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## **A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MORPHOLOGY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIVISM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In this article I explore some of the arguments pertaining to word-structure used by the nativists to bolster the idea that language is part of our genetic endowment. The focal point of this analysis will centre primarily on the arguments put forth by Steven Pinker in his various works, regarding the morphological constraints supposedly imposed on language by our genetically hard-wired language faculty. Peter Gordon's work on English compounding will also be critically evaluated. I contend that these allegedly innate constraints are wrongly construed as such, and can easily be explained without postulating a 'language acquisition device', as contingent cultural and environmental factors suffice when trying to explain the morphological phenomena Pinker believes can only be explained by the innate constraints of universal grammar. Hence, this strand of the nativist's paradigm needs to be seriously re-evaluated as the original conclusions drawn by theorists like Pinker and Gordon are flawed.

### **Introduction**

Linguistic nativism has been built on an edifice ranging from armchair philosophical argumentation to rigorous empirical data. There are numerous strands of nativism, but the focus here is on word-structure, and on how influential scholars like Steven Pinker have bolstered their case for linguistic innateness with reference to the phenomenon of how phenomena such as derivational and inflexional morphology are constrained by a genetically hard-wired language faculty. Peter Gordon (1986) argues along similar lines, citing research done on compound words, claiming that innate restrictions preclude the compounding of morphologically complex modifiers.

Though this argument is only one strand of a particular theory with an increasingly parochial following, it is still a paradigm that is followed by the majority of linguistics scholars around the world. The concern here is that the mind-set that accompanies a theory of this kind can have negative consequences. In Grein and Weigand (2007), for example, Geoffrey Sampson explores some of the contentious upshots regarding a theory that tries to homogenise mankind, while ignoring the disparities. Language policy has also been informed the world over by this way of thinking. The belief is that if things as detailed as the rules pertaining to word-structure are part of a child's innate machinery, then the educator's role is merely to elicit this innate knowledge. This may have contributed to the rationale behind the failed outcomes-based education curriculum, which sees the teacher as a 'facilitator' who is not meant to teach, but merely to stimulate the expression of what is already innately there.

In the pedagogical context of teaching English as a foreign language, adherents to the critical period hypothesis believe that teachers' jobs only ought to entail helping their students/learners to 'get by' in the target language by aiming for a basic level of communicative competence. This aim is because educators are trained in a paradigm based on the belief that it is impossible to attain native speaker competence after a certain age – this is a biologically constrained phenomenon (cf. Lenneberg, [1967], on whose work Chomsky draws and which he explicitly endorses). The various strands of nativism alluded to here are used to inform policies that are damaging to the country; linguistic pedagogy draws on theoretical underpinnings in linguistics,

and aside from the pedagogical implications of the theory, the nativist paradigm is taking linguistics as a whole away from its scientific standing in the academic world.

Scholars such as Gordon (1986) and Pinker (1994; 1999) argue that phenomena such as compounding rules and the rules pertaining to morphological concatenation are not logically necessary, making their alleged ubiquity not only contingent, but in need of explanation. As mentioned, Gordon and Pinker explain the morphological restrictions found in their data by postulating a universal grammar that is part of our biological endowment. This article serves to re-evaluate this strand of linguistic innateness by pointing out the false predictions Pinker, Gordon (and others of their ilk) make with regard to morphology, and in light of that counter-evidence, proffer an explanation that is more commonsensically commensurable. Hence, this article calls for a paradigmatic re-evaluation of linguistic nativism as a whole. Nativism should either be more answerable to conspicuous counter-evidence, or embrace a theory that is more amenable to the counter-evidence shown in conflicting data.

### **The case for innate morphological constraints**

Pinker (1994) claims that the restrictions pertaining to the structure of words lend evidence to nativism in the sense that children's minds seem to be designed with the logic of word-structure built in. His first example is that of a pattern whereby the derivational affix can attach only to roots, not to stems (i.e. roots with at least one affix attached). When we try to attach a derivational affix to a stem, we get something like *Darwinsian*, which could refer to the works of Charles Darwin and his grandfather, Erasmus Darwin. However, this would sound ridiculous, not because it is illogical, but because there seems to be some sort of innate restriction on what affix can go where in a word. Later Pinker says that the restriction is that derivational suffixes cannot attach themselves to inflected roots.

Pinker (1999) discusses headless compound words, and draws conclusions that provide further evidence for his case. An example of a headed compound would be *"barman"*, with the *-man* part constituting the head. Hence, a *"barman"* is a kind of man, namely one that works in bars. Headless compounds are words like *"walkman"*. Here, *-man* cannot be the head because a *"walkman"* is neither a kind of man, nor is it a kind of walk, even though the rightmost morpheme is usually defined as the head of a compound.

Pinker (1994; 1999) explains that when a compound has a head, all the information regarding the head gets percolated up to the top-most node of the (morphological) tree, including the rules. When there is a headless compound, it is not clear where the information must come from, so the "percolation conduits" get blocked, and the default rule applies. That is the reason why we say *"sabre-tooths"* and *"still-lives"*, not *"sabre-teeth"* and *"still-lives"* (Pinker, 1999; 1994).

Other research cited by Pinker includes Peter Gordon's experiment with three-year-olds, commonly referred to as the *"Jabba experiment"* (Gordon, 1986). He showed them a puppet and said: *"This is Jabba. Jabba eats mice. Jabba is a \_\_\_?"*, to which the children replied: *"Mice-eater"*. Thereafter, he asked: *"Jabba also eats rats. Jabba is also a \_\_\_?"*, to which they replied: *"Rat-eater"*.

Now, Gordon asks, why do they use the plural *"mice"*, but not the plural *"rats"*? Given that not a single child ever used the inflected plural as the initial constituent of the compound, this could indicate that there is some sort of rule that they are applying. It is unlikely that they were told that this is so, as Motherese contains few or no compounds, especially of that kind; it is also unlikely that someone would have told them not to include inflected words in their compounds. Why do they not generalise the rule: *"Create a compound by putting two words together"*? Why should there be a restriction of this sort? Nativists like Gordon and Pinker would explain it as

follows: If there were an innate rule of this kind to facilitate language acquisition, the child would already 'know' some of the things that cannot be said, like including an inflected word in the first part of a compound word, which is obviously why they avoid constructions of this sort.

Gordon concludes that these results were interesting because there seemed to be a consistent restriction in terms of what kind of word was allowed to be in the first part of a compound word. "Mice-eater", for example, was an acceptable form to them; their answer to the first question would be just that. However, they never answered "rats-eater" to the second question; they always answered "rat-eater". This is interesting, because if one goes solely on logic, then "rats-eater" ought not to be precluded, since "mice" and "rats" are both plural forms, and both (equally) morphologically complex.

The question, then, that Gordon posed is: What exactly makes forms like "rats-eater" ungrammatical? The reason he postulated was that the form "rats" is clearly derived from a rule: rat + -s. The word "mice", however, is not; despite its morphological complexity, the word is learnt as a listeme, and therefore treated as such by the lexicon. Hence, "mice" in "mice-eater" is treated by the phonology as a simplex word. This, Gordon claims, must be an innate constraint placed on us by universal grammar, and we have fairly good reason to assume this, given that children as young as three consistently do it.

There are problems with this claim, however, since there are languages that do exactly that which is claimed by Gordon to be universally excluded by an innate constraint. German, for example, makes use of regular plural forms in compounds. Consider the set of data in the table below:<sup>1</sup>

Table 1: English and German compound words

English compound	German translation
1) Mice-eater	Mäusefresser
2) Rat-eater	Rattenfresser
3) Butterfly-eater	Schmetterling(s)fresser <sup>▲</sup>
4) Insect-eater	Insektenfresser
5) Cat-eater	Katzenfresser
6) Flower-eater	Blumenfresser
7) People-eater	Menschenfresser
8) Tree-eater	Bäumefresser
9) Sheep-eater	Schaf(s)fresser
10) Fish-eater	Fischfresser

In German, -e(n) represents the plural suffix. To clarify, Table 2 shows the singular/plural forms of the (German) words used in the data above:

<sup>1</sup> Data gathered by me from a native German informant who recently immigrated to Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>▲</sup> The bracketed "s" is referred to as a "fugen-s" (gapping/bridging s), so-called because it is there to serve as a bridge between the two constituents, and does not in itself carry any semantic significance.



*Table 2: Singular and plural words in English and German*

<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
1) Maus	Mäuse
2) Ratte	Ratten
3) Schmetterling	Schmetterlinge
4) Insekt	Insekten
5) Katte	Katzen
6) Blume	Blumen
7) Mensch	Menschen
8) Baum	Bäume
9) Schaf	Schafe
10) Fisch	Fische

In examples 9) and 10) of Table 1 (schaf(s)fresser and fischfresser), the singular form was preferred by my German informant; in examples 1) and 4) (mäusefresser and insektenfresser), both the singular and plural were judged to be acceptable forms, such that both mausfresser and insektfresser would not count as ungrammatical, though mäusefresser and insektenfresser are the more preferred of the two.

What is interesting about this is that examples 4 to 8 make use of the plural form in exactly the way Gordon would predict to be impossible, since here we have rule-derived words found in the position they should not be found in.

These ostensible counter-examples can be dealt with if it can be shown that the phonology treats these morphologically complex words as simplex; in other words, the phonology is blind to the morphological complexity of these forms. Now we know that irregular plurals are certainly treated by the phonology in the same way as simplex listemes, but if we can show that this is true of not only irregulars, but other complex forms as well, maybe we can save Gordon's thesis from being refuted by these counter-examples.

Kaye (1993) has given us some novel insight into this issue of word structure. In discussing Kaye's views, we will see why words cannot always be classified as either simplex or complex in a binary fashion. I will therefore now outline Kaye's approach to this phenomenon, based on his theory of government phonology, so as to gain a better understanding of the matter at hand:

We cannot assume that the phonology is per se blind to morphological complexity, since the [mz] (from "dreams") is clearly a pseudo-cluster, and deemed both morphologically and phonologically complex.

It is clear, then, that at least some morphological structure is visible to the phonology. Kaye draws a distinction between what he calls analytic morphology and non-analytic morphology. Analytic morphology is morphology wherein the phonology is able to recognise a complex domain structure; non-analytic morphology is not able to. Let us first consider analytic morphology, which is visible to the phonology.

### **Analytic morphology**

As mentioned, the [mz] cluster from "dreams" is invariably complex. What does this tell us about morphological penetration into phonology?

Let us firstly assume that only morphological domains can be represented in the phonology. A compound like “black-board”, then, will have the following structure:

a) [[black] [board]]

Since there are three pairs of brackets, it reflects three phonological domains. These brackets represent how the phonological string is to be processed. To give an exact definition, we can use the CONCAT<sup>2</sup> and  $\phi$  (apply phonology) functions, so “blackboard” can be shown as follows:

b)  $\phi$  (CONCAT ( $\phi$ (black)  $\phi$ (board)))

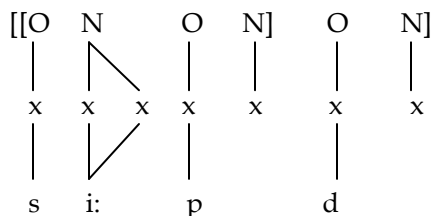
To translate this pseudo-formula into plain language: apply phonology to “black”, then to “board”, concatenate the result, and then apply phonology to that string. So, the brackets we see in example a) are actually not part of the phonological representation, but actually outline domains that are arguments to functions.

This consequently illustrates one type of structure that involves morphologically complex forms. It has the schema [[A][B]]. This is the case for most English compounds.

There is a second structure, involving two morphemes, but only two domains. The structure is [[A] B], and is interpreted as follows:

$\phi$  (CONCAT ( $\phi$ (A), B))

To translate, we do phonology on A, and concatenate the result with B; then do phonology on the result. This is the case with English (regular) inflexional morphology. For example, consider the past tense of the word “seep”. Its structure is [[seep] ed]. With regard to government phonology, we could also illustrate this structure in more detail:



Note that empty nuclei are to be found at the end of each domain, and are licensed to be silent by virtue of their domain-final position. Furthermore, the licensing principle states that all positions in a phonological domain need to be licensed, unless that position is the head of that particular expression. This is actually why the suffix does not form a domain by itself. We see here that the suffix consists of two positions: an onset position and a nuclear position, both being licensed. If “-ed” were a domain, it is obvious that it would violate the licensing principle, which states that a phonological domain must have at least one unlicensed position – its head. The onset is licensed because, like all onsets, it is licensed by the nucleus to its right, which is itself p-licensed, i.e., licensed to be silent.

Analytic morphology also has a rather interesting property in that the distribution of empty nuclei is very restricted; in English, it is almost always found at the end of domains. Hence, this

<sup>2</sup> Short for “concatenate”, a term borrowed from computer programming.

provides us with a fairly reliable parsing cue, since a p-licensed empty nucleus signals the end of a domain, so if it occurs within a word, it shows that it is not a morphologically simplex one. So the pseudo-cluster [mz], from “dreams”, is so-called because:<sup>3</sup>

1. The vowel length is maintained (which would not be possible had it been an authentic cluster); and
2. [m] and [z] are not homorganic, which again is not possible for true clusters.

It is for this reason that much of analytic morphology is phonologically parsable.

So hitherto, we have considered two structures:

1. [[A][B]]
2. [[A] B],

and we have seen how morphology impacts on phonology in the form of these two domains.

Let us now turn to non-analytic morphology (which is invisible to the phonology).

### **Non-analytic morphology**

If morphological structure was present in the form of domains, then to that extent morphology can have an impact on phonology. These domains have the effect of respecting the integrity of the internal domains. By this, Kaye means that when you append an affix, for example, the actual pronunciation of the root/stem does not change. Consider the “-ing” suffix, whose form can be shown as [[V]-ing]. To pronounce this, you just pronounce the verb on its own and attach the suffix. This procedure does not apply to all forms of morphology. For example, take the words “parenthood” and “parental”; the respective suffixes interact with the phonology in different ways, as is evident from the variable pronunciation of the aforementioned words. In fact, the “-al” type of morphology is invisible to the phonology. In other words, the phonology reacts as if there were no morphology at all. Hence, the phonology would treat a word like “parental” in the same way it would treat a mono-morphemic word like “agenda”. So we can characterise the internal structure of a form like “parental” as follows:

[AB]

It is this kind of morphology that is referred to as non-analytic. And since the only effect morphology can have on phonology is the presence of internal domains, it follows that this kind of morphology can have no effect on phonology, since there are no internal domains. To further accentuate the disparity between analytic and non-analytic morphology, let us look at the morpheme “un-” (which is analytic), and the morpheme “in-” (which is non-analytic).

The prefix “un-” does not change its form, regardless of what consonant follows it. This property follows from its analytic morphology. Since the prefix “n” is not adjacent to the following onset, there is no restriction in terms of phonotactics. A word like “unreal”, then, can be represented as

[[un Ø] [ri:l Ø]],

where Ø represents the empty nucleus, whereby the first of which separates the two domains. The first empty nucleus provides us with a parsing cue, along with the nucleus in the following syllable, such that we are able to perceive the prefix as a separate structure. So a string segment

<sup>3</sup> Other than the fact that it is separated by an empty nucleus.

like “nØr” is phonologically parsable, and one can analyse the form as “un-real”.

With the prefix “in-”, the situation is different. Appending “in-” to a stem must yield a well-formed phonological domain on its own; this is because non-analytical morphology, by definition, has no internal domains. A non-analytic combination of morphemes is interpreted as follows:

$\varphi$  (concat (A,B))

You concatenate the two strings and then apply phonology to the result. So a form like “in-rational” is not well-formed because “nr” is not a possible sequence. That is why the “n” has to be dropped, resulting in the form “irrational”.

Non-analytic morphology is therefore invisible to the phonology. There are no internal domains, or any other phonological indication of morphological complexity. Non-analytic forms have the same phonological properties as any simplex form. It is reasonable to assume, then, that any form manifesting non-analytic morphology is listed in the lexicon.

Irregular forms that exhibit morphological complexity are not phonologically parsable. This is because there are no phonological hints of their complex morphological structure. It is for this reason that irregular morphology is always non-analytic.

Therefore, with regard to the kind of compounds we are looking at, compounds can be classified into four groups, viz.:

Group 1: Analytic, singular (for example – “tree-eater”)

Group 2: Analytic, plural (for example – “rats-eater”)

Group 3: Non-analytic, singular (for example – “linguistics-programme”)

Group 4: Non-analytic, plural (for example – “mice-eater”)

In the groups above, “analytic/non-analytic” refers to the compound itself, and “singular/plural” refers to the modifying noun.

The relevance of his thesis is quite evident in that it may explain why the counter-examples to Gordon’s experiment are only pseudo-counter-examples. German, for example, does make use of compound words that contain a plural form. This seems, *prima facie*, a blatant refutation of Gordon’s claim. However, Kaye offers us some novel way to save the Gordon-hypothesis from refutation. My point here, however, is that Gordon’s argument as it stands is untenable, but can be saved in light of Kaye’s explanation, as the plural compound words have been shown to belong to our “Group 4” type words. However, German is peculiar in that the language has more irregular forms than regular ones, which leads one to the rather quaint conclusion that the ‘irregular’ plural seems to be more regular than the ‘regular’ plural inflexional suffix. Hence, the explanation for this phenomenon has nothing to do with genetic inheritance, but can be explained by appealing to the logic of word structure. Whether that is innate is a separate question, and Gordon would have to explain why languages do it differently. One could easily do so with a parameters-like explanation. However, an approach of this kind is scientifically unamenable and therefore vacuous; since this immunises one’s hypothesis from falsification, it degenerates the theory into a pseudo-scientific dogma. If there are other explanations that explain the same data more consistently and more logically, why should we accept the claim that this is unequivocally a result of innate constraints? For the nativists, they insist that innateness is the

only logical explanation for the phenomenon Gordon refers to; Kaye has shown otherwise.<sup>4</sup> This concludes the discussion of Kaye (1995).

A form like “mice-eater” is acceptable because the phonology is blind to its morphological complexity. A form may also not be irregular, and still be an acceptable part of the compound, as in the plural German compound words found in the data above. As Kaye has established, complex forms with no internal domains are treated by the phonology as if they were simplex. If German can be shown to exhibit non-analytic morphology with regard to using plural modifying nouns, they do not constitute true counter-examples; or rather, Gordon’s original hypothesis can be easily adapted to accommodate these facts without actually compromising the crux of his original thesis, which could now state that the restriction applies only to constituents that exhibit analytic morphology. For example, in a compound like *rattenfresser*, even though *ratten* is the (regular) plural of *ratte*, it actually is non-analytic, which means that the phonology is blind to the morphological complexity of the modifying noun.

### **The case against innate morphological constraints**

Firstly, regarding the restriction on inflexional-derivational suffixes, Crystal (1971)<sup>5</sup> expressed the preference of drawing a distinction between a “linguist” and a “linguistician”, such that a “linguist” should refer to a student of the discipline linguistics, whereas a linguistician should refer to someone who is involved in the discipline professionally. If someone had to encounter this distinction without any knowledge of the conventional usage of the term “linguist”, one would accept the terminology without any qualms, especially since a new-comer to the discipline is bombarded with so much jargon that he would expect to come across hitherto unfamiliar words. This example is a clear instance of what Pinker insists should “sound ridiculous” – we have an innate restriction that states that a derivational suffix like *-ian* can only attach itself to roots, and never to stems (Pinker, 1994: 135). According to Pinker, linguistician should also be an impossible construction that “sounds ridiculous”, since *-ian* attaches to the non-root stem *linguist* + *ic*. Would someone reading this accept it as an English word, or perceive it as something that violates our innate knowledge of word structure? Crystal certainly had no qualms about using it, and when I first read it, it did not even strike me as odd.

Later, Pinker says that the restriction is that derivational suffixes cannot attach themselves to inflected roots. This rules out the counter-examples just mentioned, but Sampson refers to a film called *Heathers*, about a group of girls all called Heather, and asks us to imagine this film having some sort of cult following. Would there be anything wrong in describing this as *Heathersian*? Or think of a hypothetical spoof of the film, in the same way one could see *Austin Powers* as having a rather James Bondian paradigm, one could see this spoof as having a ... *Heathersian* paradigm. As a monolingual native speaker, I do not think this sounds ridiculous at all.

It might be true that we as English speakers prefer not to add derivational suffixes to inflexional suffixes, but there is a much better explanation than appealing to instinctive knowledge of word structure – one that provides an explanation based on culture and history. The *-ian* suffix is Latin, and words that use this suffix in English are taken from Latin. Later, *-ian* words were coined that had not existed in Latin, but the people who coined these words tried to make them sound as Latin as possible. Thinking in terms of Latin, it is not clear what it would mean to add an *-ian* suffix to a word inflected with

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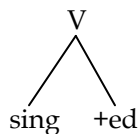
<sup>4</sup> Kaye does indeed endorse one version of innateness, as does Popper, so I do not wish to imply that Kaye believes exactly what I am trying to show in this article as a whole; however, neither explains it the way Chomsky does, and Chomsky has explicitly rejected their versions of innateness.

<sup>5</sup> He wrote this book with the expressed intention of giving an overview of the field to those who were not familiar with linguistics, but wanted to know what the field was about.

-s. Hence, there was no possibility of this occurring, given that they were using Latin as their model. Now things have changed. In the 1960s, one had to provide proof of having passed a substantial Latin exam before a university application was even considered. When my father was in school, taking Latin right until matric was mandatory. Now, Latin is no longer seen as the language of the educated. In light of this fact, it seems viable that more words like Heathersian would be accepted, as they would not have to be based on the Latin model.

Pinker happened to be write at a time when the study of classical languages was fairly recent, yet obsolete enough for most people to not know the exact reason why there are these regularities among -ian words in English. "So, Pinker can announce that these regularities stem from unconscious biological instinct, and gullible readers may believe it" (Sampson, 1997: 97), but it seems quite evident that this is not the case in this instance.

Regarding the way compounds work in terms of headedness and percolation conduits, Pinker (1999) uses this explanation to apply to more than one phenomenon.<sup>6</sup> He talks about how irregular verbs trigger "blocking" mechanisms that preclude the application of the rule (Pinker, 1999: 130-165). The way I understand it, this predicts that either a rule will be generated, or it will be blocked; if it is blocked, then it cannot be generated. For example, consider the incorrect past tense of the verb "sing". This will be perceived as a morphologically complex word:



When a child encounters the correct past tense, "sang", which now has to be rote-learned as a listeme, it "blocks" the application of the "add -ed" rule to this word, since "sang" and "singed" both have the same semantic content. Therefore, whereas the past tense may have been taken to be "singed", it will now be over-ridden (or blocked) by the new word.

However, this does not happen. There is even a clear correlation between exposure to the irregular form and correct usage of it. Instead of saying that we have a "blocking mechanism" that precludes rules from applying, it makes far more sense to say that this is a result of exposure to stimuli from the environment, which, for example, can be explained by Ploch's and Jensen's notion of attestation (Ploch, 2001). Attestation refers to the fact that any form can be tested by a native speaker, and that phonological forms can be added and subtracted from the speaker's set of attestations. Forms are 'more normal' if they are retrieved from long-term memory and put into short-term memory. If this is not done, then the form will be 'less normal'; this may occur either because the form is not retrieved, not retrieved properly, or because the form may be entirely foreign altogether. This explanation, besides sounding more plausible from an a fortiori point of view, is also more in consonance with common sense. It seems rather unlikely that this could be explained by a binary mechanism that either triggers a rule or not; to interpret the phenomenon in this way seems incoherent.

Also, with regard to headed compounds, the same criticism applies. Pinker explains this phenomenon in terms of "percolation conduits" (1994: 142-143) that either allow a rule to "filter" to the top of the morphological node or not. The determining factor here is that of headedness. If

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<sup>6</sup> Note: This counter-argument attempts to refute nativism insofar as it rests on assuming the grammaticality hypothesis to be true, even though I should point out that Prof. Ploch himself supports nativism, despite some disagreement with Chomsky's and Pinker's versions of it.

the compound has a head, then the rules that apply to that head percolate up the morphological tree and apply to the compound as a whole. If it is headless, then the default rule applies to the compound. How, then, does one account for the fact that some native speakers may say either at different times, and sometimes not even be sure of which one to use? To explain this, Pinker (1994; 1999) now says it is a matter of exposure, and whether the speaker perceives the compound as having a head or not; and some may not be sure! Surely speaking about innate “percolation conduits” and blocking mechanisms is far less plausible than saying that we employ a more general learning strategy. Clearly then, we are once again not obliged to take this as support for nativism.

The third instance may seem like a more convincing case, but upon analysis is just as vacuous. Despite having tried to do everything to save Gordon’s hypothesis from refutation, it seems like there is still a problem with his claim. The Brown and LOB corpus,<sup>7</sup> features a natural-speech sentence that reads as follows:

...the smaller European carriers, who have in the past been strong opponents of fares-cutting airlines...

The compound we see here is “fares-cutting”, which is a compound that has an analytically complex word as the first part of the word; this is precisely what Pinker and Gordon would predict to not be possible.<sup>8</sup> There are more instances like the one above in the UK than in the USA, which is why Gordon, who is American, may have missed it; but that only lends further evidence to the notion that it is a cultural norm, not one constrained by genetic hard-wiring (Sampson, 1997).

