in their process of second language (L2) learning. The results obtained from the vocabulary achievement test (VAT) demonstrated that although both groups yielded a significant improvement in their vocabulary development phase, the participants in the Traditional group outperformed their counterparts in the Call-Mediated one. Moreover, after implementing the delayed post-test, findings manifested that in both groups learners' vocabulary retention was hindered significantly; besides, analysis portrayed the superiority of the Call-Mediated method regarding learners' long-term vocabulary retention and recall. Thus, the current study shed light on the area of vocabulary learning and suggested some remarkable pedagogical implications for teachers to integrate strategies exploited via computer programs, which captured the interest of learners and provided them with a context and scaffold to learn more efficiently.

**Key words*:*** CALL, Homograph, Homonym, Homophone, Vocabulary

## 1. Introduction

Learning vocabulary is an important part of mastering in a second or foreign language for both teachers and students (Schmitt, 2000). It is essential to contemplate Wilkins' (1972) famous saying



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that "without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (p.111). Learning vocabulary is therefore perceived to be "of critical importance to the typical language learner" (Zimmerman, 1997, p. 5). With regard to the fact that most learners usually experience salient and significant difficulties in this respect, similarity between words as in homonyms is very problematic in this area too.

*Homonyms* are defined as two or more words which have the same spelling, or the same pronunciation, or both, but share different meanings. In this definition homonyms represent a big category from which two sub categories of homophones and homographs emerged. Diversity of lexical representations with one pronunciation in *homophones*, and also merging two distinctive words with different meanings under the domain of one form as in *homographs* are eristic and controversial issues, which are too disruptive not only to the students, but also to the teachers and native speakers. In this line, Mazzocco (1997) stated that learners may encounter some difficulties to derive the correct meaning of homonyms in context. He also argued that learning homonyms is more demanding especially for children; they may learn this kind of words more slowly than other new words.

Considering these facts, Takač (2008) posed that formal L2 vocabulary instruction should be according to various teaching techniques and activities in order to improve individual learning styles and break down the classroom routines. So, teachers can make use of technology in their instructional methods. Integration of technology enables them to broaden their horizons and widen their scope. Rahimpour (2000) pointed out that recent years have witnessed an explosion of interest in using computers for teaching and learning purposes. Therefore, researchers and teachers make unraveling efforts to link Computer-Assisted Language Learning (*CALL*) into the curriculum (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2003).

CALL is defined as "the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning" (Levy, 1997, p.1). CALL programs provide a stimulus so that the learner must respond; the stimulus may be illustrated in any combination of texts, still images, sound, as well as motion videos (Ghabanchi & Anbarestani, 2008). The class in a CALL environment is more student-centered than teacher-centered; chances for cooperation are increased, and students spend a lot of time working together (Hawisher and Selfe, 1991; Brandl, 2002). More interactions between learners occur in computer-based learning, because students are dependent on themselves; besides, CALL environment is a stress-free and more relaxed atmosphere than the Traditional classrooms (Murphy, 1997; Roed, 2003). In this flow, this kind of instruction is the reminiscence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which is a good supportive theoretical background for the present research. The CLT approach focuses on carrying out and implementing methodologies that are capable of enhancing learners' functional language ability through active involvement of them in authentic communication (Savignon, 2007). In this respect, the philosophy of CALL also put a strong emphasis on student-centered lessons that allows the students to be autonomous learners.

It should be noted that *Multimedia CALL* is a more recent approach to CALL. It favors a learner-centered approach to CALL, rather than a teacher- centered drill-based one; it is also presented by the use of some concordance programs in language classroom settings (Davies, Hewer, Rendall, & Walker, 2004). These kinds of programs make it possible to combine texts, graphics, sounds, pictures, and still (or motion) images, as well as animations, and video recordings in an imaginative style. Therefore, Multimedia CALL-Mediated homonyms instruction was implemented throughout the current study.

Ultimately, it is the matter of the utmost importance that second language learners usually learn vocabulary in a Traditional way, passively through their teachers' explanations or by drilling tasks, which seems to be very boring and inefficient. In the case of homonyms, the problem is



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more difficult to deal with, because they are very complicated and common sources of confusion. Therefore, discovering effective ways of learning vocabulary through lexical set of words instruction such as homonyms or via implementing appropriate tasks may reinforce L2 learners' vocabulary repertoire, and also affect the retention and recall of these words too.

Hence, the present study particularly focused on homonyms instruction and tried to address several key questions about the effectiveness of various methods in this respect. It also investigated the role of integrating technology and exploiting the medium of computers in the process of second language vocabulary teaching and learning. Moreover, the outcome of this piece of study proposed several remarkable insights regarding learners' vocabulary development and vocabulary retention and recall.

## 2. Review of the Related Literature

In this section, bulk of previous and related debate on the subject matter came up for review. So, various lines of research on homonyms in English as a foreign language (EFL) context, as well as the role of CALL in L2 vocabulary learning were discussed in detail.

### 2.1. Homonyms

Since the similarity between words is subjective and it differs in any accent, the great number of homonyms is still a mystery throughout the history of English language. These kinds of similarities in pronunciation, as in homophones, or in spelling, as in homographs, may cause a lot of problems in the process of language learning. Readence, Baldwin, and Head (1986) asserted that not only may multiple-meaning words cause some confusion for native language speakers, but this phenomenon is also very difficult for English language learners. The nature of homonyms is so complicated and odd that they cannot be anticipated by any rules of grammar or diction. We cannot search dictionaries systematically for them, and the only way to get better at recognizing and understanding them is to practice using them frequently.

#### 2.1.1. Various Lines of Research on Homonyms

Some studies were carried out which addressed the conflict of homonyms in order to indicate whether explicit homonyms instruction was effective or not.

In an experimental study, Zipke, Ehri, and Cairns (2009) investigated the reading comprehension of 46 third grader students through metalinguistic awareness involving semantic ambiguity detection instruction. The participants were amongst 8-9 year-old students chosen from a variety of cultural backgrounds who were randomly assigned into two groups of treatment and control. The treatment group were asked to analyze the multiple meanings of homonyms and ambiguous sentences in isolation, text, or riddles taken from Amelia Bedelia series of books, while the control group had a book-reading and discussion without any metalinguistic awareness. The results manifested that the treatment group learners significantly outperformed the control ones. So, metalinguistic ambiguity instruction was effective and exerted a bigger impact on the standardized reading comprehension test which was individually administered and involved reading and fill-in-the-blank questions to complete the meaning of the short passages.

In another study, Storkel and Maekawa (2005) tried to identify whether preliterate children aged between 3 to 4 years old learn homonyms more rapidly than novel-words or not. In this study, the participants were exposed to homonyms or novel words in a story accompanied by visual support. The study was administered in two phases. First, the *semantic representation* phase that the children were asked to choose the referent of each homonym or novel word. Second, the *lexical representation* phase that the learners were asked to name the pictures. The results revealed that both groups of participants did the task in the first phase with the same degree of accuracy. In other words, homonym learning was similar to novel word learning so that learners could identify homonyms as accurate as novel words. On the second phase, learners were more



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accurate in naming homonyms than the novel words. Therefore, pictures of homonyms were easier to name for children, because they were composed of common sound sequences.

Some scholars have argued that children in the age of 3-9 range have difficulty in interpretation of the homonyms, because they tend to choose a meaning which is consistent with the 'primary meaning' of the homonym rather than its secondary meaning which is the new meaning. (Mazzocco, 1997; Mazzocco, Myers, Thompson & Desai, 2003; Doherty, 2004).

Evidences also have revealed that the ability of children to independently distinguish and identify the contextually appropriate meaning of a homonym appears to improve through age (Beveridge & Marsh, 1991; Doherty, 2000). In support of this idea, some previous studies have implied that 3-4 year-old children have difficulty to discriminate the primary and secondary meaning of homonyms, They also can not choose the appropriate contextual meaning frequently; however, children this young can identify both meanings of a homonym in tasks with minimum cognitive demands or tasks which provide more support for the appropriate contextual interpretation (Beveridge & Marsh, 1991; Backscheider & Gelman, 1995; Doherty, 2000). Here, the child needs additional cue or evidence to override his or her preference, and in order to choose the appropriate meaning of the homonym mate or homonym family.

Taken together, according to Doherty (2000), he concluded that most children who are between the ages of 3 and 4 seem to develop their ability in recognizing two distinct meanings of one word in isolation. But, it is observed that preschoolers tend to select the most common meaning of multiple-meaning words, even in the cases where the meaning does not match to the context (Campbell & Bowe, 1983; Beveridge & Marsh, 1991). Also, Cairns, Waltzman, and Schlisselberg (2004) claimed that first-grade students may have metalinguistic awareness in order to detect homonyms in isolation, but a kind of *explicit homonyms instruction* can be beneficial in this regard to foster learners' comprehension, and to verbalize their burgeoning awareness.

**2.2. The Role of Technology and CALL in L2 Vocabulary Learning**

In an environment where information is spread in a great speed, the necessity of knowing a foreign language turns out to be significant. As Freire and Macedo (1987) implied, literacy is not only about 'reading the word', it is also about 'reading the world'. As, technology incorporates rapidly in every aspect of human life, the field of language learning is not an exception. So, Computer-Assisted Language Learning or **CALL** has long been studied by many of the researchers. In this flow, according to Ahmad, Corbett, Rogers and Sussex (1985), implementing computers offers certain advantages to language teachers so that they can present and process authentic materials to the learners with a kind of flexibility.

Kern (2006) introduced the role of technology and CALL as being a tutor, tool or medium. It seems that the roles of the computer as a tutor and as a tool are complementary. Since as a tutor, the computer evaluates the users' input and responds to it, while as a tool it is employed by the users to enhance their own learning or communication. Therefore, it works as a 'medium'.

**2.2.1. Various Lines of Research on CALL**

There are several lines of research on the effects of CALL-based programs on learners' vocabulary learning, which are described as follows:

In a study, Ghabanchi and Anbarestani (2008) put CALL programs under spotlight to determine whether they had any significant effects on contextualized vocabulary learning, and long-term vocabulary retention of the learners or not. In this regard, 56 EFL learners participated in their research. The teacher taught 30 new words along with the definition of the words, pronunciations, as well as some synonyms and antonyms each session to the students. 28 learners who had access to the computerized facilities and technological apparatus at home were voluntarily assigned to the experimental group who had to find the meaning and definition of the newly taught words through the medium of the computers, while the control group followed



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the traditional approach which was based on bilingual lists and desktop dictionaries. The results manifested that in spite of the fact that the scores of the CALL group learners in the immediate post-test were significantly more than the Control ones, the scores in the delayed post-test were considerably less than the Control one.

Licenjacka and Filologia (2007) examined two methods of learning a series of adjectives within a period of seven days. However, the experimental group had the opportunity to access the word processing software or technological equipment in order to learn the new lexicon, the Control group was requested to study new words without any access to the computerized programs. They were left free to memorize the lexis in the way they prefer themselves. The findings suggested that the experimental group, the CALL-based one, could yield better results in terms of learning the mentioned set of adjectives.

Getkham (2004) compared two groups of learners in their vocabulary performance. The first group implemented a Multimedia CALL program; whereas, the Traditional one utilized some printed texts. Results obtained from the pre-test and post-test demonstrated that after practicing vocabulary exercises, both groups improved in their vocabulary knowledge. But, unfortunately after one month, the findings gained from the immediate and delayed post-tests revealed that both groups forgot some of the instructed words. Therefore, the Multimedia CALL program could help learners store and retain the vocabulary in their long-term memory, and the degree of forgetting in this group was less than that of with the printed texts.

Gan, Low and Yaakub (1996) undertook a comparative study to examine the effect of using computers on teaching vocabulary. In this respect, forty-eight participants were randomly divided into two groups of Control and experimental. The treatment was carried out in the experimental group who were working on Computer-Assisted exercises in two stages, each lasted for five two-hour sessions, while the participants of the Control group were instructed the vocabulary in a conventional manner. The post-test scores indicated that vocabularies were taught more efficiently via the CALL approach than the conventional one. Besides, students' preferences regarding these two instructional methods and based on their responses to the questionnaire manifested that they preferred Computer-Assisted approach as a complement to the conventional method in their vocabulary learning.

All in all, it is of extreme importance that most learners usually experience salient and significant difficulties in vocabulary learning. So, it is substantial for language teachers to be cognizant about discovering and applying efficient techniques and strategies that will best help learners in order to learn, retain and retrieve the vocabulary items. Learners should try to guess the correct meaning of words; otherwise, their comprehension, writing or understanding will not make sense. At the heart of this issue is identifying the correct meaning of homonym pairs, which is more problematic in this area, and very difficult to cope with. The nature of homonyms is so odd that cannot be predicted by any rules of grammar or diction, and it is quite possible for young learners not to discriminate or distinguish the difference in meaning of even some of the most obvious ones.

Having reviewed many academic articles and published papers, scholars came to this conclusion that *Traditional* ways of teaching and learning vocabulary were inefficient and had not been very effective. They were based on plain paper and printed texts, which relied on drilling and explanation by the teacher. There was not enough interaction in Traditional EFL classes, the lessons were boring and learners became too exhausted. In this regard, the gap between what was taught and what was learned was very great. Meanwhile, after surfing the Internet, books, and journals, we concluded that not much experimental research had been done in the area of vocabulary learning through CALL, and also most previous research studies on homonyms instruction had been conducted in the L1 context. Thus, discovering a solution to this issue would



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be worth considering. Moreover, further studies were necessary to fill an important gap on beneficial methods of instructing homonyms within the context of L2, and more specifically in the case of children and young learners, which yet had remained unexplored.

**3. Objectives of the Study and Research Questions**

Regarding the preliminary information mentioned above, several objectives were to be followed. So, the current study made an attempt to bridge the niche and gap of mentioned homonymous conflict and clash of vagueness in identifying the correct meaning of homonyms. It was a kind of quasi-experimental and pedagogical research, which was mainly concerned whether explicit homonyms instruction had any impacts upon vocabulary development of the learners or not. Also, it was quantitative since the data included scores gathered through pre and post tests in order to estimate young elementary EFL learners' retention in terms of their lexical knowledge of homonyms. The role of the computer as a supplier of input was verified too.

In this vein, the following research questions were raised, which inspired the researcher to conduct this piece of study.

1. What is the effect of homonyms instruction on vocabulary development of Iranian young female elementary EFL learners?
2. What is the effect of homonyms instruction on vocabulary retention of Iranian young female elementary EFL learners?
3. Does CALL-Mediated homonyms instruction lead to differential effects compared with the Traditional group?

**4. Methodology**

**4.1. Participants**

Sixty-four Iranian young female elementary EFL learners enrolled in the current research study through CALL-Mediated, and Traditional methods of homonyms instruction. They were composed of four intact classes who were selected from one of the branches of the Iran Language Institute (ILI) in Isfahan, Iran. Learners in two classes of each group had the same availability of teaching aids and the same amount of exposure. Considering the fact that participating in this research was completely voluntarily, two of the students who were not interested in taking part did not sign the assent form and eliminated from the study. Students' mother tongue was Persian and English was learned as their foreign language.

**4.2. Instructional Materials**

Various instructional computerized materials and software programs were applied in CALL-Mediated group of this study, such as Researcher-made PowerPoint slides and also English movie clips.

The *PowerPoint slides* relied on several phases. In the first slide, children were exposed to various meanings of a homonym with a visual support sequentially. The true spelling of each homonym pair was exhibited below its picture. Meanwhile, the exact and accurate pronunciation of each homonym family was extracted from online Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary as they could be played automatically two times through the second slide. Besides, a variety of authentic examples were used in the third slide of the PowerPoint program. Moreover, the content of the slides was validated by two Ph.D. specialists in curricula design and TEFL instruction, as well as a native speaker. (It should be noted that the base for choosing these homonyms was their application in students' everyday use of language and their encounter with these words in the elementary-level books such as Fly High series of books for children).

In this respect, four carefully selected and interesting English *movie clips* related to the subject matter were also taken into account. The first movie clip was provided from Waterford institute.



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The second one was created by Cindy Waler; and the third one taken from Mexus education pvt. Ltd. Besides, the review clip was extracted from English-Tonight.com site.

**4.3. Measuring Instruments**

In the flow of this piece of study, a set of measuring instruments was used. Initially, the written part of the *English Unlimited Placement Test (UPT)* was performed as a proficiency test. It was taken from Cambridge university press made by Luisvoid (2010) to homogenize the participants of the current study based on their L2 general language proficiency to ensure that all the subjects enjoyed the same level of language ability.

Also, a kind of researcher-made *Vocabulary Achievement Test (VAT)* was carried out as the pre-test and post-tests in order to find out the effects of homonyms instruction on vocabulary development and retention of the learners. The content had a good coverage of materials taught through these sessions so that the questions reflected the overall understanding of the learners from the subject matter. The achievement test was comprised of three phases. In other words, the VAT included thirty items: a) Ten matching items (ten points), b) Ten fill-in-the-blank items (ten points), and c) Ten two-alternative items (twenty points). Hence, the total score ranged from 0 to 40.

At the preliminary stage, through the 'pilot study', the VAT was held prior to the study to 30 students similar to the sample group. So, the *validity* of the VAT was confirmed by asking three experts, professors, and English teachers to give their comments on the content of the test. In this regard, some of the items were revised or removed. On the other hand, the *reliability* of the test items was calculated. So, Cronbach's Alpha of 0.861 assured the internal consistency and adequate reliability of the test. Hence, the amount of Cronbach's Alpha manifested the reliability of the results so that we would trust the results and generalize them to the same population. Also, according to the pilot study, the sufficient allotted time to the VAT was an estimate of twenty minutes.

**4.4. Procedure**

In the current study, the ethical issues were observed as all of the participants, as well as their parents filled out the *Assent Form*. So, due to the agreement of the head of the institute, the teachers of the classes, and consensus of all of the subjects and their parents, their three treatment sessions were attended after the usual time of their classes.

At the next stage, the *UPT* was administered as the proficiency test in order to estimate the general English knowledge of the participants and homogenize them. Following the index and score guidance of the UPT, students whose scores were not equivalent to quorum of the elementary level (below 20 or above 40) were excluded from the study. They could attend the sessions but their scores were not be accounted in the study. In the next step, the participants were assigned into two groups of CALL-Mediated (N=16+16), and Traditional (N=15+17) ones.

According to the curriculum and through the *PowerPoint slides*, sixty-seven homonym counterparts consisting of sixty new words (twenty ones in each session) were introduced to the learners in terms of CDs or removable flashes in three sessions of instruction, each session taking about forty minutes. 25 homonym families in the first session, 18 sets of homonyms in the second session, and 24 homonym mates in the third session were proponed to the learners in the CALL-Mediated and Traditional groups. In these two groups, the students favored the concurrent homonyms instruction as the meanings corresponding to both members of the homonym pair or homonym family were introduced simultaneously to the learners.

Learners in the **Multimedia CALL-Mediated** group encountered with a variety of instructional software programs. They utilized the computerized visualization of each word to differentiate the meaning of each homonym counterpart using still or motion pictures, its pronunciation, and good instances in meaningful sentences, as well as well-prepared group tasks through enjoyable



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and innovative successive PowerPoint slides accompanied by carefully selected movie clips. On the other hand, the **Traditional** group benefited from conventional way of homonyms instruction, and received the same instruction as CALL-Mediated group without any access to the computerized programs or movie clips. Their instruction relied on plain and printed texts, and the learners exposed to the lexicon through teacher's explanation, guided drills, practice exercises, repetition, as well as the equivalent translation of them in learners' mother tongue, Persian, without aiding technology. To summarize, in spite of the fact that both groups favored the simultaneous homonyms instruction, the instruction in the Traditional group was based on plain paper and printed texts, and there was no technology in this respect.

The *VAT* was held before implementing the study as the pre-test, and also after treatment sessions as the immediate post-test. The delayed post-test one was run three weeks later too. The content of the post-tests was just the same as the pre-test, while the order of the alternatives and options were changed to eliminate the possibility of the practice effect.

The aim of the pre-test was to ensure that the subjects did not have any prior knowledge of the discussed material, and acquaintance with the new homonyms. Meanwhile, the aim of the post-tests was to measure the difference between learners' knowledge and their competency in the case of homonyms after the last session of the instruction, and also three weeks later (about 20 days later). The content of the test had a good coverage of the materials taught through these sessions, and the questions reflected the overall understanding of the learners from the subject matter.

## 5. Data Analyses and Results

SPSS 22 software was applied throughout the whole analyses to get the descriptive and inferential statistics of the data. The minimum Alpha for confirmation of the results was set at 5 % ($\alpha = 0.05$), and the amount of certainty of the results was 95%. Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test was also run to check the normality of the scores and select the appropriate formula in each section.

### 5.1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used in order to gain primary information such as mean, maximum and minimum amount number of the data, and also the standard deviation of the scores.

Table 1.
*Descriptive Statistics of the Proficiency Test*

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Traditional | 32 | 20 | 34 | 28.59 | 3.241 |
| CALL-Mediated | 32 | 22 | 39 | 28.50 | 4.008 |
| Total | 64 | 20 | 39 | 28.55 | 3.616 |

Following the score guidance of the proficiency test, and based on the obtained results in the above table, all of the students' scores were between 20 and 39. Therefore, they were considered as the elementary level learners of the current study. Table 2 also described the primary data of pre-test, post-test, as well as delayed post-test scores of the students in Traditional and CALL-Mediated groups.

Table 2.
*Descriptive Statistics of the VAT Scores*

| | N | Minim | Maximu | Mean | Std. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|



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| | | | um | m | | Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Traditional | Pre-test | 32 | 13 | 29 | 22.50 | 4.143 |
| | Post-test | 32 | 18 | 38 | 30.81 | 5.855 |
| | Delayed Post-test | 32 | 14 | 38 | 24.41 | 5.079 |
| CALL-Mediated | Pre-test | 32 | 13 | 29 | 21.47 | 3.776 |
| | Post-test | 32 | 23 | 40 | 28.56 | 3.885 |
| | Delayed Post-test | 32 | 19 | 35 | 25.00 | 3.902 |

**5.2. Level of the students in the Pre-test**

In addition to the UPT results, the homogeneity of the learners was also calculated by Mann-Whitney U test at the preliminary stage of implementing the treatment.

Table 3.
*Mann-Whitney U Test, Ranks & Test Statistics*

| | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks |
|---|---|---|---|
| Traditional | 32 | 35.14 | 1124.50 |
| CALL-Mediated | 32 | 29.86 | 955.50 |
| Total | 64 | | |
| Mann-Whitney U | 427.500 | | |
| Z | -1.141 | | |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | **.254** | | |

The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test indicated that the pre-test mean scores of the Traditional group *(Mdn= 22.50)* and the CALL-Mediated one *(Mdn= 21)* did not have any significant differences with each other, *U*= 427.5, *P*= .254. Hence, all of the participants enjoyed the same level of language proficiency before performing the study.

**5.3. Analysis of the Research Questions**

**RQ1:** To respond to the first research question, and based on the normality, a set of parametric Paired Samples *t*-test for the Traditional group, and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for the CALL-Mediated one were run on the pre and post-test scores of each group.

Table 4.
*Traditional Group, Paired Samples t-test*

| | Mean | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Post-test – Pre-test | 8.313 | 9.298 | 31 | **.000** |

The Paired Samples t-test was conducted to compare the pre-test mean scores (M=22.50, SD=4.14) and post-test ones (M=30.81, SD=5.85) of the learners in the Traditional group; t(31)= 9.29, p = 0.00. The gained results achieved from Table 4 demonstrated a significant difference or a kind of meaningful increase between pre and post-test scores of the learners in the mentioned group.

Table 5.



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| *CALL-Mediated Group, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| post-test – Pre-test of CALL-Mediated | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks |
| Negative Ranks | 1[a] | 3.00 | 3.00 |
| Positive Ranks | 30[b] | 16.43 | 493.00 |
| Ties | 1[c] | | |
| Total | 32 | | |
| Z | -4.813 | | |
| Asymp. Sig. | **.000** | | |
| a. Post-test < Pre-test<br>b. Post-test > Pre-test<br>c. Post-test = Pre-test | | | |

Also, according to the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test in Table 5, the median post-test scores of the learners in the CALL-Mediated group, *Mdn=28*, were statistically significantly higher than the median pre-test ones, *Mdn=21*, *Z*=-4.813, *p*< 0.00.

In sum, significant level of .000 in the Traditional and CALL-Mediated groups was less than 0.05 and manifested a meaningful difference in terms of the pre and post-test mean scores of both groups.

Consequently, with regard to the effects of homonyms instruction on learners' L2 *vocabulary development*, the analysis indicated that although homonyms instruction led to better vocabulary development and progression of the learners in both groups, obtained results portrayed the superiority of the Traditional method to the CALL-Mediated one in the vocabulary development phase.

The below figure illustrated the significant impact of homonyms instruction on learners' vocabulary development in both groups.

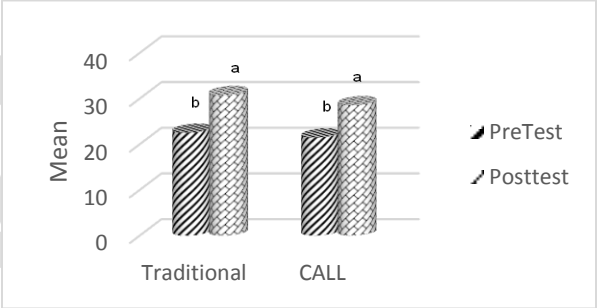


*Figure 1.* Vocabulary development.

**RQ2:** To answer the second research question, and according to the distribution of the scores, a series of parametric Paired Samples *t*-test for the Traditional group, and non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for the CALL-Mediated one were carried out again to compare the immediate and delayed post-test scores of these two groups separately.

| Table 6.<br>*Traditional group, Paired Samples t-test* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |



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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Delayed Post-test – Post-test | -6.406 | -6.795 | 31 | **.000** |

The gained results achieved from the paired Samples t-test in Table 6 implied a meaningful decrease or a significant difference between the immediate post-test mean scores of the learners (M=30.81, SD=5.85) and delayed post-test ones (M=24.41, SD=5.07) in the Traditional group; t(31) = -6.79, p = 0.00.

Table 7.
*CALL-Mediated Group, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test*

| Delayed Post-test – Post-test of CALL-Mediated | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks |
|---|---|---|---|
| Negative Ranks | 27[a] | 14.91 | 402.50 |
| Positive Ranks | 2[b] | 16.25 | 32.50 |
| Ties | 3[c] | | |
| Total | 32 | | |
| Z | -4.008 | | |
| Asymp. Sig. | **.000** | | |

a. Delayed Post-test < Post-test
b. Delayed Post-test > Post-test
c. Delayed Post-test = Post-test

Besides, based on Table 7, the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test indicated that the delayed post-test scores of the learners in the CALL-Mediated group, *Mdn*= 24.5, was significantly less than the post-test ones, *Mdn*= 28, *Z*= -4.008, $p < 0.00$.

In sum, the significance level of 0.00 in the Traditional and CALL-Mediated groups demonstrated a significant difference between mean scores of the learners achieved from immediate and delayed post-tests in the mentioned groups.

Consequently, to consider the effects of homonyms instruction methods on L2 learners' long-term *vocabulary retention*, the obtained results indicated that both groups revealed a significant decrease in learners' long time recall. As expected, the analysis manifested that some forgetting took place. Hence, the recovery of the vocabulary was hindered through simultaneous and concurrent homonyms instruction in both groups three weeks later. (It should be noted that although subjects' performance in two groups decreased from immediate to delayed post-tests, they could still retain their improvement significantly from pre-test to the delayed post-test phase).

The below figure portrayed the significant decrease in vocabulary retention of CALL-Mediated and Traditional groups.

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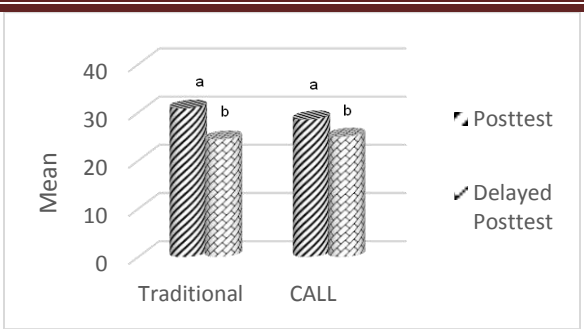


*Figure 2.* Vocabulary retention.

**RQ3:** To investigate the third research question corresponding to the differential effects of CALL, the difference in the post-test scores of both groups was carried out via the analysis of nonparametric Mann-Whitney U Test.

Table 8.
*Mann-Whitney U Test, Ranks & Test Statistics*

| | N | Mean Rank | Mean Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| Traditional | 32 | 36.78 | 1177.00 |
| CALL-Mediated | 32 | 28.22 | 903.00 |
| Total | 64 | | |
| Mann-Whitney U | 375.000 | | |
| Z | -1.846 | | |
| Asymp. Sig. | **.065** | | |

Findings with regard to the Mann-Whitney U Test revealed that there was not a significant difference in post-test mean scores of the CALL-Mediated *(Mdn=* 28*)* and Traditional *(Mdn=* 31*)* groups who favored the concurrent and simultaneous homonyms instruction. *U*= 375, *P*= .065.

After comparing the mean scores of both groups, the following information was derived:

- In the Traditional group, the percentage of vocabulary development (from pre to post-test) was equal to 27% and the amount of decrease in vocabulary retention (from post-test to the delayed one) was 26%.
- In the CALL-Mediated group, the percentage of vocabulary development (from the pre to post-test) was equal to 25% and the amount of decrease in vocabulary retention (from post test to the delayed one) was 14%.

In sum, based on the elicited results, the adjusted vocabulary pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test scores of both groups were illustrated as follows:

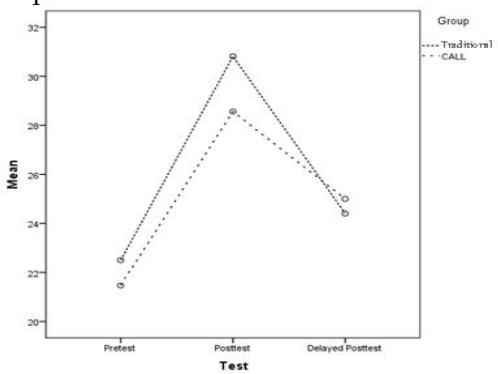




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*Figure 3*. Adjusted VAT test scores.

**6. Discussion**

Considering the obtained results and after comparing the mean scores of the learners, we came to this conclusion that although the *vocabulary development* of the learners in the Traditional group was a little bit more than the CALL-Mediated group, the difference was not significant. On the other hand, in the case of vocabulary *retention*, learners who benefited from CALL-Mediated environment revealed a little better performance in terms of long-term recall and vocabulary retention compared with the Traditional method, which was not significant too. Here, the degree of forgetting in the former group was slightly less than that of the latter one and demonstrated the superiority of the CALL-Mediated method in learners' long-lasting vocabulary retention and long-term recall, which is the aim of education. To summarize, we found out that the difference in mean scores of the learners' in two groups was so subtle that they can be used interchangeably. Therefore, with regard to the objectives of the current study, the discussion of the mentioned results was fully elaborated in this section.

**6.1. First Research Question**

Concerning the integration of CALL-Mediated programs in L2 vocabulary learning, and after investigating the pre and post-test analyses, we discovered that the findings of this study were in line with the obtained results by Getkham (2004). Because in both studies results demonstrated that after administering the immediate post-test, both groups of Multimedia CALL and Traditional one significantly improved in their vocabulary knowledge.

On the other hand, regarding the integration of the computers in L2 vocabulary learning, we found that the results of this study contradicted the results obtained by Zipke et al. (2009), Ghabanchi and Anbarestani (2008), Licenjacka and Filologia (2007), and Gan et al. (1996). In the Zipke et al.'s study, metalinguistic ambiguity instruction in the treatment group was effective, and it remarkably enhanced learners' reading comprehension in the paragraph completion task. Similarly, in the Ghabanchi and Anbarestani's research, the obtained results manifested that the CALL group's immediate post-test scores were significantly better than the scores of the ordinary group whose instruction relied on learning vocabulary in isolation and through bilingual lists. Besides, in Licenjacka and Filologia's study, the students in the CALL group gave a better performance in learning various sets of adjectives than the learners in the Traditional one who did not have any access to the word processing programs and technological equipment. Moreover, Gan et al. (1996) also implemented a study to explore the impact of using computers on vocabulary teaching. The post-test results indicated that vocabularies were taught more effectively in the CALL approach than the ordinary one. Therefore, the analysis affirmed the superiority of the CALL method; whereas, in the present study both groups indicated a significant improvement. Thus, choosing various types of words, as well as the type of CALL might be the reason for inconsistency of the results with the current study.

**6.2. Second Research Question**

Comparing the immediate and delayed post-test scores of both groups, we concluded that this study was in agreement with the results gained by Getkham (2004). In Getkham's research the obtained results revealed that after one month, the students in both groups of Multimedia CALL and the Traditional one forgot some of the instructed words. But, as in our study, the degree of forgetting in the Multimedia CALL group was less than that of the printed texts.

However, the findings of the present research study were in contrast with the results of Ghabanchi and Anbarestani (2008). In their research, the results obtained from the vocabulary test implied that the delayed post-test scores of just CALL group were considerably less than the ordinary method; whereas, the current study despite the significant decrease in the vocabulary retention of both groups, the degree of forgetting in the CALL group was less than the



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Traditional one. Hence, the contradictory results might be due to the types of words or even the type of the CALL-Mediated programs implemented through these studies.

**6.3. Third Research Question**

Following the obtained analysis, we understood that the findings of the present study were in line with Getkham (2004), because based on Getkham's study results, he compared the performance of the learners in Multimedia CALL and Traditional groups. After administering the pre and post-tests, the results suggested that in the case of vocabulary development and vocabulary retention, there was not any significant difference between these two groups.

Taken together, in the current research study, both methods of CALL-Mediated and Traditional indicated some improvement in the short run. Also, in both groups, learners could still retain their improvement significantly from pre-test to the delayed post-test. Therefore mentioned results gave some tips and pointers on the effectiveness of concurrent and simultaneous homonyms instruction. To confirm this view, some scholars suggested that incorporating homonyms instruction into the curriculum can be fruitful, and lead to some advantages for learners to compare and contrast words within various texts (Foster, 2003; Rog &Kropp, 2004).

In this line, Cairns et al. (2004) also declared that although first-grader students have metalinguistic awareness to detect homonyms in isolation, the explicit homonyms instruction was fruitful; it could verbalize learners' burgeoning awareness and reinforce learners' reading comprehension. Besides, after the investigation of toddlers, preschoolers, second and fifth graders, as well as the college students, Mazzocco (1997) exerted the beneficial and positive impacts of explicit homonyms instruction on learners' interpretation skill: in reprocessing the information and substituting the alternative meaning of the homonyms. Moreover, through the second phase of Storkel and Maekawa's study (2005), they affirmed that 3-4 year-old learners revealed a better performance in picture-naming of homonyms than novel words. So, phonotactic probability and form characteristics of the homonyms played an important role in this regard since they were composed of common sound sequences which were easier to name for children.

In the light of above mentioned facts and discussed results, it is confirmed that simultaneous homonyms instruction is effective and has positive effects on vocabulary development and retention of young learners, but it is suggested that there is a 'need' to establish more research on these areas before proponing any strong claims in this regards.

**7. Conclusion**

In a nutshell, the gained results of the present study suggested the chance of replacing CALL-Mediated and Traditional methods with each other interchangeably. Since almost all the learners in the traditional group implied that the class based on this method was boring; therefore, applying the medium of computer in a limited dimension and just as the complementary tool (for example the existence of just one computer in each class), along with other traditional techniques in the L2 classes can decrease the problem of rote learning and would be effective in this respect.

In this perspective, the outcome of the current study provided various important implications for vocabulary learning and led to give some insights into the effectiveness of homonyms instruction in EFL contexts. Therefore, the results of this study would be fruitful and beneficial for the *managers* of the institutes to integrate CALL as the supplementary tool in their institute to reduce their expenses; for *Instructors* and *teachers* to equip themselves with efficient innovative new strategies and the recent latest up-to-date techniques of teaching to present the materials in a creative way in order to have fun with word sets and to reinforce learners' receptive and productive skills; for *learners* to provide an opportunity to enjoy their process of second language learning, and share their ideas in a stress-free environment with the least amount of anxiety, and also in order to become motivated through a meaningful learning to collaborate with their other peers, and also become autonomous learners in this respect; for the *syllabus designers* and *material*



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*developers* to devote more attention to the vocabulary learning through active involvement of young L2 learners in the interactive class activities, and also dedicate special focus on providing the L2 curricula via promoting meaningful practice and relevant tasks around the learners' lives, needs, interests and capabilities. It would also be interesting and beneficial to those who are concerned with *philology, linguistics* and *lexicography* to shed more light on the area of homonyms and the nature of these kinds of words to investigate different methods of their instruction. The nature of homonyms is quite unique that would be fun even for *poets* and *writers* too.

The mentioned features enlightened the current research, and considered to be good predicators of using CALL-Mediated method upon which it facilitated the process of learning homonyms especially in the CLT environment that children could communicate actively with their classmates. It helped the peers fully deal with the instructed materials while working with each other. Employing technology such as computers attracted the attention of young learners and promoted students' strategic use of CALL-based tools, which increased students' incidental vocabulary learning. Also, explicit homonyms instruction encouraged students to foster their L2 lexical knowledge. In a CALL environment, Chunks of information conveyed to long-term memory embracing a variety of visual images. So, they would be incredibly the most powerful device aiding learners' recall and long lasting retention.

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# THE ROLE OF THINK-ALOUD PROTOCOLS ON IMPROVING IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION AND WRITTEN PERFORMANCE: THE READING-WRITING CONNECTION

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**Abstract**
The purposeof this study was twofold: its first aim was to investigate different aspects of the think-aloud strategies that are used by efl lerrners on reading comprehension tasks, secondly,it attempted to determine the effect of think-aloud strategies on developing efl learners' reading comprehension and written performance. Furthermore,researchers tried to find out which aspects of writtin performance were improved. Students were randoly assigned to an experirmental and a control group by using a preliminary english test(pet) and a reading comprehension task and a writing task as apre-test. In the experimental group ,the teacher explained about think- aloud strategies .these students completed the reading tasks and used different think-aloud strategies and worked collaboratively with their teachers and peers while using think-aloud flashcards to practice these strategies.this group also had to complete questionnaire about which think-aloud strategies they used while reading or they found useful in completing reading comprehension tasks.the process and materials for the control group were the same as the experiental group.however,the taecher did not explain about think-aloud strategies. Furthermore, they did not have access to think-aloud flashcards.the results of the study indicated that in the post-test, the experimental group outperformed the cotrol group on completing reading comperhension tasks and improving their written performance .the findings suggested that using think-aloud strategies could be a good strategy for improving reading and writing .

**Keywords:** efl, reading comprehension, think-aloud flashcards, think-aloud strategies, writing skill

## 1. Introduction

Reading comprehension is defined as the level of understanding of a text/message. This understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text/message (Baker& Brown, 1984). Proficient reading depends on the ability to recognize words quickly and effortlessly. It is also determined by an individual's



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cognitive development, which is the construction of thought processes. Some people learn through education or instruction and others through direct experiences (Baker& Brown, 1984). Reading comprehension is a strategic and interpretive process of making connections between ideas in a text and ideas in a reader's mind. Classroom instruction must be designed to address the learner's needs for assistance in making these connections (Gil , Martinez, & Vidal-Abarca , 2015).

There is a growing interest to investigate ways for improving students' reading skills. These skills are generally called reading strategies. Reading strategies are defined as mental operations relating to how readers perceive a task, what textual cues they attend to, how they make sense of what they are reading, and what to do when they do not understand. Strategies, therefore, are readers' resources for understanding and learning (Chan , Inoue & Taylor , 2015).

In spite of teaching reading strategies, there are still some students not progressing in the area of reading comprehension. New strategies should be used to boost students reading comprehension. Teachers know that highly skilled readers use similar thought processes before, during, and after reading. They (a) adjust a reading goal according to their level of prior knowledge, (b) think strategically, (c) follow their intentions to the end of a passage, (d) monitor their comprehension, and (e) reflect on an author's purpose within the constraints of a particular genre and their own reading objective (Bonifacci & Tobia, 2016). Recent research reports and panel syntheses agree that all readers should use these expert thinking processes. Many less able readers, however, will not do so unless their teachers become proficient in demonstrating these thinking processes (Klein, Biedinger, & Becker, 2014). To accomplish this goal, educators have asked for more information about how to perform effective think-alouds (e.g., Aghaie & Zhang, 2012; Gu, 2014; Wang, 2012).

A think-aloud is a "metacognitive technique or strategy in which a teacher verbalizes thoughts aloud while reading a selection orally, thus modeling the process of comprehension" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 256). Think-aloud strategies involve the verbalization of thinking during reading, problem solving, or other cognitive tasks (Capellini, dos Santos, & Conti Uvo, 2015). Participants might verbalize commentary, questions, generating hypotheses, or drawing conclusions. Thus, think-alouds may serve as both an instructional tool and method of assessment. Significant research has focused on explicit efforts to understand the thinking process and the comprehension of text (Ali & Saiden, 2015). Utilizing think-alouds in such a manner involves teacher modeling, teacher-student interaction, and finally, the independent use by the student.