In addition, the validity of Gordon’s experiment can be questioned for other reasons. His sample was based on a fairly homogenous group of children, all of whom were English first-language speakers, and all of whom were Americans. To draw the conclusion that these restrictions are universal to all human beings may be a bit premature. The reliability of this experiment may also be questioned, since there were also no follow-up tests done; it is at least possible that six months later some of the children in his sample may find the word “rats-eater” a well-attested form.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to critically assess the claims made particularly by two influential theorists adhering to the school of linguistic nativism. Having gone through Pinker’s and Gordon’s arguments for innate knowledge of word-structure, it seems reasonable to conclude that the inference drawn by them is flawed. It now seems quite clear that the inferences they make in terms of innate constraints on word-structure are not justified.

Before making inferences on human nature as a whole, it makes more sense to explore the applicability of the kinds of restrictions assumed to be built into the logic of word-structure. I have shown here that the predictions made by nativist scholars are not borne out even in other dialects of English and the more-closely-related German. Given the variety of languages in the world, it makes more sense to at least see if these properties are present in languages not related to the Germanic branch of the language tree. This is important because nativists are wont to make inferences from their research to human language and even human nature, which is a methodological flaw.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.hd.uib.no/icame.html>

<sup>8</sup> In addition to this, Sampson refers to Stig Johanssen’s 1980 book *Plural attributive nouns in present-day English*, which is filled with even more counter-examples.

Although morphology may be construed as a very specific sub-field of linguistics, the implications from studies such as the ones mentioned here fit into a much broader paradigm with numerous strands; this theory is commonly referred to as linguistic nativism. Linguistic theory informs policy in various domains, including that of language teaching. An ideology that promotes teaching and learning should never be based on what is quite evidently a flawed linguistic theory, certainly insofar as it pertains to the innate knowledge of word-structure. Furthermore, de-bunking this strand of the theory is one step in the direction of getting linguistics back on an empirical track, which shows an open-minded appreciation for the varieties of languages and cultures in the world.

Hence, there is ample scope for future research in this sub-field, and it remains to be seen whether the logic of word-structure in some way allows us to infer linguistic innateness. As it stands, this strand of the argument does not stand up to empirical testing, and perhaps the theory as a whole should be empirically and cross-linguistically tested. If the trend that has transpired in an analysis of this sort continues, it most certainly justifies a paradigmatic re-evaluation on nativism, and its concomitant conclusions.

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# ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL SCRIPTS OF OBJECTIONS AND RESPONSES TO OBJECTIONS IN PERSIAN AND ENGLISH WITHIN NATURAL SEMANTIC METALANGUAGE FRAMEWORK

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## ABSTRACT

Language is the main medium for expressing other phenomena. It expresses the beliefs, values, and meanings which members of a society share, so it is more than a system of sounds, meaning units, and syntax. Wolfson (1989) refers to language as a social behavior. Social rules and cultural values are embedded in language and since they are not the same in different cultures they must be learnt by second and foreign language learners.

In this study a number of social functions in Persian are analyzed using the “natural semantic metalanguage” (NSM) framework developed by Wierzbicka (1991). The results are then compared and contrasted with those of English. The functions in focus are objections, and response to objections. The results of this study indicates that: the NSM is applicable to the communicative interaction routines in Persian, the cultural scripts can be used to develop an awareness of cultural differences in the learners, and the model in question is suitable for cross-cultural contrastive analysis.

**Key words:** social functions, natural semantic metalanguage, communicative competence, cultural script, contrastive analysis

## 1. Introduction

In different societies people speak various languages and they also use them in radically various ways. Wierzbicka (1991: 67) states, “. . . in different countries people speak in different ways - not only because they use different linguistic codes, involving different lexicons and different grammars, but also because their ways of using the codes are different”. It seems clear that mere knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical rules of a language is not enough for one to successfully communicate cross-culturally. The point is that only the ability to produce correct sentences does not constitute knowledge of a language.

According to Richards et al. (1992: 65) “the ability not only to apply the grammatical rules of language in order to form grammatically correct sentences, but also to know when and where to use these sentences” is called communicative competence. As Wolfson (1989) states Dell Hymes (1972) believes that communicative competence refers to the ability of native speakers to use the resources of their language in ways that are not only linguistically accurate but also socially appropriate.

Linguists say that every language represents a unique way of seeing and thinking about the world which is called culture. Wierzbicka (1996) believes that every culture having its own culture specific communication patterns is unique. Culture consists of a set of subconscious rules

that shape people's beliefs, ways of interacting, speaking, feeling and thinking. Different cultures have different conversational routines because their norms and values differ. Such cultural differences may cause miscommunication when people with different cultural backgrounds communicate. As Wolfson (1989: 14) points out, the cause of intercultural misunderstanding is twofold. On the one hand "people coming from different sociocultural backgrounds tend to have very different value systems" and on the other hand this diversity "is usually not well understood".

It would be possible to find endless examples of misunderstandings since polite behavior in one culture differs from those of another. Asadi (1980), as quoted by Sahragard (2000:2) reports that an Iranian responded to an American's complement on his coat with a translated *ta'arof*, i.e. 'You can have it' and the American nearly possessed it. There have also been reports that Iranians have gone hungry when they have used their *ta'arof* strategies of politely refusing hospitality with non-Iranian hosts.

In the light of developing a politeness theory, different scholars have come up with a variety of models. One of them is a pragmatic approach to describing rules of speaking. The first principles of this approach were laid down by Grice (1975). His cooperative principles (CP) assume that any communicative interaction between the speakers depends on such parameters as quantity, quality, relation, and manner. It was further developed by Leech (1983) to include features of politeness. His Politeness Principles (PP) rescued Grice's Cooperative Principles by explaining exceptions to and apparent deviations from the CP. In 1987 Brown & Levinson developed an alternative framework for the universal analysis of politeness in all cultures which has been widely used to describe politeness in wideranging cultures.

All these approaches as Wierzbicka (1991) says have a basic problem: they are ethnocentric or put it in a better term, Anglocentric; what holds for speakers of English doesn't necessarily hold for people generally. Wierzbicka (1991:71) maintains,

It seems obvious that if we want to compare different cultures in terms of their true basic values and if we want to do it in a way that would help us to understand those cultures, we should try to do it not in terms of our own conceptual artifacts (. . .) but in terms of concepts which may be relevant to those other cultures as well.

### **1.1. Objectives of the Study**

The overall objective of this study is to compare and contrast a small portion of communicative interaction routines in English and Persian in terms of cultural script model developed by Wierzbicka (1991); however, this study is also aimed at the following objectives:

1. To examine the applicability of the "Natural Semantic Metalanguage", framework developed by Wierzbicka (1991) to a number of selected social functions in Persian. (Objections and objection response routines are the functions in focus.)
2. To compare and contrast the results of the above analysis with those of English, and
3. To see to what extent cultural script framework developed by Wierzbicka (1991) is suitable for cross-cultural contrastive analysis.

### **1.2. Review of literature**

#### **1.2.1. Wierzbicka's "Cultural Scripts" Model**

James Down as Wierzbicka (1994: 28) cites, pointed out, "one of the greatest stumbling blocks to understanding other people within or without particular culture is the tendency to judge others' behavior by our own standards". It seems obvious that if we want to compare different cultures in a way that would help us to understand those cultures, we should try to do it not in terms of our own concepts, but in terms which may be relevant to those other cultures as well. Goddard (1998: 12) states that the possibility of translation between languages and the ability of people to

learn and understand new languages indicate that there is “some universal framework for understanding”.

To understand societies' ways of speaking Wierzbicka develops 'cultural scripts' model. She says, “We can't do it without ethnocentric bias unless we have a universal language independent perspective” (1994: 1), the rules of speaking as she points out must be stated in terms of “lexical universals, that is, universal human concepts lexicalized in all languages of the world”. Wierzbicka (1991) claims that culture-specific ways of speaking can be described by means of 'cultural scripts' written in lexical and semantic universals.

Every society has a shared set of specific cultural norms that as Wierzbicka (1994: 27) states “can be stated in the form of explicit cultural scripts”. Since cultural scripts can be formulated in lexical universals, they can be easily compared across languages. The key idea of the theory of cultural scripts is that widely shared and widely known ways of thinking can be identified in terms of some empirically established universal human concepts. Her model is not derived from one culture and one language, but is based on a great deal of cross-linguistic evidence. The set of universal human concepts which has emerged from cross-linguistic investigations undertaken by many scholars over the last few decades can be presented in the form of the following table (Table 1).

Table 1. Universal semantic primitives English Version

Substantives:	I, YOU, SOMONE, (PERSON), SOMETHING (THING), PEOPLE, BODY
Determiners:	THIS, THE SAME, OTHER
Quantifiers:	ONE, TWO, SOME, MANY/MUCH, ALL
Attributes:	GOOD, BAD, BIG, SMALL
Mental Predicates:	THINK, KNOW, WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR
Speech:	SAY, WORD, TRUE
Actions, Events, Movements:	DO, HAPPEN, MOVE
Existence, and Possession:	THERE IS, HAVE
Life and Death:	LIVE, DIE
Logical Concepts:	NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF
Time:	WHEN(TIME), NOW, AFTER, BEFORE, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME
Space:	WHERE (PLACE), HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE
Intensifier, Augmentor:	VERY, MORE
Taxonomy, Partonomy:	KIND OF, PART OF
Similarity:	LIKE (HOW, AS)

(Wierzbicka, 2001: 56)

To compare meanings expressed in different languages and cultures one has to be able to state them, as Wierzbicka (1991) points out, a semantic metalanguage independent of any particular language or culture and yet accessible and open to interpretation through any language can help. A metalanguage is a language that is used to describe or analyze another language. For this reason she proposes a 'natural semantic metalanguage' (NSM), based on a hypothetical system of universal semantic primitives shown in table 1.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. The Subjects

Subjects of the study constituted 100 undergraduate students studying at Shiraz Azad University.

Their ages ranged from 18 to 27. They consisted of 50 males and 50 females, majoring in different academic subjects, such as architecture and computer. Those students studying English, Arabic, linguistics and majors related to language were not included in order to decrease the amount of interference.

The subjects were selected since they all had a supposedly full command of the language, and the culture. All of them were educated native speakers of Persian. They were asked for their age, sex, level of education and field of study. The subjects had to express what they would say in each situation in the questionnaire and what the possible answer would be.

### 3.2. Data for the Study

Persian data were elicited from the native speakers of the language. Two researcher-made questionnaires were used in the inquiry, an open questionnaire and a closed one. The open questionnaire which included 10 situations was used for the pilot study. Each situation consisted of two parts: 1) objections, and 2) objection responses.

Eighty undergraduate students, studying at Shiraz Azad University were the subjects in this stage of the study. They were asked to imagine themselves in the given situations and then write what they would say in each case and what the possible answer would be.

The closed questionnaire was prepared based on the data elicited from the pilot study and the intuition of the writer as a Persian native speaker. This questionnaire included the same 10 situations, and was administered to 100 subjects, 50 males and 50 females, at Shiraz Azad University. They were asked to mark the best and the most common choice in each situation. Then the frequency of all the choices was calculated, and to discover whether the sample data fit into the population distribution or not, and whether the differences in figures were large enough to say that they were truly different the Chi-square test at an 0.01 level of significance was applied. In most of the situations the results showed that the choices with the highest frequency could be considered as the commonest forms in Persian. In the cases where the Chi-square test didn't prove significant the analysis relevant to all the choices was given. English data came from Wierzbicka (1991), *Cross-cultural Pragmatics*; and Wierzbicka (1987), *English Speech Act Verbs*.

### 3.3. Procedure of Data Analysis

The elicited Persian data were analyzed in terms of Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) developed by Wierzbicka (1991). The central idea of her theory as Goddard (1997: 197) states is that all languages share a semantic code which "has a language like structure with lexicon and syntax". The NSM is based on a small set of lexical and syntactic universals or near universals that can show the similarities and the differences between different cultures. In order to clarify the point, the following example will suffice.

#### Situation

##### **a. The text**

You are in the bus line and want to get on the bus when a new comer tries to force his/her way and get on the bus. You don't like it and want to stop him/her, so you make an objection.

##### **b. Objection choices**

- A: xânom / ?âqâ çe xabar ?ast? magari nemibinid saf ?ast?  
 madam / sir what news is maybe not see + you line is  
 (What's the matter sir/ ma'am? Can't you see the line?)
- B: dorost savâr šavid čerâ ?inqadr ?ajale mikonid?  
 right get on + you why this much hurry do + you  
 (Get on carefully. Why are you in such a hurry?)

- C: lotfan nowbat-râ ra?âyat konid.  
please turn OM observe do + you  
(Please observe your turn.)
- D: če xabar ?ast? čerâ hol midahi?  
What news is why push give + you  
(What's the matter? Why do you push me?)

**e. Frequencies**

Items	A	B	C	D
Frequencies	29	8	40	23
$X^2 = 21.36$	$\alpha = 11.344$		$P > 0.01$	

**d. Response choices**

- A: bebaxšid man ?ajale dâram.  
excuse me + you I hurry have + I  
(Excuse me. I'm in a hurry.)
- B: delam mixâhad be šomâ rabi nadârad.  
my heart want + it to you relation not have + it  
(I'd like. None of your business.)
- C: hâlâ magari če šode, xob šomâ ?avval befarmâid.  
now maybe what has happened ok you first go on + you  
(So what? Ok, you get on first.)

**e. Frequencies**

Items	A	B	C
Frequencies	29	9	62
$X^2 = 42.98$	$\alpha = 9.21$		$P > 0.01$

**f. Representative dialogue for this situation**

- A: lotfan nowbat-râ ra?âyat konid.  
please turn OM observe do + you  
(Please observe your turn.)
- B: hâlâ magari če šode, xob šomâ ?avval befarmâid.  
now maybe what has happened ok you first go on + you  
(So what? Ok, you get on first.)

**g. Cultural script**

- A: (a) When I think something like this of a person:  
"This person is doing something  
It is bad for him/her/me"
- (b) I feel something bad because of this  
(c) I don't want it to be done  
(d) I want this person to do something good  
(e) I think this person knows why I say this  
(f) I think this person will do it because of this
- B: (a) When I am doing something bad  
(b) If a person wants me to do something good  
(c) I know this person feels something bad because of this  
(d) I say: "Nothing bad happens because of this"  
(e) I don't want this person to think something bad about me  
(f) I say something to that person to feel something good

#### 4. Data analysis and results

##### 4.1. Objections and Responses to Objections in Persian

Hornby (1987: 578) defines objection as a “statement or feeling of dislike, disapproval or opposition”. He states that when one objects to something, one says that he is not in favor of something; he is opposed to it and makes a protest against it.

An important aspect of communicative competence is to have control over the rules of speaking which contains rules of making appropriate objections and responding them accurately. Such rules are not universal; they are culture specific and vary considerably from one culture to another. So in order to interact successfully in a foreign speech community, one should know the relevant beliefs, ways of interacting, feeling, thinking and cultural norms which consist of the related rules of speaking. The underlying cultural norms are not usually objectively known to the native speakers. NSM is an approach by which implicit cultural norms can be brought into attention. So this approach is used to analyze and transcribe objections and responses to them in Persian in 10 situations.

##### 4.2. Comparison of English and Persian Cultural Scripts

###### 4.2.1. English and Persian Objections in Contrast

Speaking about, the verb “object” as an English speech act verb, Wierzbicka (1987) states that when an action is somehow bad in one’s eyes he performs an objection to stop it or to prevent it from achieving its goal. The person who objects might be able to stop or influence the course of that action by his well founded objection that is based on principles which any reasonable person would accept. However, he is not necessarily convinced that his attempt will be successful; he assumes that it might be.

The following cultural script is suggested by Wierzbicka (1987):

- (a) I say: something bad can be said about what X is doing
- (b) I don’t want it to be done
- (c) I think that I can say why I say this
- (d) I say this because I want to make it not be done

A close examination of the interaction routines in Persian shows that objections are more elaborated and complicated. This difference can be best shown by the components of scripts for objection routines in Persian. The result of the present study proves the following general cultural script for all 10 representative objections in the 10 situations:

- (a) When I think something like this of a person:  
     “This person is doing something  
     It is bad for him/her/me”
- (b) I don’t want it to be done
- (c) I can say why I think so
- (d) I say something
- (e) I say this because I want to make it not be done
- (f) I think this person will not do it because of this

Component (a) gives us the idea that the negative view about an action is the target of the objection. Component (b) shows that the speaker wants to stop the action, so by expressing reasons he tries to convince the addressee that the action must be stopped (components c and e). Component (f) implies that compliance is taken for granted and that the speaker expects the addressee’s action to be controlled by his wishes. By contrasting the above cultural scripts, it is clear that the sixth component in Persian (component f) doesn’t exist for English speakers.

In Persian there are also some substrategies which are used in expressing objections. These substrategies accompany the above norm.

a) Substrategy No. 1: Using irony

- (a) When a person is doing something bad
- (b) I don't say in words what I think, feel or want
- (c) This person may feel something bad
- (d) I say something else

The above cultural script reveals that sometimes it is beneficial to avoid direct objection for the sake of the addressee's feelings.

b) Substrategy No. 2: Stating consequences

- (a) When a person is doing something bad
- (b) I say something bad happens to you because of this
- (c) This person may feel something bad because of this
- (d) I think this person will not do it because of this

Here the speaker tries to stop the action by revealing the threatening consequences and making bad feelings towards the action.

c) Substrategy No. 3: Stating directly

- (a) When a person is doing something bad
- (b) I can say what I feel, think or want
- (c) I say: "You are doing something bad"

In this norm the speaker expresses his feeling directly since he wants to stop the action as soon as possible in order to prevent its negative effects.

d) Substrategy No. 4: Suggesting an alternative action

- (a) This person is doing something bad
- (b) I don't want it to be done
- (c) I want this person to do something else

The speaker expresses his negative view against what is going on by stating an alternative way.

e) Substrategy No. 5: Asking for reasons

- (a) I think this person is doing something bad
- (b) I ask: "why are you doing this"

Using this substrategy the speaker tries to convince the addressee that there is no good reason for doing such an act or not doing something else.

#### 4.2.2. English and Persian Responses to Objections in Contrast

Another area where Persian cultural norms are different from those of English is responses to objections. Wierzbicka (1987) states that there are two general strategies, one is the acceptance strategy and the other one is the rejection strategy. If the addressee finds the objection reasonable, he accepts it, otherwise he rejects.

a) Strategy No. 1: Accepting

- (a) I know that you want X not to happen
- (b) I know that you can't make me not do something if I say that I want it to happen
- (c) I think you want me to say if I want not to do it
- (d) I say: I don't want it to happen
- (e) I say this because I want to make it not be done

Wierzbicka (1987) refers to accepting as an act of 'cooperation'.

b) Strategy No. 2: Rejecting

- (a) I know that you want X not to happen
- (b) I know that you can't make me not do something if I say I want it to happen
- (c) I say: "I want it to happen"

- (d) I say this because I want X to be done

The above strategies show that in English personal autonomy is taken for granted and every individual knows that nobody can force him to do or not to do something.

The results of our study show that the general cultural norm in Persian is different. This difference can be best shown by the components of the cultural scripts. There are three general strategies for objection response routines in Persian.

a) Strategy No. 1: Rejecting by stating reasons

- (a) When I am doing something bad
- (b) If a person says something about it
- (c) It is good to say why I am doing it
- (d) This person may not think something bad about me because of this
- (e) I don't want this person to think something bad about me

As it is clear, components (c), (d), and (e) do not exist in Anglo-American cultural scripts. The addressee tries to seem reasonable in the eyes of the other party by bringing some evidence to show it. It is very important for the addressee to reduce other's negative feelings, but in Anglo-American cultural scripts this is not taken into account.

b) Strategy No. 2: Rejecting by stating positive feelings

- (a) When I am doing something
- (b) If a person says that it is bad to do it
- (c) It is good to say something like this to this person:

"Nothing bad will happen because of this  
Something good may happen because of this"

- (d) I don't want this person to think something bad about me
- (e) I say this because I want to make this person feel good

The addressee tries to state his positive feelings towards the action and as result diminish the objector's negative feelings about the action or the actor. Such elements are not present in the case of Anglo-American cultural scripts.

c) Strategy No. 3: Accepting

- (a) When I am doing something bad
- (b) If a person says to me "what you do is bad, don't do it"
- (c) if I know that this person wants to make me do good things
- (d) It is good to say: "You say something good

I don't do it"

- (e) I say this because I want this person to think something good about me

This strategy is present in Anglo-American culture but the elements are not completely the same. For the Persian speaker the other's feeling is considered very important, but for the American one the most important factor is self autonomy whether he accepts or rejects the objection.

## 5. Conclusions

This study was devoted to a comparison and contrast of Persian and English communicative interaction routines within the framework developed by Wierzbicka (1991). This natural semantic metalanguage framework was proved applicable to describe and analyze the communicative interaction routines in Persian. However, it should be noted that research in this area is still at an embryonic stage of development in Persian. So it is necessary to undertake further studies to open new avenues in the area. Wierzbicka's cultural script model was also proved suitable for cross-cultural contrastive analysis.



### 5.1. Implications

From the theoretical point of view this is one of the first studies that analyze some Persian interactional routines within the framework of scripts model developed by Wierzbicka (1991). This approach describes people's ways of speaking in a qualitative, non-behavioral term and frees conversational analysis from ethnocentric bias and language bias. The findings can be used to clarify some areas of similarities and differences between a number of selected social functions in English and Persian as two languages with different cultural norms.

As for application, the results of this investigation can be used in language teaching to inform the learners of cultural values of the target language and its differences with the native one and as a result facilitate cross-cultural communication. To communicate effectively in a second language both interactors, whether the speaker or the listener, must be aware of expectations and cultural values of the language. So mere knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical rules of a language is not enough for one to successfully communicate cross-culturally; language can not be regarded as an entity separate from culture. The students must be aware of the social and cultural significance of the words and expressions employed, as a result it seems reasonable to include culture in the curriculum.

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# THE EFFICACY OF ERROR ANALYSIS ON TEACHING TRANSLATION

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## ABSTRACT

Error analysis developed as a branch of applied linguistics and as an alternative to contrastive analysis. It may be carried out in order to identify strategies learners use in language learning, recognize the causes of learner errors and obtain information on common difficulties in language learning as an aid to teaching and/or in the preparation of teaching materials. Despite the fact that it had its heyday in the 1960s, nowadays it can be illuminating for pedagogy due to its high practicality. Experience reveals that intermediate and even advanced foreign language learners have recourse to their mother tongue resources whenever they are in shortage of L2 patterns and vocabulary. The aim of this paper is to diagnose and remedy the university students' problems in the process of translation. To do so, we have given students a test comprising a set of intentionally knotty Persian sentences to be rendered into English. The analysis of the data pool reveals that the majority of participants have transferred SL structures into the TL texts negatively. The outcome of the study can bring about valuable implications for teachers of translation how to balance their instruction based on the students' present proficiency rather than they are exposed to overly subjective and abstract ideas and theories

**Key Words:** error analysis, contrastive linguistics, equivalence, schematic structure, interference, textual strategies, linguistic relativity

## 1. Introduction

The relationship of linguistics and pedagogy might have reached culmination in audiolingual method with the emergence of contrastive linguistics relying on American structuralism. Although the strong and weak versions of contrastive linguistics were doomed to failure, its moderate version provided a sounder theoretical foundation for language learners and teachers. According to Sridhar (1980), there is no doubt that the learner carries over patterns of L1 into his L2 performance and this results in the largest number of deviant forms and functions in areas where the structures of L1 and L2 differ the most. Critics of contrastive analysis argue that since L1 interference is only one of the sources of error, the predictions of errors is not worth the time spent on it due to the fact that on the one hand, many of the difficulties predicted by contrastive analysis do not appear in the actual learner performance at all and many errors that occur are not predicted by contrastive analysis, on the other hand. Whitman and Jackson (1971), Gradman (1971), Lee (1968) and Richards (1971) among others suggest that the only version that has any validity is the 'a posteriori' version through which the problems are revealed by error analysis rather than the 'a priori' or predictive version.

George (1972) estimates that approximately one-third of all errors made by L2 learners can be traced to L1 interference. Therefore, as Stockwell (1968) points out, since one of the variables contributing to success or failure in language learning is the conflict between linguistic systems, contrastive analysis has a place in L2 methodology. In the past it was believed that error analysis could determine the sequence of presentation of target items in textbooks with the difficult items following the easier ones, devise remedial lessons and exercises and select items for testing the learners' proficiency. Based on the arguments such as those aforementioned some scholars (eg, Wilkins, 1968) have asserted that there is no necessity for a priori comparison of structures and

that an error-based analysis is more satisfactory, more fruitful and less time consuming. Error analysis can have its role as a testing ground for the prediction of contrastive analysis as well as to supplement its results. In the light of the above generalization we have adopted an error analysis approach in our study.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

Sixty four male and female junior university students majoring in English language and literature at Kurdistan University were selected as the sample. They had passed basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing as well as translation principles and practical translation courses. It is deemed relevant that dominance over the foregoing skills and courses must logically boost the process of translation from L1 into L2 and vice versa. It seems to be right in assuming that the acquisition of any sub/skill can strengthen mastering the other sub/skills because of the fact that every skill is composed of linguistic components of vocabulary, grammar, morphology and so the like and language skills are mutually interwoven with one another in terms of reception and production.

### 2.2. Materials and Procedures

To assess the students' proficiency level in translation, we gave them thirty Persian sentences to be rendered into English. It needs to be pointed out that the structures of the SL sentences had been selected intentionally on the assumption that since they were distinctive from their equivalent patterns in the TL, they might create more problems in terms of interference for the responders. It must be remembered that similar constructions had occasionally been practiced in translation lessons about two terms ago and the aim of the research was to examine whether the students had acquired authentic structures being different from their equivalents in the SL. To neutralize the effect of extraneous variables, we did not go into details how students should translate the sentences so that we would measure to what extent the students had picked up English language and translation principles profoundly. Regardless of the insights and findings of contrastive linguistics and error analysis, every experienced teacher of the English language postulates that the occurrence of negative transfer or interference is inevitable on the part of FL learners.

## 3. Data Analysis

The design of the study is one-shot study (XT), that is, there is no control group and the participants are given some experimental instruction for a given period of time and at the end of the period, they receive some sort of test on the treatment (Hatch and Farhady, 1981). As table 1 indicates, after the papers were scored, the percentage of acceptable and unacceptable translations for any item was calculated. According to a principle of testing stating that any point under question should appear meaningfully at least twice (Batchman, 1990), we followed the procedure (see the appendix) to prevent students from making hunches and even wild guesses.

*Table1: The average percentage of acceptable and unacceptable responses for challenging aspects of translation*

Aspects of Translation	Acceptable Responses	Unacceptable Responses
1. Passivization	62%	31%
2. Used to; It+be+adj+infinitive	41%	37%
3. Embedded questions; Inversion/substitution	50%	45%
4. Absence of passivity in English	20%	70%
5. Tense	27%	72%
6. Verb + appropriate preposition	52%	48%

7. Thematization	19%	78%
8. Implicative meaning	33%	48%
9. Ambiguity	5%	86%
10. Schematic structure	39%	33%
11. Proverbs	13%	27%
12. Simile	30%	62%
13. Overgeneralization	16%	58%
14. Referential meaning	33%	58%
15. Measurement	0	75%
16. Word displacement	41%	41%
17. Two word lexical items in Farsi but one word lexical item in English	60%	22%
18. One word in Farsi with two different equivalents in English	73%	25%

#### 4. Results

##### 4.1. Findings

If we categorize the first six aspects of translation in table 1 as manifestations of grammatical structures across SL and TL, it is clear that sixty two percent of participants has been able to translate the passive sentence correctly, fifty two percent of them has used appropriate preposition after its related verb in English (No 6), fifty percent of students have rendered embedded questions and inversion/substitution into English, forty one percent of students have had the proficiency to use 'used to' and 'It+be+adj+inf' as TL equivalents for their SL counterparts, twenty seven percent of student have replaced correct sequence of tenses in their translation and only twenty percent of student have translated the verb 'disappear' acceptably in that it does not have any passive voice in standard English. Of course, the aim is not to translate structure for structure because every language is unique and what is present in one language may not be existent in another language at all or it may be realized differently. What should be concerned is to find out the communicative value of any structure and try to establish that value in the TL.

Although an overwhelming majority of themes can be transferred from English to Farsi and vice versa (Yarmohammadi and Amal-Saleh, 1994; Sarhady, 2008), only nineteen percent of students have figured out this textual strategy and maintained its positions in TL. Theme as the initial element of any message activates information from long term memory to interact with the message. According to Fries (1983), discourse comprehenders do not process all the information in a text. Information which is familiar is merely taken by the readers as a key upon which the following information is to be processed. The discourse producers, on the other hand, being aware of this fact, try to place more relevant information at more noticeable positions in the hierarchical organization of a text or sentence in order to boost the addressee's ability to receive message as it was intended; therefore, this point of departure should not be neglected in the process of translation.

The table demonstrates that thirty three percent of students have translated the implicative meaning successfully and surprisingly about two thirds of them have overlooked this essential layer of meaning in favour of the general meaning of the sentences. Also, ambiguity as one of the intricacies of language is of great importance whether it is uttered intentionally or not. It is interesting to know that just five percent of students have given attention to this aspect of communication and the rest have missed the discoursally motivated nature of language in this area.

It is evident that rhetoric of writing are enormously different within a language and when genres

are contrasted across two or more languages, the cracks become deep fissures. The direction of address writing on envelopes in English is fully different from that in Farsi, so thirty nine percent of participants have translated SL address according to TL conventions. Unexpectedly only thirteen and thirty percent of students have been naturally and authentically able to transfer SL proverbs and similes to TL, respectively while loyalty and faithfulness to figurative use of language is one of the crucial assets for any translator.

Overgeneralization or what Brown (2007) calls 'generalization of a particular rule or item in the second language beyond its conventional rules and boundaries' is one of the major sources of problem FL learners encounter and this flaw surfaces more densely when translation comes into play. In the mistaken belief that the word 'hospitalize' is the derivation of 'hospitality' (an instance of overgeneralization) fifty eight percent of students have rendered the message meaninglessly. Furthermore, vocabulary structure as one of the parameters of equivalence varies across languages, ie some weak version of determinism might be involved in making semantic components of linguistic items and the way even the physical entities are categorized by different languages and cultures. As the table illustrates (No 14), thirty three percent of our sample has comprehended and/or converted referential meaning thoroughly into TL. According to Lotfipour (2004), in general texts the metric system of measurement should be translated into TL norms to facilitate comprehensibility of the text for TL lay readers while no one has noticed this issue in the research.

The arrangement of words in a great number of phrases and word combinations is different across English and Farsi. Regarding this feature, forty one percent of subjects has accomplished the task appropriately. Another distinction lies in that the two languages employ different lexicalization strategies, eg in Farsi there may be a two word lexical item for which there is one word lexical item in English or there may be an individual word in Farsi with two different equivalents in English. For the above-mentioned cases sixty and seventy three percent of participants successively have been cognizant of the gap to communicate the message through TL aptly.

#### **4.2. Discussions**

Those involved in the act of translation should be aware of the complexity and subtlety of SL and TL systems in terms of both forms and functions. Creating equivalization between these two delicate networks calls for consciousness-raising practice due to the intimate relationship between translation and linguistics. Although the sample in our study had received the courses of principles of translation and linguistics in advance and had been instructed most of the points designed in this research, the majority of students could not overcome the items tested in the study. If the percentage of correct and incorrect responses for any aspect of translation under study in table 1 is added, the sum is less than one hundred per cent resulting from the fact that a group of students left it blank. This marked reluctance can be attributed to some sort of avoidance strategy originating from the students' lack of knowledge in that conjunction.

Prediction by means of contrastive analysis is called the strong version of contrastive analysis hypothesis (Brown, 2007) which is unrealistic and impractical; however, error analysis as the weak version of contrastive analysis does not imply a priori prediction of difficulties. It recognizes the significance of interference across languages, but it also recognizes that linguistic difficulties can be more explained 'a posteriori', ie when errors appear, teachers can utilize their knowledge of L1 and L2 to understand the source of errors. Thus, error analysis can offer a cautious middle ground to crystalize the students' problems especially in the field of translation.

### 5. Implications

With reference to the related literature and the outcome of the research mentioned above, the following implications are suggested.

Despite the fact that error analysis assigned to American structuralism has lost its widespread popularity in the course of history, it seems that it can function its diagnostic role in pedagogy. One of the problems teachers face in their daily career is to present theoretically subjective ideas highly beyond the students' knowledge at the expense of dealing with real and tangible issues students are in their need. The findings of error analysis particularly in the area of translation can be used to diagnose the students' weaknesses and strengths in such a way that teachers adjust their instruction via the feedback they receive. Teacher's experience with regard to students' errors committed regularly resulting from the discrepancy of two languages in amalgamation with classroom tests based on error analysis can broaden their horizons in real context.

Identification of language learners' errors and mistakes is one of the controversial issues especially in oral communication; however, when students deviate from common norms and standards of L2 in the process of translation through written mode of language free from the constraints of time, there is no doubt that most of the deviations are errors stemming from students' incomplete competence and not from their performance.

### 6. Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the theoretical concepts and practical procedures discussed in this study, some related investigations are recommended.

1. Some other study can be conducted with two homogenous groups, a control group and an experimental one. The experimental group can receive translation instruction according to error analysis and the other group can be taught through other methods. After receiving treatment in a term period, they are evaluated to see the efficacy of different methods.
2. The native language of the majority of participants in this research was not Farsi, so it is safe the outcome be interpreted with caution because they may not have been proficient enough in written mode of Farsi as the source language in the study even though not all native speakers of a language are warranted to be fluent in their written language. It is of paramount importance the study can be reiterated with Persian students to counteract any possible pitfall and bias arising out of this variable.

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## Appendix

### Testing Items Constructed for the Research

\*Note: The SL sentences submitted for translation have been arranged on the basis shown in table

1. In the right column you see the transcription of the SL sentences and their literal translation into English, respectively.

Aspects of translation	Example in SL
1. Passivization	/In ketab: ra: pedæræm bæra:jæm xærId./ [This book my father bought for me.] /ba:zIkO:ne bltSa:reh ra: be qætI resa:ndænd./ [The poor player was killed.]
2. Used to; It+be+adj+infinitive	/sa:beqæn dZO:rdZ hærfhaIə blhu:deh mlzæd./ [In the past George said nonsense words.] /zærurI æst hæde æksærə sæ, æjət ra: benema:ji:d./ [It is necessary to do your best.]
3. Embedded Questions; inversions /substitution	/a:ja: mlIda:nId u: tSeka:re æst?/ [Do you know what he is?] /æll da:neSdZujə ba: esteæda:dI æst wæ pærwlz hæmtSenIn./ [Ali is an intelligent student and Parviz it too.]
4. Absence of passivity in English	/pesær bætSeh na:pædId SO:d./ [The little boy disappeared.]
5. Tense	/pedæræm gO:ft u: a:ma:deh æst./ [My father said he was ready.]
6. Verb + preposition	/flO:ra: ba: dZIm ezdewa:dZ kærd./ [Flora married George.]
7. Thematization	/dær kela:se dærs tSæha:r næfær huzu:r da:Stænd./ [In the classroom there were four students.] /na:n wæ pænIr sO:bha:nelə æslə u:st./ [Cheese and bread is his main breakfast.]
8. Implicative meaning	/dær enfedZa:re bO:mb se næfær Sæhi:d SO:dænd./ [In the bomb explosion three people were martyred.]
9. Ambiguity	/ba:jæd mærdan wæ zæna:nə tO:hIdæst ra: ja:rI da:d./ [We should help the poor women and men.]
10. Schematic structure	/tehra:n, xIja:ba:nə da:neSga:h, kutSeə bO:nbæstə la:leh,

	pela:kə pændZ, dZVn blu:mfi:ld./ [Tehran, University Ave, Laleh Blind Alley, No. 5, John Bloomfield.]
11. Proverbs	/dO: sæd gO:fteh tSO:n nlm kerda:r nIst./ [Two hundred words is not like one half action.] /ma:rgæzIdeh æz rIsma:ne sləh wæ sefld mItærsæd./ [A snake beaten person is afraid of a black and white cord.]
12. Simile	/dærke keta:b mesle a:be xO:rdæn a:sa:n bu:d./ [Understanding the book was easy like drinking water.]
13. Overgeneralization	/æz tIm mehman næwa:ZI be æmæl a:mæd./ [Tim received hospitality].
14. Referential meaning	/sa:reqln sære ka:rmænd ra: bO:rIdænd./ [The robbers cut the employee's throat.]
15. Measurement	/tu:le pa:rtSeh se ja:rd wæ dO: IntS æst./ [The length of the cloth is 3 yards and 2 inches.]
16. Word displacement	/æll dIr ja: zu:d IndZa: ra: tærk kha:hæd kærð./ [Ali, later or sooner, will leave here.] /ærzeh wæ tæqa:za emsa:l besja:r kæm SO:deh æst./ [Supply and demand has reduced a lot this year.]
17. Two word lexical items in Farsi but one word lexical item in English	/a:gha:ja:n bIstær æz kha:nO:mha: sIga:r mIkeSænd./ [Gentlemen smoke more than ladies.] /æœlæb bæra:jə xO:dda:rI æz sIga:rkeSIIdæn SO:kO:la:t estefa:deh mIkO:næm./ [To avoid smoking, I often use chocolates.] /pedær Səuhære ælls bO:zO:rgtær æz ma:dær Səuhære u:st./ [Alice's father-in-law is older than her mother-in-law.] /mæmjæm xa:hærza:deiə mæn æst./ [Maryam is my niece.]
18. One word in Farsi with two different equivalents in English	/a:qa:jə esmlt dO: pesær wæ se dO:xtær da:ræd./ [Mr Smith has two sons and three daughters.]



# THE EFFECT OF GIVING THE GIST OF READING PASSAGE IN THE STUDENTS' MOTHER TONGUE BEFORE TEACHING READING ON THE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION.

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of giving the gist of reading passage in the students' mother tongue before teaching reading on the students' reading comprehension. Two homogeneous male groups of students at the age of 25–37 have been selected. All students have had the same amount of exposure to English before the experiment. One of the groups was chosen as the control group, and the other as the experimental group. For one term consisting of 14 weeks, each week two sessions of 90 minutes each, the students in the control group were taught their textbook reading comprehension. In the experimental group, the gist of reading passage in the students' mother tongue, at most in one or two sentences were given; then the reading comprehension was taught in the same way as it was taught in the control group. At the end of the term the reading ability of both groups was post-tested by a reading comprehension test. The result of the test shows that giving the gist of the reading passage in the students' mother tongue before teaching reading has a considerable effect on the reading ability of the experimental group. The outcome of the study can have valuable implications for teaching reading comprehension.

## 1. Introduction

Reading as one of the most important skills of language proficiency plays a very significant role in academic achievement of students in general and that of foreign language learners in particular. Hatch (1979) believes that reading is a skill that everyone needs whether s/he is a student in elementary, university, or adult school. Yet, it is a skill that gets slighted in most ESL teacher-training programs (pp.129-130). We, as teachers of English, are involved in teaching reading at all levels of learners, primary, intermediate and advanced. Thus, reading skill seems to be one of the most significant skills to be dealt with in teaching any language. Brown (2004, p.185) states that with the exception of a small number of people with learning disabilities, reading is a skill that is taken for granted. It is quite axiomatic to the researcher that students gain much more knowledge through using reading skill than other skills. Rivers (1981, p.259) contends that reading is one of the most important skills by which learners obtain information and consolidate other areas of language in any language class. It is worth mentioning that Rivers means that reading is important for foreign language learners because in most of the cases and almost most students use this skill much more than the other skills. She asserts:

Justification for an emphasis on the development of the reading skill is not hard to find. In many countries foreign languages are learned by numbers of students who will never have the opportunity of conversing with native speakers, but who will have access to the literature and periodicals, or scientific and technical journals, written in the language they are learning. Many will need these publications to assist them with further studies or in the work; others will wish to enjoy reading in another language in their leisure time to keep them in touch with the wider world (ibid, p. 260).

Despite the fact that reading has been investigated more than other skills by different researchers and different results have been obtained, it is still the core of research topics in most countries, particularly where it is taught as a foreign language. Paulston (1976), Farhady et al (1994), Grabe and Stoller (2001) and many other methodologists all underscore the significance of reading for language learners.

How reading is processed and how it should be taught has been dealt with for a long period of time throughout the history of language teaching. Some experts claim that reading is processed well if and only if students get familiarity with sound system, graphic conventions, words, phrases and sentence formation. In other words they are focusing on reading sub-skills. In fact such a view was frequently uttered in the time when audio-lingual approach was dominant. Carrel, 1988 (qtd in Mirhassani and Khosravi 2002, pp.20-21) concerning reading skill and how it is processed gives the following explanations:

Second language reading was viewed primarily as a decoding process of recognizing the author's intended meaning via recognizing the printed letters and words, and building up a meaning for a text from the smaller textual units at the "bottom" (letters and words) to larger and larger units at the "top" (phrases, clauses, intersentential linkages). Problems of second language reading comprehension were viewed as being essentially decoding problems deriving meaning from print (p. 20).

Of course, there are controversies of ideas among scholars concerning the inefficiency in reading abilities. Hatch, (ibid, p.135) claims that inefficiency in reading probably goes back to problems of reading in the students' mother tongue in that he says why not teach him or her first language and hope for a strong transfer of skills to read in English. Others believe that the students' imperfect knowledge in foreign language is the source of inefficient reading; however, Brown (2001) points out that efficient reading consists of clearly identifying the purpose in reading something. By doing so, students know what he is looking for and can read without potential distracting information (p.306)

Since reading is an important activity, different views concerning reading processes are frequently observed in literature in one way or other among scholars advocating different models of reading processes such as bottom-up, top-down and interactive approaches. In the bottom-up processing approach the reader pays close attention to the text and reads it closely so as to discover the writer's message. In fact in this approach it is claimed that meaning is in the text while in the top-down processing it is claimed that the meaning is not in the text but reader uses his background knowledge in order to recreate the writer's message at the time he is reading the text. Chastain (1988) puts these ideas as follows:

In reading, for example, in a bottom-up approach the emphasis is on the language found in the reading as the basis for comprehension. In a top-down approach primary importance is attached to what readers know about reading and about the world in general. In the first approach, meaning resides in the reading passage; in the second, meaning is derived by readers activating their prior knowledge to recreate the author's meaning (p. 360).

It is now obvious that advocates of both bottom-up and top-down approaches have exaggerated in their own views. In order to process reading the reader should have the necessary familiarity with language components, words, grammar and so forth. After that he can make use of his background knowledge in order to process reading and recreate the writer's intended message. Paulston (1976, p.158) states that the reader interacts with graphic input to recreate the original message. Other scholars have expressed similar ideas as Sarhady (p. 4) who believes that

reading is an interaction between the text and the reader; however, it is the reader who integrates the text to arrive at a coherent comprehension. These ideas are in line with interactive model of processing reading comprehension as Esnaashari (2012, p.17) emphasizes that readers combine elements of both bottom-up and top-down models simultaneously to process reading. So, reading is a kind of information processing making use of linguistic knowledge as well as background knowledge along with some other unobservable neurological processes to recreate the writer's intended message.

Of course it is not the *researcher's* aim here to stand for or against the aforementioned views, rather it is *my* strong belief that students should be highly motivated in order to do their best to study effectively. In that case they gain more profits from their activities while reading any passage either in the case of intensive or extensive readings. So previewing the reading material very briefly can motivate readers to read purposefully and process the readings quickly. Ringler and Weber 1984(qtd in Nickpour and Amini, 2012, p. 52) noted that in order to provide a reader with the necessary background to organize the activity and to comprehend the material, pre-reading activities are considered to be certain types of "enabling activities".

Accordingly, teachers of English should do any possible attempt to motivate students to read carefully. For sure, there can be different types of motivational activities at the teachers' disposal to interest students in the reading. For instance, based on the schema theory giving a few questions before reading comprehension will motivate students to activate their background knowledge to process the reading materials appropriately. Faghih (1990, p.29) contends that teaching reading deserves special attention because in a sense it is one of the major responsibilities of teachers to use different techniques to motivate students to read. He mentions quite a number of techniques to be used by the teachers to help students read effectively. Among these techniques to be used by the teachers "preparation for reading" and "previewing the reading material" are (is) the most efficient ones in the case of our research study. Therefore, teachers should, before teaching any subject, come up with appropriate preparatory activities to make students take part in learning activities eagerly.

Along with the same line Mahmoodi (1988, pp.43-46) maintains that the teacher, considering the necessary background information(the material taught before) should find the most effective ways to arouse interest in a particular text by giving a good related and interesting introduction and relating the passage to the students' own experiences. He (ibid) adds, "if reading is a narrative you had better tell them briefly about how the story starts in order to make it more interesting. You can ask them questions like: 'What do you think will happen?', 'Let's read more about... ' ". Harmer (2007) points out that there are many reasons why getting students to read English texts are an important part of the teacher's job. In the first place, many students want to be able to read texts in English either for their careers, for study purposes or simply for pleasure. Anything we can do to make it easier for them to do these things must be a good idea (p. 99).

Hence, it is the teachers' responsibility to innovate appropriate techniques to motivate the students to follow their reading activities eagerly and efficiently. However, each teacher might try a different technique instead of sticking to the fixed ones. Likewise, the researcher believes that giving the gist of the reading passage in the students' mother tongue (at most in the form of one or two sentences) will encourage students to do their best to read quickly and effectively. As a result, this familiarity with the gist of the reading makes them curious to continue their reading with much appreciation and enjoyment. In this case students take part in learning activities purposefully and learn more. Therefore, conducting such a study seems quite necessary because it sounds that no research has been done so far in this regard. Thus, the research question is an attempt to answer the following: *Does giving the gist of reading passage in the students' mother tongue before teaching reading have any effect on the students' reading comprehension?*

## **2. Method**

### **2.1 Subjects**

Through a placement test used as a pretest a group of sixty students majoring in 'Primary Teaching Course' was selected out of one hundred students to take "General English" to pursue their academic study later in Sanandaj, University for Teacher Training. These sixty students were then randomly put into two, control and experimental groups. They were all male and their ages ranged from 25 to 37. Furthermore, all the students had studied English for six years in high school before being accepted in the university; moreover, they had passed two course credits in English as a pre-requisite for this course. Thus, the researcher was quite certain concerning the homogeneity of the groups at the beginning of the study.

### **2.2. Design**

The researcher used a pre-test and post-test design. To the both groups a pre-test and a post-test were administered. The pre-test was administered at the first session of the term and the post-test, on the other hand, was administered after fourteen weeks at the end of the term. As a treatment, the gist of the reading passage in the students' mother tongue, in the form of one or two sentences, was orally given to the students by the teacher in the experimental group before the reading comprehension would be taught as usual, but the control group received only the second phase of teaching. Finally a post-test was administered to the both groups and the data were analyzed through SPSS program.

### **2.3. Materials and procedures**

To be sure that students' reading abilities in English are close to each other before the treatment a pre-test was simultaneously administered to the two groups. This testing instrument was a reading test taken from the book "TOEFL: Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Workbook by Davy, E., & Davvy, K. (1984, pp. 206-210)". The test consisted of vocabulary and reading comprehension. Based on the purpose of our study the reading section consisting of five reading comprehension passages along with two sentence comprehension texts, were chosen. These passages altogether had 20 multiple choice items. Students took part in the exam and answered the questions in 30 minutes allocated for it. The t-test analysis shows that there was no significant difference between the control and the experimental groups at the beginning of the study. After that "A Textbook of General English for University Students" (Asshabi, S., & Masoumi, M. (2005) was assigned as treatment. To control extraneous variables, the researcher himself took the responsibility of teaching reading comprehension to both experimental and control groups. The classes were held for 14 weeks, each week two 90 minute sessions. As a treatment, the instructor at the beginning of each reading gave the gist of the reading passage in the form of one or two sentences in the students' mother tongue to the experimental group and then the reading comprehension was started. The same procedure was exactly used for control group except for not giving the very summary of the text. At the end of the term a post-test was administered.

## **3. Data Analysis and Discussions**

In order to test the hypothesis the t-test was applied to the data obtained for the pretest and post-tests in different stages. At the first stage the researcher wanted to measure the homogeneity/heterogeneity of reading comprehension abilities of both control and experimental groups at the beginning of the research. To do this the results of the pre-test for the two groups were given to the SPSS software and the following information was obtained.

Table1: Comparison of mean scores of the Experimental and Control Groups regarding reading comprehension on Pre-Test

Groups	Number	Mean	SD	T-observed	df	2-tailed Probability	T-critical
Experimental Group	30	8.3333	1.8999	0.369	58	0.05	2.000
Control Group	30	8.1333	2.2853				

As it is observed from table (1) the mean scores of both control and experimental groups are to some extent very close (the difference is 0.2000). Furthermore, t-observed value which is .369 is much lower than the t- critical value of 2.000 at the probability level of 0.05. Accordingly, the null hypothesis, indicating that there is no significant difference concerning the participants' abilities at the beginning of the research, was approved. Then, the treatment was applied for both groups and at the end of term a standardized test was made and it was administered to the both experimental and control groups. To see whether or not the treatment was effective the means of the post-test of the two groups were given to the SPSS software in order to compare them through t-test and the following information was obtained.

Table 2: Comparison of mean scores of experimental and control groups regarding reading comprehension on post-test

Groups	Number	Mean	SD	T-observed	df	2-tailed Probability	T-critical
Experimental Group	30	16.2000	2.0239	3.516	58	0.05	2.660
Control Group	30	14.1667	2.4365				

The findings of table 2 show that the mean of the experimental group is 16.2000 and control group is 14.1667(the mean gain is 2.0333). It is also understood from the table that the t-observed value which is 3.516 is higher than the t-critical value which was found in the critical t-value (2.660). Thus, the null hypothesis assuming that the knowledge of the participants' reading comprehension abilities would be equal on the post-test was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance; therefore the treatment was effective.