Think-alouds enable readers to stop periodically, reflect on the thinking they do to understand a text, and relate these literacy processes orally. Teachers use this technique as an instructional practice to help students verbalize the thoughts they use during reading, and thus bring that thinking into the open so that they can replicate it more effectively in the future (Oster, 2001). This metacognitive awareness significantly increases students' scores on comprehension tests, adds to students' self-assessment of their comprehension, and enhances students' abilities to select thinking processes to overcome comprehension challenges while they read (e.g., Block, 2004; Chostelidou, 2012; Puttonen, Siekkinen, & Nurmi, 2016). As an instructional practice, think-alouds differ from prompting, modeling, or giving directions. Think-alouds enable teachers to demonstrate for their students how to select an appropriate comprehension process at a specific point in a particular text. Thus, performing effective think-alouds has proven to be a successful practice by which teachers can explain how expert readers elicit comprehension processes separately and collectively (e.g., Borglin, 2012). Teachers want to boost their abilities to perform effective think-alouds, and students have also expressed a need to understand their teachers' thinking during reading. In Another study documented by Garcia (2002), the results showed that



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these needs were greater for English-language learners and struggling readers. These students wanted their teachers to deliver very specific think-alouds about the following strategies: how to confirm or disconfirm what they understood, decode, infer, use prior knowledge, notice novelty, paraphrase, predict, question, read ahead, reread, restate, summarize, understand the structure of a text, use context clues, make visual images, and learn new vocabulary words.

In addition, Writing is a difficult process and for learning writing, input is essential but not sufficient. McKay (1984) believes that "Writing is such a complex process that one cannot be able to give his/her students simple formula for good writing. The present study focuses on the role of reading skill on developing writing skill. Several researchers found that reading and writing skill are connected to each other (e.g.,Brooks, 2010; Chan, Inoue, & Taylor, 2015; Topping& Bryce, 2010). "You have to read, read, and read" says Walter Ong (1979, as cited in Eschholz, 1980, p. 5). "There is no way to write unless you read, and read a lot" (p. 12).

In this research, the researchers tried to find the relationship between reading comprehension and written performance. They tried to show that if think aloud reading strategies can improve EFL learners' both reading and writing skill.

Regarding the purpose of the study, the following research questions are presented:

1. What aspects of think-aloud strategies/protocols are used by learners during reading comprehension?
2. What is the effect of using think-aloud strategies/protocols on learners' reading comprehension?
3. What is the effect of using think-aloud strategies /protocols on learners' written performance?
4. What aspects of learners' written performance are improved?

## 2.Methodology

### 2.1Participants

The participants in the present study were 300 EFL students from Payame Noor University, Nabiyeh Akram and Rabe Rashidi Universities in Tabriz, Iran. Students were aged between 18 and 25 and all were at intermediate level. These EFL students were passing reading comprehension course and writing essays course with the researcher as their instructor. They were chosen after assigning a preliminary English Test (PET) and a reading comprehension task and a writing task for having homogeneous groups. Those who got 60 out of 100 in the PET test were chosen. The researcher randomly assigned them as the experimental and the control group.

### 2.2Instrumentation

The proficiency Test employed in the present study was Preliminary English Test "PET". It included four parts: listening, writing, speaking and reading. The subjects' scores were out of 100. Those who were chosen for the study had obtained 60 or more in this test. Writing tasks for pretest and posttest were chosen for this research project from book 'how to prepare for the TOEFL Essays' edited by Abbas Zahedi (2002) Other Different instruments were used in the present study which involved a reading comprehension task in the pre-test and the post-test and different reading tasks from" Reading and Comprehension 1, 2, 3" published by Payame Noor University's publication, for the treatment sessions. twelve Thinking-aloud flashcards, a questionnaire about thinking-aloud strategies were also used.

### 2.3Procedure

The goal of this study was to examine the effects of thinking-aloud strategies on improving reading comprehension and written performance. The researcher used a quasi-experimental research design with a sample of 300 Iranian EFL learners in Tabriz-Iran. After assessing the groups' homogeneity by using a PET test (those who got 60 or more out of 100 were chosen) and



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a reading comprehension task and a writing task as a pre-test, the researcher randomly assigned them as the experimental and control groups. Students' writings were rated by two raters to obtain inter-rater reliability (one of the raters was the researcher herself). In order to increase the validity of writing tasks, the researcher also conducted a pilot study. The teacher in the experimental group explained about thinking-aloud strategies which were useful for reading comprehension and they were widely used by highly skilled readers. Then teacher used a think-aloud flashcard game to practice these strategies while students were dealing with a reading task in their English book. Students chose strategies in flashcards one by one and tried to understand the text by using them. They also got feedback from their teacher and their peers about correct use of these strategies. After five months of having treatment sessions,the teacher asked students to complete a questionnaire about which think-aloud strategies they used more or found useful. In the experimental group, procedure in the treatment sessions was adapted from Block and Israel (2004) and Roger and Jusko (2014).

Think aloud strategies included three stages and twelve techniques as follows:

**Stage1: Explanation of BEFORE Reading Strategies**

- 1-Overview the Text
- 2-Look for Important Information
- 3-Connect to an Author's Big Idea
- 4-Activate Relevant Knowledge
- 5-Put Yourself in the Book/text

**Stage2: Explanation of DURING Reading Strategies**

- 6-Revise Prior Knowledge and Predict
- 7-Recognize an Author's Writing Style
- 9-Ask Questions

**Stage3: Explanation of AFTER Reading Strategies**

- 10-Notice Novelty in Text
- 11-Relate the Book/text to Your Life
- 12-Anticipate Use of Knowledge

In the control group, during treatment sessions, students worked on the same reading tasks in the same books. However, teacher did not explain about think-aloud strategies. They did not have think-aloud flashcards, either.

At the end of the twenty one week program, the participants in both groups were post-tested. Post-test procedure was exactly similar to the pre-test procedure. In the post-test, a reading task and a writing task were given to the students in both control and experimental groups.

Students' writing was classified into five categories (the researcher followed Hughes' 2003 classification):

**1. Vocabulary**
**2. Grammar**
**3. Mechanics**
**4. Discourse (form or organization)**
**5. Fluency (style and ease of communication)**

The researcher used the proportion of these five categories in students' writing to see which aspects of writing in the experimental group would develop. In addition, students' writing tasks in the pre-test and post-test were assessed according to the Hughes' (2003) analytic assessment.

**2.4Design**

Due to the proposed research question, this study required a quasi-experimental method of research. It contained a pre-test, a post-test, a control group and an experimental group. T-test was used for assessing questions number 2 and 3. Descriptive statistics was used for answering to questions 1 and 4.



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Think aloud Protocol was the independent variable, which was the major variable hoped to be investigated. The improvement of Iranian EFL Learners' reading comprehension and written performance were the dependent variables which were observed and measured to determine the effect of the independent variable.

In this study, students' language proficiency was controlled by taking a PET test and choosing two homogenous language learner groups.

3.**Results**

**Language Proficiency Test**

To make sure of the participants' homogeneity, the researcher measured their language proficiency level using a PET test. The results of the language test are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Descriptive data and Independent sample t-test for proficiency scores*

| Group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | F | t | Sig(2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PET** control | 150 | 64.9667 | 2.75490 | .22494 | 2.126 | -.258 | .797 |
| experimental | 150 | 65.0533 | 3.05385 | .24935 | | | .797 |

As a result of theIndependent sample t-test, there has not been a significant difference in scores for control group (M = 64.96, SD = 2.75) and experimental group (M=65.05, SD = 3.05), t (298) = -.258, P>.05.

**Frequencies of Think aloud strategies used by students' in Experimental Group**

Table 2 shows the frequencies and proportions of Think aloud strategies noticed by the experimental group.

Table 2

*The frequencies and proportions of Think aloud strategies noticed by the experimental group.*

| | Frequency | Percent % | Mean | Std. deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Overview the Text** | 145 | 96.7% | 0.96 | .6822 |
| **Look for Important Information** | 138 | 92% | 0.92 | .2434 |
| **Connect to an Author's Big Idea** | 129 | 86% | 0.86 | .2566 |
| **Activate Relevant Knowledge** | 140 | 93.3% | 0.93 | .4344 |
| **Put Myself in the Book/text** | 34 | 22.7% | 0.22 | .7856 |
| **Revise Prior Knowledge and Predict** | 125 | 83.3% | 0.83 | .2434 |
| **Recognize an Author's Writing Style** | 76 | 50.7% | 0.50 | .6875 |
| **Determine Word** | 146 | 97.3% | 0.97 | .6234 |



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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Meanings** | | | | |
| **Ask Questions** | 23 | 15.4% | 0.15 | .0721 |
| **Notice Novelty in Text** | 77 | 47.2% | 0.51 | .0654 |
| **Related the Book /text to My Life** | 68 | 45.8% | 0.45 | .4705 |
| **Anticipate Use of Knowledge** | 109 | 72.6% | 0.72 | .5687 |

As Table 2 indicates, the largest proportion and mean frequency of thinking -aloud strategies that are found helpful by the students are Determine Word Meanings (97.0%, M = .97), Overview the Text (96.7%, M = .96), and Activate Relevant Knowledge (93.3%, M = .93).
To provide a better understanding of the frequency of features noticed by the experimental group, the results are shown in Figure 1.

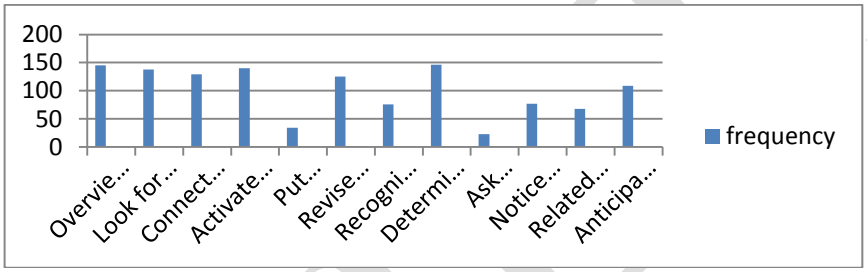


*Figure 1* Frequencies of think -aloud features noticed by the experimental group

**Results of T-test for Reading Scores**
A T-Test was used to compare the means of scores between two groups in the pre-test, to further show the homogeneity of two groups. The results of students' scores in the pre-test and post-test are shown in Table 3. Furthermore, for showing the amount of improvement in groups from the pre-test to the post-test, a paired sample t-test was used. The results of the paired sample t-test are shown in table 4.
Table 3
*Descriptive data and Independent sample t-test for the Reading scores in the pre-test and post-test*

| Group | | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | F | t | Sig(2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pretest** | control | 150 | 4.7600 | .68228 | .05571 | .406 | .435 | .664 |
| | experimental | 150 | 4.3933 | .56636 | .04624 | | | .664 |



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| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Posttest** control | 150 | 5.3267 | .47057 | .03842 | 18.128 | -67.695 | .000 |
| experimental | 150 | 9.4067 | .56872 | .04644 | | | .000 |

As a result of the t-test, there has not been a significant difference in scores of reading task in the pretest for control group (M = 4.76, SD = .68) and experimental group (M=4.39, SD = .56), t (298) =.435, P>.05. The mean score shows that the reading comprehension scores between two groups in the pre-test were the same. As a result of the t-test, there has been a significant difference in scores of the reading task in the post-test for the control group is (M = 5.32, SD = .47) and the experimental group is (M=9.40, SD = .56), t (298) = -67.69, P=.000. The results show that there is a significant difference between two groups in the post-test. In the post-test, the experimental group outperformed the control group in completing the reading comprehension task.

Table 4

*Paired Samples Statistics for the Reading scores of the Control and Experimental Groups*

| Group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t | Sig(2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pretest** control | 150 | 4.7600 | .68228 | .05571 | -7.582 | .000 |
| **Posttest** control | 150 | 5.3267 | .47057 | .03842 | | .000 |
| **Pre test** experimental | 150 | 4.3933 | .56636 | .04624 | -67.695 | .000 |
| **Posttest** experimental | 150 | 9.4067 | .56872 | .04644 | | .000 |

According to the result, the pre-test scores of reading task in the control group is ( M= 4.76, SD= .68) and in the post-test is(M= 5.32, SD= .47), P= .000. Post-test scores show improvement. However, the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is so marginal. According to the results, pre-test scores of the reading task in the Experimental group is ( M= 4.39, SD= . 56) and in the post-test is (M= 9.40, SD= .56), P= .000. The results show that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test in the reading task scores of the experimental group. In the post-test, the scores have improved significantly.

**Inter-rater Reliability for Writing Scores**

As mentioned before, the scores of the students were rated by two raters. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to establish the inter-rater reliability through computing the correlation between the first Rater and second Rater on the mean score of the pre-test and post-test of the control and experimental groups for the writing task scores. For answering the research question three, the researcher used the mean of scores gained by two raters in the pre-test and post-test of writing scores.

**Results of T-test for Writing Scores**

An Independent sampleT-Test was used to compare the means of scores between two groups in the pre-test, to further show the homogeneity of two groups. The results of students' scores in the pre-test and post-test are shown in Table 5. Furthermore, for showing the amount of



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improvement in groups from the pre-test to the post-test, a paired sample t-test was used. The results of the paired sample t-test are shown in table 5.

Table 5
*Descriptive data and Independent sample t-test for the Writing scores in the pre-test and post-test*

| Group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | F | t | Sig(2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pretest** control | 150 | 17.7233 | 2.24676 | .18345 | .131 | -.052 | .959 |
| experimental | 150 | 17.7367 | 2.19723 | .17940 | | | .959 |
| **Posttest** control | 150 | 17.7400 | 2.09643 | .17117 | 59.556 | -34.132 | .000 |
| experimental | 150 | 26.1733 | 1.77509 | .14494 | | | .000 |

The mean score and standard deviation in the control group for writing task is (M = 17.72, SD = 2.24) and the mean score and standard deviation in the experimental group is (M = 17.73, SD =2.19), t (298) =- .052, p>.05, which shows that there are not any significant differences between two groups in the pre-test. As a result of the t-test, there has been a significant difference in scores of writing task in the post-test for the control group (M = 17.74, SD = 2.09) and the experimental group (M=26.17, SD = 1.77), t (298) = -34.13, P=.000. The results show that there is a significant difference between two groups in the post-test. In the post-test, the experimental group outperformed the control group in the writing task.

Table 6
*Paired Samples Statistics for the Writing scores of the Control and Experimental Groups*

| Group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t | Sig(2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pretest** control | 150 | 17.7233 | 2.24676 | .18345 | -.064 | .949 |
| **Posttest** control | 150 | 17.7400 | 2.09643 | .17117 | | .949 |
| **Pre test** experimental | 150 | 17.7367 | 2.19723 | .17940 | -34.187 | .000 |
| **Posttest** experimental | 150 | 26.1733 | 1.77509 | .14494 | | .000 |

According to the result, pre-test scores of Writing task in the control group is ( M= 17.72, SD= 2.24) and in the post-test (M= 17.74, SD= 2.09), p>.05. Post-test scores do not show any improvement. There is not any significant difference between writing scores from the pre-test to



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the post-test in the control group. According to the results, pre-test scores of the writing task in the Experimental group is ( M= 17.73, SD= 2.19) and in the post-test is (M= 26.17, SD= 1.77), P= .000. The results show that there is a significant difference between pre-test and post-test in the writing task scores of the experimental group. In the post-test, the scores have improved significantly.

**Frequencies of Features Improved in the Writing Task of the Experimental Group**

Table 7 shows the frequencies and proportions of features improved in the writing task of the experimental group.

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-vocabulary | 150 | 2 | 4 | 3.0561 | .30398 |
| Pre-grammar | 150 | 2 | 4 | 3.0400 | .35396 |
| Pre-mechanic | 150 | 2 | 4 | 3.0232 | .35396 |
| Pre-form | 150 | 2 | 4 | 3.0735 | .32967 |
| Pre-fluency | 150 | 2 | 4 | 3.0433 | .34726 |
| Post-vocabulary | 150 | 3 | 6 | 4.2061 | .47128 |
| Post-grammar | 150 | 4 | 6 | 4.5233 | .52564 |
| Post-mechanic | 150 | 4 | 5 | 4.2500 | .42863 |
| Post-form | 150 | 4 | 6 | 5.0967 | .54863 |
| Post-fluency | 150 | 4 | 6 | 5.1660 | .54239 |

As Table 7 indicates, the largest proportion and mean frequency of the features was fluency (86%, M = 5.16, SD= .54), followed by form (84.83%, M = 5.09, SD- .54), grammar (75.33%, M = 4.52, SD= .52), mechanics (70.83%, M = 4.25, SD= .42), and vocabulary (70%, M = 4.20, SD= .47).

To provide a better understanding of the frequency of features improved in the writing task of the experimental group, the results are shown in Figure 2

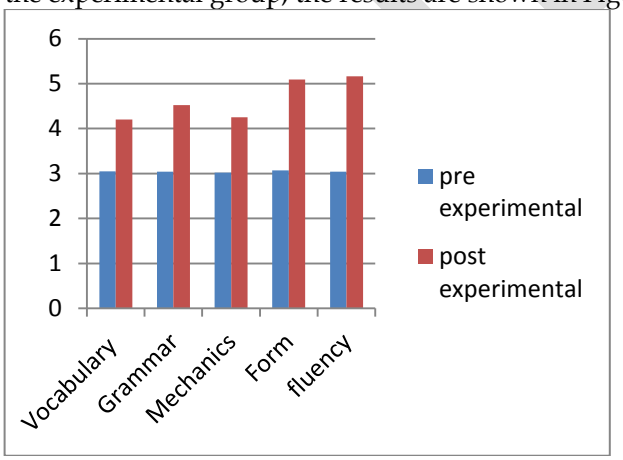


*Figure 2* Frequencies of features in the writing task of the experimental group in the pre-test and post-test.

**4. Discussion and Conclusion**



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At first, the descriptive statistics of considering think aloud questionnaire shows that students found Determine Word Meanings, Overview the Text, and Activate Relevant Knowledge more helpful than other strategies. The finding was in line with Schmidt (2001, as cited in Abe, 2008). Based on the assumption that noticing and understanding are different in the level of awareness and on the psychological view that attention is of limited capacity, Schmidt (2001, as cited in Abe, 2008) states that "limited attentional resources are directed first at those elements that carry message meaning, primarily lexicon, and only later, when the cost comes down, towards communicatively redundant formal features of language" (p. 13). For analyzing the second question, first, a T-Test (Independent sample t-test) analysis was run to determine if there were any statistically significant differences between the two groups' mean scores on the pre-test measuring EFL learners' reading comprehension. The statistical analysis of reading pre-test data showed that there were not any differences between the two groups. The homogeneity of the two groups has been shown in Table 3. Second, after the instruction, the post-test was administered to the participants and the results showed a significant difference between two groups' mean scores, using another t-test (Independent sample t-test) (see Tables 3). To check the amount of improvement from the pre-test to the post-test in two groups, a paired sample t-test was used for both control and experimental group. According to the results (see table 4) both groups have improved in the post-test. However in the control group the improvement was so marginal that could be neglected. The Experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in the post-test which shows the positive effect of using think-aloud strategies on developing reading comprehension. Furthermore, the findings of this study with regard to the first and second research question is consistent with some of the previous L2 reading studies (e.g. Aghaie & Zhang, 2012; Gu, 2014; Klein, Biedinger & Becker ,2014) which stated the positive effect of Think-aloud strategies on learning and teaching of reading comprehension. Teachers can demonstrate think-aloud strategies and ask students to identify it by holding up the flashcard that depicts that thinking process. Teachers can also pair students and ask them to perform think-alouds together

For analyzing the third and fourth questions, first, a T-Test (Independent sample t-test) analysis was run to determine if there were any statistically significant differences between the two groups' mean scores on the pre-test measuring EFL learners' writing skill. The statistical analysis of written pre-test data showed that there were not any differences between the two groups. The homogeneity of the two groups has been shown in Table 5. Second, after the instruction, the post-test was administered to the participants and the results showed a significant difference between the two groups' mean scores (see Table 5). For checking the amount of improvement from the pre-test to the post-test in two groups, a paired sample t-test was used for both control and experimental group. According to the results (see table 6) just the experimental group has improved in the post-test. However in the control group there is not any significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The Experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in the post-test which shows the positive effect of using think-aloud strategies on developing written skill.

This finding supports the use of think-aloud in reading instruction as advocated by reading researchers (e.g., Oster, 2001; Wang, 2012). Thus, the empirical results of this present study suggest that the instructional procedure of think-aloud in a collaborative environment of a small group through playing games which provide scaffolding, should be considered as a technique in reading instruction for EFL students. Vygotskian perspective is suitable for this study since the vital role that Vygotsky accorded to speech is in the learning process. To Vygotsky, speech is an important mediating tool for human mental development. In a social interaction, speech that is used when experts and novices or peer groups collaborate to solve a problem mediates the



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movement from one level to a higher level in the learner's ZPD. The reason behind the positive effect of think -aloud strategies on developing written performance is the learners' cognitive processing system and the factor 'noticing'.

Referring to the results of this study, it can be concluded that think-aloud strategies are helpful for improving Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension and written performance.

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# THE ROLE OF SELF-REGULATED LEARNING THROUGH THINK-ALOUD STRATEGIES ON IMPROVING IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' WRITTEN PERFORMANCE

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**Abstract**
Writing is one of the most complicated skills for learning. The purpose of this study was two fold: its first aim was to investigate different aspects of the think-aloud strategies as a self-regulated learning, that are used by efl lerrners on reading comprehension tasks, secondly, it attempted to determine the effect of think-aloud strategies on developing efl learners' written performance. Furthermore, researchers tried to find out which aspects of writtin performance were improved. Students were randoly assigned to an experirmental and a control group by using a preliminary english test (pet) and a reading comprehension task and a writing task as a pre-test. In the experimental group ,the teacher explained about think- aloud strategies .these students completed the reading tasks and used different think-aloud strategies and worked collaboratively with their teachers and peers while using think-aloud flashcards to practice these strategies. This group also had to complete questionnaire about which think-aloud strategies they used while reading or they found useful in completing reading comprehension tasks. The process and materials for the control group were the same as the experiental group. However, the taecher did not explain about think-aloud strategies. Furthermore, they did not have access to think-aloud flashcards. The results of the study indicated that in the post-test ,the experimental group outperformed the cotrol group on improving their written performance .the findings suggested that self-regulated learning through using think-aloud strategies could be a good strategy for improving writing .

**Keywords:** self-regulated learning, think-aloud strategies, writing skill

## 1. Introduction

Self-regulated learning (SRL) is a process that assists students in managing their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions in order to successfully navigate their learning experiences. This process occurs when a student's purposeful actions and processes are directed towards the acquisition of information or skills. Generally, models of (SRL) are separated into phases. One popular cyclical model discusses three distinct phases: Forethought and planning, performance monitoring, and reflections on performance (Zimmerman, 2000). During the planning phase, students analyze the learning task and set specific goals toward completing that task. When students learn unfamiliar topics, however, they may not know the best ways to approach the task or what goals might be



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the most appropriate. Teachers and/or more experienced peers often can instruct students on effective approaches in cases like these.

Next, in the performance monitoring phase, students employ strategies to make progress on the learning task and monitor the effectiveness of those strategies as well as their motivation for continuing progress toward the goals of the task.

In the final reflection on performance phase, students evaluate their performance on the learning task with respect to the effectiveness of the strategies that they chose. During this stage, students also must manage their emotions about the outcomes of the learning experience. These self-reflections then influence students future planning and goals, initiating the cycle to begin again (Zimmerman, 2000).

Self-regulated learners' proactive qualities and self-motivating abilities help to distinguish them from their peers. Research shows that self-regulated students are more engaged in their learning. These learners commonly seat themselves toward the front of the classroom, voluntarily offer answers to questions and seek out additional resources when needed to master content (Clarebout, Horz, &Schnotz, 2010). Most importantly, self-regulated learners also manipulate their learning environments to meet their needs (Kolovelonis, Goudas, &Dermitzaki, 2011). Due to their resourcefulness and engagement, it is not then surprising that findings from recent studies suggest that self-regulated learners also perform better on academic tests and measures of student performance and achievement (Schunk& Zimmerman, 2007). They found that learners who were taught SRL skills through monitoring and imitation were more likely to elicit higher levels of academic self-efficacy (i.e., confidence) and perform higher on measures of academic achievement compared to students who did not receive SRL instruction. It seems as though SRL can make the difference between academic success and failure for many students (Kolovelonis, Goudas, &Dermitzaki, 2011).

Think-alouds enable readers to stop periodically, reflect on the thinking they do to understand a text, and relate these literacy processes orally. Teachers use this technique as an instructional practice to help students verbalize the thoughts they use during reading, and thus bring that thinking into the open so that they can replicate it more effectively in the future (Oster, 2001). This self-regulated learning significantly increases students' scores on comprehension tests, adds to students' self-assessment of their comprehension, and enhances students' abilities to select thinking processes to overcome comprehension challenges while they read (e.g., Puttonen, Siekkinen, &Nurmi, 2016). As an instructional practice, think-alouds differ from prompting, modeling, or giving directions. Think-alouds enable teachers to demonstrate for their students how to select an appropriate comprehension process at a specific point in a particular text. Highly effective think-alouds also describe why a specific thought process would be effective in overcoming that confusion or reading difficulty. Thus, performing effective think-alouds has proven to be a successful practice by which teachers can explain how expert readers elicit comprehension processes separately and collectively (e.g., Borglin, 2012; Gu, 2014; Vaezi&Alizadeh, 2011). Teachers want to boost their abilities to perform effective think-alouds, and students have also expressed a need to understand their teachers' thinking during reading.

Writing is among the most important skills that learners of English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) need to develop. For many years, teaching writing was merely for reinforcing the mastery of grammar rules, and vocabulary items. However, recent theories of language teaching and learning have come to realize the importance of such skill to achieve language proficiency. Writing is a creative process by which the writer creates a text for the reader. It is a process through which the writer involves in "a two-way interaction between continuously developing knowledge and continuously developing text" (Brooks, 2010, p. 12).



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Writing cannot be developed in vacuum. It is a skill that needs a special care from both teachers and learners whether in a native or a foreign language context. Writing is a difficult process and for learning writing, input is essential but not sufficient. The present study focuses on the role of reading skill on developing writing skill. Since reading and writing skill are connected to each other (e.g.,Brooks, 2010; Chan, Inoue, & Taylor, 2015; Topping& Bryce, 2010). "You have to read, read, and read" says Walter Ong (1979, as cited in Eschholz, 1980, p. 5). "There is no way to write unless you read, and read a lot" (p. 12).

So, in this research, the researchers try to find the relationship between reading comprehension and written performance. Furthermore, they try to show that if think aloud strategies as a self-regulated reading strategy can improve EFL learners' writing skill.

Regarding the purpose of the study, the following research questions are presented:

5. What aspects of think-aloud strategies as self-regulated learning are used by learners during reading comprehension?
6. What is the effect of self-regulated learning through using think-aloud strategies on learners' written performance?
7. What aspects of learners' written performance (vocabulary, grammar, mechanics, discourse & fluency) are improved?
8. What aspects of learners' written performance are improved?

## 2.Methodology

### *2.1Participants*

The participants in the present study were 300 EFL students from Payame Noor University, NabiyehAkram and RabeRashidi Universities in Tabriz, Iran. Students were aged between 18 and 25 and all were at intermediate level. These EFL students were passing reading comprehension course and writing essays course with the researcher as their instructor. They were chosen after assigning a preliminary English Test (PET) and a writing task for having homogeneous groups. The researcher randomly assigned them as the experimental and the control group.

### *2.2Instrumentation*

The proficiency Test employed in the present study was Preliminary English Test "PET". It included four parts: listening, writing, speaking and reading. The subjects' scores were out of 100. Those who were chosen for the study had obtained 60 or more in this test. Writing tasks for pre-test and post-test were chosen for this research from book 'how to prepare for the TOEFL Essays' edited by Abbas Zahedi (2002). Other Different instruments were used in the present study which involved different reading tasks from" Reading and Comprehension 1, 2, 3" published by Payame Noor University's publication, for the treatment sessions. Twelve think-aloud flashcards (see Appendix A) were also used.

### *2.3Procedure*

The goal of this study was to examine the effects of think-aloud strategies on improving written performance. The researcher used a quasi-experimental research design with a sample of 300 Iranian EFL learners in Tabriz-Iran. After assessing the groups' homogeneity by using a PET test and a writing task as a pre-test, the researcher randomly assigned them as the experimental and control groups. The teacher in the experimental group explained about think-aloud strategies which are useful for reading comprehension and they are widely used by highly skilled readers. Then the teacher used a think-aloud flashcard game to practice these strategies while students were dealing with a reading task in their English book (see Appendix B). Students chose strategies in flashcards one by one and tried to understand the text by using them. They also got feedback from teachers and their peers about correct use of these strategies. After four months of having treatment sessions, teacher asked students to take notes about which think-aloud



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strategies they used more or found useful. In the experimental group, procedure in the treatment sessions was adapted from Block and Israel (2004) and Roger and Jusko (2014). Think aloud strategies included three stages and twelve techniques as follows:

**Stage1: Explanation of BEFORE Reading Strategies**

- 1-Overview the Text
- 2-Look for Important Information
- 3-Connect to an Author's Big Idea
- 4-Activate Relevant Knowledge
- 5-Put Yourself in the Book/text

**Stage2: Explanation of DURING Reading Strategies**

- 6-Revise Prior Knowledge and Predict
- 7-Recognize an Author's Writing Style
- 9-Ask Questions

**Stage3: Explanation of AFTER Reading Strategies**

- 10-Notice Novelty in Text
- 11-Relate the Book/text to Your Life

12-Anticipate Use of Knowledge

In the control group, during treatment sessions, students worked on the same reading tasks in the same books. However, the teacher did not explain about think-aloud strategies. They did not have think-aloud flashcards, either.

At the end of the twenty one week program, the participants in both groups were post-tested. Post-test procedure was exactly similar to the pre-test procedure. In the post-test, a writing task was given to the students in both control and experimental groups.

Students' writing was classified into five categories (the researcher followed Hughes' 2003 classification):

**1. Vocabulary**
**2. Grammar**
**3. Mechanics**
**4. Discourse (form or organization)**
**5. Fluency (style and ease of communication)**

The researcher used the proportion of these five categories in students' writing to see which aspects of writing in the experimental group would develop. In addition, students' writing tasks in the pre-test and post-test were assessed according to the Hughes' (2003) analytic assessment.

***2.4Design***

Due to the proposed research question, this study required a quasi-experimental method of research. It contained a pre-test, a post-test, a control group and an experimental group. T-test was used for assessing question number 2. Descriptive statistics was used for answering to questions 1 and 3.

Think aloud Protocols as self-regulated learning was the independent variable, which is the major variable hoped to be investigated. The improvement of Iranian EFL Learners' written performance was the dependent variables which was observed and measured to determine the effect of the independent variable.

In this study, students' language proficiency was controlled by taking a PET test and choosing two homogenous language learner groups.

3.**Results**

**Language Proficiency Test**

To make sure of the participants' homogeneity, the researcher measured their language proficiency level using a PET test. The results of the language test are shown in Table 1.

Table 1



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*Descriptive data and Independent sample t-test for proficiency scores*

| Group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | F | t | Sig(2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PET** control | 150 | 64.9667 | 2.75490 | .22494 | 2.126 | -.258 | .797 |
| experimental | 150 | 65.0533 | 3.05385 | .24935 | | | .797 |

As a result of the t-test, there has not been a significant difference in scores for control group (M = 64.96, SD = 2.75) and experimental group (M=65.05, SD = 3.05), t (298) = -.258, P>.05.

**Frequencies of Think aloud strategies used by students' in Experimental Group**

Table 2 shows the frequencies and proportions of Think aloud strategies noticed by the experimental group.

Table 2

*The frequencies and proportions of Think aloud strategies noticed by the experimental group.*

| | Frequency | Percent % | Mean | Std. deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Overview the Text** | 145 | 96.7% | 0.96 | .6822 |
| **Look for Important Information** | 138 | 92% | 0.92 | .2434 |
| **Connect to an Author's Big Idea** | 129 | 86% | 0.86 | .2566 |
| **Activate Relevant Knowledge** | 140 | 93.3% | 0.93 | .4344 |
| **Put Myself in the Book/text** | 34 | 22.7% | 0.22 | .7856 |
| **Revise Prior Knowledge and Predict** | 125 | 83.3% | 0.83 | .2434 |
| **Recognize an Author's Writing Style** | 76 | 50.7% | 0.50 | .6875 |
| **Determine Word Meanings** | 146 | 97.3% | 0.97 | .6234 |
| **Ask Questions** | 23 | 15.4% | 0.15 | .0721 |
| **Notice Novelty in Text** | 77 | 47.2% | 0.51 | .0654 |
| **Related the Book /text to My Life** | 68 | 45.8% | 0.45 | .4705 |
| **Anticipate Use of Knowledge** | 109 | 72.6% | 0.72 | .5687 |

As Table 2 indicates, the largest proportion and mean frequency of thinking -aloud strategies that are found helpful by the students are Determine Word Meanings (97.0%, M = .97), Overview the Text (96.7%, M = .96), and Activate Relevant Knowledge (93.3%, M = .93).

**Results of T-test for Writing Scores**

A T-Test was used to compare the means of scores between two groups in pre-test, to further show the homogeneity of two groups. The results of students' scores in pre-test and post-test are



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shown in Table 3. Furthermore, for showing the amount of improvement in groups from pre-test to posttest, paired sample t-test was used. The results of paired sample t-test are shown in table 3.

Table 3

*Descriptive data and Independent sample t-test for Writing scores in pre-test and post-test*

| Group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | F | t | Sig(2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pretest** control | 150 | 17.7233 | 2.24676 | .18345 | .131 | -.052 | .959 |
| experimental | 150 | 17.7367 | 2.19723 | .17940 | | | .959 |
| **Posttest** control | 150 | 17.7400 | 2.09643 | .17117 | 59.556 | -34.132 | .000 |
| experimental | 150 | 26.1733 | 1.77509 | .14494 | | | .000 |

The mean score and standard deviation in control group for writing task is (M = 17.72, SD = 2.24) and the mean score and standard deviation in experimental group is (M = 17.73, SD =2.19), t (298) =- .052, p>.05, which shows that there are not any significant differences between two groups in pre-test. As a result of the t-test, there has been a significant difference in scores of writing task in the posttest for control group (M = 17.74, SD = 2.09) and experimental group (M=26.17, SD = 1.77), t (298) = -34.13, P=.000. The results show that there is a significant difference between two groups in the post-test. In the post-test, the experimental group outperforms the control group in the writing task.

Table 4

*Paired Samples Statistics for the Writing scores of Control and Experimental Groups*

| Group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | t | Sig(2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pretest** control | 150 | 17.7233 | 2.24676 | .18345 | -.064 | .949 |
| **Posttest** control | 150 | 17.7400 | 2.09643 | .17117 | | .949 |
| **Pre test** experimental | 150 | 17.7367 | 2.19723 | .17940 | -34.187 | .000 |
| **Posttest** experimental | 150 | 26.1733 | 1.77509 | .14494 | | .000 |

According to the result, pre-test scores of Writing task in the control group is ( M= 17.72, SD= 2.24) and in the post-test (M= 17.74, SD= 2.09), p>.05. Post-test scores do not show any improvement. There is not any significant difference between writing scores from pre-test up to post-test in the control group. According to the results, pretest scores of writing task in the



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Experimental group is ( M= 17.73, SD= 2.19) and in the posttest (M= 26.17, SD= 1.77), P= .000. The results show that there is a significant difference between pretest and posttest in the writing task scores of experimental group. In the posttest, the scores have improved significantly.

**Frequencies of Features Improved in the Writing Task of Experimental Group**

Table 5 shows the frequencies and proportions of features improved in the writing task of the experimental group.

Table 5 shows the frequencies and proportions of features improved in the writing task of the experimental group.

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-vocabulary | 150 | 2 | 4 | 3.0561 | .30398 |
| Pre-grammar | 150 | 2 | 4 | 3.0400 | .35396 |
| Pre-mechanic | 150 | 2 | 4 | 3.0232 | .35396 |
| Pre-form | 150 | 2 | 4 | 3.0735 | .32967 |
| Pre-fluency | 150 | 2 | 4 | 3.0433 | .34726 |
| Post-vocabulary | 150 | 3 | 6 | 4.2061 | .47128 |
| Post-grammar | 150 | 4 | 6 | 4.5233 | .52564 |
| Post-mechanic | 150 | 4 | 5 | 4.2500 | .42863 |
| Post-form | 150 | 4 | 6 | 5.0967 | .54863 |
| Post-fluency | 150 | 4 | 6 | 5.1660 | .54239 |

As Table 5 indicates, the largest proportion and mean frequency of the features was fluency (86%, M = 5.16, SD= .54), followed by form (84.83%, M = 5.09, SD- .54), grammar (75.33%, M = 4.52, SD= .52), mechanics (70.83%, M = 4.25, SD= .42), and vocabulary (70%, M = 4.20, SD= .47).

**4. Discussion and Conclusion**

At first, the descriptive statistics of considering think-aloud questionnaire shows that students found Determine Word Meanings, Overview the Text, and Activate Relevant Knowledge more helpful than other strategies. The finding was in line with Schmidt (2001, as cited in Abe, 2008). Based on the assumption that noticing and understanding are different in the level of awareness and on the psychological view that attention is of limited capacity, Schmidt (2001, as cited in Abe, 2008) states that "limited attentional resources are directed first at those elements that carry message meaning, primarily lexicon, and only later, when the cost comes down, towards communicatively redundant formal features of language" (p. 13).

For analyzing the second question, first, an Independent sample t-test was run to determine if there were any statistically significant differences between the two groups' mean scores on the pre-test measuring EFL learners' writing skill. The statistical analysis of written pre-test data showed that there were not any differences between the two groups. The homogeneity of the two groups has been shown in Table 3. Second, after the instruction, the post-test was administered to the participants and the results showed a significant difference between the two groups' mean scores (see Table 3). For checking the amount of improvement from the pre-test to the post-test in two groups, a paired sample t-test was used for both control and experimental group. According to the results (see table 4) just the experimental group has improved in the post-test. However, in the control group there was not any significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The Experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in the post-test which shows the positive effect of using think-aloud strategies as self-regulated learning on developing written skill.



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Furthermore, the findings of this study with regard to the first and second research question is consistent with some of the previous L2 reading studies (e.g. Aghaie& Zhang, 2012; Gu, 2014; Klein, Biedinger, & Becker ,2014; Vaezi&Alizadeh, 2011),which stated the positive effect of Think-aloud strategies on learning and teaching of reading comprehension. Teachers can demonstrate think-aloud strategies and ask students to identify it by holding up the flashcard that depicts that thinking process. Teachers can also pair students and ask them to perform think-alouds with each other.

The findings of the study indicated that the students' self-regulation of their reading behaviors through using think aloud strategies resulted in improving written performance. In this regard, the results of the study concur with the findings of previous research asserting that self-regulated learning is strongly correlated with higher academic achievement (Kolovelonis, Goudas, &Dermitzaki, 2011) This effectiveness of self-regulated reading instruction is based on core features of self-regulated reading that are typically absent in traditional reading classrooms. First, self-regulated reading combines together components empirically proven effective in enhancing reading competence; namely- cognitive reading strategy. It has effect on enhancing reading achievement, and it maximizes the effect of reading comprehension . Similarly, Ruohotie (2002, as cited in Clarebout, Horz, &Schnotz, 2010) argues that as students become more engaged in self-regulated reading, they become more involved in deeper problem –solving practices related to analyzing situations, setting priorities, considering choices and alternatives, taking decisions, and evaluating consequences.

Moreover, self-regulation of reading touches upon necessary conditions for the development of reader autonomy such as needs, motivation, reading strategies, and language awareness. When readers are autonomous, they become aware of and able to identify their needs and strategies and have the opportunity to reconsider and refashionapproaches and procedures for optimal reading (Rivers, 2001). The autonomous reader is a self-activated maker of meaning. Based on such perspective, reading is not a matter of rehearsal or rote memorization of reading content adhered to in the traditional reading classes, but rather a constructive process that involves actively seekingmeaning or even imposing meaning on reading events. In this study, students work under the guidance and intervention of the teacher. The instruction about how to use think aloud reading strategies is carried out in order to build up appropriate reading skills. Performing think-aloud reading strategies and knowing where, when, and how to use a given strategy, freed students' cognitive capacities and fostered self-regulation.

Moreover, the reason behind the positive effect of think -aloud strategies on developing written performance is the learners' cognitive processing system and the factor 'noticing'. Eschholz (1980) points out that what L2 learners write depends on what they read and they can improve their L2 writing skills by reading. He also argues that given the opportunities to learn rhetorical modes, L2 learners can eventually apply their knowledge about those modes to their writing. Referring to the results of this study, it can be concluded that self-regulated learning through think-aloud strategies are helpful for improving Iranian EFL learners' written performance.

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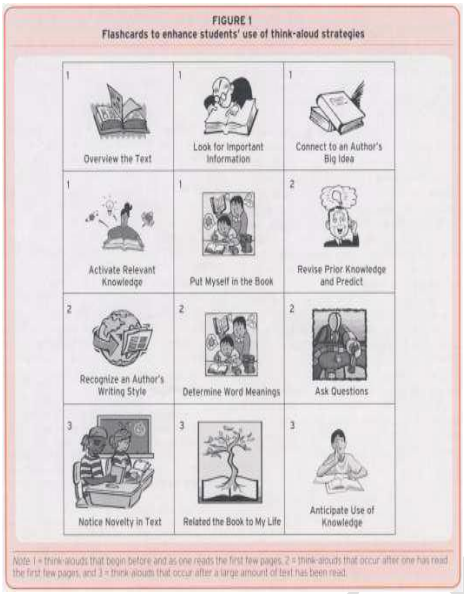
Appendix A
Think aloud Flashcards




Appendix B
Samples of think- aloud strategies
Teacher Modeling
Sample reading text in the treatment

Signs of Drug Abuse
Most drugs that are continually misused can influence a person's behavior. In some cases, this influence is obvious. For example, excessive use of alcohol or sleeping pills causes poor muscle coordination, slurred speech, and sleepiness. People who use amphetamines and cocaine become restless and talkative. However, the effect of some drugs, such as tobacco and marijuana, may not be noticed.
Even parents and close friends may not be aware that a person is abusing drugs. Many drug abusers try to keep these activities secrets. Long absence from home, school, or work, or a sharp drop in school or job performance, may indicate drug abuse. A sudden change in



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personality may also be a clue, but such a transformation often occurs without drugs.