#### 4. Pedagogical implications and suggestions

From practical point of view, many foreign language teachers are trying different techniques to help their students to improve their knowledge in reading comprehension skills. Moreover, it was mentioned earlier that reading comprehension seems to play a major role for foreign language learners to pursue their academic studies. Indeed, it is the teachers' duty to try and innovate different techniques while they are teaching reading to their students. Vossoghi(1990,p. 40) puts it this way," The activities for motivating the class takes different forms. It is a matter of personal taste and innovation of individual teacher rather than a set of fixed values." In this study, the researcher has discovered that giving the gist of the individual passages in the students' mother tongue before teaching reading comprehension will help students to read with enthusiasm; and due to this eagerness they attempt more and make more progress in reading. Thus, it can be concluded that when learners in the foreign language settings learn a little bit about the content of the passage in advance they will be highly motivated to do their best to pursue the story from the very beginning to the end. In this case they try more, economize time

and gain more in comparison with the other classes where students are totally unaware of the content of the passage from the outset.

This study was done with foreign language learners who were rather old, between 25 and 37 at the university level and their major course was not English. It can be tested with different age groups, different majors at different levels of study and with different subjects such as grammar, vocabulary, and other skills in order to be sure whether the similar findings are obtained or not.

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# **EFL LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS USING MIND MAPPING TECHNIQUE IN THEIR READING COMPREHENSION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Reading is purposeful and requires active involvement on behalf of the readers, as during reading a text, they have different aims to achieve (Koda, 2005). As Gambrell, Block, and Pressley (2002) names comprehension as the most important part of reading, helping students to cope with complicated texts they face is one of the crucial parts of teaching English to EFL learners. Among different strategies that are applied to improve reading comprehension, mnemonics, and its more recent type, mind maps are prominent. Mind maps that are graphic and visual presentation of materials, was first introduced by Buzan in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of EFL learners towards using mind mapping technique in reading comprehension. The participants of this study were 31 male and female students of business management at Hakiman Institute of Higher Education, Bojnourd, Iran. It was their first semester and they participated in a pre-English course as a compulsory one. After eight sessions of treatment, when they were familiar with mind mapping strategy and applied it for the reading passages of their textbook, their attitudes toward using mind maps for reading comprehension was investigated through Likert-type questionnaire and oral interview. The findings revealed the positive attitudes of the participants towards the use of mind maps in reading classes.

**Key Words:** Attitudes, Mind Mapping Technique, Reading Comprehension, EFL

## **1- Introduction**

Reading, as a critical aspect of literacy, is regarded as an interaction between the reader and the text (Alderson & Urquhart, 1984). Among the variety of techniques and skills of teaching reading, five of them are identified as essential by the National Reading Panel (2000). They are: (a) phonemics awareness, (b) phonics, (c) comprehension, (d) fluency, and (e) vocabulary. As such, comprehension plays a key role as a reading skill that EFL learners are required to master in particular.

Reading comprehension is crucial in Iran as an EFL context, too. There is a vast range of research in this scope to find the learners' difficulties and to find some solutions for them. Gorjian, Hayati, and Sheykhiani (2009) claimed that in Iranian educational system, learners have difficulties in comprehending a text and there is no special policy in order to teach them some strategies for the sake of better comprehension. In this educational system, there are just some activities and questions after reading to check learners' comprehension and strategy instruction seems to be a missing component.

As teachers can teach strategies to improve the reading comprehension of their students, Zipp, Maher, and D'Antoni, (2011) emphasized this role that teachers are unable to teach the students

to think but, “our obligation to our students is to help them turn the wheels of their mind with ever increasing power and clarity as they grow and learn” (p. 60). Thompson (2000) stated that applying reading strategies would enhance the students’ rate of comprehension and change them from a passive one to an active one. As Ness (2009) argued, the instruction of reading comprehension strategies is highly beneficial in all the levels and as Javdan Faghat, and Zainal (2010) restated, these strategies help the reader to interact with the text.

Mnemonics are one of these strategies that are applied in reading activities especially for reading comprehension for years. Mnemonics or memory-enhancing strategies refer to a “specific reconstruction of target content intended to tie new information more closely to the learners’ existing knowledge base and, therefore, facilitate retrieval” (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1990, pp. 271-272).

Mnemonics works as a bridge to link new information to the already existing one and “mnemonic strategy instruction is based on the premise that concrete information that is meaningful or familiar may be elaborated and made easier to learn than abstract and seemingly unrelated information” (Fontana et al., 2007, p. 346). There are several types of mnemonic devices in two main categories: organizational (to organize the information you already have), and encoding (to encode the new information). Key word, peg word, acronym, acrostic, loci, are some of them.

Mind maps as a kind of mnemonics were introduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Buzan for the first time. A mind map is a visual representation of ideas and concepts. Its flexible links, capacity of using images, colors, and lots of other options facilitate different actions as brainstorming, analyzing, comprehending, etc. One hundred uses of mind maps are mentioned by Foreman (2009).

Although different strategies are recommended by many researchers, it is important to note that there is a relationship between these strategies and different learning styles. According to Peacock (2001), language learning styles are the preferred mode or method of learning that was expanded from Reid’s work in this realm that was published in 1987. According to Leopold (2012), if we were to assess the quality of our teaching based on our students’ learning, we would aim to diversify our instructional approach to be more inclusive of all learners’ preferences. Learning styles have been defined as “the cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment” (Keefe, 1979, p. 4) and “the general approaches students use to learn a new subject or tackle a new problem” (Oxford, Holloway, & Horton-Murillo, 1992, p. 440). Goodson (1994) in a study of 227 East Asian university students concluded that most of them tend to visual and kinesthetic learning styles. The distinct feature of mnemonics is their adjustment with different learning styles.

According to Lu et al. (2013), a mind map “emphasizes divergent thinking and focuses on the core concept or the crucial problem instead of on the process of knowledge acquisition (memorizing) and problem solving” (p. 236). As people with visual memory can remember more the visual images than the words and sentences, Buzan (2003), in a study, found that only three percent of one hundred people that heard the word “Apple”, saw the word “A-P-P-L-E” spelled out in their minds, and the rest imagined a picture or photograph or drawing related to that word. “Mind mapping developed as an aid-memoir -the aim of mind mapping is to accelerate learning, the ability to remember and recall information, by presenting ideas in note form around a central theme, with visual stimuli, thus stimulating different parts of the brain and helping to trigger learning and understanding” (Brightman, 2003, p. 8). He also argued “that is of most use as tool for personal reflection, knowledge exploration and learning. Mind maps tend to be highly



personal, especially hand-drawn ones containing few words and a lot of images" (p. 9).

Their visualization, cooperation in their preparation, colorfulness, their fun, motivating nature, etc. are some of them. Khan (2008) names the fun aspects of mnemonics as their big secrets. This aspect must add with the use of second halves of the brain. "Mnemonics do help, but fun helps even more" (p. 154). Images are one side of this fun, and Buzan and Buzan (1996) stated that the full power of a mind map can be exhibited when we use an image instead of a word in the center or suitable branches.

## **2- Review of the Related Literature**

The review of the literature for this study focuses on procedures used to identify the attitudes of Iranian learners about using mind mapping strategy in their reading comprehension. Searching among literature shows that in spite of vast queries on using mind maps, there are just a few number of findings that investigate the attitudes of learners. Some of them are mentioned below:

Siriphanich and Laohawiriyanon (2010), in addition to investigating the effect of mind maps on reading comprehension of Thai EFL learners, considered their attitudes towards using mind maps in reading comprehension. Their attitudes were evaluated via a questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was distributed among all of the students but the students who were interviewed were in three groups: the students who got higher scores in using mind maps, those who got lower scores, and those whose scores had no change in spite of using mind maps. The results of questionnaire revealed that most of the students (72.4%) were satisfied with using mind maps while reading for better comprehension. The results of interview showed that the students who got the higher scores did not have any problem in using mind mapping technique in their reading comprehension.

Benavides et al. (2010) conducted a research on the effects of mind mapping software on reading comprehension for the students of Bachelor degree in English attending reading and writing in English II course at Universidad de Oriente Univo, San Miguel. In this research, the attitudes of learners towards using mind mapping software were investigated, too. The results of questionnaire showed that 100% of the students considered the Mind Mapping Software as a useful tool for the improvement of reading comprehension skills and summarizing reading materials and 80% of the students believed that it fosters reading and writing skills. In this study, 88% of the students answered that this technique helped them visualize the readings.

Bayindir (2003) also conducted a case study on the attitudes of students of Middle East Technical University towards brain-based applications. The analysis of the data collected through the attitude questionnaire indicated that 93% of the students showed significant positive attitudes towards the brain-based applications, while only 1% of the students had negative attitudes towards the brain-based applications. The analysis of the results of the interviews also revealed that all students had positive feelings about the brain-based applications.

## **3- Method**

For the purpose of this study which aimed to investigate students' attitudes towards mind mapping strategy in reading comprehension of freshman students who try to pass their pre-university general English, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected.

### **Participants**

The participants of this study were 31 female and male students of business management at Hakimian University of Bojnourd, Iran. They were participating in a pre-university general English course as their compulsory one. As for the course schedule, it was a one semester-long course meeting four hours per week for 16 weeks. Their ages ranged from 18 to 23 and they were

in their first semester of study. Ten of them participated in the qualitative data collection that was investigated by an interview.

### **Instruments**

The quantitative data were collected through an attitude questionnaire. In addition, the qualitative data were collected through interviews. In data collection, the process of involving more than one data source and more than one method enhances validity in research (Merriam, 1992). The 21-item questionnaire was composed of closed responses based on 4-point Likert scale, *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. The questionnaire was developed by the present researchers and confirmed by two experienced EFL instructors. It was piloted on 10 students who did not participate in the treatment sessions of mind mapping in reading course but was still first-year business management students. Before using these instruments, we had an eight-session treatment to introduce mind maps and use them in the class for the reading passages of the students' text book: 'Select Readings: Pre- intermediate' by Lee and Gunderson (2002). At the end of the treatment sessions, the participants were available to use and design mind maps.

To obtain more detailed information, and to investigate how students felt about mind maps, 10 of the participants were interviewed. The questions asked during the interviews were prepared by the researchers beforehand. That is, semi-structured interviews were conducted for this study. The questions were checked and confirmed by two other EFL instructors, too.

### **Procedure**

The data were collected in regular class hours by the first author who was their teacher, too. All participants were asked to read the questions of the questionnaire and then answer them individually. Ten of the participants were selected by the course instructor from among the students who had positive view towards using mind maps while reading comprehension and those who did not have a positive view. The participants were aware that they were participating in a research study, and they were informed about the purpose and procedures of the research. They also knew that their test scores would neither be disclosed nor affect their grades.

### **Data Analysis**

As in this study, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected to be analyzed. At first, in analyzing the data of the questionnaire, the mean score of each item were calculated and then the frequency and the percentage for each item were mentioned. They were presented in tables.

Secondly, the data of the interview were transcribed and were analyzed via cross-case analysis to identify students' general tendencies by the common answers given by the students. In addition, the frequencies of the participants' ideas were calculated and reported.

### **4- Results and Discussions**

The participants answered the items in the questionnaire on a Likert scale of 1 to 4, where 4 stood for "Disagree", 3 stood for "Strongly Disagree", 2 stood for "Agree", and 1 stood for "Strongly Agree". For processing the data obtained through questionnaire, at first it was done through calculating the mean score for each item in the questionnaire separately and then, the frequency and the percentages of students' responses were identified. Mean score and percentage analyses for the questionnaire, which is based on a 4-point Likert scale, were calculated using the SPSS program (version 16). Then, the results were presented in tables. In interpreting the responses, scores 1 and 2 are considered as positive, and 3 and 4 as negative attitudes.

### Quantitative Analysis: Attitude Questionnaire

*Table 1. Means of Responses to Attitudes about the Use of Mind Maps on Reading Comprehension*

No.	Item	Mean
1	The mind map strategy is interesting to me.	1.4194
2	I need do a lot of training in a course which uses mind mapping strategy to understand how to use mind maps.	1.9677
3	Mind maps help me to have better reading comprehension.	1.5806
4	I enjoy sharing my knowledge of a reading passage via mind maps.	1.6452
5	As a new way of reading, I think mind mapping strategy is interesting.	1.7742
6	Using mind maps in a reading process is a waste of time.	3.4516
7	Mind maps provide me with learning opportunities that I have never tried before in usual reading classes.	1.9032
8	I felt isolated when I participated in a course using mind maps.	2.9032
9	It is easier for me to comprehend what I've read through mind maps than without them.	1.9355
10	The mind map strategy is quite boring.	3.2581
11	I'm not the type to do well with mind maps.	2.4194
12	I prefer working alone to working with other students in designing a mind map.	3.0323
13	Mind maps help me to communicate more with other students.	2.0645
14	I do not to use mind maps.	2.7742
15	Mind maps are good as a tool for discussing with other students.	1.7742
16	I'm motivated to read others' mind maps before designing mine.	2.1290
17	When I use mind maps for a reading passage, I'm more able to solve post-reading activities.	1.6129
18	It is difficult to construct mind map.	2.1935
19	Would you like to use mind maps for reading?	1.8710
20	Would you like to be able to use mind maps at home?	2.1613
21	Would you prefer not to use mind maps during your later reading studies?	2.7742

As it is clear in Table 1., the highest mean scores for items, was mainly obtained for item 6 (Using mind maps in a reading process is a waste of time), and item 10 (The mind map strategy is quite boring), and item 12 (I prefer working alone to working with other students in designing a mind map) which indicates the answers of students to these questions was mainly in the same direction, and a look at the responses of students showed that most of them answered to these questions in the form of 'Strongly Disagree' or 'Disagree'.

In Table 2 below, the frequency and the percentages of students' responses are given. Since responses 4 and 5 are considered to be positive and 1 and 2 as negative, their percentages are summed while interpreting the results.

*Table 2. Students' Responses to Attitudes about the Use of Mind Mapping in Reading Comprehension*

	Students' Responses							
Items	1 Strongly Agree		2 Agree		3 Strongly Disagree		4 Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%

1	20	66.7	9	30.0	----	----	1	3.3
2	13	43.3	10	33.3	2	6.7	5	16.7
3	18	60.0	10	33.3	----	----	2	6.7
4	11	36.7	19	63.3	----	----	----	----
5	11	36.7	17	56.7	----	----	2	6.7
6	1	3.3	2	6.7	9	30.0	18	60.0
7	10	33.3	17	56.7	----	----	3	10.0
8	3	10.0	4	13.3	16	53.3	7	23.3
9	9	30.0	17	56.7	2	6.7	2	6.7
10	2	6.7	3	10.0	10	33.3	15	50.0
11	6	20.0	11	36.7	7	23.3	6	20.0
12	2	6.7	2	6.7	19	63.3	7	23.3
13	7	23.3	18	60.0	1	3.3	4	13.3
14	3	10.0	11	36.7	4	13.3	12	40.0
15	11	36.7	16	53.3	2	6.7	1	3.3
16	6	20.0	19	63.3	1	3.3	4	13.3
17	15	50.0	13	43.3	----	----	2	6.7
18	10	33.3	10	33.3	3	10.0	7	23.3
19	14	46.7	11	36.7	----	----	5	16.7
20	11	36.7	11	36.7	----	----	8	26.7
21	6	20.0	8	26.7	3	10.0	13	43.3

When the results in Table 2 are analyzed, it is observed that all of the 31 students enjoy sharing their knowledge of a reading passage via mind maps. (item 4).

Similar to that, more than 90 % of the students are interested in mind mapping strategy (item 1), and mind maps are helpful for their reading comprehension (item 3); as a new strategy it is interesting (item 5); mind maps provide them with learning opportunities that they have never tried before in usual reading classes (item 7), and they are more able to solve post-reading activities by using mind maps in reading passages (item 17).

#### Qualitative Analysis: Oral Interview

In this study, the qualitative data were collected through student interviews which were conducted with 10 students at the end of the study and one week after the administration of the attitude questionnaire. The questionnaire contains three questions and the students who were interviewed were among the students whose scores improved after treatment, and those whose scores did not change after treatment. Responses to the interview questions were analyzed via cross-case analysis. That is, the common answers given by the students were listed to identify the general tendencies. To analyze the interviews, first the interviews were transcribed. Later, each response for the questions was analyzed and grouped under related headings. Finally, the results were presented in frequency tables. Moreover, if the quotations borrowed from the students were in Persian, they were translated into English by the researcher.

**Table 3.** The Results of the Interview Question 1 ("Did you like this reading course in general?")

"Did you like this reading course in general?"	Frequency
Yes	10
No	0

Table 3 indicated that all of the interviewees liked this reading course. In the next question (Table

4), to know more about the reasons they like this course and in the third question (Table 5.), the possible reasons of lack of interest on the part of the students were explored.

**Table 4.** *The Results of the Interview Question 2(What specifically did you like?)*

<i>"What specifically did you like about mind maps?"</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Using pictures	8
Organizing the data in distinct categories	7
Working in groups to design mind maps	6
Being fun	9
Being useful to answer post reading questions	5
Having the potential to be used for other course materials	3
Being colorful	6

According to the answers of question 2, 90% of the participants in the interview indicated that mind maps are fun and most of them considered the use of pictures in mind mapping strategy and named the organization of data in mind maps as their features.

**Table 5.** *The Results of the Interview Question 3(What specifically did you dislike?)*

<i>"What specifically did you dislike about mind maps?"</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Designing mind maps are hard and needs instruction.	2
It is better to design mind maps in isolation rather than with cooperation.	4
Mind maps are mostly for children.	2
They prevent me from concentrating on reading passage.	1

The last table (Table 5.) shows the dislikes about mind maps; four interviewees mentioned that they like to do mind maps on their own.

This study intended to find the attitudes of learners towards using mind maps in reading comprehension. In this respect, the quantitative data collected by questionnaire indicated that 83.4% of the students showed significant positive attitudes towards the use of mind maps in reading comprehension, while only 16.7 % of the students had negative attitudes towards using them for reading. As the qualitative data collected by interviewing ten EFL students revealed, the results showed that this course was enjoyable for all of them and their being fun, using pictures, and having understandable categories and subcategories are the prominent features indicated by these students. On the other hand, four of the interviewees preferred to try mind maps on their own rather than in groups.

Finally, the findings of the current study proved to support the significant results obtained by Siriphanich and Laohawiriyanon (2010) and Benavides et al. (2010). The findings of this present study might offer some practical implications for the use of classroom teachers who are highly motivated to welcome challenge and novelty in their classrooms. Further studies on the implementation of mind mapping strategy might look for the attitudes of mind mapping softwares on students' reading comprehension achievement or investigate its impact on students' comprehension at different levels of English proficiency.

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## VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES IN AN ESP CONTEXT: A CASE OF ENGINEERING STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

The present study aims at discovering the vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) used by engineering students in an ESP course in EFL context and its relationship to EFL learner's proficiency level. One-hundred and one engineering students were randomly selected from students of Shomal University of Amol to take part in this study. The required data were collected using Nelson English language proficiency test and Bennett's vocabulary learning strategies questionnaire (VLSQ). The questionnaire was translated into Persian. In order to determine the internal consistency of the instruments, they were piloted with a group of 20 engineering students and the reliability check for the VLSQ was 0.88 and for the proficiency test it was found to be 0.76 which indicated acceptable reliability for both of the instruments. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and frequency) and Pearson correlation procedure were computed using SPSS (version 16) to analyze the data. The results of descriptive statistics showed that engineering students were medium strategy users who reported memory strategy as the most frequently used strategy and meta-cognitive strategy as the least frequently used strategy. As for the relationship between the participants' proficiency level and their choice of VLSs, the results of the Pearson correlation showed no statistically significant relationship in either of the strategy categories.

**Key words:** Vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs), engineering students, proficiency, ESP, EFL.

### 1. Introduction

The recognition of the role of vocabulary in language learning shows a significant growth in recent years. Vocabulary is the center of any language and it is very important to language learners because words are the main parts of a language that act as its building blocks. By the help of words, learners can label objects, actions, ideas without which no one can convey their intended meanings. Word knowledge is a necessary part of communicative competence (Seal, 1991), and it is important for both production and comprehension in a foreign language.

Learners usually know how important the words are in a language and they also realize the fact that learning strategies can be a very helpful device in their vocabulary learning. Learner autonomy can be improved if learners get familiar with different VLSs used in developing their learning process. In addition, learning strategies help students to be more active and take more responsibility on their own learning.

Studies have become wider in vocabulary learning area since the 1980s (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Schmitt, 1997; Nation, 2001; Fan 2003). Learning strategies in general have been studied for a longer period of time (Nation, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Schmitt & Schmitt, 1995; Grenfell & Harris; 1999; cited in Yu-Ling, 2005) but more specific topics, such as strategies used especially for



vocabulary learning, have not been studied extensively.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has gradually developed and it is now considered to be one of the most outstanding areas with which a lot of activities are performed. Some examples are technical English, medical English, English for tourism, English for business and lots of other fields. Teaching vocabulary especially in ESP courses is becoming a challenge for English Language Teachers. Vocabulary cannot be separated from any teaching syllabus so it should be taught in a well-planned and regular basis. It is essential to make a careful decision on vocabulary selection for teaching, and the approaches or activities that will be used for teaching it to the students. Students usually face some difficulties while learning new English words. ESP words are difficult to learn because they are low frequency words and learners do not face them very often.

In spite of the fact that there are a lot of studies on studying, categorization and description of language learning strategies (Naiman *et al.*, 1978; Rubin, 1975; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990), it is Schmitt (1997) who described a particular taxonomy of VLSs. This taxonomy differentiates between:

- Discovery strategies, i.e. those strategies used to find out the meaning of a new word.
- Consolidation strategies, i.e. those used to store the new word in long-term memory.

### **Statement of the problem**

Vocabulary knowledge is essential when using a foreign language, since one is unable to communicate without words. Learners are usually aware of the importance of words in a language and they also usually realize the fact that learning strategies can help them in their vocabulary learning. Learner autonomy can be enhanced by introducing the learner to different VLSs which can be used in developing the learning process. In addition, learning strategies help students to be more active and take more responsibility on their own learning.

Vocabulary receives a little emphasis in the university curriculum of Asian countries (Fan, 2003). Iran as an Asian country has the same situation. Generally, in universities in Asian countries, they put more emphasis on the four language skills in their English teaching. Vocabulary teaching in many classrooms is largely incidental (Fan, 2003; Catalan, 2003), that is, when the students have difficulty in understanding a particular word or phrase, the definitions are told to them.

### **Significance of the study**

The aim of this study is to survey students' VLSs. If teachers and researchers know students' beliefs about vocabulary learning and strategies they use, they can design the most appropriate materials and activities to help them improve their vocabulary learning as well as their lexical competence. Therefore, finding out the strategies which are used mostly in vocabulary learning would be an effective guide in teaching.

ESP is considered as a very important field in language learning and teaching these days; therefore, finding out the strategies that learners use for vocabulary learning will be of great value in teaching ESP.

### **Objective of the study**

Vocabulary plays an important role in language learning and this role will become more important in the case of ESP. Because of this, the present study aims at discovering which VLSs are used by different engineering students in their ESP course and also how much they use these strategies.

### Research questions

The following research questions are formulated for this study:

1. What are the most and least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) by engineering students in ESP course?
2. Is there any relationship between the ESP students' level of proficiency and their choice of VLSs?
3. Are engineering students, high, medium, or low VLSs users?

### Review of the literature

Vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) can be considered as a part of general learning strategies in second language acquisition. The first development in learning strategies research began in the 1970s to recognize who can be considered as good language learners and what characteristics they have (Naiman et al., 1978; Rubin, 1975). Schmitt (1997) stated that learning is "the process by which information is obtained, stored, retrieved and used... ;therefore vocabulary learning strategies could be any which affect this broadly defined process" (p. 203).

Vocabulary learning strategy (VLS) can be seen from at least three different point of views. First, a VLS, speaking as a whole, could be whatever the learners do to help the new vocabulary learning process. Second, a VLS could be connected to anything which is done to help vocabulary learning work well. Third, there might be a relation between a VLS and conscious actions that learners take to study new words.

The main advantage obtained from all learning strategies, as well as VLSs, is that learners are able to control their learning sufficiently on their own so that students will feel more responsible for their studies (Nation, 2001; Scharle & Szabó, 2000). Cameron (2001) believes that children may not be able to make use of VLSs themselves in order to make this happen. In fact, they need to be instructed to apply the strategies effectively. In Nation's view (2001), the most important way that learners learn vocabulary is when they use strategies independently of their teacher.

Schmitt (1997) based his taxonomy of VLSs on Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of learning strategies. Since Oxford (1990) created the taxonomy for describing learning strategies as a whole in the first step, Schmitt (1997) had to revise it in order to act as a useful tool especially when categorizing VLSs. His taxonomy consists of five categories: determination strategies, social strategies memory strategies, cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies.

Some researchers (Nation, 2001; Coxhead, 2006 among others) believe that academic, technical, and low frequency vocabulary would differ and suggest that specialized words have a high frequency in some limited texts in academic fields (Fraser, 2005). Scarcella and Zimmerman (1998) are also among those who make this distinction, pointing out "*technical words* that are used in specific academic fields" (p. 28). Carlson (1999) and Coxhead and Nation (2001) also wrote about specialized vocabulary lists for specific purposes.

Gu and Johnson (1996) studied 850 non-English major Chinese learners in China. To this end, a questionnaire and multiple regression analysis were utilized. It was indicated that two VLSs, namely, self-initiation and selective attention, are positive predictors of participants' proficiency, as measured by their college English test scores. It was also found that the strategies of contextual guessing, skillful dictionary use, paying attention to word formation, contextual encoding, and using newly learnt words had a positive relationship with participants' test scores.

Six-hundred Japanese EFL learners participated in a survey conducted by Schmitt (1997). They completed a VLS questionnaire and marked how often they used different VLSs, what they felt

about the helpfulness of those strategies, and mentioned the most useful ones. Among the most frequently used and most helpful VLSs, these six strategies were common: using a bilingual dictionary, written repetition, verbal repetition, saying a new word aloud, studying a word's spelling, and taking notes in class. Evaluating the results of the survey of strategies reported by groups of middle school, high school, university and adult EFL learners, Schmitt (1997) also noted that "for some VLS the patterns of strategy use appeared to change over time" (p. 224).

Fan (2003) conducted a large-scale research, studying 1,000 Chinese EFL university students in Hong Kong. A vocabulary test and a strategy questionnaire were administered to all participants. Fan discovered that the learners with a high proficiency level used more strategies (such as using more sources, dictionaries, guessing, and known word strategies) which was significantly more than low proficient ones. There are also many differences to be mentioned between participant's VLSs frequency of use and perceived usefulness.

Atay and Ozbulgan (2007) examined the VLS of 50 military ESP learners in Turkey. The participants took part in a three-week study in two separate classes each of which was held for six hours a day. A multiple-choice vocabulary test and a strategies questionnaire were utilized. On the vocabulary knowledge post-test, the participants in the experimental group outperformed the control group. The results of the strategies questionnaire among learners in the experimental group also indicated a major "increase in the percentage of use and variety of strategies in the post-test" (p. 46).

Akbary and Tahririan (2009) investigated VLSs use for specialized and non-specialized learning vocabulary among ESP students in different fields of study. One-hundred and three medical and paramedical undergraduate Isfahan University of Medical Sciences students from eight majors took part in this study. For data elicitation, three different tools were used: Observation, interview and questionnaire. The finding of the questionnaire showed that the most frequent strategy was 'using bilingual dictionaries' and the most commonly used learning strategy was 'oral and written repetition'.

Gani Hamzah, Kafipour and Abdullah (2009) did a study in order to evaluate undergraduate EFL learners' VLSs and its relationship to the learners' vocabulary size. One-hundred and twenty-five Iranian TEFL undergraduate students took part in this study. Nation's standardized vocabulary size test and Schmitt's vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire adopted from Bennet (2006) were used to collect the data. The results revealed that Iranian undergraduate EFL learners are medium strategy users and 'determination strategy' was the most frequently used and 'social strategy' was the least used frequently strategies. In addition, the results showed a significant relationship between VLSs and learners' vocabulary size.

In a study carried out by Khatib, Hassanzadeh and Rezaei (2011), they sought to examine the preferred VLSs of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners. One-hundred and forty-six undergraduate EFL students from Vali-e-Asr university of Rafsanjan participated in the study. A TOEFL test for identifying participants' language proficiency level and a VOLSI questionnaire (Vocabulary Learning Strategies Inventory) were used to find out their preferred VLSs. The stepwise multiple regression analysis showed that three strategies (self-motivation, word organization, and authentic language use) out of nine were significant predictors of L2 proficiency.

Seddigh and Shokrpur (2012) sought to examine the VLSs of Shiraz medical science students; 53 male and 67 female students participated in the study. A questionnaire was used in order to identify students' choice of VLS and its relationship to gender. The results revealed that 'guessing' and 'dictionary' strategies were used more frequently than 'social' and 'study

preference' strategies. The statistics indicated a significant difference between participants' gender and their choice of VLSs; female students were found to use more strategies than their male counterparts.

A study was conducted by Jafari and Ajideh (2012) to explore VLS use of Iranian EFL learners across different proficiency levels. In this study, one-hundred and two pre-intermediate, intermediate and advanced level learners from a language institute took part by random selection. A background test and a questionnaire were administered to collect the data. The result of the collected data showed that there was relatively a negative relationship between the VLSs frequency and learners' proficiency level except the 'affective' strategies. The overall strategy use showed that 'metacognitive' strategies were the most and 'memory' strategies were the least frequently used strategies.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The participants of the study were randomly selected from among undergraduate engineering students ( $n=120$ ) who enrolled in an ESP course at Shomal University, Technical Faculty, Amol. The participants were from three fields of study: Computer engineering (35; 19 male & 16 female), Civil engineering (31; 22 male & 9 female) and Electronics (35; all males).

### **Instruments**

In order to answer the research questions, two instruments were used: a questionnaire and a proficiency test.

1. Nelson English language proficiency test (section 300D) which is a 50-item multiple-choice test that includes cloze passages, vocabulary, structure, and pronunciation.
2. Bennentt's 39-item VLS questionnaire, which is an adaptation of Schmitt's VLS.

The questionnaire is designed to measure learners' VLSs under two conditions: the first case is when learners face a new word the meaning of which they do not know: "When I find a new English word that I don't know I ...". The second is when learners want to remember the new word's meaning and fix it in their mind: "When I want to remember new words and build my vocabulary, I ...". The 39 items of the questionnaire are separated according to the strategies they represent using alphabets A (seven items), B (five items), C (17 items), D (seven) and E (three). 'A' includes the items related to determination strategies; 'B' includes social strategies; 'C' consists of memory strategies; 'D' stands for cognitive strategies and finally 'E' includes the items which are indicative of meta-cognitive strategies.

In order to determine the internal consistency of the translated questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ), an appropriate reliability index for reliability check, was used to check the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The reliability check for the VLSQ from the pilot study was 0.88; as such, the questionnaire used in the present study was found to be reliable. The same procedure was taken in order to pilot the English proficiency test and the reliability index was 0.76 which indicates that this test is a reliable one, too.

### **Data collection procedure**

The relevant data were collected in the ESP classes of Shomal university of Amol. The participants were first briefed about the purpose of the study and they were given complete information as to how to complete the questionnaires. Students were given 50 minutes to fill out the 50-item multiple-choice proficiency test and they had 20 minutes to respond to the VLSQ items.

### Data analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and frequency) were computed using SPSS (version 16) to specify the proficiency level of the participants, to calculate the overall pattern of VLSs use by the participating EFL learners and to indicate the most and least frequent strategy categories. Pearson correlation procedure was also utilized in order to examine the relationship between the variables.

### Results & Discussion

In order to answer the first research question which is concerned with the most and least frequently used VLSs by engineering student, descriptive statistics were used; mean score and standard deviation for each strategy category was calculated to find out the most and least frequently used strategies by engineering students.

As Table 1 shows, memory strategy is the most frequently used strategy among engineering students with the mean score of 30.21 and SD of 13.91 while meta-cognitive strategy with the mean score of 5.86 and SD of 3.36 is the least frequently used strategy.

Pearson correlation was calculated for each strategy category separately to find the relationship between learners' proficiency level and their choice of VLS.

*Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (Strategy use)*

Strategies	N	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
(A) Determination	101	23	5	28	14.62	4.856
(B) Social	101	19	0	19	8.88	4.429
(C) Memory	101	53	5	58	30.21	13.916
(D) Cognitive	101	25	1	26	13.41	6.212
(E) Meta-cognitive	101	12	0	12	5.86	3.360

*Table 2. Relationship between proficiency level & determination strategies*  
Correlations<sup>a</sup>

		Proficiency Levels	Frequency of Use A
Proficiency Levels	Pearson Correlation	1	-.099
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.324
Frequency of Use A	Pearson Correlation	-.099	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.324	

a. Listwise N=101

*Table 3. Relationship between proficiency level & social strategies*

Correlations<sup>a</sup>

		Proficiency Levels	Frequency of Use B
Proficiency Levels	Pearson Correlation	1	-.089
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.380
Frequency of Use B	Pearson Correlation	-.089	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.380	

a. Listwise N=99

Table 4. Relationship between proficiency level &amp; memory strategies

Correlations<sup>a</sup>

		Proficiency Levels	Frequency of Use C
Proficiency Levels	Pearson Correlation	1	-.083
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.408
Frequency of Use C	Pearson Correlation	-.083	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.408	

a. Listwise N=101

Table 5. Relationship between proficiency level &amp; cognitive strategies

Correlations<sup>a</sup>

		Proficiency Levels	Frequency Of Use D
Proficiency Levels	Pearson Correlation	1	-.027
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.787
Frequency of Use D	Pearson Correlation	-.027	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.787	

a. Listwise N=99

Table 6. Relationship between proficiency level &amp; Meta-cognitive strategy

Correlations<sup>a</sup>

		Proficiency Levels	Frequency of Use E
Proficiency Levels	Pearson Correlation	1	-.156
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.127
Frequency of Use E	Pearson Correlation	-.156	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.127	

a. Listwise N=97

As the aforementioned tables indicate, there is no significant relationship or correlation between participants' proficiency level and their choice of strategies across five strategy categories.

Descriptive statistics and frequency was used in order to find the strategy use level.

Table 7. Strategy Use Level

Level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
High	13	12.9	12.9	12.9
Medium	63	62.4	62.4	75.2
Low	25	24.8	24.8	100.0
Total	101	100.0	100.0	

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	SD
Strategy Use Level	101	2.60	.694
Valid N (listwise)	101		

According to scoring system developed by Oxford (1990) and used by Schmitt (1997, 2000), mean score below 2.5 shows low strategy use, mean score between 2.5 and 3.5 shows medium strategy use, and mean score above 3.5 shows high strategy use. The results clearly show that the participating engineering students are medium VLS users.

### Conclusion

According to the results of the study, engineering students were found to be medium strategy users. This finding is the same as several studies carried out in Iran which also found Iranian EFL learners as medium strategy users. (Gani Hamzah et al., 2009; Kafipour et al., 2011; Kafipour & Hosseini Naveh, 2011). One possible reason for being a medium strategy user is that learners are not familiar with these strategies because they are never introduced to them; therefore, they do not know how to use them.

Concerning the five strategy categories and their frequency of use, engineering students reported memory strategy as the most frequently used strategies and meta-cognitive strategy as the least frequently used strategy. This might be due to the fact that teaching procedures in Iran mostly depends on memorization in the main. In fact, both lecturers and EFL learners do not follow and practice communicative approach in a satisfactory manner and they seem to be mostly interested in the traditional approach which puts strong emphasis on the role of memory in the learning process. As it was mentioned earlier, meta-cognitive strategy was reported as the least frequency of use. This is the same as Bennett's (2006) study, in which the participants reported meta-cognitive category as the least frequently used strategy. One potential reason might be that many EFL students are not willing to spend their free time on reading or using English. Iranian students study English as a foreign language and outside the class they have limited exposure to the use of the target language.

Among the subcategories of VLSs used by engineering students "using a bilingual dictionary" as a determination strategy was reported as the most frequently used subcategory. Many other researches (Wu, 2005; Peng, 2009; Gani Hamzah et al., 2009 among others) show that most of the students use dictionaries when they want to find the meaning of words; engineering students of the present study are not found to be different. For the least frequently used VLSs, "put English

labels on physical objects” as a cognitive strategy was reported.

Concerning the relationship between students’ proficiency level and their choice of VLSs, the results show no significant relationship. This is contrary to the expectations as in a natural learning process of language learning more proficient learners are expected to use more strategies.

### Suggestions for further research

Future studies should include more participants from different universities in order to make better comparisons and arrive at more generalizability. It is also suggested that researchers use both qualitative and quantitative methods so that they can reach more comprehensive results. Researchers can also focus on the relationship of other variables with VLSs such as age, gender, motivation, learning style and background knowledge among others.

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# THE INFLUENCE OF TEST FORMS ON ENHANCING GENERAL KNOWLEDGE IN THE IRANIAN HIGH SCHOOL CONTEXT: DO THEY REFLECT REAL DIFFERENCES AMONG LEARNERS?

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## ABSTRACT

This study attempted to explore the influence of test forms on enhancing general knowledge of Iranian high school students. The question this study tried to answer was whether or not there was any difference among the means of the OPT, teacher - made test and school final exam. To answer the question, 60 junior high school students participated in the three target tests: first, they were given an OPT test as the criterion test. Then, school final exam and teacher-made test were given to the students. Each of these tests was administrated after two weeks interval from the previous one. The contents of the three tests, in which vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension were examined, were the same. The data was analysed through One-way ANOVA. The results indicated that there was significant difference between the means of the three tests.

**Key Words:** Test forms, general knowledge, OPT, final exam, teacher-made test.

## 1. Introduction

Testing is an important part of every teaching and learning experience. Well-made tests of English can be helpful for the students in at least two ways. First, English tests can create positive attitudes toward the class. Second, they can help students to master the language and where several tests are given, learning can be enhanced by students' growing awareness of the objectives and the areas of emphasis in the course (Madsen 1983). The form of a test refers to its physical appearance. Considering the nature and varieties of attributes, language testers should utilize the most appropriate form of the test which would correspond to the nature of the attribute be measured. Therefore, to decide on the form of a test, certain parameters such as the nature of the attribute and the function of the test should be taken into account. Most assessments administered in school are criterion - referenced. Teachers create these tests based on the school's curriculum and learning expectations in a given subject area. Although personal experience is a good criterion, it is not a sufficient one for criticizing tests. Language tests play an important role in the investigation of effects of different instructional setting and techniques on language acquisition (Farhady et al, 1994). According to Heaton (1975), well-constructed classroom test will provide the students with an opportunity to show their ability to perform certain tasks in the language. Provided that details of their performance are given as soon as possible after the test, the students should be able to learn from their weaknesses. In this way a good test can be used as a valuable teaching device.

## 2. Literature Review

A brief review of the related literature would seem necessary to support the claims for the implementation of this study. According to Buck (1988), there is a nature tendency for both teachers and students to tailor their classroom activities to the demands of the test, especially

when the test is very important to the future of the students, and pass rates are used as a measure of teacher success. According to Farhady et al (1994), language tests play an important role in the investigation of effects of different instructional setting and techniques on language acquisition. Mehrens (1984) found that achievement testing served to broaden the curriculum; that is, testing encouraged teachers to add to, rather than replace existing instructional topics. AcSchwartz and Tiedeman (1957) cited in Farhady et al ,(1994) state that teacher - made tests are valuable because they measure students' progress based on the classroom activities , motivate students , provide an opportunity for the teacher to diagnose students' weaknesses concerning a given subject matter , and help the teacher make plans for remedial instruction , if needed . In spite of the usefulness of teacher - made tests, they have always been faced with students' complaints. These complaints have originated from the ambiguity of the content of the test and sometimes the irrelevance of such tests to instructional materials. Therefore, any test must be based on a pre-determined content to measure the students' knowledge at a given point of time. Such a test

Recent studies raise questions about whether improvements in test score performance actually signal improvement in learning (Cannell, 1987; Linn, Grave, & Sanders, 1989; Shepard, 1990). Other studies point to standardized tests' narrowness of content, their lack of match with curricula and instruction, their neglect of higher order thinking skills, and the limited relevance and meaningfulness of their multiple choice formats (Baker, 1989; Herman, 1989; Shepard, 1990). Several studies have investigated the ways in which testing influences teacher planning and instruction. Herman and Dorr-Bremme (1983) found relatively little influence of standardized tests on teacher decision-making, for instance, in grouping students, planning instruction ,grading, diagnosing/prescribing compared to other sources of information available to teachers. In contrast, Salmon-Cox(1981) reported that teachers in Pittsburgh found the California Achievement Test to be useful in sequencing instruction, planning instruction and grouping students. Madaus (1988) noted that teachers taught to the test when they believed important decisions, such as student promotion, would be based on test scores. Corbett and Wilson (1988), in a study of Maryland schools, similarly found that schools redefined course objectives and resequenced course content in an attempt to improve test scores.

Annandale, et al (2003) cited in Guy (2007), states that effective teaching and learning stems from effective assessment and evaluation. According to Bachman (1990), the fundamental use of testing in an educational program is to provide information for making decisions, that is, for evaluation. Barry and King (2004) which is qouted in Guy (2007) believes that assessment relates to collecting, synthesizing and interpreting data about the knowledge and understanding, skills and attitudes of a person or group in order to facilitate decision-making. They go on to describe evaluation as the major step in the overall process pending assessment and that evaluation is when a value is placed on the worth of a score. According to Hayati and Askari (2008), many language tests follow a psychological rather than linguistic theoretical framework, evidenced by the use of a single modality (such as a paper-and-pencil test that ignores spoken and oral comprehension). Best and Kahn (1989) cited in Tasdemir (2010), assume that achievement tests attempt to measure what an individual learner has acquired. Achievement tests are particularly helpful in assessing individual or group status in academic learning. Achievement test scores are used to diagnose strengths and weaknesses and thus can be considered as a basis for awarding prizes, scholarship or degrees. They are also used in evaluating teachers, teaching methods and other factors which can be significant in educational situations. A language test which seeks to find out what candidates can do with language provided a focus for purposeful, everyday communication activities. Such a test will have a more useful effect on the learning of a particular language than a mechanical test of structure. In the past even good tests of grammar, translation or language manipulation had a negative and even harmful effect on teaching. A good communicative test of language, however, should have a much more positive effect on learning and teaching and should generally result in improved learning habits (Heaton, 1975).

According to Michele Vanpelt (2010), in the classroom, and within the school, a teacher will be utilizing many different types of assessments with his or her students. Some assessments may be formal, such as Standardized Achievement Tests or Informal Achievement Tests while others are less conventional. Both offer the teachers a good basis for determining what skills are being learned (or not learned) within the classroom. Test form in EFL setting has also received increasing attention over the past decade for improving language learning. According to Heaton (1975) ways of assessing performance in the four major skills may take the form of tests of: listening (auditory) comprehension, in which short utterances, dialogues, talks and lectures are given to the testees; speaking ability, usually in the form of an interview, a picture description, role play, and a problem-solving task involving pair work or group work; reading comprehension, in which questions are set to test the students' ability to understand the gist of a text and to extract key information on specific points in the text; and writing ability, usually in the form of letters, reports, memos, messages, instructions, and accounts of past events, etc. He also states that:

"...the evaluation of student performance for purposes of comparison or selection is only one of the functions of a test. Furthermore, as far as the practicing chief purpose of testing in schools. Although most teachers also wish to evaluate individual performance, the aim of the classroom test is different from that of the external examination. While the latter is generally concerned with evaluation for the purpose of selection, the classroom test is concerned with evaluation for the purpose of enabling teachers to increase their own effectiveness by making adjustments in their teaching to enabling certain groups of students or individuals in the class to benefit more. Too many teachers gear their teaching towards an ill-defined 'average' group without taking into account the abilities of those students in the class who are at either end of the scale. The test should also enable the teacher to ascertain which parts of the language programme have been found difficult by the class. In this way, the teacher can evaluate the effectiveness of the syllabus as well as the methods and materials he or she is using. The test results may indicate, for example, certain areas of the language syllabus which have not taken sufficient account of foreign learner difficulties or which, for some reason, have been glossed over."

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

The basic theoretical assumption behind the use of test in second language learning comes from the idea that language tests play an important role in the investigation of effects of different instructional setting and techniques on language acquisition. Baker (1989) cited in Glass and Stanley (1970), considered a test as a way of arriving at a meaningful decision. This means that the results of a test will lead us to the choice of a course of action. He also believed that a test can be substitute for a more complicate procedure and is always a quicker or easier substitute for a more complicate decision-making procedure.

As Haynie (2003) states, the importance of testing in education and the many value-charged issues surrounding it make testing an important research topic. Research on testing has historically concerned standardized tests, while a large amount of evaluation in the schools is accomplished via teacher-made tests (Haynie, 1983, 1990a; Herman & Dorr-Bremme, 1982; Mehrens, 1987; Mehrens & Lehmann, 1987; Moore, 2001; Newman & Stallings, 1982; Stiggins, Conklin, & Bridgeford, 1986).

Heaton (1975) believes tests may be constructed primarily as devices to reinforce learning and to motivate the student or primarily as a means of assessing the student's performance in the language. In the former case, the test is geared to the teaching that has taken place, whereas in the latter case the teaching is often geared largely to the test.

### **4. Statement of the Problem**

According to Yarmohammadi (1995) quoted in Fatemi (2008), test-driven teaching and learning

in Iran has a long history. The Iranian school final exam is a prerequisite as one of the criteria to determining whether the student is qualified or not to enter to upper class. Unfortunately, current English examination in Iran is heavily grammar- centered, which could have negative effect on learning. Yarmohammadi (1995) claimed that the ultimate goal of EFL for a student in Iran is to master a foreign language and to reach for proficiency in all four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Sachs (2010) claimed that the class test is one of the most dreaded parts of school life because children have to take tests in one form or another. He presented various forms of school tests as oral question and answers sessions, multiple choice questions, essay questions, practical demonstrations, and written short questions. These methods vary depending on the subject studied and the age of the students. In his study he showed that testing is extremely important because without it no teacher can really know how much the students have learned and it is necessary not only in terms of the students but also for the teacher so that he or she can know where the class is holding when preparing the material for the next lessons. It can also show who the weaker and stronger students are - who needs extra help and who needs more of a challenge. Regarding the test effect, he referred to the higher probability of recalling an item resulting from the act of retrieving the item from memory (testing) versus additional study trials of the item. Thus, for this effect the test trials must have a medium to high retrieval success; it means if the test trials are so difficult that no items are recalled or if the correct answers to the non-recalled items are not given to the test subject, then minimal or no learning will occur. In other words, test form has been found to be effective in improving different areas of a language. "Language testers should utilize the most appropriate form of the test which would correspond to the nature of the attribute to be measured. Therefore, to decide on the form of a test certain parameters such as the nature of the attribute and the function of the test should be taken into account" (Farhady et al, 1994, p.29). In the same vein, he referred to the examinee's first impression of the test which is its appearance and believed that if the form of a test is harmonious with the nature of the attribute to be measured, it will attract the examinee.

According to Razmjoo (2011), elements of communicative language testing are not represented and practiced in the tests constructed by the Iranian testers. Moreover, he referred to the following shortcomings, which are found in Iranian high school and institute tests: the tests are not as accurate a reflection of the real situation as possible. They, therefore, are not context-specific; the two tests are quantitative rather than qualitative and they follow the behaviorist view that learning took place through habit formation. As such they do not reveal the quality of the testee's language performance. Since empirical research is still lacking on the Iranian high school learners towards the effect of test form on their general English knowledge, test scores do not reflect real differences among learners. Therefore, it reveals that most of the test- markers in Iran are not aware of the effect of test forms on learning. This study intends to determine the possible impacts of test forms on learning English as general knowledge. Additionally, there are some concerns about some forms of testing being able to properly assess certain of the six skills.

However, a survey in the literature reveals an absence of conclusive evidence of the possible effect of test forms on improving learning ability in Iran. How test form would be more effective in learning ability of language learners has remained unanswered. Because of this gap, the present study intends to investigate the influential effect of it on improvement of Iranian language learners.

### **Research Question**

The following research question provides the specific focus for the study:

RQ- Is there any difference among the means of OPT, teacher - made test and school final exam?

## Methods

### Participants

Sixty male junior high school students participated in this study. Because they were at the same level of education, the subjects were homogeneous. These participants made the only experimental group of the study. They took a two - credit general English course. Sex were controlled and (all of the subjects were male). All of the participants took three tests with different forms but same content. This was done to investigate the effect of test forms on Iranian high school students' general English.

### Data gathering tools and procedures

To answer the research question relevant to this study a number of materials were devised. The materials used in current study were of three sorts and all of them were given as the pretest of the study. Since the study aimed at indicating the influence of test forms on enhancing general knowledge of Iranian high school students, the forms of these three tests were different but the contents were the same. They included the OPT, school final exam and teacher - made test. The three tests were used in this study consisted of the following sections: vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension. The participants were asked to answer each section. The reliability of teacher-made test estimated based on rater consistency ( $r=0.76$ ). Each test included sixteen points for testing grammar, fourteen points for testing vocabulary, and eight points for testing reading comprehension. The total points for each of three tests were forty.

There were two weeks intervals between administrations of each test. The time allowed for answering the whole sections was 90 minutes. The tests resembled in terms of time allocation and their contents. After administering each test, students' answer sheets were collected and were scored. Since both tests had 40 points on the whole and the teacher decided to calculate the score of every student from 20, so the tests were divided by two. The scores in each test were calculated separately, and then the mean score in each test was calculated.

### Data analysis

The data obtained from testing the hypothesis of the study was analyzed via One-Way ANOVA (Analysis of Covariance).

### The descriptive analysis of the data

This section focuses on the descriptive analysis of the obtained data in this study. Such analysis was done using the SPSS software. Table 1 shows the descriptive analysis of the three tests from the experimental group of the study:

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of the data

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
OPT 60		9.0000	2.27738	.29401
final exam 60		10.0333	1.54005	.19882
teacher made 60		10.0833	1.22532	.15819
Total	180	9.7056	1.79912	.13410

According to table 1, the number of participants has been 60 in experimental group ( $N=60$ ) and all of the participants participated in the present study (Missing Value=0.00). The mean and standard deviation of both tests are presented in Table 1. In Table 1 the mean for the OPT test scores was 9.0000 ( $\bar{x}=9.0000$ ) and the mean of the final exam test scores which was 10.0333 ( $\bar{x}=10.0333$ ) compared to the mean of teacher-made test scores that was 10.0833 ( $\bar{x}=10.0833$ ).