Teacher is modeling think- aloud strategies she is using while reading this text. Modeling and retelling of teacher's think -aloud strategies are mentioned here:

Stage1: Explanation of BEFORE Reading Strategies

1. Overview the text

*Review the text: start with the title → as you see this passage must be about drug abuse.*

*You see some vocabulary related to the Drug abuse (e.g., alcohol, sleeping pills, amphetamines and cocaine, tobacco and marijuana).*

2. Look for Important Information

*Look for important information: as you see we can understand that drug abuse can cause these effects:*

*1. Influence a person's behavior.*

*2. Poor muscle coordination.*

*3. slurred speech, sleepiness*

*4. Restless and talkative*

*5. Sharp drop in school or job.*

*6. Absence from home/school /work*

3-Connect to an Author's Big Idea

*All of these phrases (e.g. restless, being absence, slurred speech, etc.) suggest that the author wants to speak about Drug abuse.*

4-Activate Relevant Knowledge

*If you remember the movies, documentaries, etc. about drug abuse, you will remember about the effects of drug abuse. Such as being restless, talkative, sleepiness, etc.*

5-Put Yourself in the Book/text

*If you want to be the author of this passage, you will write about which aspects of drug abuse?*

Stage2: Explanation of DURING Reading Strategies

6-Revise Prior Knowledge and Predict

*Of cource a person who abuse drugs, is weak, sleepy, can't concentrate on his/her work… So, we can predict that the author will write about the aspects of drug abuse.*

7-Recognize an Author's Writing Style

*The author uses formal language but tries to use vocabulary that can be used daily .The author uses short and simple sentence. So, understanding this text is so easy.*

*It can be mentioned that the author refers to the main idea in every paragraph. You can find the main idea → pay attention that every paragraph has its own main idea and supportive ideas. The main idea in the first paragraph is called thesis statement. Main idea and main purpose of the text will be restated in the last paragraph, too. As you see the main idea (thesis statement) of this text is"most drugs that one continually misused can influence a person's behavior".*

*Every paragraph is connected to the other one by the transition words (e.g., in some cases, for example, however).*

*Words related to the topic which are repeated or synonyms and antonyms can show connections between paragraphs. (e.g., Misuse=abuse; change=transformation; influence=affect; aware≠ secret; personality =behavior). The related words (e.g., alcohol, pills, amphetamines and cocaine all are related to drugs).*



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*Some other related words in the text are (poor muscle coordination, slurred speech, sleepiness, restless, change personality). All of them refer to the side effects of drug abuse.*

*We can make new vocabulary by adding prefixes and suffixes (e.g. sleepy (adj) +ness→ sleepiness (n); rest (n) +less→ restless (adj)). So, paying attention to these affixes can help us in guessing the meaning, because "less/" means "without", which can help in guessing meaning.*

9-Ask Questions

*When one person abuse drugs what will happen?*

Stage3: Explanation of AFTER Reading Strategies

10-Notice Novelty in Text

*Pay attention to the word usage –synonyms, antonyms, transitive words etc. The author uses them to show the coherence and the cohesion in the text.*

11-Relate the Book/text to Your Life

*In our real life, in own city or country we see people who abuse drugs.*

12-Anticipate Use of Knowledge

*We can learn these new synonyms, words, etc. So, we can understand the other texts by using them and we can use these elements in our writing.*

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# ON THE EFFECTS OF A SPECIALIZED VOCABULARY- TRAINING APPLICATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH VOCABULARY AMONG IRANIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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**Abstract**
The present study aimed to investigate the effects of a specialized vocabulary-training application on the development of l2 vocabulary among Iranian high school students. The participants were divided into two groups of experimental and control according to their level of language proficiency. Each group had 30 participants. There was a pre-test was administered at the beginning of the experiment to ascertain the participants ' prior familiarity, if any, with the target vocabulary to be introduced as well as their homogeneity. The control group was taught by traditional methods like using a bilingual dictionary, word grouping, and memorization of vocabulary, reading aloud, repetition, and translation. The students in the experimental group were taught by using a vocabulary-training application in the powerpoint program. After the treatment, which took three months to finish, a post-test was given to check out the student's knowledge of vocabulary at the end of the experiment in both groups. The findings proved that using the specialized vocabulary-training application had been effective in learning and retention of english vocabulary by the participants retaining unknown words.

**Key words:** call, high school students**,** vocabulary training application, vocabulary learning

## 1. Introduction

Vocabulary learning is an essential aspect of mastering a second or foreign language (L2). Knowledge of words is fundamental to both comprehension and production in reading, listening, speaking and writing activities. In instructional settings, providing learners with a variety of information about a word enhances vocabulary learning. Research also suggests that vocabulary annotations are not equally effective for all learners. For example, research indicates that pictorial annotations illustrating the meaning of a word in a reading passage have lasting effects on word



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retention. Research also suggests that vocabulary annotations are not equally effective for all learners. Individual learner differences determined by, for instance, distinct cognitive styles and/or learning preferences influence learners' abilities to benefit from particular vocabulary annotations for learning. Pictures are potentially more valuable for visual learners than for verbal learners. (Rimrott, 2010)

Yet, vocabulary annotations are still underexplored. For instance, audio annotations require further investigation. In addition, it is unclear how word concreteness impacts the effectiveness of vocabulary annotations. This paper fills some of the research gaps surrounding vocabulary learning in computer-assisted language learning (CALL). With their multimedia capabilities, CALL programs can provide word annotations such as pictures, audio pronunciations and / or written definitions to assist in the language learning process. Due to convenient tracking capabilities, they can also answer questions concerning the effectiveness of multimedia annotations for different learners. This knowledge will contribute to constructing effective CALL programs that are tailored to individual learners' needs. Finally, questions surrounding the effect of features of the computer environment itself on learning outcomes can be explored with CALL programs (Rimrott.A, 2010).

## 2. Review of the Literature

### 2.1. Vocabulary acquisition

There are different pairs of modes on vocabulary learning. In this paper the term 'incidental vocabulary acquisition', discussed in Eysenck (1982) as one of our theoretical foundation, will be used. Incidental vocabulary learning in this paper means that learners are required to finish a task involving the processing of some unfamiliar words without being told in advance that they will be tested afterwards on their recall of the meanings of those novel words. It is different from implicit vocabulary learning which holds that the meaning of a new word is acquired totally Sub-consciously as a result of abstraction from repeated exposure in a range of activated contexts. Implicit learning can be incidental only, but incidental vocabulary learning can include both implicit and explicit learning since "linking word form to word meaning is an explicit learning which holds that there is some benefit to vocabulary acquisition from the learner noticing novel vocabulary, selectively attending to it, and using a variety of strategies to try to infer its meaning from the context" (Ellis, 1994: p219). At the same time, it cannot be claimed that vocabulary learning here is an indirect learning since we have vocabulary exercises in our reading tasks including guessing words from context and using target words to make sentences which belong to vocabulary learning. The controlled experiments in the present study aim at investigating the effects of varying reading tasks on learners' vocabulary retention. Therefore, the term incidental learning is used as an opposing concept of intentional learning. The participants are required to read the passages with an intention to understand them and answer some comprehension questions but not with an intention to learn the target words. It is in this sense that learning of the target words is incidental.

Although the learners acquire vocabulary incidentally through reading, they also need to process the unfamiliar words in order to understand the contents of the passages. What do we know about the processes that facilitates vocabulary learning? Then another theoretical foundation of the current study is the depth of processing model which is launched by Craik and Lockhart (1972). However, some researchers (Baddeley, 1978; Eysenck, 1978, 1977) have challenged their levels of processing theory. The main points focus on the following two questions: (1) What exactly constitutes a level of processing, and (2) How do we know that one level is deeper than another. In 2001, Laufer and Hulstijn showed the Involvement load hypothesis which firstly adopts the measurable and operational factors (need, search, evaluation) to define the



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involvement loads which are used to judge the different degree of processing the unfamiliar vocabulary items through reading.

**2.2. The promise of CALL**

Undoubtedly, digital media is impacting how second languages are taught/learned today. "It can now be argued that computer-assisted language learning has come of age, and that we are now entering a fully integrated and naturalized phase of CALL."(Reinders& Thomas, 2012).CALL has made its way into the mainstream teaching of L2 nationally and internationally, and the future of CALL is directly related to language teaching (Hubbard, 2008). A number of research studies have found that students using CALL performed better than students not using CALL (Grgurovic, Chapelle& Shelley, 2013). The use of technology offers the possibility to enrich the L2 teaching/learning by keeping the quality of instruction with a minimum amount of teacher-student contact and not affecting negatively the learning objectives (Hoopingarner, 2009). Bush's (2008) research concluded that computers facilitate L2 learning for the students, because computers can be used by the students when they need them and when the time is right. New Pieces of in education are prompting deep changes in teaching, which are surpassing the traditional lecture and group work and changing them into learning environments with games and activities; these new learning environments prompt the students to use L2 in situations that re-create life circumstances as close as possible to the real ones and such environments allow L2 learners to assume control of their own learning without depending on the teacher (West, 2013). According to Warschauerto (2010), one important benefit of using technology in L2 is the fostering of self-technology-based learning due to its daily accessibility which gives participants the opportunity to use L2 more often. Lin's (2010) research concluded that students favored a computer-supported learning environment when they were learning L2.Incorporating technology to learn a target language is very important in today's multicultural and multilingual global society (Godwin-Jones, 2013).

**2.3. Using Applications in Language Teaching**

In general, teaching practice has changed by the integration of technology in the classroom. Technology will keep changing second language teaching as new technologies are being introduced faster than ever (Hoopingarner, 2009). CALL technology and its uses are broad in the second language teaching; some technologies can be used with more than one language skill (Stockwell,2007). In a research study conducted by Lin, he concluded that a video-based CALL had positive impact on learning L2 verbs, nouns, and adjectives among students with diverse levels of proficiency (Lin, 2010). Sites such as Facebook and Wikipedia provide teachers with material to expose the language learners with realistic use of a second language; social media provides important interaction with L2 (Istifci, Lomidazde, &Demiray, 2011). CALL- based language teaching/learning offers quite a few benefits to the learner, such as interactive activities and multimedia applications, which are engaging (Genc, 2012).

**3. Methods of Research**

**3.1. Participants**

Participants of the present study were a sample of 120 female intermediate high school students. In order to determine the language proficiency of the students and make up a homogeneous group, students were were given a sample copy of the Oxford Solution Placement Test (OSPT). They were selected randomly by a digital randomizer called Super Cool Random Number Generator application from among 150 students. The random selection procedure was initiated by assigning 60 Iranian high school students randomly into two groups of 30participants, namely experimental and control. Sixty students were selected as a pilot group. The random selection procedure began after administering an English language proficiency test. Students from the high



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school were administered an OSPT including 50 multiple choice test and 10 reading comprehension test. Next, one version of the English vocabulary test was administered to the pilot groups.

Regarding the results of the Oxford Solutions Placement Test,the participants were 120 students. 60 students were randomly assigned into pilot groups, 30 students the experimental and 30 students were randomly assigned into the control group. Gender was a controlled variable in this study. All of the participants were non-native speakers and at the intermediate proficiency level.

**3.2. Instruments**

The data collection instruments utilized in this study included the following:

An OSPT including 50 items in multiple-choice format was used to determine the proficiency level of the students. This test was administered to 150.A sample of 60 students which were homogenous were selected to receive treatment on English vocabulary.The participants who scored 40 were included in the study.

A vocabulary pre-test consisting of 80 vocabulary items was administered to both groups prior to the treatment. The participants should have selected the target vocabulary items of the pretest. The aim of this test was to omit the familiar words from the pre-test and post-tests. All words were selected from Vocabulary for the High School Student book and 1100 words (Bromberg). The duration of this 80-item test was 80 minutes.

A vocabulary recognition post-test in the form of a multiple choice test was administered to the pilot group in a session. The test included 80 items whichtheir stems in the test items were developed based on example sentences that appeared in Webster dictionary (2015) and Longman dictionary (2009). Each test included items with blanks and four choices. The duration of this test was 80 minutes.

The Power Point application was introduced to the students as an option for learning electronically.A training session was set up for the participants to gain familiarity with the available features.The selected words were computerized, and 80 words in each slide were glossed by a computer program called Power Point. The words were glossed pictorial form. There were 80 slides to show computerized vocabulary and their definition in English, underlined words, the pictures related to the meaning of underlined words.

The selected words were computerized, and 80 words in each slide were glossed by a computer program called vocabulary-training application. The words were glossed pictorial form. There were 80 slides to show computerized vocabulary and their definitions in English, the underlined words, as well as static pictures related to the their meanings.

Tablets were given to students. The Kingsoft Office program was installed on each Tablet. Students used the Office program to learn vocabulary by PowerPoint program.

**3.3. Procedures**

**3.3.1. The pilot study**

A pilot study for the purpose of standardizing the instruments (i.e., Pre-and posttests) was conducted in this research. This study was conducted in a high school. To fulfill the aim of this study, a placement test had to be given to the students to determine the intermediate students.All participants of the study (n = 120) were given a language proficiency test in order to ensure their homogeneity in terms of language proficiency level. The students whose scores were 40 selected to participate in the main study. TAP software was utilized to estimate the IF (item facility) indices of test. The analysis revealed that 20 items should be removed from the test, as their IF indices were above 0.05 (IF > 0.05). Afterward a number of 20questions were omitted from the pretest owing to its low difficulty. Then the pilot group was given the posttest at the end of the



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procedure of teaching the vocabulary through the method under investigation. It needed to satisfy the criteria of a standard test, such as validity and reliability; that is, the test needed to be validated and then was administered to the experimental and control groups as the pretest.

**3.3.2. The Main study**

At the beginning, when the students received the pretest, they were not familiar with the vocabulary of this book. The pretest including 80 questions was administered a day before starting the instruction mentioned in this research. The test contained multiple-choice questions and both groups received the above- mentioned test. However, the test was provided to the students that selected by the researcher. It was administered to control and experimental groups to ensure that they were homogeneous with respect to the variable of this investigation, that was, the vocabulary knowledge. Since, the test items had been designed by the researcher. Subsequently, the obtained results were collected and analyzed as a source of data both to confirm that the experimental and control groups had the qualification of a homogenous sample with regard to their vocabulary knowledge, and, also to measure the possible initial differences existing between the groups.

All the participants in experimental group were instructed how to work with PowerPoint application. The words were taught to the students in experimental group every session for about a month through the procedure by using tablet. In each session 10 vocabularies taught to students via vocabulary-training application on Power Point program. The students looked at the picture of the word on their tablet and understood the meaning of the word via picture and text. Both groups were taught in two different conditions. The experimental group received instructions through a structured special presentation. The control group, on the other hand, received instructions under traditional vocabulary techniques which mainly consist of the use of bilingual dictionary, of word grouping, memorization of vocabulary, etc. The students were taught the same unit and the same material, including the vocabulary, at the same time.

During the PowerPoint presentations where students were exposed to new vocabulary through the structured and planned material, they were informed that the vocabulary was going to be part of the following units to be taught later. All the words were presented with the corresponding images or pictures in color, the spelling of the words was showed in a highlighted and animated text, the pronunciation of the words was modeled by the researchers and students repeated chorally three times.

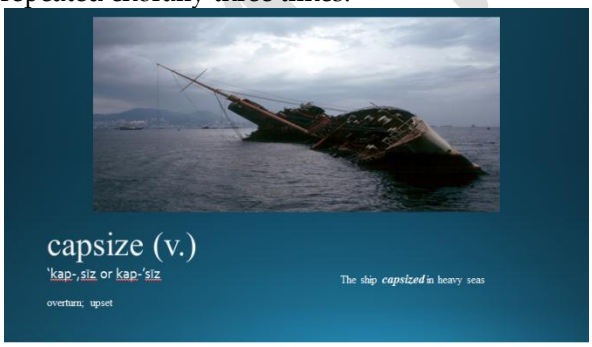


Figure 3.1.A Sample of Specialized Vocabulary Training Application

At the end, when the vocabulary was taught by the teacher in charge of both groups, the researchers administered a posttest to both groups, the experimental and control.

All of this was accomplished in order to gather information and to see the relative effectiveness of the treatment of the experimental and control groups. This research presents the scores of the pretest for the control and the experimental groups and makes a comparison between them.Then, there was a presentation of the scores for the post-tests administered to both groups in order to



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prove the effectiveness of the use of vocabulary-training application presentations which were compared to the traditional techniques, used by most teachers, to teach vocabulary to develop it.

**4. Results**

In the analysis stage of this research, the results achieved from the pre- and posttests were summarized, and the procedures of descriptive statistics (including means, standard deviations, etc.) along with inferential statistics namely independent samples T-tests were run. To investigate the possible differences between the control and experimental groups with respect to their vocabulary achievement and provide answer for the research question, an Independent samples t-test was run. Furthermore, the normality assumption of the parametric test (namely independent samples T- test) was established through running Skewness analyses, Levene's test for equality of variances, computing Trimmed Mean, and presenting normal probability plots.

In fact, learners' performance in the experimental group (Mean =30.10) far outweighed that of the control group (Mean =23.23) in final vocabulary test.

**Table4.1:**

**Statistics for the Control and Experimental Groups' Performance on Final Vocabulary Test**

| Group Statistics | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
| posttest scores | control | 30 | 23.23 | 5.348 | .976 |
| | experimental | 30 | 30.10 | 4.930 | .900 |

Table 4.1 depicted the values of means and standard deviation along with standard error of mean for the two groups on final vocabulary tests. The mean score of the experimental group (mean $_{\text{experimental group}}$= 30.10) is (6.86) points higher than that of the control group (mean $_{\text{control group}}$= 23.23). However, the standard deviation for the experimental group was slightly lower than that of the control group (SD $_{\text{experimental group}}$ =.4.93, SD $_{\text{control group}}$ =5.34).

**Table 4.2:**

**Independent Samples Test for the Control and Experimental Groups' Performance on Posttest of Vocabulary**

| Independent Samples Test | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Levene's Test for Equality | t-test for Equality of Means |



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| | | of Variances | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| posttest scores | Equal variances assumed | .51 | .47 | -5.17 | 58 | .00 | -6.86 | 1.328 | -9.52 | -4.20 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -5.17 | 57.6 | .00 | -6.86 | 1.328 | -9.52 | -4.20 |

The independent sample T-test procedure offered two tests of the contrast between the control and experimental groups. The assumption for the first row was that the variances of the two groups were similar. The Levene statistic evaluated the fairness of the variances.The significance index of the statistic was (.47).

Since this value was higher than (.05), it could be assumed that the groups had equal variances and thus the second test was ignored and the findings of the first test (first row) were documented.

The results of independent samples t-test for the final vocabulary test in Tables 4.1, and 4.2 showed that there was a significant difference between the two groups in their performance on final vocabulary test (sig= .00, $p<0.05$). The Mean Difference between the two groups was also shown in this table; along with the 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference showing the Lower value and the Upper value (see Table 4.2).

According to the findings, although the two groups were homogenous in terms of their vocabulary size at the beginning of the study (as depicted by the results of the independent samples t- test for the pretest scores), the experimental group who took specific treatment markedly performed better than the control group who received traditional methods of vocabulary practice. The results showed that the vocabulary-training applicationhad been beneficial in enhancing students' performance on vocabulary test for the experimental group and thus the null hypothesis was rejected (t=5.17, 0.00 <.05). In other words, specialized training applicationcould help improve the students' command of the L2 vocabulary. The following figure depicts the two groups in posttest of vocabulary at the end of the study.

**Table 4.3:**
**Descriptive Statistics for Vocabulary Test Scores (Posttest)**

| | groups | | | Statistic | Std. Error |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Posttest scores | control | Mean | | 23.23 | .976 |
| | | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | Lower Bound | 21.24 | |
| | | | Upper Bound | 25.23 | |
| | | 5% Trimmed Mean | | 23.19 | |
| | | Median | | 22.00 | |
| | | Variance | | 28.599 | |
| | | Std. Deviation | | 5.348 | |
| | | Minimum | | 15 | |
| | | Maximum | | 32 | |
| | | Range | | 17 | |
| | | Interquartile Range | | 10 | |
| | | Skewness | | .389 | .427 |
| | | Kurtosis | | -1.288 | .833 |

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To obtain the 5% Trimmed Mean, the top and bottom 5 percent of the cases were removed and a new mean value was calculated. The original means and the new trimmed means were compared for all the tests and it was found that extreme scores were not having a strong influence on the means. In other words, since the trimmed mean and mean values were not very different and the two mean values were very similar for the vocabulary tests, the values were not too different from the remaining distribution and thus these cases were retained in the data file. In addition, Skewness and kurtosis values were also provided as part of this output that gave information about the normal distribution of scores for the two groups across the pre- and posttests.

The results showed that the vocabulary-training applicationhad been beneficial in enhancing students' performance on vocabulary test for the experimental group and thus the null hypothesis was rejected ($t=5.17$, $0.00 < .05$). In other words, specialized training applicationcould help improve the students' command of the L2 vocabulary. The following figure depicts the two groups in posttest of vocabulary at the end of the study.

Figure 4.4*:* the Comparison between the Two Groups on posttest of Vocabulary at the End of the Study

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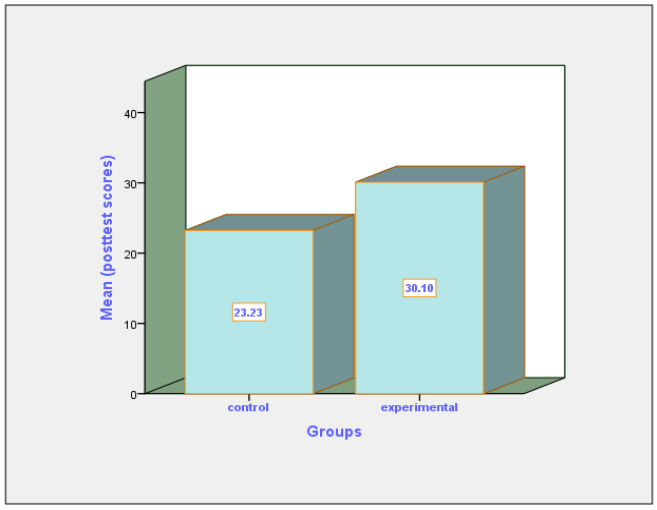


In order to investigate students' progress within groups, two paired t-tests were also run, which showed the subjects' progress in pre-test and post-test that are shown in Tables 4.5, and 4.6.

**Table 4.5:**
**Paired Samples Statistics for the Vocabulary Test**

| Paired Samples Statistics | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| groups | | | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
| control | Pair 1 | Pretest scores | 22.93 | 30 | 5.607 | 1.024 |
| | | Posttest scores | 23.23 | 30 | 5.348 | .976 |
| experimental | Pair 1 | Pretest scores | 23.63 | 30 | 5.021 | .917 |
| | | Posttest scores | 30.10 | 30 | 4.930 | .900 |

**Table 4.6:**
**Paired Samples T- Test for the Vocabulary Test**

| Paired Samples Test | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| groups | | | Paired Differences | | | | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| | | | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| control | Pair 1 | Pretest scores – posttest scores | -.300 | 1.022 | .187 | -.682 | .082 | -1.6 | 29 | .11 |
| rimenta | l | Pretest scores – | -6.46 | 1.306 | .238 | -6.954 | -5.979 | -27.1 | 29 | .00 |

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As depicted in the tables 4.5, and 4.6 both control and experimental groups had proceeded in the post-test of vocabulary. Based on the results of paired t-tests, this improvement was statistically significant simply for the experimental group but not for the control group ($P_{experimental\ group}<.05$, $P_{control\ group} \geq .05$). In other words, the experimental group made a noticeably higher advance as compared to the control group in the posttest of vocabulary.

**5. Discussions**

Significant impact of a specialized vocabulary-training application on vocabulary development has also been confirmed in the study undertaken by Tabatabaei.O and HeidariGoojani.A (2012) who tried to explore the impact of text-messaging on vocabulary learning of EFL learners. In this regard, a t-test was conducted to probe the first question in this study. The results revealed that there was a significant difference between the means of experimental and control groups. Therefore, it can be concluded that using short message service has a significant impact on vocabulary learning of Iranian EFL high school students. In order to answer the second and the third questions two attitudinal questionnaires were administered. The results showed that both students and English teachers had positive attitudes toward the application of SMS on vocabulary learning of the students.

The finding is also supported by Pahlavanpoorfard.S and Soori.A (2014) study that came to investigate the positive impact of using computer software on vocabulary learning of Iranian EFL University Students. The students in the experimental group were taught by computer software for vocabulary learning while the students in the control group were taught through traditional method for vocabulary learning. After the treatment, all the students sat for a post-test. The statistical analysis through running Independent-Sample T-tests revealed that the students in the experimental group who used the computer software for vocabulary learning performed better than the students in the control group were taught through traditional method for vocabulary learning.

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# COGNITIVE TASK COMPLEXITY: SKEHAN'S LIMITED ATTENTIONAL CAPACITY MODEL AND ROBINSON'S COGNITION HYPOTHESIS

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**Abstract**
After using tasks as the basic units of the syllabus, there has been a great deal of discussion about the best criterion for ordering and sequencing tasks. Information processing approch to tasks is one of the proposed models which introduce the use of task complexity (i.e. from simple to complex tasks) as the criterion for sequencing tasks. The main concern of this approach is the effects of task features on the performance of learners in the three dimensions of accuracy, fluency, and complexity. There are two well-known models of task complexity: skehan's limited attentional capacity model and Robinson's cognition hypothesis model. After presentation of thses two controversial points of view, a plathora of research has been conducted to see which of these models are supported. With these two models in mind, the present study provides a review of the studies which have supported each of these two models.

**Keywords:** task complexity, skehan's lac model, Robinson's ch model

## 1. Introduction

A psycholinguistic approach, which is the first major research area in task-based instruction, is concerned with "the psychological processes underlying language learning and use" (Skehan, 1998, p. 1). In this perspective a task is considered as a "device that guides learners to engage in certain types of information-processing" (Ellis, 2000, p. 197), that are believed to improve language use and/or language acquisition (Ellis, 2000). There are two different models which are derived from the psycholinguistic approach: Theinteractional approach and information processing or cognitive approach.The former deals with modifying features of target tasks, i.e., "a task found in real life" (Ellis, 2003, p. 351) which can lead to the production of specific conversational episodes called negotiation of meaning, communicative strategies, and communicative effectiveness (Ellis, 2003). The latter, information processing approach, on the other hand, has to do with the characteristics of tasks and the influences of manipulation of those characteristics on language performance in terms of fluency "i.e., the capacity to use language in real time, to emphasize meanings, possibly drawing on more lexicalized systems" (Skehan & Foster, 1999, p. 96); accuracy "i.e., the ability of the learner to perform in accordance with target language norms" (p. 96); and complexity "i.e., the capacity to use more advanced language, …. greater willingness to take risks, and use fewer controlled language subsystems"(pp. 96-97) (Skehan, 1996). In addition, this approach is also concerned with the way a balanced performance in terms of these aspects of production can be obtained (Ellis, 2000).

## 2. Cognitive Models in Task-Based Production



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As mentioned earlier, in the cognitive approach the focus is on the psychological processes typically engaged in when learners do tasks (Skehan, 2003). As Skehan and Foster (2001) put it, this approach considers cognitive complexity of the task as criteria in designing tasks because it helps to the understanding of how attention is deployed during performing tasks. There are two competing models of how attention is used while doing tasks. There are two well-known models of cognitive approach: Skehan's (1998) LAC and Robinson's (2001) CH model. While Skehan (1998) claimed limited information processing capacity for human beings,Robinson (2001b) proposed a multiple-resource view of attention.

**2.1. Skehan's LAC model**

Skehan's(1998) LAC modelisbasedontheinformationprocessingperspectives.Skehan (1996), advocatingasingleresourcemodelof attention, claims that attentional resources are limited, as a resulttherewillbe trade-offbetweendimensionsofperformance (i.e., accuracy, fluency, and complexity).AsSkehan(1998)putsit,incognitivelydemanding tasks great deal of attentional resources are paid to meaning at the expense of language forms,consequently fluency will be increased.But due tothe limited attentional capacity theremainedattentionalcannotbedevotedtobothaccuracyandcomplexity; as a result,only oneoftheseaspectswouldbeincreased.Insum,Skehan(2003)mentions that in applyingmorecognitivelycomplextasks,"greaterfluencymaybeaccompaniedbygreater accuracyorgreater complexity, but not both"(p. 5).

Skehan(1996,1998)makes a distinction between twodifferentsystemsofthe rule-basedand exemplar-based systems. He claims that the rule-basedsystem, whichconsistsofabstractrepresentationsofthe underlyingpatternsofthelanguage,requiresmoreprocessing, therefore it is bestsuitedformore controlled and lessfluentlanguageperformance.On the other hand,theexemplar-basedsystem,which includes ready-madeformulaic chunks oflanguage,canbeeasilyand quicklyaccessedwhich makes it much more appropriate forfluentlanguageperformance.

Skehan (1998) proposed a model for task classification. Skehan's model consists of three factors of code complexity, cognitive complexity, and communicative stress for task classification.The code complexity is concerned with the two areas of syntactic and lexical difficulty of the tasks (Skehan, 1996). The cognitive complexity is concerned with content features of the input. This factor is in turn consisted of the two aspects of cognition named: Cognitive familiarity (i.e., the use of ready-made or pre-packaged solutions and schematic knowledge) and cognitive processing (i.e. finding out online computations and active thinking). Cognitive familiarity is broken down into the three aspects of 1) topic familiarity and predictability; 2) familiarity of discourse genre; and 3) familiarity of task. Cognitive processing is also consisted of the four aspects of: 1) information organization (i.e., naturalness of organization of task relevant information); 2) amount of computation (i.e., the amount of needed simultaneous transformation or manipulation of information); 3) clarity and sufficiency of information (directness of available information and need to make inference); 4) information type (i.e., nature of available information concrete/abstract, static/dynamic, contextualized/decontextualized).

The last factor, communicative stress, is concerned with the conditions under which the task needs to be done. Aspects that are involved in communicative stress are: (1) time limits and time pressure; (2) speed of presentation; (3) number of the participants; (4) length of texts used; (5) type of response (modality: reading, writing, speaking, and listening); (6) opportunity to control interaction (the influence that participants can have on task on the way that it is done). Skehan (1996) argued that using such a system helps to establish effective balance between dimensions of performance.

**2.2. Robinson's CH Model**



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Robinson (2001b) argues that task complexity should be used in making decisions for sequencing tasks because learner factors about task difficulty cannot be anticipated in advance of implementation of a syllabus; therefore, it can be of no use to the syllabus designers. Robinson, in contrast to Skehan, holdsa multi-resourceviewofattention.He claimsthatdimensionsofcognitivetaskcomplexity belongtodifferentattentionalresources,asaresultmeaningandformarenotincompetitionforattention.

Robinson (2005, 2007a) proposed the triadic componential framework (TCF) for sequencing tasks. In this framework he distinguished the three components of task complexity, task conditions and task difficulty.

Task complexityrefers to "the intrinsic cognitive demands of the task" (Robinson, 2003, p. 55). Task complexity consists of two aspects of resource-directing and resource-dispersing variables. The former is concerned with variables which"make greater resource demand, but lead learners to use specific features of the language code" (Robinson, 2005, p. 4) and the latter deals with variables which "make greater resource demand without leading them to use specific features of language code" (Robinson, 2001a, p. 31). Robinson mentioned three resource-directing variables, (1) [+/- few elements], which refers to "few, easily distinguished, versus many similar elements" (Robinson, 2005, p. 5); (2) [+/- here-and-now], which refers to "whether the task requires reference to events happening now, in a mutually shared context" (here-and-now) (2005, p. 5) versus to events that occurred in the past, elsewhere (there-and-then); and 3) [+/- spatial reasoning] refers to "spatial location, where easily identifiable and mutually known landmarks can be used, versus reference to location without this support" (2007, p. 165); 4) [+/- causal reasoning] refers to "simple information transmission, versus reasoning about causal events and relationships between them" (p. 165); 5) [+/- intentional reasoning] which refers to "simple information transmission, versus reasoning about other peoples' intentions, beliefs and desires and relationships between them" (p. 165); and 6) [+/- perspective taking] which refers to "whether the task requires the speaker/listener to take just one first-person perspective on an event, or multiple second, and third person perspectives" (p. 165).

Resource-dispersing variables, on the other hand, increase task complexity without directing them to any aspect of the linguistic system (Robinson, 2001a). Resource-dispersing variables include: 1) [+/- planning time], which is "giving time for planning how to do the task" (Robinson, 2005, p. 22) vs. not giving it; 2) [+/- single task] which refers to tasks that "require only one thing to be done" (2005, p. 22), vs. those which "require two (dual) or many (multiple) things to be done simultaneously" (p. 22); and 3) [+/- prior knowledge] which refers to "providing background knowledge needed for task performance" (p. 22), vs. not giving it; 4) [+/- task structure] refers to the "tasks where there is a clear structure available to help in deciding which steps are needed to complete it" (2007b, p. 166), vs. those without one; 5) [+/- few steps] refers to the "tasks where one or few steps are needed to complete it" (p. 166), versus those requiring many steps; and 6) [+/- independency of steps] which refers to "the tasks where there is no necessary sequence or 'chain' in which steps are followed" (p. 166), vs. those which require participants to follow a strictly chained sequence, in which one step must be performed before another.

Robinson (2001b) states that increasing task complexity along resource-directing dimensions call learners' attention to the linguistic features which are needed to meet task demands as a result of which learners will be ledto higher complexity and greater accuracy of output. By contrast, increasing task complexity along resource-dispersing dimensions deplete learners' attention without directing it to any specific linguistic aspect of L2 production, therefore their performance will be poorer (Robinson, 2001a).



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Task condition refers to the features which are determined by the situational setting, and conditions in which they take place. This category includes two components of participation variables and participant variables. Participation variables embrace: 1) closed task vs. open tasks, 2) one way tasks vs. two-way tasks, 3) convergent vs. divergent tasks. Participant variable consists of: 1) same/ different gender; 2) extent of familiarity; and 3) power and status.

Task difficulty, the last component, refers to the "between learners variables" (Robinson, 2001a, p. 32) and is concerned with the learners' perceptions of the demands made by the task and the resources that learners bring to the task. Task difficulty consists of two variables: 1) affective variables, such as motivation, anxiety, and confidence which are temporary and may change and affect the size of available resources; and 2) ability variables such as intelligence, working memory, and aptitude which are more permanent and stable over a course of instruction.

In sum, Skehan (1998) and Robinson (2005, 2007a) have different predictions about the effect of cognitive complexity of the task on learners' language production (Table 2).

**3. Research into Cognitive Task Complexity**

After the presentation of Skehan's (1998) LAC model and Robinson's (2005) CH model, a great deal of research hasmanipulated task features by increasing or reducing the cognitive demand of tasks in order to see which of these two controversial models were supported (such as Crookes, 1989; Foster &Skehan, 1996; Iwashita, Elder &McNamara, 2001; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999; Rahimpour, 2007; Skehan& Foster, 1997; Wigglesworth, 2001 Yuan & Ellis, 2003). Some of the studied supported Skehan's LAC model while some others supported Robinson's CH model. The following sections provide a summary of some of those studies.

**3.1. Studies in Line with Skehan's LAC Model**

As mentioned earlier, Skehan (1998) stated that attentional resources are limited so aspects of language (i.e., accuracy, fluency, and complexity) cannot be attained simultaneously, if learners pay attention to one aspect, other aspects will be decreased. Furthermore, he claimed that since fluency is based on exemplar-based system (i.e., ready-made chunks and formulaic items), it will always be increased and one of the dimensions of accuracy or complexity will be increased. Here are some of the studies that support Skehan's LAC model.

Exploring the effects of [+/- here-and-now] dimensions on the oral production of participants, Brown et al., (1984) found that the less cognitively demanding task resulted in greater accuracy and fluency. Ellis (1987) investigated the effects of three planning conditions (both online planning and strategic planning, just strategic planning, and neither strategic nor online planning) on learners' performance. He went on to conclude that his findings were in line with Skehan's LAC model because when they had time they had the opportunity to employ their rule-based system and produced more accurate language. Crookes (1989) examined the effect of planning on learners' oral production. Performing two monologictasks with and without time for planning, the participants produced more complex language which was in line with Skehan's LAC model.

Skehan and Foster, as advocators of LAC model, conducted several studies to see the effects of task complexity on different dimensions of learners performance. In their early study, Foster and Skehan (1996)probed the influences of planning learners' oral performance using the three tasks of personal information exchange, narrative, and decision-making. The results strong effects of planning on fluency and complexity. In a subsequent study, Skehan and Foster (1997) replicated their previous study in which the same results were gained. In yet another study, Skehan and Foster (1999) examined the effects of inherent task structure on the learners' oral production. The findings unveiled that tasks with clear inherent sequential structure resulted in greater fluency and accuracy, especially in the planning conditions, though complexity was not affected by task structure. Foster and Skehan (1999) kept exploring task complexity effects on the performance of



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participants this time along source of planning (teacher-led, solitary, and group-based planning) and focus of planning (language or content). The results illustrated that accuracy was increased in the teacher-led condition, while complexity and fluency were increased in the solitary planning condition. Finally, the language vs. content planning condition did not result in different performance. What the results of their findings clearly demonstrates is that accuracy and complexity are in competition for attentional resources, since when task demands are increased only one of the aspects of accuracy or complexity is affected, not both of them.

Mehnert (1998) investigating the effects of different amounts of planning time on the speech performance of L2 speakers, found that fluency and lexical density of speech increased in the planning time group, whereas accuracy of speech improved with only one minute planning but did not increase with more planning time. Ortega (1999) examining the effects of planning on learners' oral production indicated that while accuracy was not affected, fluency and complexity were increased in the planning condition.

Yuan and Ellis (2003) examined the effects of planning time (no planning time, 10-minute planning time, online planning time) demonstrated that in terms of accuracy and structural complexity the participants of the online planning time outperformed the other groups and the participants of the pretaskplanning time group produced grater structural and lexical complexity along with unaffected accuracy. Ellis and Yuan (2004) in another study investigating the effects of planning showed that the pretask planning resulted in greater fluency and greater syntactic variety, and online planning resulted in greater accuracy.

Rouhi (2004) and Rouhi and Marefat (2006) studied the effects of planning (no planning, 10-minute planning, and online planning) on learners both written and oral production. Planning condition resulted in greater fluency and accuracy, but complexity was not affected. One more time, Rouhi and Saeed-Akhtar (2008) scrutinized the effects of planning time (no planning, detailed planning, and undetailed planning) on learners' oral production and they found that the detailed pre planning group generated greater accuracy and fluency in comparison to the other two groups.

Exploring the influences of narrative structure (loose and tight) and storyline complexity (with or without background events) on the learners' performance, Tavakoli and Foster (2008) and Foster and Tavakoli (2009) concluded that tightly structured storyline task resulted in greater fluency and accuracy, on the other hand in the tasks with a background element complexity was increased.

Gilabert (2007) investigated the effects of planning and [+/-here-and-now] on learners' oral performance. The results indicated that greater fluency, and lexical complexity were gained in planning time group. Regarding [+/-here-and-now], only accuracy was increased, while lexical complexity and fluency was decreased. Finardi (2008) explored the effects of task familiarity (task repetition) on the oral production of the learners and he found that task repetition increased the complexity of learners' performance while their accuracy was decreased.

Rahimpourand Hoseini (2010) investigated the impacts of [+/-here-and-now] on L2 learners' written narratives. They noted that their findings were in line with Skehan's LAC model as the participants prioritized aspects of their performance. Rahimpour and Nariman-Jahan (2011) probing the effects of planning and proficiency on learners' written task performance concludedthat the low-proficiency group learners produced high concept load, fluency, and complexity. On the other hand, high-proficiency group learners generated greater concept load and accuracy than their counterparts.

Farahani and Meraji (2011),explored the influences of planning time and [+/-here-and-now] on learners' performance and claimed that in the most complex task [-here-and-now and -planning time] only syntactic complexity was significantly increased. In their study, Ahangari and Abdi



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(2011) maintained that their findings were in line with Skehan's LAC model since planningtime has a positive effect only on complexity not on fluency. Skehan's LAC model was also supported bya study in whichKormos (2011) task structure effects on learners' production were investigated. It was found thatas a result of task complexity, lexical complexity was increased, but accuracy and cohesive characteristics of learners' written performance were not affected.Haghjou and Oroujlou (2012) scrutinizing storyline effects on production found that fluency and complexity were increased as the result of increasing task complexity. Khorasani, Pandian, and Mohammad-Ismail (2012) examined the influences of planning time on learners' production and concluded that their results confirmed Skehan's LAC model.Ghavamnia, Tavakoli and Esteki (2013) explored the effects of planning conditions on learners' written production. The findings of the study illustrated that the pretask planning group produced more complex and fluent performance, whereas the online planning group produced more accurate writing performance.Seyyedi et al. (2013) investigating the effects of planning found that planning time resulted in more accurate and fluent language but less accurate production.

**3.2. Studies in Line with Robinson's Cognition Hypothesis**

Robinson and Lim (1993) investigated the effects of increasing task complexity along single vs. dual tasks on learners' oral production. The results of the study revealed that in the dual task, fluency was decreased, while complexity was increased, and accuracy was not affected by cognitive complexity of the task. Decreased fluency results along with increased complexity partially confirmed Robinson's CH model.

Robinson (1995a) probed the effects of [+/-here-and-now]on learners' oral production. The results displayed that the participants of the complex task generated more accuracy and complexity, but less fluency. Iwashita et al., (2001) probed the effects of planning time and [+/-here-and-now] on learners' oral performance under testing conditions. The participants of the [-here-and-now] group produced more accurate language, while complexity and fluency were unaffected. Their findings partially supported Robinson's point of view. Robinson (2001a) investigated the effects of increasing task complexity on learner's oral production. The results of the study revealed increasing task complexity resulted in lower fluency, higher lexical complexity. Wigglesworth (2001) investigated the effects of task familiarity and task structure on learners' production. The results revealed that planned groups outperformed the other groups in all of the measures.

Tavakoli and Skehan (2005) exploring the effects of planning time task structure and proficiency level on learners' performance found that the planning condition generated more fluent, accurate, and complex language. Regarding proficiency level, greater accuracy and complexity were generated.Ishikawa (2007) examining the effects of [+/- here-and-now] on leaners' written performance indicated that in there-and-then condition greater accuracy, structural and lexical complexity were gained, while fluency was increased in here-and-now condition. Rahimpour (2007) explored the effect of [+/-here-and-now] on Iranian students' oral performance. In the complex task of there-and-then, he found that more accuracy, less fluency, and less complexity obtained in learners' performance. Decreased fluency results are in line with Robinson's CH model, however, increased accuracy and decreased complexity supported Skehan' LAC model.Kuiken and Vedder (2007) investigated the effects of (+/-few elements) on L2 written performance of learners at different levels of language proficiency. The results showed that in the complex task fluency was decreased, but accuracy was increased. They claimed that their findings were in line with Robinson's CH model.Shin (2008) investigating the effects of planning [individual vs. collaborative] on writing performance of learners found that in the collaborative planning condition, learners achieved high scores in all of the measures.



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Meradji (2009) examining the effects of [+/- here-and-now] and planning time on the written performance of learners indicated that more accuracy, structural complexity, and fluency were found in the planning group. On the other hand, the [+/- here-and-now] revealed no significant effect on accuracy and complexity. Examining the effects of [+/- here-and-now] and language proficiency on L2 written narrative discourse, Abdollahzadeh andFard-Kashani (2011) found that complexity and accuracy increased in the complex task with high-proficiency learners, though fluency was not affected by task complexity and language proficiency.

As already discussed in the previous sections, Skehan (1998) noted that due to the limited attentional capacity, there will be prioritization in the aspects of performance. Moreover, he claimed that the competition for attention will be mainly between accuracy and complexity. Based on Skehan's remarks only one of the two dimensions of accuracy or complexity will be increased not both of them. From among the studies mentioned earlier in this paper, a good deal of research established that prioritization in accuracy and complexity occurs while individuals are performing tasks.There is no consensus among the researches that which of the two dimensions of accuracy or complexity increases. While some studies reported more complex tasks generated more complex language (Ishikswa, 2007; Robinson, 1995a; Rouhi, 2004; and Yuan & Ellis, 2003), some other studies reported the increase of accuracy in more complex tasks (Ishikswa, 2007; Rahimpour, 2007; Robinson, 1995b; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). On the face of it, what these studies suggest is that as Skehan's LAC model puts it, prioritization in performance dimensions is an unavoidable phenomenon.

With respect to fluency measures, Skehan proposed dual-model processing system in which he mentioned thatregardless of task complexity level, fluency will always increase in tasks. He explains that because of the two points of a) primacy of meaning in tasks and b) exemplar-based nature of fluency, this dimension never decreases. However, Robinson, quite contrary to Skehan, declares that fluency will be reduced in the complex tasks. In this respect the bulk of the research reported that fluency was decreased as a result of complex tasks (Brown et al., 1984; Ellis & Yuan, 2004; Ishikawa, 2007; Gibabert, 2007; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999; Rahimpour, 2002, 2007; Robinson, 1995a; Rouhi, 2004; Rouhi&Marefat, 2006; Skehan& Foster, 1999; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). Taken together, with the results of these studies in mind, it is perhaps fair to say that, to date, Skehan's claims of the dual-model processing system was not confirmed.

## 4. Conclusion

For years, a great deal of research has been conducted to see which of the two controversial models of Skehan's LAC or Robinson's CH was supported. After reviewing of some of the researches in this regard, the present paper concluded that most of the studies were in line with the claims of Skehan's LAC model.

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# BRIDGING THE CAPACITY GAP THROUGH ADVERSITY QUOTIENT (AQ): "THE ELEVATED WISDOM"

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**Abstract**
The world we live today is over flooded by the myraid of information, especially no-good ones namely as the adversities acting upon individuals in such a way that the notion of thinking deems a far-fetched domain to be notied and touched. The reflections and responses of individuals confronting the adversities may differ from negligence to resilience. The descisive factor for the individuals in moving through the dilemma spectrum from negligence to resilience is the notion of thecapacity gap existing in between. Such capacity gap could not only be filled but also be best bridged via implementation of the notion of adversity quotient (aq). The present paper aims at elaborationg on the idea that through the elevated wisdom, it could be possible to bridge the capacity gap btween the accessed capacity and the required one needed to overcome the adversity ahead. The notion of elevated wisdom is much the same in nature to that of scaffolding in education field, either on the part of the senders or the receivers.

**Key words:** adversity quotient, capacity gap, elevated wisdom, resilience

## 1. Introduction

In the 21st century, life has become so complicated, so as the trends of thoughts which have been changed due to flood of technology towards the lifestyle of people. There has always been the notion of adversity prevalent in the life of human beings since Adam and Eve era. What counts here in the 21st century is the smart nature of the phenomenon governing over the lives of amateur and novice fellow dwellers who are experiencing hard times facing these smart devices. The notion of adversity is something never could be dodged, because as Hewitt (2002) put it "without adversity there is no story to tell." That is exactly where Stoltz (2000) proposes the notion of Adversity Quotient and shed light at the crucial role of adversity quotient in dealing with the ups and downs of the 21st century.

To Stoltz (1997), the notion of Adversity Quotient is "an indicator of how one withstands adversity, the ability to overcome it". In this sense, adversity is the mirror point of human resilience, i.e. the science of human resilience is manifested and touched through the notion of Adversity Quotient. There are a plethora of researches on establishing a vivid picture of what resilience is, most of which are giving dimensions to their audience. Among them, there are those



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who believe Adversity is the external factors acting over the individuals, whereas Resilience is the internal factors reacting towards that specific action through the axis of time and place. The main reason is that seeing about the construct of resilience, having a lot in common with that of the adversity, is much like depicting a dynamic phenomenon, something far-fetched and phantom which differs from one individual to another, from one place to another, hence exerting the notion of the time of occurrence.

There are controversial and sometimes challenging justifications for the illumination of the notion of resilience. Once more, it is noteworthy to pinpoint that the nature of resilience is a dynamic construct in nature, and that's why the definitions may sometimes meet contradictions. Scholars such as Reed (2002) believe that resilience is "patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity or risk"(p.75).

Scholars such as Glantz & Johnson (1999); Masten (2001) have done a lot of studies over the pivotal factors that account for individual's successful outcomes. There exist seven common factors prevalent in their works that influence resiliency: Creativity, Humor, Morality, Relationships, Initiative, Insight, and Independence. Such categorization of factors is so broad, whereas scientifically speaking, most scholars and specialists having great command over the construct of resilience have classified two facets of factors in their works as the *risk* factors and *protective* ones. Hence, the advocates of the protective factors are twice as much because scholars such as Knight (2007) believe that protective factors are of great importance and value just because they would support positive progress and achievement. Along the same line, Esquivel et al. (2011) pinpointed the high degree of influence the protective factors have in educational and academic settings, for they can cut down on the students' stress and make them prepared for better lives.

**Significant Others,**

So far, the significance of protective factors is brought to view, but it is worth mentioning that the protective factors are not confined to the ones mentioned above, i.e. some factors may come to existence only when they are touched upon with special weight of importance or notice. We will come to this notion later on in the present paper. Scholars such as Rutter (1987) believed that among the protective factors, those of the social supports especially the external ones are of great importance and influence. Others such as Dawson and Pooley (2013) also believed that perceived social support (social support of family, significant others, and friends) is beneficial for the individuals in empowering them to cope with anxiety and challenge their improvement in academic achievement cases. Among the perceived social support, one can see the presence of the significant others. There may pop up the challenging questions such as how would such significant others influence the individuals performance in such a way that they would outperform their usual selves. What would make those others significant? Or to what extend to be significant? In providing the best answers to these challenging questions, it should be highlighted here that the significant others are those who have certain amount of expectation from the individual, and such expectations would result in providing a room for thinking or performing beyond ones usual self. In a nutshell, others expectations who are significant for the individuals in any case of emotional, social or environmental, would act as the external road mapper who in turn canalizes the cognitive trend of the individual to act beyond its normal capacity in a higher level. There are bunch of examples in medical recovery cases where placeboes are prescribed by a physician and they really work. Just the expectations of the patients that physicians could cure or recover them pave the ground for their rehabilitations. Or in case parents expectations from their child to get good grades at school could be another proper instance here where once the student has got stuck in an arithmetic calculation in a test or facing



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a difficult and far-fetched situation, by just remembering that his/her parents would expect him/her to certain degree of performance, the golden time would be triggered and just like scaffolding cognitively, the student would outperform his/her usual cognitive performance. Such golden time has got certain characteristics, more significant of which is the uniqueness of the occurrence. Or to put it scientifically, the time of occurrence of such golden time is a function of time. Never ever do two identical situations would result in an identical outperformance. It is unique in its time and place. It could never be repeated or simulated in realistic circumstances. Such golden time is second to none, especially when the events are of great importance or unexpected (Weiner, 1992).

**FromAttribution to Contribution**

Anyone involved in the field of Adversity Quotient and is familiar with the construct of resilience, s/he would have touched the fundamental underlying theories which have formed the infrastructure of the Adversity Quotient construct: Learned helplessness, and Attribution theory. Taking the first one for granted, the second theory named as the Attribution theory deemed influential for academic achievement and motivation (Weiner, 1980, 1992). Attribution theory encompasses the modification of behavior in such a way that learners get strongly motivated when witnessing the pleasant outcome of their deeds which would in turn make them able to feel good and about themselves. There may exist discrepancies among individuals as what and how feeling good is defined. Scientifically speaking, such good feeling is the reflection received via others' approvals. In better words, there is an amalgamation of cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory in such a way that the onward self-perception of the individuals/learners, or what Ruan (2014) name it as the Self-Concept, would be influenced highly and decisively, and would in turn mold the future performance and trend of behaviors.

The point to be raised here is that such self-perception or self-concept is initiated and reinforced by others' approval. Once more, others' approval is to be justified in line with scholars' beliefs that states perceived social support is the key in dominating specific trend of cognition and behaviors. According to scholars, perceived social support namely as the social support received from family, significant others, and friends is of great importance and influence in institutionalizing a specific trend of thoughts. In better words, significant others and their expectations would influence one's level of cognition. This is exactly in line with the work of Heider (1958) who studied the interpretations individuals provide for their success and failure. He proposed that the reasons individuals provide are in compliance with others expectations. He believed that some reasons and causes attributions are aimed at the internal expectations, some are attributed to external expectations from significant others. The internal expectations are attributed to their present performance, whereas the external expectations are contributed to future outperformance which is unique in the axis of time and place.

**Resilience and adversity meet at the capacity gap intersection**

The two notions of adversity and resilience are so neatly interwoven to the extent that some scholars believe that they are the two sides of a single coin. But that is not really the case. According to Stoltz (1997), adversity in nature refers to the capacity of the individuals to cope with adversities of any kind, hence the notion of resilience refers to the individuals' capabilities to adapt and get in-tune well in adverse situations. Adversity and resilience are interwoven in a sense, but to be on the right track, adversities are the external circumstances acting upon the individuals, whereas the resilience is the unique internal responses to those external influences. In better words, resilience is beyond the capacity of the individuals to manage the adversities



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when facing them. Resilience is acting as a smart mechanism which reinforces the promotion of success and dwindle the propagation of failure.

As mentioned earlier, Stoltz (1997) defines adversity quotient as the capacity of an individual when facing adversities in life. Stoltz (2000) proposes the Human Capacity Structure Model (Figure below), explaining the pivotal role of the adversity quotient (AQ) in bridging the gap between different capacities when facing adversities:

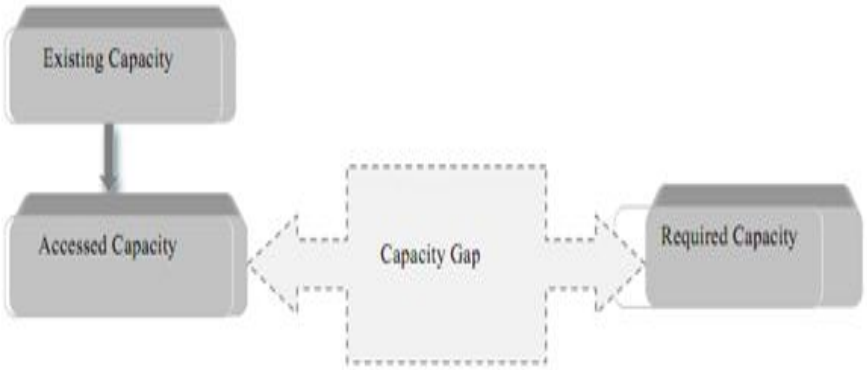


*Figure Human Capacity Structure Model (Stoltz 2000); pg. 21*

Stoltz(2000) believes that the world economy is constantly changing and the adaptation of different capacities is a risky task which is merely possible under the umbrella term of the Human Capacity. The ever-changing world order would exert unrealistic tension over individuals, which in turn would result in many failures or suffrage of hard situations. This happens when there is mismatch among the three capacities provided in his Human Capacity Structure Model. In better words, when the existing capacity (i.e. what capacity the individual possesses at a time) and the accessible capacity (i.e. the capacity which could be accessed on a daily routine basis) are not in congruent with the required capacity (i.e. the demanded capacity needed to perform the present task, especially the unwanted and unexpected one). Then there would happen to emerge the capacity gap. According to Stoltz (2000), the measurement of the capability to fill the gap is through enhancing the adversity quotient.

**Bridging the gap through the elevated wisdom**

In the present paper, the author believes that the capacity gap could in no way be filled, but be bridged. This could be done by enhancing the resilience level of the individuals. Enhancing the resilience level is an umbrella term which encompasses various aspects of adversities as well. Scholars and researchers such as Dweck (2012) believe that responses to adversity are learnable, but not sufficient to bridge the capacity gap. Individuals should be equipped with the power of judgment and prediction skills in order to maneuver in the challenging situations and exceed their natural intellectual abilities. They should move beyond what Bandura (2006 and 2008) put as the efficacy beliefs. What an individual perform is beyond the expectations s/he has from self, just because the outcome of such bridged gap is a cumulative one which in turn would be over and above one's expectation. In doing so, the individuals could utilize the great noticeable element of expectations from self and also from significant others in order to scaffold the existing capacity gap needed to be bridged and create noble and unique capacity by bridging that gap. This could be at first a mimic performance but in the long run it could be internalized and fostered.

**The Elevated Wisdom and its component**



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The proposed term "elevated wisdom" is the state of mind which best suits the capacity gap between the accessed capacity and the required one. The elevated wisdom acts as the floating bridge to be judged and adjusted by the individuals when facing sudden unexpected adversities. It is comprised of two main components namely as the framework and the processed chunks of info. These two components of the elevated wisdom would act and counteract over the adversities in order to come up with a proper solution to get out of the hard situation in an unexpected fashion. This could be possible by the great power of mind in adverse conditions in turning the obstacles into opportunities. The input to such system is clear; hence the output is something over and above the expectations, and that is just because there exists little control over the performance of the individuals in adverse situations.

**Framework**

The framework is the state of mind to process the information popped up in it when facing a sudden unexpected adversity. The framework could be either physical or psychosocial. Let me elaborate on the issue by providing examples. Imagine an individual attending driving course to get ready to apply for his/her driving license. S/he has got the enough information and the skill to drive a car, but it is a guided, realistic, and controlled training setting. As soon as s/he gets behind the wheel and his/her feet touch the pedals in a real setting, something in his/her mind rings a bell and a sense of ownership comes to him/her that just then s/he is the captain of the ship. Such "getting behind the wheel" is an instance of the framework for the elevated wisdom. Another example could be a trainee attempting to learn how to guide an airplane, to get his PPL (Private Pilot License). By the time he is occupying the observer seat in the cockpit, either the real or a simulation one, he would not be able to feel the sense of thinking and deciding like a pilot in risky conditions. As soon as he sit behind the yoke and touch the throttle in a real setting, a sense of control and ownership would sweep over him. Such "sitting behind the yoke and touching the throttle" is another instance of the framework in the elevated wisdom. In better words, the sense of real setting would exert an impression on the individuals that could never ever be repeated. Any form of repetition would be regarded as another new and genuine setting which demands its own framework.

An important notion to be raised here is that, mimicking others' trends of behavior could be regarded as providing frameworks for specific settings, i.e. one great responsibility of the policymakers in societies is to provide icons in societies through the propagation of various culture and behavior. This could be done by producing movies or introducing prominent individuals and authorizes into the target society and in the long run institutionalizing a specific trend of behavior, that for sure such specific trend of behavior is rooted in a specific trend of thought. The individuals witnessing the scene or establishing certain connections to such characters would in turn act in the same way when facing similar situations in real life. The "act in the same way" is exactly the notion of "framework" discussed above. The individuals mimicking in the same way as authorities and icons when facing adverse situations, which in turn would provide the necessary framework appropriate for that situation. For instance, imagine a university student witnessing his loved professor's behavior when facing an adverse situation. The student observes that the professor never jump into hasty conclusions and always ponder over the situation before any action. The student would mimic his professor's deed in adverse situation without having the rationale or the necessary background for that. This is exactly the act of providing the framework, which is an element of the elevated wisdom in order to act higher-orderly in adverse situations.



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**Processed chunks of info**

Once an individual faces an adversity, certain amounts of processed information, from highly-related in form or content to less-related ones are crystallized in his mind. The sources of such processed information are the individuals' schemata, background knowledge, experience, or core competency. Another nickname for the processed chunk of information is the learnt responses to adversities, the rationale for which come from what Dweck (2012) puts that response to adversity is learnable. Such crystallization is a function of the first component of the elevated wisdom namely as the framework. This means that unless the framework is sensed in real authentic and unique condition that the processed chunks of info are triggered. Otherwise this does not work, i.e. fake, realistic, or laboratory conditions do not trigger anything. Let me elaborate on this notion by providing example. Imagine a captain of a ship facing an adversity as the mines from the enemy are floating in the sea and are approaching the ship. The framework is real and in a fraction of a second, all the schemata of the captain is engaged and searched for the processed information resembling any part or portion of such adversity. Suddenly the captain remembers a game he was playing with his son, that there were a basin of water and a plastic ball floating in that. He and his son were both hand-tightened in their backs and the games went on as they should blow on the plastic ball to win. Such chunk of processed info, along with the knowledge that the ship has got flexible air ducts would trigger a remedy on the captain's mind to get out of the adversity. The captain orders to let the air ducts sent to the surface of the sea near the body of the ship and then blow the mines away. It is noteworthy to mention that all chunks of processed information or learnt responses to similar adversities are available in the repertoire of the individuals, but what counts them here to be selected as the elected ones is the weight they gain due to the judgment taking place in the mind of the individual facing the specific adversity, the specific adversity which is unique in time and place and it is individual-specific. That is to say that if an identical twin living together from their early childhood, now facing a specific adversity, their responses to the same adversity would tolerate diversifications.

**Types of the elevated wisdom**

The elevated wisdom could be of two types, as the ***inboard*** and ***outboard***. The inboard elevated wisdom is when the individual holds the belief that s/he is able and must be able to get out of the faced adversity. In better words, a student who attends scholarship program just because his/her parents are poor and cannot afford his/her education expenses, s/he is equipped with the inboard elevated wisdom. Or once an inventor is moving in the dark and experiencing the undiscovered part of the reality, or when an individual is making a wild guess which is the last chance of his life and s/he does make it right, and bunch of other examples are instance of the inboard elevated wisdom.

Meanwhile, the outboard elevated wisdom is when an entity exists outside the will and command-realm of the individual and in turn induces an invisible beacon lights which guide the trend of thoughts of the individual in certain way. In other words, others expectations, or in better words, significant others' expectations would exert the bulky chunks of information which are half full of semi-processed information needed to get out of the risky, unexpected adverse situation. There exists a plethora of examples in this regard. In educational setting, such notion of outboard elevated wisdom is called "scaffolding", where the students are helped implicitly by the instructors to get out of the challenging situations. As another instance, imagine a surgeon who is doing an operation over an organ of a patient who is by chance one of his best relatives or is his mother or father or even his primary school teacher. Suddenly he is caught in bombast when facing a rare sample during the operation. Others' beliefs about the surgeon, or in better



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words, significant others' beliefs about him is the very outboard elevated wisdom which in turn exert special weights to the processed chunks of info stored in the schemata of the surgeon, and in the long run, would affect the quality of the products or manifestations of his mind.

It is worth mentioning here that the source of the elements of the elevated wisdom namely as the framework and the processed chunk of info should not be one, i.e. unilateral. That is to say that in a discourse of action – a discourse resulting in a proceeding action – it would not be important that the sender provides the framework and the receiver provides the processed chunks of info, or vice versa. It is a give-n-take process. It does make sense when there is the amalgamation of these two components ready. For instance, when an instructor is helping the students to apply what they have learned to the problem at hand, s/he is providing the framework for the learners in order for them to manipulate, adjust, tune, and give weight to the chunks of info stored in their minds, so that their minds move logically and get out of the adverse situations, and get the job done. So scaffolding on the part of the teacher is an instance of providing the framework. Even in psychology discipline, establishing rapport and even the inner feeling and desire of the teachers and instructors in order for their students to understand the lessons is of great importance in their academic achievements and progress. Compared to a teacher who is doing his job as the duty put on him, the class whose teacher is establishing rapport with his students and has the inner feelings that he would do his bests so that his students make the most of the lessons taught in class, the second instance will outperform the first one.

**Final Remarks**

In the present paper, the author aimed at shedding lights on the idea that in order to save face in adversities and come up with the proper solution out, the required capacity is to be touched by the elevated wisdom, cause in most cases the individuals got problems in digesting the situation. The pile of processed information stored in mind is triggered and applied just when they gain weights. In confronting the adversities, where time and place are two important issues, when each and every second counts in deciding on the right solution as the required remedy, there is a gap between the accessible capacity and the required one. In this sense, the individuals may feel to quit or surrender, just because they feel they would not be able to overcome the adversity by himself, i.e., the gap in between the accessible capacity and the required one to conquer the adverse situation is so wide that s/he could not overcome it without the help of others. Such capacity gap could be best bridged by applying the adversity quotient through the elevated wisdom. By considering the framework and the processed chunks of info which has gained weights due to the elements hidden in the adverse situation, the ground is paved to come up with the best solution out of the adversities. It is worth mentioning that the outcome of the elevated wisdom to be met by the required capacity is unique in its time and place. And of' course it is individual-specific. What works or makes sense for an individual would not work or make sense for another individual experiencing the same adverse situation. And the last but not least, it should be highlighted here that the level of control over the outcomes of such systems is of its least possible value, i.e. the outcomes of such systems are not predictable and controllable just because the nature of the outcomes are unique, differing from time to time, from one place to another, and from person to person.

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# THE NEXUS BETWEEN REFLECTIVE TEACHING AND TEACHERS' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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**Abstract**
This paper examined the relationship between emotional intelligence (ei) and reflective teaching in a foreign language teaching context, making use of an explanatory mixed-methods research design (emmrd). The participants of this study consisted of 165 female (n = 99) and male (n = 66) English language teachers at private language institutes and high schools of neyshabur, khorasan razavi province located on the northeast of iran. The researcher employed two self-report standardized instruments alongside an interview. Results from correlation and regression analyses revealed there is a slightly positive significant relationship between emotional intelligence and reflective teaching. Further analysis indicates that there are significant relationships between some components of emotional intelligence and reflective teaching. The study concluded with a set of implications and discussions about the undeniable (within the scope of the present study) effect of emotional intelligence on reflective teaching. These final suggestions were made based on a general interpretation of the theoretical and empirical evidence about the variables of this study.

**Keywords:** reflective teaching; emotional intelligence; mixed-methods research design

## 1. Introduction

The relationship between reflective teaching and EI has primarily been overlooked in educational and organizational research. Studies have been carried out about the possible relationship between emotional intelligence and effective teaching but they are inadequate to show the prominent role of emotional intelligence in teaching. The relationship between reflection and emotions is one that is recognized but it is not described (Moon, 1999). Even though, until now, we know of no empirical evidence which show whether having higher levels



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of measured emotional intelligence is related with level of teachers' reflectivity among English language teachers.

Up till now, many scholars believed reflection is rigorously a cognitive process. Emotions are regarded as a part of the reflective process which influence on how one reflects and its ramification (Moon, 1999). Bar-On (2004) hints to a relationship between both constructs. Similarly, Goleman (1995) affirms that experiential learning and habitual self-reflection improve emotional competencies. He maintains that reflective thought affects individual emotional intelligence. But they had not presented empirical evidence for their affirmation (Mitchell-White, 2010).

Learning requires reflection. Reflection influenced by emotion leads to a greater opportunity for expanding one's strength of knowledge and awareness as it goes beyond the cognitive domain. Likewise, reflection and thinking do not happen without emotions (Dewey, 1933, 1944). Dewey indicated that attitudes and feelings are complicatedly connected to reflection and learning and cannot be splited.Therefore, for a perfect depiction of individual learning, scholars should attend to emotions and reflection simultaneously when evaluating the nature of learning and the value eachparadigm brings to the adult learning context (Mitchell-White, 2010). Reflection reinforce the improvement of emotional intelligence and cognitive growth (2010).

Learning cannot take place without engaging the affective realm (Dewey, 1933). An individual's ability to learn go beyond the cognitive level, according to Dewey: "There is no integration of character and mind unless there is fusion of the intellectual and the emotional, of meaning and value, of fact and imaginative running beyond fact into the realm of desired possibilities" (Dewey, 1933, p. 278).

Advocates of the social emotional instruction movement would dispute that training teachers in the concepts of EI, and employing its framework as an application for instruction will influence not only students' emotional growth, relationship skills, and responsible decision making, but also their academic achievement and adult success.

Schools are not just dispensaries of prior knowledge, social emotional scholar would dispute; they also should teach students how to learn, to use skills for problem solving and critical thinking to new setting that will come to light in the course of their work and personal lives. Schools, because of the social nature of their organization, are a natural setting for social instruction (McCuin, 2012).

Regarding to second language learning, 'intelligence in its traditional definition, intelligence may have little to do with one's success as a second language learner: people within a wide range of IQs have proven to be successful in acquiring a second language. But Gardner attaches other important attributes to the notion of intelligence, attributes that could be crucial to second language success' (Brown, 1997, p.109). Finally, the EQ (emotional quotient) make known to public by Goleman may be far more influential than any other element in accounting for second language success both in classrooms and in untutored contexts (p.110). 'Educational institutions have recently been applying Emotional Intelligences' to a variety of school-oriented context' (1997).

Considering the role of emotional intelligence in education, affective factors that relate to learning and especially second language learning such as having high self-esteem, motivation, empathy with others, and being risk taker are sub components of emotional intelligence. Moreover, we



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know having components of emotional intelligence like being creative, responsible and etc. help us to being successful learner. However the role of emotional intelligence is clear in SLA but there is need to do more studies about it.

Emotional intelligence as common currency has become as a major theoretical framework in education, management, and psychological research within the last decade ( Goleman, 1998). IQ was assumed to be genetic. This notion of intelligence was unchallenged as a predictor of school and job success for many years. However, in recent years, there has been a debate concerning whether or not intelligence is fixed at birth (Sternberg, 2011; Lunenburg, 2011).

The multiple intelligences construct, and emotional intelligence especially, have gained an incredible deal of interest currently, specifically regarding leadership capacity. There is some evidence that the characteristics of EI (e.g., self-awareness, self-management, self-motivation, social awareness, and relationship management) may be a better predictor of leadership performance and success than the traditional "intelligence quotient," or IQ. (Lunenburg, 2011).

There is a growing body of studies that prove the ability to work with emotion is integral element of the teachers' ability set. Researches revealed teachers' emotional abilities effect on students' behavior, their engagement, and attachment to school, and their academic performance. Teachers with high scores on emotion regulation skill test (one domain of emotional intelligence) also report less burnout and higher job satisfaction (Corcoran &Tormey, 2013). "Carl Rogers (1902–87) wrote about what would now be called emotional intelligence in teachers, most notably in Freedom to Learn (1983). He said that the teacher who exhibited the personal qualities of genuineness, empathy and acceptance with learners would, by that fact alone; bring about change in their learners" (Mortiboys, 2005).

In spite of the fact that the positive effect of reflection on teachers' knowledge and attitudes has been clarified (e.g. Kabilan 2007), there is only some empirical research evidence about reflective teaching in particular and about teachers in general in mainstream education and in ELT. The role of the teacher has been a principal issue of debate in the field of general education along with language education. Yet a variety of investigations done have confirmed that the quality of teacher functioning was associated to the students' progresses made (Mccuin, 2012). Recently, in ELT and teacher education focus from method shift to post method era. These changes summarize a shift from a positivist-oriented viewpoint to a constructivist-oriented perspective and "a shift from transmission, product-oriented theories to constructivist, and process-oriented theories of learning, teaching, and teacher learning" has been especially considerable (Crandall, 2000, pp. 34-35). The rise of reflective teaching in ELT can be considered as one of the results of the post method debate (see Prabhu, 1990; Kumaravadivelu, 1994; 2001; 2003; 2006).

According to Cunningham (2001) "constructivism views learning as an active process where learners reflect upon their current and past knowledge and experiences to generate new ideas and concepts" (p. 2). Therefore, "a shift to a constructivist perspective of teaching and teacher learning makes teachers a primary source of knowledge about teaching" (Crandall, 2000, p. 35). (As a result of constantly articulated frustration of the restrictions of the concept of method and the transmission paradigm of teacher education, the L2 profession is confront with an imperative need to establish a post method pedagogy) (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 537). "This give rise to demise of method and the appearance of post method era. "A post method teacher education program must take into account the importance of recognizing teachers' voices and visions, the



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imperatives of developing their critical capabilities, and the prudence of achieving both of these through a dialogic construction of meaning" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 552). Seeking to something as an alternative of method, reflective teaching has been regarded as a solution to the challenges teachers deal with in the 'beyond method' period. Despite the fact, that there is different point of view about reflection, 'most teacher educators would argue that reflection is anintegral part in professional development' (Burton, 2009, p. 300; Borg, 2011, p. 220; Jay & Johnson, 2002).

Richards (1998) proposes that "reflection is a key component of teacher development. Recently, the term reflection, the current *grand id'ee* in teacher education and reflective teaching has been become generally accepted and has received significant attention in teacher education and teachers' professional development for teaching pre service teachers to reflect is in many ways teaching them to "think like a teacher" (Griffiths, 2000; Jay & Johnson, Schon, 1983; Schon, 1987). AsTabachnick and Zeichner (2002) put it, "there is not a single teacher educator who would say that he or she is not concerned about preparing teachers who are reflective" (p. 13).

With improvement of theories becomes clear that learning is lifelong process and teacher should pay attention to other factors in this process. Giving more attention to emotional intelligence beside cognitive knowledge can make desirable teachers. "Effective teacher create learning atmosphere which are cognitively and affectively expanding; learning atmosphere which enable the learner to become a more adequate and knowledgeable person.

This finding suggests that teachers really can have a positive and influential effecton both the linguistic and performance and the emotional well-being of the students" (Brown, 2007, p. 155). To partially fill this gap, the present study was conducted to tap into the relationship between emotional intelligence and reflective teaching.

Although Thorndike (1921), Guilford (1956), and later, Gardner's (1983) research into social intelligence hints at the importance of emotions to intellectual functioning, the term EI was not brought into mainstream psychology until the 1990s. Currently, Mayer, Salovey, and colleagues argue that EI incorporates a set of conceptually related psychological processes involving the processing of affective information (Zeidner et al., 2004).

## 2. Methodology

### Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 165 female (N = 99) and male (N = 66) English language teachers at private language institutes and high schools of Neyshabur, Khorasan Razavi province located on the northeast of Iran. Teachers' ages ranged from 21 to 60. They had degrees in TEFL, English literature or linguistics, and their experience in teaching ranged from 1 to 36 years.

### Instrumentation

In this study the hypothesized framework were draw about two variables encompass reflective teaching and emotional intelligence. The researcher employed two self-report standardized instruments to assess the variables. The English Language Teaching Reflection Inventory (ELTRI) developed by Akbari et al. (2010) was used to assess the reflectivity of teachers and Schutte et al.'s Emotional Intelligence Scale (1998) was utilized to measure teachers' level of EI. In view of



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cultural differences and to avoid any misunderstanding regarding the content of the questionnaires, both questionnaires translated in Persian. The both instruments are available on Internet.

**Teacher Reflectivity Questionnaire**

The reflective teacher questionnaire employed in this study was devised by Akbari, Behzadpour and Dadvand. Akbari et al. (2010) developed an instrument called the English Language Teacher Reflective Inventory (ELTRI) based on reflection factors. The questionnaire consists of 29 items self-report inventory. This self-report test comprise of 29 elements on a 5-point Likert format ranging from 1 = never to 5 = always. Respondents applied a 5-point Likert scale, on which "1" presented "never," "2". Presented "Rarely," "3." Presented "Sometimes," "4." "Often, "to" 5." Presented "Always." The robust qualitative and quantitative analyses done on the survey has generated six overarching components of the teacher reflectivity, involving Affective, Cognitive, Metacognitive, Practical, and Critical aspects.

Akbari et al. (2010) describe reflective teaching elements as practical factor that is related to fact of reflection by using different tools like journal writings, talking to colleagues, teaching portfolios, lesson reports, observation. Cognitive factor deals with conscious efforts for professional development such as reading books and journals, action research, attending related conferences and workshops. Knowing about learner's affective and cognitive state is the theme of Learner (affective) component. Meta-cognitive factor is about teachers' awareness of their strength, weaknesses, personality, and teaching profession. Lastly, socio-political aspects of teaching are the theme of critical element (Akbari, et al., 2010).

Modified version of reflective teaching inventory (ELTRI) consists of five factors. As it is shown in Appendix, items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6-measure practical reflectivity of teachers. Items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 test cognitive reflectivity of teachers. Items 13, 14, and 15 measure teachers' affective reflectivity. Items 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22 assess metacognitive factors of teachers' reflectivity. Items 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 refer to critical aspects of the teachers' reflectivity. The questionnaire reports high reliability and validity as an evaluating survey for teacher reflectivity. The reliability of the reflective teaching instrument conducted by Akbari et al. is reported to be .84.

**3.6.1. Schutte et al. Emotional Intelligence Scale**

The Assessing Emotions Scale or the Emotional Intelligence Scale is the Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test, that also called the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, is

based on Salovey and Mayer's (1990) original model of emotional intelligence. Based on this model emotional intelligence comprise of appraisal of emotion in the self and others, expression of emotion, regulation of emotion in the self and others, and employment emotion in solving problems (Schutte et al., 2009 p. 119)..

The Assessing Emotions Scale tries to evaluate characteristic, or trait, emotional intelligence. The Assessing Emotions Scale is a self-report inventory consist of 33-item centering on typical emotional intelligence. Subjects assess themselves on the items employing a five-point likert. The standard time to complete the test is five minutes (Schutte et al., 2009 p. 119).

Items 5, 28 and 33 should computed by reverse coding. To acquire the total score all items should sum up. Higher scores are 165 that showing more characteristic emotional intelligence and lower



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scores are 33 (Schutte et al., 2009). Subjects respond on a 5-point likert types scale, on which a "1" presented "strongly disagree" and a "5" presented "strongly agree," to show to what extent each item defined them. All parts of the framework were demonstrated by multiple choices (Schutte et al. 1998).

The most generally employed subscales emanated from the 33-item Assessing Emotions Scale are those based on factors recognized by Petrides and Furnham (2000), Ciarrochi et al. (2001), and Saklofske et al. (2003). These factor analytic studies proposed a four-factor solution for the 33 items. The four factors recognized by Ciarrochi et al. are perception of emotions, managing emotions in the self, social skills or managing others' emotions, and using emotions. The items consisting the subscales regarding these factors (Ciarrochi et al., 2001) are as follows: Perception of Emotion (items 5, 9, 15, 18, 19, 22, 25, 29, 32, 33), Managing Own Emotions (items 2, 3, 10, 12, 14, 21, 23, 28, 31), Managing Others' Emotions (items 1, 4, 11, 13, 16, 24, 26, 30), and Utilization of Emotion (items 6, 7, 8, 17, 20, 27). All 33 items are subsuming in one of these four subscales (Schutte et al., 2009 p. 119).

**Procedure**

The aim of current study is to explore the possible relationship between reflective teaching and emotional intelligence. The strategy for this study was purposive sampling. A sample size of 165 participants was collected within ten months. Participation was voluntary. For purposes of this study, I used two instruments to determine a level of emotional intelligence and reflectivity of English teachers. English language teaching reflection inventory (Akbari et. al, 2010) and Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale (1998). The emotional intelligence was independent variable and reflective teaching dependent variable. As a first step, the researcher collected the questionnaires by self from institutions and schools and then calculated the scores. Sheets from participants who were not completed the questionnaires completely or not specify their gender did not involve in the study. The participant responses for the emotional intelligence and reflective teaching questionnaires were sorted by unique identification code. This procedure resumed until the sufficient number of sheets were gathered.

**Data collection**

The EQ and reflective teaching test administered to the teachers to acquire their level of emotional intelligence to know their EI level and their reflectivity to assess their degree of reflectivity in teaching and contrast different components of EI and reflective teaching variables. Tests question because of cultural differences and to avoid any misunderstanding based on the content of the questionnaire was translated in Persian. The questionnaires according to their guidelines was used and computed. The questionnaires completed by participants in any order. Participant involved in the study by fulfilling the questionnaires thoroughly.

Each questionnaire was administered to the teacher in person by one of the researchers or through the supervisor of the institutes or manager of high school. The explanations provided to the supervisors and teachers were general and based on the instructions of each questionnaire. Whereas participant was more interested in the whole research process, more details of the study were provided to them. It should be mentioned that in spite of tendency on the part of the teachers and the supervisors of the institutes, number of teachers disinclined to answer the questionnaires. Number of teachers either unanswered the questionnaires totally or left the sheet totally blank. After the data coded by unique identifier, the scores were interred to an excel file. Then, the obtained data from the emotional intelligence and reflective teaching instrument were



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transferred into PASW Statistic Grade Pack 18.0 for Windows (a Statistical Package of Social Sciences product) for analysis and hypothesis testing. The whole process to complete the test is no more than 20 minutes. Number of teachers who are contacted refused to complete the survey. Data collection gets time near 10 months. Descriptive statistics and cronbach's alpha of measurements were calculated. Researcher analyzed the obtained score to evaluate the sum, mean, standard deviation, variance and internal consistency of scores.

Descriptive and inferential statistics of the data were calculated by PASW® Statistics Grad Pack 18.0 for Windows (a Statistical Package of Social Sciences product). The scores of two questionnaires was moved from an Excel spreadsheet into statistical program and computed to examine the possible relationships between emotional intelligence and reflective teaching statistical description, Pearson product-moment Correlation, linear regression and t test was run.

The Cronbach's alpha of translated version (from English to Persian) of the emotional intelligence questionnaire was found to be .844 and Cronbach's alpha of the reflective teaching questionnaire was found to be .892. The reliability index (Cronbach alpha) of construct of emotional intelligence is: perception of emotions=.73, managing own emotions=.53, managing others emotions=.625, utilizing emotions=.636. The reliability index (cronbach's alpha) of components of reflective teaching is as follow: practical reflectivity=.748, cognitive reflectivity=.764, affective reflectivity=.764, affective reflectivity=.643, metacognitive reflectivity=.803, critical reflectivity=.836.

The average and standard deviation of emotional intelligence is respectively 130.64 and 11.42) and the average and standard deviation of reflective teaching is respectively 93.98 and 15.66). The average and standard deviation of variables construct is as follow, allowing for comparison between scales with differing numbers of items: Perception of Emotion (M=38.27, SD=4.95), Managing Own Emotions (M=35.89, SD=3.84), Managing Others' Emotions (M=32.20, SD=3.61), and Utilization of Emotion (M=24.25, SD=2.96); and for reflective teaching variable: practical reflectivity (M=17.15, SD=4.17), cognitive reflectivity (M=27.39, SD=4.53), affective reflectivity (M=10.19, SD=2.59), metacognitive reflectivity (M=27.39, SD=6.09), and critical reflectivity (M=2082, SD=6.08). Table 3 below shows the descriptive statistics and reliability indexes of each of the questionnaires used in this study.

**Data analysis**

This study examined the correlation coefficients between the independent variables, emotional intelligence, and the dependent variable, teacher's reflective teaching.

To answer the research questions, primarily, I analyzed the population characteristics to ensure the external validity of the findings. Then, I analyzed reliability of the questionnaires to prove measurement validity.

Distribution of each variable response was analyzed to obtain the means, variance, and standard deviations and to determinate the validity of surveys. Spss 18 was used for analysis of data. Because the data collected from devices was in an Excel spreadsheet format, the obtained score moved easily into this statistical program improving the ability to evaluate all statistical inferences, successfully. Multiple regression analysis was used as the principal statistical procedure on the collected data intends to investigate the hypotheses proposed in this study to examine the existence relationship between components of reflective teaching (dependent variable) and emotional intelligence (independent variable).