Results showed that there was difference among the means of three tests. Thus, it can be claimed that test forms had effect on enhancing learning process.

### **Inferential analysis of the data**

In this section, the inferentially statistical results obtained from the experimental group were revealed. Such analysis was done via SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science), too. Table 2 shows the inferential analysis of the data for the two tests in the experimental group of the study:

*Table 2. The inferential analysis of the data (ANOVA F)*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	44.878	2	22.439	7.430	.001
Within Groups	534.517	177	3.020		
Total	579.394	179			

According to Table 2,  $F=7.430$  is more than one and also it is significant. This finding revealed that the difference among means of tests was not by chance and the forms of tests had effect on them. Based on Table2, it is shown that the  $\text{sig}=.001$  and since it is less than 0.05, it can be claimed that test forms have effect on learning and can reflect real differences among learners.

### **Results and discussion**

The findings of the present study provided statistically significant evidence to find the answer to the research question of the study that targeted the possible existence of any difference among the means of OPT, teacher – made test and school final exam. Accordingly, findings of this study indicated that test forms showed a significant influence on Iranian high school EFL learners' performance in a test of general English.

Considering factors that influence test performance, the findings of the present study are in line with Bachman's (1990) assertion that a test taker's language performance is influenced by the characteristic of the method used to elicit the test takers' language performance. Also, the findings of the current study are in line with Bachman and Palmer's (1996) argumentation that characteristics of test methods always affect test scores to some extent and they further suggested that since it is impossible to eliminate the effects of test methods, it is necessary to control them as much as possible so that the tests will be appropriate for what they are used for. Moreover, the findings of calculating the gained scores of the three tests of the present study confirm Farhady's et al (1994, p. 29) assertion that state the examinee's first impression of the test is quite important because it may encourage or discourage him and he may find the appearance of the test harmonious with or contrary to his presuppositions about it. Moreover, the findings accept Sachs' (2010) claim that is test form has been found to be effective in improving different areas of a language.

Further, the findings of this study are against Bakhtiari's(2012) assertion that test forms have no effect on learning and they also contradict Moon, Brighton, & Callahan (2003) claim that standardized testing had little effect on teaching practices until the late 1970s despite the widespread use of testing and also the findings are not line with the study of Bormuth (1967) cites in Bensoussan (1984) who claims that different test formats that measure the same skill can arrive at equivalent percentage scores. His conclusion reveals that both cloze and reading comprehension test which have different formats but measure the same skill, can reflect the accurate scores of the student's level of reading proficiency and can measure reading proficiency equally well.

### Conclusion

The findings of the present study provided significant evidence responding to the research question which was "is there any difference among the means of OPT, teacher - made test, school final exam?".

According to the collected findings, the null hypothesis of the study was supported. The results of the one way ANOVA of the study revealed that there is significant difference among the means of teacher - made test, school final exam and OPT (see table 1) and as it was shown in table 2, there was significant F ( $F=7.430$ ) and  $\text{sig}=.001$  is less than 0.05, therefore it does not confirm the null hypothesis of the study, therefore, test forms can reflect real differences among learners.

### Limitations, Recommendations, and Implications

Although the findings offer valuable insights, there are some limitations to consider that may have influenced the results of this research. It is hoped that other researchers working in this field would consider these points in their research. These issues are lacking control group, generalizability of the findings, the number of subjects, and the gender of subjects. In addition to the potential pedagogical benefits from this study, these findings also suggest a number of ideas for further research. Further researches can be carried out to investigate other skills such as listening, writing and pronunciation to shed more lights on the possible effects of test forms. If there was a control group, the results were more accurate and acceptable. In this study the numbers of subjects were limited. It seems possible if future studies elicit information from a larger population, the result may be something different. Since the findings of the study may not be generalized to all students, it should be interesting if future studies are advised to expand the replications of this study to other language testing situation in Iran such as universities or institutes .

Practically, the findings of the study are applicable to English language teachers and testers as well as material developers. Therefore, the findings of the study can assist the test - makers in designing the tests on the basis of the effectiveness of test form on Students' General English. Further, teachers in testing language skills are able to present various test forms. Also it can be employed in high schools, universities, and language centers. This study could be helpful for teachers to be aware of the impact of test form on learning and also make the learners familiar with it.

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# LANGUAGE TEACHERS' VOICES: ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK OF LANGUAGE TEACHING APTITUDE

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## ABSTRACT

Several studies elaborated on the job of a language teacher and identified examples of good teaching practice. However, much uncertainty still exists about what makes one an effective language teacher and the other an unsuccessful language teacher. In an attempt to address this underlying construct, the current researchers set out to develop a framework delineating the componential structure of language teaching aptitude based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with ten experienced language instructors (PhD in TEFL). The teacher participants were drawn from state universities of four metropolises in Iran, i.e. Ahvaz, Esfahan, Shiraz, and Tehran. The participants were asked to comment on the characteristics of capable or ideal language teachers. Solicited data, then, were content-analysed through a six-stage coding process. Content analysis yielded eight main components concerning language-teaching aptitude: affective, creativity, moral, intelligence, knowledge, communication, professional, and memory components. Each component was further divided into some sub-components. The affective component was found to be the most salient feature of language teachers and the moral component emerged as the least mentioned capability for a language teacher. The findings of this study have both practical and theoretical implications.

**Keywords:** Language teaching aptitude, Framework, Components, Cognitive qualities, Affective qualities

## Introduction

It is generally established that a nation's academic development and intellectual progress is formed by the quality of its residents and this quality is related to the quality of instruction imported to them (Kant, 2011). Pursuing quality has been typical of human civilization history and the motivation behind all human activities. Teacher quality, which is directly linked with teacher aptitude, is believed to be the core of all educational improvements (Ushakumari, 2008). Teaching needs those individuals who have the appropriate type of aptitude for teaching in order to be an effective teacher in future. Due to the key role of teachers in education, an entire educational system is likely to fail, if its teachers lack the required teaching aptitude and efficacy.

It is clear that teaching aptitude is a dispensable factor contributing to successful teaching but it is not clear what this teaching aptitude really is. The problem with a word like *aptitude* is that everyone assumes the meaning of the word to be clear. However, when it comes to its theoretical and empirical characterization, difficulty unfolds. Several definitions of general aptitude exist. Aptitude may be defined as "a specific ability or a specific capacity distinct from the general intellectual ability, which helps an individual to acquire degree [*sic*] of proficiency or achievement in a specific field" (Hamid & Tasleema, 2012, p. 67). In other words, aptitude refers

to an innate or acquired capability or ability particularly an inclination, competence, or preference to learn or to be trained (Merriam-Webster's online medical dictionary, n.d.). Similarly, teaching aptitude is the quality of being fit for teaching profession (Ushakumari, 2008).

Recently teaching aptitude has received increasing attention owing to the educational importance of choosing suitable instructors. A number of researchers have devised new measurement tools for assessing teaching aptitude and its related variables (e.g., Karim & Dixit, 1986). Thus, a framework as a guiding blueprint might be called for in order to characterize the construct and its components. This characterization can guide both test development and validation.

One kind of aptitude directly related to the present study, is language aptitude. Language aptitude is defined as the capability to handle new experiences in language learning (Grigorenko, Elena, Sternberg, & Ehrman, 2000). A significant number of investigations have been carried out on language aptitude (Carroll, 1981; Horwitz, 1987; to mention just a few) and language-learning aptitude's components (e.g., Carroll & Sapon, 1959). As it is apparent, most studies conducted so far have been related to language learners' aptitude and little attention has been devoted to language teachers' aptitude. Moreover, it should be noted that no test of language teaching aptitude, not surprisingly, has been constructed to date. Measuring a psychological trait rests on the theoretical or empirical characterization of the construct. A test of language teaching aptitude, similarly, entails a delineation of its main components. The current study, therefore, was carried out to address this gap by developing a framework of *language teaching aptitude* based on language teachers' views and perceptions.

### Teaching Aptitude

Teaching profession demands three major qualities. They are knowledge, communication, and aptitude (Mahadeva Iyer, 2002, Sept. 3). In a survey of several psychological variables that correlate with successful teaching, Kukruti (1990) recognized that aptitude and success in teaching have a positive correlation with each other. An analysis of related studies shows that numerous features that are related to teaching career are associated with teaching aptitude, as well. These studies highlight the intricate nature of this aptitude. As an example, Ekstrom (1974) examined both the relation between teacher aptitude and teacher cognitive style, and their correlation with student performance. Teacher knowledge and teacher aptitude were found as the main contributing factors to students' achievements. In 1978, Ekstrom, again, investigated the relationship between cognitive style and all components of teaching aptitude and found only one component of teaching aptitude (level of aspiration) to be highly correlated over both grades and subject matter. Besides, Mutha (1980) concluded from his study that effective teachers possess higher aptitude scores than ineffective teachers; hence, approving aptitude in teaching as a major predictor of teacher effectiveness. Concurring findings were reported by other scholars (for example, R. A. Sharma, 1971).

As another line of research, there has been an increasing body of literature on different components of teaching aptitude. For instance, Ekstrom (1974) published a paper in which she concentrated on five classes of aptitudes as significant to teacher performance. They were verbal, numerical, reasoning, memory, and divergent production aptitudes. Among various components of teaching aptitude named by Ekstrom, verbal aptitude is the only teaching aptitude that has received scholars' attention largely. This attention is due to the outcomes of a study called "Equality of Educational Opportunity" (Coleman, 1966) which revealed that verbal ability in teaching was one of the main features mostly correlated with learners' achievement. In another major study, Taylor, Chiselin, and Yagi (1967) proposed that individuals having high verbal aptitude could transfer more concepts and ideas in a certain time to their audiences. However, it is a debatable conclusion since it is not true for all groups of learners. For instance, regarding students with low-level proficiency, the high level of teacher verbal fluency might be a base of

confusion in itself.

Reasoning aptitude appears to be the other group of aptitudes associated with teaching aptitude. Several types of reasoning are identifiable: general, inductive, mechanical, verbal, logical, etc. Not all of them are related to teaching aptitude. Many studies have elaborated on the role of reasoning in teaching (e.g., Carroll, 1976; Ekstrom, 1974, 1978), but one criticism of much of the literature on reasoning is that, until now, no one has offered any sound justification for including this element as one of the constituents of teaching aptitude.

The last two types of aptitude identified by Ekstrom (1978) as significant to teaching aptitude were memory and those types of divergent production aptitudes known as flexibility and fluency. She identified memory because the ability to remember the right and proper information when needed is of high significance for teachers. Concerning fluency, Taylor et al. (1967) firmly established the prominence of associational and expressional fluency in teaching. The second divergent production aptitude was flexibility and it is definitely significant for teachers since teachers with more flexibility have been shown to be more effective in assisting child learners to think for themselves (Hunt & Joyce, 1967).

### **Language Teaching Practice**

In the above paragraphs, it was shown that in many studies teaching aptitude demonstrated a strong correlation with teacher effectiveness. Moreover, as Neumann (2001) emphasized, teaching practices might differ across disciplines. In this regard, a look at the indicators of good teaching practice in the field of TEFL/TESL and characteristics of exemplary language teachers would be of utmost significance for coming up with the possible constituents of language teaching aptitude. Since good teaching practice is situated in context, here, the current investigators have focused only on those features that are common among most of the cultures.

In their case study, Smith and Strahan (2004) found six dominant tendencies existing among successful teachers, namely, having high degrees of confidence, considering their classes as communities, establishing positive relationships with students, teaching through student-centred approaches, engaging in professional communities, and being experts in their content areas. In another study, Goodman, Arbona, and Dominguez de Rameriz (2008) reported the affective characteristics included in their *Professional Attributes Questionnaire* as follows: "demeanor, responsibility, maturity, cooperation, flexibility, appearance, attendance and punctuality, initiative, social sensitivity, patience, tactfulness, enthusiasm, organization, creativity, written and oral communication, professionalism, self-reflection, awareness of all aspects of the learning environment, and the appropriate use of technology" (p. 28). In another study, Richards (2010) described ten competencies and performance behaviours needed in language teaching. They were language proficiency, content knowledge, teaching skills, contextual knowledge, identity of the language instructor, learner-centred teaching, pedagogical reasoning skills, theorizing from practice, participation in professional communities, and professionalism. As pointed out earlier, the aim of this research was to design a conceptual framework of language teaching aptitude and its components based on experts/instructors' (TEFL PhD holders) insights and a review of relevant literature.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

Through purposive sampling, ten TEFL PhD holders (seven males and three females) from state universities of Iran were selected to participate in this study. The motive behind selecting TEFL PhD holders in this study was the fact that they are constantly building, using and evaluating their knowledge and expertise in the field of language teaching. To achieve maximum diversity, participants were recruited from four metropolises of Iran; namely, Ahvaz, Esfahan, Shiraz, and

Tehran. All participants had at least five years of continuous teaching experience at university level.

### **Instrumentation**

This study was guided by one predominant question: What is the nature of language teaching aptitude construct from TEFL instructors' perceptions?

To answer this question, a qualitative examination of subjects' answers to a number of open-ended questions asked in semi-structured interviews was carried out. The present researchers employed analytic induction to develop a framework for beliefs on language teaching aptitude grounded on analysis of the information gathered through interviews and through examining available frameworks on factors contributing to language teaching aptitude. The objective here was not to deliver a lengthy report of what the interviewees expressed, but to generate a comprehensive yet instrumental framework of their different views and perceptions of the main components of the language teaching aptitude. In this regard, ten semi-structured interviews were conducted. The participants' views were solicited through posing the following questions:

1. Describe an ideal or a capable language teacher you know. What were his or her exceptional characteristics?
2. Please name and explicate various characteristics or talents needed by a language teacher to be successful in his/her career.
3. Can you think of any qualities specifically related to capable language teachers?

The interviews were conducted in English because the interviewees were of high proficiency and they preferred to answer in English.

### **Procedures**

The present researchers reached data saturation in the sixth interview but continued the procedure until all ten subjects were interviewed. Each interview lasted for 20 to 30 minutes and was recorded and transcribed verbatim. The accumulated data were analysed using qualitative content analysis in which the constant comparative method of data analysis is employed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin's (1998) techniques offered an open analysis method suitable for exploratory studies like the current study. In view of that, a six-stage coding process was employed consisting of two main stages: open coding stage and axial coding stage. The first three stages contributed to open coding stage and the last three stages to axial coding stage. Open coding involved finding general themes in the data and axial coding involved intensive coding of the themes found in the open coding phase around some major categories (Strauss, 1987).

### **Data analysis**

Firstly, the data were transcribed verbatim and parts of the transcript that were related to the aims of the present study were extracted. Secondly, the researchers made field notes displaying likely concepts or themes in the data. Thirdly, general open coding was carried out. To be exact, each distinctive theme or concept was allotted a code. Following this, the identified codes were applied to the rest of data; simultaneously, new codes were developed once needed.

Once the third stage of coding was completed, the axial coding stage started. In the axial coding stage, that is the fourth stage, using the codes developed in stage three, extensive coding around some major categories was performed to find the principal themes. At this phase of the study, the initial codes identified in the third stage were compared, mixed, and re-organized to form major categories and sub-categories. At this point, initial codes were permitted to be included in various categories or sub-categories, in an attempt to represent the data in the best way. Therefore, this stage turned the initial coding into more meaningful secondary coding. This axial coding or secondary coding mirrored the interviewees' responses more accurately. Then, these secondary codes were clustered under the evolved dominant themes.

Fifthly, the dominant themes and the secondary coding were applied to a portion of data. To assess the validity of the evolved coding system along with the reliability of the coding process, a new researcher (M.A. in TEFL) coded 30% of the data, which was randomly selected. Outcomes and variations between the present researchers and the research assistant were examined and an inter-rater agreement of 0.90 was obtained through Cohen's kappa reliability coefficient. The last stage (sixth) of content analysis involved a modification of the evolved categories and sub-categories with respect to the present study's questions and the related literature. In this stage, some categories were added from the literature or were re-named in light of the existing literature. This last analysis stage provided a tentative framework comprising eight predominant constituents (see Figure 3).

### Results and Discussion

Eight main categories were emerged from the analysis with several sub-categories. These eight categories were related to two overarching themes of personal qualities and cognitive qualities. Table 1 presents the emerged themes and secondary coding together with their frequencies and percentages.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage<sup>9</sup> of themes<sup>10</sup> indicating beliefs about the components of language teaching aptitude

Emerg ed themes	Total frequency & percentage	Secondary coding	Frequency & percentage of each code
Affective components	69 (24.2%)	----- <sup>11</sup>	-----
Knowledge components	57 (20%)	General knowledge	20 (7.0%)
		Pedagogical knowledge	27 (9.4%)
		Content knowledge	10 (3.5%)
Communication components	53 (18.5%)	Non-verbal communication skills	32 (11.2%)
		Verbal communication skills	7 (2.4%)
		Listening skills	14 (4.9%)
Creativity components	42 (14.7%)	-----	-----
Intelligence components	29 (10.1%)	General intelligence	8 (2.8%)
		Logical reasoning	21 (7.3%)
Memory components	18 (6.3%)	Associative memory	9 (3.1%)
		Meaningful memory	9 (3.1%)
Professional components	9 (3.1%)	Professional integrity	3 (1.0%)
		Reflectiveness	6 (2.1%)
Moral components	8 (2.8%)	-----	-----
Total number of themes	285 (100%)		

#### 1. Personal qualities

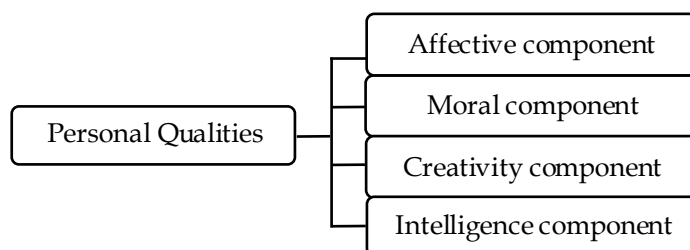
<sup>9</sup> In showing percentage figures in tables, the first decimal were rounded.

<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that the unit of analysis in the interview data was theme.

<sup>11</sup> This symbol is used to indicate that no modification of themes had occurred at secondary coding phase.

In line with new theories of aptitude, which defines this term as personal preparation to benefit from specific trainings (Snow, 1991), teachers with specific personal characteristics gain more from a particular teacher-training course than others who are short of those characteristics. There is a clear-cut relationship between personal qualities of an individual and his or her teaching aptitude (Fives & Buehl, 2008; Ushakumari, 2008). Data analysis in this study revealed that interviewees' perceptions of the personal qualities in language teaching could be classified into four components. These were *affective*, *moral*, *creativity*, and *intelligence components* (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Personal qualities involved in language-teaching aptitude framework



### 1.1. Affective components

The instructors regarded this component of high value to language teachers (24.4%). The interviewees' comments included references to care and love for students, enthusiasm for their occupation, self-confidence, etc. These themes were regarded as affective components akin to Fives and Buehl's (2008) notion of "affective qualities". The current researchers conceptualized affective components as emotive behaviours of a teacher contributing to students' learning. It is worth noting that unlike former studies (e.g., Goodman et al., 2008) the current scholars have not included creativity and morality in affective components since they emerged as two distinct categories from the interview data suggesting that the instructors considered these two as independent categories contributing to language teaching aptitude.

Similar findings were achieved in different studies regarding the effect of affective factors in teaching; specifically, teaching a foreign language (for example, Dulay & Burt, 1977; Fives & Buehl, 2008; Oxford, 1996). An example from the interviews may further clarify the significance of this component in language teaching. For instance, an interviewee attached significance to the affective relationship between teachers and students:

A<sup>12</sup> "English language teachers seem more approachable to learners than teachers in other fields of study. Most of the language teachers I have known up to now tended to make a personal contact with their learners; for example they spoke of their personal life and experiences a lot that possibly made them look more agreeable."

### 1.2. Moral components

This component draws the teachers' attention to moral philosophy "which centers the moral life around issues of personal character and how individuals regard and treat other individuals" (Hansen, 1998, p. 645). The importance of teachers' moral behaviour is highlighted in the literature; for example, it is one of the eight features included in Karim and Dixit's teaching aptitude test battery (1986) and it has been the focus of many large-scale studies (e.g., R. C. Sharma, 1984). Furthermore, it is considered as a key feature contributing to teacher effectiveness (Mato, 1988). In the current study, there was not much support for this theme in the interview

<sup>12</sup> For the sake of confidentiality, only the first letter of the participants' last name is provided.

data (2.8%) and it can be explicated with respect to a multitude of contextual factors affecting language instructors' perception of their responsibilities. That is, owing to differences in English language teaching along with the circumstances under which language teaching takes place in different contexts, it is hard to conceptualize a unified role for language teachers (Fradd & Lee, 1998). Similarly, a likely reason for the exclusion of morality component can be teachers' belief about their role as teachers since it prevents them from being visibly involved in moral issues (Hansen, 2001).

### 1.3. Creativity components

In this study, as illustrated in previous studies (e.g., Chàvez-Eakle, 2009; DeYoung, 2011), this component is considered as a personality trait. Several attempts have been made to depict the importance of this construct. For example, Chàvez-Eakle (2009) reported that "creative thinking and creative problem-solving not only enhance our ability to adapt to our environment and circumstances but also allow us to transform them" (p. 246). In this regard, creativity highly contributes to the teaching field. Borg (2006) carried out a large-scale study on the distinctive characteristics of language teachers and concluded that creativity is one of the defining characteristics differentiating language teachers from teachers of other subjects. Many of instructors highlighted the significance of this component (14.7%). They offered comments such as,

**S** "It has been rationally emphasized that some personality types are naturally more creative and they employ more novel approaches in their classes. It cannot be denied that some language teachers are better at drawing and sustaining learners' attention."

Finally, a number of respondents commented that it must be included as a non-cognitive trait:

**S** "I do not think of creativity as a cognitive trait as it is largely achieved through an individual's personal endeavour."

### 1.4. Intelligence components

Themes related to intelligence were the last category emerged relating to personal qualities category (10.1%). In 1994, a number of specialists in the field of intelligence offered a comprehensive definition of intelligence as follows:

Intelligence is a very general mental capability that, among other things, involves the ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly and learn from experience. It is not merely book learning, a narrow academic skill, or test-taking smarts. Rather it reflects a broader and deeper capability for comprehending our surroundings – "catching on", "making sense" of things, or "figuring out" what to do (Gottfredson, 1997, p. 13).

As it can be inferred from the above definition, intelligence is composed of different abilities; among them are reasoning and the ability to understand complicated and abstract ideas. In the present investigation, interviewees commented on the importance of different aspects of intelligence. Analysis of the data showed some discrepancy in participants' conceptualizations of this component. To be precise, their answers were divided into two sub-categories: *general intelligence* (*g factor*) and *logical reasoning*. This division was emphasized in some of the interviewees' responses:

**R** "Firstly, teachers should be intelligent enough to deal with students' problems. Secondly, they should handle problems in a rational way by using logic and thinking carefully about the challenging situations. Besides, I do believe that IQ level plays a role."

Referring to literature, some points were clarified. First, it was made clear that IQ level which was mentioned in the interviews was the same theme as general intelligence. In the same vein, rationality and logic were the same as logical reasoning. Second, it was discerned that there has been a controversy in the literature over the inclusion of intelligence under the personality

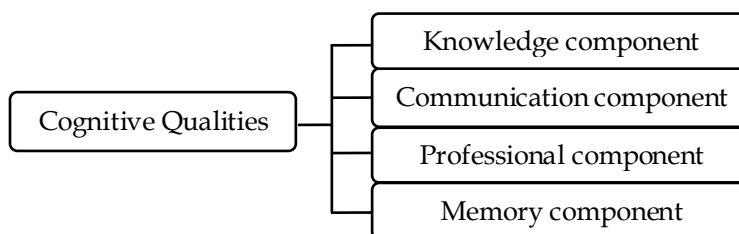


characteristics (e.g., Eysenck, 1994). More recently, literature has emerged suggesting that several personality traits demonstrate meaningful associations with intelligence; hence, excluding the possibility that intelligence is not linked to personality elements (DeYoung, 2011; Guilford, 1959). Third, general intelligence (Patil, 1984) and reasoning (Ekstrom, 1974, 1978) were revealed to be meaningfully related to teaching aptitude.

## 2. Cognitive qualities

Latest interpretations of the term “aptitude” distinguish between cognitive and affective sources of aptitude (Ushakumari, 2008). Instructor’s cognitive complexity has an influence on their views and understanding of classroom activities (Perry, 1981); thus affecting successful teaching. Teachers’ cognition consists of their mental states and their philosophies and thinking processes, which form their understanding of teaching practices (Richards, 2010). In light of the existing literature, it can be claimed that teacher cognition and teacher efficiency have an association with each other. Therefore, language teachers with high teaching aptitude are required to have certain cognitive characteristics in order to perform most effectively in their jobs. In the current study, the interviewees’ answers in relation to cognitive qualities can be classified into four categories: *knowledge*, *communication*, *professional*, and *memory* components (see Figure 2). They are explicated below.