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Follow-up analyses of the findings (results) were conducted to obtain correlation of any two subscales of variables. Likewise, t test was applied to answer the third and fourth research question to find out if there is different between female and male regarding their emotional intelligence and reflectivity in teaching. Regression analysis was administered to examine the null hypothesis. Findings did not prove the null hypothesis. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. However, result didn't demonstrate the expected values but it shows the significant relationship between variables and some of their components.

**3. Results and Discussion**

As stated earlier, the present study aimed to investigate the relationship among the variables emotional intelligence and reflective teaching.

To investigate the research hypotheses of the study, a simple and multiple regression analysis and t test analysis was run which provides the following results:

To answer the first research question linear regression analysis applied. As the results of the Multiple Regression Analysis (R=127) indicate, emotional intelligence can predict teacher reflectivity but it's not high level of prediction.The independent variable, emotional intelligence significantly predicted dependent variable, emotional intelligence, F (1, 164) = 4.984, p< .05, variables significantly contributing to the prediction. The beta weights, presented in Table, suggest that emotional intelligence contribute most to predicting reflective teaching.

The standardized beta coefficient (B=.172, t=4.550, p= <0.05) which reveals that this model was significant. This table also checks for multicollinearity in our multiple linear regression models.

Although, this study outcome did not show strong relationships between total emotional intelligence and reflective teaching, however, some component of emotional intelligence showed significant association with all the components and total of reflective teaching.

Table 1

*Model summaries of Regression Analysis for EQ and RF*

| Variables | $R^2$ | Model | B | SE | *P* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EQ | .091 | (Constant) | 54.172 | 13.837 | 000 |
| | | PE | -.559 | .282 | .049 |
| | | Others | .315 | .394 | .425 |
| | | Own | .885 | .370 | .018 |
| | | UE | .796 | .440 | .072 |
| RF | .223 | (Constant) | 107.204 | 5.257 | 000 |
| | | Cognitive | -.378 | .231 | .104 |
| | | Metacognitive | 1.395 | .211 | 000 |



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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Affective | -.187 | .385 | .627 |
| Critical | -.098 | .150 | .512 |
| Practical | -.225 | .245 | .359 |

*Note*. EQ = Emotional Intelligence; RF = Reflective Teaching; PE = Perception of Emotions; others = Managing others Emotions; own = Managing own Emotions; U = Utilizations of Emotions

Results from correlation and regression analyses revealed there is a slightly positive significant relationship between emotional intelligence and reflective teaching. Further analysis indicates that there are significant relationships between some components of emotional intelligence and reflective teaching. T-test analysis showed there is no significant difference between female and male based on their degree of emotional intelligence and their reflectivity.

To answer the second research question multiple regression analysis was run between emotional intelligence and components of reflective teaching. The multiple correlation coefficients reported to be. 472. Result of multiple regression analysis (R=.472) indicate, components of reflective teaching can significantly predict emotional intelligence. The adjusted R squared value was .223. This indicates that the model explained 22% of the variance of reflective teaching.

The model of reflective teaching components significantly predicts emotional intelligence. The prediction model was statistically significant, F (5, 159) = 9.120, p < .001, and accounted for approximately 19% of the variance can predicted from emotional intelligence (R2 = .223, Adjusted R2 = .198).

Inspection of the structure coefficients suggests that, with the possible exception of metacognitive (beta = .553), which strongly predict the dependent variable; the other predictors were not strong indicators of the dependent variable described by the model.

Moreover, multiple regression analysis was run between reflective teaching and components of emotional intelligence. Result of multiple regression analysis (R=.302) indicate, emotional intelligence components can significantly predict teacher's reflectivity. The adjusted R squared value was .091. This indicates that the model explained 09% of the variance in reflective teaching.

As it can be observed from the analysis of the Multiple Regression Analysis for the constituents (R =302), perception of emotion (b=-.177, p<0.05) and (b=.217, p<0.05) the constituents of emotional intelligence show an acceptable predicting power for reflective teaching.

Multiple regression was conducted to determine the best linear combination emotional intelligence components score, for predicting reflective teaching. Here, F (4,160) = 4.002, p<.05 which is less than 0.05 and indicates that, overall, the regression model statistically significantly predicts the outcome variable. (i, e., it is a good fit for the data). The combination of variables significantly predicted reflective teaching.

The adjusted $R^2$ is. 068 with the $R^2$= .091 that means that the linear regression explains 91% of the variance in data. The $R^2$ value indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable, reflective teaching can explain by the independent variables, emotional intelligence components. In this case, 091% of dependent variable can explains by independent variables, reflective teaching. The adjusted R squared indicates how much of variance in the dependent



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variable, reflective teaching can be explained by the independent variable, emotional intelligence components.

Beta expresses the relative importance of each independent variable in standardized terms. Result shows that only perception of emotions (beta = -.177) and managing own emotions (beta = .217) are significant predictors, moreover result showed that managing own emotions has a higher impact than other variables.

To answer the third and fourth research question whether teachers' emotional intelligence and reflective teaching differ among males and females participants, t-tests were run. As table displays gender did not plays significant role between participants of this study. Because, the sig (2 tailed) value is below .1 the coefficient is significant at 90% confidence. The mean difference of EQ between female and male (3. 31818) implies that we can say, with 95% of confidence, that the mean EQ for females is 3.31818 higher than that for males.

To answer the forth research question of this study, which stated, "is there any significant difference between teachers' reflective teaching with respect to their gender, t test were run. Result shows there is no significant difference among English teachers regarding their gender. Because the sig (2 tailed) value is not below .05 the coefficient is not significant. The mean difference of 07071 implies that we can say, that there is significant difference among teachers' reflectivity. It indicates that mean for female just .07071 higher male.

**Follow-up Analysis**

Therefore, subscale scores were calculated for each of the subscale of emotional intelligence and reflective teaching. After computing the subscale scores, six subscales of emotional intelligence and reflective teaching showed high significant correlation with each other.

Table 2 contains the correlational relationships of subsets of variables. Correlation in both subscales of variables is relatively moderate. The results indicate that relationship exist between the some components of RF and EQ.

Table 2

*Correlation of EI and RF construct*

| Measure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. EQ | _ | .172* | .801** | .752** | .764** | .615** | .011 | .422** | .085 | .069 | .024 |
| 2. RF | _ | _ | -.004 | .139 | .229** | .202** | .732** | .729** | .688** | .727** | .717** |
| 3. PE | _ | _ | _ | .461** | .434** | .297** | -.070 | .239** | -.091 | -.020 | -.116 |
| 4. Others | _ | _ | _ | _ | .458** | .325** | -.010 | .315** | .107 | .096 | -.014 |
| 5. Own | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | .371** | .063 | .431** | .160* | .067 | .131 |
| 6. UE | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | .083 | .284** | .144 | .098 | .132 |
| 7. Cognitive | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | .421** | .389** | .322** | .544** |



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| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. MC | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | .440** | .375** | .395** |
| 9. Affective | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | .413** | .478** |
| 10. Critical | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | .275** |
| 11. Practical | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ | _ |

*Note*: EQ = Emotional Intelligence and RF = Reflective Teaching; PE = Perception of Emotions; others =

Managing others Emotions; own = Managing own Emotions; U = Utilizations of Emotions

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

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

**Overview**

The serious problem teachers' deal is to develop efficient instruction condition to grow learners who are ready to cope with real life challenges. Knowing the cognitive and affective effect of learning to make condition for efficient instruction of any individual is critical (Dewey, 1938). Teachers should show their expertise and knowledge to provide instant and substantial role in promotion of educational system. Having knowledge about the predict value of reflective thinking and emotional intelligence on performance, faculty can embody strategies to develop more operative organizational learning programs (Cherniss, 2001; Mitchell-White, 2010).

Involving lessons about using emotional intelligence in syllabus of pre service teachers will help them to improve their performance. Reflective thinking (that reflective teaching is sub issue of it) and emotional intelligence theoretical foundations propose a direct relationship between the cognitive and affective domains of learning (Mitchell-White, 2010; Bar-On, 2000; Salovey& Mayer, 1990).

Instructor should look perfect and skillful in EI and employ it in their personal life before they question or expected to model it in the classroom. According Kaufhold (2005), Justice & Espinoza (2007), and Palomera, et to.al. (2008), EI training must be a mandatory section of teacher training programs (McCuin, 2012).

The fundamental purpose of this study was to find answer to this question: If there is any relationship between reflective teaching and emotional intelligence? Result of regression analysis (R=172, p=.027) affirmed there is slightly significant relationship between emotional intelligence and reflective teaching.

Further analysis indicated the existence of significant relationship between some subcomponents of emotional intelligence and reflective teaching. These results indicate a relationship between teachers' level of emotional intelligence and their reflectivity. The result of correlation was expected to be higher.

This study result is somewhat at odds with the theoretical deliberations about the variables literature and demonstrates a discrepancy between theory and practice.



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I think this result back to this reason that self-report questionnaire just show the level of emotional intelligence competence and according to Goleman there is different between emotional intelligence competence and performance. According to Goleman model (1998) which views this construct as a wide array of competencies and skills that drive managerial performance, measured by multi-rater assessment (Boyatzis et al., 2001); If someone have high emotional intelligence score it's a start of life long effort to show it in performance.

As Bar-On (2004) mentioned he propose ESI model to the potential for performance (original emphasis), not to performance itself. Emotional competence is "a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work" (Goleman, 1998).

Consider the IQ inference that a student can have excellent spatial abilities but never learn geometry. It can be happen in EI a person can be highly empathic but can't handling customers good because EI ability is necessary but it's not enough to manifest competence in any one of the four EI domains. In addition, it can happen in teaching and particularly in teaching English. These skills should be learned and sequently employ in real context. Level of emotional intelligence shows the potential ability of individual but emotional competence shows capability of individual. By learning and mastering the practical skills that underlie the four EI domains, and translating it into life, can show person's capabilities (Goleman, 2001).

Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) distinguishes the feelings that might facilitate or meddle with the successful performance of various cognitive and behavioral tasks (Facilitation).

Moreover, it can be because teachers that involved in this study didn't have enough information about both of variables. The notion emotional intelligence was unknown concepts for most of them. In addition, they didn't have any information about reflective teaching. Therefore, they did not know how they could apply it in their classes.

Accordingly, as I see the participants didn't show high emotional intelligence performance in their teaching. I see it does can be the main cause of this result. In addition, participants did not show high reflectivity in their teaching. Some of them that had information about emotional intelligence and reflective teaching mentioned it is back to their constraint but I think there is no good motivation for teachers to enhance their information that is one items of reflective teaching. Many of the teachers believed we could engage students without necessarily having a good relationship with them. They do not try to create good relation with their students. Some of them try to develop good relation but fail. That is because of lack of information. They do not try to assess update articles and don't read the new books. They just strike on schoolbooks. In addition, there is in-service classes to improve teachers' performance but this classes conduct by teachers themselves. Therefore, it is not add something to them. I think another reason is that they do not have enough information about applying emotional intelligence and reflective teaching. I think should apply rules to teach courses in universities that teachers need it in real environment.

There is number of reasons that draw to these low correlations have been described in the previous paragraph. In addition to reasons that noted, this result can be back to participants neglect in answering the questions. The participants not paying enough attention to what they are doing, so make mistakes in filling questionnaires. It can be one of main cause of this result because they were reluctant to fill the questionnaires. Beside the reasons that pointed, another cause for this result can be the participant tendency to show the certain character for them or choose a perfect answer.



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**Implications for Social Change**

Schools are substantial organization established to improve the potential capability of society and efflorescence of genius.

The major function of schools is to grow educate and responsible people. Social change cannot happen if any individual reflect on him/her performance. This change to better life should start from schools. The schools mission is to create effective training to learners who are ready to have instantaneous valuable role in their society, become effective member of society, and be able to meet their responsibility challenges in life. This study measured emotional intelligence and reflectivity of teachers that accurately evaluates the features of teachers that exactly concern performance of teachers. Prominently, this study recognized insufficient knowledge of teachers and incorrect way of evaluate their performance can have a perpetual effect on teachers performance and their learners. If teachers' performance is not evaluated appropriately, it can have a prominent effect on learners particularly and on society in general.

Teachers' performance can better evaluate by devise methods that assess their awareness and their capacity in acquiring adequate degree of performance in different aspects of their teaching for fulfilling outcome expectation.

Schools should constantly attempt to find ways to update the instructional context and educational activities to certify the future of a society. For improvement the educational training, instructor must know more about learning process then change their behaviors to effectively perform in real situation. Such studies are necessary to reach this goal.

Emotional intelligence is not fixed, freeze concept but it can be improved (Boyatzis, 2000). This fact proposes some suggestion for policy makers, parents, language teachers, and materials developers. AsBar-On (2007) mentioned: it is necessary to design training programs based on the theoretical investigation and empirical experience to enhance and modify intelligent manner of learners, emotionally and socially. He emphasized on involving emotional intelligence in instructional system for reach a more efficient, creative, and humane society (Bar-On, 2007). I think there is urgent need for both parents and teachers and especially English language teachers to know more about emotional intelligence value. Teachers should speak about emotions with children, have a good behavior with them, give children promoting scaffolding, and promote them learn more skills in this respect (Saarni, 2007).

Implication of this research does not pertain to the teachers of second language learning but are regarded to education, in general.

**Recommendations for Action and Further Study**

Efficient instruction promote transmit of learning and application to job performance. The procedure of educational performance assessment should sufficiently measure skills performance to identify if skill levels are designed for correct application (Mitchell-White, 2010). The teacher's performance evaluation needs a revolution. Different aspects of instruction process that influence the teachers' performance should take into account. Therefore, in evaluation system of teachers should concentrate on subjects that mirror actual performance of teachers. In addition, university courses should be reconsidered to subjects that are more practical. Practical courses continuously extent teachers' performance. Therefore, consideration should be given to increase teachers-learners performance.



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Further consideration should be taking into account to determine if the protocols differ from those used in schools. The results of the additional analyses can be useful for future studies examining the trends in the relationships between emotional intelligence and reflective teaching.

**4. Conclusion**

The magnitude of emotional intelligence and reflection on teachers and learners performance cannot be overlooked. The primary duty of educational system is providing generative and resourceful member for society. Efficient person that make better future for themselves and their world. This study examined the assumption that if there is possible relationship between emotional intelligence and reflective teaching. Result showed there is slightly relationship between emotional intelligence and reflective teaching. Notwithstanding that outcome of this study showed negative relationship between some components of variables, some components showed positive significant.

Moreover, findings of current study determined that women and men have their own strengths and weaknesses in total and several aspects of emotional intelligence and reflective teaching. Based on the results of this study, we can suggest that EQ level of female are greater than male but t test analysis indicates that the difference is not significant.

There is need for conducting further research to scrutinize the relationship of these constructs to the teaching and learning process. The challenge is not only teachers level of emotional intelligence and reflective teaching but successfully involving in teaching-learning situations, and prominently, employing their new knowledge and skills operatively meet the challenge of real world.

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# THE IMPACT OF LOGICAL INTELLIGENCE ON IRANIAN ADVANCED EFL LEARNERS' PARAGRAPH WRITING ABILITY ACROSS GENDER

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**Abstract**

The present study sought to investigate the possible link between iranian efl learners' paragraph writing ability and their logical intelligence.to do this, the oxford placement test (opt) was employed and 40 advanced learners were selected (20 males and 20 females). The multiple intelligence developmental assessment scales (Midas) (shearer, 1994), was used as another material in this study. Then participants were given a topic and were asked to write a paragraph of at least 150 words.based on independent samples t-test analysis the results of the study indicated that there was a statistically significant and positive link between male participants' performance on paragraph writing task and their logical intelligence. Although the current study failed to stablish a link between female learners' paragraph writing ability and their logical intelligence, it is recommended that English teachers consider the role of l1 and provide more effective activities in line with individual differences in the class.

**Key words:** multiple intelligence, logical intelligence, paragraph writing, efl learner

## 1. Introduction

Every society recognizes that people are different. In education, this thought is taken one step further to acknowledge that everyone learns differently. This fact becomes important both inside and outside the classroom because recognizing that students learn differently and modifying curriculum and instruction to better enhance learning opportunities will inevitably assist in

students' success (Naseri and Nejad Ansari, 2013). Before the 1970's and 1980's researchers did not actively investigate how people, more specifically students, learn. In1983, Howard Gardner developed a model of teaching that revolves around the differing potential each student has instilled inside of them, called Multiple Intelligences Theory (MIT). His theory classifies human intellectual competencies in an extraordinarily new way, with more specific criteria than the traditional choice between "verbal" or "mathematical" (Hyun, 2000). It appeals to many different kinds of minds, and involves the idea of intelligence rather than aptitude or ability. MI theory encourages educators to ask not how smart a child is, but rather in what ways are they smart (Rettig, 2005).

Despite the fact that all four language capabilities are significant in learning development, writing performance is the single ability that has the chance for being measured systematically. Furthermore, writing performance is an ability which is observable and its information is usually simply collectable. Moreover, writing performance is a talent which students have better control on it and also they have the chance of monitoring themselves and retaining their knowledge during their performance (Krashen, 1981).

Considering writing as a mix of some distinct human capacities, Gardner suggests some valuable descriptions of what some of those may be. It is obvious that we cannot guarantee a good writing by increasing the amount of anything as well as the number of "intelligences". According to Grow (1990), linguistic, the logical-mathematical, and the two personal intelligences, are four of Gardner's intelligences that are clearly related to writing. Also in their research, Ahmadian and Hosseini (2012) emphasized that linguistic and interpersonal intelligences positively correlate with writing ability. Therefore by proving multiple intelligences' positive link with students' writing skill, there can be a new tendency in language teaching, especially teaching writing in order to develop students' writing skill by paying attention to students' differences. (Sajjadi Rad, Khojaste and Kafipour, 2014).

## 2. Review of the Related Literature

### 2.1 Multiple Intelligence and L2 learning

Increasing popularity of English as an international language calls for innovative approaches in English language teaching classroom. It is no longer appropriate to teach all students with a cookie-cutter formula. Diversity of learners and their unique needs call for implementation of MIT to the language classroom (Dastgoshadeh&Jalilzadeh, 2011).

According to Maftoon and NajafiSarem (2012) quoted from Ellis (1985) second language (L2) learners are different. They learn with different speed and different results. There are many explanations for that issue. The general factors that influence second language learning are: age, aptitude and intelligence, cognitive style, attitudes, motivation and personality. In recent years, there has been a substantial amount of interest in individual differences among foreign language learners. Although there are many ways in which learners can vary, intelligence is often thought to be one of the most significant predictors of language learning success.

Gardner's (1983, 1999) broad model/theory of intelligence, labeled as Multiple Intelligence(s) (MI), views intelligence as a combination of different components. In this view, intelligence is "the ability to solve problems, or to create products, that are valued within one or more cultural settings" (Gardner, 2011). As Armstrong (2009, p.120) contends, the application of MI can be



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influential since it can "affect students' behavior in the classroom simply by creating an environment where individual needs are recognized and attended to throughout the school day."

2.2. Logical intelligence

Looking at the history of learning, especially language learning, everyone acknowledges that learners are different in second language learning. To account for this difference, many philosophers were traditionally replete with the idea that since individuals are different in their cognition ability, they vary in how successful they are in learning. In other words, they assumed that those who are high at linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities can reliably better go through the process of learning (Mayer, Robert and Barsade, 2008). According to Gradner (1983) The logical-mathematical intelligence seems particularly involved in problem-solving and in grasping, drawing out, and showing the implications of an event.

It's claimed that logical/mathematical intelligence is the true manifestation of the Multiple Intelligences theory. In other word, MI theory is represented mostly through the logical/mathematical intelligence (Veemana and Spaansa, 2005).

Gardner(1993) described logical/mathematical intelligence as the ability to study problems, to carry out mathematical operations logically and analytically, and to conduct scientific investigations. Gardner identified mathematicians, logicians, and scientists as persons who would possess high levels of this hypothesized intelligence. The kinds of processes used in the service of logical-mathematicalintelligenceincludecategorization, classification, inference,generalization, calculation, and hypothesis testing. People who prefer to use their logical-mathematical intelligence usually do well on standardized comprehension/written language tests. They like to solve abstract problems and often do so by trial and error.

2.3. Paragraph Writing and Logical Intelligence

Writing is one of the most challenging skills for L2 learners to master and the important roles that one can play begin to evolve when we look at how the brain sets out to experience the nature of writing (Qualter, Gardner, Pope, Hutchinson, &Whiteley, 2012).Writing as a productive skill is more complicated than it seems at first and often seems to be the hardest of the skills, since it involves not just a graphic representation of speech, but the development and presentation of thoughts in a structured way (Gabrielatos, 2002). The ideas in the paragraph must be presented in logical order by using transition words or connecting words which indicate the relationship between the ideas. That's what many teachers find difficult to teach and, as a result of this, many learners do not enjoy.

As Kern (2000) points out, "writing is no longer seen simply as a way of recording thoughts, feelings, and ideas, but also as a key means of generating and exploring new thoughts and ideas." So writing is viewed as a complex, recursive and creative process which is essentially learned, not taught. As a result of such a view, learners are taught to become active writers, that is to say, to generate thoughts or ideas and move actively and dynamically throughout their composing processes, that is, from the generation of ideas through to the editing of the final text. Hence, the main role of the teacher, is first to foster learners' creativity, and then to guide them in the process of drafting, revising and editing their important problems. These are writing activities Gardner might categorize as logical-mathematical operations.

Logical-mathematical Precision in language is different from the precision of thought demanded by the logical-mathematical intelligence, but the two support one another. Mathematicians,



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Gardner points out, must not only be able to reason precisely, they must also be able to write down their proofs with precision. The idea of the logical-mathematical intelligence directs one's attention to the precision of language and precision of thought in a piece of writing, whether the sustained structure of a long work, the organization of paragraphs, sentences, or transitions (Grow, 1990).

The most successful application of the logical-mathematical intelligence, Gardner suggests, is scientific method, "the practice of making careful measurements, devising statements about the way in which the universe works, and then subjecting these statements to systematic confirmation" .These three steps offer an interesting perspective on the stages in certain kinds of writing. You "make careful measurements" by collecting information. You "devise statements" about how these facts go together in a thesis, outline, or method of approach. You "confirm your hypothesis" through additional research and revision, and through writing the results in a convincing way. If you can't "confirm your hypothesis," you shift to a different approach (Jordan, 2007). Lev Vygotsky in his "Thought and Language" points out that writing and thinking are interwoven. Writing is a complex process that allows writers to explore thoughts and ideas, and make them visible and concrete (Saeidi and karvandi, 2014).

3. Methods of research

3.1. Participants

The population of this study consisted of 80 male and female nonnative speakers of English with the same Persian L1 background.The data for this study were collected from students who studied English at the advanced level in Shokouh institute of Astara. To make sure that the subjects were similar in terms of their language proficiency an Oxford Placement Test was conducted and 20 male and 20 female learners were selected as sample groups.

3.2. Materials

The instrument employed for data collection purposes of the study includedan Oxford Placement Test (OPT) which is a standard test that provides teachers with a reliable and efficient means of placing students at the start of a course. The OPT test were administered to 80 EFL learners to put participants into homogeneous groups at advanced level. Then, 20 male and 20 female subjects whose scores were one standard deviation above the mean were chosen.

In order to measure students' logical intelligence the Persian version of MIDAS (multiple intelligences development assessment scales) was utilized. This instrument consists of 119 Likert-type questions (from a to f). The Persian version of MIDAS was obtained from its designer's representative in Iran. It consists of eight scales, i.e., Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Kinesthetic, Linguistic, Logical-Mathamatical, Musical, Naturalist and Spatial, and contains 119 questions to which six alternatives are offered. For practical purposes, only the Logical Mathematical Scale (LMS) of the Persian MIDAS was used in the present study. The LMS comprises 17 questions. The test takers were required to read a question such as "Are you good at multiplying three digit numbers in your head?" and then choose one of the six alternatives, No, Fairly good, Good, Very good, Excellent, and I don't know.

Then all the participants were asked to write a paragraph of at least 150 words about the given topic within 20 minutes at one sitting and under the same test conditions. The topic was chosen from a book called ''Paragraph Development" edited Arnaudet& Barrett (1990). Learners were allowed to use dictionaries and were given paper for note taking. In the present study, the



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assessment was based on Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Harfield, &Hughey's (1981) criteria. The guidelines provided by Jacobs et al. (1981) contains five criteria: Content has the highest score (30), and the lowest score goes with mechanics (5), organization and vocabulary have the same score (20), and language use (25), which totally make 100. At the end The result were analyzed through using Independent Samples T_Test (or independent t-test, for short, which compares the means between two unrelated groups on the same continuous, dependent variable) in both groups to determine if logical intelligence has any impact on learners' paragraph writing ability or not.

3.3. Procedure

The procedure applied in this study was, firstly, the selection of participants from advanced EFL learners of Shokouh institute of Astara. To this end, a group of 80 students including males and females were selected. The Oxford Placement Test was employed to homogenize learners regarding their proficiency in English. Having administered a standard OPT test, the researcher reduced the participants to 40 (20 males and 20 females) out of 80. Accordingly, participants whose scores fell one Standard Deviation above the mean were selected as a more homogeneous group.

Then the MIDAS questionnaire was administered. The test contained likert-type questions and the subjects were assumed to choose the best answer based on their desire and interest. The questions were all related to problem-solving activities that measure the subjects' logics, planning, and mathematical ability and answer sheets were entered into SPSS for scoring. The participants' scores on MI were obtained in the form of numeric values ranging from 0 to 100 (as defined by Dr. Shearer himself).

The subjects in both male and female group were assigned to write a paragraph of at least 150 words in 20 minutes about the given topic. Two raters read each composition independently, then for the ease of assessing and following the same scale of scoring, they followed the same proposed index. This index was Jacobs et al.'s (1981) scoring profile.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis for the male participants

| | Logical Intelligence | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Writing | High Logical Intelligence | 17 | 91.7647 | 9.75019 | 2.36477 |
| | Low Logical Intelligence | 3 | 78.3333 | 7.63763 | 4.40959 |



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The above table describes the male participants' writing scores regarding their logical intelligence. As the table shows, out of 20 male participants 17 participants were classified as high logical intelligence and 3 of them were classified as low. The mean writing scores of the male sample who were categorized as high logical intelligent, equaled 91.07647. On the other hand, the low logical intelligent learners in the male group had a mean score of 78.3333 which is considerably lower than that of the first group.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis for the female participants

| | Logical Intelligence | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Writing | High Logical Intelligence | 12 | 74.3333 | 8.70040 | 2.51159 |
| | Low Logical Intelligence | 8 | 69.6250 | 9.27266 | 3.27838 |

The above table shows the same information in terms of logical intelligence degree and the learners' performance on the writing test for female participants. As it is seen, 12 female learners were classified as high logical intelligent learners while 8 of them were considered as low logical intelligent learners according to the findings from the questionnaire. The mean scores of paragraph writing ability among the high group members equaled 74.3333 while the mean score of the writing ability for the low group equaled 69.6250. This could mean that the high logical intelligent females scored relatively higher than then low logical intelligent group.

In order to analyze the data inferentially to compare the result of the questionnaire with the male and female participants' performance on the writing ability, two t-tests were run to find out how the logical intelligence affected this skill. Since the descriptive statistics dose not investigate the categories under question profoundly, the inferential data analysis was run. The following tables depict the analysis findings:

Table 3. Independent sample T-test for the male participants intelligence and writing ability

| Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | t-test for Equality of Means |
|---|---|



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| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | |
| | | F | Sig | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper | |
| Writing | Equal variances assumed | 0.494 | 0.491 | 2.249 | 18 | 0.037 | 13.43137 | 5.97330 | 0.88194 | 25.98081 | |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | 2.684 | 3.282 | 0.068 | 13.43137 | 5.00366 | -1.74606 | 28.60880 | |

As the table shows, to investigate the performance of the male group of students in their writing test an independent sample t-test was run. The Levene's test assumes the equality of the variances. This is a test that determines if the two variables have about the same or different amounts of variability between scores. Accordingly, the significance level came to .491 which confirms the equality of the variances. The mean difference equaled 13.43137 which is relatively a large difference. The t-test section of the table shows that the significance level equaled.037. This meansthat there is a statistically significant relation between your two conditions. This rejects the assumption of effect of logical intelligence having no effect on group's writing performance on the test. That is to say the logical intelligence has an impact on the writing ability of male leaners. Sig=0.037<α = 0.05

Table 4. Independent sample T-test for the female participants intelligence and writing ability

| Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | F | Sig | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |



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| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Writing | Equal variances assumed | 0.044 | 0.836 | 1.155 | 18 | 0.263 | 4.70833 | 4.07474 | - 3.85237 | 13.26904 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | 1.140 | 14.459 | 0.273 | 4.70833 | 4.12978 | - 4.12307 | 13.53974 |

As mentioned before the Levene's section of the t-test demonstrates the equality of the variances under question. The level of significance for the Levene's test equaled 0.836 which holds the assumption that the variances are equal. This number confirms this assumption. The second section of the above table refers to the t-test which shows the significance level was computed as 0.263 which in underlined in the table. Since this amount is larger than 0.05, the null hypothesis of the study is proved. It can be observed that there is no statistically significant relation between the two variables of writing ability and logical intelligence. It can be derived that the differences between the means are likely due to chance and not likely due to the logical intelligence.This could imply that high logical intelligence has no effect on the females' writing ability. Sig=0.263 >α =0.05

5. Discussion

Regarding the role of logical intelligence in paragraph writing this investigation has a number of important findings. First, considering the role of gender in the impact of logical intelligences on L2 writing, results indicated that, while controlling for gender, for male learners high levels of logical intelligence were associated with high levels of L2 paragraph writing ability. Significant relationships between MI and writing performance has also been confirmed in the study undertaken by Saeidi and Carvandi (2014) who investigated the possible relationships between EFL learners multiple intelligences and their performance on reasoning gap writing task and concluded that such a relationship does exist, and MI and writing performance are related, but from among the eight intelligences only logical-mathematical, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences have more statistically significant relationships with the writing performance.Results of the study are also in line with that of Khani and Davoodi (2012) who tried to investigate the existing of any possible relationship between logical/mathematical intelligence and metacognitive strategies Iranian EFL learners used in their reading comprehension process. They also investigated the effect of gender on the relationship. Data analysis revealed that logical/ mathematical intelligence had a significant relationship with metacognitive strategies in EFL context. Moreover, males and females, except for logical/mathematical intelligence usage, didn't have any significant difference in the application of metacognitive strategies.

Although this study failed to establish a link between Logical intelligence and the writing ability of female participants, multiple intelligence entails an active involvement with educational reform in which students with different intellectual abilities and intelligence types can benefit more from different educational methods intertwined with MI approaches that cater for their distinct needs and capabilities. This sensitivity subsequently can pave the way for jump starting



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students' achievement. Human minds are highly differentiated. It is particularly fallacious to evaluate human mind from just one perspective, to raise the issue of a single intelligence or a single problem-solving capacity. If education opts for the achievement of its highlighted aims, what can be regarded as extraordinarily significant would be the recognition of the students' unique capacities, which involves judgment about the potentials of the individuals and how each can be nurtured in its most effective way. No two learners are alike, and teachers must realize that a single teaching method will not work in a classroom. Having said that, Gardner's (1983) MI theory has educational implications through which learners' particular intelligence types are to illuminate educational paths right from the start to enable the teacher to adapt his/her teaching styles to the intelligences and learning preferences that inform individual learners. These results also yield pedagogical implications for foreign language teachers among which the importance of teachers' knowledge of the relationship between intelligence types and acquiring basic language skills is the leading one.

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# IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS DIFFERENT ENGLISHES IN TERMS OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

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**Abstract**

The current study aimed to investigate the attitude of iranian efl learners towards different varieties of english and explore whether language proficiency had an effect on such an attitude. For the purpose of this study, 100 intermediate and advanced Iranian efl learners age-ranged from 18 to 25 formed the sample population. The two groups of subjects responded to a questionnaire sought their attitudes towards English varieties. Then, a one-way repeated measures anova as well as an independent-samples t-test were run on the collected data. The main conclusion of this study was that iranian efl learners do not believe in just one world english anymore; instead, they are approaching to have the idea of world englishes and as such are accepting other english varities too for their communication with people all over the world. Thus the idea of the Standard English is losing its importance. The second conclusion drawn which was related to the effect of language proficiency on the learners' attitudes reflected some dissimilarities in the participants' attitudes toward different varieties of english claiming that advanced learners showed more positive attitudes to english varieteis than intermediate learners did.

**Keywords:** attitude; Standard English; world Englishes; English varieties; language proficiency

## 1. Introduction

English as the language of international communication has been spreading all over the world, and since any transmission of language brings about transformation (Widdowson, 2003), this spread has resulted in the existence of different varieties of English, each as a consequence of English contact with a certain language, culture and community. The interesting point is that the speakers of these new Englishes who use English to communicate with fellow non-native speakers far outnumber the native speakers (Widdowson, 2003). The coinage and promotion of the term World Englishes is mainly associated with Kachru (1982). The spread of English around the world has led to the need to study the attitudes held by users of English in what Kachru (1985) called the



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Outer and the Expanding Circles. The context of Kachru's (1985) three concentric circles model for acknowledging English language norms within particular English using communities, include the Inner Circle (e.g. Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), the Outer Circle (the former British and US colonies) and the Expanding Circle (the rest of the world).

The underlying philosophy of Kachruvian approach argues for the "importance of inclusivity and pluricentricity in approaches to linguistics of new varieties of English" (Bolton, 2004, p. 367). In addition, in an attempt to empower new Englishes, this theory calls the labels 'native speaker' and 'native and standard English' into serious questioning and denies any special status for them.

As for the context of ELT, the learners all over the world are, today, faced with different varieties of English and naturally develop attitudes toward them. Now, what is the significance of such attitudes to the theory of World Englishes and why should they matter? Timmis (2007) argues that the variety of a target language a learner acquires and prefers to speak in is influenced by his or her attitude towards that variety. In other words, the more positive your attitude is toward a certain variety, the more motivated you get in conforming to it. The problem here, based on the ideology of World Englishes, pops up when such

conformity is not in line with your needs and motivations for learning English, i.e., you do your best to learn that variety with all its details simply because it is said to be the native and standard one. Still, a more important problem is that of identity; it follows that when a learner considers a certain variety to be the best or standard one and thus emphasizes on sounding like its native speaker, his or her cultural identity gets at stake.

Many researchers such as Hiraga, 2005, Bradley and Bradley, 2001, Labov, 2001, Bayard, 1999, and Garrett et al., 1999 worked on attitudes of Inner Circle speakers towards varieties of English. But only recently a relatively few studies focused on the attitudes of non-Inner Circle speakers. McKenzie (2008) for example, studied the Japanese respondents' ratings of speakers of varieties of English. In Europe, Hartikainen (2000), Ladegaard (1998) and Dalton-Puffer et al. (1997) utilized verbal-guise tests to elicit the language attitudes of students. Hartikainen (2000) also studied senior secondary school students' attitudes towards six standard varieties of spoken English in Finland. Oller, Baca, & Vigil (1977) in their study on Mexican Americans in the southwest found a negative relationship between attitudes towards the target language and language proficiency; they concluded the more proficient their students were in ESL, the more negative they were toward Americans. Contrary to this, Javdani et al. (2009) claimed that American English is very popular among Iranian EFL learners; despite the negative reflection of Americans in the press, this variety of English was more popular among proficient students indicating their linguistic competence which enabled them to differentiate their favorite varieties. Talebi Habib Abadi & Heidari Darani (2016) conducted a study to explore the attitude of male and female Iranian EFL learners towards English varieties.

And this study aimed at investigating Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward different Englishes in terms of language proficiency and attempted to answer the following research questions: 1) What is the attitude of Iranian EFL learners towards different Englishes?



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and 2) Do Iranian EFL learners' attitude towards different Englishes differ in terms of language proficiency?

## 2. Review of the Literature

### 2.1 World Englishes

Kachru's (1992) model of the spread of English is one of the most influential proposals for the use of English in the world. Kachru divides World Englishes into three concentric circles, the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. These three circles represent the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition, and the functional allocation of English in diverse cultural contexts (Jenkins, 2003). The Inner Circle comprises countries where English is historically the first language to be spoken such as the United Kingdom (UK), America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The Outer Circle comprises ESL countries where English has a long history of institutionalized functions standing as a language of wide and important roles, such as India, South Africa, and Nigeria (Kachru & Nelson, 2001). Finally, the English spoken in the Expanding Circle is called English as a foreign language.

Davis (2004) defined World Englishes as a term used to "legitimate the Englishes spoken in the British non-white colonies" and explained that the ideology behind it denies a special status for the native speakers of metropolitan English varieties and complains about these native speakers' discriminations against users of world Englishes (p. 442). The concept of World Englishes has its philosophical roots in the two dominant schools of thought of the present time, i.e., Post colonialism and Postmodernism.

World Englishes paradigm discusses the global spread of English and the large number of functions it has taken on with increasing range and depth in diverse sociolinguistic settings around the world. This paradigm particularly emphasizes on multilingualism, multicultural identities, multiple norms of use, and bilinguals' creativity (Bhatt, 2001). Moreover, having its theoretical and philosophical foundations in liberation linguistics, it severely problematizes the traditional concepts in theoretical and applied linguistics including interference; inter language, native speaker, speech community, ideal speaker-hearer, Standard English and traditional English canon.

At present, English is used practically all over the world. According to Kachru (1992), users of English around the world total roughly 750 million, among whom 350 million are native speakers of English and 400 million are non-native speakers. English is the principal means of intercommunication, not only among native speakers but also between native speakers and non-native speakers. English is also used as a lingua franca by many non-native speakers with different language backgrounds. This claim tried to strengthen the World Englishes concept and lessen the special status for the native speakers of metropolitan English varieties.

### 2.2 Language Learning Attitude

Why are some language learners more successful than others? To account for the differences in learning a language, Dörnyei (2010) clings to individual differences. That is, the "dimensions of enduring personal characteristics that are assumed to apply to everybody



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and on which people differ by a degree (p. 41)". In some cases, learning second language is a relatively important educational task that students face during their academic formation, while for others it is a straight way to bilingualism. In both cases, researchers seem to agree that affective variables such as attitudes influence language learning (Gardner et al., 2004). Karahan (2007) claims that "positive language attitudes let learners have positive orientation towards learning English" (p.84). As such, attitudes may play a very crucial role in language learning as they would appear to influence students' success or failure in their learning. It is also believed that positive attitude facilitates foreign language learning while negative attitude acts as a psychological barrier against it (Dörnyei, 1994; Dörnyei, 2002).

Empirical evidence is also available to support these postulations. Nikolov (2001) for instance, finds that students' negative attitude to Russia or Russians was responsible for their failure to learn or retain the language. Also, Gardner and Lambert (1972) in their extensive study give evidence that positive attitudes toward language enhance proficiency as well. Many researchers believe that attitudes have cognitive, affective and behavioral components (e.g. Wenden, 1991).The cognitive component involves beliefs or perceptions about the objects or situations related to the attitude. The affective component refers to the feelings and emotions that one has towards an object, 'likes' or 'dislikes', 'with' or 'against'. The behavioral component means that certain attitudes tend to prompt learners to adopt particular learning behaviors. In the second language acquisition field, researchers have mostly pay attention to two types of attitudes: attitudes towards the learning of the language, and attitudes towards the community of the target language.

While the first set of attitudes is educational in nature, the second one is more social. SLA literature supports a relationship between attitudes towards language learning and achievement in the language (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003) even more than that of other subjects of the curriculum (Jordan, 1941). Attitudes towards language learning also seem connected to the context where learning takes place (Gagnon, 1974; Krashen, 1997). In learning a second language, it is important that students have high motivation and positive attitude towards the target language. This is because many linguists have proven that motivation and attitude are closely related in determining the success of second language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Higher levels of motivation and positive attitude will produce more successful language learners and vice versa. Brown (2007) states that positive attitudes towards the self, the native language and the target language group enhance second language proficiency. He further states that a language learner benefits from positive attitude and that negative attitude may lead to decrease in motivation, input and interaction; and consequently it leads to unsuccessful attainment of proficiency.

**2.3 Attitudes towards Varieties of English**

One of the pioneering studies of attitudes towards varieties of English was undertaken by Tucker and Lambert (1969; cited in McKenzie, 2006). This study used the matched-guise technique with groups of northern white, southern white and southern black college students in the USA. It discovered that each group of respondents had distinct attitudes towards particular American varieties, rating some of them more positively than others.



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Since this ground-breaking study appeared, many researchers have conducted attitude studies, most of which have mainly focused on Inner Circle speakers' attitudes towards varieties of English. These studies include research conducted in Inner Circle countries, such as, Britain and the USA (Hiraga, 2005), Australia (Bradley and Bradley, 2001), the USA (Labov, 2001), New Zealand (Bayard, 1999), and Wales (Garrett et al., 1999). The data gathered from these studies have shown a considerable degree of consistency in relation to attitudes of speakers in the Inner Circle. For example, research indicates that standard speech varieties and rural non-standard speech varieties of English are judged most positively by Inner Circle speakers in terms of social status (competence) (Hiraga, 2005). Conversely, non-standard speech varieties are judged most positively in terms of social attractiveness (solidarity) when compared to standard speech varieties of English.

While a considerable amount of research has been undertaken into attitudes of Inner Circle speakers, until recently relatively few studies had focused on the attitudes of non-Inner Circle speakers towards varieties of English. Research by McKenzie (2008) showed that the Japanese respondents' ratings of speakers of varieties of English speech are complex and often contradictory. The study suggested that when the perceived status of a variety of English is the dominant factor affecting attitudes, varieties of American English are rated more positively than other varieties. However, the study also indicated that when solidarity is the key factor, heavily-accented Japanese English or non-standard varieties of American and British English are judged more positively than the more standard varieties.

In Europe, Hartikainen (2000), Ladegaard (1998) and Dalton-Puffer et al. (1997) all used verbal-guise tests to elicit the language attitudes of students. In Finland, Hartikainen (2000) studied senior secondary school students' attitudes towards six standard varieties of spoken English speech: Received Pronunciation (RP), General American, General Canadian, General Australian, Scottish Standard English, and Standard Northern Irish English. RP and General Australian were rated higher than General American, and the Scottish and Northern Irish varieties.

Although the respondents indicated that they were most familiar with General American English via access to the media, its lower rating appears to suggest that familiarity with particular variety of English might not determine attitude to it. Moreover, age, gender and school grades were not found to be major factors affecting the students' attitudes.

Talebi Habib Abadi & Heidari Darani (2016) conducted a study to explore the attitude of male and female Iranian EFL learners towards English varieties. The findings of the study revealed that the participants of the study could recognize different varieties of English. Moreover, they seemed to have positive attitudes towards English language learning since they could recognize the different varieties. They suggested that this positive attitude may lead to their improvement in English language learning thus a good command of English.

**2.4 Role of Language Proficiency in Attitude towards Varieties of English**

Wardhaugh (2004) states that our receptive linguistic ability is much greater than our productive linguistic ability which, in practice, means that we are able to understand many more varieties than we are able to produce. Although native speakers of English are perhaps



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naturally more perceptive of differences in accents within the English language, McKenzie (2004) points out that evidence suggests even students with a lower level of proficiency in English demonstrate significantly differentiated responses toward varieties of English. Even if non-native speakers are not able to produce different accents very well, this does not mean that they lack the ability to understand them, and more importantly, carry attitudes toward them.

Oller, Baca, & Vigil (1977) in their study on Mexican Americans in the southwest found a negative relationship between attitudes towards the target language and language proficiency; the more proficient their students were in ESL, the more negative they were toward Americans. They also found that students who were proficient in English rated Americans lower on traits such as cleverness and happiness than students who scored lower on ESL proficiency.

Contrary to the above studies, Javdani et al. (2009) claimed that American English is very popular among Iranian EFL learners. Despite the negative reflection of Americans in the press, this variety of English is more popular among the students. 55% of Intermediate and 84% of Advanced students prefer American English. Regarding Starter and Elementary students, with only 38% and 42% this was predictable simply because they have no idea about the difference between the two varieties, i.e. this was due to age and linguistic competence: students at higher levels can appreciate the difference.

**2.5 Current Status of English in Iran**

There is no doubt that English is the international language in the world and it plays a crucial role in worldwide relationships (Khajavi & Abbasian, 2011). Due to today's growing science and technology all over the world, learning English language has been given much more importance compared to past years, and it is not an exception in Iranian context. Nevertheless, teaching English in Iran has been a difficult task both for EFL students as well as teachers because of the lack of resources and little contact with the target language outside the classroom compared to other EFL learners in other contexts (Sadeghi, 2005). There are very few English programs broadcasted on TV or radio. Of course, due to advancements in technology and the more frequent use of the Internet, satellite, and rapid growth of private language institutes in Iran, the opportunities for English language learning have greatly improved (Talebinezhad & Aliakbari, 2002). In addition, increasing the number of language institutes can confirm the increase in value and importance that is given to the English language in Iran.

For many countries, the English language education policy has become a major attention of their officials. However, educational policy of these authorities has influenced their communities in ways that are often controversial (Khajavi & Abbasian, 2011). In the Iranian curriculum, English is one of the compulsory subjects which is taught to students as a foreign language from the first year of junior high school. Therefore, Iranian students study English for nearly seven years before they go to university. However, having finished high school during which they studied English for seven years, students are not yet proficient enough in using the language. The education they receive neither enables them to attain full competence in using English nor helps them interact with confidence (Nahavandi & Mukundan, 2013).



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With regard to the three circles proposed by Kachru (1985), Iran is among the Expanding Circle countries where English is considered EFL and mostly used for educational and commercial purposes. Apart from junior and senior high schools, English is learned in language institutes as an extracurricular activity. Those interested in English can even continue to learn it as a major at universities. English is taught and evauated in Iran based on the most dominant varieties: British and American Englishes (Pishghadam and Sabouri, 2011). Imitation plays a significant role in learning the language and its assessment. Proficiency is assessed based on the extent of proximity to the native-like accent. Pishghadam and Sabouri (2011) maintain that Iranians assume British and American Englishes the best varieties as these two varieties exhibit the Standard English native speakers use.

Imitating the dominant varieties of English and attempting to approach native-like proficiency presumably demotivate those who fail to do so in the EFL context of Iran. Also, "it has exploitative effects on the learners who manage acquiring it after great effort." (Pishghadam and Sabouri, 2011, p. 89) Recent research has revealed that, from a sociological perspective, those learners who have a high tendency to learn a native-like accent of English and thus put much effort to it show a kind of deculturation (Pishghadam and Kamyabi, 2008). In this respect, Pishghadam and Navari (2009) believe that contact between two languages does not necessarily lead to cultural enrichment; on the contrary, it may put one of the two languages at risk of deculturation.

Pishghadam and Sabouri (2011) argue that imitating English is what is achieved via linguistic imperialism and it limits people's creativity in using the language. Yet, English must be considered as a valuable tool at the disposal of people with different nationalities so as to express their thoughts and their culture. Viewing English as an international language is in step with Crystal's (2003) view calling for adopting a functional account of English. This view concedes English as a valuable instrument for people to attain their aims as well as a medium for being heard by the whole world.

## 3. Methodology

This study follows a quasi-experimental design. The quantitative data were obtained from Iranian EFL learners. In this case only female participants were selected randomly from the non-native undergraduate students of English Translation at Islamic Azad University, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch. Therefore, gender was controlled.

### 3.1 Participants

A number of 100 undergraduate female students aged between 18 and 25 studying English Translation at Islamic Azad University, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Isfahan, Iran, participated in this study. Their mother tongue was Persian and they were all from Isfahan and its suburbs. The subjects were selected randomly and divided into two 50-people groups of intermediate and advanced levels based on Oxford Quick Placement Test. The test was developed in collaboration with the University of Cambridge ESOL Examination (UCLES, 2001). According to Perry (2005), students who scored over 80% were placed in the advanced and those who scored between 50% and 80% were placed in the intermediate group.



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### 3.2 Instruments

In this study, the following types of materials and instruments were utilized for the purpose of data collection.

#### 3.2.1 The Audio Material

As the purpose was to gather information on attitudes toward varieties of English, it was decided that the audio material should consist of authentic, spontaneous speech. Since finding native speakers of English who were capable of producing several varieties credibly is difficult in the English speaking world, and close to impossible in Iran, some audio records were taken from VOA, BBC, Iranian Press TV and India Today websites.

It was decided that the number of speakers to be used on the recording should be four. Four was considered to be enough for variation as it allowed for including familiar and unfamiliar native varieties as well as non-native varieties; and, at the same time, it was not too many to bore or distract the informants listening to the recording. In the final version of the recording, all four speakers spoke uninterrupted for a period of approximately two minutes. The audio files were played using Sony Vegas 7.0. as adjusting and leveling the sound was important in improving the quality of study. The stimuli selected were also broadly similar in length ranging from 1 minute and 23 seconds to 1 minute and 40 seconds.

#### 3.2.2 Oxford Quick Placement Test

Oxford Quick Placement Test was developed in collaboration with the University of Cambridge ESOL Examination (UCLES, 2001). It was administered to guarantee participants homogeneity in terms of their proficiency level. This placement test contained 100multiple-choice questions and participants 'responses were scored on a scale of 100 points.

#### 3.2.3 Attitude Questionnaire

A questionnaire on attitudes towards varieties of English including American English, Indian English, British English, and Iranian English was presented. The first part of the questionnaire aimed at exploring the views of the participants about different English varieties. In this part 'Likret Scale' ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was used to examine and evaluate the students' views through the following 14 traits in terms of attitudes and solidarity dimension (friendly, attractive, well-educated, intelligent, selfish, boring, arrogant, cold, poor, very strong, unpleasant, unsuccessful, insincere, crude, easy to understand). These traits served to show the participants positive or negative attitudes towards different English varieties. While the participants were listening to the speakers, they had to decide on each of the 14 traits mentioned above and tick one of the 5 options starting from strongly disagree to strongly agree for each. In this way, they showed their feelings about the English variety they listened to. The second part included questions and all questions were made as clear and unambiguous



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as possible, and an open option for additional comments or clarifications was added towards the end of the questionnaire.

### 3.3 Data Collection Procedures

To collect the required data, the students first took the Oxford Quick Placement Test. After the students were divided into intermediate and advanced students based on their scores on the placement test, the attitude questionnaires were distributed among the students of the two groups and they were briefed on the experiment. The participants were given instructions on listening to the speakers and completion of the evaluation sheets. Varieties were played one by one and the participants were asked to put a tick mark under the 5-point scale relevant to the respective traits and then respond to the questions after each listening. In case the participants needed to listen to a speaker twice, the audio file would be played for the second time. Similarly, while they were responding to the question items, they were permitted to ask questions if they did not understand any parts of the questionnaire. When they finished responding to the questionnaire, the researcher collected the sheets so that she made them ready for data analysis.

### 3.4 Statistical Procedures

The researcher used the 5-point Likert-scale items to measure respondents' attitudes towards different English varieties. In the 5-point Likert scale, scales 1-2 (from strongly disagree to disagree) served to show a low attitude, and scales 4-5 (from agree to strongly agree) indicated a high attitude toward English accents. Scale 3 represented "no idea". Negative traits were located at one end of the scale and positive traits were put at the other end. The collected data were analyzed through SPSS (v.21.0). Based on the data obtained from the questionnaires, a one-way repeated measures ANOVA was employed to explore the attitudes of the participants towards different varieties of English and an independent-samples t-test was run on the data to probe the probable differences between two groups of intermediate and advanced participants in terms of their attitudes towards native and non-native varieties of English.

## 4. Results

The results of the analyses are indicated in the following tables. Table 1 shows the Iranian EFL learners' attitudes towards all speakers who belonged to the Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle.

Table 1.
*One-way repeated measures ANOVA to compare the attitudes of the Iranian EFL learners towards all speakers*

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Speaker | 412235.404 | 1 | 359722.500 | 4234.579 | 0.064 |



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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Error | 1999.200 | 98 | 75.342 | | |

As indicated in Table 1, there was not a significant difference (P-value>0.05) among all speakers. Indeed, the participants' attitudes towards all varieties of English were similar.

To explore the probable differences between Iranian intermediate and advanced EFL learners' attitudes towards the native and non-native varieties, an independent-samples t-test was run on the data. The results are shown in table 2.

Table 2.
*Independent-samples t-test to show the difference between Iranian intermediate and advanced EFL learners' attitudes towards English varieties*

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | T | Df | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interm | 50 | 3.53 | 1.50 | 0.318 | 98 | 0.045 |
| Adv | 50 | 5.33 | 1.78 | | | |
| Total | 100 | 4.43 | 1.62 | | | |

Table 2 indicated that a statistically significant difference (P-value<0.05) was observed between intermediate and advanced participants' attitudes towards different English varieties.

**5. Discussion and Conclusion**

The results of the one-way repeated measures ANOVA indicated that the participants' attitudes towards different English varieties including the so-called standard and non-standard varieties were not different. Based on what Sadeghi (2005) discusses, compared to other EFL contexts, teaching English in Iran has been a difficult task both for EFL students and teachers because of the lack of resources and little contact with the target language outside the classroom. Therefore, it is interesting to notice that although Iranian EFL learners have less exposure to different English varieties and they are just exposed to two dominant varieties of American and British, they did not show any particular attitude towards different varieties of English exposed to them in this study. Indeed, the native and non-native varieties were noticed similarly and no variety was preferred to another. This is in line with Matsuura et al. (1994) indicating that the participants who thought that in any country the native language should be most respected tended to accept the non-native varieties as well as the native varieties. It goes the same with the ideas put forward by Kachru (1982) and Davis (2004) concerning World Englishes in an attempt to empower the concept of World Englishes. Davis (2004) holds that the ideology behind World English denies a special status for the native speakers of metropolitan English varieties and complains about these native speakers' discriminations against users of world Englishes (p. 442). Likewise, the underlying philosophy of Kachruvian approach argues for the "importance of inclusivity and pluricentricity in approaches to linguistics of new varieties of English" (Bolton, 2004, p. 367). In addition, in an attempt to empower



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new Englishes, this theory calls the labels 'native speaker' and 'native and standard English' into serious question and denies any special status for them.

Furthermore, contrary to Pishghadam and Kamyabi (2008) and Pishghadam and Navari (2009) who discuss the risk of deculturation for those learners with high tendency to learn a native-like accent of English, in this study, in the case of Iranian EFL learners deculturation will not probably occur since they did not show tendency towards any particular variety and respected the cultures all the same.

Moreover, they seemed to have positive attitudes towards English language learning, since they respected the English language altogether and this positive attitude may lead to their improvement in language learning. Likewise, Gardner et al. (2004) seem to agree that affective variables such as attitudes influence language learning. Karahan (2007) also claims that positive language attitudes help learners develop positive orientation towards learning the language. As such, attitude may play a very crucial role in language learning since it seems to influence students' success or failure in their learning. Dörnyei (1994) and Dörnyei (2002), likewise believes that positive attitude facilitates foreign language learning while negative attitude acts as a psychological barrier against it. Dörnyei (2010) clings to individual differences including attitude as factors which influence successful learning. This also may help understand that as the participants of this study were intermediate and advanced EFL learners, they both showed positive attitudes to language learning and have been successful language learners.

With regard to the difference between intermediate and advanced participants' attitudes towards English varieties, the results of the independent-samples t-test demonstrated that language proficiency had an effect on the attitudes towards the varieties. Concerning positive attitudes towards varieties of English, the results showed that advanced students were more positive than intermediate students. However, Oller, Baca, & Vigil (1977) in their study on Mexican Americans in the southwest found a negative relationship between attitudes towards the target language and language proficiency; the more proficient their students were in ESL, the more negative they were toward Americans. Javdani et al. (2009) also claimed that participants with lower levels of language proficiency differ from those with higher levels of language proficiency in terms of attitudes towards different English varieties.

The main conclusion of this study is that when learners' attitude is positive toward a language, it can help them learn the language with more interest and more profoundly. Being exposed to different varieties of English can help learners develop the ability to learn and recognize them as a useful skill in the process of language learning. The next conclusion drawn is that Iranian EFL learners do not believe in one world English anymore; instead, they are approaching to believe in World Englishes; in other words, the ideas of the perfect or the standard English variety is losing its importance and Iranian EFL learners are receding from that perfect English accent and accepting other Englishes for their communication with people around the world. As a matter of fact, they will probably try not to imitate the American and British accents anymore; they rather try to communicate with their Iranian English. The final conclusion of this study may be regarded as a new addition to the results of the previous studies concerning the effect of language proficiency on learners' attitudes. A few studies reveled that language proficiency is a



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crucial factor when attitudes are concerned in learning. The respective results of this study show that the higher language proficiency is, the more positive the attitudes of the EFL learners will be regarding learning a second/foreign language and this can be considered as a promising issue in English learning and teaching context.

Iranian EFL learners need and would benefit from a broader ability to understand different varieties of English. The implications that this study can have relate to the fact that instructors must find ways to overcome their students' general reluctance towards various varieties of English in order to develop this broader ability. With this new understanding, it's time to overcome this challenge by helping students to be familiar with different English varieties through listening to such varieties. Furthermore, teachers' attitudes toward varieties of English can play a critical role in shaping learners' perspectives, attitudes, and expectations of various English varieties. Therefore, the role and significance of the teacher's preferable variety need to be further explored.

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# THE EFFECT OF READERS THEATER ON INTERMEDIATE IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS IN TERMS OF ORAL PERFORMANCE AND L2 VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE

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**Abstract**
This study was an attempt to investigate the effect of readers theater on oral proficiency and lexical knowledge of iranian learners of english as a foreign language. From among the learners studying English at a language school in isfahan, iran, a sample of 90 female intermediate efl learners were asked to participate in this study. Having administered oxford placement test to ensure the homogeneity of the participants in terms of proficiency, 75 learners were chosen. Afterwards, an interview which served as one of the pretests of the study was run on the 75 subjects as the homogenizing test of oral ability, and ultimately 60 homogenous pre-intermediate learners were selected as the participants of the study. They were then assigned to the two groups of control and experiment. Another pretest used in this study was a vocabulary knowledge test developed by the researcher. During the treatment, the learners in the experimental group were exposed to reader's theatre, but the control group attended their regular classes. To gauge the lexical and oral development of the subjects, vocabulary posttests as well as an interview were administered. The findings of data analysis indicated improvements of fluency and complexity as a result of learners' exposure to the treatment; besides, the experimental group outperformed the control group regarding the improvement on lexical knowledge. The results may provide further impetus for teachers to make attempts at extending the students' active knowledge for real time communication as well as providing language which is both more complex and fluent.

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**Keywords**: readers theater, oral proficiency, l2 lexical knowledge, fluency

**1. Introduction**

The success in second and foreign language teaching depends on the methodological approach the teacher employs in the classrooms (Athiemoolam, 2004). In the past many Iranian schools (the context of this research), mainly focused on grammar approaches in teaching English. Those methods left students with no opportunity to use the language in the classroom. Until the end of the twentieth century, classrooms were teacher-dominated and teacher-centered in which students were less motivated to learn as the teacher followed the same monotonous style in teaching the lessons and doing the exercises. The need for a kind of variation was felt in the twenty-first century. Students were more interested in interacting with others rather than just listening to the teacher. Actually a shift was occurring from a teacher-centered approach to a more student-centered approach. Accordingly new methods that motivated learners and helped them develop communicating abilities came into fashion. These student-centered, teacher-facilitated teaching models challenged the Iranian Confucian-heritage tradition, which emphasized hierarchical relations between teachers and students. In systems like this teachers are the authority in the classroom and the expert in the subject, and students behave modestly, listen attentively, and do exactly what they are asked to do (Nisbett, 2003; Watkins &Biggs, 1996, 2001).

One method which involved students' participation in the learning process was the use of Readers Theater (RT). Many studies point to the fact that RT is an effective way of improving students' reading fluency (Corcoran & Davis, 2005; Flynn, 2005, 2007; Kabilan & Kamaruddin, 2010; Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008; Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1998). One of the greatest aids to such fluency development is the rehearsal of the RT text; each session students are given time in class to rehearse their scripts and prepare for their performance. By reading and rereading the texts they increase their chances of becoming fluent readers (Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1998). Keehn, Harmon, and Shoho, (2008) also state that RT can aid fluency development, because the teacher provides the modeling of proper expressiveness needed for such development.

More recent studies by Griffith and Rasinski (2004) and Young and Rasinski (2009) likewise indicate that RT promotes fluency and interest in reading. Through repeated readings of the text, students increase sight word vocabulary and the ability to decode words quickly and accurately (Carrick, 2006 & 2009). The repeated readings allow the students to phrase sentences appropriately, read punctuation markers, and read with greater ease. This fluent reading enables students to spend less time on decoding and increase comprehension (Pikulsi & Chard, 2005).

Most studies on l2 speech production agree that mastering a foreign language involves speaking the language with complexity< fluency, and accuracy (Shekan, 1996; Bygate, 2001; D'ely, 2006, to mention but a few). Complexity is a willingness to use more challenging language, reflecting hypothesis testing and possibly restructuring of the language system. Fluency is conceptualized as the ability to sustain real-time communication through a focus on meaning. And accuracy is the learners' orientation toward conservatism and control over more stable elements in the inter-language system (Shekan & Foster 2001). Because people have a limited-capacity cognitive system (Ashcraft, 1994), attention to one aspect of oral performance may mean that there is not enough attentional resources to be devoted to other aspcts (Shekan, 1998).

This study aims at investigating the effect of Readers Theater on the speaking ability and lexical knowledge of intermediate Iranian EFL learners and thus is going to answer the following research question : Does Readers Theater have any influence on the improvement of the oral



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ability (fluency, accuracy and complexity) and L2 lexical knowledge of pre-intermediate Iranian EFL learners**?**

**2. Review of the Literature**

**2.1. Readers Theater**

According to Walker (1996) Readers Theater (RT) is a literature-based oral reading which communicates story through oral interpretation. Black & Stave (2007) introduced RT as " a strategy that showcases the power of language"( p.3). Walker (1996) further illustrated that RT is an interpretive reading activity in which readers bring characters, story, and even content area or textbook material to life through their voices, actions, and words. RT is often described as "a stylized form of dramatization", Allowing for interpretation through multiple modes (Trousdale & Harris, 1993, p.201). Shepard (2006) stated that, regardless of formatting and purpose, RT is based on script reading and the suggestive power of language. RT taps the multiple intelligences of a reader and allows for multiple ways of understanding (Gardner, 1985).

**2.2. Role of RT in Reading Skill Improvement and fluency**

RT is particularly important in developing reading and oral skills. "The backbone of RT is repeated reading, a tested and proven method for increasing reading fluency in short-term studies" (Worthy & Prater, 2002, p. 295). Walker (1996) also suggested that the type of texts may have much to do with repeated reading; nevertheless, this activity in the RT setting would not be tedious, but fun. Support for the comprehensive nature of Readers Theater is found in several reading theories and educational paradigms including those of Samuels (1979), Rosenblatt (1978), Schreiber (1980), and Slavin (1987).

The Readers Theater script acts as an incentive to elicit thoughts, ideas, and past experiences from the reader. This allows the reader to read the script through an interpretive process and use both cognitive and affective domains (Carrick 2006). Scripted dialogues provide EFL students with the opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas (Adams, 2003). In addition, scripted dialogues have often been used in the classroom to enable students to acquire the vocabulary, idioms, grammar and syntax of English speech (Berlinger, 2000). As they involve all aspects of language use, scripts rehearsed in class can offer students an authentic communicative context to practice spoken English. Barbu (2007)believes that being able and confident to perform in front of the class gives a higher status with the rest of the group. Although RT is not the one and the only proper way to learn, it is, nevertheless, one of those methods that keep the lessons interesting.

In order to be effective, reading strategies must ensure that students are extracting meaning while decoding. As students practice their fluency, it is important for teachers to check students' use of expression and phrasing. These skills show the reader is making meaning out of what s/he is reading.

Having been studied and practiced in real reading classroom for years, RT has been recommended by many educators and scholars (Tyler & Chard, 2000; Bafile, 2005; Garrett & O'Connor, 2010) to be a working instructional strategy in building reading fluency due to the following features of the instructional process: First, In 2002 Samuels identified that the repeated reading required in RT provided students with practice to move decoding to an automatic level (Caluris, 2006). The significant goals of RT are to enhance students' reading skills and comprehension (Tyler & Chard, 2000; Caluris, 2006) as well as build their confidence through



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repeated reading with a purpose. That is, students must reread scripts created from grade-level books or stories in the instruction of RT.

Young & Rasinski (2009) found that most students were more willing to participate in the practice if knowing that they would perform in front of audiences. Thus, RT offers all learners, particularly those reluctant students, a real reason to read aloud and reread the same text several times during the rehearsal (Tyler & Chard, 2000; Bafile, 2005). Second, unlike playing a drama, RT does not require students to memorize the lines of scripts. The emphasis of the presentation of RT is on how students read their lines, and it is meant to motivate students to improve their fluency, enhance their comprehension through multiple rereading of texts, and reduce anxiety and pressure of learning. Third, the teamwork involved in the presentation has also served to motivate students to engage in more attentive readings (Caluris, 2006). Additionally, having the group members' assistance and the repeated reading activity made those struggling students much more willing to read because reading has already become an easier and less stressful task (Tyler & Chard, 2000). RT is an interesting way to practice reading (Tyler & Chard, 2000). The success of RT activity lies in exposing students to the text fit to their cognitive and affective levels (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003).

Due to their influence on fluency development, Readers Theater and other forms of drama can be employed as effective methods by teachers. Teachers can incorporate RT into the classroom relatively easily and cheaply. It does not require props, costumes, or sets like other forms of theater production. The actors also remain in the same place throughout the performance so there is not a need to plan the movement of the actors on the stage. All rehearsal time is dedicated to making sure that the script is read with the proper expression, intonation, and at the proper rate so the story is told effectively.

**3. Methodology**

The paradigm of this study was a quantitative one and it was based on a quasi- experimental research using group pre-test and post-test design. This research was conducted in 2014, summer semester of Rooyesh language institute in Isfahan, Iran.

**3.1. Subjects**

The participants were all female students studying English as a foreign language at pre-intermediate level. They age-ranged from 10 to 15. In general, this study used non-probabilistic type of sampling. Originally, 90 female intermediate EFL learners were selected to take part in this study. So sampling in this stage was based on availability or convenient sampling procedure. In order to ensure the sample was homogenous and all the participants were in the same level, Oxford Placement Test (QPT was un on the group and 75 learners were chosen as homogenous learners. Then, to investigate speaking ability, an oral interview was devised to confirm the homogeneity of the participants in terms of oral proficiency level. In these two stages, sampling was based on purposive sampling procedure. By so doing, 60 homogeneous pre-intermediate learners were ultimately selected as the participants of the study. All the subjects had at least two school years of experience in learning English.

**3.2. Materials and Instruments**

Family and Friends book 2 of the seven- level primary course series written by Naomi Simmons was used in this study. The book consisted of 14 units from which the second 7 units of were taught to the participants. Each unit worked on the following parts : Words and Story, Grammar, Words and Song, Phonics, Skills Time! Reading, Skills Time, Listening and Speaking. In collaboration with the classroom teacher, the researcher selected seven short stories from the



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book to serve as Readers Theater scripts. These short dialogues were designed based upon student interest and suitability for Readers Theater format. In addition to the book, three more instruments were used: pretests, posttests, and Oxford Placement Test, to ensure the homogeneity of the groups.

**3.2.1. Pretests**

**3.2.1.1. Oral Interview**

Before either class commenced the procedure, to make sure that the two groups were not significantly different in speaking ability, the teacher administered a pretest interview. The interview was a researcher-made one and consisted of ten questions of high frequency in everyday conversations, such as family, free time, hobbies, field of study, etc. The validity of the questions was approved by a number of university professors.

**3.2.1.2. Vocabulary Knowledge Test**

In order to measure the students' prior knowledge of vocabulary, a selection of Oxford University exams was developed. The questions were chosen from test builder CD-ROM provided by Oxford University such as editable unit tests, skill tests, and summative tests; this test had a score of 20. The test had already been piloted and its split-half reliability coefficient was found to be .86. Further, the researcher asked some university professors to appraise the validity of the test, and it was approved by all.

**3.2.2. Posttests**

**3.2.2.1. Oral Interview**

After conducting the treatment, participants in both experimental and control groups took a posttest interview which consisted of a different set of questions. The interviews were transcribed and then rated based on the measures chosen for complexity, accuracy, and fluency. The inter-rater reliability of the test was calculated via Pearson product-moment correlation formula. It turned out to be .83, .76, and .81 for complexity, accuracy, and fluency respectively.

**3.2.2.2. Vocabulary Knowledge Test**

After conducting the study, the knowledge of vocabulary of the two groups was evaluated. The vocabulary pretests and posttests were similar in order to avoid the testing effect to some extent.

**4. Results and Discussion**

**4.1. Results of Interview/ Pretest**

Table 1. *The Oral Ability Pretest results for the Learners in the Experimental and Control Groups*

| | Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fluency | EG | 30 | 1.5130 | .33575 | .06130 |
| | CG | 30 | 1.4883 | .32485 | .05931 |
| Accuracy | EG | 30 | 3.0273 | .75529 | .13790 |
| | CG | 30 | 2.9613 | .70309 | .12837 |
| Complexity | EG | 30 | 1.4077 | .31148 | .05687 |
| | CG | 30 | 1.4263 | .32462 | .05927 |

The mean fluency scores of the EG ($M$ = 1.51) and CG ($M$ = 1.48) were not drastically different. This was also true for their mean accuracy scores ($M_{EG}$ = 3.02, $M_{CG}$ = 2.96) and their mean complexity scores ($M_{EG}$ = 1.40, $M_{CG}$ = 1.42).



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Table 2. *Results of the Independent-Samples T-Test for the EG and CG Oral Ability Pretest Scores*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | T-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F. | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Fluency | .005 | .944 | .289 | 58 | .77 | .02467 | .08529 | -.14607 | .19540 |
| Accuracy | .074 | .787 | .350 | 58 | .72 | .06600 | .18840 | -.31112 | .44312 |
| Complexity | .001 | .981 | -.227 | 58 | .82 | -.01867 | .08214 | -.18309 | .14576 |

According to Table 2. there was not a statistically significant difference in pretest oral ability scores for EG and CG since the *p* values for fluency, accuracy, and complexity measures were .77, .72, and .82, which were all greater than the specified level of significance (i.e., 0.05).

**4.2. Results of the Vocabulary Test/Pretest**

Table 3. *The Vocabulary Pretest Results for the Learners in the Experimental and Control Groups*

| | Groups | N | Men | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Vocabulary | EG | 30 | 16.8343 | 1.89180 | .34539 |
| | CG | 30 | 16.7483 | 1.55915 | .28466 |

Here again, the mean scores of the EG (*M* = 16.83) and the CG (*M* = 16.74) were not immensely different. Yet, t-test table should be referred to in order to see whether the difference was meaningful or not.

Table 4. *Independent-Samples T-Test for Comparing the EG and CG Vocabulary Pretest Scores*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | T-test for Equality of Means | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F. | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the |



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| | | | | | | | | Difference | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Vocabulary | 1.748 | .191 | .192 | 58 | .84 | .08600 | .44458 | -.80993 | .93193 |

Since the *p* value under the *Sig.* (2-tailed) column was larger than the alpha level (i.e., .84 > .05), it could be concluded that the difference between the pretest vocabulary scores of the EG and CG was insignificant. As a result, the learners in the two groups were shown to be homogeneous in terms of their oral ability and lexical knowledge.

**4.3. Results of the Research Question**

The research question of the study intended to find out the extent to which Readers Theater (RT) affected pre-intermediate Iranian EFL learners' oral proficiency and L2 lexical knowledge.

Table 5. *The Posttest Oral Ability for the Learners in the Experimental and Control Groups*

| | Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fluency | EG | 30 | 2.2593 | .45863 | .08373 |
| | CG | 30 | 1.7150 | .44570 | .08137 |
| Accuracy | EG | 30 | 3.2723 | .87597 | .15993 |
| | CG | 30 | 2.9837 | .76347 | .13939 |
| Complexity | EG | 30 | 1.7707 | .28914 | .05279 |
| | CG | 30 | 1.5573 | .32621 | .05956 |

As for mean fluency scores on the posttest, the EG mean (*M* = 2.25) and CG (*M* = 1.71) were different.

Table 6. *Independent-Samples T-Test for Comparing the EG and CG Oral Ability Posttest Scores*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | T-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F. | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Fluency | .001 | .971 | 4.662 | 58 | .000 | .54433 | .11676 | .31061 | .77806 |
| Accuracy | .760 | .387 | 1.361 | 58 | .179 | .28867 | .21215 | -.13599 | .71333 |
| Complexity | .366 | .547 | 2.681 | 58 | .010 | .21333 | .07958 | .05403 | .37264 |



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According to Table 6. there was not a statistically significant difference in posttest accuracy scores for EG and CG since the *p* values for accuracy was greater than the specified level of significance (i.e., .17 > .05). However, the *p* values for fluency (*p* = .000) and complexity (*p* = .010) were less than the alpha level.

Table 7. *Posttest Vocabulary Results for the Learners in the Experimental and Control Groups*

| | Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Vocabulary | EG | 30 | 17.8477 | 1.45529 | .26570 |
| | CG | 30 | 15.8757 | 1.22816 | .22423 |

The mean scores of the EG (*M* = 17.84) and the CG (*M* = 15.87) on the vocabulary posttest were different. T-Test was run in order to determine whether the difference was statistically meaningful or not. It was 5.753, indicating that the difference between the posttest vocabulary scores of the EG and CG was statistically significant. Hence, the learners' vocabulary knowledge was positively affected as a result of exposure to RT.

**5. Conclusion**

This research sought to investigate whether Readers Theater enhanced EFL learners' oral production. Furthermore, the effectiveness of this technique on using vocabulary was also evaluated. From a psycholinguistic perspective, the findings of this study not only confirmed the limited nature of attentional capacity but they also supported the viability of Levelt's (1989) L1 speech production model for L2 speech production research as well. From a pedagogical perspective, results of this study offered further empirical evidence in support of the flexibility of task-based approaches to language teaching and learning. In the context of a limited capacity cognitive system, it makes sense to think of a diet of tasks and task conditions as a way to help students focus on different aspects of L2 speech performance, thus developing L2 speech in its totality.

In particular, the findings empirically confirmed what Ellis (2009b) noted as one of the advantages of task-based language teaching (TBLT) approaches, that while TBLT prioritizes meaning over form, it can nevertheless cater for learning form, and it has the potential to cater for the enhancement of communicative fluency while not neglecting accuracy of language.

This research was an attempt to report on a study into the potential transfer of benefits of repeated reading of the same story to the oral production of EFL learners. Of particular relevance to the present study was the finding that when language learners received either feedback or input between the two performances, the positive benefits of task repetition are transferred to performance of a new task. It should be pointed out that this issue is complex and thus needs to be further explored through methodologically rigorous research studies as this one stands as a preliminary study which aims to open up this avenue of research.

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# THE IMPACT OF CHOOSING TITLE ACTIVITIES AS A POST-READING TASK ON LEARNING READING COMPREHENSION AMONG PRE-INTERMEDIATE LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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**ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the impact of choosing title activities as a post-reading task on learning reading comprehension among Iranian pre-intermediate language learners. To homogenize participants, the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) was administered, and a homogeneous sample comprised of 42 male and female learners whose scores were between 28 and 36 was selected from a population of 90 at the pre-intermediate level. Then the homogenized sample was non-randomly assigned to two equal experimental groups of guided and free title activities. A reading comprehension pre-test was administered to the participants at the beginning of the course. In the experimental group of guided title activities, the learners used guided title activities as a post-reading task for the intended reading texts. In the experimental group of free title activities, the learners used free title activities as a post-reading task during 30- minute sessions in eight weeks. Then the learners' performances were evaluated based on their appropriate comprehension of the reading texts. During ten sessions of treatment, the participants of the guided experimental group followed choosing of guided title activities engaged in the post-reading task and the learners received guidance for comprehending the texts and answering the comprehension questions included selecting the title activities. The free experimental group engaged in free choosing title activities since they did not receive teacher's guidance for choosing the title, and then they proposed some topics for the passage. The participants took a reading comprehension post-test to approve the effectiveness of the post-reading task, of choosing the title activities. The results of Paired and Independent Samples *t*-tests indicated that there was a significant difference between the guided and free title activities groups on the post-tests. Consequently, Implications of



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the study suggest that reading comprehension could be developed through choosing guided title activities rather than free title activities.

**Key Words:** Title activities, post-reading task, reading comprehension

**1. Introduction**

In order for language learners to function in a foreign language, they need to be able to speak, listen, write and read that language. In academic settings, reading is assumed to be the central means for learning new information (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Reading as a skill has received a lot of attention almost in every pedagogical situation because the purposes of reading and the tasks it fulfills can be various and it can affect the learning of other components as well. Richards and Renandya (2002) stated that there are some reasons that reading receives a unique attention among second or foreign language learners. At first, the learners want to be able to read for gaining important information about their careers or their majors. Second, they are able to enhance the process of language learning via written texts which follow various pedagogical goals. "The reading goal is to read for meaning or to recreate the writers meaning. Reading to improve pronunciation practice, practice grammatical forms, and study vocabulary does not constitute reading at all because, by definition, reading involves comprehension. When readers do not comprehend, they do not reading" (Chastain, 1988, p. 217).

Reading comprehension is thus an interactive process between the reader and the text. In that the reader is required to fit the clues providing in the text to his or her own background knowledge. Reading for comprehension is the primary purpose of reading skill. Thus raising students' awareness of main ideas in a text and exploring the organization of a text are essential for good comprehension. As a consequence, the use of graphic representation to highlight text organization and to indicate the ordering of the content information is an important resource for comprehension instruction (Nunan, 2006). Celce-Murcia's (2001) framework of reading instruction consists of: pre-reading instruction, during-reading instruction, and post-reading instruction.

Post-reading instruction focuses on the development of opinions on the texts to discuss the major ideas to be understood by the learners. Demand a critical stance on text information, or oblige students to connect text information to personal experiences and opinions. All three components of the frame work may be integrated into a single lesson with a short reading passage on a familiar topic or they may run across numerous lessons. Reading is a complex skill and we want to see whether choosing title activities as a post-reading task is effective in reading comprehension or not (Celce-Murcia, 2001). To achieve the purpose of reading comprehension, an appropriate approach or methodology is required. Language teaching methodologies involve some of the more popular second language teaching methods of the last half century (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Alongside content-based instruction (CBI), task-based language teaching (TBLT) has gained a considerable degree of attention around the world. In TBLT, the learners are given an opportunity to explore the language (Skehan, 1998). Successful teachers have always helped their students to create a connection between the new information they obtain with their real lives. Post-reading activities and tasks are used to help ESL students to think about and respond to texts they have read (Morris & Stewart-Dore, 1990). They support students to consider what they have read and learned that they might use for other language and literacy related activities such as presentations or reading texts.



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According to Richards and Renandya (2002), it is important to note that not all but the majority of the writers agree that post-reading tasks should be included in the extensive reading programs. Although the post-reading tasks take time away from reading and may prevent the students' enjoyment from reading, but it should be seen as its own reward in extensive reading. However, we feel that if pos-treading tasks are carefully designed, they can serve useful purposes. The purposes of post-reading activities are: (1) reinforcing what students have learned from their reading; (2) giving students a sense of progress; and (3) helping students share information about materials to read or avoid.

Reading skill is the activity of comprehending a piece of written language which is designed to be read. However, reading is more than being a matter of recognizing the symbols of written language (Koralek & Collins, 1997). Just as speech is more than producing sounds, writing is much more than the production of graphic symbols and reading is much more than recognizing the symbols; these symbols have to be arranged according to some conventions to form words, to combine them to form sentences and at the end to convey a message (Maarek & Moumene, 2009).

Reading is a language skill which is relatively difficult to learn and teach. In terms of four skills, comprehending a coherent, fluent, extended piece of written text is probably the most dominant to do in language (Nunan, 2004). For second and foreign language learners the challenges are enormous, particularly for those who go on to a university and study in a language that is not their own. A number of efforts have been made to develop the students' reading skill, among others is by applying different approaches to the learning and teaching of reading (Richards, 2015). Lots of studies were done on learning and teaching different phases of tasks, particularly pre-task, during-task, and post-task they also show that Iranian learners as foreign language learners to some extent have had difficulties in reading.

Therefore, because of the importance of reading and benefits of tasks and their aspects, this research investigated the role of choosing title activities as the post-reading tasks in learning reading comprehension among Iranian learners. Post-reading tasks generally and choosing title activities particularly provide a chance for students to practice and check their comprehension at the time they are challenging to choose the best titles. By using it students' reading comprehension will improve in a number of ways by focusing their attention to the main points of the applied post-reading tasks. The research questions to be investigated in the present study are as follows:

$RQ_1$. Does a choosing free title activity as a post-reading task affect learning reading comprehension among pre-intermediate language learners?

$RQ_2$. Does a choosing guided title activity as a post-reading task affect learning reading comprehension among pre-intermediate language learners?

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1. Task-based Language Teaching

A task is a pedagogical action "where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome" (Willis, 1996, p. 23). Skehan (1998) defines the task as "an activity in which meaning is primary; learners are not given other people's meaning to regurgitate; there is some communicative problem to solve; there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities; task completion has some priority; the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome" (p.95).

Krahnke (1987) notes that task-based instruction may be different from other methods of language teaching since the lessons are constructed based on the way in which the more



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focus is on the language required to perform the tasks rather than the aspects of language such as structures and vocabulary. The students learn the language structures indirectly and through the task completion. Students' interaction during the tasks facilitates transfer of old information and incorporates it with new information through performing the task which connects the tasks to the learners' real-life and provides them with large amounts of input.

According to Ellis (2002), the design of a task-based lesson is based on several components of the lesson including vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, etc. Thus any task is based on its principal component. The designs of tasks have been proposed through the main purpose of the treatment. Generally speaking, they all have three levels in common. These levels are of the chronology of a task-based lesson. Thus, the first phase is 'pre-task' which concerns the activities those teachers and students may undertake before they start the lesson such as warm-up, pre-speaking or pre-reading questions. The second one is the task phase which centers the lesson, including the main activities performed by the students who are required to operate under time-pressure. The final phase is the post-task that deals with the procedures for wrapping-up the task performance. (Willis, 1996,p.1).

According to Willis (1996), there are many advantages in using task-based learning to motivate the leaners towards tasks and classroom activities in a TBLT environment. It offers a situation for students to display their efforts and develops their ideas. It also help the learners to co-operate with each other in small groups which builds bonds between them. They work together in groups and they are able to produce meaningful interactions on given topics. They also able to concentrate on the language features, knowledge and experiences which enable the students to explore novel features of language.

**2.2. Post-task Activities**

According to Skehan and Foster (1997), post-task activities have also proved interesting. Examples of such activities are informing learners before they do a task that some of them will be required to re-do the task subsequently on front of the entire class. The rationale here is that the threat of a future public performance will induce learners, while doing the task, to concentrate on error avoidance, since they will more clearly see the connection between the task and how well they will later do, when more pedagogic norms will prevail. In addition, the future task will not compromise the naturalness and communicativeness of the actual task, since the teacher will not be present at that stage. An alternative post-task condition would be to record learner performance during a task (which is done anyway during research studies), and then give the tape to learners so that they have to transcribe some of their own performance. Once again, the intention is to focus learners' attention on form, since they will be drawn in working in detail with what they themselves have said. Skehan and Foster (1997) made the prediction that accuracy, selectively, would be advantaged in a post-task condition.