Figure 2. Cognitive qualities involved in language-teaching aptitude framework



### 2.1. Knowledge components

Knowledge needed in teaching is an increasingly important area in the field of teaching. In 1987, Shulman examined the existing literature and recognized seven types of knowledge related to teachers: (a) content knowledge, (b) pedagogical content knowledge, (c) general pedagogical knowledge, (d) curriculum knowledge, (e) knowledge of students, (f) knowledge of learning environments, and (g) knowledge of educational purposes, values and their origins. Respondents, in this study, referred to different types of knowledge related to teaching field in general and to language teaching in specific. Naturally, not all knowledge types identified by Shulman (1987) were reported as essential for language teachers. According to the interviewees’ responses, the present researchers divided the knowledge components into three sub-categories: *general*, *pedagogical*, and *content (language)* knowledge. The three sub-categories of knowledge components are explained below.

As regards pedagogical knowledge, it was the most typical type of knowledge mentioned in interviews (9.4% of 20%). The interviewees’ comments involved references to general teaching methods and practices, assessment, and knowledge of learners or learning contexts. These notions were labelled as pedagogical knowledge with reference to Shulman’s (1987) term general pedagogical knowledge and Fives and Buehl’s (2008) notion of pedagogical knowledge.

The second sub-category of knowledge components was knowledge of content area, in this case, knowledge of language. A considerable body of literature has focused on the vitality of content knowledge to teaching profession (e.g., Richards, 2010; Shulman, 1987). Concerning English language, Roberts (1998) indicated that teachers should have knowledge about English language system, for instance grammar and phonetics, and be concurrently confident speakers of it since

they act as language models. This point is clearly depicted in the following extract:

**A** *"A talented language teacher is the one who is competent in the target language. This helps them to have confidence in their classes and therefore to be able to manage the class in a more effective way."*

The last sub-category of knowledge components was *general knowledge*. There is little support for its effectiveness in educational settings. The only person who highlighted the importance of general knowledge in humanities and education fields was Neumann (2001). However, in the current study, general knowledge emerged as an independent theme as demonstrated in the subsequent extract:

**T** *"Language teachers, especially, should have information about cultural issues and the current problems in the world. For instance, they need to know about interesting happenings in the world to encourage their students participate in the classroom activities more attentively."*

## 2.2. Communication components

The interviewees required a good language teacher to be able to communicate in an effective way. In line with existent literature on interpersonal communication (Laver, 1994), the present researchers grouped the interviewees' ideas into two dominant categories, that are, *non-verbal* and *verbal communication skills*. A brief explanation of each follows:

One of the two main categories of communication components was non-verbal communication skills. Many references on the importance of this component were made (11.2%). When participants were asked about what they meant by non-verbal skills, they named different kinds of body language and knowledge of different gestures in the target language as related to this category. In the following extract, a teacher presents ample support for this component:

**J** *"Different gestures and facial expressions add another aspect to language; consequently, adding to the social and cultural element that verbal communication conveys. This consciousness of non-verbal signals may also help at avoiding some misunderstandings that are unavoidable but bothersome consequences of cultural misinterpretations."*

The other category of communication components was verbal communication skills (73%), consisting of listening skills and oration or presentation skills. Regarding listening skills, the interviewees pointed out that language teachers should be good active listeners. Here, apart from its typical meaning, listening means trying to comprehend what others need and want from you. Although only a few respondents (2.4%) mentioned this component, it emerged as a completely distinct category in all phases of analysis. Similarly, Fives and Buehl (2008) reported this component as one of the three factors in communication skills. The other component in verbal communication skills was oration or presentation skills. Participants emphasized the need for teachers to be good orators of information. They considered it a prerequisite for teachers to transfer information to their students effectively, comprehensible to students. It is interesting to note that interviewees commented twice more on the ability to present information articulately than on the ability to listen to others effectively (see Table 1). This suggests that they attended more to the significance of information produced by teachers rather than to the potential importance of information that teachers get from their students.

## 2.3. Professional components

Although only a minority of participants (3.1%) remarked on the significance of this component, the present researchers retained it in the framework due to its significance in language teaching literature (e.g., Akbari et al., 2010; Fives & Buehl, 2008; Richards, 2010). This component included those themes that dealt with the actual practice of reflection and professional integrity of

teachers. Many researchers linked this component to conscious mental effort or cognitive capability of teachers (e.g., Akbari, Behzadpoor, & Dadvand, 2010; Yeh, 2007). The current researchers included this component under the cognitive category according to Akbari, Behzadpoor, and Dadvand's (2010) teaching reflection inventory. They defined it as "conscious efforts for professional development by attending conferences and reading professional books and journals" (p. 215).

The first constituent of professional components was *professional integrity*. Interviewees included concepts such as responsibility, commitment, and engaging in the professional community under this category. Many scholars have also found the idea of participating in the professional community as a contributing factor for language teachers (Richards, 2010; Smith & Strahan, 2004). An example from the interviews may clarify the point.

**A** "All teachers must pay attention to their professional development. It helps them in several ways, from achieving an acceptable professional face to turning into a more effective instructor in their classes."

The second theme emerging in relation to professional components was *reflectiveness*. Several studies have consistently shown the centrality of reflection in teaching (to mention just a few, Akbari et al., 2010; Hillier, 2005). Akbari et al. (2010) defined a reflective teacher as the "one who critically examines his/her practices, comes up with some ideas as how [sic] to improve his/her performance to enhance students' learning, and puts those ideas into practice" (p. 212). According to this definition, a reflective teacher thinks about his or her teaching practices and learns from it. Correspondingly, Yeh (2007) defined a professional teacher as the "one who continuously learns from teaching" (p. 505), or in other words, a professional teacher is a reflective teacher. As such, the present investigators included reflectiveness under the category of professional components. An extract from the interviews might be helpful in supporting this treatment:

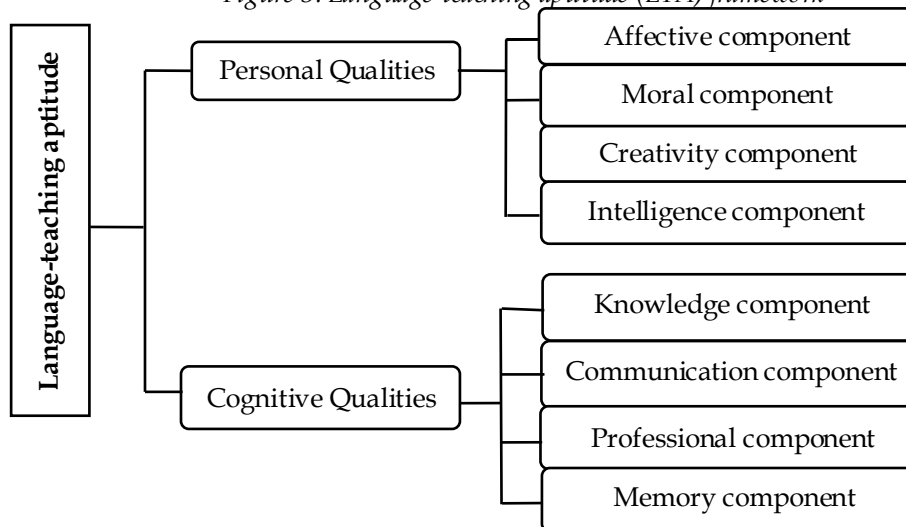
**T** "Being reflective is a key tool for teachers in order to examine their actions in classroom and to improve their teaching practices so enhancing students' language learning".

#### 2.4. Memory components

The importance of memory cannot be denied as the ability to remember right information when needed is of considerable significance for teachers. Several studies have revealed the association between working memory capacity and language learning aptitude (e.g., Robinson, 2002; Sawyer and Ranta, 2001). However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, only Ekstrom (1974, 1978) has conducted research on the association of memory and teaching aptitude so far. In her papers (1974, 1978), Ekstrom isolated memory as a distinct category in teaching aptitude and two kinds of memory were accentuated to be prominent in teaching: associative and meaningful memory. Associative memory is the capability to recall disparate bits of information or symbolic units or to attach unrelated information to each other in some way (Ekstrom, 1978). Meaningful memory is defined as the capability to recall verbal materials or resources and is related to semantic systems (Ekstrom, 1978). Findings of the present study paralleled exactly the ones reported in Ekstrom's papers (1974, 1978). Many respondents indirectly mentioned memory components. The current researchers, thus, categorized their comments according to the definitions presented for each type of memory. Some examples from the interviews are presented to simplify and illustrate the case. For instance an interviewee indicated that "**(R)**...it is a basic inquiry for any teacher to have the ability to recall his or her teaching materials when teaching; otherwise, how can they teach?", and another one commented that "**(S)**...language teachers should be skilful in relating foreign language materials with native language equivalents". The first excerpt indirectly emphasized the need for meaningful memory because it implied the ability to remember a collection of related materials (i.e. teaching materials). On the other hand, the second excerpt referred to associative memory since it talked about attaching two apparently distinct materials.

Upon completion of data analysis, the current researchers established the following framework (see Figure 3). In the following figure, it can be seen that the construct under study constitutes two main categories, i.e. personal and cognitive qualities. Further, each of these categories is sub-divided into four sub-categories. Personal quality includes affective, moral, intelligence, and creativity components and cognitive quality comprises sub-categories of knowledge, communication, professional, and memory components.

Figure 3. Language-teaching aptitude (LTA) framework



### Conclusions and Implications

There are a multitude of studies on teachers and teacher training. Different aptitudes and skills have been identified as important for being an effective teacher. However, to date, there has been little research on what aptitudes (whether innate or acquired) are needed for being a *language* teacher. This study set out to specify empirically the constituents of language teaching aptitude as a neglected yet critical area of research. The aim of this investigation, more specifically, was to develop a framework of language teaching aptitude construct. By a detailed analysis of the semi-structured interviews with university experts of TEFL and an in-depth review of the related literature, eight main categories with several sub-categories were identified as constituents of language teaching aptitude. They were categorized under two main headings: personal and cognitive qualities. Personal qualities included affective, moral, creativity, and intelligence components. Cognitive qualities comprised knowledge, communication, professional, and memory components. The categories resulting from the study differed in terms of their frequency of occurrence in interview data (see Table 1). In this study, the current researchers elaborated on the emerged themes to understand what exactly they meant and what their sub-categories (or different types) were.

Affective components were the most widely recognized themes (24.2%) in the interview data. The current researchers conceptualized affective components as emotive behaviours of a teacher contributing to students' learning. The second most frequent category was knowledge components (20%). Three types of knowledge were recognized as significant for a language teacher: pedagogical, general, and content or language knowledge. Pedagogical knowledge, which emerged as the most typical type of knowledge, covered areas such as assessment, teaching practices, and knowledge of learners/learning. General knowledge was the second most frequent category of knowledge components that involved information about important world affairs and target language culture. The last knowledge type was content or language knowledge

that required language teachers to be confident users of language and have knowledge on English language system.

The third most frequent component unfolded in interviews was communication components (18.5%). The researchers further divided this component into non-verbal (11.2%) and verbal communication skills (7.3%). The first category included an awareness of body languages and meanings conveyed by different gestures in target language. The other communication element was verbal communication skills that was further classified into two categories of listening skills (2.4%) and oration or presentation skills (4.9%).

The fourth component in language teaching aptitude was creativity (14.7%). Creativity in teaching methods and enhancing learners' creativity were recognized by interviewees as some characteristics of a creative teacher. Intelligence component was the fifth category that surfaced in the data as vital for language teachers (10.1%). The present researchers divided this component into two sub-categories of general intelligence (2.8%) and logical reasoning (7.3%). Memory (6.3%) was the sixth category coming to light in the analysis. As it was mentioned earlier, the ability to remember the right information when needed is of critical import for teachers. Two types of memory, i.e. associative and meaningful memories, were recognized by the researchers as pertinent to the construct under study. The two remaining categories were professional and moral components. One of them was identified as the professional component, which involved professional integrity and reflectiveness. Professional component relates to concepts like responsibility and job commitment, engaging in professional community, etc. The last category emerging from the analysis, with the lowest frequency, concerned moral issues.

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for future practice. From a practical perspective, the findings offer insights into the language teachers' perception about teaching aptitude. Teacher educators can benefit from the findings of the study to raise teachers' consciousness of the general competencies and specific abilities needed to become a successful language teacher. Test designers can use the developed framework in building a test for measuring language-teaching aptitude. This has been our ultimate goal and is what we are currently working on. Researchers can also utilize this framework or parts of it as a base for developing instruments to delve into the language teachers' perceptions on different factors related to language teaching or to investigate the relationship between different components involved in the framework. Understanding these relationships could provide various ways to improve language teachers' education programs and their professional development. Furthermore, this framework can be validated using multiple empirical tools so as to explore more comprehensively the associations among its components and establish its construct validity.

Findings in this study are subject to at least two limitations. First, only Iranian language experts/instructors were involved in the study; hence, findings in other contexts might differ. Second, the sample used in the current study was drawn from PhD holders teaching at universities; thus, the researchers cannot state that the framework is completely reflective of all language teachers' views.

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# THE EFFECT OF SCULPTURES OF ACTIVITIES ON GRAMMAR LEARNING AND RETENTION OF PERSIAN ADULT EFL LEARNERS, A COMPARISON OF DEDUCTIVE AND INDUCTIVE METHODS

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## ABSTRACT

This paper proposes an effective method for teaching English grammar based on Sculptures of Activities in two manners, deductive and inductive, for practicing simple present, present continuous and simple past. The homogenous adult males and females have been selected randomly in their experimental and control groups. The experimental group received the inductive manner and the control group received the deductive manner. An English grammar test was designed from Interchange second learning English text book, third edition, by Jack c. Richards with Jonathan Hull and Susan Proctor. It has been applied as pre-, post-, and delay post- test. However, before using the test for the purpose of data collection, it was piloted on a small group of subjects to estimate its reliability. The purpose of the second delayed test was to see which method of instruction had more impact on the students' grammar retentions and could sustain their grammar learning for longer period of time. The results and findings of the present study confirm the supports of Sculptures of Activities in the inductive grammar learning and retention.

**Key Words:** *Sculptures of Activities, Grammar Learning, Deductive learning, inductive learning.*

## 1. Introduction

People exchange information or ideas with each other through a language, and English is the international language which people learn to express their thoughts and ideas. According to ICAL (2012), "Accuracy and Fluency are two factors which can determine the success of English language students in the future. Essentially accuracy is an ability to produce correct sentences using correct grammars and vocabularies. On the other hand, fluency is ability to produce language easily and smoothly" (p.1).

A comparison between the accuracy of young children and adults states that children have lower accuracy than adults. "Teachers who concentrate on accuracy help their students to produce grammatically correct written and spoken English, ideally aiming towards the accuracy of a native speaker of similar age and background" (ICAL,2012,p.1).

According to Council (2012), the correct use of language system including grammars, pronunciations, and vocabularies is accuracy. Accuracy and fluency are two important factors in classrooms when speaking and writing of learners are evaluated. Some activities can enhance learners' accuracy such as "controlled practice, drills, the study and application of grammar rules, and activities that help students to notice their own mistakes" (p.1).

Humphrey (1998) cited, for decades, "The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) have been making increasing efforts to shift the focus of EFL pedagogy from correctness and accuracy in English to communicative ability (MEXT, 1998)" (p.59). However, according to Brumfit (2011), the over correction and the frequent monitoring of accuracy can cause less confidence and less developments in learning a language.

Thus, teachers may need to design a sufficient teaching method to master their students in learning grammar. This paper explores an effective inductive teaching grammar method based on a sufficient treatment that can be done in classrooms.

### 1.2. Grammar errors

Childs (1998) claimed that "Dictionaries define grammar as the rules and explanations which deal with the forms and structure of words (morphology<sup>1</sup>), their arrangement in phrases and sentences (syntax<sup>2</sup>), and their classification based on their function (parts of speech)" (p.1).

Childs (1998) claimed that learners already have knowledge of grammar and functions of grammar when they read, listen, speak, or write. After learners learn names of things, learners need to know how different forms of words put into an order (syntax). Not only native speakers have some errors in their native language grammars, but also EFL learners may have some errors in a language grammar. Therefore having knowledge of grammar errors is very critical for EFL learners.

Thornbury (1999) claimed that "Errors can and do occur in all areas of language, from syntax and morphology to lexis and pronunciation as well as other areas" (as cited in Vlack, 2011, p.1). Thornbury "identifies four specific areas in which he claims errors occur. They are lexis, grammar, discourse, and pronunciation (for spoken language)" (as cited in Vlack, 2011, p.1).

Vlack (2011) claimed that errors are important because errors permit learners to produce enough language in classes. Thornbury (1999) stated four ways for distinguishing four errors in lexical, grammatical, discourse, and pronunciation (as cited in Vlack, 2011). Thornbury (1999) stated that these four errors can be classified in forms and usages based errors. "The basic distinction between the two is that form errors relate to things that native speakers could not say (forms native speakers cannot use) while usage errors relate to things native speakers would not say \_forms they generally would not use" (as cited in Vlack, 2011, p.4).

For clarifying the grammar errors to readers, the author gives illustrations about the grammar errors from Gillespie (2008). According to Gillespie (2008), there are 10 most common grammatical errors:

#### 1. Agreement

- ☐ When subjects do not agree in number or person with their verbs.
- ☐ When pronouns do not agree in number or person with their antecedents.

#### 2. Comma Splices

- ☐ When two sentences are connected with only a comma.

#### 3. Misplaced/ Dangling Modifiers

- ☐ When modifiers (words that limit or describe other words) are in the wrong place.

#### 4. Passive Voice

- ☐ When the subject of a sentence is acted upon.

#### 5. Possessive Case

- ☐ When nouns or pronouns do not show possession properly.

#### 6. Pronoun Reference

- ☐ When pronouns refer to their antecedents incorrectly.

**7. Punctuation (comma, semicolon, or colon)**

- ☐ When commas, semi-colons or colon are used incorrectly.

**8. Sentence fragments**

- ☐ When sentences are incomplete.

**9. Word Choice**

- ☐ When the wrong word is used.

**10. Wordiness**

- ☐ When empty or meaningless words obscure meaning.

**1.3. Teaching grammar**

Generally speaking, adults like learning grammar and use them correctly in their speaking or writing, but children like to learn grammar and use them less than adults. Learners desire to learn grammar for helping their writing and speaking more than listening and reading. In a formal language teaching classroom, grammar learning and teaching are used more than other classrooms.

Decades after decades, grammar and its value for EFL learners are under questions. "Unattractive grammar monger whose only pleasure in life is to point out the faults of others" (Baron, 1982, p. 226). Any notifications about the correctness of learners' grammar in classrooms cause discomfort and stress for learners. "Many teachers have tried to make grammar teaching a non-threatening, imaginative and useful activity within the English curriculum" (Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam, 2011, p.69).

According to Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011), Studies on students' and teachers' sentiments and feelings of grammar teaching in the overall situation of language teaching and learning presented that students and teachers do not have the same feelings. "While students favor formal and explicit grammar instruction and error correction, teachers favor communicative activities with less conscious focus on grammar (p.70)"

Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) claimed that, when teachers like to teach grammar to their learners, they should consider three aspects and areas: "grammar as rules, grammar as forms, and grammar as resources (p.70)". EFL learners think that learning grammar indicates studying some rules and knowledge grammar.

Instructors believe that this belief will make learners to produce accurate structures by using the knowledge. Teachers believe that students are secure with the rules. Moreover, learners benefit from the belief that grammar is one of many resources to communicate for reaching to a better approach. "We should see how grammar relates to what we want to say or write, and how we expect others to interpret what our language use and its focus" (Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam, 2011, p.71).

**1.4. Significant of grammar learning**

Childs (1998) claimed that "Studying grammar is really just learning a new vocabulary so that you can talk about and learn how to correct these mistakes" (p.2). Having appropriate knowledge of grammar in a language help for people to speak and write in more effective ways. People are usually evaluated by their speaking and writing. Lack of accuracy in speaking and writing may cause someone to think that the speaker or writer does not have much literacy.

Savage, Bitterlin, and Price (2010) found the following:

As a result of this gap between knowledge of grammar and its successful application, there has been a shift in our view of grammar instruction over the last 20 or 30 years. Nowadays, many ESL practitioners view grammar less as a body of knowledge to be studied than as a skill to be

practiced and developed. Grammar knowledge is important, but only insofar as it enables students to communicate accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. (p.2)

### **1.5. Games in English learning**

Chirandon, Laohawiriyanon, and Rakthong (2005) stated that “using games in classroom is one of recommended techniques” (p.2). Lee (1995) stated that using games in classrooms by teachers uphold English teaching in various outlooks. Thus, using games in classrooms by teachers gives chances for practicing a foreign language easily, and effectively. It supports FL learners to express their thoughts and ideas by utilizing “all four skills, and creates a real life situation for using language” (as cited in Chirandon, Laohawiriyanon, & Rakthong, 2005, p.2).

On the other hand, learners always complain about their subjects and they have problems with their lessons because of lack of interest (Chirandon, Laohawiriyanon, & Rakthong, 2005). Thus, Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (2005) “suggested that games were the effective means sustaining students’ interest and getting rid of anxiety in class” (as cited in Chirandon, Laohawiriyanon, & Rakthong, 2005, p.2). In addition, in the sense of social connections, Jacobs and Liu (1996); Erozo (2005) stated that social behaviors of learners like working together and assembling teams may be developed by games. “Furthermore, relevance to different intelligences, Gardner (1999) recommended that games can develop three types of intelligences: spatial, bodily kinesthetic and interpersonal intelligence” (as cited in Chirandon, Laohawiriyanon, & Rakthong, 2005, p.2).

Chirandon, Laohawiriyanon, and Rakthong (2005) mentioned that the great assist of games in teaching English is to learn English based on authentic conditions without fears or tensions in a lively manner.

### **1.6. Significant of teaching English through games**

Researchers believed that taking advantages of games in teaching and learning subjects provide some conditions and circumstances that put one in favorable positions. The following are some of the advantages suggested by Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (1994, p. 1):

1. Games help and encourage learners (fun and interesting)
2. Games help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful.
3. Games provide intense and meaningful practice of the language
4. Games provide practices in all the skills (R, W, L, and S), in all the stages of the teaching/learning sequence (presentation, repetition, recombination, etc), and for many types of communication (encouraging, agreeing, explaining).
5. Using games can engage the students and motivate them to interact with the topic.

Reese (1999, as cited in Sripramong, 2004) purposed that there are two aims for using games in classrooms. First, trying to raise background knowledge of learners any stages. Second, practicing and producing English in practical and active ways.

### **1.7 . Deductive and inductive grammar methods**

According to Hedge (2000), the deductive technique depends on processes of making inferences through logical ways, examining methodically in detail for the purposes of explanation, and comparing. Instructors present an illustration for explaining grammar directly. Learners repeat an activity several times in order to improve performance, producing sentences, with given prompts. Grammar is taught in a solitary method with a little concentration to meanings, and mechanical practices. However, the deductive technique has some values. It is effective and sufficient for chosen and motivated learners. It could take time when learners stand face to face to grammar rules which are difficult but which has to be instructed. It can assist to increase learners’ self-assurances in the tests which are written with accuracy as the principal of accomplishments. According to Hedge (2000), in the inductive method, instructors induce the students to focus on grammar regulations without any signs of explicit descriptions. It is thought that the regulations

will become obvious if the students are given enough effective illustrations. It is thought the inductive technique is more productive in that students find out the grammar of languages themselves while interact with a language use. This is particularly correct in grammatical rules which are easily achieved, comprehended and applied.

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

### **2.1. Teaching grammar**

Zain (2007) mentioned that, ESL teaching and its continuous debates and hypotheses about teaching grammar are not an unforgettable aspects. "The inconclusive debate about the best way to teach grammar has significant influence on the development of language teaching practice" (p.1). Thus, various opinions, accesses , principles and methods of the particular branch of knowledge of teaching grammar have introduced for ESL teachers for enhancing learners.

However, Corder (1988) believed that "the methodological proposals in pedagogic grammar for teachers are often implicit rather than explicit" (as cited in Zain, 2007, p.1). Nespor (1987, as cited in Zain, 2007, p.1) claimed that the inability to succeed comes into views of obvious indications of acceptable conducts about grammar teaching in various conditions when "the contexts and environments within which teachers work, and many of the problems they encounter, are ill-defined and deeply entangled" have conduct instructors to create different hypotheses and theories in teaching grammar. "These personal theories are derived from their belief system" (Zain, 2007, p.1).

According to Rutheford (1987), grammar is "a necessary component of any language teaching programme" (as cited in Zain, 2007, p.1), so it plays a significant function in language teaching. However, the particular attention to grammar in language teaching was disputed the truth or validity of the appearance of teaching principles and methods of knowledge or disciplines based on distinctive coherent learning groups of general assumptions, "such a challenge influenced not only the content and the curriculum in language teaching, but also the implication for teaching grammar" (Zain, 2007, p.2).

Thus researchers and language teachers reconsidered the present situation of grammar in language teaching and learning and took grammar into considerations for exemplifying its purposes in language learning. This made a continuous formal discussion in a public meeting or among language teachers and researchers with relation to the basic or inherent features of grammar instruction, "which affected the understanding of how second languages should be taught or learned" (Zain, 2007).