Title activities, as a type of post-reading task, consist of the questions in which the readers have been pulled into the challenge to choose the most fruitful title for the passage. By the time, the learners come to these types of activities; they already have read or skim the passage (Richards & Renandya, 2002). In the present study, title activities refer to two types of guided and free choosing title activities in which the learners' reading comprehension measured by choosing the best title for the read text.

Khoshsima and Pourjam (2014) investigated the effectiveness of cloze tests and open-ended questions on reading comprehension ability of Iranian Intermediate English as foreign



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language (EFL) Learners. The traditional way of teaching reading comprehension was used for the control and working with various items of testing reading comprehension The findings of their study indicated that the open and closed ended items facilitate the learners' 'reading comprehension while the open-ended questions are significantly more effective than the closed ended items in students' reading comprehension (Derakhshan & Nazari, 2015).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Participants

To use post-reading activities in this research, the study was conducted at Abadan Islamic Azad University. A sample of 42 learners at the pre-intermediate level was selected non-randomly from among 90 Iranian EFL learners based on convenience sampling method. They were studying English language translation at Abadan Islamic Azad University. Male and female BA students ranging in age from 20 to 25 acted as our participants. Through their performance on OQPT which was designed into two parts with sixty questions, 42 learners out of 90 were selected. After administering OQPT, 42 male and female learners whose scores were between 28 and 36 (based on a standard ranking test) were chosen as the research sample. Because of the limit number of learners, these participants were non-randomly divided into two equal groups (21 participants in each group). Sampling was made based on non-random convenience sampling method. One group acted as experimental group of guided title activities in which the learners used guided title activities as a post-reading task for the intended reading text as the treatment step and the group who used free title activities as a post-reading task was considered as the experimental group of free title activities.

### 3.2. Instrumentation

The present study made benefit from the following instruments:

OQPT: It was applied to determine the learners' level and to homogenize the sample. This test was divided into two parts; Part One (Items 1 – 40) and Part Two (Items 41 – 60). Each test had 60 items, with one point available for each correct answer. Levels were then determined by the number of points the learners scores i.e., between 28 and 36. This test took 60 minutes.

Pre-test: A teacher-made reading comprehension test was designed by the researcher. It was piloted on a group of ten students other than the real participants in the study. The reliability index was met through KR-21 formula as (r=.828). Then the participants took it as a pre-test. Two groups participated in an independent pre-test with 20 multiple choice items based on the first texts read by the participants.

Post-test: A teacher-made reading comprehension test was designed by the researcher. It was piloted on a group of ten students other than the real participants and the reliability index was met through KR-21 formula as (r=.701). Then the participants took it as a post-test. Two groups participated in an independent post-test with 20 multiple-choice items based on the last texts read by the participants.

### 3.3. Materials

The present study made benefit from the following material:

Select Readings (Lee & Gundersen, 2000): It was used to choose some text from it. The goal of *Select Readings* was to generate good English language skills with the main focus on reading skills. The authors used both the bottom-up and top-down approach where



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appropriate. This book was taught in the department of English at Abadan Azad University.

**3.4. Procedure**

Ninety BA students at university from different major were selected non-randomly for participating in an OQPT for selecting students with the same homogeneity. After administering OQPT, 42 students were selected with the same homogeneity for this study. Then these students divided into two groups non-randomly each group with 21 students. One group received guided title activities as a post-reading task and other group received free title activities as a post-reading task.

Before starting instruction groups participated in an independent pre-test with 20 multiple choice items based on the first text read by the participants. It means that students answered to 20 items. At the next stage students worked on 8 reading passages that selected from Select Readings (Lee & Gundersen, 2000) for two months and each month four sections. Reading each passage was taken 10 minutes. The minimum and maximum text lengths were specified (150 words). During instruction a treatment task was designed to elicit the master of reading and comprehending of the learners in written texts.

It was going to apply pre-test, treatment and post-test design. The reasons behind selecting this design would be as follows:

a. The participants were requested to complete the pre-test, which was going to be administered in order to check out the learners' current level of reading.

b. Providing the participants with treatment in order to pave the way for complete comprehension of the texts.

c. To know whether the treatment was shed some light on the blurred issue of using title activities in Iranian EFL context, one post-test were used.

A treatment task was designed to elicit the master of reading and comprehending of the learners in written texts. Two types of free and guided choosing title activities were used as post-reading task.

a) During treatment, the experimental group of guided title activities engaged in reading different texts with the different content. The participants of the experimental group of guided title activities which followed the guided choosing title activities engaged in a post-reading task through it the learners received teacher's guidance for comprehending the texts and answering the comprehension questions included choosing title activities.

b) The experimental group of guided title activities engaged in guided choosing title activities used as post-reading task. The experimental group of free title activities engaged in free choosing title activities since they did not receive teacher's guidance for choosing the title, and then they proposed some topics for the passage. In every session, the teacher gave the free experimental group one passage without any title, and then he/she wrote some topics on the board. The teacher requested the learners to choose the best topic after reading the passage. At the end, the best topic was chosen based on the majority of the students' election.

c) The experimental group of free title activities engaged in free choosing title activities used as post-reading task.

After allocation of learners into experimental groups, a pre-test, included choosing title questions, for reading comprehension proficiency was administered to the participants of both groups during a 30- minute time allotment and the learners' performances were evaluated based on their appropriate comprehension of the read text. One type of post-



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reading task, called choosing title activities, was designed to elicit the pre-intermediate language learners' comprehension of read texts.

During the treatment, participants of the experimental group of guided title activities which followed the guided choosing title activities engaged in a post-reading task through it the learners received teacher's guidance for comprehending the texts and answering the comprehension questions included choosing title activities. The experimental group of free title activities engaged in free choosing title activities since they did not receive teacher's guidance for choosing the title; then they proposed some topics for the passage. They just comprehended the comprehension questions. The participants took a post-test alike the pre-test to approve the effectiveness of the post-reading task, especially choosing the title activities.

The first and the last texts read by the participants were respectively be regarded as a pre-test and post-test. That is, the learners of experimental group of guided title activities were first required to read the texts during the first session and to complete a twenty-item test which was designed in accordance with the text. The last text with its questions was again assigned by the instructor was treated as post-test. Choosing titles from a list of possibilities could show whether the students had understood the overall theme of the text. The titles should have worded in such a way as to make the students think about the overall meaning.

At the end of eight sessions both groups participated in a post-test with 20 multiple-choice items based on the last read text. The results of pre-test and post test were analyzed through Independent Samples t-test for testing the null hypothesis.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed through paired and independent samples t-test to show the difference between the groups' means. In order to analyze the data obtained from the rating assessment tests, the data results were analyzed through using SPSS, version 17 to have the two groups' means compared. The researcher aimed to show whether there will be any significant difference between the mean of two experimental group of guided title activities and experimental group of free title activities. Moreover, the researcher's aim was to show whether tasks were helpful for the students to recognize the appropriate title for the passages.

## 4. Results

Descriptive statistics of free experimental and guided experimental groups' pre-tests including means, standard deviations and then standard error of means of the pre-tests were computed, respectively. The results are presented in Table 1.

*Table 1.Descriptive Statistics (Pre-test)*

| Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error of Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Guided Experimental | 21 | 11.9524 | 4.60951 | 1.00588 |
| Free Experimental | 21 | 11.8095 | 4.55652 | 0.99431 |

Table 1 shows the number of the students in the free experimental and guided experimental groups is equal, 21 participants in each group. The participants of both groups were pre-



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tested on reading comprehension. It was done to measure how well participants comprehend the reading texts before any treatment and filling the title choosing items that they would learn during the treatment. The results of the independent *t*-test comparing the free experimental and guided experimental groups are presented in Table 2.

*Table 2.Independent Samples t-test (Pre-test)*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | F | Sig. | *t* | df | Sig. | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | 0.190 | 0.665 | 0.101 | 40 | 0.920 | 0.142 | 1.414 | -2.715 | 3.001 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | 0.101 | 39.9 | 0.920 | 0.142 | 1.414 | -2.715 | 3.001 |

Table 2 shows the observed *t* (0.101) is less than the critical *t* (1.684) with df=40. Thus the difference between the post-test of guided experimental and free experimental groups is not significant at ($p<0.05$). Therefore, it came to be known that the two groups were homogeneous. In other words, Independent samples *t*-test analysis indicated that there was no significant difference between the scores of the reading comprehension of the two groups at the outset of the research. The following statistical procedure was carried out at the end of the course in order to figure out and compare the means, the standard



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deviation and the standard error of means of the two groups under study. The results are presented in Table 3.

*Table 3. Descriptive Statistics (Post-test, Guided vs. Free Title Activities )*

| Groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Guided Experimental | 21 | 14.4286 | 4.38830 | 0.95760 |
| Free Experimental | 21 | 11.9190 | 3.32380 | 0.72531 |

Table 3 indicates that the number of the students in the free experimental and guided experimental groups is equal, 21 participants in each group. The difference between the two means is significant. Table 4 shows the results of the Independent Samples *t*-test comparing the post-tests is presented in Table 4.

*Table 3. Independent Samples t-test (Post-test, Guided vs. Free Title Activities )*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | F | Sig. | *t* | df | Sig. | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances ass | 4.520 | 0.040 | 2.339 | 40 | 0.024 | 2.80952 | 1.20128 | 0.38164 | 5.23741 |



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| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | umed | | | | | | | |
| Equal | | 2.339 | 37.265 | 0.025 | 2.80952 | 1.20128 | 0.37608 | 5.24297 |
| | variances not assumed | | | | | | | |

Table 4 shows the observed *t* (2.339) is greater than the critical *t* (1.684) with df=40. Thus the difference between the post-test of guided experimental and free experimental groups is significant at ($p<0.05$). In order to analyze the data, two Paired-Samples t-tests were conducted. The first one was run to show whether the instruction of reading comprehension with guided-choosing title activities helped the learners to comprehend reading texts after the treatment or not. The results of the tests are shown in Table 5.

*Table 5.Descriptive Statistics (Pre and Post-test of the Groups)*

| | | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 | Pre-test Guided Experimental | 11.9524 | 21 | 4.60951 | 1.00588 |
| | Post-test Guided Experimental | 14.4286 | 21 | 4.38830 | 0.95760 |
| Pair 2 | Pre-test free Experimental | 11.8095 | 21 | 4.55652 | 0.99431 |
| | Post-test free Experimental | 11.9190 | 21 | 3.32380 | 0.72531 |

Table 5 shows the number of the students had taken part in the pre-tests and post-tests of free experimental and guided experimental groups was equal, 21 participants in each group. The participants of both groups were pre-tested and then post-tested on reading comprehension. It was done to measure how well participants comprehended the reading texts after treatment and filling the title choosing items that they would learn



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during the treatment. Paired Samples *t*-test was run to see the difference between the free experimental groups' pre-test and post-test and the guided experimental group's pre-test and post-test means is significant. Results are shown in Table 6.

*Table 6. Paired Samples t-test of the Guided Experimental and Free Experimental Groups*

| | | Paired Differences | | | | | *t* | df | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Pair1 | Pre-test vs. Post-test of Guided Experimental | -2.476 | 5.287 | 1.153 | -4.883 | -0.069 | -2.146 | 20 | 0.044 |
| Pair2 | Pre-test vs. Post-test Free Experimental | 0.180 | 3.763 | .8212 | -1.522 | 1.903 | 0.232 | 20 | 0.819 |

Table 6 shows the degree of freedom, the level of significance and the observed *t*-value of free experimental and guided experimental groups' pre-tests and post-tests. The degree of freedom, the level of significance and the observed *t*-value of guided experimental groups' pre-test and post-test are 20 and 0.044 and 2.146, respectively. Since the observed *t* (2.146) is greater than the critical *t* (1.725) with df =20, the difference between the pre and the post-test of guided experimental groups is significant at ($p<0.05$). The second *t*-



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test shows that the observed *t* (0.232) is less than the critical *t* (1.725) with df =20, the difference between the pre and the post-test of the free experimental group is not significant ($p<0.05$).

**5. Discussion**

The results will be discussed in this section, was involved with the following research questions.

$RQ_1$. Does a choosing free title activity as a post-reading task affect learning reading comprehension among pre-intermediate language learners?

Results of the free experimental group's pre-test and its post-test showed a slight improvement in the learners' overall reading comprehension through post-reading tasks through choosing free title activities. By looking at the means of the pre-test and post-test of the free experimental group who chose free title activities, the first null hypothesis was rejected because the progress in the free experimental group's mean in the post-test of comprehending EFL context was seen. Moreover, by comparing the results of the pre-test and post-test of the free experimental group, one can simply notice the partly usefulness of choosing free title activities. The learners who used post-reading task and the appropriate choosing free title activities based on what had been learned in the interval times could achieve a rather good result in the post-test examination. One reason for the better performance of the free experimental group on post-test than its pre-test in using post-reading task types might be due to the fact that it was motivating for teachers and learners to work on a special kind of reading comprehension activities and focused more on choosing the most fruitful titles among the proposed ones.

After analyzing the data, the difference between free experimental group's performances in two pre- and post-tests was observed. This result can be more approved by this evidence that there was a slight significant difference between the means of free experimental group's pre-and post-tests. The mean of the post-test was a little higher than pre-test. The results showed that using the post-reading tasks like free title activities had significant effect on students' reading comprehension. Post-reading tasks and activities provide a chance for students to think about the text and check their reading comprehension again. The post-reading activities have also proved interesting. Thanabalan (2013) supported the research results that language usage would be advantaged by using various post-reading activities and language learning tools, such as Twitter in the school, college or universities and rarely in the community college environment. To support the claim that post-reading activities impacts positively on different aspects and phases of language learning, Keihaniyan (2014) also designed a study to investigate the role of post- reading questions on incidental vocabulary learning with the aim of providing useful techniques for learning vocabulary in language classes. After analyzing the data, the results showed that incidental vocabulary learning has a high correlation with reading comprehension.

$RQ_2$. Does a choosing guided title activity as a post-reading task affect learning reading comprehension among pre-intermediate language learners?

Results of the guided experimental group's pre-test and its post-test showed an improvement in the learners' overall reading comprehension through another type of post-reading tasks, specially, choosing guided title activities. The reason of this salient progress in learners' reading comprehension was the guidance they have received from the teachers when the learners were challenging the reading texts to choose the best title. In general, the ability to learn and promote the reading comprehension of EFL context among the



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participants of the guided experimental group improved saliently by using guided-choosing title activities. After analyzing the data, it was observed a significant difference between experimental group's performances in two pre- and post-tests. The better performance of the guided experimental group on the post-test showed that the learners could work on a special kind of guided title for a text.

The results of this study are supported by Feez (1998), Rooney (2000), and Skehan's (1998) statements that CBI and TBLT have attracted considerable attention around the world because a task-based approach provides learners with interesting challenges and implementation is clearly related to their language needs. Morris and Stewart-Dore (1990) supported this approach in which learners are given a chance to explore the language. Successful teachers have always helped their students to create a connection between the new information they obtain with their real lives. Post-reading activities are used to help the learners to think about the passages they have read. They guide the learners to consider what they are reading to help the students make an organization of the information which they might apply regarding later activities such as presentations or reading texts.

**6. Conclusion**

Results of the study showed that post-reading tasks- particularly choosing title activities with the aim of focusing on the main points of the text- enhanced students' interest and learner`s motivation . It was pointed out that in spite of some limitations on using tasks such as time barriers which are the main outstanding problems in Iranian classrooms in which the time of the course is really short to apply tied procedures in appropriate reading text. Also, post-reading tasks provide a chance for students to practice and check their comprehension at the time they are challenging to choose the best titles. By using it students' reading comprehension will improve in a number of ways by focusing their attention to the main points of the applied post-reading tasks.

The usefulness of choosing free and guided title activities is supported by Maxine and Keene's (2003) declaration in which the process of writing title is described. Writing an effective title needs a brainstorming and revising and it does not appear in one magic moment. To write a good and meaningful title and preventing the writers from writing a meaningless one, some hints should be considered. They include the prediction of the content, catching the readers' interest, the reflection of tone, and containing the keywords which helps the readers for the internet search. That is, choosing a suitable title occurred when chosen title is accordance with the content, the keywords and readers' interest. The titles may be chosen by the teacher's guidance and hints or freely and without receiving any guidance from the teacher. Application of post-reading tasks promotes students' motivation and this may them more motivated in classroom participation while students who merely and conventionally read and practice a text by using reading comprehension items. Seemingly, it is not easy to motivate the students to participate in the classroom activities. Since some of them do not have information about it and they are not interesting.

Post-reading tasks generally and especially choosing free and guided title activities may influence EFL learners' reading comprehension. Focus on language materials through choosing free and guided title activities is an influential and motivational factor for EFL learners. The instruction of reading comprehension through post-reading tasks, in this study to some extent choosing free title activities and more significantly choosing guided title activities do have more impact on the learners' reading comprehension than the



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other reading activities. The effectiveness of choosing guided title activities than choosing free title activities is because of the teachers' guidance and help along with the instruction of reading texts.

The results of this study may be applicable in educational settings for language learners and tutors and teachers who are interested in implicating tasks in EFL contexts. This study could be a starting point in investigation of the effect of post-reading tasks of different kinds of title activities in appropriateness of reading comprehension. Language studies in the domain reading skill are well advised to consider the implications presented in this study.

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# COMPARATIVE LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL CORPUS OF ENGLISH AND TURKISH PROVERBS INTERRELATED IN CHILDREN

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**ABSTRACT**

Proverbs, which have been evaluated as a very rich heritage of collective wisdom and experience in society, are loved by people who prefer spicing up a conversation with the tips of wisdom to 'convince' others to 'prove' their point of view and actions. The paper explores semantic models of proverbs which denote the status of children in the family as well as issues connected to the process of child-raising in Turkish and English languages and cultures. Semantic models were interpreted, compared and the morals of the proverbs were identified. We see that proverbs have a crucial role in the growth and development of young people and not only the parents but also the whole community should remember vivid images portrayed in those proverbs.

**KEYWORDS:** Proverbs; culture; children; equivalent; cross-language

## 1.) MATERIAL AND METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

The proverbs are common to all communities and though each culture has its own set of proverbs, the same wisdom can usually be recognised in a different culture. In spite of religious and cultural differences, nations still reveal similarities regarding everyday life situations which, among many others, include family life and child-rearing as well as the values to which a family should adhere while raising their children as valued members of society(Gozpinar,2014).

There are number of proverbs in each culture explaining children and their upbringing according to their own cultures. This means that the well-being of children and their education is very important for the society. I wanted to show general conceptions in proverbs about children, how and when the proverbs of the both cultures (English and Turkish) studied in this research give messages or attitudes towards the disciplining of children. (Gözpınar, 2011)

I believe that children are very vital for deciding how the world will be after some years. So as educators, we should keep in mind that if we can do some good in the life of a child then there can be at least a slightest change in the world. If educators think on same lines then we can hope of a better future ahead. Children are so much important for the family and society in the proverbs as well and cultures are similar from the point of child development. Education has to be aimed at the overall development of a child.



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As the teachers, we should always remember that the things children learn during school years play a very important role in the proper development of them because those years are the time when children learn by exploring their environment and watching people in everyday life.

In this research, in order to collect enough data for English proverbs about "children", Rosalind Fergusson's dictionary of Proverbs (Fergusson,1983), and "A dictionary of Turkish Proverbs" by Metin Yurtbaşı are used (Yurtbasi, 1993).

**2.) ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND TURKISH PROVERBS ABOUT "CHILDREN"**

In order to explore the paradigm of the proverbs related to children in English and Turkish languages and cultures we conducted the research in several stages:

1. We identified relevant proverbs in the corpus of these languages. In this process we relied on several points:

a) The definition of proverb: "A proverb is a common metaphorical summary which initially originates locally but subsequently achieves a level of universal usage. A proverb is a reflection by people, based on events they have encountered, containing wisdom for the future generations. In addition to accuracy and relevance poignancy makes them easily remembered and repeated"(Gozpinar,2014).

b) The proverbs which include the relevant family lexemes such as son, daughter, mother, father, child and their equivalents in all of the languages were identified.

2. We analysed the proverb data relying on the pragma-semantic model of the proverb suggested by Rusieshvili (Rusieshvili, 2005). According to this theory, the semantic model of a proverb consists of three interdependent layers - explicit, implicit and presuppositional - each of them having its own status, function and playing a definite role in the creation of a general meaning of a proverb.

**3.) SEMANTIC MODELS**

Altogether, twenty-five (25) relevant proverbs were identified in Turkish and fifty-seven (57) proverbs in English which were grouped in nine semantic models. The most important models are discussed in the paper. **TP:** Turkish Proverb; **EP:** English Proverb

**3.1. Families Place a High Value on Children.**

In Turkish and English cultures, a family is considered incomplete without a child. Children liven up the home and they are the wealth of a family. The child is seen as the future of a family and the birth of a child brings hope and dreams into the families. We can imagine the importance of a child in the family by the amount of happiness it brings in. The proverbs below stress the importance of children by emphasising the happiness there is when they have children.

1. **TP:** A house with children is like a marketplace and a house without children is like a graveyard. (Çocuklu ev pazar, çocuksuz ev mezar.)
2. **TP:** A father without children is like a fruitless tree. ( Çocuksuz baba meyvesiz ağaca benzer.)
3. **EP:** Where children are not, heaven is not.
4. **EP:** Children are the keys of paradise.
5. **EP:** The best smell is bread, the best savour salt, the best love that of children.
6. **EP:** Children are poor mens richness.

**3.2. There's Only One Perfect Child in the World**

Parents constantly exaggerate the importance of their children. Every mother thinks that her child is perfect, and better than every other child. The children who seem different to others are perfect for their parents.

7. **TP:** To a crow her own young bird seems a falcon. (Kargaya yavrusu şahin görünür.)



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8. **EP:** The crow/owl thinks her own bird(s)/young fairest/whitest.
9. **EP:** The ape thinks her own babes beautiful.

**3.3. The Behaviour of the Child Will be Similar to That of the Parents**

English and Turkish proverbs agree that parents play the vital role in raising their children and are important in their children's developments. Both parents must be concerned with raising their children because this period can determine the rest of their lives later. The Turkish proverb stresses the function of both parents in watching closely what the child is doing. The Turkish proverb means that children always imitate adults thus; the behaviour of the child in most cases will be similar to that of the parents. The English proverb mentions that parents are models who make the child; thus, parents play a key role in character development.

10. **TP:** Four eyes are for one child. (Dört göz bir evlat içindir.)
11. **TP:** Who stands by a grey horse will be affected either by his temper or by its water. (Kır atın yanında duran ya huyundan ya suyundan kapar.)
12. **EP:** Parents are patterns.

Proverbs from English and Turkish cultures below generally mean that a child grows up to be very similar to his parents, both in behaviour and in physical characteristics, so the passing of those traits and hereditary talent and character is also meant in proverbs.

13. **TP:** The pear does not fall far from the tree. (Armut dalının dibine düşer.)
14. **EP:** The apple never falls far from tree.
15. **EP:** Blood will tell.

As seen in the proverbs, children and parents everywhere, regardless of differences in race, culture, and gender tend to respond in exactly the same way when they perceived. Parents take care of them, entertain them, take responsibility for them, want to enjoy the children occasionally and handle most of the care, education and deal with any problems.

The fact that "mother" is likely to have a greater influence than the "father" on the child in both cultures (English and Turkish) has been revealed by the data. Because the way mothers show their love is always the best for the children and understands her childs problems best of all, mothers are accepted as the best friends for their children as seen in English and Turkish proverbs. Because mothers have such an influence on the childs development, the child must be judged by the qualities their mother displays in Turkish proverbs.

16. **TP:** Only its mother understands the young bird's song. (Yavru kuşun dilinden anası anlar.)
17. **TP:** No friend like a mother. (Ana gibi yâr olmaz.)
18. **TP:** Anasına bak kızını al, kenarına bak bezini al. (Look at the mother before marrying the daughter just as you examine the selvage before you buy the cloth.)
19. **EP:** A mother‟s love never ages.
20. **EP:** A mother‟s love is best of all.
21. **EP:** What the mother sings to the cradle goes all the way down to the grave.
22. **EP:** Men are what their mothers made them.
23. **EP:** Like hen, like chicken.

No matter how much the mother is involved in the care of their children and how close she is to them, the children become dependent on their fathers as well. Fathers are also often more implicated than mothers in the development of a child as is seen in the following proverbs. In the English proverbs, father's role is mentioned in shaping our personalities



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as children and into adulthood and father's love contributes as much to a child's development as does a mother's love.

24. **EP:** One father is more than a hundred school masters.
25. **EP:** No love to a father's.

In both cultures (English and Turkish), the boys are expected to spend a lot of time with their fathers while the girls are trained by their mothers. Consequently, a boy learns to deal with the duties of men in a house from his father and a daughter- from her mother. The English proverbs state that sons tend to resemble their fathers in character and behaviour; and girls to fathers.

26. **EP:** Like mother like daughter.
27. **EP:** Like father like son, like mother like daughter.
28. **EP:** Take a vine of a good soil, and the daughter of a good mother.

Turkish proverb stresses that daughters will be good friends with the mothers whereas sons with the fathers but the English one stresses just the opposite. In the Turkish proverb, the source from whom the boy and girl learn how to perform their duties is indicated.

29. **EP:** A boy's best friend is his mother.
30. **TP:** The son is a friend to the father, and the daughter to the mother. (Oğlan babaya kız anaya yar olur.)
31. **TP:** A son learns from his father to earn a living, and a daughter learns from her mother how to cut out clothes. (Oğlan atadan/babadan öğrenir sofra kurmayı, kız anadan öğrenir bıçkı biçmeyi.)

In the following Turkish proverb, even grandfathers have responsibility for the grandchildren, and their behaviour in the society may have some positive and negative results which cause the children feel upset and happy in the future.

32. **TP:** Sour plum (Koruk) eaten by the father sets the children's teeth on edge - effected the children. (Babası eksi elma yer, oglunun disi kamasır.)

### 3.4. Express Gratitude for the Parents' Devotion

Children are a huge responsibility and require a great deal of self-sacrifice on the part of their parents because they often sacrifice their own happiness to give it to their children. They not only try to fulfil every wish of their children but also they try to protect them from any adversities in the future. Thus, having been brought up well, it is the children's obligation to express gratitude for the parents' devotion and care and repay with the same. We are greatly indebted to our parents.

Because of this, according to English and Turkish proverbs, parents' (especially the mothers') efforts and commitment should be seen, appreciated and respected by children. The model reveals the idea that parents bring children up well so they do not expect rebellion and hatred from them but they deserve honourable treatment from the children.

33. **TP:** The father's blessing takes effect, and a mother's sigh. (Atanın duası tutar, ananın ahı.)
34. **EP:** A father's goodness is higher than the mountains; a mother's goodness is deeper than the sea.
35. **EP:** God, and parents, and our master, can never be requited.

We see in the following Turkish proverbs that the pain caused by the loss of the property is nothing when compared to the grief a person carries after the death of his child. Parents have additional burdens of despair and grief over the death of a child.

36. **TP:** If anyone would cry for me, it is only my mother, the others would do so only feignedly. (Ağlarsa anam ağlar, kalanı yalan ağlar.)
37. **TP:** The grief for one's child is deplorable. (Evlat acısı içler acısı.)



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**3.5.Children Bring Happiness and Misery**

In Turkish culture, family ties are strong which obliges children to respect and help parents in their old age. Consequently, when children do not do so, they are considered ungrateful. If you expect children to make you happy, you will be disappointed as seen in the following proverbs:

38. **TP:** A good child makes his parents proud, a bad one makes them ashamed of him. (İyi evlat (anayı) babayı vezir eder, kötü evlat rezil eder.)
39. **EP:** A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

In Turkish and English proverbs, it is meant that a good child gives happiness to parents whereas a bad one is a big burden on their shoulders. The characteristic traits emphasized are good children and parents are proud of them whereas badly-behaved children make their parents suffer as well. Although parents do everything for them in their lives, children may ignore parents when they are old.

40. **TP:** Babası oğluna bir bağ vermiş, oğlu babasına bir salkım üzüm vermemiş. (The father gave his son a vineyard, but the son did not offer him a bunch of grapes)
41. **EP:** One father is enough to govern one hundred sons, but not a hundred sons one father.
42. **EP:** A son is a son till he gets him a wife, but a daughter's a daughter all the days of her life.

The pleasure by a good child is the best of all according to the proverbs as in the following:

43. **EP:** Happy is he that is happy in his children
44. **EP:** A child's service is little, yet he is no little fool that despises it.
45. **EP:** Wise child is a father's bliss.

The comparison of good and bad children revealed that English and Turkish proverbs share the attitude towards the parents that having children is a blessing from the creator.

**3.6. It is Hard Work for Parents to Raise up and Take Care of a Child**

Proverbs used for the care and concern of the education of the children in the cultures show that raising children is so hard. But the parents patiently and gladly put up with all the difficulties for the sake of their child as seen in English and Turkish proverbs. It is hard to raise children properly by comparing the process to hard work. Because it is hard to raise children properly, proverbs state that parents should be ready for expected hardships.

46. **TP:** Raising children is like gnawing at Stones. Çocuk büyütmek taş kemirmek.
47. **TP:** If you have children you will have a thousand worries, if you have no children you will have one worry. (Evladın varsa bin derdin var, evladın yoksa bir derdin var.)
48. **EP:** Children suck the mother when they are young, and the father when they are old.
49. **EP:** Wife and children are bills of charges.
50. **EP:** Small birds must have meat.
51. **EP:** The first service a child does his father is to make him foolish.
52. **EP:** Children when they are little make their parents fools, when they are great they make them mad.
53. **EP:** Children are certain cares, but uncertain comforts.
54. **EP:** Children must be fed.

**3.7.Education in Childhood Shape the Future Character**

Everything has its own time and a child can be taught everything in their childhood. Because children acquire new habits in early childhood, so changing the old ones is difficult in adulthood. You can tell about a child in early ages whether he is going to be a well-mannered in the future or not. The English and Turkish proverbs below stress that the early period of a child's life is the best time to acquire habits and the way of living.

55. **TP:** A tree should be bent when young. (Ağaç yaş iken eğilir.)



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56. **EP:** As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined.
57. **EP:** Raw leather will stretch.

As seen in the proverbs above, people's personalities form when they are children so a person will have the same qualities as an adult that he or she had as a child. At the youngest ages, parents should promote the participation of children in the lives of their families. During childhood, the family continues to play an important role which will have lifelong consequences. Parents should give support and guidance in the right way in order to make their children culturally more developed and a good member of the community.

**3.8.Pampering Excessively Leads to Spoiled Children**

One of the most unpleasant things a parent can encounter on earth may be a demanding and spoiled child because they do not understand the difficulties of life so they believe that they are entitled to whatever they want, whenever they want it.

58. **TP:** A child thinks bread grows in the cupboard. (Çocuk ekmeği dolapta bitiyor/yetişiyor sanır.)
59. **TP:** A young bird's mouth is big. (Yavru kuşun ağzı büyük olur.)
60. **EP:** A growing youth has a wolf in his belly.

As seen in the following equivalents, it is stressed that pampering a child leads to bad results. Spoiling the children by pampering is not accepted and parents should not give all what they want as long as they we could. While educating their children, the parents should be careful not to spoil them because fulfilling all of their wishes may make them lazy.

61. **TP:** Do not spoil the child or he will sit on your head. (Çocuğu şımartma, başına çıkar )
62. **EP:** Woe to the kingdom whose king is a child.
63. **EP:** He that spoils (cockers) his child provides for his enemy.
64. **EP:** A child may have too much of his mother's blessing.
65. **EP:** Give a child while he craves, and a dog while his tail doth wave and you'll have a fair dog, but a foul knave.
66. **EP:** Too much liberty spoils all.
67. **EP:** Dawted (spoilt) daughter makes daidling (lazy) wives.

It is worth noting that several proverbs emphasise the necessity of strictness while bringing up children and suggest that being strict helps them grow up with discipline and good ethics in life. English proverbs state this trait and call for strictness.

68. **EP:** Kindness is lost that's bestowed on children and old folk.
69. **EP:** One should be strict with their children.
70. **EP:** Better children weep than old men.
71. **EP:** A pitiful mother makes a scabby (nasty) daughter.
72. **EP:** Rule youth well, and age will rule itself.

Turkish proverb and English proverbs specify the method of corporal punishment by also indicating that it is necessary to beat children for the parents not to suffer in their old age.

73. **TP:** He who doesn't beat his daughter will beat his knees. (Evladını dövmeyen dizini döver.)
74. **EP:** Spare the rod and spoil the child.
75. **EP:** The kick of the dam hurts not the colt. (Said to point out that children do not feel angry or bitter when punished by their parents).
76. **EP:** Birchen twigs break no ribs.
77. **EP:** The rod doth not make less the mother's love.

**3.9.Children Tell the Truth**



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Parents feel it is extremely important to teach children about the issue of secrets because kids tell it like they see without exaggeration and deception. They do not hesitate to repeat everything they hear, so parents do not have to talk about secrets with them. The following proverbs in English and Turkish let us see the same point of view in accordance with the honesty of the children.

78. **EP:** What children hear at home, soon flies abroad.
79. **EP:** Children and fools speak the truth.
80. **EP:** Children have wide ears and long tongues.
81. **TP:** Don't gossip while children are around. (Çocuğun bulunduğu yerde dedikodu olmaz.)
82. **TP:** Adults at home will say - children from the roof will be notified. (Büyükler evde söyler, çocuklar damda beyan eder. )

**4.) CONCLUSION:**

- Proverbs have strong connection with people's philosophy on children and contain general observations of practical knowledge, situations and other various aspects of child development.
- Using metaphors in the proverbs increases the value of a proverb and takes the listeners to a situation directed by a true story. Proverbs of these nations serve as the rules of the unwritten constitution in the framework of family formation and parent-child relations, and particularly in raising and educating children.
- Parents should take these proverbs into consideration in order to set good examples for their children.
- The proverbs above provide an interesting and informative source of folk knowledge with their highly communicative and instructive value helping parents solve and understand the situations of conflict and stating what should, or should not be done and show conditions for certain actions and attitudes.
- The study of the proverbs related to children in both cultures (English and Turkish) has revealed the importance that these cultures give to upbringing children.
- Both cultures (English and Turkish) emphasize that a parent should be a good example and a wise teacher for their children.
- As is seen in English and Turkish proverbs above, both communities (English and Turkish) give great value and importance to the education of children because children are seen as the vital elements of the family's happiness and are very important for the future.
- Proverbs in English and Turkish cultures revealed that the people of these countries pay great attention to the concept of the family and to the proper grooming of their children. They assign an important role to the parents in the process of raising a good generation.
- Mother and father have duties and responsibilities while bringing up their children because the children learn by observing and imitating their parents, therefore, the parents must be a good example to them. Nothing is much more important than the love of child for the mother. Environment and heredity is also effective in the development of the child.
- If parents hesitate to show their children how to behave appropriately and children are allowed to behave however they want, they will certainly get themselves into trouble and embarrass themselves and their families.
- During the first years of life, education is very effective, so the behaviour, attributes and personality of the child will be shaped in a more permanent form.



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- As seen from the data, from the cultural point of view, the proverbs from both (English and Turkish) cultures highlighted similar issues although they differ from cultural and religious points of view. The relation between proverb and culture is very strong and wit and spirit of a nation are discovered in its proverbs.

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# A REVIEW OF USING TECHNOLOGY IN EFL LEARNING AND TEACHING: CALL IN ELT CONTEXT

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**Abstract**
In the fast advancing world of information, the widespread use of technology in language teaching has been a revolution in all aspects of the field of elt. As such, using technology and all its relevant issues have recently been one of the fitting foci of efl studies which is an inevitable part of the most important contributions of such an attempt to the second-language education. To this end, the current inquiry made an attempt to review studies related to technology, mainly computers, and its influence and interrelation that affect language teaching and learning in an actual class environment. The researcher first provided an overview of literature on recent advances in technology and call, and then elaborated on the major concerns of exploring the interrelation between computer-assisted instructions and English language teaching and learning in an efl context. Furthermore, the researcher shed some light on the integration of technology (in its broad umbrella term) with the learning environment. Concluding remarks come up with the notion that technology corresponds to the ongoing pedagogy for English as a second language education. The findings are discussed with implications for classroom practices and future research.

**Keywords:** computer assisted language learning, technology integration, ELT.

## 1. Introduction

With the on-going development in the technology domain, the interest in applying the innovations to the field of ELT (English Language Teaching) is spreading rapidly. In the field of linguistics, most of the scholars and researchers, likewise, believe in the significance of knowing how these technologies in context would influence the future educational programs within the classroom instructions. The existed literature about using technology in language teaching and learning indicates that researchers like Underwood (1984) have investigated the use of computers in language learning since the 1960s. As such, a momentous amount of literature explores the significance of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) in relation to language education but few studies investigate how and why technology integration is more effective on the process of teaching and learning. Levy (1997), described CALL as "the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning" (p. 1). Gamper and Knapp



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(2002) also referred to CALL as "a research field that explores the use of computational methods and techniques as well as new media for language learning and teaching" (p. 329).

During the last 20 years, the widespread integration of technology into everyone's personal life results in providing immense range of opportunities within and beyond the boundaries of life and increases the practice of technology use in classrooms. However, technology does not include only computers in the field of educations; instead, computers are among the latest in the whole set of technological assistance to enhance language learning.

Strictly speaking, CALL refers to a sort of technology that facilitates language learning. Using CALL for linguistic purposes emerged in 1970s, and since the 1980s. When computers found their way into many schools and people's homes, CALL had gradually shifted its focus towards learners and is regarded as a tool controlled by learners (Kern & Warschauer, 2000). Kenning, M. M and Kenning, M. J. (1990), in their report about CALL pointed out two distinct factors from which CALL originated. The first one is the educational needs and the second one is technological means. CALL also can be viewed from either typical or modern perspectives. The typical CALL refers to any forms of videos, sounds, images, texts, and their combinations while the learners learn the language material by typing at the keyboard, pointing with the mouse, or speaking by microphone. On the other hand, modern CALL points to the centralization of adopting CD-ROM, DVD and a variety of renovated technologies, helping in handling receptive and productive skills and other aspects of the language processing.

One of the main concerns of the current paper is to explore how and why technologies elaborate on the field of ELT, and to touch primarily the recent developments in language learning and technology. Furthermore, this survey tries to illustrate the main concerns of interrelation between CALL and language teaching and learning by reviewing the related articles published in the field of language and technology. Finally, the researcher analyzes how technologies can be successfully integrated into the language learning and teaching environment.

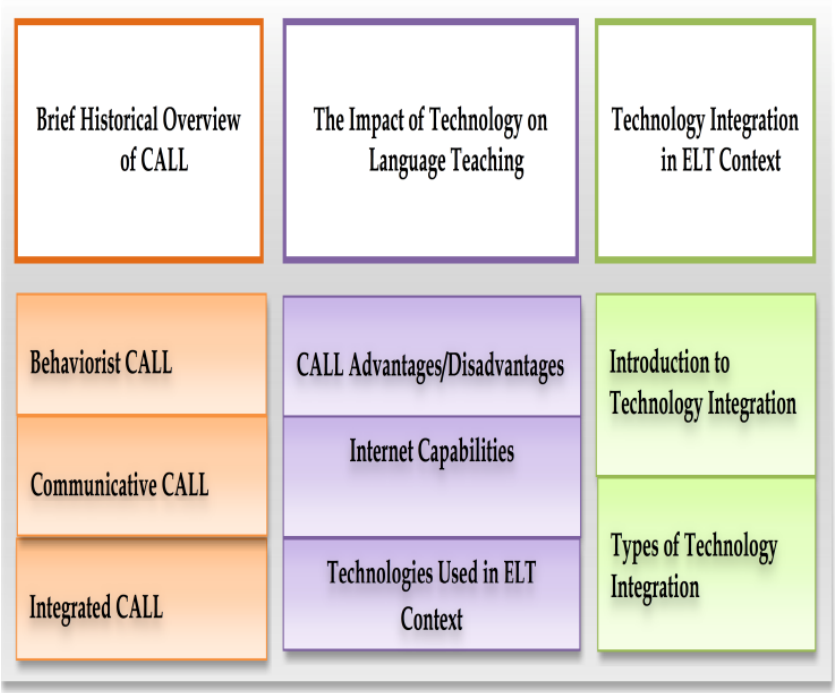


*Figure 1:* The overview of research trend presented in the paper



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## 2. Brief historical overview of call

In the recent history of language teaching, researchers often characterize the changes in terms of a shift from the structural perspectives to the integrative ones. It is wise to begin with a concise record of computer technology usage in TEFL (Teaching of English as a Foreign Language) context, while the range of theoretical perspectives besides their deal of overlapping have a direct impact on how the computer-assisted instructions have been used in the realm of language teaching and learning.

Technologies, or computers in a narrower sense, have been applied in the field of language teaching since the 1960s based on its historical background. The periods of developments in language learning related to technology are boiled down to three main stages; behaviorist or structural CALL, communicative or cognitive CALL, and integrative or socio-cognitive computer-assisted instructions following Washauer and Healey's (1998) points of view.

### 2.1 Behaviorist CALL

The first phase of CALL goes back to the 1960s, and the programs that were designed, as incorporation for language teaching, were corresponding to behaviorist methodologies. According to Kern and Warschauer (2000), this phase is "consistent with the structural approach which emphasized that repeated drilling on the same material was beneficial or even essential to learning" (p.8). During the 1960s, programs were designed with the assistance of computers in such a way to enhance and give instant feedback to learners' responses to the specific testing exercises on grammatical or vocabulary tutorial and drill programs. Nowadays they are still used in various forms as an educational tool.

### 2.2 Communicative CALL

The second phase was proposed during the 1970s, and there was a shift toward learner choice and a meaning-focused communicative methodology in order to present language in context to learners. Put it another way, approaches of communicative CALL concern the meaning of language in use rather than on its form (Warschauer, 2004). As Warschauer, 2004 stressed,

> Communicative CALL took the form of communicative exercises performed as a way of practicing English. The content of the interaction was not seen as important, nor was the learners' own speech or output. Rather the provision of input was seen as essential for learners to develop their mental linguistic systems. (p. 10)

This phase, in fact, was in keeping with the cognitive methodologies in the 1970s and 1980s (McDonough, Shaw, and Masuhara, 2013). As the authenticity of presented materials to the learners were highly valued in this period, the structural approach was rejected and new programs were used as a facilitating tool for the communicative language approach.

### 2.3 Integrated CALL

The last stage, which is the current phase, is somehow a movement away from interactions with computers and toward interactions with other humans through using computers. McDonough, Shaw and Mauhara (2013) claimed that the Internet development and broader communication opportunities are "drawing on socio-cognitive views of learning, where authentic task and text are central, and teachers draw on tools such as word processors and the Internet to put learners into positions in which they use technology for authentic activity"(p.80). Many thanks must be



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dedicated to the Internet highways, which pave the way for integrating communication opportunities and lead to having access to the authentic sources of information. According to Fouts (2003), research on computers and education, and the integration of computers with traditional instruction generate higher academic achievement in a variety of different subject areas in comparison with the traditional instruction alone.

It is also to bear in mind that the three stages declared above do not fall into limited timelines. As each new stage has emerged, former stages remain. Current uses of computers in the language classroom embody all three of the paradigms mentioned above (Warschauer and Healey, 1998, as cited in Bax, 2003). The following table illustrates the summary of the role of CALL in the three aforementioned approaches adopted from *Network-based Language Teaching* by Kern and Warschauer (2000).

Table 1.
The Role of CALL in Behaviorist, Communicative, and Integrated Frameworks

| **Stage** | **1970s–1980s: Structural CALL** | **1980s–1990s: Communicative CALL** | **21st Century: Integrative CALL** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Technology** | Mainframe | PCs | Multimedia and Internet |
| **English-teaching paradigm** | Grammar Translation and Audio-lingual | Communicative Language Teaching | Content-based, ESP/EAP |
| **View of language** | Structural (a formal structural system) | Cognitive (a mentally constructed system) | Socio-cognitive (developed in social interaction) |
| **Principal use of computers** | Drill and Practice | Communicative exercises | Authentic discourse |
| **Principal objective** | Accuracy | Fluency | Agency |

Bax (2003) argued the fact that teachers can benefit from using eclectic approaches. As he pointed out, "technology use also needs to be understood in relation to a teacher's intentions and role, and where it is used in the curriculum" (as cited in McDonough, Shaw and Mauhara, 2013, p. 80). Bax (2003) further noted that a fully integrated CALL is happened when:

> The technology becomes invisible, embedded in everyday practice and hence 'normalized'. To take some commonplace examples, a wrist watch, a pen, shoes, writing these are all technologies that have become normalized to the extent that we hardly even recognize them as technologies. (p. 24)

It is worth mentioning that studying historical overview of CALL prepared us with discovering how the trends of technology as a whole reflect upon pedagogical purposes.

## 3. The impact of technology on language teaching and learning



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Regarding the prevalent concern in using technology and primarily computers in the field of ELT, it deserves to shed more light on the role and impact of CALL on EFL teaching and learning trend by reviewing some of the related published articles in the field of language and technology.
In recent years, researchers have become more interested in scrutinizing the effective usage of technology in classrooms. Barani (2013), for example, explored the impacts of CALL on vocabulary achievement in ELT context. As a result, he concluded the effectiveness impact of using CALL in EFL educational studies through its significance and potentiality for teaching a foreign language. CALL could motivate EFL learners while it's being used with proper care and taking the educational objectives into consideration clearly. Barani (2014) also argued about the existence of Internet acts like a supplementary tool to enhance the efficiency of language teaching, and furthermore, moving away from concentration on grammar and toward implementing communicative teaching. With the help of Internet a better communication can take place, as it is the most common objective for almost every language learners.
A number of advantages regarding the use of CALL were identified by Barani (2014), based on the research carried out by Warschauer and Healey (1998), and are summarized in the following table.

Table 2.
Lists of CALL Advantages

| | **CALL Advantages** |
|---|---|
| **1** | Moving from grammar practice towards communicative teaching |
| **2** | The vocabulary software incorporating graphics, audio recording and playback, and video |
| **3** | Multimodal practice error-checking and giving feedback |
| **4** | Word-processors coming with spelling checkers |
| **5** | Pronunciation having benefited from CALL |
| **6** | Using game as a fun factor |
| **7** | Pair or small groups working on projects |
| **8** | Variety in the available resources and learning styles used |
| **9** | Exploratory learning with large amounts of language data |
| **10** | Real-life skill building in computer use |

Warschauer and Healy (1998) discussed about the Internets' arrival and highlighted that, "computer both in society and in the classroom-has been transformed from a tool for information processing and display to a tool for information processing and communication" (as cited in Crystal, 2006, p. 266). Consequently, the needs analysis should also be taken into account to see what learners really want to do with the language and what course objectives are brought to the table.



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Regarding CALL disadvantages, Maleki, et.al (2015) expressed some practical points. The following table introduces some of the shortcomings that are worth considering, too.

Table 3.
Lists of CALL Disadvantages

| | CALL Disadvantages |
|---|---|
| **1** | "Computers would increase educational expense and decrease the impartiality of education which eventually lead to be a great burden for parents and schools" (Gips, Dimattia, and Gips, 2004). |
| **2** | "The necessity of having basic knowledge about computer for language learning for both students and teachers. As a result, those students who do not have adequate technological training will not adore the positive points of computer technology "(Roblyer, 2003). |
| **3** | Imperfection of computer assisted language-learning programs **(**Warschauer, 2004). |
| **4** | Computers cannot respond to student's questions as quickly as teachers do due to limitations in artificial intelligence of computers (Dent, 2001). |

It should be mentioned that as some CALL software included drills and integrated them with games as a fun factor, the result was motivating students to learn the language easier. The interactive capability of CALL as a unique factor drew special attention to its contrast to other technological aids as Kenning & Kenning (1983) stated the following:

> The unique property of the computer as a medium for education is its ability to interact with the student. Books and tape recording can tell a student what the rules are and what the right solutions are, but they cannot analyze the specific mistake the student has made and react in a manner which leads him not only to correct his mistake, but also to understand the principles behind the correct solution. (p. 2)

Likewise, Patrikis (as cited in Warscauer, 2004, p.171) in the late 1970s expressed that the advantage of technology-based instruction was that it was completely removed from "real life." Students could therefore learn English without having to participate in the real world—although, of course, they had to come back to the real world to use what they had learned. Bearing in mind a more current expression of the value of technology, mainly computers in instruction, is of Shneiderman (1997), who claimed, "we must do more than teach students to 'surf the net,' we must also teach them how to make waves" (as cited in Warscauer, 2004, p.7). As a consequence, instructors advised to make the best use of computers in the classroom while students are stimulated to perform the most real tasks likely. Besides, by taking the benefits and power of modern information and communication technologies, EFL teachers may change the world in ways that suit students' own critical values and instructional requirements.
Regarding the noteworthy role of the Internet as an additional teaching material and its unique invaluable contributions to the development of language education like studying EFL in the specific context of culture, Barani (2014) made an attempt to summarize the Internet capabilities, which may be used by students as follows:

Table 4.
List of Internet Capabilities Students May Use Summarized by Barani (2014)

| | Internet Capabilities |
|---|---|



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| | |
|---|---|
| **1** | Corresponding in English via e-mail with other classes in other parts of the world |
| **2** | Developing individual pen-pals to write to them |
| **3** | Communicating in real-time chat rooms |
| **4** | Sharing cross-cultural opinions and ideas on sports, music, food, hobbies, etc. |
| **5** | Conducting international surveys for class work |
| **6** | Reading and listening to up-to-date news |

Internet tools and its corresponding applications provided the language teachers and learners a greater ample of opportunities in terms of interactions. It also encouraged the development of global understanding and served implications for both language instructors and foreign language learners.

Zhao (2003) argued that computer-assisted language learning is at least as effective as human teachers. This is in line with the recent year's studies having been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of technology uses in language education. According to Grgurovic, Chapelle, and Shelley's (2013) meta-analysis of performing effectiveness investigations into language learning, which was supported by computer technology, CALL groups excelled better than the non-CALL groups within the synthetic results across their comparable thirty-seven studies. Based on the research regarding the educational innovation, carried out by Orr and Mrazek (2009), lists of more modern technologies that are used in the realm of language teaching are capsulated in the following table.

Table 5.
List of Technologies Used in the Realm of Language Teaching by Orr and Mrazek (2009)

| | **Technologies Used in ELT Context** |
|---|---|
| **1** | Presentation Software |
| **2** | Classroom Video |
| **3** | Concept- Mapping Software |
| **4** | Interactive Whiteboard Technology |
| **5** | Interactive Classroom Response System |
| **6** | Visual Image Capturing Technologies |
| **7** | Visual Imaging Technologies |
| **8** | Video Production Software |
| **9** | Learning Content Management Systems |
| **10** | Podcasting - - Mobile Devices |
| **11** | Website Development |
| **12** | Wiki/Blogging - Social Networking |
| **13** | Virtual Worlds |



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| | |
|---|---|
| **14** | Gaming/Simulations |
| **15** | Large Group Video- Conferencing Technologies |
| **16** | Interactive Desktop Web- Conferencing/Bridging Technology |

It should be highlighted that classroom video, in the investigation done by Orr and Mrazek (2009), regarded as an incorporation of many types of videos presented in class activities regardless of the mode of format and delivery like DVD or streaming. They also include social networking, wikis and blogging as they were used to meet different educational requirements. Virtual world has also played a tremendous role in the educational setting. According to definition given by Wikipedia, the virtual world is "an online community that takes the form of a computer-based simulated environment through which users can interact with one another and use and create objects". Due of the fact that gaming and simulation overlap each other, they are both presented in the same category.

There have been many studies exploring the relationship between CAT (Technology in General Terms) and EFL teaching and learning. Amongst them, Aydin (2010) gave a critical review of technology use in EFL education concerning 17 different studies and discoursed at great length on their interrelations. According to Aydin (2010), the first criteria which he examined was the topic and the overall conclusion drew special attention to the papers for which the most part undertake "EFL learners' attitudes, beliefs, and conceptions about technology and its components, such as computers and the Internet", likewise concentrating on "effects of technology on reading skills, writing skills and vocabulary" (p. 21). Generally, there were four main results obtained from Aydin's study. The table below summarizes the results obtained from his study.

Table 6.

Results Obtained From 17 Studies in TOJET by Aydin (2010)

| | **Aydin's Study Results** |
|---|---|
| **1** | All 17 articles focused on EFL learners and teachers' perceptions, beliefs, assumptions, knowledge, and attitudes toward technological tools and environments such as computers, the Internet, learner-centeredness, e-portfolios, presentations. |
| **2** | The sample groups of the studies consisted of EFL teachers, the students of ELT departments, and ESP students |
| **3** | The papers mainly include reviews and quantitative studies while qualitative studies seem limited |
| **4** | Studies indicate that EFL learners and teachers mainly have positive attitudes towards technology, and that technology has positive effects on EFL learning and teaching processes |

In respect of Aydin's (2010) piece of research on the review of 17 articles on the interrelation between EFL education and technology, in a broad sense, firstly he concluded that the number of investigation in terms of quantity required to be increased. Thus, explanation of analysis on the insufficiency of research would be probed and practical and effective solutions to researcher's difficulties are needed to suggest by educational policy makers. Secondly, topics in terms of its broad diversity in context of EFL demanded to be addressed by researches in the field touched upon with respect to use a larger sample size. Furthermore, researches also should focus on running research about the impact of current technology on speaking/listening skills. Besides, taking into account the "social, communicational and interactional" (Aydin, 2010, p.22) features



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of technology and its corresponding association with EFL learners sounds paramount in future research.

Concerning the impacts of computer and all other technological equipment in educational environment, the findings of the study done by Lai and Kritsonis (2006) correspondingly indicated the positive effect of computer use on the achievement level of second language learners. Additionally, they pointed to the limitations and weaknesses of using CALL program in the educational context such as financial, isolated, and knowledge-required issues. They also concluded that in order to enhance the effective use of technology-related equipment in second language learning and teaching, we must outline both positive and negative impacts of computers in the foreign language-teaching arena.

### 3.1 Characteristics of a Good CALL in Language Learning Environment

Concerning the approaches that CALL is applied in language classrooms, Bangs and Cantos (2004) put forward some characteristics of a good CALL in order to improve the results of pedagogical performance. As they believed, CALL is not an issue separate from other language teaching and learning realm. As well, he pointed out that CALL should put the learners at the center of the process, and exist for the learners, not teacher. According to Bangs and Cantos' perspective, a good CALL should be adaptive and introduce technology, rather than serve it. A good CALL also should engage and motivate the learners, respond to research and students' needs, should be focused and assist learners learn better.

## 4. Technology integration in ELT context

### 4.1 An Introduction to Technology Integration

Nowadays, the development of technology facilitates down-to-earth approach in solving ELT problems. The notion of integrating technology in ELT context is consistent with Swain (1985) "output hypothesis". This hypothesis suggests that by social interaction, EFL learners can develop their language competence through negotiation of meaning and interactional exchanges. Technology integration is defined as the use of resources like computers, mobile phones, software, and Internet highway in actual class environment. In order to achieve the ultimate goal of successful integration of technology in ELT context, the use of technology should be conventional, transparent, materialized and promptly accessible for the forthcoming tasks, and can support the educational goals and help the learners to eventually accomplish their ultimate goals. In an ideal case, if technology integration occurs at its highest level of effectiveness, both teachers and learners would not notice whether or not they are using it, leading to its becoming a second nature. This is again in agreement with the Bax's (2003) "normalization" principle, that is the eventual objective of technology integration. Though the full integration of CALL becomes invisible and embedded in everyday language learning process.

Effective technology integration cloud be achieved by learner, according to EDU TECH District Technology Planning, when:

> Students are able to select technology tools to help them obtain information in a timely manner, analyze and synthesize the information, and present it professionally. The technology should become an integral part of how the classroom functions as accessible as all other classroom tools. (p. 4)



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The international society for technology in education (ISTE) has drawn attention to conditions and concerns of incorporating technology effectively into the classrooms corresponding the educational standards for learners (NETS-S; ISTE, 2002).

### 4.2 Types of Technology Integration

There are some requirements for rapid expansion of technology under certain circumstances in order to reach a successful integration of technology. The most significant one includes the eagerness to accept changes, as it requires continual learning. Technology integration, however, is such a broad area as it covers many tools and practices. As such, a list of different strategies in which technology can be a part of learning process have been retrieved from the website of eduTopi*a* (2015) and included as follows:

- Online Learning
- Project-Based Activities incorporating Technology
- Game-Based Learning and Assessment
- Learning with Mobile and Handheld Devices
- Instructional Tools like Interactive Whiteboards and Student Response Systems
- Web-Based Projects, Explorations, and Research
- Student-Created Media like Podcasts, Videos, or Slideshows
- Collaborative Online Tools like Wikis or Google Docs

The question of whether these kind of technologies, mainly CALL, can develop the learners' language skills and their language acquisition or they do not have a significant effect on the learning trend is on the table. In response to this question, Macaro, Handley, and Walter (2012) concluded that:

> Some language learning benefits of CALL have been shown. These include evidence that CALL helps secondary learners with listening and writing, with some suggestion that speaking can also be improved. However, the research on whether CALL improves reading and on the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary were inconclusive. As far as non-linguistic benefits are concerned, there exist an evidence of positive attitudes towards CALL and learners perceived an increase in confidence in engaging in real learning experiences not found in books and speaking activities (p. 15–20).

In a nutshell, it should also be noted that as we live in a fast changing world of information, new tools and ideas in technology education emerge on day-to-day basis, forcing us to be updated and ready to follow the incessant changing of this trend.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The actual aspects and performance of using computers in the realm of language teaching have changed reasonably throughout the last four decades. Technology in its broad sense implemented into the current field of language education and with the help of technology integration in language learning arena, authentic communicative and discursive educational tools can immerse language learners in truly rich and communicative settings. Researchers put forward that development in language learning and increasing learner's interest and motivation toward CALL are likely to occur when learning technologies are used properly. Consequently, obtaining a clear set of educational objectives for encouraging deep learning approaches seem to be essential. Based on the review of selected articles for the purpose of this research paradigm, CALL can provide a meaningful setting for communicative language learning if it is used effectively through its successful integration into the real class environments.



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As this paper aims at reviewing the selected articles based on their focus of study in field of language technology research, firstly the researcher aims to emphasize the howness paramount concerns of technologies are deployed in classroom practices and how they mediate such practices, is more important than historical phases of CALL's development which is inline with what Motteram (2013) declared. As a result, we only need to take them up to mediate our practices and explore the outcomes instead of waiting for phases of technological development to succeed others or for technologies to become normalized. Technologies and in a narrower sense CALL programs, assist language teachers and learners in language teaching and learning by their outstanding contributions to educational technology as a medium of learning.

By examining the types of research design that reviewed through out this study, most of conducted investigations are quantitative research paradigm and it is highly suggested to run qualitative research as well to fill the presented gap and consequently give us comprehensive perspective on expectations and realistic results. Put forward for consideration, researchers need to concentrate more on different varieties of topics like receptive and productive skills or structural knowledge in terms of technology related educations as of very few qualitative studies have been done in the field of language education and technology. Triangulation approach could also be conducted in order to draw deeper perspective outcomes that result in a more reliable and effective data analysis. Furthermore, it is beneficial to run more studies that could address the pitfalls of technology use on EFL learners and teachers besides their potentials, advantages, and opportunities that the enhancement of technology brings to the realm of ELT which has implications for both EFL teachers and learners.

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# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IRON DEFICIENCY ANEMIA AND LONG-TERM VOCABULARY RETENTION AMON0.G EFL LEARNERS

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**Abstract**

One of the most-heard complaints of many language learners is their failure in retaining new vocabulary they have just learned (Allen, 1983). Body of research on vocabulary retention, has found numerous reasons responsible for this failure including methods of teaching, and types of cognitive processes involved in learning. This study aims at exploring effects of iron-deficiency anemia (IDA) on retention of vocabulary items. Out of a population of 104 Iranian female EFL learners, 36 were randomly selected for the study (18 for control and 18 for experimental groups). Two weeks after vocabulary learning sessions, a delayed post-test was administered. Results of independent samples t-test showed a significant difference between the two groups indicating that language learners who suffered from Iron Deficiency Anemia (IDA) (Ferritin<15μg/L, hemoglobin <12) had lost more words than non-IDA learners. Findings of this study can serve as a starting point to push forward borders of our understating of the nature of long-term vocabulary retention.

***Keywords**: Vocabulary, Long-term retention, Iron deficiency anemi*

## Introduction

Vocabulary is defined as "a list or set of words for a particular language or a list or set of words that individual speakers of a language might use" (Hatch & Brown, 1995). Magnifying the significance of vocabulary, Wilkins (1972) contended that "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (p. 111). Students, even after mastering grammar, have to study masses of unknown words (Laufer, 1986). Contrary to the orthodoxy that related vocabulary learning mainly to reading comprehension (Nagy, Herman & Anderson, 1985;



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Stoller & Grabe, 1993), Cohen and Weaver (2005) argued that vocabulary is a component of language learning that is necessary for all four skills.

One of the most-heard complaints of many language learners is that what they have memorized can be easily gone, and it happens so quickly (Allen, 1983). Since language learners forget the new vocabulary after a short period of time, Long-term retention of new vocabulary has beenfocus of many studies in language learning (Leeke & Shaw, 2000). Then, as Sokmen (1997) argues, the responsibility of helping learners to efficiently learn and remember words must be claimed. Min & Min (2008) emphasizing the vital role of acquiring English vocabulary in understanding its readings, call for searching for effective ways to enhance learners' acquisition and retention of new words.

**Review of Literature**

***a. vocabulary***

Vocabularies are considered to be the building blocks of any language through which language speakers can communicate and, accordingly significance of vocabulary learning is an agreed-upon issue (Allen, 1983). Because of the growing interest of researchers (e.g. Knight, 1994; Wesche & Paribakht, 1996; Zimmerman, 1997) to explore the role of vocabulary in development of the linguistic ability of learners, there is a call by some scholars (e.g. Hatch & Brown, 1995; Hulstijn, 1993) to systematically focus on the process of vocabulary learning. Therefore, language teachers have attempted to find innovative ways and strategies to help students learn new words, and more significantly, to help them retain those words over time. Any language learning method/approach to language teaching (e.g., Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Reading Approach, Audio-Lingual Method, Communicative Approach, Lexical Approach, and Natural Approach) has been part of such attempts. Memorization of lists of new vocabulary, learning new words through natural interaction, acquiring new words through intensive reading, learning vocabulary through repeated dialogues, and learning new words for language functions, have been among various techniques that presumed to help both language learners and teachers to overcome difficulties of vocabulary learning (Decarrico, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2003; Zimmerman, 1997).

Besides from the kind of approaches and methods proposed, researchers distinguished between various types of vocabulary learning. Hulstijn (1992) differentiated between two types of vocabulary learning: intentional and incidental. This distinction has a direct relationship with



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learners' responsibility for learning. When learners intentionally focus on learning new vocabulary (e.g., learning a list of new words), they involve in intentional vocabulary learning. On the other hand, when language exercises are directed to something other than vocabulary learning (e.g., reading a short story), learners acquire new vocabulary incidentally. Nation (2001) argues that intentional vocabulary learning where learners' attention is primarily focused on vocabulary creates better opportunities for vocabulary learning. Such a claim is also supported by experimental studies (e.g., Konopak et al.., 1987). Krashen (1989) and Nation (2001) contend that incidental learning, especially through reading, is responsible for the best part of vocabulary learning both in first and second language

***b. vocabulary retention***

Vocabulary retention is defined as "the ability to recall or remember things after an interval of time" and it is believed to "depend on the quality of teaching, the interest of the learners, or the meaningfulness of the materials" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 457). Therefore, the problem here is about remembering new vocabularies students have already learned, which is of course directly correlated with the way people process them (Bahrick, 1984).

Various elements have been found to have an impact on the degree of retention of a newly learned word. Numerous studies (e.g. Haastrup, 1989; Modria & Wit-de Boer, 1991; Xialong, 1988, as cited in Hedge, 2000) suggest that retention is related to how well meaning is inferred and how much of mental analysis involved. That is, when more mental processing is involved in learning a new word (e.g., when learners are involved in critical reading) chances are more that learners remember it for a longer patch of time. Studies also suggest that when newly learned words are related to previously learned words both in first and second language, more efficient retention can be expected (Haycraft, 1978; Schouten-Van Parreren, 1989).

Levine and Reves' (1990) study suggests that contextualized presentation helps students in comprehension of new vocabulary, while it acts as an obstacle for vocabulary retention. On the contrary, Nam (2010) studied vocabulary retention and found that the use of visual representations (e.g., pictures and drawings) can boost vocabulary retention.

There are also other elements that can influence vocabulary retention. Krueger and Salthouse (2010) found that language learners who have higher command of vocabulary are more likely to remember newly learned vocabulary for a longer time. This is so because such learners can get



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involved more effectively in vocabulary production activities such as retelling a story or composition task. Kasahara (2010) investigated the role of combination of words versus learning a single word on retention of meaning of learned vocabulary. He concluded that word combinations led to more efficient retention than single words. Plass, Chun, Mayer, and Leutner (1998) found that retention of new words can be boosted when they are accompanied with both pictorial and written annotations. Even when learners look up words in an electronic dictionary, those words that are animated with pictures are likely to be better remembered (Lew, 2009). Others (Ellis, 2001; Pulido, 2007; Dubois & Vial, 2000) reported that topic familiarity, background konwledge, and interaction between audio, text, picture, and animation can help students memorize and remember new vocabulary more efficiently.

***c. Iron Deficiency Anemia (IDA)***

IDA is the most widespread nutritional problem; and according to the reports by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2001 more than 2 billion people suffered from IDA worldwide. Data from WHO also indicate that from 1993 to 2005 nearly 30% of the world population suffered from iron deficiency (Benoist et al. 2008). Iron-deficiency anemia is slightly more common in female (9.9%) than males (7.8%). (Vos et al. 2012). Half of the children at the school age suffer from iron deficiency in the different parts of the world. (Looker, 1997; Tatala et al. 2008 ).

IDA is also one of the biggest problems in the Middle Eastern countries (Baghchi, 2004). In Iranian setting, 33% of population both in villages and urban districts suffered from anemia, while iron deficiency anemia stroke about half of the whole population from newborn babies to school-going children and pregnant women (Sheykh Aleslam et al. 2003; Jari et al. 2014; Esmat et al. 2010; Kadivar et al. 2003; Monajemzadeh et al.. 2009; Keikhaei et al. 2007).

For diagnosis of anemia, World Health Organization provides specific standards. According to WHO, level of hemoglobin (an iron-containing protein in red blood cells that carry oxygen throughout the body) in the blood can be an indicator of anemia. Table 1 summarizes the data published by WHO:

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Table 1

*Hemoglobin Levels to Diagnose Anemia at altitude of Sea Level to <1000 meters (g/l)*

| Population | Anemia | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Non-anemic | mild | moderate | severe |
| 5-59 months | ≥110 | 100-109 | 70-99 | <70 |
| 5-11 year | ≥115 | 110-114 | 80-109 | <80 |
| 12-14 year | ≥120 | 110-119 | 80-109 | <80 |
| Non-pregnant women | ≥120 | 110-119 | 80-109 | <80 |
| Pregnant women (15 and above) | ≥110 | 100-109 | 70-99 | <70 |
| Men (15 and above) | ≥130 | 110-129 | 80-109 | <80 |

Another indicator of the IDA is measuring serum Ferritin level, the best indicators of the body's total iron stores. If the level of serum Ferritin is lower than 15 µg/L (Ferritin<15µg/L) for an adult male and female, then the person is diagnosed as suffering from IDA (Asha, 2004; Brugnara, 2003; Cook, 1999; De Paz & Hernandez-Navaro, 2006). Significance of iron is because of its vital role in production of hemoglobin maintaining healthy cells, skin, hair, and nails (American society of hematology). Iron deficiency anemia (IDA) occurs when there is an imbalance between iron intake and loss of iron in the body. It is a health problem that affects major portions of the population especially in underdeveloped countries (Miller, 2013). Hurrell et al. (2010) estimated that 50% of all anemia is caused directly by iron deficiency.

***d. IDA and learning disorders***

One of the significant impacts of IDA is on cognitive processes, learning, and concentration (Gardan, 2004). Bonuck and Kahn (2002) reported that IDA is related with learning disorders. As Youdim (2000) argues "iron deficiency can have a profound long term effect on brain function…with an effect on learning and cognitive processes" (p. 504), because when there is lack of iron, brain enzymes cannot function properly and consequently brain's ability for concentration and learning decreases substantially (Andrews, 2004; Beard, 2001). In studies on schoolchildren, those students who suffered from iron deficiency scored significantly lower in doing classroom assignment; they were also reported to have problems with the exercises that required memorization (Weiskopf et al. 2000). Other studies (e.g., Nachvak et al. 2003) suggest that students' ability for problem solving decreases substantially when they suffer from IDA.



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Kanarek et al. (1991) observed that IDA can cause children and adolescents gain lower scores in intelligence quotient test.
Otero et al. (1999) examined disorders related to iron deficiency in schoolchildren and found that children with IDA had significantly lower scores in items of information, comprehension and verbal performance, and full scale IQ than non-anemic children.

Khani and kyumarsi (2014) explored the relationship between iron deficiency and students' performance in mathematics. They selected 45 female students between 14-15 years and administered three different mathematics tests to them. Results indicated that iron deficiency could negatively affect students' performance in math-related exercises. Moreover, they found that there was a significant difference between participants regarding their numeric memory (their ability to memorize numbers for calculation); those who did not suffer from IDA outperformed those who did. Bruner et al. (1996), also, examined 73 girls who suffered from iron deficiency while they did not suffer from anemia (non-anemic iron deficiency) and treated the treatment group with specific doses of iron. Their findings suggested that those participants who received iron performed better on a test of verbal learning and memory than girls in the control group.

There is already a consensus that adequate iron levels are necessary for normal neurodevelopment (Lozoff & Georgieff, 2006; Beard & Connor, 2003). Many human studies have demonstrated the negative effects of ID on behavior include learning and memory, and affective and social behavior (Lozoff & Georgieff, 2006).

In contrast to adults, Infants and children with early IDA demonstrate acute and wide-ranging learning and memory deficits. For example, nine and 12 months old infants were tested to investigated effects of IDA on their cognition and memory. They were exposed to both their mothers' faces and strangers. The iron-sufficient group (control group) showed a greater attentional response to their mothers and a greater memory for stranger at age of nine. Infants with IDA, however, did not show such pattern of responses until 12 months, suggesting a delay in cognitive development (Burden et al. 2007). Also, other studies (e.g., Siddappa et al. 2004)

suggest that newborn infants with IDA show impaired auditory recognition for processing of their mother's voice.



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Riggins et al. (2009) managed to find a correlation between IDA at birth and learning and memory impairment in next years of life. They studied 3.5 year old children who had suffered from iron deficiency at birth and found that their recall memory performance for elicited imitation tasks was significantly impaired. Children who were iron deficient at birth, showed decreased language development, and fine motor skills at age of 5 compared to normal children (Tamura et al. 2002). Lozoff et al. (2000, 2006) and Shafir et al. (2006), also reported that, children at age of 11 to 14 who were IDA at their infancy, exhibited worse performance on memory tasks, impaired psychomotor development, impairment in attention and concentration, and even more difficulties with anxiety compared to those students who had been born normal.

Santos et al. (2009) investigated effects of iron deficiency on language development of 44 children. Language development of participants was classified according to communicative as-pects and cognitive aspects. Results of their studies indicated significant differences in the language development of the treatment and control group in both communicative and cognitive fields, with worse performance of anemic children.

**Research Question**

Does iron deficiency anemia (IDA) have a significant role in retention of vocabulary items in EFL learners?

**Method**

***Participants***

The participants of this study were 104 intermediate female students aged between 19 to 25 years old, studying different fields at three universities in Zabol, Iran. Selection procedure for the participants included two steps. One, to make sure of the homogeneity of their English proficiency, they first took a Nelson test which is a Standardized English Proficiency Test. The participants whose scores fell one SD above and below the mean were 86 female students, and were selected to take part in the second round of sample selection. For the second step, 75 students underwent a blood test so that those who suffered from IDA would be recognized form

the non-IDA ones (11 did not continue the study). Based on the results obtained from the blood test, 19 students were recognized as suffering from IDA, and 18 of them were assigned to the treatment group (one student was not willing to take part in the study). From among 56 non-IDA students, 18 were selected randomly and comprised the control group so that the number of



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participants would be the same for both groups. Therefore, total number of the EFL learners who participated in the study was 36.

**Instruments**

***a. Proficiency Test***

To make sure of the homogeneity of the participants Nelson test was used. The test is reported to be a reliable and valid test (e.g., Flower & Coe, 1976; Mahmoodi & Talang, 2013) and consists of 50 multiple choice items.

***b. Blood Test***

To diagnose those participants who were suffering from IDA, samples of their blood were taken so that their hemoglobin level and serum Ferritin level could be measured.

***c. Vocabulary test***

Two vocabulary tests were used in this study; a pre-test and a post-test. The vocabulary pre-test was conducted to check the participants' lexical pre-knowledge and to make sure that they were not familiar with the vocabulary that they supposed to learn during the treatment. Therefore, a list of 50 words was selected by the researchers and the participants were asked to write the meaning of each word they knew either in Persian or English. 13 words were recognized as already-known to students and were consequently substituted by new unknown vocabulary. The same vocabulary list was used in the post-test but with a different order of words.

**Procedure**

104 female students volunteered to participate in this study. To screen those EFL learners whose proficiency were homogeneous, they were asked to take part in a proficiency examination. The examination was held for all participants in one of the universities in Zabol, Iran. Before taking the exam, participants were informed that only those who could perform better on the exam would be selected for the next step and therefore they were motivated to do their best. The proficiency test was a multiple-choice type, so the results of the exam came three days after the

examination day. Based on the results of the proficiency test, 86 were found to score ± 1SD above or below the mean.

In the second step, 75 participants underwent a blood test and 11 were not willing to participate. Eight students explained that they were afraid from the blood-giving procedure, two were not



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present at the day of the blood test, and one preferred not to discuss the reason with the researchers. 5 milliliter (mL) blood sample was taken from each of the students by four experienced technician in Sina Laboratory. The blood samples were analyzed using a fully-automatic machine called Autoanalyzer™. The laboratory sent the blood test results one week after the sampling day. According to World Health Organization standards (see Table 1), girls and women over 15 years of age with hemoglobin level of ≤ 11.9 are considered anemic. Moreover, people with serum Ferritin lower than 15 μg/L (Ferritin<15μg/L) are considered iron-deficient anemic. For this study, both standards were applied to diagnose students suffering from IDA (it is worthy to note that in this study, researchers do not differentiate among mild, moderate, and sever anemia). Upon application of these standards, results indicated that 18 female students suffered from IDA (the researchers expected more IDA cases). 56 participants were recognized to be non-IDA and from among them 18 students were selected randomly to take part in the exam as control group.

In the third step, both control and treatment groups took a pretest. The test was a vocabulary list including 50 words selected by three experienced teachers from among different textbooks. The list included five themes (cinema, restaurant, dormitory, airport, and hotel); each containing 10 related words. The aim of administering the test was to make sure that none of the words was known to the participants. List of the selected vocabulary was printed on paper and students were asked to write the meaning of each word in front of it, either in English or Persian. Results indicated that 13 words were known to some students and hence they were substituted with other 13 new words.

In the forth step, students in both groups attended the vocabulary learning sessions. The sessions were held in two consecutive weeks, five times a week for one hour approximately. The researcher themselves taught the new vocabulary to the participants. Every session was allocated to one theme, in a way that at the end of the first week all themes and their related vocabulary were introduced. In the beginning of each session, students watched a video (about 5 minutes) that was related to the theme of the day. Then, the teacher asked every student to explain about the video s/he had just watched in English and all the class discussed about it. During discussion the teachers wrote new vocabulary items on the whiteboard and required to use the new words in their sentences. Next, images describing each item were presented to the students where the word was written below the image. Students were required to explain the image to their peers using the word to be learned. Finally, students were asked to look up the new word in the Oxford



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Advanced Learners Dictionary Software 8th Edition and check pronunciation and different parts of speeches of the word.

In the second week of the study, themes and their related vocabulary items were practiced using different activities including free discussion, role play, and writing a short composition. The same procedure was carried out in both control and treatment groups. Finally, at the end of the second week, the vocabulary-list test was administered as a post-test to compare students' learning in two groups. Two weeks after the post-test, the vocabulary-list test (with a different order of items) was administered as the delayed post-test to students in both groups to survey the effects of IDA on the vocabulary retention of the EFL learners.

**Data Analysis**

The data obtained from the post-test and delayed post-test were analyzed using independent samples T-test in SPSS software version 19. Post-test data was analyzed to make sure that participants in control and treatment groups had mastered the new vocabulary items and gained nearly the same scores. However, the delayed post-test data analysis was done to find any difference between control and treatment group in their ability to retain newly-learned items after two weeks and explore the role of IDA on retention.

**Results**

The vocabulary-list test was administered as pretest after two weeks of instruction. Obtained data was analyzed using independent samples t-test. Table 2 shows descriptive analysis, and Table 3 indicates results of independent samples t-test. According to the results, there was no significant difference between the control (Non-IDA) and treatment (IDA) groups (Sig = .416, $p < .05$).Table

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2. Group Statistics for Pre-test

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Non-IDA** | 18 | 88.89 | 8.844 | 2.085 |
| **IDA** | 18 | 86.33 | 9.159 | 2.159 |
| **Total** | 36 | | | |

**Table 3. Independent Samples Test for Pre-test**

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | F | Sig. | t | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |
| VAR00004 Equal variances assumed | .027 | .870 | .824 | 34 | .416 | 2.444 | 2.967 | -3.586 | 8.475 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | .824 | 33.994 | .416 | 2.444 | 2.967 | -3.586 | 8.475 |

Two weeks after administering the preset, vocabulary-list with different order of items was administered as the delayed post-test. Table 4 shows group statistics for the delayed post-test. As Table 5 indicates, according to the results of data analysis there was a significant difference between control and treatment groups (Sig = .000, $p < .05$).

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**Table 4. Group Statistics for delayed Post-test**

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Non-IDA** | 18 | 81.02 | 6.91. | 2.14 |
| **IDA** | 18 | 70.11 | 15.377 | 3.624 |
| **Total** | 36 | | | |

**Table 5. Independent Samples Test for delayed Post-test**

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | F | Sig. | t | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |
| VAR00004 Equal variances assumed | 8.405 | .007 | 4.253 | 33 | .000 | 17.948 | 4.220 | 9.361 | 26.534 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | 4.190 | 25.188 | .000 | 17.948 | 4.284 | 9.129 | 26.767 |

**Discussion**

Results of this study indicated a significant difference between language learners who were diagnosed as suffering from iron-deficient anemia and those who were non-anemic regarding their capability for long-term retention of the newly-learned vocabulary items of a foreign language. There is enough support in the related literature for this finding (Bonuck & Kahn, 2002; Gardan, 2004; Kanarek et al. 1991; Nachvak et al. 2003; Otero et al. 1999; Youdim, 2000). Lozoff and Georgieff (2006) reported negative effects of ID on behavior include learning and memory. Lozoff et al. (2000, 2006) and Shafir et al. (2006) reported that, children at age of 11 to 14 who were IDA at their infancy, exhibited worse performance on memory tasks compared to those students who had been born normal.

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Based on the results, anemic learners could not remember meaning of the words they had learned two weeks earlier as much as non-anemic learners could. Put another way, non-anemic learners' memory capacity of for long-term retention of vocabulary items seemed to be higher. This goes in line with studies which reported that schoolchildren suffering from IDA showed difficulties in doing exercises that required memorization (e.g., Weiskopf et al. 2000). In addition some other studies (e.g., Khani & kyumarsi, 2014) reported that IDA learners had difficulty in memorizing numbers for mathematical calculations.

Body of research on vocabulary retention has explored various factors affecting degree of learners' success in keeping in mind the new vocabulary items. "quality of teaching, the interest of the learners, or the meaningfulness of the materials" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 457), the way people process vocabulary items (Bahrick, 1984), how much of mental analysis involved for learning new words (e.g. Haastrup, 1989; Modria & Wit-de Boer, 1991; Xialong, 1988, as cited in Hedge, 2000), relation of new vocabulary with previously learned words both in first and second language (Haycraft, 1978; Schouten-Van Parreren, 1989), use of visual and pictorial representations such as pictures and drawings (Nam, 2010), learners' command of vocabulary (Krueger & Salthouse, 2010; Plass et. al. 1998; Lew, 2009), using of word combinations rather than learning single words (Kasahara , 2010), and topic familiarity and background konwledge (Ellis, 2001; Pulido, 2007; Dubois & Vial, 2000) have been all found to be correlated with long-term vocabulary retention. This study has much in common with studies carried out in the field because it tries to uncover factors underlying learners' failure in remembering words for a long time; however, it differentiates itself with focusing on elements that have never been explored before. Approaching the issue from another angle, results of this research can add to our understanding of the nature of learners' memory issues, and shed light over another aspect of the phenomenon.

Results of the study can be significant for language teachers especially in the third world countries where high rates of anemia (including iron-deficiency anemia) is prevalent among female language learners. Studies (e.g., Bruner et al. 1996) suggest that treatment of the suffering learners can boost their memory function and lead to longer and more efficient retention of vocabulary items. Bruner et al. (1996), examined 73 girls who suffered from iron deficiency while



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they did not suffer from anemia (non-anemic iron deficiency) and treated the experimental group with specific doses of iron. Their findings suggested that those participants who received iron performed better on a test of verbal learning and memory than girls in the control group.

While body of research on the relationship between language learning and psychology, sociology, and even neurology is getting richer every day, this study, as a starting point, is a call for more investigations on the relationship between medical dimensions of language learning. Further studies in this field can focus on examining male students and investigate effects of gender as an independent variable on long-term retention of vocabulary to investigate if male students who are suffering from IDA show memory problems for learning vocabulary or not. While this study does not differentiate between different degrees of anemia (mild, moderate,

severe), effects of these different degrees of anemia on retention of vocabulary can be investigated. Second language learners, instead of foreign language learners could be also subjects of this kind of study. Effects of treatment of learners with doses of iron on their vocabulary retention can be a topic for further studies. In addition, relationship between taking specific medicines, and suffering from psychological states, as well as effects of specific diseases on learners' cognitive functions and memory efficacy can be explored with the specific focus on language learning.

**Conclusion**

To shed light over a less-surveyed dimension of vocabulary retention, this study investigated impacts of iron-deficiency anemia as a widespread nutritional disorder especially in less-developed countries, on long-term retention of newly-learned vocabulary items. Results indicated that suffering from IDA can have significant effect on learners' failure in retaining new vocabulary items, meaning chances are high that language learners lose a substantial part of what they've learned when they have insufficient amounts of iron stores in their blood and body. Findings uncover another significant factor behind learners' failures and can suggest necessity of solving the problem with appropriate medical treatments (such as treating language learners with sufficient doses of iron intake).

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