Murrow (2005) claimed that you can find structures and grammar in all languages. Sequences of vocabularies "have little or no meaning unless they are ordered in a way recognizable to the listener or reader" (p.19). On the contrary, Celce-Murcia (1996, as cited in Murrow, 2005) believed that building blocks of English dull expressions could have been a primary rule or principle for teaching grammar at the sentence level. "It is the simplest recognizable and useable element of written communication" (Murrow, 2005, p.9).

Murrow (2005,p.19) found out that pupils have to acquire knowledge of or skill in an activity that is natural to each main component of sentences and "the suitable orders for these components" through study, experience or by being taught. "This, then, is the basis of grammatical instruction" (p.19). "However, explicit grammatical instruction has fallen somewhat out of favor" (p.19). Hillocks and Smith (1991), Elley (1991), Krachen (1993), Weaver (1995), Özbek (1995) and Celce-Murcia (1996) believed that teachers may not teach, form or view grammar as a unit apart ( as cited in Murrow, 2005).

Widdowson (1990) believed, "...grammar is not a constraining imposition but a liberating force: it frees us from a dependency on context and a purely lexical categorization of reality" (as cited in Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam, 2011, p.71). "Given that many learners – and teachers – tend to view grammar as a set of restrictions on what is allowed and disallowed in language use – ‘a linguistic straitjacket’ in Larsen-Freeman’s words (2002) – the conception of grammar as something that liberates rather than represses is one that is worth investigating" as cited in Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam, 2011, p.71).

Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) cited that, learners are aware of having better predispositions to classify objects and events and to react to them with some degrees of evaluative consistencies toward grammar teaching in contexts, "while performing slightly better after having experienced the traditional grammar instruction" (p.71). Elkilic and Akca (2008) provided a detailed statement about an occurrence of optimism of learners who were learning English grammar at a private primary EFL classroom for learning grammar. "In particular, however, a little over 50% of their subjects claimed to enjoy grammar very much and only about 10% reported finding some difficulty in learning and remembering grammar" (as cited in Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam, 2011, p.1).

Even though many important subjects of discussions or controversies in a relation with form-focused bases in teaching second language researches have not answered definitively, "studies have provided promising evidence that focus on form is correlated with more acquisition of new grammar and vocabulary than non-form-focused approaches" (Rodríguez, 2009, p.2). Ellis, Basturkmen, and Loewen (2001) realized that a communicative form practices for learners was critical because they could improve their grammar knowledge, grammatical accuracies and correct uses of them (as cited in Rodríguez, 2009). Loewen (2002) discovered information or a fact by chance or deliberately which "short episodes of corrective feedback correlated with higher rates of correctness on subsequent tests" (as cited in Rodríguez, 2009, p.2).

Rodríguez (2009) believed that some studies which verifiable by observations or experiences rather than theories or pure logics have discovered information or a fact by chance or deliberately in showing different properties or qualities of focus-on-form techniques, that is, procedures that were effective in achieving the aims, have led to deploy in achieving of target structures in more authentic ways.

According to Ellis (2001), focus on form is "any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form" (pp. 1-2). Rodríguez (2009) mentioned that meaningful sociable contexts and the processes of extending of communicative language teaching are the areas of focusing on form.

Rodríguez (2009) found the following:

Instructors encourage learners to focus on form in several ways. Focus on form may be planned and focused on preselected structures, or it may be incidental, arising spontaneously at any point in a communicative activity. Teachers might design a task to encourage learners to notice forms in the input (e.g., prepositions of location such as in, on, under), or they might explicitly teach these forms and provide opportunities for meaningful practice. Focus on form may be reactive, including explicit corrections to student language; recasts (saying what students have said, but differently); clarification requests; and other types of feedback. (p.2)

## **2.2. Inductive and deductive grammar methods**

Widodo (2006) believed that the learning through inductive methods in the matters of educational grammar could also be named the rule-discovery by most specialists. This opinion proposed that instructors could instruct grammar by using and beginning examples of structures. Therefore, learners could learn and study grammars through examples.

Widodo (2006) mentioned that “the presentation of grammatical rules can be spoken or written” (p.127). The existence of the inductive approach makes an attempt or effort to take advantage of “the very strong reward value of bringing order, clarity and meaning to experiences” (Widodo, 2006, p.128). This method suggested that learners practiced and took a part in instruction process actively and effectively.

Moreover, this approach stimulated the development of learners to improve their intellectual systems of techniques for coping with any tasks. To state the matter differently, this learning method sought to emphasize on grammatical rules implicitly and supported learners to arrive at a judgment or opinion about the grammatical rules that their teachers proposed (Widodo, 2006).

Berendse (2012) claimed that, most researchers and teachers, believed that the deductive approach appear to be “much more reasonable – why make students guess the rule?” (p.12). Berendse (2012) claimed that in an inductive approach, even though learners are not acquire knowledge of or skills in a language through study, experience or by being taught, the learning process endures a great similarity to a native language.

According to Berendse (2012), “but which approach is believed to be most effective in teaching grammatical structures? Teachers and scholars have a wide range of views on whether the inductive or deductive approach is most effective” (pp.12-13).

Hammerly (1975) believed that it has been put forward for consideration that some structures “are most amenable to a deductive approach while others ... can be learned very well by an inductive approach” (as cited in Berendse, 2012, p.13). Berendse (2012) also cited that this view has been encouraged by Brown (2007), who claimed that “both inductively and deductively oriented teaching methods can be effective, depending on the goals and contexts of a particular language teaching situation” (p.13).

In general, Berendse (2012) cited that, some researchers exchanged conflicting views in a heated way that the both methods were all the same and they had equal efficiency. However, others believed that one of these methods should be the most effective method in grammar teaching and learning that were used by teachers.

As an illustration, as cited in Berendse (2012), Staatsen (2009) claimed that learners and teachers should show their disapprovals of the deductive approach because the inductive approach commonly has requested learning after-effect.

Berendse (2012) cited that “On the other hand, in her study comparing the deductive and inductive approach to teaching foreign languages, Shaffer concludes that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of both approaches” (p.13); “this offers strong evidence against the notion that an inductive approach should not be used for difficult structures” (p.13). She also discovered after much searching the “correlation between ability and approach was not significant” (p.13) which disproved this opinion that the inductive approach had been shown a hard method for learners with low proficiency levels.

Schaffer (1989) resulted that instructors “should not only apply the inductive approach in their lessons but instead vary” (p.401). On the other hand, Schaffer (1989) believed that a benefit of the inductive method was its “active participation” of learners and the actuality behind the presentations of grammar in “meaningful contexts” (as cited in Berendse, 2012, p.13).

### **2.3. Teaching English through games**

Yolageldili and Arikan (2011) claimed that the connection that exists between games and teaching of foreign languages has been investigated in different researches in Turkey.

“As Topkaya and Küçük (2010) articulate, primary school curriculum for young learners’ English lessons should incorporate more games for children” (as cited in Yolageldili & Arikan, 2011, p.1). Similarly, “Sungurtekin, Sezer, Bağçeli-Kahraman and Sadioğlu (2009) describe that by playing games, a child makes acquaintance with his environment, learns life and gains new instructions” (as cited in Yolageldili & Arikan, 2011, p.1).

Yolageldili and Arikan (2011) mentioned that games were a stimulate method which caused motivations, authentic practices, and interesting activities that were enhancing the meaningful learning for EFL learners so that they should be a primary “part of primary school education” (p.1).

Yolageldili and Arikan (2011) claimed that teachers enjoyed the benefits of games in their classrooms when they were teaching their EFL learners. One of these benefits was that when EFL learners were playing a game; they were stirred to actions, practices, and exercise in classrooms in learning a language.

McCallum (1980) focused on this idea by proposing this view which “games automatically stimulate student interest, a properly introduced game can be one of the highest motivating techniques” (as cited in Yolageldili & Arikan, 2011, p.2).

Moreover, Avedon (1971, as quoted in Yolageldili & Arikan, 2011, p.2) disputed that “games spur motivation and students get very absorbed in the competitive aspects of the games; moreover, they try harder at games than in other courses”. “In other words, games stimulate students’ interest in classroom activities and as a result; students become motivated and willing to learn” (p.2).

Yolageldili and Arikan (2011) claimed that the capability of games to make a possible social mutual action is critical. Young learners usually interest in learning a language with games in comparison to adult learners. Learners can engage with their classmates during learning games. Cooperations and competitions between teachers to students, and learners to learners and are included in such games that teachers can use them for teaching their students effectively. While learners work together in their teams, at the same time, they contend against other teams. “Hence, what teachers should consider while choosing a game is the fact that children learn best with games which require physical action, interaction, competition and participation” (p.4).

Yolageldili and Arikan (2011) stated that, many other circumstances like the size and the physical possessions of the classroom are important for teachers. Teachers should also consider “the equipment, materials and the time available for a game” (McCallum, 1980, p. 6). “Teachers should take all these factors into account while choosing a game because a game which seems to be most appropriate may turn into a complete failure in the end” (p.4).

Yolageldili and Arikan (2011) believed that teachers can use games as an entertainment hobby to cool down their students at the end of their courses or “keep students quiet. However, Lee (1979, p. 3) proposes that “games should not be regarded as a marginal activity, filling in odd moments when the teacher and class have nothing better to do” (as cited in Yolageldili, & Arikan, 2011, p.4). In this respect, teachers should teach through games and teachers should focus on games during teaching. Moreover, Games can be used “as a merely warm-up activity” (Yolageldili, & Arikan, 2011, p.4).



Rinvoluceri (1990) clarified that a game can be used in any of these three stages while using them as a part of grammar instruction (as cited in Yolageldili & Arikan, 2011, p.3):

- a) Before presenting a given structure, especially to find out diagnostically how much knowledge is already known by the learners?
- b) After a grammar presentation to see how much the group has grasped.
- c) As a revision of a grammar area.

According to Meizaliana (2009), Communicative Language Teaching defines important features of classroom which are called tasks. Tasks can be actions which taken in pursuit of classrooms and instructions objectives. Meizaliana (2009) stated "CLT grammar taught through tasks" (p.19). Tasks are critical in the act of instructing languages so that instructors order and teach subjects, topics, and points easily. Moreover, learners are recognized and mastered them easily. Tasks improve the quality or value of repeating activities several times in order to improve performance of learners in some main component of language. Meizaliana (2009) believed that playing games are classified as one of the examples of different tasks.

As mentioned above, one of the task activities is a game. The customary or expected procedure or ways of learning and teaching a language point or structure of grammar through games are very effective and useful. Moreover, teaching and learning processes become enjoyable, authentic, and fun when teachers take advantages of games. "Besides, game can make the teaching learning process fun and enjoyable" (p.19). (Meizaliana, 2009).

According to Meizaliana (2009), some others researchers have mentioned the following distinguishing qualities of games. Hadfield (2004, as quoted in Meizaliana, 2009) when rules, goals and elements of fun exist in teaching and learning activities, those can be named games.

Celce-Murcia (2001, as cited in Meizaliana, 2009) expressed definitely and clearly that taking advantage of "games, role-play, pair work, and other small-group activities" has acquired approval "and is now widely recommended for inclusion in language teaching programs" (p.20). Harmer (2001, as quoted in Meizaliana, 2009) claimed that an engagement is critical for teaching and learning. The Engagement can be an imperative basic constituent participate in classrooms. Learners to learners' interactions and teachers to learners' interactions are the main concerns in classrooms "where teachers try to arouse the students' interest" (p.20). "Thus involving their emotions, activities and materials which frequently engage students include: games (depending on age and type), music discussions (when handled challengingly), stimulation pictures, dramatic stories, amusing anecdotes etc" (p.20).

Richards (2006, as cited in Meizaliana, 2009) mentioned that "there are many other activity types that have been used in CLT, one of them is task-completion activities: puzzles, games, map-reading, and other kinds of classroom tasks in which the focus is on using one's language resources to complete a task" (p.20).

Agoestyowati (2007, as quoted in Meizaliana, 2009) believed that by using games and playing games in classrooms, teachers can change the environment of their classes into dynamic classes. Games are able to cause learners to appear younger in classrooms, that is, games are able to refresh learners' knowledge about a language and they assist learners' brains to study in an appropriate way. Agoestyowati (2007, as cited in Meizaliana, 2009) found the following:

Games allow students to work co-operatively, to compete with each other, to strategize, to think in a different way, to compare and to share knowledge, to learn from others and from mistakes, to work in a less stressful and more productive environment, and to allow the students to have

fun, and to be able to help students use and practice the language in relaxed way. (p.21)  
According to Meizaliana (2009), games look like as if they are activities and exercises which are made by experts to facilitate teaching and learning more exciting. Learners also enjoy learning through playing games.

Sugar and Sugar (2002, as cited in Sudartini, 2012, p.3) cited that, teachers should think about few things carefully. The following are main components which the instructors must think about them carefully "before playing a game in the English classroom" (p.3). Those contain the behind main components:

- Target Audience
- Level of Play (Language Level Required)
- Number of Players
- Size of the Class
- Learning Outcomes
- Playing Time
- Game Variations

#### **2.4. Sculptures of Activities**

According to Richards, Hull, and Proctor (2005), Sculptures of Activities is a game. It uses to review vocabulary and grammar in an active way. "An Instructor should divide the class into teams of three. The Instructor whispers an activity to one student (e.g., play soccer). The students whisper the activity to their teammates. The team has one minute to form a sculpture that illustrates the activity (e.g. one student pretends to kick a ball, other teammates pretends to be a goalkeepers and players). The other teams guess the activity. The first team to guess correctly gets a point" (p.144). Meanwhile the instructor should ask the students to use the specific grammar structures such as simple present, present continues, and simple past, when guessing the activity. At the end, the Instructor should make sure that all the students practice the structures through the games inductively.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Participants**

The participants in this study were 60 Iranian adult EFL learners. They have been studying English in Adine Higher Educational College. The participants, males and females, were selected randomly from 100 homogenous learners. The 30 adult participants were in a control group. The 30 adult participants were in an experimental group. They were also selected in their groups randomly. They were both males and females. Participants, males and females, are assigned randomly to their control and experimental groups. All of the participants were homogenous. Their proficiency levels were intermediate. Participants were not informed about the research study, serial tests, the treatments and so forth. They supposed; they participated in a natural College's semester.

#### **3.2 Instruments**

##### **3.2.1. The Pre-Test, Post-Test and Delay Post- Test**

A test of English grammar was designed from American English File Student Book first, learning English text book by Clive Oxenden with Christina Latham-Koeing and Paul Seligson to examine the participants' grammar learning and retentions of adult EFL Learners. The grammar test was adapted from unit 2, 5, and 6 of the book. The test was validated by the SPSS 19 Software. Also the reliability of the test was trusted by the SPSS 19 software. The test was made by the author of the study. It has 40 questions' items. It has 40 multiple choice questions' items. The duration of the test was 50 minutes. The test was the same for pre-test, post-test and delay post-test. Delay post-test was required for evaluating the participants' retentions. The participants were not allowed to use dictionaries or cheat during the each exam. However, before using the test for the

purpose of data collection, it was piloted on a small group of subjects to estimate its reliability. The result of the reliability analysis is given below:

*Table 1. Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.750	40

### 3.2.2. Sample TOFEL Test

The study examined the homogeneity of the participants with a sample TOFEL test in order to have the participants who had a same knowledge and proficiency level before the pre-test.

### 3.2.3. SPSS 19 software

The study used the software for analyzing data and the results of the pre-test, post-test, delay post-test and the sample TOFEL test. It was used for thrusting the validity and reliability of the test.

## 3.3 Procedure

This study was conducted within six months. The participants became homogenous with a sample TOFEL test. The participants were randomly assigned to two groups: experimental and control groups. Sex was controlled randomly for assigning participants in their groups. Participants were not informed about the research study, serial tests, the treatment and so forth. Each group studied English with American English File Student Book 1, learning English text book by Clive Oxenden with Christina Latham-Koeing and Paul Seligson. Participants studied the grammar from unit 2, 5, and 6. After completing the instruction, participants in both groups received the pre-test. Then the researcher began to use the Sculptures of Activities in an inductive way for the experimental group by showing some pictures about working and doing activities of people in different situations and places. The researcher tried to play different roles and simulates each character and using the structures, simple present, simple past, present continuous in his speech simultaneously. Then, the researcher provided many sentences by using the three structures for students and using pictures and making examples about anything within the normal daily life of the participants to create an understanding of the use of the three structures. After three examples, the students repeated after the researcher, the researcher's role was to provide meaningful contexts to encourage demonstrations of the rule, and then the researcher divided the class into teams of three. The researcher whispered an activity to one student (e.g., play soccer). The students whispered the activity to their teammates. The team had one minute to form a sculpture that illustrated the activity (e.g. one student pretended to kick a ball, other teammates pretended to be a goalkeepers and players). The other teams guessed the activity. The first team to guess correctly got a point. Meanwhile the instructor asked the students to use the specific grammar structures such as simple present, present continues, and simple past, when they were guessing the activity. At the end, the instructor made sure that all the students practiced the structures through the games inductively.

The control group received Sculptures of Activities in a deductive way. The researcher used the traditional style of teaching and dictated the three structures for reviewing them. And the researcher began the reviewing by saying "Today we are going to learn how to use the simple present, simple past and present continuous structures". Then, the rules of the three structures were outlined and then the researcher divided the class into teams of three. The researcher whispered an activity to one student (e.g., play soccer). The students whispered the activity to their teammates. The team had one minute to form a sculpture that illustrated the activity (e.g.

one student pretended to kick a ball, other teammates pretended to be a goalkeepers and players). The other teams guessed the activity. The first team to guess correctly got a point. Meanwhile instructor asked the students to use the specific grammar structures such as simple present, present continues, and simple past, when they were guessing the activity. At the end, Instructor made sure that all the students practiced the structures through the games inductively. The participants in the experimental and control groups received post-test one week after the treatment. After 3 weeks, the participants received delay post-test for evaluating their retentions. The pre-test, post-test, and delay post-test were same grammar test from the unit 2, 5, and 6 of American English File Student Book 1, learning English text book by Clive Oxenden with Christina Latham-Koeing and Paul Seligson.

#### 4. Data Collection and Analysis

The results for the descriptive analysis of the pretest and posttest are shown in tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Mean score, Standard deviation, variance, and Std. Error of mean for pretest

Group Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Std. Error of Mean
Control Group	30	27.57	4.057	16.461	.741
Experimental Group	30	27.20	4.097	16.786	.748

Table 3. Mean score, Standard deviation, variance, and Std. Error of mean for post-test

Group Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Std. Error of Mean
Control Group	30	27.73	4.177	17.444	.763
Experimental Group	30	35.32	3.223	10.388	.588

To compare the group means for the study, a one-sample test analysis was employed for the posttest phase (see table 4). As shown in this table, the difference is considered to be statistically significant between the two experimental and control groups. That is, the candidates in experimental group with the specific inductive grammar teaching have outperformed the ones in control group with deductive grammar teaching.

Table4. One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Experimental	60.018	29	.000	35.317	34.11	36.52
Control	36.370	29	.000	27.733	26.17	29.29

This confirms that use of Sculptures of Activities improved inductive grammar learning of Persian adult EFL learners to a great extent.

Three weeks after the experiment the students of both groups were asked to participate in the delayed posttest again. The purpose of this test was to see which method of instruction had more impact on the students' grammar retentions and could improve their grammar learning for longer period of time. Interestingly enough, here again the participants of the experimental group could performed better than the control group (See table 5).

Table 5. Mean score, Standard deviation, variance, and Std. Error of mean for both groups after three weeks

Group Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Std. Error of Mean
Control Group	30	24.10	3.881	15.059	.708
Experimental Group	30	31.87	3.767	14.189	.688

## 5. Results and Discussions

Accuracy is an important factor in classrooms when speaking and writing of learners are evaluated (Council, 2012). Generally, for achieving accuracy, adults like learning grammar and use them correctly in their speaking or writing, but children like to learn grammar and use them less than adults. Learners desire to learn grammar for helping their writing and speaking more than listening and reading. In formal language teaching classrooms, grammar learning and teaching are used more than other classrooms. Childs (1998) claimed that learners already have knowledge of grammar and functions of grammar when they read, listen, speak, or write. After learners learn names of things, learners need to know how different forms of words put into an order (syntax). Moreover, Not only native speakers have some errors in their native language grammar, but also EFL learners may have some errors in a language grammar. Therefore having knowledge of grammar errors is very critical for EFL learners (Childs, 1998). According to Rutheford (1987), grammar is “a necessary component of any language teaching programme” (as cited in Zain, 2007, p.1), so it plays a significant function in language teaching. However, the particular attention to grammar in language teaching was disputed the truth or validity of the appearance of teaching principles and methods of knowledge based on a distinctive coherent learning group of general assumptions, “such a challenge influenced not only the content and the curriculum in language teaching, but also the implication for teaching grammar” (Zain, 2007, p.2). Having appropriate knowledge of grammar in a language help people to speak and write in more effective ways. People are usually evaluated by their speaking and writing. Lack of accuracy in speaking and writing may cause someone to think that the speaker or writer does not have much literacy. Lee (1995) stated that using games in classrooms by teachers give chances for practicing a foreign language easily, and effectively. It supports FL learners to express their thoughts and ideas by utilizing “all four skills, and creates a real life situation for using language” (as cited in Chirandon, Laohawiriyanon, & Rakthong, 2005, p.2). For teaching grammar, experts proposed different method. Inductive and deductive methods are frequently used by teachers in classrooms.

According to Hedge, T. (2000), the advantages of a deductive method can be as follows:

- Good for selected and motivate students
- Save time to explain complex rules
- Increase students' confidence in examination

According to Hedge, T. (2000), the disadvantages of a deductive method can be as follows:

- Grammar is taught in isolated way
- Little attention is paid to meaning
- The practice is often mechanical

According to Hedge, T. (2000), the advantages of an inductive method can be as follows:

- Inspire students' thinking activities
- Motivate students' learning interests
- Grammar is taught in context.

According to Hedge, T. (2000), the disadvantages of an inductive method can be as follows:

- The presentation of grammar is more complex and time consumption
- Grammar is not taught directly
- Some rules cannot be induced easily

The treatment as Sculptures of Activities. According to Richards, Hull, and Proctor (2005), it uses to review grammar in an active way. “An Instructor should divide the class into teams of three. The instructor whispers an activity to one student (e.g., play soccer). The student whispers an activity to their teammates. The team has one minute to form a sculpture that illustrates the activity (e.g. one student pretends to kick a ball, other teammates pretends to be a goalkeepers and players). The other teams guess the activity. The first team to guess correctly gets a

point" (p.144). Meanwhile the instructor should ask the students to use the specific grammar structures such as simple present, present continues, and simple past, when guessing activities. At the end, the instructor should make sure that all the students practice the structures through the games inductively. The author tries to find an effective instruction method to improve and helps Persian adult EFL learners to learn grammar in more an effective way. Then, the author tries to compare the instruction levels of the experimental and control group after giving the treatment in the two manners.

As discussed earlier, the candidates in the experimental group with the specific inductive grammar teaching have outperformed the ones in the control group with the deductive grammar teaching method. This confirms that use of Sculptures of Activities in the inductive way enhanced grammar learning of Persian adult EFL learners to a great extent. The purpose of the second delayed test was to see which methods of instruction had more impacts on the students' grammar retentions and could sustain their grammar learning for longer period of time. Again the participants of the experimental group could perform better than the control group.

## 6. Conclusion

Zain (2007) mentioned that, ESL teaching and its continuous debates and hypotheses about teaching grammar were not an unforgettable aspect. "The inconclusive debate about the best way to teach grammar has significant influence on the development of language teaching practice" (p.1). Thus, various opinions, accesses and principles and methods of the particular branches of knowledge of teaching grammar have introduced for ESL teachers for enhancing learners.

In the conclusion, the results and findings of the present study confirm the significance of the inductive instructional method of English grammar teaching and foremost it supports the use of Sculptures of Activities in the English grammar learning and retentions of Persian adult EFL learners.

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#### Appendix A:

Experimental group, the total score is 40

participants	Pre-test	Post-test	Delay post-test
1	23	35	28
2	25	37	30
3	30	38	36
4	25	36	32
5	24	34.5	30
6	25	34	29
7	30	38	34
8	26	35	32
9	28	36	32
10	24	34	30
11	31	38	36
12	30	37	34
13	28	35	30
14	23	35	31
15	24	32	28



16	34	39	38
17	30	37	34
18	32	37	35
19	33	39	36
20	27	36	34
21	35	40	38
22	23	35	31
23	24	37	34
24	23	34	30
25	35	39	37
26	31	37	34
27	26	31	28
28	23	28	25
29	22	29	27
30	22	27	23

Control group, the total score is 40

Participants	Pre-test	Post-test	Delay post-test
1	22	26	22
2	24	25	21
3	25	25	20
4	26	30	27
5	24	25	21
6	30	28	26
7	35	37	33
8	27	26	23
9	30	28	26
10	23	25	21
11	25	25	22
12	25	25	20
13	26	24	21
13	28	29	24
15	30	27	23
16	36	40	33
17	31	32	28
18	32	30	27
19	34	33	26
20	23	25	20
21	28	28	22
22	25	25	21
23	30	28	25
24	34	32	28
25	28	29	30
26	23	20	18

27	25	25	24
28	24	25	20
29	30	30	28
30	21	23	23